

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1879, Frank Hamilton Cushing set off from his desk at the Smithsonian Institution to undertake three months of research in New Mexico. Under the auspices of the federal Bureau of Ethnology, his task was to find out everything he could “about some typical tribe of Pueblo Indians.”¹

Cushing ended up in Zuni, one of the pueblos. He was captivated by the Zuni’s methods of farming and irrigation, animal husbandry, skill at pottery, and elaborate ceremonial dances. He stayed longer than three months—a lot longer, as it happens, nearly five years. By the time he returned to Washington, D.C., in 1884, he spoke the language fluently, was a decent enough potter, and bore a new title, alongside that of U.S. assistant ethnologist: “First War Chief of Zuni.”

Cushing published several essays on his time in Zuni, among them a series with the rather prosaic title “Zuni Breadstuffs.” Yet the Zuni attitudes toward their food, and toward raising crops, were anything but dull and mundane. What we learn via Cushing is not only how the Zuni till the land or bake cornmeal bread. This is also the series of essays in which he sets out the importance of hospitality, explains how grandparents instill the values of patience, respect, and hard work in young children, and interprets how the rich symbolism of the Kâ’-Kâ festivals underscores the importance of the practice of uxori-local marriage (the technical term for when a man goes

2 ■ Introduction

to live in the homestead of his wife).² What emerges from this treatment of Zuni foodways is something of the culture writ large, of how a society in this often harsh and unrelenting environment flourishes through communal ties and mutuality. “Patient reader, forgive me for having lingered so long in the Zuni cornfields,” he writes at one point. “However closely we may have scrutinized these crops growing green, golden grown as they may have been, we have but barely glanced at them according to the rules and practices of their dusky owners.”³

In 2000, Caitlin Zaloom set off from Berkeley, California, to London to undertake research on futures trading. Zaloom had already spent six months in 1998 working as a runner at the Chicago Board of Trade. The value of runners had been tested by time; these were the people who literally ran across trading floors, scraps of paper in their hands with orders placed by customers on the other end of a phone. The Chicago pit was a “financial melee,” Zaloom writes, “runners often elbowed each other out of the way,” and “the noise was deafening.”⁴ It wasn’t the chaos of the floor that bothered these ambitious capitalists, however. It was the dawning of the electronic age. Electronic trading was on its way, and it would radically transform the nature of their work within a few years. As in Chicago, in London Zaloom was up at the crack of dawn every day and off to the City. There, though, she didn’t throw on a trader’s coat and exchange elbows with her peers in the pit: “I spent nine hours a day with eyes fixed on my screen and fingers lying lightly on the mouse, poised to click the second an opportunity for profit appeared.”⁵

German treasury bond futures might well be recognized as closer to the workings of power than a Zuni cornfield,

but they are hardly a riveting topic. For Zaloom, however, futures trading was a window onto the larger world of markets, morality, and conceptions of rationality. It was also a window onto the processes of globalization, itself furthered by new technologies, market regimes, and culturally specific systems of exchange. What made electronic trading particularly interesting to her was the extent to which it promised to deliver a truly “free” market—one based on the rationality of electronic, disembodied transactions rather than humans literally fumbling over each other. Get out of the trading pits, the promise of e-trading held, and it’s almost as if you step out of culture; you free yourself from the biases and background factors that might hamper your profits. As Zaloom makes clear, the promise wasn’t delivered, in large part because you can’t step out of culture—you can’t trade futures in a culture-free zone.

Cushing in Zuni; Zaloom in London: this is anthropology. Over the past 150 years, the discipline of anthropology has been driven by a curiosity with humankind’s cultural expressions, institutions, and commitments. What is it that makes us human? What is it that we all share, and what is it that we inherit from the circumstances of society and history? What can seemingly small details, like the cultural significance of maize or our use of computers, tell us about who we are?

