

## The Malinowskis in South Tyrol: A Relational Biography of People, Places and Works

**Daniela Salvucci**

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

**Elisabeth Tauber**

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

**Dorothy L. Zinn**

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

2019

### POUR CITER CET ARTICLE

Salvucci, Daniela, Elisabeth Tauber & Dorothy L. Zinn, 2019. "The Malinowskis in South Tyrol: A Relational Biography of People, Places and Works", in *Bérose - Encyclopédie internationale des histoires de l'anthropologie*, Paris.

URL Bérose : [article1754.html](http://article1754.html)

BEROSE Publisher: ISSN 2648-2770

© UMR9022 Héritages (CY Cergy Paris Université, CNRS, Ministère de la culture)/DIRI, Direction générale des patrimoines et de l'architecture du Ministère de la culture. (All rights reserved).

Your use of this article indicates your acceptance of the Bérose site ([www.berose.fr](http://www.berose.fr)) terms and conditions of use, available [here](#).

Visited on 8 December 2022 at 14:05

This article draws on biographical and bibliographical sources, as well as on archival data, in order to examine two under-investigated and intertwined aspects of the life and career of Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942): his working collaboration with his first wife, the Australian writer and journalist Elsie Masson (1890-1935), and their connection to South Tyrol (Northern Italy), where they lived in 1920s and 1930s and where they purchased a house that is still in the family. We aim to highlight the biographical relationality between the Malinowskis, some of their friends, relatives and colleagues, the places they inhabited, the houses in which they dwelled and the works they produced in that period and left to us. The research upon which this essay is based was conducted under the aegis of the Malinowski Forum for Ethnography and Anthropology (MFEA), coordinated by Dorothy Zinn and Elisabeth Tauber with the scientific collaboration of Daniela Salvucci at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. [1]

### **Biographical relationality: places, houses and works**

In this essay, we highlight how several biographical sources on Malinowski's writings and career account for relations (ideational and practical) between people, works, houses and

places. In order to do this, we apply the concept of “biographical relationality” starting from Latour’s idea of relations as interactions that entail an interdependency of elements, a co-production of situations, and the interrelation between human and non-human agents and actants. The concept of biographical relationality brings concreteness to the critique of the “biographical illusion” elaborated by Bourdieu (1986), since relationality focuses on the tangible interactions from which “objective relations” within social fields are made. [2] Without calling Malinowski’s own merit and genius into question, this concept helps us to shed light on the relationality of both biographies and biographical accounts. It leads us to consider the “relational infrastructure” (Strathern, 2018) of anthropological writing as an object of enquiry. On the infrastructure of ethnography, Strathern argues that the ethnographic enterprise is underpinned by both practical and ideational, or conceptual, infrastructures that make it possible. She underlines the relational aspect of infrastructures, pointing out that in both investigation and writing “crucial relations are created although they are not always apparent” (Strathern, 2018: 66). Even though such infrastructures are the real support for action, they are usually not perceived nor analysed.

To make the relational infrastructure of Malinowski’s anthropological writing visible, on the one hand, we refer to particular ideas about places and landscapes shared by the Malinowskis and their friends. On the other hand, we underline the specific role of certain actants, which would be better described as sets of relations between people and things, such as the Malinowskis’ house in South Tyrol. Just as the tent and the verandah made a difference during Malinowski’s ethnographic fieldwork, the house in the holiday resort of Oberbozen made a difference in coproducing a new situation, contributing to the enterprise of anthropological writing. Malinowski and his first wife Elsie Masson could work together living in their villa in Oberbozen, relaxing and enjoying the atmosphere of the Dolomite mountains. They were able to host many friends, relatives and several of Malinowski’s students, developing anthropological discussions at home. Speaking of Malinowski’s work practices, Raymond Firth – his closest student, friend and assistant – wrote the following:

In London he did much work in bed; in Oberbozen, where he had a villa at which he spent most of the summer, he usually worked on the balcony, often nude in the sun, with a green eyeshade, scrubbing himself with a solution of iodized salt in the intervals of discussion about Trobriand myth or family life (Firth, 2004: 79).

We see, then, that a house in the mountains is a practical infrastructure for the work of anthropological writing. At the same time, the house incorporates particular ideas about inspiration and creativity connected to isolation and “romantic” rural landscapes. Moreover, it enables personal relations between the owners, the local people and their many guests, as well as conceptual and practical relations between creativity, landscapes to enjoy from the verandah (Tauber and Zinn, 2018), walks throughout these landscapes as lived places, and writing activities. Looking at the biographical relationality allows us to account for all these connections and interactions between people, houses, places and works, since all of them operate together.

