Phil Gulliver, 1994.

Preface

A Dedication to P. H. Gulliver

This collection of essays has been brought together in honour of Philip Gulliver, to whom the volume is dedicated. Gulliver studied at London University, gaining his doctorate at the LSE in 1952 while he was holding an assistant lectureship there. His earliest research (1948–51) was amongst Turkana nomads in Kenya and Jie agro-pastoralists in Uganda, resulting in his first major monograph, *The Family Herds* (1955a). This was also the beginning of a long period in his career that focused on East Africa.

Upon completion of his doctorate Gulliver was, for six years, Research Sociologist to the Government of Tanganyika. His first research in that period was among the Ngoni and Ndendeuli of southern Tanganyika, on labour migration, history and political change, economic development and law. However, his main scholarly work which emerged from this research (*Neighbours and Networks: the Idiom of Kinship in Social Action among the Ndendeuli*) was not published until 1971, largely because the then current models in anthropology were of little use in making sense of a society without corporate groups. In the 1960s, whilst re-examining the data he had collected a decade earlier, Gulliver had to discover some new ways of conceptualizing and describing social relations in action. This he did by using network analysis and the concept of action-set.

The next period of fieldwork (1954–5) was spent among the Nyakyusa, and focused on labour migration and problems of land scarcity and social change. It resulted in *Land Tenure and Social Change among the Nyakyusa* (1958). This was followed by a spell amongst migrant and settled plantation workers in north-eastern Tanganyika, after which Gulliver worked amongst the Arusha from 1956–8, a period of fieldwork which led to one of his most important books, *Social Control in an African Society* (1963).

At the end of his contract with the Government of Tanganyika in 1958, Gulliver spent several years in the United States, teaching first at Harvard and then at Boston Universities. In 1962, he

returned to Britain and joined the fledgling anthropology department at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He remained there as Lecturer, then Reader (1965) and Professor (1967) until 1971, apart from a brief visit to teach again in North America at the Universities of Minnesota and Washington.

During his time at SOAS, Philip Gulliver was able to re-visit some of his research areas in East Africa. He also published a good deal, including (apart from numerous articles) *Social Control in an African Society* (1963), *The Family Estate in Africa* (with Robert Gray) (1964), *Tradition and Transition in East Africa* (1969) and *Neighbours and Networks* (1971). This was also a productive period in terms of supervision of a number of postgraduates who went on to become academic anthropologists: Janet Fitton Bujra, Caroline Ifeka-Moller, David Parkin, Lionel Caplan, Pat Bailey Caplan, Walter Johnson, Jan de Wolf and many others. Several of his students from that period are represented in this volume, along with a number of his colleagues.

A major theme which runs through much of Gulliver's writing from his 'African' period concerns social control, dispute-management and the anthropology of law. As well as two monographs which he published around those themes (1963, 1971), he also wrote some important chapters and articles (1961, 1969, 1973). He published too on labour migration, kinship, age-set systems and other topics, but his interest increasingly centred on dispute-management and negotiations. In looking at Gulliver's work in terms mainly of his contributions to legal anthropology, we can see that he has always been concerned with ethnographic understandings – with 'concrete manifestations' (1971: 13). He has seen these as propelling conceptual and theoretical advance because, in his view, the final purpose of ethnography is to arrive at generalizations: 'Monographic single-mindedness (concern for the particular) has undoubtedly advanced anthropological studies. ... [However] there might well have been greater progress ... had anthropologists been more ready to voice, and their colleagues more prepared sympathetically to attend to, attempts at generalised observations' (Gulliver 1965b: 103).

This concern to tie the particular to the general as a central purpose for anthropology has been rooted in a second theme which has typified Gulliver's work: his belief in the indissoluble link between field research and theory, ethnography and anthro-

pology: 'The firmly rooted tradition of personal field research and of theoretical development in the context of monographic accounts of social systems and cultures must surely be maintained as the foundation of anthropological studies' (Gulliver 1965b: 103).

