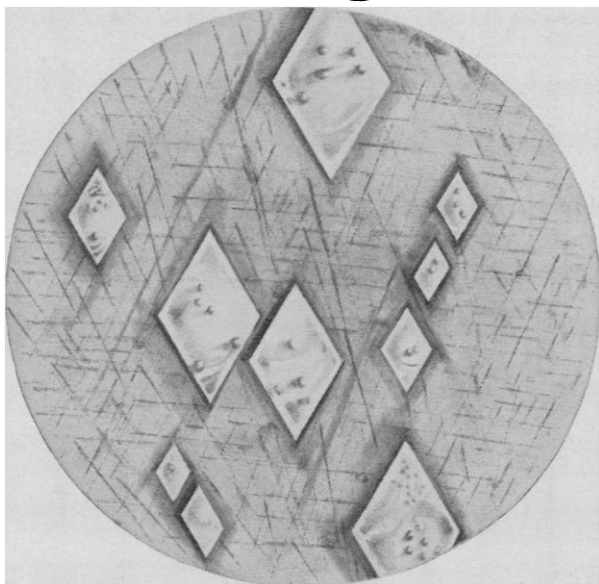


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Social Anthropology: Models, Political Systems, Religion, and Urbanization

The relevance of models for social anthropology, political systems and the distribution of power, modern approaches to the study of religion, and the social anthropology of complex urban societies were the chief new developments discussed at a joint Anglo-American meeting of the British Commonwealth Association of Social Anthropology held at Cambridge University, 24-30 June.

In the sessions devoted to models, Ward Goodenough (Pennsylvania) approached the concepts of status and role through the utilization of cognitive theory and Guttman scaling techniques; and David Schneider (Chicago) and I. M. Lewis (University College, London) presented a critical analysis of alliance and descent theory with reference to unilineal descent and prescriptive marriage. Remarks by the latter stimulated comments on the nature of the models used by anthropologists and their relevance to different field and research problems (Edmund Leach, Cambridge; M. N. Srinivas, Delhi; George Homans, Harvard). Marshall Sahlins (Michigan) offered new interpretations on the interrelations between the forms, material conditions, and social relations of exchange in primitive communities; he made a basic distinction between reciprocal exchange and centralized pooling of goods, and related different types of reciprocity to kinship, rank, and wealth differences.

Since the war, anthropologists have become increasingly interested in political systems and the distribution of power. A number of papers were presented by members of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, on consensus in decision-making (F. G. Bailey), the comparative study of factions (R. Nicholas), and the significance of quasi-groups (Adrian Mayer). Concerned with the typology of African states, L. A. Fallers (Chicago), P. C. Lloyd (Ibadan), and A. Southall (Makerere) drew on the theoretical researches of American political scientists and their own field work to develop more adequate classifications for studies of political change.

The renewed interest in the scientific study of religion was noted by M. E. Spiro (University of Washing-

ton) when he argued that an adequate explanation for the persistence of religion requires both psychological and sociological variables and suggested some important areas for investigation. C. Geertz (Chicago), viewing religion as a cultural system, urged a wider conception of religion which would center on the meaning of the symbol systems. A number of papers were concerned more specifically with religion in various African societies, notably V. W. Turner (Manchester) on color symbolism among the Ndembu, R. E. Bradbury (University College, London) on ancestor worship among the Edo, and E. H. Winter (Virginia) on religion and society among the Iraqw. J. Loudon (Medical Research Council, South Wales) presented the results of a pilot study of religious order and mental disorder in a Welsh parish.

Various aspects of complex societies, such as urbanization in both newly developing nations and in Western society, were discussed. Eric Wolf (Michigan) pointed to the role of kinship, friendship, and patron-client relations in making the formal structures of complex societies operate more effectively; and B. Benedict (London School of Economics) analyzed the social characteristics of isolated communities. The theoretical orientations of urban studies in Africa were outlined by J. C. Mitchell (University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland); and some preliminary hypotheses with regard to society and culture in urban Britain were presented by W. Watson and R. Frankenberg (Manchester).

The general discussions emphasized differences of approach with regard to the strategy and scale of research. Much to the surprise of many participants was the fact that there were no significant differences in American and British points of view, a situation that would not have been true even a decade ago.

