

knowledge implies a process of abstraction and generalisation : even the recognition of an individual whom we see every day is only possible as the result of an abstract idea of him formed by generalisation from his appearances in the past. Thus the science of man is forced to abstract certain aspects of human nature and to consider them apart from the concrete reality ; or rather it falls into a number of sciences, each of which considers a single part of man's complex organism, it may be the physical, the intellectual, the moral, or the social side of his being ; and the general conclusions which it draws will present a more or less incomplete picture of man as a whole, because the lines which compose it are necessarily but a few picked out of a multitude.

In the present treatise Dr. Malinowski is mainly concerned with what at first sight might seem a purely economic activity of the Trobriand Islanders ; but, with his usual width of outlook and fineness of perception, he is careful to point out that the curious circulation of valuables, which takes place between the inhabitants of the Trobriand and other islands, while it is accompanied by ordinary trade, is by no means itself a purely commercial transaction ; he shows that it is not based on a simple calculation of utility, of profit and loss, but that it satisfies emotional and æsthetic needs of a higher order than the mere gratification of animal wants. This leads Dr. Malinowski to pass some severe strictures on the conception of the Primitive Economic Man as a kind of bogey who, it appears, still haunts economic text-books and even extends his blighting influence to the minds of certain anthropologists. Rigged out in cast-off garments of Mr. Jeremy Bentham and Mr. Gradgrind, this horrible phantom is apparently actuated by no other motive than that of filthy lucre, which he pursues relentlessly, on Spencerian principles, along the line of least resistance. If such a dismal fiction is really regarded by serious inquirers as having any counterpart in savage society, and not simply as a useful abstraction, Dr. Malinowski's account of the *Kula* in this book should

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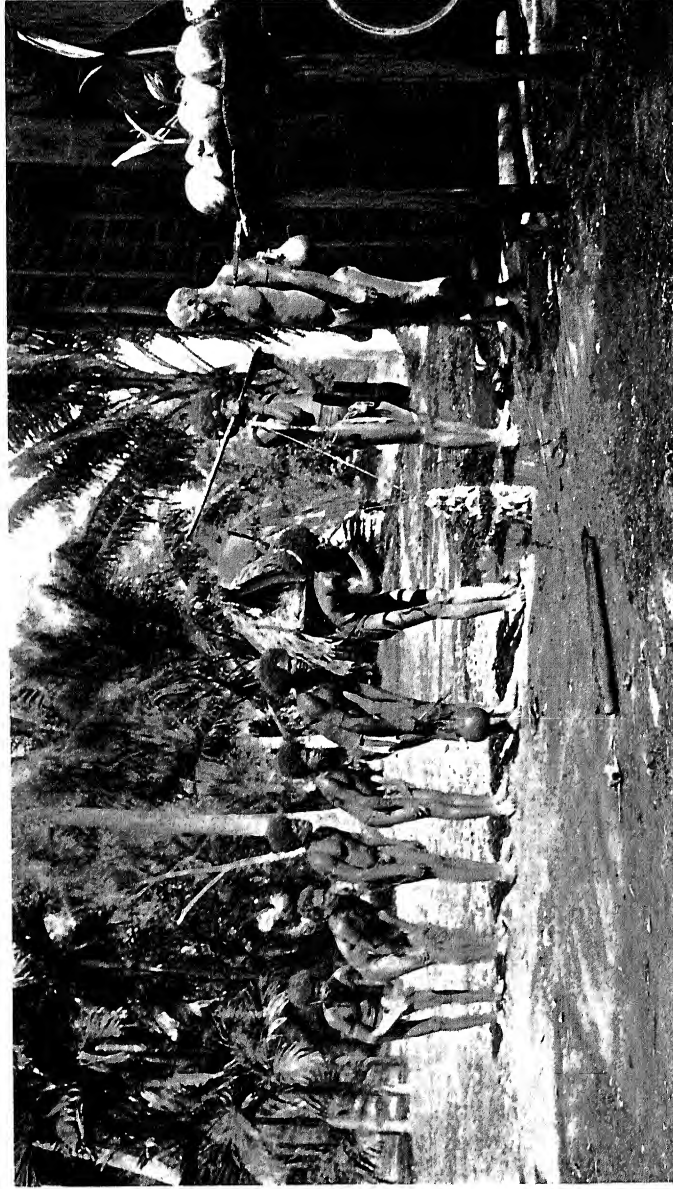
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ARGONAUTS OF THE WESTERN
PACIFIC

ROBERT MOND EXPEDITION TO NEW GUINEA, 1914-1918

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

- THE FAMILY AMONG THE AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES. Lond : University of London Press (out of print), 1913.
- PRIMITIVE RELIGION AND SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION. Cracow (in Polish, out of print), 1915.
- "THE NATIVES OF MAILU." Adelaide : *Trans. of the R. Soc. of S. Australia for 1915.* pp. 494-706. 1915.
- "MAGIC, SCIENCE, AND RELIGION," in Essays collected by J. Needham, under the title *Science, Religion and Reality*. London : The Sheldon Press ; New York and Toronto : The Macmillan Co. 1926.
- MYTH IN PRIMITIVE PSYCHOLOGY. London : Kegan Paul and Co. ; New York : W. W. Norton and Co. (out of print). 1926.
- CRIME AND CUSTOM IN SAVAGE SOCIETY. London : Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.; New York: Harcourt Brace and Co. *Sixth Impression* 1952.
- THE FATHER IN PRIMITIVE PSYCHOLOGY. London : Kegan Paul and Co. ; New York : W. W. Norton and Co. (out of print) 1927.
- SEX AND REPRESSION IN SAVAGE SOCIETY. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. ; New York : Harcourt Brace and Co. *Third Impression*, 1949.
- THE SEXUAL LIFE OF SAVAGES IN N.W. MELANESIA. London : Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. *Seventh Impression* 1952.



