

The King and I: Bronislaw Malinowski, King Sobhuza II of Swaziland and the vision of culture change in Africa

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ABSTRACT

Recent research into the life and work of Bronislaw Malinowski, one of the most important figures in British social anthropology in the 20th century, has concentrated upon his early life up to and including the years he spent in the Trobriand Islands undertaking his epoch-making fieldwork. However, very little of this research has been into the last decade of his life, especially his work on the impact of imperialism upon Africa's colonized peoples. The purpose of this article is to extend this interest to his later research by contextualizing, describing and analysing Malinowski's relationship with King Sobhuza II of Swaziland to whom he was introduced in 1934. I demonstrate that over the following four years, Malinowski sought to assist Sobhuza in regard to a number of matters, most notably his efforts to establish a national school linked to the Swazi age-grade system and his negotiations over the proposed transfer of Swaziland to the Union of South Africa. I argue that Malinowski gave this assistance because Sobhuza personified for him his vision of colonial and even postcolonial Africa which is contained in the largely ignored works of *Freedom and Civilization* and *The Dynamics of Culture Change*. Thus, these works reflect not only his background as a Pole in the Hapsburg empire, but also his contemporary experiences of colonial Africa.

Key words anthropology, colonialism, Malinowski, social change, Swaziland

INTRODUCTION

Though Bronislaw Malinowski is recognized as one of the most important figures in the development of social and cultural anthropology in the 20th century, the understanding of his place in the history of the discipline has been largely unaffected by the growing interest in his intellectual development. His reputation as a fieldworker and an ethnographer *par excellence* – based on his fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands during the period 1915–18 – initially resulted as much from his students' assessments of his work as from his own rhetoric (Malinowski, 1978: 1–25; Firth, 1957; Gluckman, 1963: 207–52). These students increasingly distanced themselves from his brand of functionalism and instead adhered to A. R. Radcliffe-Brown's structural-functionalism following the latter's return to Britain in 1936.¹ Consequently, while his ethnographic work was held up as a model for the discipline, his late theoretical works including his works on colonialism and modernity were largely ignored. Ironically, this reputation was further reinforced by the posthumous publication of some of his fieldwork diaries which, coming as they did at the beginning of the modern 'crisis' in anthropology, became a prime focus for the mediation of this 'crisis' by postmodernists (Malinowski, 1967). Indeed, as Sylvain has argued, Malinowski has become for the postmodernists 'a Modern Other against which they define their own postmodern ethnographic standards' (Sylvain, 1996: 21). Thus, Malinowski's Trobriand fieldwork has become 'probably the most famous, and certainly most mythicized, stretch of fieldwork in the history of the discipline: a paradigm journey to a paradigm elsewhere' (Geertz, 1988: 75).

Consequently, while there has been much research into Malinowski's intellectual development in recent years, very little of this has been focused on the last decade of his life, especially his work on the impact of imperialism upon Africa's colonized peoples. This period is significant since, as Kuper has noted, Malinowski's attempts to align the discipline with colonialism signified nothing less than a 'radical change of paradigm' for anthropology such that he 'came to see ethnographic reality not as "savage cultures" but rather colonial cultures in process of rapid change' (A. Kuper, 1983: 34). While a number of other researchers have recognized this (James, 1973; Rossetti, 1985; Mucha, 1988; Stocking, 1991 and 1995; Skalnić, 1991; Berman, 1996), the bulk of the research remains concentrated upon his early years, such as on the influence of his Polish background and the emergence of his functionalism in his pre-Trobriand work, or on his period in the Trobriand Islands (Young, 1984; Young, 1988; Ellen *et al.*, 1988; Skalnić, 1995; Roldan, 1995; Thornton and

Skalnik, 1993). The purpose of this article is to counter this trend by contextualizing, describing and analysing the significance of Malinowski's relationship with King Sobhuza II of Swaziland to whom he was introduced during the southern African leg of his four-month tour of Africa in 1934.

The significance of this relationship derives from the particular point of Swazi history in which it develops. While some researchers have written off the 1930s as of little interest in the history of Swaziland (Potholm, 1972: 16; Booth, 1983: 26), Macmillan has argued that it was significant for the emergence of an ideology of 'traditionalism' among an elite that came to dominate the politics of post-colonial Swaziland (H. Macmillan, 1985).² Centred around Sobhuza who was installed in 1921 as the *Ingwenyama* or 'King', this ideology was successfully propagated because it was merged with the anti-colonial struggle due to his being given the lesser title of 'Paramount Chief' by the British colonial authorities. According to Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini:

This meant that the struggle for the monarch to assert his real status as a King had certain anti-colonial overtones: it could be represented as a struggle for the legitimacy of national institutions against colonialism. (Davies, O'Meara and Dlamini, 1985: 3)

So successful was Sobhuza and the Swazi elite in its use of this ideology that they secured at independence in 1968 a constitution which gave the country a separate institutional foundation parallel to the Westminster-type parliamentary system. Less than five years later, Sobhuza repealed this constitution and banned all political parties, charging that they had introduced into Swaziland

... highly undesirable political practices alien to and incompatible with the way of life in our society, and designed to disrupt and destroy our own peaceful and constructive and essentially democratic methods of political activity; increasingly this element engenders hostility, bitterness and unrest in our peaceful society. (Sobhuza's proclamation of 12 April 1973, cited in H. Kuper, 1978: 335-6)

This elite has retained its position since Sobhuza's death in 1982 and his successor, Mswati III, has maintained his predecessor's ban on all political parties in spite of political unrest in recent years (*Daily Mail and Guardian*, 1999; 2000).