We cite data from biographical sources, above all the letters Malinowski and Masson sent to each other. These letters were collected and published in 1995 by their youngest daughter Helena Malinowska Wayne (1925-2018) in a two-volume edition entitled *The Story of a Marriage*. We also draw on archival sources, such as South Tyrolean newspaper notes from the 1920s and administrative house registers and plans held in the archive of the Teßmann Library and the historical city archive in Bozen-Bolzano.

### **The relationship between Malinowski and Masson**

Elsie Masson was the daughter of a chemistry professor who immigrated to Australia from Scotland and held a position at the University of Melbourne. Bronislaw Malinowski met her in 1916 within her father's academic milieu during his Australian stay between the two long fieldwork periods he carried out in the Trobriand Islands, New Guinea. At that time, Masson was training as nurse and had already published a book on the "untamed territories" of Northern Australia (Masson, 1915), where she had been living for a year and half, describing the process of colonization in this still less explored region of the country. In this book, she described social life in the town of Port Darwin and in the backcountry, focusing on the relations between the settlers and the local aboriginal peoples, showing a humanistic approach to the racial question (Lydon, 2016). Malinowski had read this book when, in 1917, he asked her for help to organize his ethnographic material and to revise his manuscript on Trobriand culture. He remarked on the importance of her book in a letter from the Trobriands on 11 January 1918, when they were already engaged (Wayne, 1995 I: 98):

Don't forget that had you not published this book, we would have probably never met, or at least I never would have conceived the idea of asking you to read my Ms. (*manuscript*), which was the thing that permanently brought in the possibility to see each other. You say that your interests and ambitions have been deflected through meeting me. But I think that we complete each other very well and that we both will have to give up the "mine" for the "our"...

In 1917, in fact, before Malinowski went back to the Trobriands, Masson had been supporting him to develop a mammoth, complex monograph called "Kiriwina" after the largest of the Trobriand Islands, which he had formerly planned (Young, 2004: 468). Later he used this material to publish five different monographs (Malinowski, 1922, 1926, 1927, 1929, 1935), together with many essays and book chapters, focusing on various aspects of the Trobriand culture. Masson and Malinowski met regularly to work at the Victoria Museum of Melbourne, as Malinowski's biographer Young reports (2004: 462):

...in her spare time Elsie joined him in a small room at the museum, where his papers and notebooks were spread out. She sat by his side, reading his chapters and posing questions about his material. They called it "Kiriwining". In return he helped her to prepare her speeches for the socialists.

At that time, Masson was politically involved in the discussion within Socialist circles about

conscription and Australia's participation in World War I. She often spoke publicly on the subject and was deeply engaged in the struggle for better working conditions for nurses at local and national levels. Malinowski introduced Masson to Paul and Hede Khuner from Vienna, who had become his closest friends in Melbourne. Paul Khuner was a Jewish entrepreneur detained in Australia after the war broke out because of his Austro-Hungarian citizenship, just as Malinowski was. The Khuners' house in Melbourne became a meeting point for a group called "the Clan" that also opened to Masson's old friends. The relationality that emerged in Melbourne linking Malinowski, Masson, the Khuners, their house and their friends continued to operate in the coming years, as the Khuners and the Malinowskis used to help, visit and write each other once back in Europe. In particular, this friendship would also be decisive for the establishment of the Malinowskis' household in South Tyrol.

The relationship between Masson and Malinowski strengthened during his second long ethnographic fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, as attested to by both their correspondence (Wayne, 1995 I) and his private diary, published posthumously (Malinowski, 1967). In his personal diary, Malinowski refers to Masson, "ERM" (Elsie Rosaline Masson) as he abbreviated her name, as one of the main protagonists of his own intimate inner world, mixing present and past, the lived concrete experience in the Trobriands and his memories and vision of other places, times, houses and people, far away from there. Among these faraway places there were, for instance, the Cracow of his youth and Zakopane, the resort town in the Carpathians where he used to spend holidays with his friends, such as the painter and writer Stanislaw I. Witkiewicz, and other intellectuals (Gross, 1986, Malinowski, 1967: 26, 66, 233, 254, 291, 296, 297); or the Yarra bank in Melbourne along which he walked together with Masson (*ibidem*, 149, 151). Masson is a very important part of a biographical ethnographic relationality that includes all the relations that coproduced Malinowski's enterprise. To account for this relationality, the letters Malinowski and Masson exchanged in 1917-1918 (Wayne, 1995, v. I) play a significant role, showing Malinowski's connections during fieldwork in a different light, as Lewis (1996) has pointed out. Whereas in his private diary Malinowski confessed his obsessions, fears and desires, presenting all the moral and psychological complexity of ethnographic practice, in the letters he addressed to Masson from the Trobriands, he elaborated his feeling more rationally and described his progress in fieldwork, revealing some of his provisional ideas and intuitions to her. She replied with her opinions and feedback and reported about the news from ongoing political events and about the various academic tasks in which Malinowski was engaged. She corrected some of his papers to be submitted for publication and copy-edited letters he had to send to his supervisors and mentors. It was a relation of love and a work collaboration. She also sent the theatrical pieces she penned to him and they discussed books and literature during Malinowski's fieldwork, just as they had exchanged books in Melbourne in previous months. They shared an interest in travelogues and novels of adventure and exoticism, and they appreciated the same authors, such as Stevenson and – above all – Conrad, with whom Malinowski identified (Clifford, 1986; Firth, 1957; Geertz, 1988; Thompson, 1995; Thornton, 1985).