A CEREMONIAL ACT OF THE KULA

Frontispiece

ARGONAUTS OF THE WESTERN PACIFIC

*An Account of Native Enterprise
and Adventure in the Archipelagoes
of Melanesian New Guinea*

BY

BRONISLAW MALINOWSKI

PH.D. (Cracow), D.Sc. (London)

WITH A PREFACE

BY

SIR JAMES GEORGE FRAZER, F.B.A., F.R.S.

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TO
MY FRIEND AND TEACHER
PROFESSOR C. G. SELIGMAN, F.R.S.

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PREFACE

BY SIR JAMES G. FRAZER

MY esteemed friend, Dr. B. Malinowski has asked me to write a preface to his book, and I willingly comply with his request, though I can hardly think that any words of mine will add to the value of the remarkable record of anthropological research which he has given us in this volume. My observations, such as they are, will deal partly with the writer's method and partly with the matter of his book.

In regard to method, Dr. Malinowski has done his work, as it appears to me, under the best conditions and in the manner calculated to secure the best possible results. Both by theoretical training and by practical experience he was well equipped for the task which he undertook. Of his theoretical training he had given proof in his learned and thoughtful treatise on the family among the aborigines of Australia*; of his practical experience he had produced no less satisfactory evidence in his account of the natives of Mailu in New Guinea, based on a residence of six months among them.† In the Trobriand Islands, to the east of New Guinea, to which he next turned his attention, Dr. Malinowski lived as a native among the natives for many months together, watching them daily at work and at play, conversing with them in their own tongue, and deriving all his information from the surest sources—personal observation and statements made to him directly by the

* *The Family among the Australian Aborigines: A Sociological Study.* London: University of London Press, 1913.

† "The Natives of Mailu: Preliminary Results of the Robert Mond Research Work in British New Guinea." *Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia*, vol. xxxix., 1915.

natives in their own language without the intervention of an interpreter. In this way he has accumulated a large mass of materials, of high scientific value, bearing on the social, religious, and economic or industrial life of the Trobriand Islanders. These he hopes and intends to publish hereafter in full; meantime he has given us in the present volume a preliminary study of an interesting and peculiar feature in Trobriand society, the remarkable system of exchange, only in part economic or commercial, which the islanders maintain among themselves and with the inhabitants of neighbouring islands.

Little reflection is needed to convince us of the fundamental importance of economic forces at all stages of man's career from the humblest to the highest. After all, the human species is part of the animal creation, and as such, like the rest of the animals, it reposes on a material foundation; on which a higher life, intellectual, moral, social, may be built, but without which no such superstructure is possible. That material foundation, consisting in the necessity of food and of a certain degree of warmth and shelter from the elements, forms the economic or industrial basis and prime condition of human life. If anthropologists have hitherto unduly neglected it, we may suppose that it was rather because they were attracted to the higher side of man's nature than because they deliberately ignored and undervalued the importance and indeed necessity of the lower. In excuse for their neglect we may also remember that anthropology is still a young science, and that the multitude of problems which await the student cannot all be attacked at once, but must be grappled with one by one. Be that as it may, Dr. Malinowski has done well to emphasise the great significance of primitive economics by singling out the notable exchange system of the Trobriand Islanders for special consideration.

Further, he has wisely refused to limit himself to a mere description of the processes of the exchange, and has set himself to penetrate the motives which underlie it and the feelings which it excites in the minds of the

natives. It appears to be sometimes held that pure sociology should confine itself to the description of acts and should leave the problems of motives and feelings to psychology. Doubtless it is true that the analysis of motives and feelings is logically distinguishable from the description of acts, and that it falls, strictly speaking, within the sphere of psychology ; but in practice an act has no meaning for an observer unless he knows or infers the thoughts and emotions of the agent ; hence to describe a series of acts, without any reference to the state of mind of the agent, would not answer the purpose of sociology, the aim of which is not merely to register but to understand the actions of men in society. Thus sociology cannot fulfil its task without calling in at every turn the aid of psychology.

It is characteristic of Dr. Malinowski's method that he takes full account of the complexity of human nature. He sees man, so to say, in the round and not in the flat. He remembers that man is a creature of emotion at least as much as of reason, and he is constantly at pains to discover the emotional as well as the rational basis of human action. The man of science, like the man of letters, is too apt to view mankind only in the abstract, selecting for his consideration a single side of our complex and many-sided being. Of this one-sided treatment Molière is a conspicuous example among great writers. All his characters are seen only in the flat : one of them is a miser, another a hypocrite, another a coxcomb, and so on ; but not one of them is a man. All are dummies dressed up to look very like human beings ; but the likeness is only on the surface, all within is hollow and empty, because truth to nature has been sacrificed to literary effect. Very different is the presentation of human nature in the greater artists, such as Cervantes and Shakespeare : their characters are solid, being drawn not from one side only but from many. No doubt in science a certain abstractness of treatment is not merely legitimate, but necessary, since science is nothing but knowledge raised to the highest power, and all