Because the conference had been unusually successful, plans were made for future joint meetings; however, it was decided that they would be on a smaller scale, and with a more specific agenda. Participation of the American contingent, which included about 12 anthropologists, was made possible by a grant from the National Science Foundation, administered through the American Anthropological Association. The program was arranged by



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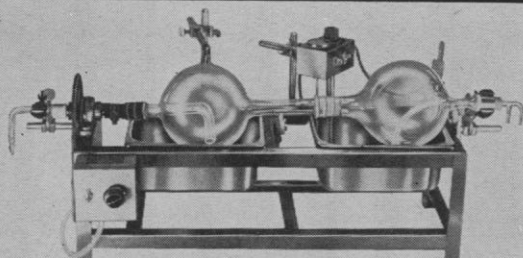
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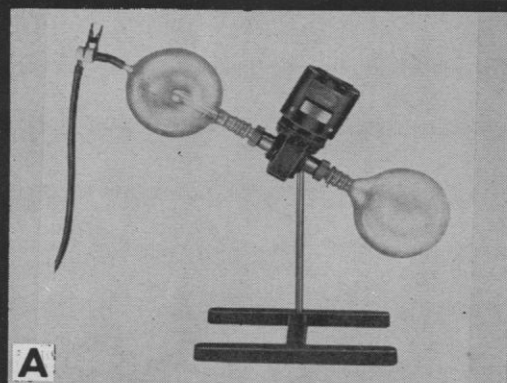
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Raymond Firth (London School of Economics) and Fred Eggan (Chicago) and was chaired by Max Gluckman (Manchester).

During the conference, participants attended the annual meeting of the Royal Anthropological Institute, and heard the presidential address of I. Schapera and the Huxley Memorial Lecture, delivered by E. E. Evans-Pritchard.

FRED EGGAN

*Department of Anthropology,
University of Chicago*

Forthcoming Events

October

1-3. **Physics and Nondestructive Testing**, symp., San Antonio, Tex. (W. J. McGonnagle, Southwest Research Inst., 8500 Culebra Rd., San Antonio 6)

1-3. **Space Electronics**, 8th annual symp., Miami Beach, Fla. (H. E. Weber, Martin Co., Orlando, Fla.)

1-4. **Animal Care Panel**, Los Angeles, Calif. (A.C.P., Box 1028, Joliet, Ill.)

1-4. **Aerospace Nuclear Safety**, 1st natl. topical meeting, Albuquerque, N.M. (A. J. Smith, Topical Meeting, Box 818, Kirkland Air Force Base, N.M.)

1-4. **Electronics Research and Development for Civil Aviation**, London, England. (Secretary, Inst. of Electrical Engineers, Savoy Pl., London W.C.2)

1-4. **American Council of Independent Laboratories**, Lincoln, Neb. (ACIL, 4302 East-West Highway, Washington, D.C.)

1-5. **Aviation and Cosmonautical Medicine**, 6th intern. congr., Rome, Italy. (Secretariat of the Congress, Centro di Studi e Ricerche di Medicina Aeronautica, Via P. Gobetti 2 a, Rome)

1-6. **Microbiology of Crude Oil**, intern. symp., Greifswald, Germany. (W. Schwartz, Institut für Mikrobiologie, Ludwig-Jahn-Str. 15, Greifswald)

3-4. **Physics of Optical Glass**, conf., Lathom, England. (Inst. of Physics and the Physical Soc., 47 Belgrave Sq., London S.W.1, England)

4-5. **Documentation**, intern. federation, Stockholm, Sweden. [Tekniska Litteratursällskapet (TLS) Rånhaamsvägen 12, Stockholm-Bromma 11]

4-5. **Muscular Dystrophy**, symp., Houston, Tex. (M. M. Guest, Dept. of Physiology, Univ. of Texas Medical Center, Galveston)

4-6. **American Acad. of Psychotherapists**, New York, N.Y. (H. Rockberger, 44 S. Munn Ave., East Orange, N.J.)

5. **Paleontological Research Inst.**, Ithaca, N.Y. (K. Caster, Geology Dept., Univ. of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio)

7-10. **Instruments and Research Equipment**, symp. and exhibit, 13th annual, Bethesda, Md. (J. B. Davis, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda 14)

7-11. **American Soc. of Civil Engineers**, annual, San Francisco, Calif. (ASCE, 345 E. 47 St., New York 17)

7-11. **Biological Effects of Neutron Irradiations**, intern. symp., Upton, N.Y.

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