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Malinowski's Revival in Poland

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The centennial of Bronislaw Malinowski's birth in 1984 coincided with his long-delayed acceptance in the life of Polish culture. Prior to the second World War, he was little known in his native country outside of professional circles and childhood friends from Cracow. In the late 1940s and 50s he was proclaimed a "bourgeois anthropologist," and as such excommunicated together with the whole science of sociology by the champions of Marxism-Leninism. This changed, however, in the 60s and 70s, when the late Professor Andrzej Waligorski, Malinowski's pupil and a teacher of social anthropology in the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, initiated the complete edition in Polish of Malinowski's works—a project which I am now honored to carry on myself. Five volumes have already been published: the first (1980) contains Malinowski's doctoral dissertation from Cracow (published for the first time), and also his only book written in Polish, Wierzenia pierwotne i formy ustroju społecznego ("Primitive Beliefs and the Forms of Social Structure"); the second (1980) contains translations of Crime and Custom in Savage Society and The Sexual Life of Savages; the third (1981), Argonauts of the Western Pacific; and the fourth and fifth (1985), Coral Gardens and Their Magic. The remaining volumes are scheduled to appear during the next six years. Although Malinowski's work already belongs to the history of anthropology, the success of the volumes so far testifies to a lively interest in Malinowski among the Polish reading public.

Professor Waligorski's efforts also made it possible for me in 1980 to found the first department of social anthropology in Poland at the Institute of Sociology, Jagiellonian University. Thus it may be said, despite his emigration from Poland and subsequent neglect, that Malinowski served in a sense as a Trojan horse making possible the establishment of a separate place for social anthropology among Polish scientific institutions.

Despite the turmoil and the socio-political difficulties in current, post-Solidarity Poland, these earlier developments made it possible for the Jagiellonian University and the Cracow Section of the Polish Academy of Sciences to organize an international meeting to commemorate Malinowski's centennial. Cracow University, his alma mater, conferred its highest honor, an honorary doctorate, on Sir Raymond Firth, Malinowski's pupil and successor to the chair of social anthropology in the London School of Economics. A two day conference was also held last September, at which Professor Firth spoke on "Malinowski in the History of Social Anthropology"; Professor Piotr Sztompka (Cracow), on "Malinowski and the Development of Sociology";
Professor Jerzy Szacki (Warsaw), on "Malinowski and the Development of Polish Social Science"; Mrs. Grazyna Kubica (Cracow), on "Bronislaw Malinowski's Years in Poland"; Professor Andrzej K. Paluch (Cracow), on "Malinowski's Functional Interpretation of Culture"; Dr. Andrzej Flis (Cracow), on "Cracow Philosophy and the Rise of Malinowski's Scientific Ideas"; Professor Jan Jerschina (Cracow), on "Polish Culture of Modernism and Malinowski's Personality"; and Dr. Janusz Mucha (Cracow), on "Malinowski and the Problems of Contemporary Civilization." In this way the city of Cracow paid a belated tribute to its son who became a great scholar in England.

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