Anthropology has always worked at the intersection of nature and culture, the universal and the particular, patterns and diversity, similarities and differences. Exactly how that work takes place has changed over time. Back in Cushing’s day, theories of social evolution, modeled on the findings of Charles Darwin in biology, drove the ways in which the newly emerging field of anthropology

4 ■ Introduction

approached cultural diversity; back then, the Zuni were thought to occupy a different, earlier stage of humankind's development. Today, an anthropologist such as Zaloom would be much more likely to argue that the truck and barter of small-scale societies should be treated in the same frame as e-trading in cyberspace. Still other approaches have been dominant, and even today there are distinct ones: there are cognitive anthropologists and postmodern ones too; Marxists and structuralists; most—including me—would subscribe to no such labels, preferring to draw from their own handmade portmanteau. But what binds them all is the stitch of the cultural.

This book focuses in the main on the kind of work that Cushing and Zaloom have done, which is often called social or cultural anthropology. It's the kind of anthropology that I do as well—hence my slant. But not all anthropologists work with living, breathing people, situated in a particular place or community. In several national traditions, the biological and evolutionary aspects of humans are looked at alongside the cultural ones. Archaeology and linguistics are often important areas of anthropology too. Some anthropologists, in other words, focus on teeth and hip bones; others on what prehistorical settlement patterns can tell us about the emergence of agriculture, iron smelting, and state formation; still others on technical aspects of Bantu noun classes and phonology (the study of the organization of sound use in language). When it comes to archaeology and linguistics, the links with culture are pretty obvious: archaeology, after all, is concerned with what we often call “material culture”; language and culture are two sides of the same coin. (And besides, most linguistic anthropologists study language use rather than its abstracted formalities. That

means studying it in particular places and particular times, much like cultural anthropologists.) Yet even for anthropological specialists in anatomy and evolution, the building blocks of culture are a central interest. The size of our brains, our dental makeup, and the strength of our thighbones are studied by biological anthropologists for what they can tell us about the origins of language, tool use, and the rise of bipedalism. In a word, culture.

FIRST CONTACT: A PERSONAL TALE

I remember very well the first piece of anthropology I read. I was a first-year student at university, holed up in the library on a cold Chicago night. I remember it so well because it threw me. It challenged the way I thought about the world. You might say it induced a small culture shock. It was an essay titled “The Original Affluent Society” by Marshall Sahlins, one of the discipline’s most significant figures. In this essay, Sahlins details the assumptions behind modern, Western understandings of economic rationality and behavior, as depicted, for example, in economics textbooks. In doing so, he exposes a prejudice toward and misunderstanding of hunter-gatherers: the small bands of people in the Kalahari Desert, the forests of the Congo, Australia, and elsewhere who lead a nomadic lifestyle, all with very few possessions and no elaborate material culture. These people hunt for wildlife, gather berries, and move on as necessary.

As Sahlins shows, the textbook assumption is that these people must be miserable, hungry, and fighting each day just to survive. Just look at them: they wear loincloths at most; they have no settlements; they have almost no

6 ■ Introduction

possessions. This assumption of lack follows on from a more basic one: that human beings always want more than they have. Limited means to meet unlimited desires. According to this way of thinking, it must be the case that hunters and gatherers can do no better; surely they live that way not out of choice but of necessity. In this Western view, the hunter-gatherer is “equipped with bourgeois impulses and paleolithic tools,” so “we judge his situation hopeless in advance.”⁶ Drawing on a number of anthropological studies, however, Sahlins demonstrates that “want” has very little to do with how hunter-gatherers approach life. In many of these groups in Australia and Africa, for example, adults had to work no more than three to five hours per day in order to meet their needs. What the anthropologists studying these societies realized is that the people could have worked more but *did not want to*. They did not have bourgeois impulses. They had different values than ours. “The world’s most primitive people have few possessions,” Sahlins concludes, “but they are not poor... Poverty is a social status. As such it is the invention of civilization.”⁷

After reading Sahlins, I could never hear talk about “affluence” in quite the same way. I could never rest easy with my own assumptions about what it means and how my assumptions often took on the rather dangerous garb of common sense. This lesson from Sahlins was only the first of many when it came to words I thought I knew how to use, how to think with. As a student, I quickly learned that anthropology is very good at questioning concepts, at questioning “common sense.” One of the discipline’s trademark clichés is that we make the familiar strange and the strange familiar. It is a cliché, but it’s

no less true for being so. And that process of questioning, that process of turning things upside down, is one of lasting value.