In pursuing this ideal, a third general theme can be discovered in Gulliver's work, namely his involvement with the key conceptual and empirical dualities which have long informed the discipline and its practitioners: social relations and material interests, change and history, small-scale and wider context. In his earliest book, Gulliver saw the first duality as central to his general approach (1955a). In that same year and from a different ethnographic context, he also put forward a plea for historical understandings: 'Concerning the Ngoni ... a knowledge of their history is, I believe, essential to an understanding of the people and their social system because ... today, they remain closely connected with that early evolution' (Gulliver 1955b: 17). Nevertheless, a decade later, when he reviewed the state of African ethnography, Gulliver still found it necessary to criticize a still-dominant synchronic approach and to reiterate the importance of history and change:

It is clear that anthropological research, theory and methods can (and must) expand to embrace the factor of change. Its exclusion as a convenient working device is now quite outmoded. Concomitant with this requirement is the need for anthropologists to take steps to build up as full a historical record as possible of the evolution of African societies and cultures (Gulliver 1965b: 102).

Complementing his concern with social relations and materiality, history and change has been his clear focus on the micro-level: 'Anthropologists' specialisation in dealing with micro-structures and sub-systems and with the details of interpersonal small-group relationships can continue to produce information and lead to understanding in a way no other discipline can, (Gulliver 1965b: 101). However, for Gulliver, the micro-focus of anthropology had to be connected to, and located within, broader contexts. In commenting on the historico-ethnographic research methods which he more recently used in fieldwork in an Irish town and its hinterland, he noted: 'In any case, in whatever way a socio-geographical unit ... is defined, social relations and social interaction have significantly and constantly extended well beyond any boundaries which could be delineated' (Gulliver 1989: 334).

In the early 1970s, Gulliver decided that it was time to move on and to return to North America. In 1971 he became Professor of Anthropology at the University of Calgary, Alberta, subsequently moving to York University, Ontario. Although continuing his primary interest in dispute-management, he shifted to the collection of comparative materials on the processes of industrial negotiations in Western societies. This led to one of his best-known works, *Disputes and Negotiations: a Cross-Cultural Perspective* (1979). In the same period, he edited a symposium, *Cross-Examinations* (1978), in honour of Max Gluckman, whose work on the anthropology of law he much admired.

Following this, Gulliver decided that he wanted to undertake further field research and to pursue his research interests in a Western society and to develop the kind of historical perspective that had been difficult in some of the East African societies he had previously studied, which lacked any depth of written records. Accordingly, and in co-operation with York University anthropologist Marilyn Silverman, he began to carry out ethnographic and archival research in the Republic of Ireland, focusing on a small town and its hinterland in County Kilkenny. Together they have engaged in field and archival research in Ireland totalling 24 months to date, and have accumulated something like 40,000 pages of materials. In addition to a number of articles, Gulliver and Silverman have published a social history of their locale (*In the Valley of the Nore: a Social History of Thomastown, County Kilkenny, 1840–1983* [1986]), edited a collection of essays in historical anthropology utilizing Irish case studies (*Approaching the Past* [1992]), and completed another book entitled *Merchants and Shopkeepers: An Historical Anthropology of an Irish Market Town 1200–1986* (in press).

Philip Gulliver retired officially in 1992, although he continues to do some teaching. He is Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus at York University, and continues to carry out research and to publish.

Overall, then, Gulliver's work has displayed his firm commitment to the ethnographic analysis of material relations and social change in small-scale locales contextualized in wider arenas and, increasingly, in historical understandings underpinned by theory. Nested in these broad themes, however, has been a lifelong commitment to the practical doing of anthropology and to the notion that each new piece of research makes a further contribution to the discipline.

[T]here is great value in trying out methods and concepts, asking new kinds of questions and pushing some old questions a little further, examining new problems, and testing hypotheses, in relation to particular and limited ethnographic data. It is also useful to contribute new ethnographic data, for the plaint that we already have more raw data than we can use is palpably false (Gulliver 1971: 1).

It is in the spirit of this viewpoint that we dedicate this volume to him.

Pat Caplan and Marilyn Silverman

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