After Malinowski returned to Melbourne, he and Masson married in 1919 and went to Europe the following year. Searching for an academic position for him, they visited England and Scotland, where their first daughter was born. Then they spent some months in the Canary Islands, renting a little house in Tenerife, where Malinowski wrote *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in approximately four months (Wayne: 1995 II: 15). He did this thanks to Masson's help, as he acknowledged in a handwritten note on her copy of the book, dedicating it: "To my collaborator, who had half the share at least and more than half the merit in writing this book" (ibid: 26). In an article regarding "the influence of various women" on Malinowski's career, Wayne states that when Malinowski was writing *Argonauts*, Masson acted as "aide and critic, not least with his style" (Wayne 1985: 535). Young has even called her "his chief editor" (2004: 467), underlining her influence on his writing style: "In years to come, Malinowski would endeavour to write in a manner both popular and academic. Elsie's advice helped him strike a balance that would make his writing accessible to lay readers". According to Firth, although Masson did not influence Malinowski's work theoretically, "she was an acute appraiser and critic of it, and helped him much with it in draft" (Firth 1988: 27), and Malinowski "relied very greatly upon her judgment" (Firth 2004: 79).

In the letters they wrote one another in the 1920s (Wayne, 1995 II), there is evidence that Masson continuously helped Malinowski as copy editor and discussant. She also managed his academic correspondence when he was away and helped to establish and maintain social relations. As Bauer (1998) suggested when reviewing Wayne's book, the collaboration between Malinowski and Masson could be a good example of the "two-person single career" pattern (Papanek 1973: 852). As formulated by Papanek (1973), this concept refers to the multiple non-remunerated and publicly unacknowledged contributions of a wife to the work and career of her husband, especially in middle-class professions and academic employment.

### **The Malinowskis in Oberbozen**

Upon their return to Europe, Malinowski and Masson moved from one place to another in search of a suitable spot to write and rear their children. In Tenerife, she wrote to him in 1921: "I want to have a nice little untidy house with you, a piano, lots of papers about, casual friends of congenial kinds and romantic walks". (Wayne, 1995, vol. II: 22). Waiting for an academic position to come through, the couple moved again to Southern France, when their second daughter Wanda was born, and then to Cracow where Malinowski refused a position at the University. As Skalniak (2003) observes:

In 1922 he rejected an offer to become Professor of Ethnology in his native Cracow and instead of buying a summer house in Zakopane, as proposed to him by Witkiewicz (whom he saw during his brief visit to Poland the same year), he bought a house in South Tyrol where he spent a substantial portion of each year ever since. (Skalniak, 2003: 137)

Indeed, in 1922, thanks to a suggestion by Hans Busch, a friend of the Khuners in Vienna (Wayne, 1995 II: 27), the Malinowskis finally arrived in Oberbozen-Soprabolzano in South Tyrol.

This little village lays on the Ritten mountain above Bolzano in the Dolomites area, a region that belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire until 1919, and passed to the Italian Kingdom after World War I. Malinowski was born and grew up in Cracow, the capital of Galicia, in Southern Poland (Ellen, Gellner, Kubica, Mucha 1988); as a region which had also belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire until World War I, South Tyrol felt particularly familiar to him, as his grandchildren Patrick Burke and Lucy Ulrich have stated. [3] When the Malinowskis arrived there, Oberbozen was an upper-class resort, easy to reach from the town thanks to a cog train, a place for rich people, especially from Bozen and wealthy tourists from Vienna, but also from Berlin, as Malinowski himself had the opportunity to notice during a conference in Berlin (Wayne, 1995 II: 83). Many of them went to the villages of the Ritten Mountain for summer time lodging in so-called “Sommerfrischhäuser” (holiday houses) to enjoy the mountain air, sunshine and mild climate here as in other southern parts of the central Alps. Among others, Sigmund Freud often spent summers in South Tyrol, staying in Klobenstein-Collalbo, near Oberbozen [4]. The upper-class cottages rose up near the traditional farms of the local peasants, who provided the holiday houses with domestic work staff.