In the chapters to follow, I take a page from Sahlins's book—from every good anthropologist's book—and set about exploring and questioning concepts. They are not technical concepts, and they are all ones with which you will be familiar. They are, in fact, everyday words, and purposefully so. As a rule, anthropologists are interested in everyday things. I begin with anthropology's foundational concern itself—culture—and then go on to consider a small number of others: civilization, values, value, blood, identity, authority, reason, and nature. It is a bare-bones list; I am all too aware of what's being left out. What about “society”? What about “power”? But there is no point in trying to be exhaustive; there would always be another term to add. This book is a map with some points of orientation. It is meant to be a useful guide to a larger territory—the territory of our lives—which is and always will be defined by the importance of taking account of the lives of others.

Anthropology doesn't just level critiques. It doesn't just point to the ways in which our understandings of “affluence,” “civilization,” and “blood” are culturally specific, or even handicapped by the blind spots of our common sense. Anthropology also explains. Above all, it explains both how and why culture is central to our makeup as human beings. We are not automatons. We are not governed by a strong “human nature,” and we are not simple products of our genes. We make choices. The hunter-gatherers have had choices, and they have often chosen, historically speaking, to cultivate the value

8 ■ Introduction

of egalitarianism, while downplaying that of property, in order to maintain their ways of life. The nomadic existence of hunting and gathering is dependent upon both of these things: the sharing of resources and the discouragement of status and accumulation (stuff, after all, only weighs you down). Up until the 1960s, for example, the Hadza, a group of hunter-gatherers who live in Tanzania, chose not to adopt the ways of nearby pastoralists.

Our “choices” of course are often constrained. The environment plays a role, cultural traditions play a role (we can’t make them up out of whole cloth), and the broader currents of politics and society play a role too. Sahlins published “The Original Affluent Society” in 1972. By that point in time, the ability to live a nomadic lifestyle had been seriously curtailed. Colonial expansion often led to seizure or redeployment of the land that nomadic groups had relied upon. So we *do* find impoverished hunters and gatherers, Sahlins notes, but this has to be seen as a result of “colonial duress”—of being dragged into the orbit of “civilization.”⁸ That’s what he means by saying that poverty is an invention of civilization. This duress has continued into the present day, although more often now under the auspices of globalization. Over the past fifty years, the Hadza have lost access to 90 percent of the land they traditionally relied upon to hunt game.⁹ Similar stories can be found around the globe, from the Kalahari Desert in Namibia to the forests of Malaysia. Hunters and gatherers don’t have nearly as many choices these days. Another thing I learned from “The Original Affluent Society” then is just this: no culture exists in isolation. No culture is ever really original; every culture is, we might say, always on a nomadic path.

ANTHROPOLOGY PROPER

Before embarking on our more focused discussions, it will be helpful to provide a bit more background on anthropology as a discipline. This book is not a history of anthropology. But throughout, I will highlight some of the key figures, trajectories, and trends because the story of anthropology's emergence and development tells us important things about the modern academic disciplines more generally. Some background is also helpful given the emphasis here on the subfields of social and cultural anthropology. These are not as well-known as archaeology and biological anthropology. I am a cultural anthropologist, yet I still have some blood relatives who think I dig potshards out of the ground or measure skulls. Also, if people are aware of the sociocultural traditions, they often think anthropology's remit is Zuni, not London—that London, being in the West, and perhaps even “modern,” is the preserve of sociologists. While it's true that anthropologists traditionally tended to focus on the non-Western world, there have long been exceptions—there is a great anthropological study of Hollywood published in 1950, for instance.¹⁰ It's never just been jungles and drums.

