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Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942), born and educated in Poland, helped to establish British social anthropology. His classic monographs on the Trobriand Islanders were published between 1922 and 1935, when he was professor of anthropology at the London School of Economics. The present collection of Malinowski's early writings establishes the intellectual background to this achievement. Written between 1904 and 1914, before he went to Melanesia, all but two of the essays are published here in English for the first time. They show how Malinowski's considerable impact on twentieth-century thought is rooted in the late nineteenth-century philosophy of Central Europe, especially the work of Ernst Mach and Friedrich Nietzsche, and in the critical appraisal of the ethnological theories of Sir James Frazer.

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ROBERT J. THORNTON
AND
PETER SKALNÍK

TRANSLATED BY LUDWIK KRZYŻANOWSKI



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521383004

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First published 1993
 This digitally printed first paperback version 2006

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Malinowski, Bronisław, 1884–1942.
 [Selections. English. 1993]

The early writings of Bronisław Malinowski / edited by Robert J.
 Thornton and Peter Skalnik: translated by Ludwik Krzyżanowski.
 p. cm.

Translated from Polish.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 38300 5

1. Malinowski, Bronisław, 1884–1942. 2. Ethnology. I. Thornton,
 Robert J. II. Skalnik, Peter, 1945–. III. Title.

GN21.M25A25 1993

305.8'0092—dc20 91–44488 CIP

ISBN-13 978-0-521-38300-4 hardback
 ISBN-10 0-521-38300-5 hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-02646-8 paperback
 ISBN-10 0-521-02646-6 paperback

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PREFACE

Nearly fifty years after his death, the work and ideas of Bronisław Malinowski continue to be central to the discipline of anthropology. Born and educated in Poland, his world-wide impact was so great during his lifetime that he has come to be thought of as one of the founders of modern, twentieth-century anthropology, and especially of British social anthropology. The careers of his many students continued to define social anthropology throughout the English-speaking world into the 1970s. Today, interest in his work has had a significant revival, especially in England, America and in his native Poland.

As recent commentators have begun to point out (e.g. Gellner 1985a; Buchowsky 1986; Kubica 1986), Malinowski's approach to myth, history, nationalism and ethnicity was rooted in a specifically Polish experience of history. His ideas are relevant today especially in Poland, Africa and in Melanesia and Mexico because the problems with which he concerned himself continue to exercise the best minds, and surface frequently in political and economic affairs. His constant attention to methodological matters speaks to today's similar concerns in all of the social sciences. Recent readers and critics of Malinowski have explored his style and the rhetorical methods he used in order to represent so vividly the world of the Trobriand Islanders (Clifford 1986; Geertz 1988; Thornton 1987), while others have commented with insight (but with considerable speculation) on his philosophical foundations (for example Leach 1957; Strenski 1982; Paluch 1981b). In the essays presented here, however, Malinowski's specific intellectual debts can be traced for the first time to Friedrich Nietzsche, Ernst Mach and James George Frazer, especially, but also to others such as Friedrich Herbart, Richard Avenarius, Edvard Westermarck, Karl Bücher and Emile Durkheim among many others. An understanding of these lines of influence permits us to understand more

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clearly Malinowski's attraction, and his original approach to the ideas of pragmatism, positivism, Freudianism, and other main currents of twentieth-century thought.

One 'main current' of the twentieth century that is conspicuous for its absence in Malinowski's work is Marxism. These essays help to explain Malinowski's implicit rejection (by ignoring it entirely) of Marxism, since his deepest foundations include the work of Ernst Mach and Richard Avenarius against whom V. I. Lenin inveighed so vehemently. Indeed, Malinowski's work was reviled until recently by the leaders of ethnology in the Communist world (Ol'deroge and Potekhin 1953), and was not taught for the most part in Poland, his homeland, or other Eastern European universities until very recently.

Interest in Malinowski, however, had been sparked in his native Poland at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, where one of Malinowski's former pupils, Professor Andrzej Waligórski, used the relatively liberal atmosphere of Poland within the Communist bloc to initiate a return to Malinowski by publishing a Polish translation of *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* together with a long evaluative introduction (Waligórski 1967; Waligórski 1973). Ewa Borowska has contributed research on Malinowski's Polish background (Borowska 1971; Borowska 1976). In the last decade, a group of young Polish anthropologists have re-evaluated Malinowski's life and work from the Polish point of view (A. Flis 1983, 1984; A. Flis and Paluch 1984; Kempny 1979; Kubica-Klyszcz 1982; Paluch 1976; 1981a; 1981b; Średniawa 1981; Swiderski 1984). A Polish 'Collected Works' (*Dzieła*) of Malinowski is being compiled and published under the general editorship of Andrzej Paluch. At least six volumes have appeared since 1980 (Malinowski 1980–). Since Waligórski's death, the Polish group published *The Social Anthropology of Bronislaw Malinowski* (M. Flis and Paluch 1985), a collection of evaluative essays on Malinowski. Members of the group organized and participated in the Cracow Malinowski Centenary Conference (Ellen 1985; Ellen et al. 1988; Gellner 1985a; Kubica and Mucha 1985).