In 1922, the Malinowskis rented a flat in an ancient house attached to the little church of Maria Schnee, then in 1923 bought a villa close to there, also thanks to the Khuners’ financial support (Wayne, 1995 II: 29). The local newspapers reported the news. [5] South Tyrolean cultural heritage expert Waltraud Kofler-Engl has provided the following description of the Malinowski villa:

The presumably older, rural building features a wooden verandah topped with a balcony. The double-barreled wooden staircase creates a direct connection from the living area to the garden. The wide, roomy verandah for sheltered outdoor stays and the accessibility of the garden complement the typology of the simple architecture of a farmhouse with stylistic elements that are characteristic of *Sommerfrischhäuser*. The building itself does not bear any other status symbols. The Malinowski *Haus* is fully in line with the typology and appearance of the later, hardly representative furnished *Sommerfrischhäuser* of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the Ritten. In imitation of “reform architecture”, they consciously took on regional traditions (Kofler Engl, 2018).

For approximately the next ten years, the Malinowskis made their home in Oberbozen, and despite their cosmopolitan lifestyle, they both maintained a strong connection to this place. For the couple, it was a kind of “living apart together” (Levin, 2004), as Malinowski obtained a position at the London School of Economics quite early, first as lecturer in 1924, then as professor in 1927. They decided against moving together to London, because of the higher expenses they would have incurred there and because of the unhealthy climate. Masson and their daughters lived in Oberbozen, while Malinowski stayed in London to teach at LSE, coming back home for the winter and summer holidays. In 1925, their third daughter Helena was born in Bozen-Bolzano. From this period on, Masson experienced the symptoms of a

serious illness that made her progressively unable to move, and for this reason, the family started to move down from the plateau to the city of Bozen during the winter months, in the neighbourhood of Gries a well-known “Kurort” – spa town – since the end of nineteenth century. They rented a flat in two different villas in Gries, Villa Elisabeth at first (Wayne 1995 II: 78) and then Villa Marienheim (Wayne 1995 II: 115). In 1929, they moved to London, but continued to spend holidays in Oberbozen. Travelling from New York to New Haven in 1926, Malinowski wrote to Masson on 13 May 1926:

...I have dreadful pangs for you and for idyllic Europe (small, insignificant, backward but thank God still in existence) and for our little home. Funnily enough, I dream of our being once more in Bozen... Bozen (which I hate from Oberbozen, as you know) seems a real paradise. Probably its old-fashioned atmosphere, the vague associations with Cracow and my youth which it gives me, and our happy reunions after the usual London absences. (Wayne, 1995 II: 68)

From Villa Elisabeth in Gries, on 21 November 1926 Masson wrote once back in Bozen after a short visit to Oberbozen:

I had a passion of affection for our little house. It seemed to me a wonderful and miraculous thing that it really belonged to us. Towards evening I walked up and down the verandah and the whole place seemed saturated with the happy and even unhappy times we have had there. I think we should not sell the house rashly. Even if we went to England it would be worthwhile to have three summer months there... And we shall certainly spend Christmas in Oberbozen... (ibid: 88)

In the summer time, many of the couple’s friends and relatives and several of Malinowski’s students visited the family in Oberbozen (Kuper, 1996, Firth, 1957, Powdermaker, 1966). Many of these students became important figures in modern anthropology (Stocking, 1995), such as Raymond Firth, Edward E. Evans-Pritchard, Isaac Shapera, Hortense Powdermaker, Meyer Fortes and Audrey Richards, among others. The Malinowskis’ house in South Tyrol became a point of connection between the many nodes of their social network, a proper actant (in Latour’s lexicon) to be taken into account looking at biographical relationality. Firth described the atmosphere as follows:

Even his Oberbozen home was brought into the socioacademic orbit. Many graduate students stayed at the *Pfarrhaus*, the home of the priest at Maria Himmelfahrt nearby, and joined in the teas at the villa and the walks through pine woods and alpine meadows in the evening, with talk ranging from the latest thesis chapter to more general problems of social theory or more personal problems of agreement and difference. (Firth, 2004: 79)