While I would agree that anthropology has a place in this history (see H. Macmillan, 1995), the main focus of this article is the significance of the relationship for our understanding of Malinowski and the history of anthropology rather than of Sobhuza and the history of Swaziland. I will argue that Sobhuza personified for Malinowski a vision for colonial and even post-colonial Africa that should cause us to question the marginalization of Malinowski's interest in colonialism in the history of anthropology. The rest

of this article is divided into four parts. In the first section, I will outline the main developments in Swazi history to the time of Malinowski's arrival in southern Africa. In particular, I will focus upon the effects of the colonization process on the Swazi royal family and their response to it. In the second and third sections, I will describe and analyse Malinowski's relationship with Sobhuza and the events that shaped it. In the final section, I will discuss Malinowski's interest in Sobhuza in the context of the cultural and political visions set out in his posthumously published works *The Dynamics of Culture Change* and *Freedom and Civilization* (Malinowski, 1961; 1964).

THE POLITICS OF SWAZI CULTURE AND KINGSHIP IN THE 1930s

The Swazi state was formed in the 19th century as various chiefdoms of different ethnic origins came together around the institution of the Swazi monarchy. Despite its various internal rivalries, the regional political climate enabled this state to develop into one of the most important African states in the region (Bonner, 1983: 208–13). However, it increasingly became subject to the pressures of European expansion and especially Boer expansion from the neighbouring South African Republic. By the 1880s, Boer graziers and English-speaking prospectors came to Swaziland seeking concessions of land from King Mbandzeni. It was during his reign that there was a frenzied granting of concessions which so destabilized the Swazi state that it became a colony of the Boer South African Republic, although the latter's demise in the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) resulted in colonial control passing to Britain (Bonner, 1983; Booth, 1983: 13–20). In 1904, the new British administration empowered a commission ostensibly to investigate the numerous overlapping claims by Swazi landholders, Boer graziers and farmers, and mining companies. However, as Crush (1980) has argued, the resulting division of land did not result in a mediation of these claims, but was 'historically structured by a set of criteria deeply empathetic to the notions of white settler and metropolitan capital over Swazi land and labor'. While several hundred resident and absentee white landowners were granted title to 40 per cent of the land (which grew to 58 per cent by the late 1920s as a result of the purchasing of territory designated as Crown Land), the more than 200,000 Swazi were left with less than 40 per cent (Crush, 1980: 72; 1987: 131–2).

This partition heralded a period in which colonial policy in Swaziland was centred upon developing the colony primarily as a settler state, resulting in tremendous pressure being placed upon the existing social and economic relationships between the Swazi commoners, chiefs and aristocracy (Crush, 1987: 155–66). As early as 1906, the leading European settler, Allister Miller, demanded the 'denationalization' and 'detrribalization' of the Swazi so that a

plentiful supply of labour could be secured for British-backed capital. He advocated that all Swazi land be alienated and that the Swazi should become tenants of European landholders and so provide them with cheap labour (Booth, 1983: 21). Although the Swazi aristocracy led by Labotsibeni – the *Ndlovukazi* or Queen Mother, and the Regent and grandmother of the infant King Sobhuza II – successfully resisted this pressure, it nevertheless suffered a general decline in its authority and prestige (Crush, 1987: 211, 214). Thus, Labotsibeni set about the restoration of ‘the legitimacy of the monarchy in the face of a disillusioned citizenry and an inimical colonial administration’ (Booth, 1983: 28). After Sobhuza came of age in 1920, he continued this attempt to restore the monarchy’s legitimacy. In 1922–3 he led a deputation to London seeking a redressing of the land issue and later launched a court case challenging the validity of Miller’s – and thus all of the settlers’ – concessions. Both actions failed, with court action finally being rejected by the Privy Council in 1926.

According to Macmillan, these failures ‘marked a watershed’ in Swazi history in that it was from this period that Sobhuza finally put aside ‘conservative resistance’ to the effects of the colonial settlement and resorted to ‘the conscious revival and use of “tradition” as a weapon of mobilisation’. Central to this mobilization was the revival of ‘royal and chiefly authority’ among the Swazi themselves to counteract what he and his confidants regarded as ‘the increasing social disintegration which resulted from land alienation, labour migration, and mission education’. This process was given encouragement by the administration with the first moves towards the introduction of ‘indirect rule’ in Swaziland from the late 1920s, and its growing disillusion with the failure of the settlers to establish a viable agricultural industry despite continued government assistance (H. Macmillan, 1985: 647–9; cf. Crush, 1996: 185–6). Moreover, this ‘tradition’ was consciously manipulated by Sobhuza to emphasize his authority over and above that of the various chiefs, especially those from the southern areas of Swaziland (H. Macmillan, 1995).³ Thus, it was in this context that Malinowski was introduced to Sobhuza on his visit to southern Africa in 1934.

MALINOWSKI AND THE POLITICS OF SWAZI EDUCATION

Malinowski met Sobhuza in Johannesburg in July 1934 at the New Education Fellowship (NEF) conference in Cape Town and Johannesburg to which he was invited as ‘an authority on primitive education and social problems’ (Bronislaw Malinowski Papers [BMP], Rheinallt Jones to Malinowski, 22 May 1933; E. G. Malherbe Collection [EGMC], Malherbe to Sir William Beveridge, 14 December 1933).⁴ Although Malinowski had until then shown

little interest in southern Africa,⁵ it is clear from his correspondence with the conference organizers that he wanted to visit some African areas, including one of the so-called 'High Commission Territories'. Originally, he favoured going to Basutoland (now Lesotho), but Winifred Hoernlé – lecturer in social anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand – was making a 'special case' for visiting Swaziland (BMP, Malinowski to Rheinallt Jones, 4 April 1934; Rheinallt Jones to Malinowski, 26 February 1934). While it is not clear whether Malinowski would have gone to Swaziland in any case, the circumstances of his meeting with Sobhuza at the NEF conference certainly decided the issue. Malinowski described the circumstances of their meeting in a letter to his wife, Elsie:

My main lecture, with Smuts in the Chair, roused a great deal of antagonism and criticism. But a few African natives, notably the Paramount Chief of Swaziland, told me it was very good – I believe quite sincerely. So I am satisfied after all. (Malinowski to Masson, 27 July 1934, in Wayne, 1995: 195)⁶