Anthropology as we know it is just over 150 years old. The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland was formed in 1848. In 1851, Lewis Henry Morgan, a lawyer from upstate New York, published *League of the Iroquois* and went on to produce a series of seminal studies on kinship based on work with Native American peoples. In France, the first chair in anthropology was established in 1855 at the Musée d'histoire naturelle,

Paris.¹¹ This is about as far back in the modern genealogy as we can reasonably get. It is not unusual for anthropologists to claim earlier figures as ancestors: Michel de Montaigne (1533–92), for instance; Herodotus (484–426 BC) is also a favorite. Both had what has come to be known as an anthropological sensibility. Herodotus traveled to far-flung lands and provides us with rich descriptions of “Others” to the Greeks. Montaigne did not travel in this way, but for his important essay “Of Cannibals” he took pains to speak with three Tupinambá Indians (from what is today Brazil), brought to France, whom he met in Rouen. In the essay, he implores his readers not to be too swift to judge their supposed savagery (the Tupinambá were said to have eaten their Portuguese captives), urging us to understand the more holistic picture of their practices and ways of life.

In each of these prototype cases, as in the fully-fledged anthropological ones we’ve considered briefly, two key features stand out: (1) the importance of fieldwork; and (2) the principle of cultural relativism. You can’t understand anthropology without understanding these things.

Fieldwork has long been the central rite of passage for the anthropologist. While some founding figures are better described as “armchair anthropologists” (because they relied primarily on the work and reports of others), and while some traditions have clearer and longer-standing divisions of labor between empirical research and theory building (the French, for instance), you generally can’t be taken seriously without spending a year or more among the people you’re studying. Some anthropologists begin their careers this way, off in the field, and don’t end up returning a lot, or ever; they carry on doing anthropology by turning to more theoretical or conceptual concerns. In-

deed, some of the most important anthropological thinkers are not die-hard fieldworkers. But in nearly all cases, they did it to start with and it confirms their bona fides.

The main aspect of fieldwork is participant observation. Exactly what this means can differ. If you are in Zuni, or some hamlet in Chhattisgarh, India, it should mean almost total immersion. You should live with the locals, eat with them, learn their language, and take part in as full a range of their activities as possible. In short, and to put it in decidedly unscientific terms, you should be *hanging out* and *doing stuff*. If you are in London, total immersion can be slightly more challenging. Not all futures traders, of course, live in something akin to a pueblo, and they may well not invite you into their homes on a regular basis to break bread. Not that hospitality counts for nothing in England, but still, it's not the Zuni of 1879. As Zaloom did, though, you should get into the thick of things at work (or church, or gambling shops, or whatever you happen to be focusing on): you should be seeking those profits yourself because what you need to appreciate is how the people you're studying think, act, and live. One thing I always tell my PhD students is that being a fieldworker is kind of like being that kid in school who always wanted to play with everyone. "Hey, what's going on!?! Can I join in?" That's the life of an anthropologist in the field.

There can be a fine line between participant observation and going native. Anthropologists should not "go native."* Going native can rob you of the critical distance

*Unless they *are* "native." The Japanese anthropologist Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney (1984), for instance, studied "her people" in Kobe. The category of native anthropologist is a fraught one, though, and has occasioned a lot of debate. It usually only comes up if being "native" means being non-white and

12 ■ Introduction

you need to make an analysis; it can also prompt ethical challenges. During his fieldwork, Cushing came close on several occasions (actually, he went over the line): shooting at Navajo ponies (which, he claimed, had been wrongly brought onto Zuni lands), leading a raid on horse thieves (resulting in the death of two men), and even claiming an Apache scalp. Cushing had been inducted by his hosts as a war chief; claiming scalps is what was required of a man of his standing. Cushing also sent one U.S. senator into near apoplexy by exposing the fraudulent land claim of the senator's son-in-law, an action that led to Cushing's recall by the Bureau of Ethnology. "If a civilized white man can now get only 160 acres of land as a homestead by paying for it, and an Indian can get over 1,000 acres without paying for it," the angry senator wrote, "had not the white man better adopt the Cushing plan and become one of the Zuni Indians?"¹²