They used to walk together along the mountain paths and woods, then continued to discuss at Malinowskis’ villa, where Masson contributed to readings and debates. Powdermaker offered this recollection:

After tea, Malinowski often walked, or rather climbed up a hill, with one

of us, discussing our thesis. He talked continuously as he walked; I was often breathless, but not he. After dinner, we were at the Malinowski villa again. Elsie, in her pleasant clear voice, read aloud from one of her husband's manuscripts or from another anthropologist's book. Radcliffe-Brown's *Andaman Islanders* was read in this manner. Malinowski or one of us would raise points for discussion. (Powdermaker 1966: 43-44)

Despite the fact that Malinowski spent a great deal of time in Oberbozen, and even if many of his students were there too, it seems that they were not very interested in South Tyrol's local life, since none of them carried out a field study in that area or elsewhere in the Alpine region, [6] as noted by Cole:

An entire generation of British anthropologists experienced invigorating walks in the mountains and enjoyed what Malinowski is said to have regarded as the finest scenery in all of Europe (Firth, 1957: 4; Kuper 1973: 34). But the discussions on these vacations were of research conducted far afield, and while all enjoyed the scenery, their professional gaze was across the seas, among the black and brown inhabitants of the dominions and colonies of the British Empire. (Cole, 1977: 350).

Although Malinowski seems to have paid little attention to local culture in South Tyrol as an ethnographer, he wrote some of his most famous works there, in his house in Oberbozen during vacations, likely helped by his wife.

#### **Life in Oberbozen in the 1920s and '30s**

Although they may have initially been attracted to South Tyrol as a central European resort area, when Malinowski and Masson came to live in Oberbozen in 1923 (Wayne 1995: 27f), they gradually had to come to terms with the fact that they were living in a border region that featured various cultural groups that were affected by Italian Fascism. [7] The German, Italian and Ladin speaking groups, as well as a long-standing Sinti population, all experienced an aggressive politics of Italianization (Gatterer 1968; Di Michele 2003; Lechner 2005). The political agenda of Italian Fascism in South Tyrol was defined by three elements: first, the internal border situation to the south with Trentino; second, the external border to the north with Austria; and, third, the ethnic-cultural borders within South Tyrol itself (Lechner 2011: 51). Elsie Masson herself documented Italian Fascism and its aggression towards the German-speaking South Tyroleans (Salvucci, 2017). [8]

In order to understand the political context of the 1920s and 1930s, the years in which Malinowski and Masson lived in Oberbozen, it is vital to consider how the Italian Fascists sought to create a 'total act of submission' (Lechner 2011: 52) in which the German-speaking South Tyroleans were to concede that they had been defeated on the Alpine Front during World War I. [9] It is noteworthy that economic and political power remained in the hands of the German-speaking population, while Italians were de facto excluded from all spheres of power. Italian Fascists in Rome and Bolzano interpreted this as a continuation of the Austro-Hungarian oppression of the Italians, and we still have little insight on how the Fascist regime observed the bourgeoisie, cosmopolitan and liberal intellectuals who lived in places



such as the Malinowski villa in Oberbozen. In this period, Italian peasants were struggling to drain swamplands in the broad Etsch (Adige) valley near the old market town of Bolzano. South Tyrolean farmers shipped their products on the Etsch river to the Italian south (Dughera 1998). The cultural differences between these Italian farmers in the valley and the self-sufficient German peasants living up on the Ritten plateau, where Oberbozen was located, were substantial. The farmers of the Ritten plateau worked on dry and often steep land, with family and domestics organized around the head of the farmstead, the *Bauer* (Cole & Wolf 1974). At the same time, Oberbozen, more than other rural areas in South Tyrol, witnessed high social stratification between farmers and the rich Bolzano merchants whose profits – made through wine production, transport and Bolzano’s trade fair [10] – were invested in prestigious summer villas in the mild and sunny village. Furthermore, the routes down in the main valley have for centuries connected the northern Alps and Germany with northern and central Italy. Malinowski and Masson perceived the jarring contrast between this transit-movement, of which Bolzano was and is a nodal point, and the seeming stability up in the mountains. Both enjoyed Oberbozen and disliked Bozen (Wayne 1995). As we see in the section that follows, Masson appears to have integrated into local and rural networks to a greater extent than Malinowski.