This book, however, has developed along a different trajectory. It is the result of the intersection of the editors' interests in Malinowski and in the history of anthropology. In 1975, Peter Skalnik visited Cracow where Malinowski was born, grew up and studied, and there gained access to Borowska's research. Skalnik

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began work on the preparation of Malinowski's early writings in 1976, immediately after his escape from Czechoslovakia to Holland. While affiliated with the University of Leiden during the years 1977–81, Skalník compiled a file of Malinowski's writings that were not accessible to the English-speaking world. The New York based Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences of America, run by Malinowski's former student, Professor Feliks Gross, provided a travel grant from the Kościuszko Foundation in New York which enabled Skalník to study some of the Malinowski papers held in the archival department of the Stirling Library of Yale University at New Haven (where Malinowski lived for three years until his death on 16 May 1942). In 1983, the translation of most of the texts from Polish and German into English was completed by the late Professor Ludwik Krzyżanowski, then editor of *The Polish Review*. Additional archival research was undertaken in London in the main Malinowski archives at the British Library of Political and Economic Sciences (Skalník 1982).

After joining the department of anthropology at the University of Cape Town in 1983, Skalník began to work with Robert Thornton who had a special interest in the history of anthropology. Thornton's training in the natural as well as the social sciences helped him to understand both Malinowski the scientist and Malinowski the anthropologist. A grant for the study of methodology in anthropology from the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa allowed the editors time and assistance to correct and edit the texts. Careful readings and discussions of these essays revealed that they all assume a knowledge of late-nineteenth-century science and philosophy in Central Europe. Though such knowledge was widely shared among Malinowski's colleagues and teachers in Cracow, Leipzig and Vienna, it became clear that a lengthy introduction and considerable bibliographical research were necessary to make these essays accessible to the contemporary audience, and to enable further research into Malinowski's intellectual heritage.

Malinowski championed a method (field-work) and a theoretical orientation (functionalism), and while this style of thought has now succumbed to criticism and changing times, his ideas were broader than the epithets suggest, and his roots in European philosophy and history are deeper than most people seem to realize. By presenting Malinowski's early writings, completed during the decade immediately before he began his field-work in

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Papua New Guinea, the editors hope that the depth and nature of his intellectual roots will become visible. These writings on philosophy, methodology, religion, totemism and other ethnological problems provide a context for his later, mature work. Through these writings, too, the connection between modern social and cultural anthropology and some of the main streams of European science, philosophy and social thought are revealed in a new light.

Robert Thornton and
Peter Skalník

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Financial assistance during the long course of this book's development has been provided by the Kościuszko Foundation of the Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, and the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa. Robert Thornton had support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation while he was a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton New Jersey in 1989 and 1990. We are grateful for this assistance.

We would also like to thank Julia Segar, our research assistant at the University of Cape Town, who assisted in editing the text and in searching for full bibliographical references to works that Malinowski referred to or cited in these writings. Lorna Weisbecker, the departmental secretary, typed most of the text into the word processor and Maria Jakubowska and Sue Robinson, both of Cape Town, helped in the search for various Polish reference publications and with additional translations from Polish into English. Professor Adam Kuper deserves special thanks for encouraging Peter Skalni^ć with the project after his arrival in Holland. Mrs Helena Wayne, Malinowski's youngest daughter, assisted the effort tremendously with early encouragement, and with her careful reading of the biographical section of the introduction. Professor Józef Burszta of Poznań University, and Professor Andrzej Paluch of Jagiellonian University, Cracow, helped to gather the documents. Our thanks go to them, and to many others of our colleagues who have helped in many small ways.

For permission to reproduce a number of essays in the volume, we would like to thank:

Józefa Stuart, Wanda Shortall and Helena Wayne, the daughters of Bronislaw Malinowski, for 'Totemism and

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exogamy'; 'Tribal male associations in Australia', and 'Relations of primitive beliefs to the forms of social organization'. Stirling Library, Yale University, Manuscripts and Archives, for two manuscripts in the Bronislaw Malinowski Papers: 'Notes in Polish on Nietzsche: the birth of tragedy', and 'Notes in Polish on religion and magic in *The Golden Bough* by Frazer'. The British Library of Political and Economic Science for 'On the principle of economy and thought'. The British Association for the Advancement of Science for 'A fundamental problem of religious sociology'.

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NOTE ON THE TEXT

Malinowski's notes were very brief and sketchy with respect to sources. The editors have filled out the details of the sources and supplied notes that will make them accessible to English-speaking readers. However, the full text of Malinowski's notes has been preserved only where it is substantive or relates to matters other than reference details.