Accompanied by Hilda Kuper (*née* Beemer), one of his students who was about to make her first ethnographic field trip there, Malinowski went to Swaziland and stayed at the royal village of Lobamba, as well as with the Acting Resident Commissioner in Mbabane, A. G. Marwick. He established a friendly relationship with the king and his mother which, according to Kuper, 'did a great deal to reduce the suspicion which had been generated [among the village's inhabitants] by the preparations for our arrival' (H. Kuper, 1978: 8). More importantly, Sobhuza himself left a very strong impression on Malinowski. Writing to Elsie, he described Sobhuza thus:

He is an educated man and an intelligent man; a great patriot and very keen on keeping up the old institutions. I am certain that if I could stay here, I would get lots out of him. As it is, he has already told me things and shown me things which, I am certain, not many white people know. (Malinowski to Masson, 2 August 1934, in Wayne, 1995: 196)

Sobhuza explained to Malinowski some of the consequences of the partition and he later described Swaziland as 'perhaps one of the best examples of the white man's trickery and injustice to the native people' (BMP, Malinowski to Marwick, 22 November 1934; H. Kuper, 1978: 10). After approximately two weeks in Swaziland, Malinowski returned to Johannesburg to continue his African journey (H. Kuper, 1978: 1–10).

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons that Malinowski accepted Sobhuza's invitation and Hoernlé's 'special case' was that Hoernlé and Isaac Schapera – who lectured in social anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of Cape Town – had visited Swaziland earlier in the year and reported favourably on the possibility of introducing the Swazi age-grade or

regimental system – *ibutho* – into the African education system (BMP, A. W. Hoernlé and I. Schapera, ‘Joint Report on the Advisability and Possibility of Introducing the *Ibutho* System of the Swazi People into the Educational System’, no date).⁷ This report was written at the request of the Resident Commissioner, T. A. Dickson, after the issue itself was raised by Sobhuza in a memorandum he wrote about the education currently being offered to Swazi youth by the Christian missions. Sobhuza criticized this education by arguing that it was undermining Swazi identity and culture, thereby causing social disintegration. He went on to suggest as a remedy the inauguration of another *ibutho* (the previous one was inaugurated in 1923) and its incorporation into the African education system (H. Macmillan, 1985: 651; H. Kuper, 1978: 105–6).

According to Macmillan, this proposal ‘unleashed a storm of protest from the missions, the settlers, and some of the “native intelligentsia”’ with the introduction of the Pathfinder Movement – ‘the segregated equivalent of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides’ – being promoted as an alternative (H. Macmillan, 1985: 651). The reason for this protest was the change of Colonial Office policy towards settler predominance in the colony as a result of their failure to establish a viable agricultural industry and therefore source of revenue for the local administration. As Crush notes, ‘in keeping with broader shifts in the theory and practice of colonial governance’, the Colonial Office set about establishing

... a local administration that was more responsive to British needs, more committed to the development of peasant agriculture, and sensitive to the need to collaborate with rather than continually conflict with ‘Native Authority’. Consistent with this change of metropolitan mood, local colonial officials began to display what settlers saw as an unhealthy interest in the cultural complexity and political architecture of Swazi society. (Crush, 1996: 185)

Although an upsurge in violence by settlers against black farm workers was one response to this shift (Crush, 1996: 187–92), a ‘textual response’ also came in the form of the revival of the newspaper *The Times of Swaziland* and especially the publication of a ‘pseudo-anthropological text’, *Mamisa*. Written by one of the leading settlers, Allister Miller, *Mamisa* was devoted to demonstrating the ‘quixotic and brutal nature’ of pre-colonial rule through the purported recollections of a 19th-century Swazi warrior (Crush, 1996: 186–7).

During his stay in Swaziland, Malinowski was also asked (although by whom it is not clear) to write a report to the Chief Secretary of the Swaziland Government supporting the *Ibutho* system (BMP, Malinowski to Marwick, 22 November 1934). In it he expressed full support for Hoernlé and Schapera’s report and fully associated himself ‘with the keen desire expressed both by natives and Anthropologists to develop the system on modern lines’. Malinowski noted that it was the ‘modern tendency in

Administration – whether it be called indirect rule or parallel development . . . to grant a large measure of self-government to the natives and to use native institutions’. He added that Swaziland had a system of chieftainship, a ‘Paramount Chief’ and ‘a well developed body of customary law with excellent controls for the maintenance of family, kinship, political authority and morals’. Hence, he argued that the ‘ibutho [*sic*] system is the very kernel of native education for law and tribal discipline’; that it encouraged physical training for health; and provided an introduction to ceremonial, agricultural and other economic activities. Far from threatening European interests, he wrote: ‘The system inculcates respect for tribal elders, for tradition and for chief, and . . . is pervaded by the idea of service to the community’ which encourages an ‘esprit-de-corps and reverence for native law’ that is ‘both morally and economically’ useful to settlers (BMP, B. Malinowski, ‘Report of the Age Grade System of the Swazi People and its Value in Native Development’, 13 August 1934: 1).

Malinowski argued that criticism from whites was ‘usually based on ignorance’, while that of the ‘educated native’ stemmed from the fact that he had ‘not yet learnt to overcome the self-consciousness which is so typical of the recently detribalized individual’. Unlike Sobhuza himself: ‘These individuals have not yet learnt to discard, from time to time, their ill-fitting European garb and their ill-digested European ideas and to reappear in their native costume or associate themselves with their tribal brothers’ (BMP, ‘Report of the Age Grade System’: 2). The charge that the *ibutho* system would encourage sexual promiscuity was undoubtedly the most emotive and contentious issue raised by its opponents (see BMP, Marwick to Malinowski, 20 December 1934; and Marwick to R. F. A. Hoernlé, 19 December 1934 and 20 December 1934). In characteristic style, Malinowski dismissed such criticisms, pointing to the sexual immorality in the form of ‘sodomy, prostitution, sexual promiscuity, and of course venereal diseases’ that resulted from contact with European civilization. Those who professed to be Christians, he continued, should ‘expose the effects which our Christian civilisation is producing on the native’ and not indulge in ‘hypocrisy over this problem’ (BMP, ‘Report of the Age Grade System’: 2).