### Masson’s local relationality

Living in Oberbozen and later also in Bozen after her illness appeared, Elsie Masson established relations with both their upper-class and peasant neighbours. She also observed local peasant culture in Oberbozen, with which she was in contact thanks to her domestic assistant Maria and her family, and reported to Malinowski in letters about festivals, costumes and dances. On 8 February 1925, from Oberbozen she wrote:

As I had not been to the *Feuerwehr Ball* [the fire service ball] Franz [Maria’s fiancé] and Co [11] offered to come and *plattel* [*Schuhplatteln*, a country dance in Bavaria and Tyrol [12]] for me. Franz and Maria took up the drawing room carpet...and then all came in *Tracht* [local costume] with harmonicas and violins, and Maria and Gertie put on Dirndls and Doris also danced while I watched. Waltzes and occasional one step were varied with plattling... (Wayne, II: 36).

She made excursions in Oberbozen’s surroundings, entering the landscape and observing it as a lived place. When Masson visited the family home in Feldthurns of her domestic assistant Maria at the end of February 1925, she reported: “...It is absolutely rustic and the people go about in their costumes and are quite unspoiled”. She also remarked about the centrality of kinship ties in the village: “We went a walk through the village and every second person was a relative of Maria and extremely interested in the whole cortège...” (Wayne, II: 39).

Some days later, she described the rural houses:

I don’t know how much you would like this place as regards outlook and scenery...in Spring and Summer it must be really lovely. It is also very

‘echt’ [genuine]. The farm of Maria’s aunt is really worth a visit. It crouches against a rock over a dashing stream which turns a mill. The building is as picturesque and untidy as any production of Latin culture and in the little low *Stube* [living room] sits the eldest daughter on the seat round the oven at her spinning wheel spinning flax. (ibid: 39).

During another excursion in another valley, she also described landscapes as lived places and relationality between people, houses and places, as she wrote from Gries on 8 June 1927:

...[Yesterday] we took the *Post Auto* that goes to the Karer See [lago di Carezza] to pay the long promised visit to Anna, whose married name is von (sic) Feckel...at Birchabruck [Pontenova]. It is a pretty little place standing in a forked part of the valley with Latemar looking round one side of a fir clad hill and Rosengarten the other. (...) we visited the old peasant mother in a picturesque farmhouse overhanging the *Eggentaler Bach* [stream]...Von Feckel himself comes from an old peasant *Stamm* [clan] which has been in that neighbourhood since 1500... (ibid: 94).

Living in Oberbozen and Bozen in the 1920s and in the early 1930s, Masson could also observe the particular historical situation marked by the Italian Fascist dictatorship and the rise of the Nazism in Austria and Germany. In her first years in South Tyrol, she reported in English-language newspapers on the Italian political situation, describing the politics of the Fascist regime in the region, for example in an article she published in 1923 entitled “Viva il Fascio! Black Shirts at Bolzano” (Masson 1923). In her letters, she referred many times to the impositions and abuses of Fascists, reporting about censorship, the banning of the German language and newspapers and schools in German (Wayne 1995, II: 46, 51, 86, 95, 101, 109, 111). Firth writes that Malinowski “reacted strongly against local injustices, as he saw them the South Tyrol (Alto Adige) under Italian fascism” (Firth 1988: 21–22). In 1926 Masson wrote to Malinowski: “By the new decrees, no passes are to be given for anyone to leave the country and old ones are withdrawn, also all antif.[ascist] papers completely suppressed, including our local ones” (Wayne 1995: 86).

The family decided to send their daughter Józefa to private German lessons and, as Wayne writes, Wanda “went to a kindergarten also run in German. Such schooling had been made illegal by the Fascist government” (ibid.: 86). In October 1927 Malinowski related how in his discussion with his colleagues at the LSE he spoke of Fascists as “a certain political Sect (the Bloody Fools)” (ibid.: 101). In one of her letters of June 1927, Masson described the political atmosphere and how everybody was talking about the Italianization of school education: “there is no doubt that step [of banning the German language] has touched the peasantry as no other would have done” (ibid.: 95). She continued by describing her stay with farmers in a village on the other side of the Ritten plateau, near the Dolomites, visiting Anna (a former maid) and her family, who had prepared “an enormous and very well cooked meal” and given Masson and the children “the best bedroom” (ibid. 94).

