



Robert J. Gordon. *The Enigma of Max Gluckman: The Ethnographic Life of a "Luckyman" in Africa.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018. 522 pp. \$80.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8032-9083-9.

Reviewed by Harri Englund (University of Cambridge)

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Commissioned by David D. Hurlbut (Independent Scholar)

Max Gluckman (1911-75) was a South Africa-born social anthropologist, known for his leadership in the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in present-day Zambia and then, from 1949, at the University of Manchester. Groundbreaking work in Southern and Central Africa emanated from the intellectual ferment in these institutions, eventually associated with the so-called Manchester school in social anthropology. Characteristic of that ferment was intense intellectual exchange between scholars addressing new topics such as colonialism, labor migration, urbanism, and race relations with new sets of conceptual and methodological tools. Gluckman himself took further, as Robert Gordon shows, what A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, the inaugural professor of social anthropology in Cape Town, had initiated in the 1920s. By recognizing that Black and White in South Africa were not to be thought of as separate "cultures in contact," Radcliffe-Brown and Gluckman paved the way for the thesis of South Africa as a single society, precariously integrated by the antagonistic and oppressive relations between Black and White. It is the alternative that this approach offered to the emphasis on cultural difference and contact that is one of the most enduring legacies of Gluckman's thought.

Gordon frames his book as a narrative of Gluckman's life and work until 1947 when he left Africa, first for a short while to Oxford and then to

Manchester. Unpublished manuscripts and other primary sources, chiefly letters, allow for originality in a narrative that sheds light on many of the formative figures in British social anthropology. Gordon's close readings of Gluckman's most famous texts are accompanied by observations on the historical and political contexts of the fieldwork they are based on, particularly in Zululand and, after Gluckman was no longer able to work there for political reasons, in Barotseland. While an increasing number of anthropologists of this era are becoming the subjects of intellectual histories, the particular interest of Gluckman and the Manchester school has inspired other recent books. One is *The Manchester School: Practice and Ethnographic Praxis in Anthropology* (2006) edited by T. M. S. Evens and Don Handelman, another Richard Werbner's *Anthropology after Gluckman: The Manchester School, Colonial and Postcolonial Transformations* (2020), which draws on partly the same primary sources as Gordon but contains chapters on Elizabeth Colson, A. L. Epstein, Clyde Mitchell, Victor Turner, and Werbner himself as well as Gluckman. All these volumes build on the influential thesis in Lyn Schumaker's *Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa* (2001) on the key role played by African researchers in the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute.

Gordon provides vivid accounts of the rivalries, insecurities, and mutual support that shaped the formative years of British social anthropology. In an era of strong personalities, Gluckman certainly held his own, inspiring loyalty and loathing in equal measure. Gordon peppers his person-focused narrative with suggestive references to deeper intellectual currents. Instructive, for instance, is the influence of A. N. Whitehead on Gluckman's critique of "misplaced concreteness" and on his perspective on process and event rather than system or substance as the nub of social life. Gordon also touches on the impact Gluckman's exposure to law and psychoanalysis may have had on the development of the case method in the Manchester school. No less important is the attention Gordon gives to Gluckman's lasting appreciation of history in an era when British social anthropology was only emerging from the ahistorical illusions of functionalism and structural-functionalism. An uneasy theme running through much of the book is the relation to colonial administration. On one hand are the suspicions and outright sabotage that white administrators and settlers inflicted on Gluckman and his junior colleagues at their field sites. On the other are Gluckman's diplomatic efforts to secure access to the field as the director of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute. Gordon's descriptions of fieldwork also reveal the distance to what most anthropologists would now consider acceptable in their immersive practice. Not only does the analytical interest in law seem to explain why Gluckman worked so exclusively with elites in Barotseland. The anthropologists' dependence on a whole coterie of helpers in the field also makes astonishing reading—J. A. Barnes and his family had, during fieldwork among Ngoni, both a cook and an assistant cook at their disposal, along with other Africans occupying roles such as "water-boy" and "nurse-maid."

Gordon's narrative creates a mood in which Gluckman, for all his insufferable egoism, comes across as the intellectual heavyweight that his reputation has tended to suggest. However, life histo-

ries, when they resist the allure of hagiography, open up cracks as much as they buttress reputations already acquired. Some of the uncertainty may be of Gordon's own making, such as the scattered mentions of the Second World War. An occasional victim of antisemitism, Gluckman appears to have wanted to join the military effort but was declined because of his age and South African nationality. While experiencing the war to be far away when at the Institute in Livingstone, Gluckman actively sought to rally Lozi in Barotseland to the war effort. Overall, this momentous period in world history passes with relatively little passion in the narrative. Further tension may have been detected in the card-carrying communism of Gluckman's wife and their decision to send their son to an exclusive boarding school. Indeed, tensions would seem to have intensified in Gluckman's later life, somewhat outside the remit Gordon has given himself and yet described in the book. For example, Gluckman's involvement with Israel went beyond an intellectual interest and may have warranted a comment on how the critic of apartheid experienced the turn to Zionism. Near the end of his life, only weeks before the fatal heart attack, Gluckman raged over the ignorance of the "young Turks" who had accused him of complicity in colonialism. This well-taken anger over intellectual dishonesty coincided with a brush with student radicalism in Manchester. Yet it is not Gordon's aim to leave the reader with a perspective on the tensions and contradictions in a remarkable personal and intellectual journey. Instead, the book ends abruptly with paragraphs about a festschrift that never was. Before then, though, the reader has been treated to a wealth of observations to make up his or her own mind.

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