Malinowski then went on to note that the Boy Scout movement was in fact ‘largely inspired by the Bantu age-grades’ that its founder, Baden-Powell, ‘had observed when he was in South Africa’. Thus, he wrote:

It is a great shame that in giving back the Boy Scout movement to the natives we had to upset it and change it, abolishing the equality and brotherhood of man which is the very foundation of the Boy Scout Movement. I allude here, of course, to the fact that native Boy Scouts and Girl Guides have to be called by different names in order to satisfy the colour bar prejudices of the white man. It would be a great mistake

if the age-grade system of the Swazi were revived in the guise of the 'Wayfarers' and 'Pathfinders', thus giving them an imitation of an imitation, instead of the genuine article which they have already. (BMP, 'Report of the Age Grade System': 2-3)

The controversy continued to September 1935 when Sobhuza brought it to a head by inaugurating a new regiment. In spite of opposition, it was eventually agreed that the new regiment be integrated into the National School. This was largely due to the support given to the proposal by the administrative officials and especially Marwick 'who throughout was [Sobhuza's] strongest and most eloquent ally' (H. Kuper, 1978: 106-7). While initially seen as a success, it eventually petered out and was viewed as a failure (H. Kuper, 1947a: 76). Nevertheless, as Macmillan notes, it was successful in producing a number of the conservative elite who were to control Swaziland after independence (H. Macmillan, 1985: 651-2).

THE POLITICS OF ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE POLITICS OF EMPIRE

Although he and Sobhuza never met again, Malinowski maintained an interest in Swazi affairs and twice intervened in them to support the authority and interests of the king. The first occasion was after hearing of Sobhuza's anger resulting from an article on the Swazi rain ceremony – in which Sobhuza and his mother were the central figures – that was published in *Bantu Studies* by the Afrikaans-speaking anthropologist, P. J. Schoeman, a one-time student of Malinowski in London (Schoeman, 1935).⁸ Kuper has described the incident thus:

About four months after I entered the field, I read an article by PJ Schoeman about the Swazi rain ritual. Although I had witnessed the preparations, and had received some information on the performance, Schoeman's account was so different that I thought, 'Good Heavens, am I blind, or are they deceiving me?' I took the article to Sobhuza and said, 'What is this?' He asked me to read it to him, and as I did I blushed, it was such a gross, ridiculous distortion, filled with prejudice and contempt – a disrobing, as it were, of another's culture, from the point of view of a Westerner. Sobhuza was so angry he told me he 'did not know what to do about anthropologists'. I replied that I would write a counter, pointing out things that I had witnessed with my own eyes, and that he must add a paragraph testifying that this was the true version. (H. Kuper, 1984: 202)

What Sobhuza's mother found particularly insulting was Schoeman's

description of one part of the ceremony where the king allegedly sits on his mother's feet dressed only in a penis-covering. Sobhuza's mother is also said to be naked, 'except for the sacred rain-girdle above her sex organ' (BMP, Beemer to Malinowski, 8 July 1935; Schoeman, 1935: 173). Kuper's reply was published in the following issue of *Bantu Studies* with a paragraph from Sobhuza stating that he had corroborated the 'corrections' (Beemer, 1935: 280).

Malinowski's role in all of this was to take sides not with either of his students but with Sobhuza. He wrote to Schoeman and criticised him for not consulting with Sobhuza and his mother who were the central participants in the ceremony, and especially for not submitting to them his results prior to publication. Writing to Kuper, Malinowski also held her open to criticism if she had not attempted to co-operate and even collaborate with Schoeman, which the latter had implied (BMP, Malinowski to Beemer, 30 August 1935). To both anthropologists, Malinowski explicitly stated that in disputes such as these, he would always side with Sobhuza. To Schoeman, he wrote:

I think it is very important that we anthropologists should not offend the susceptibilities of our Bantu friends among whom we are working. . . . The Paramount Chief of Swaziland has become in a way a very great friend of mine, and I would always side with him. (BMP, Malinowski to Schoeman, 30 August 1935)

To Kuper, he wrote:

. . . Schoeman has been my pupil, and you will be the last person to expect me to take partisan sides in such a controversy; except that I will always take the side of the Paramount Chief against any indiscreet steps taken without his consent. (BMP, Malinowski to Beemer, 30 August 1935)

All of this was repeated by Malinowski in correspondence with Sobhuza where he affirmed his total support for Sobhuza and Kuper's 'correction' of Schoeman. He wrote:

I have read with interest the article which Miss Hilda Beemer wrote in correcting the tactless statements of Dr Schoeman. It is most unfortunate that anthropological work should lead to such misunderstandings and difficulties. You will realise, however, since I hope that Miss Beemer has shown you my letter to her and to Schoeman, that I insisted on Schoeman's reporting to you and working under your orders while in Swaziland. He did not do that, and, therefore, has put himself out of court completely. (BMP, Malinowski to Sobhuza, 13 January 1936)

What is important to note about Malinowski's reaction to this was his complete absence of interest in an objective ethnographic 'truth'. While at

about the same time Malinowski proved to be very sensitive to criticism of the veracity of his own ethnography,⁹ at no time did he inquire about the details of his students' accounts or question their methodologies. As he was regarding the proposal to introduce the *ibutho* into the African education system, he was doubtlessly aware of the settler backlash against the growing interest in Swazi culture by the administration, and how representations of the Swazi such as that of Schoeman's could be used by the settlers. Thus, instead of 'truth', Malinowski's main concern was Sobhuza's – and thus the Swazi's – pride, honour and reputation. That Sobhuza occupied a very important place in Malinowski's mind is summed up in his description of Sobhuza to Schoeman as 'in a way a very great friend of mine'. Indeed, at about this time, Malinowski was re-writing some of his lectures in South Africa for publication and included a reference to Sobhuza as 'an enlightened African combining a sound appreciation of European values with a love of his own national tradition' (Malinowski, 1936: 494, 498).