Cushing may have championed the Zuni's case against the shady dealings of the political elite, but it should not be forgotten that he was in the employ of the U.S. government and that he arrived not long after some of the most brutal and bloody chapters of America's westward expansion. In 1994, the Zuni artist Phil Hughte published a series of cartoons about Cushing, and it really captures the conflicted place of the anthropologist. Some of the cartoons express admiration for Cushing's dedication to the Zuni; others convey much more ambivalence, and

non-Western. So if you're Japanese and studying Japan, yes, that's "native." But if you're a white American studying, say, Hollywood, you probably won't be called a "native anthropologist." As we'll see, these debates tell us something important about anthropology's colonial history. In any case, the main point of the injunction against "going native" is that an anthropologist should not simply present the world in terms of the people being studied. At least for it to be anthropology, there has to be some kind of critical distance.

even anger, at what Hughte and many other Zunis have seen as betrayals and bullying—including reenacting parts of a secret rite for colleagues back in Washington. The final cartoon in Hughte’s book is of Cushing’s demise, in 1900, when he choked on a fish bone over dinner one night in Florida, where he was conducting an archaeological dig. The cartoon is called *The Last Supper* and Hughte tells us: “This was a fun drawing to do.”¹³

Hughte’s *schadenfreude* is not hard to understand. Anthropology has often been tagged as a handmaiden of colonialism. And in some respects, it was—and can be—in neocolonial and neo-imperial forms. In the United States, this has extended from “Indian affairs” in the nineteenth century to a series of controversial special operations and counterinsurgency programs in Latin America and Southeast Asia in the 1960s; from 2006 to 2014, the United States ran another controversial counterinsurgency program in Iraq and Afghanistan, engineered in large part by an anthropologist and staffed by many too.¹⁴ In the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Portugal, anthropologists often worked for the state or otherwise closely with colonial officials during the heydays of their empires, with many colonial officials in Britain being trained in anthropology themselves.

Yet even in the early generations, the commitment to anthropology and the ties anthropologists created with the people they studied often trumped colonial agendas—or even worked against their grain. In many ways, Cushing embodies the best and worst of what anthropologists can do. And we should not forget the worst. Today, though, to be sure, many anthropologists are active champions of the communities they study (and *not* by claiming enemy scalps). They promote group rights, are openly critical of

detrimental or counterproductive government and NGO projects, and protest against the interests of mining companies and lumber mills in Papua New Guinea and the Amazon rainforests. Doctor and medical anthropologist Paul Farmer cofounded Partners in Health, a medical NGO, as well as the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti. In the United Kingdom, dozens of anthropologists serve as witnesses in asylum tribunals, sharing their country expertise for cases pertaining to Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere.

If fieldwork is the hallmark method, cultural relativism is the hallmark mode. In one way or another, all anthropology is underpinned by it. Put simply, cultural relativism is a critical self-awareness that your own terms of analysis, understanding, and judgment are not universal and cannot be taken for granted. Yet putting this “simply” doesn’t always do the trick; cultural relativism is one of the most misunderstood aspects of the anthropological sensibility—even, I would argue, by some anthropologists. Indeed, not all anthropologists are cultural relativists. But they all use cultural relativism to get their work done.

It’s often helpful to explain what cultural relativism is by explaining what it’s not. One of the most important essays on the topic, in fact, by Clifford Geertz, is called “Anti Anti-Relativism.” Not even someone like him—he was a very gifted writer—could take a direct approach to such a delicate topic.

Cultural relativism does not require you to accept everything that other people do that you might otherwise find unjust or wrong. Cultural relativism does not mean you have no firm values or even that, as an academic (or poet or priest or judge), you can never say anything true

or even general about the human condition or in a cross-cultural frame. Cultural relativism doesn't require you to condemn statistical data, scoff at the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, accept the practice of female circumcision, or declare yourself an unbelieving atheist. These are often the kinds of charges leveled against "relativists"—that they deny the existence of hard data or have no moral red lines, or maybe even moral standards. But none of this has anything to do with how anthropologists use relativism in their research and approach to understanding the human condition.

