

MAX GLUCKMAN 1911–1975

MAX GLUCKMAN, Nuffield Research Professor of Social Anthropology in the University of Manchester, and Consultative Director of the International African Institute, died suddenly in Jerusalem on 13th April, 1975. He was for many years closely associated with the Institute, as member of the Executive Council from 1957 until 1968, and as Consultative Director from 1969 to 1974; he was appointed a Vice-Chairman at the Executive Council meeting in 1974.

Max Gluckman was born in Johannesburg in 1911. He went to the University of the Witwatersrand intending to read for the bar. As part of the degree requirements he took anthropology with Mrs. A. W. Hoernlé and realised that his main interest lay in this field, although his interest in law was to continue to be a central concern of all his later work. In 1934 he went to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar at Exeter College, where he worked under R. R. Marett. Here he met many who were to influence him and to be his friends and colleagues for many years, notably E. E. Evans-Pritchard. His field research began in 1936 when he spent fourteen months among the Zulu. In 1939 he joined the staff of the then Rhodes-Livingstone Institute of Northern Rhodesia and began his long study of the Losi of Barotseland and his intensive analysis of their jural and governmental institutions that was to be his main life's work. In 1941 he succeeded Godfrey Wilson as director of the Institute and built it into a renowned research centre. In 1947 he came as lecturer to Oxford University and two years later was appointed the first Professor of Social Anthropology in the University of Manchester, where he remained until his death this year.

Max Gluckman was one of the great Africanist scholars of his generation. He was a magnificent research worker, an inspiring teacher, and man of social concern and courage. During his time in Zambia his concern was not only to direct the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute and to carry out his own researches, but also to support the cause of the indigenous population in the difficult period of rapid advancement to political independence after the war. His obvious ability and his reputation made him a force to be reckoned with. After his move to England his public opposition to the proposed Rhodesian federation, on the grounds that it would entrench white minority rule, led to his barring by the local authorities.

While director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute Gluckman initiated a long-term programme of social research in central Africa, and recruited a team of research workers whose collaborative efforts have ensured that Zambian society has been studied in depth to an extent true of few other African countries. His guidance of this programme continued indirectly while at Oxford and Manchester, the latter department being almost an extension of the research institute. In his own research Gluckman was always interested in change as a central feature of social systems: in his analysis the 'traditional' past and the rapidly changing present were parts of a single whole. And the same approach marked the research he organized and inspired as part

of the Institute's programme. Emphasis was always on the problems of changing societies in a rapidly industrializing region—the growth of class structures and elites, the nature of urbanism and urbanization, and the relationship of these factors to the 'traditional' Africa. The members of towns and factories were also to be regarded as rural 'tribesmen', and their behaviour in either town or countryside could not be understood without the realization that they belonged to both. His influence on younger anthropologists, encouraging them to study changing Africa and to cease regarding tribal cultures as though the unchanging norm, was important in the history of Africanist studies. And the steady output of reports and books from the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute played a significant role in getting the governments and others concerned to take note of the findings of social science research.

An important side of his work was his interest in the historical development of other industrialized societies, which he used as a basis for comparison with and comprehension of African societies. His ethnographic knowledge of Europe, Asia and Oceania as well as of Africa was formidable; and his structural-functional approach to ethnographic data, based largely on the work of early scholars such as Maine, Marx, and Durkheim, ensured that the comparisons he drew were relevant and enlightening. His remarkable powers of work, and, beneath the occasional show of authority and of intellectual dogmatism, his sense of professional commitment and personal kindness, made him a magnificent teacher and leader of research seminars; with his drive and sense of personal ambition he was someone of weight in many academic and governmental advisory bodies.

In the later years of his life his interest in the development of new nations, combined with his sense of family and ethnic tradition, led him to a concern with the new state of Israel. He established a series of training and research projects in that country, and was acting as Visiting Professor at the Hebrew University at the time of his death.

As a member of the council of the International African Institute he was an influential maker of policy. He regarded it as essential that the Institute should not become merely a body of people superficially interested in Africa but that scholarly integrity should always be paramount whatever the pressures to conform to politically fashionable views. The help and encouragement he gave to Professor Daryll Forde, with whom he worked closely over many years, was a continual support to Forde and to the Institute staff. They miss his solid, enthusiastic and always commonsense advice; despite a good deal of egocentricity on the surface he was a kind and patient man who personally helped in many ways the members of the Institute's staff. Max Gluckman was a man who backed his emotions, enthusiasms and passions with a formidable intelligence and a very basic sense of humanity and decency. His sudden and early death is a great loss.

J.M.