The second occasion that Malinowski intervened in Swazi affairs was in the most pressing problem for Sobhuza throughout this period, the question of whether Swaziland and the other so-called 'High Commission Territories' – Basutoland (now Lesotho) and Bechuanaland (now Botswana) – were to be incorporated into the Union of South Africa (H. Kuper, 1978: 97, 134). In a Schedule attached to the South African Act of Union of 1909, provision was made for the transfer of these territories at a later date subject to certain conditions. During its passage through the British Parliament, important pledges were made to the effect that before transfer could be undertaken, the opinion of Parliament and the opinion of the Africans themselves would be consulted. The Territories were to be kept out of the Union until the Imperial government was satisfied that the Union had its own 'native problem' under control and that Africans' rights would be respected (Hyam, 1972: 19–20). Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the Union made a number of attempts to effect the transfer of the Territories but without success. The Imperial government considered that it was in its own best interests to retain control over them. However, the opposition of the Territories' Africans became increasingly important and, indeed, as the negotiations continued, the only good reason that the British Dominions Office could see for resisting the transfer was African opposition (Hyam, 1972: 140). Interest in the future of the High Commission Territories in particular revived from around 1933 following the deposing of Chief Tshekedi Khama in Bechuanaland, and was further stimulated by the growth of information which 'sharply focused the extent to which the government had until recently neglected their [the Territories] economic and social development' (Hyam, 1972: 141).

Consequently, pressure groups such as the London Group on African Affairs (LGAA) became increasingly important for the indigenous leaders of the Territories in their efforts to prevent transfer. It would appear that it was

Malinowski who suggested to Sobhuza that he should write to the LGAA for assistance with his campaign to prevent Swaziland's transfer (LGAAP, Livie-Noble to Rheinallt Jones, 5 June 1938; Sobhuza to Livie-Noble, 17 August 1938). According to Livie-Noble, one of the leading figures in the LGAA, Malinowski was among the group's 'strongest people' and together they had 'long talks' about the issue (LGAAP, Livie-Noble to Sobhuza, 8 September 1938).¹⁰ Writing to Sobhuza, Malinowski wrote:

Some of us here in London have been doing our utmost to prevent the incorporation of the Protectorate into the Union of South Africa. . . . Personally, I am very strongly of the opinion that the transfer of the protectorates to the Union at the present moment would be a disaster. (BMP, Malinowski to Sobhuza, 13 January 1936)

Malinowski understood that Sobhuza's position on transfer was equivocal. Given Swaziland's geographical position and history, there seemed to be no long-term alternative to incorporation into the Union and Britain's own equivocation about the issue compelled Sobhuza to consider the option 'lest worse befall if he stayed out too long' (Hyam, 1972: 154, 161–2). Furthermore, there were already Swazi in the Union and their coming under his authority along with their land in the event of transfer was an attractive proposition for Sobhuza (H. Kuper, 1978: 97–8, 134; H. Macmillan, 1988: 303 ff.). In 1937 and 1938, Sobhuza considered a number of offers such as this from the Union, although opposition from his councillors and the Swazi people resulted in a change of attitude with his resistance hardening (Hyam, 1972: 161–2).

Consequently, it appears that Malinowski was consistent in his support for Sobhuza's attempt to secure a more favourable deal for Swaziland. As well as using him as a conduit to secure a barrister in London to assist with the campaign, Sobhuza also asked Malinowski to advise him on how best to gain support for Swaziland's grievances both in the press and among a large section of the British Parliament to which the presentation of a petition was planned (BMP, Sobhuza to Douglas, 17 August 1937; BMP, Sobhuza to Malinowski, 17 August 1937). Malinowski began his reply thus:

I want first to thank you for turning to me at the present juncture, since I regard it both as an honour and a privilege to act in this matter on behalf of yourself and the Swazi nation. You must rest assured that I am doing all I can to forward the matter.

After explaining his delay in replying to Sobhuza, Malinowski wrote that he had 'conferred with several people who are in touch with Parliamentary affairs' who advised him that the British Government 'would not effect any transfer without consulting the views of the indigenous population' and that the matter would go before the Parliament. With regard to the views of the Swazi people, he wrote:

... my advice would be for you to enlighten the views of your subjects as rapidly and as completely as possible. They ought to know clearly what is at stake, and ought to be instructed to express their wishes clearly and fearlessly. Personally, I have no doubt that not one single Swazi would honestly vote for the transfer of the territories. I would also try to enlighten every one of your subjects on the grave injustice done to them in the matter of lands.

He noted that 'of course, such enlightening information must be done very carefully and that it would be better to consult first with Mr Marwick or any of the sympathetic and intelligent Administrative officials whom you have in Swaziland'. In the meantime, however, Malinowski said that he would 'take some steps in mobilising public opinion among some members of parliament in Opposition, and among some of the Government supporters' (BMP, Malinowski to Sobhuza, 28 October 1937).

One of these steps was being a member of a 1938 deputation of the Committee on Applied Anthropology of the Royal Anthropological Institute to the Secretary of State for the Dominions, Malcolm MacDonald. Although it was 'agreed that the deputation should not express opinions on the desirability or otherwise of transfer', its members chose to emphasize the utilization of the 'services of anthropologists' in the 'consulting of native opinion and upon the possibility of devising terms of transfer which would safeguard essential interests of the natives concerned' (BMP, 'The Proposed Transfer of the South African High Commission Territories to the Union: notes for the information of the deputation of members of the Applied Anthropology Committee to the Secretary of State for the Dominions', no date: 1). Malinowski himself emphasized to MacDonald that there existed a body of 'native opinion on political questions of this kind . . . which was strongly held, even if not always well informed' while his own student, Margaret Read, herself 'urged that traditionally recognized channels for ascertaining the opinion of the tribes should be utilized' (RAI, 1938: 106-7). Thus, by emphasizing the centrality of 'native opinion' to this issue, Malinowski was attempting to create favourable political space for Sobhuza to manoeuvre in.