Another way to put this is that cultural relativism is the sensibility that colors the method. It is an approach, a styling. It is what helps anthropologists guard against the dangers of assuming that their common sense or even informed understanding—about justice or affluence or fatherhood or the elementary forms of religious life—is self-evident or universally applicable. For an anthropologist, it is vital to understand how justice, or affluence, or fatherhood, or religion gets understood locally—if at all. Indeed, it is not uncommon for the people an anthropologist studies to confound the terms of analysis offered up. *Art? What's that? Religion? Huh? Oedipus? Who cares? Freedom? That doesn't look like freedom to us.* We already had a hint of this in Sahlins's treatment of the original affluent society. At its most basic, relativism should provide an appreciation of what Bronislaw Malinowski, to whom we'll presently turn, called "the native's point of view, his relation to life"; the goal is "to realize *his* vision of *his* world."¹⁵

* The term "native" has come up twice now. It is a term that can sound jarring. And so it should. In many ways it conjures up the image of colonial times made famous by such writers as Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad—

THE BIRTH OF A DISCIPLINE

It took a couple of generations for anthropology to professionalize what had originally been an amateur or “gentlemanly” pursuit of knowledge. When Cushing went to Zuni, there were no departments of anthropology in American universities; the modern university system itself, in which the social sciences came to occupy a distinct wing, was still in development. Cushing attended Cornell University but did not receive a degree. In Britain, Edward Burnett Tylor, who eventually occupied a personal chair in anthropology at Oxford University, never went to university himself and became an “anthropologist” partly because he was a sickly young man whose middle-class Quaker parents could afford to send him to the Caribbean, in the hope that the climate might do him some good. There, he met a true gentleman-explorer, Henry Christy; they went off to Mexico together and Tylor tried his hand at a popular literary genre of the Victorian era: the exotic adventure. His book on their travels in Latin America met with some success and led to a more systematic and ambitious study, *Primitive Culture* (1871). At Cambridge University, the first major “anthropological” expedition, in 1898, was undertaken by a

“the natives are getting restless” and that sort of thing. Up until World War II, and even somewhat later, “native” was used freely by anthropologists to refer to colonial subjects and it references an unequal power relation; it never meant “native of Berlin” or “native of San Francisco.” Over the past several decades, however, many anthropologists have reappropriated the term, lacing it with irony and (self) critique, by applying it precisely to the natives of Berlin and San Francisco. The point such anthropologists are trying to make is that everyone is a “native” in one way or another—that anthropology’s remit is the whole of humanity.

small group of men trained in psychiatry, biology, and medicine.

Early champions fought hard for anthropology's incorporation into the university system. Bronislaw Malinowski, regularly acknowledged as the founding figure of British social anthropology (though neither he nor many of his students were British), wrote a passionate critique of amateurism and a manifesto for "the law and order of method." Malinowski had no time for the kind of gentleman-explorers one found in Victorian Britain, or even any well-intentioned colonial officers or missionaries, whose observations were "strongly repulsive to a mind striving after the objective, scientific view of things."¹⁶ He made an institution of what Cushing had been doing thirty years earlier: fieldwork by participant observation. In his classic study, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), based on his two years of fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, Malinowski made much of his tent, pitched in medias res on the Nu'agasi beach. Not for him the colonial district officer's veranda. In the 1920s and 1930s, at the London School of Economics (LSE), he trained or otherwise influenced almost all of the leading lights of the next generation: figures such as E. E. Evans-Pritchard and Edmund Leach (they were very English, actually), Raymond Firth (a New Zealander), and Isaac Schapera and Meyer Fortes (both South African). Firth and Schapera carried on at the LSE; Evans-Pritchard went to Oxford and Leach and Fortes to Cambridge, where in each university important departments grew up.

