

Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski Biography

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Biography

Born April 7, 1884, in Krakow, Poland, British anthropologist and author Bronislaw Malinowski, who earned a doctorate in mathematics and physics from the University of Krakow, is widely acknowledged as the father of the functional school of anthropology, which stresses the importance of scientific method over abstract theory. He is best known for stressing the importance of ethnography, or detailed participant observation, in anthropology. His use of a detailed ethnographic diary is notable in this regard.

Malinowski became noted for his fieldwork on the Trobriand Islands off the northeast coast of New Guinea, where he lived among primitive island inhabitants from 1914 to 1918. From his research he published a series of monographs, including *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia: An Ethnographic Account of Courtship, Marriage, and Family Life Among the Natives of the Trobriand Islands, British New Guinea* (1929).

Malinowski was a professor of social anthropology at the University of London from 1927 to 1942 and a Phi Beta Kappa lecturer at Harvard University in 1936, as well as a visiting professor at Yale University beginning in 1939. Together with A. Radcliffe-Brown, he defined British structural-functionalist anthropology while teaching at the London School of Economics. His concentration on the functional needs of a sociocultural system did not prevent him from attempting to put psychoanalytic theories into practice in many of his works.

Malinowski received an honorary doctorate from Harvard in 1936 and was a member of the Polish Academy of Science and the Royal Academy of Science of the Netherlands. His numerous scholarly works include: *The Family Among the Australian Aborigines: A Sociological Study* (1913), *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* (1926), *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (1927), *Freedom and Civilization* (1944), and posthumously *Magic, Science, and Religion, and Other Essays* (1948) and *Sex, Culture, and Myth* (1962). Malinowski died on May 16, 1942.