The petition itself was eventually presented to the British Government in 1941. Malinowski had, by this stage, left for the United States to take up a position at Yale University where he died suddenly in 1942. He had no further involvement in the drafting of the petition (H. Macmillan, personal communication) about which Sobhuza eventually took advice from the Anti-Slavery Society and the Aborigines' Protection Society. Rather than the possible transfer of Swaziland to South Africa (which was deferred during the course of the war), the final form of the petition came to emphasize the land issue (Simelane, 1991: 725-6).

MALINOWSKI, SOBHUZA AND THE VISION OF CULTURE CHANGE

After surveying Malinowski's relationship with Sobhuza, one question begs to be answered: why was Malinowski so keen to assist Sobhuza? Clearly, it was not friendship since not only did the two men not meet again, but there is no evidence of any correspondence between them apart from that relating to the circumstances referred to above. Indeed, there are virtually no inquiries in this correspondence about each other's health, family, etc., that would indicate such familiarity. That Malinowski was motivated to a certain extent by a desire to protect Swaziland as a fieldwork site for anthropologists is undeniable.¹¹ However, to maintain this as the only reason would imply that Malinowski was a political innocent since Sobhuza himself was well aware of the legitimacy that anthropology gave to his strategy.¹² On the contrary, Malinowski understood perfectly well the significance of his relationships to the players on the Swazi political stage. Thus, I will argue that the answer to the question of his motivation for assisting Sobhuza needs to be sought in the convergence of his political and cultural visions and especially his analysis of war, nationalism and the state which came to dominate his writings from the mid-1930s until his death in 1942 (Mucha, 1988; Skalnik, 1991).

Although emerging as it did when war in Europe was becoming increasingly likely due to the rise of fascism, the fundamental question for Malinowski was one which central Europeans had pondered since the time of Hegel (Skalnik, 1991: 552; Gellner, 1987: 47–9). If, so the Hegelian argument went, 'nations' developed into 'states', what was to become of those nations such as the Poles who had been conquered and divided by more powerful states? Rejecting as he did the historicism of Hegelianism and modern European nationalism, Malinowski was not attracted to cosmopolitanism either since he could not 'conceivably see the human condition in such general terms' (Gellner, 1987: 50). Indeed, Malinowski observed the rise of fascism – and especially Nazism – in Europe with horror, seeing it as the extreme form of modern nationalism (Wayne, 1995: 169, 176, 192–3; BMP, Malinowski to Rheinallt Jones, 30 August 1935). Consequently, Malinowski sought an alternative way to conceptualize the future. According to Gellner, since Malinowski:

It became possible to have an acute sense of community and its role in human life . . . and yet at the same time firmly repudiate the cult of history and any equation of full membership of humanity with the possession of a state-of-one's-own. (Gellner, 1987: 51)

This vision was most clearly developed in *Freedom and Civilization* which was written in order to articulate a vision for the post-World War II world that would avoid the mistakes of the post-World War I settlement. He argued

that 'freedom' – that value which he saw as the basis for the alliance against fascism – had existed throughout human evolution because it was embedded in human culture (Malinowski, 1964: 25, 30–1, 103). Freedom was thus intrinsic to what he termed the 'tribe-nation' which he contrasted with the 'tribe-state'. The tribe-nation, he argued, is 'essentially democratic' and 'indeed . . . inevitably democratic' because it 'has created a diversity of groupings, a multiplicity of social ties' through which 'individuals . . . acquire their skills, their intelligence and their civic attitudes'. In contrast, the defining feature of the tribe-state is that it is 'based on political force as the integrating principle, with a centralized authority and the corresponding organization of armed force' (Malinowski, 1964: 257–8, cf. 270). The tribe-state evolved, Malinowski speculated, 'through the formation of a local group within the tribe-nation, for the purpose of the co-ordination of institutional interests, policing, defense and aggression' (Malinowski, 1964: 259). However, while war had previously assisted the development of culture through 'its unifying, cross-fertilizing effects and the creation of larger sized units', modern warfare is antithetical to culture (Malinowski, 1964: 289).

At present, an international war, like World Wars I and II, is a civil war of mankind divided against itself. Modern technical development, and the international systems of communication, economics and trade, have made the whole world one. War nowadays cannot be isolated. (Malinowski, 1964: 293)

Consequently, Malinowski made the 'distinction between the legitimate claims of nationhood and the aggressive impositions of nationalism and imperialism'. While 'nationalism as the legitimate aspiration to cultural independence is based on realities of human life as old as mankind and as fundamental', modern nationalism 'is one of the main curses of humanity' and 'one of the most pernicious tendencies of our present world' (Malinowski, 1964: 270–1). European fascism and especially Nazism represented 'the extreme example of aggressive nationalism or imperialism bent on conquest' since they substituted 'organized brute force for all other sources of cultural aspiration' (Malinowski, 1964: 305). He concluded:

Totalitarianism . . . is an attempt, not merely at control, but largely at the annihilation of the other institutions and the replacement of all of them by dictated state control. Through this system the normal, traditional, peaceful way of life of the nation is destroyed, and finally, the nation itself. Extreme aggressive nationalism is thus Enemy Number 1 of nationhood; for the nation, as a democratic cultural unit, is composed of individuals dedicated to their way of life. (Malinowski, 1964: 305)