In the United States, the German émigré Franz Boas did at Columbia University what Malinowski had done at the LSE—and this was over a much longer period of time, 1896 to 1942. His students included Margaret

Mead, Ruth Benedict, Melville Herskovits, Zora Neale Hurston, Edward Sapir, Robert Lowie, and Alfred Kroeber, some of whom—especially Mead—became household names and were very widely read. Others went on to establish new centers of anthropology, including, for instance, the department at the University of California, Berkeley. Kroeber taught at Berkeley for over forty years; Lowie for over thirty years. Herskovits had a similarly long career at Northwestern University.*

For these early generations, especially in the United States, the task of “salvage ethnography” was often a major motivation: recording the ways of life of disappearing peoples, through either destruction or assimilation into the workings of modernity. One of Kroeber’s main research interests captures this particularly well; for a time in the 1910s, he worked closely with a man named Ishi, the last surviving member of the Yahi people of California. Kroeber and some of his colleagues at Berkeley took pains to record as much as they could from this last “wild man,” as he was referred to at the time. Boas himself is often noted for the prodigious amount of documentation he produced. Aficionados of anthropology’s history will refer to Boas’s “five-foot shelf”—the five feet worth of books and papers he wrote, that is. Some of these were classic studies of exchange systems among Native Americans of the Northwest Coast; some were their recipes for blueberry muffins. Although Boas lacked the flair of Cushing on similar topics, he is the canonical figure. For not only did he train so many of the first

* Like women in other academic fields and professions, women in anthropology, especially in these early periods, often came up against the glass ceiling. Neither Mead nor Benedict got top university positions, despite their formidable accomplishments and reputations.

few generations of anthropologists, he also shaped the paradigm of anthropology with which we still work—or grapple—today.

CAVEAT EMPTOR!

Introducing anthropology is not easy—you simply can't cover it all. So you need to beware, reader, of what you have before you. I have already stressed that in what follows I'll be focusing in the main on social and cultural anthropology rather than other subfields. And as the scope of the last section implies, I am also going to be concentrating by and large on traditions that grew up in the United Kingdom and the United States. Yet a few points need to be kept in mind.

The first is that, while the British and American branches did start out as fairly well-defined traditions, they both changed and opened up over time. Malinowski and Boas were strong personalities; they had strong programs and that carried their work pretty far and pretty diffusely. Both are still read today, especially Malinowski (although it is probably Boas's legacy that has gained wider purchase). But they were never the only dominant figures, and it would now be impossible to find any such coherence, given the range of ways in which the discipline has unfolded. There are still ways in which “American cultural anthropology” and “British social anthropology” differ, but a lot of Americans teach in the UK and a lot of Britons teach in the United States; training of PhD students in the best departments is also thoroughly multinational and cosmopolitan (and well beyond the Anglo-American world). And, of course, remember that the

founder of British social anthropology was Polish and the founder of American cultural anthropology was German.

That leads us to the second point: there has always been a lot of international exchange. Another key figure in this was A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, an Englishman, who was something of an heir to Malinowski in Britain (not that Malinowski would have had it that way) but also extremely influential in the United States, where he taught at the University of Chicago in the 1930s. Chicago has been a leading department since then and has always aimed to include prominent figures on the faculty roster from outside the American tradition. Radcliffe-Brown also taught in Australia and South Africa. The other country with a dominant tradition of anthropology—France—also had links with both Britain and America, especially America via the wartime exile of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who spent some of the 1940s in New York City and whose seminal work on structuralism was partly made possible by the richly ethnographic case studies of Boas and his students. The affinity between Boas and Lévi-Strauss, despite the very different kinds of anthropology they produced, is captured in symbolism you could not top. Lévi-Strauss was at the luncheon in 1942 when Boas died; according to the Frenchman, Boas died in his arms. Many years later, though, it was British social anthropologist Edmund Leach who became Lévi-Strauss's main exponent and advocate in the English-speaking world. Mary Douglas, another British major figure, also drew heavily on structuralism.

Finally, it is worth noting the importance of other traditions altogether, with those in Brazil, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, South Africa, Australia, India, and each

of the Scandinavian countries playing notable roles. (The Scandinavians punch well above their weight, actually, and have done for several decades.) Indeed, a contemporary Brazilian anthropologist, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, is one of the most influential figures at the moment; we'll consider some of his ideas later on. And then there are even more layered identifications and connections, with, say, renowned Germans in Dutch universities, or the fact that a Briton, an American, a Belgian, and a Dutchman direct the various prestigious Max Planck Institutes in Germany that are dedicated to anthropology. Another eminent contemporary anthropologist, Talal Asad, was born in Saudi Arabia, raised in India and Pakistan, educated in the United Kingdom, and rose to prominence in the United States. In short, you should not come away from this introduction thinking the story of anthropology's positioning in the world of nation-states is a straightforward one.