Masson wrote to Malinowski in November 1927:

This afternoon I went rather early to the grand opening of the *Turnverein*

[athletics club] in its Italianised form Hilpold, the old *Turnlehrer* [gym teacher] and Fr. Civegna have got permission to give gymnastic lessons but have to join the new [Fascist] society and give all commands in Italian. (ibid. 109)

In March 1928 she wrote:

I have not felt inclined to read any actualities... even the speech of a certain person [Mussolini] failed to awaken any reaction except that of a sort of dry disgust. In fact the nearer I approach the *mise-en-scène* [of Fascism] the less emotional I feel. (ibid. 111)

Later Malinowski, too, publicly condemned the crimes of nationalism, Fascisms, Nazism and all kind of totalitarian regimes (Malinowski, 1944b, 1945b, Gellner 1998, Stone 2003, Young 2018).

The rich exchange of letters between Malinowski and Masson continued during the transfer from Oberbozen to London. The family moved to London in October 1929 (Wayne 1995, II: 146) and the house in Oberbozen became a holiday home. The family visited Oberbozen in 1930, 1931 and 1933. In July 1930, from Oberbozen, Masson wrote to Malinowski, who was in Poland for the last time: “Oh darling, nothing is really beautiful when I see it without you. But I have such a feeling of relief and joy to be in my own house, and in this little one, so perfect from my point of view.” (ibid: 155). After September 1933, Masson did not see Oberbozen again. [13] Malinowski wrote to her from Oberbozen, just after she left to try a new treatment in Leipzig: “In the morning I have my breakfast in your room at your bed and think of the many lovely mornings when we used to look at the landscape together”. At the same time, she typed to him: “Oh darling how I do love you...and do so long to be in Oberbozen, which is our Oberbozen, sad and autumnal” (ibid: 178). Some days later she also wrote: “Thank you so much for the cards of dear Oberbozen which I feel I shall never see again – probably I shall, but that is my emotional reaction to it”. (ibid: 180). Masson died in 1935 in Natters, near Innsbruck, where she went to spend the summer in 1934 (ibid: 187) and where she had to settle, having become unable to come back to London again (ibid: 201). Masson moved to Natters in 1934, because its road to the city meant that it was so much easier to get medical help quickly. Her multiple sclerosis had advanced to the point where the length of time it would have taken her doctor to reach Oberbozen from Bolzano was too great. [14]

Malinowski and the girls visited Oberbozen in 1937 and 1938. [15] Later “the house in Oberbozen was administered by a bank as enemy property through the war years. It was handed back to the Malinowski sisters soon after the war and stays in the family.” (Ibid: 242). Just before World War II started, Malinowski moved together with his daughters to the U.S. to teach at Yale University. He carried out new ethnographic research and fieldwork in Mexico (Malinowski, de la Fuente 1982; Drucker-Brown 1988), where his second wife, Valetta Swann, brought many of the Malinowskis’ documents and material, after he died suddenly in 1942.

### **The Malinowski Forum for Ethnography and Anthropology project (MFEA)**

Today the Malinowskis' villa still belongs to the family, and it remains an important reference point for them. As a means of honouring the Malinowskian presence in South Tyrol, Elisabeth Tauber and Dorothy Zinn created the Malinowski Forum for Ethnography and Anthropology (MFEA) in 2016 at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano (Unibz). The purpose of the Malinowski Forum is twofold. First, it endeavours to draw attention to the Malinowskis' connection to South Tyrol as an element of local cultural heritage. The MFEA is promoting research and collaboration with local organizations and institutions to uncover lesser-known dimensions about the Malinowski's period in the area, but also to increase local, national and international awareness of this presence through the dissemination of information and participation in commemorative initiatives. [16] Visitors to South Tyrol can find historical markers on the villa in Oberbozen that pay homage to Malinowski and Masson, as well as a plaque outside the municipal building of Gries. Fostering Bozen-Bolzano as a reference point for Malinowski studies, the MFEA has worked with the Unibz Library to develop a special section dedicated to works about and by Malinowski. Additionally, the MFEA website features an extensive database with works and resources on and by Malinowski and Masson. [17]

The other face of the project is less centred on the figures of Malinowski and Masson, and instead draws inspiration from this Malinowskian legacy to address the discipline more broadly on various levels. The MFEA aims to make anthropology more visible to those who know little about it, favouring an understanding of its distinctive epistemological perspective and potentials for today's world. For those who are already engaged in the discipline, the MFEA furthers ongoing discussions regarding the nature and practice of ethnography, especially through the organization of scientific events under the MFEA umbrella, such as the biennial symposium "Anthropological Talks in South Tyrol". The Forum also aims to recover the thread of Alpine anthropology that Malinowski himself never actively pursued, as noted above: bridging territorial and disciplinary concerns, the MFEA is participating in a revitalization of anthropological studies of the Alpine region. In this way, the Malinowski villa has again become an element in new anthropological undertakings.