Nationalism was also a central theme in *The Dynamics of Culture Change* which was a compilation of his writings from the late 1930s. In it, Malinowski

conceptualized the 'dynamics of culture change' as a form of exchange such that Africans were so attracted by the cultural and material attributes of European civilization that they were willing to discard their own culture in exchange for the 'gifts' of European civilization. However, as Malinowski also argued, this 'cultural give and take . . . is extremely selective' in terms of what was given. Modern weaponry, political sovereignty, 'the substance of economic wealth and advantages' and 'full political, social and religious equality is nowhere granted'. Thus, it is 'easy to see that it is not a matter of "give", nor yet a matter of generous "offering", but usually a matter of "take"', in spite of all that 'Europeans have done for the African in good-will, self-sacrifice, and disinterested purpose' (Malinowski, 1961: 56-7). If it were not for this selective giving, he continued, 'culture change would be a comparatively easy and smooth process' since 'the real forces of effective assimilation are to be found in the advantages offered by us to the accepting culture'. However, what was actually happening was that in educating Africans the colonists were raising 'the standard of their expectations' by widening their 'horizons' both 'intellectually and emotionally' without allowing these expectations to be fulfilled which 'obviously produces disastrous effects, both on the individual morale and on the possibilities of cultural adjustment' (Malinowski, 1961: 58-9). The growing African nationalist movement, then, was one of the consequences of these unfulfilled expectations since 'the educated Africans are rapidly becoming aware of, and exaggerating, the situation'. Yet, although it is 'no doubt mutilated and misguided, full of counter-prejudices, and charged with bitter hostility', this nationalism could not be ignored.

For on the whole it contains a great deal of truth, and it foreshadows the formation of a public opinion, of a national and racial feeling which, sooner or later, will have to be taken into account by the practical contact agents. . . . The intelligent African is rapidly beginning to see that many of the promises contained in European education, in missionary teaching, and even in the good-will of administrative work, are impossible of realization. He begins to see that in spite of his best intentions, the friendly European is not alone. The bulk of the White settlers, the managers of European enterprise, and all those who have one type of vested interest or another in Africa, have to look after their own side of the dual mandate. (Malinowski, 1961: 59-60)

For Malinowski, then, the future of the modern world depended upon how it came to terms with this aggressive nationalism which had driven Europe to war and which was emerging in the colonized world. Malinowski's antidote to this nationalism was internationalism: specifically, a 'Commonwealth of United Nations' which would require 'the establishment of international law and order within humanity which today has

already grown into an integrally interdependent whole' (Malinowski, 1964: 56–7). This was, for him, the ultimate goal of the war for it was only through such an organization that a future war could be prevented and people be allowed to express their culture and exercise their freedom. In Africa – where such aggressive nationalism had not yet taken firm hold – Malinowski argued that there still existed alternative social forms which could be compatible with this internationalist vision, paradoxically, as a consequence of the selectivity of Europeans' giving. According to Malinowski:

The African realizes that he is being thrown back on his own resources. A new conservatism is being born on the rebound. Many of the educated Africans are turning round and beginning to look upon tribalism, not as an object to be despised but as a symbol of their racial heritage, their nationalistic hopes, and of a future cultural independence. (Malinowski, 1961: 60, cf. 157–61)

This response, he continued, was not based on the 'old tribalism' which was 'now dead and buried' and 'irrelevant for culture change and its understanding, and for planning'. Instead:

. . . the new tribalism, as it now survives, is something of the highest value for the happiness of the individual Native and the welfare of the African community [and] . . . if given conditions to develop, carries in it the germs of future healthy African commonwealth. But if with the best of intentions we continue to destroy what has been left of it, we are faced with the birth and growth of new forces of nationalism and racialism, which may be hostile, unmanageable, and dangerous in the long run. (Malinowski, 1961: 60–1)

Thus, it is apparent that Sobhuza personified for Malinowski this 'new conservatism' or 'new tribalism'. Malinowski was explicit in his praise for Sobhuza in the revised version of the lectures on education he gave at the NEF conference in South Africa in 1934. Besides the description of Sobhuza quoted above, 'an enlightened African' with 'a sound appreciation of European values' as well as 'a love of his own national tradition', he noted Sobhuza's attempt to 'incorporate certain principles of African education into European schooling'. He also included a reference to the 'memorable words' of Sobhuza's own memorandum to the Swaziland administration about the education of Africans, and echoed Sobhuza's sentiments by suggesting that the 'better course would appear to be to use their own [Swazi] culture as a foundation and erect the superstructure of European education upon it, and so bring out what is best in both, bringing the Africans to world civilization as true Africans' (Malinowski, 1936: 494, 498, 512–13; see Malinowski, 1961: 86, 90). Furthermore, even if he was not explicit on this point, Sobhuza was seen by Malinowski as nurturing the Swazi 'tribe-nation' by encouraging the

continuation of Swazi cultural practices in the face of the hostility of settlers and missionaries alike. The status of the colonized 'tribe-nation' in his writings is somewhat ambiguous, suggesting their continuation both within the existing empires but also within the framework of the 'Commonwealth of United Nations'. Nevertheless, he argued that they 'would enjoy an even greater amount of autonomy, tribal or national, than they now have, for they would be allowed to federate and combine, to fuse or separate' (with the assistance of a 'colonial committee composed primarily of anthropologists') and the labour question would 'change fundamentally, since one of the requirements of this plan is equality as well as freedom in the future of living' (Malinowski, 1964: 334–5).

CONCLUSION: MALINOWSKI, SOBHUZA AND THE HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Having established why Malinowski was so interested in and keen to assist Sobhuza, what then are the implications of this for our understanding of Malinowski's place in the history of anthropology? Certainly, it confirms much of what has previously been written about Malinowski's failure to come to terms with colonialism and cultural change in a theoretical manner. As Macmillan argues, the foray into Swaziland by anthropologists such as Hoernlé, Schapera, Malinowski and Kuper clearly demonstrates that anthropology in this period 'was singularly ill-equipped to distinguish between real and invented traditions or, for that matter, between old and revived customs'. None of them was able to comprehend that Sobhuza's levying of fines on age-grade members who married was in fact a usurpation of a power that regional chiefs had exercised during the 19th century (H. Macmillan, 1995: 544, 547). Although Malinowski understood Sobhuza's strategy in regard to the settlers and the colonial administration, he clearly had no comprehension of the struggles that were taking place between Sobhuza and the other sections of the Swazi polity. Indeed, it would appear that he was used by Sobhuza – along with Hoernlé and Schapera – to further Sobhuza's own political ends.