Anthropology is also more than an academic discipline; we have seen this in the various brief examples provided thus far—from taking scalps (again, not recommended) to starting NGOs in Haiti. More broadly, however, what is often called “applied anthropology” can be found in most sectors and levels of operation. There are, as I noted earlier, anthropologists who put their skills to use for the U.S. military; there are others who become professional consultants and start their own businesses to provide “ethnographic solutions” to various problems, which might include anything from helping a housing association recognize the signs of domestic violence among tenants to providing advice on how a French cosmetics company might best market its products in Jordan. At the

University of Copenhagen, you can even now study for a master's degree in "business and organizational anthropology" and then maybe go on to work for ReD Associates, a Danish anthropology consulting firm. ReD knows that culture matters, and that it can be sold. They publish thoughtful articles like "Why Culture Matters for Pharma Strategy." In an online interview for the *Harvard Business Review*, Christian Madsbjerg, ReD's director of client relations, says that the problem with so much marketing (a \$15 billion-a-year industry, he informs us) is that it too often doesn't understand the product "in its cultural context, in its average, everyday situation." This is Anthropology 101.¹⁷

And then there are the leavers; to wrap up the introduction to this introduction, I might as well point out that some famous people, and some who have made their names in other professions, have anthropology in their backgrounds. It is a small discipline and we need all the publicity we can get. Prince Charles has a degree in anthropology. Gillian Tett, the prominent journalist and an editor at the *Financial Times*, did a PhD in anthropology at Cambridge. Film director Jane Campion studied anthropology in New Zealand, and Barack Obama's mother, Ann Dunham, was an anthropologist of Indonesia. Nick Clegg, former deputy prime minister of the United Kingdom, has a degree in anthropology. Kurt Vonnegut was kicked out of the PhD program at the University of Chicago, but that might have been for the best: while a lot of anthropology has made a difference in the world, it's nice to have *Slaughterhouse Five* and *Cat's Cradle* in the annals of literature. Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of an independent Kenya, got his PhD in anthropology at the LSE; alongside his involvement in politics, he man-

aged to produce a classic anthropological study, *Facing Mount Kenya*, on the Kikuyu people. (So he was a “native anthropologist”—and pretty early on.) Ashraf Ghani, president of Afghanistan, got his PhD in anthropology at Columbia University and was a professor for some time at Johns Hopkins University.

Anthropology is a discipline that on the face of it might seem to have little practical or vocational value. In today’s intellectual climate that’s increasingly something that has to be explained or excused. And it brings on the occasional existential shudder. But the discipline of anthropology offers a profoundly useful way of thinking about the modern world. In an interview from 2008, Gillian Tett spoke of how her move into the world of financial journalism was informed by her anthropological training. It was just after the 2008 crash. “I happen to think that anthropology is a brilliant background for looking at finance,” she said. “Firstly, you’re trained to look at how societies or cultures operate holistically, so you look at how all the bits move together. And most people in the City don’t do that.... But the other thing is, if you come from an anthropology background, you also try and put finance in a cultural context. Bankers like to imagine that money and the profit motive is as universal as gravity. They think it’s basically a given and they think it’s completely apersonal. And it’s not. What they do in finance is all about culture and interaction.”¹⁸

In the manner of the classic by Marshall Sahlins, and echoing in a more popular register what we can find in the work of Caitlin Zaloom, Tett is pushing for that anthropological sensibility. And whether you’re concerned with the financial world of the City of London or whether it’s something else that piques your interest—traditional

24 ■ Introduction

life in the Trobriand Islands, perhaps, or Hindu rituals; or why some NGO development projects fail, and some succeed; or how to sell hamburgers in Hong Kong, or understand the use of social media in Turkey; or, for that matter, how best to reach and serve victims of domestic violence in a social housing project—going for that holistic view, and appreciating the cultural dynamics in play, will most likely do you good.