However, to emphasize Malinowski's ethnographic and theoretical weakness in this way is to miss the true significance for the history of anthropology of his relationship with Sobhuza. As I noted earlier, while there has been an increasing recognition of Malinowski's efforts to transform the discipline's relationship with colonialism, the majority of these studies have focused their attention on his published work with little attention being paid to the extensive archival records that are becoming available (James, 1973; Rossetti, 1985; Mucha, 1988; Skalník, 1991). Although Stocking (1991; 1995: 391–415) and Berman (1996) have attempted to correct this omission, neither has attempted to relate their findings to Malinowski's writings. Consequently, the extent to

which these works were influenced by his experience of colonial Africa is understated. For example, both analyse in some detail Malinowski's relationship with the Kenyan African nationalist Jomo Kenyatta, who completed a PhD under Malinowski and whose ethnography of the Kikuyu of Kenya, *Facing Mount Kenya*, has since become a classic (Berman, 1996: 314–15). Yet neither attempts to identify any impact of this relationship on his work. Indeed, while Stocking has noted that Malinowski's tour of Africa resulted in his becoming more critical of the colonial enterprise (Stocking, 1995: 413–15), he nevertheless concluded that Malinowski

... had no more been transformed by African nationalism than Kenyatta by social anthropology. The two men continued to move from different starting points, along different trajectories; their visions of the present world were as different as their visions of the future.

In 'stark contrast' to Kenyatta's 'ringing call for "unceasing" struggle toward "complete emancipation"' at the conclusion of *Facing Mount Kenya*, Stocking refers to Malinowski's 'backward-looking Hapsburg paradigm of cultural autonomy without political independence' (Stocking, 1991: 59–60). However, as I have argued, Malinowski was not simply 'looking backward' to his 'early experiences as a Pole within the Hapsburg Empire' (Stocking, 1991: 59). His cultural and political theory was also based on his experiences of the present, including both his experience in Swaziland and his relationship with Sobhuza, as well his observations of and reflections on the rise of fascism. Moreover, these experiences did not simply consist of simple observation of social and cultural change as an intellectual endeavour, but – in regard to his relationship with Sobhuza – took the form of a direct advocacy of African interests, demonstrating that his call for the anthropologist to become 'not only the interpreter of the native but also his champion' (Malinowski, 1966: viii cited in Stocking, 1995: 414) was something more than mere rhetoric.

NOTES

The research for this paper was generously funded by the Faculty of Social Sciences and School of Sociology and Anthropology, La Trobe University, and the British Council. I would also like to thank Martin Chanock, Adam Kuper, Hugh Macmillan, John Morton, Michael Young, anonymous reviewers for the *Journal of Southern African Studies* and *History of the Human Sciences*, and especially Susan Smith, for their comments upon earlier drafts of this paper.

- 1 The most accessible introduction to this period in British social anthropology is still Adam Kuper's *Anthropology and Anthropologists* (1983), although Stocking's more recent *After Tylor* covers this period in far greater detail (1995).

- 2 For other discussions of the significance of this period in Swazi history see also Simelane (1991) and Crush (1996).
- 3 For further discussions of this rivalry between the Swazi royal (Dlamini) clan and the various chiefs, see Crush (1987: 159, 207, 213) and Simelane (1993: 564–5).
- 4 For Malinowski's contribution to the conference, see Malherbe (1937: 171–2, 193–8, 347–50, 423–7).
- 5 However, Malinowski had met J. D. Rheinallt Jones of the South African Institute of Race Relations as early as 1930 to discuss Rockefeller funding of the Institute. BMP, Malinowski to Rheinallt Jones, 30 July 1930; Malinowski to Rheinallt Jones, 31 July 1930; Rheinallt Jones to Malinowski, 19 August 1930.
- 6 For a contemporary account of the lecture, see *The Star* (1934) 'Natives Must Be Given Their Rights', 26 July (Johannesburg).
- 7 The modern spelling is *libutfo*. See H. Kuper (1978: xiv).
- 8 For a discussion of Schoeman's role in the development of Afrikaaner anthropology, see Gordon (1988 and 1991).
- 9 For example, see the correspondence between Malinowski and A.M. Hocart after Malinowski had heard that the latter had described his ethnography as 'highly coloured' which Malinowski took to mean as 'divergent from the truth'. BMP, Malinowski to Hocart, 11 March 1935; Hocart to Malinowski, 27 December 1934 and 20 March 1935.
- 10 Nevertheless, by the paucity of LGAA papers in his collection and correspondence of his in the LGAA Papers, it can be concluded that Malinowski kept his distance from the group. As Mona Macmillan notes, 'Professor B Malinowski was a member, though he gave little time to the meetings himself he often sent members of his seminar, most notably Jomo Kenyatta, and Mrs Paul Robeson' (1985: 85).
- 11 In addition to Kuper and Schoeman, Malinowski had hoped that a young colonial administrator and future Resident Commissioner, Brian Marwick (the nephew of A. G. Marwick), who had also completed fieldwork among the Swazi in July and August 1934, would return to do further work with an eye to doing a PhD. Marwick, 1966: xi; BMP, B. Marwick to Malinowski, 22 December 1934.
- 12 As Sobhuza once explained to Kuper: 'Anthropology makes possible comparison and selection of lines of development. European culture is not all good; ours is often better. We must be able to choose how to live, and for that we must see how others live. I do not want my people to be imitation Europeans, but to be respected for their own laws and customs' (H. Kuper, 1947b: 1; H. Macmillan, 1985: 651).

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| EGMC | E. G. Malherbe Collection Killie Campbell Africana Library, University of Natal |
| LGAAP | London Group on African Affairs Papers Rhodes House Library, Oxford |

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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