### **Bibliography**

Bauer Janet, 1998. "Reviewed Work: The Story of a Marriage: The Letters of Bronislaw Malinowski and Elsie Masson by Helena Wayne, Bronislaw Malinowski, Elsie Masson", *American Ethnologist* 25(4), p. 769–771.

Clifford James, 1986. "On Ethnographic Self-Fashioning: Conrad and Malinowski", in T. C. Heller, M. Sosna, D. Wellberg, *Reconstructing Individualism*, Stanford University Press, p. 140-162.

Cole John W., 1977. "Anthropology Comes Part-Way Home: Community Studies in Europe", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6, p. 349–378.

- Cole John W., Eric R. Wolf, 1974. *The Hidden Frontier. Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- Di Michele Andrea, 2003. *L'italianizzazione imperfetta. L'amministrazione pubblica dell'Alto Adige tra Italia liberale e fascismo*, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso.
- Drucker-Brown Susan, 1988. "Malinowski en México", *Clásicos Y Contemporáneos En Antropología*, CIESAS-UAM-UIA, Anuario de Etnología Y Antropología Social I, p. 18–57.
- Ellen Roy, Ernest Gellner, Grażyna Kubica, Janusz Mucha, 1988. *Malinowski between Two Worlds: The Polish Roots of an Anthropological Tradition*, Cambridge University Press.
- Firth Raymond (ed), 1957. *Man and Culture: An Evaluation of the Work of Bronislaw Malinowski*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Firth Raymond, 1988. "Malinowski in the History of Social Anthropology" In R. F. Ellen, E. Gellner, G. Kubica, J. Mucha (eds.), *Malinowski between Two Worlds: The Polish Roots of an Anthropological Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, p. 12-42.
- Firth Raymond, 2004. "Bronislaw Malinowski", in S. Silverman (ed.), *Totems and Teachers: Key Figures in the History of Anthropology*, Oxford, Altamira, p. 75-101.
- Gatterer Claus, 1968. *Im Kampf gegen Rom. Bürger, Minderheiten und Autonomien in Italien*, Europa Verlag, Wien/Frankfurt/Zürich.
- Geertz Clifford, 1988. "I-Witnessing: Malinowski's Children", in C. Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author*, Stanford University Press, p. 73-101.
- Gellner Ernest, 1998. *Language and Solitude: Wittgenstein, Malinowski, and the Habsburg Dilemma*, Cambridge University Press.
- Gross Feliks, 1986. "Young Malinowski and His Later Years", *American Ethnologist* 13(3), p. 556–570.
- Kofler Engl, Waltraud, 2018. *Das Haus Malinowski*. Unpublished Manuscript, Bolzano.
- Kuper Adam, 1996. *Anthropology and Anthropologists: The Modern British School*, Routledge.
- Labanca Nicola. Oswald Überegger, 2015. *Krieg in den Alpen. Österreich-Ungarn und Italien im Ersten Weltkrieg (1914-1918)*, Wien, Böhlau.
- Lechner Stefan. 2011. "Die Grenzen des Faschismus in Südtirol", *Geschichte und Region/storia e regione, Faschismus an den Grenzen* 20, 1, p. 50-65.
- Lechner Stefan. 2005. *Die Eroberung der Fremdstämmigen. Provinzfaschismus in Südtirol 1921–1926* (Veröffentlichungen des Südtiroler Landesarchivs 20), Innsbruck, Universitätsverlag Wagner.

- Levin Irene, 2004. "Living Apart Together: A New Family Form", *Current Sociology* 52(2), p. 223-240.
- Lewis Herbert S., 1996. "The Malinowskis' Letters. Helena Wayne, ed.", *Current Anthropology* 37(5), p. 882–884.
- Lydon Jane, 2016. "Popularizing Anthropology: Elsie Masson and Baldwin Spencer", in J. Lydon, *Photography, Humanitarianism, Empire*, Bloomsbury Publishing, p. 77–96.
- McGuire William (ed.), 1974. *The Freud/Jung Letters. The correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, Princeton University Press.
- Malinowski Bronislaw, 1922. *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Malinowski Bronislaw, 1926. *Crime and Custom in Savage Society*. London, Kegan Paul.
- Malinowski Bronislaw, 1927. *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*, London, Routledge, Kegan Paul.
- Malinowski Bronislaw, 1929. *The Sexual Life of Savages in Northwestern Melanesia: An Ethnographic account of Courtship, Marriage and Family Life among the Natives of the Trobriand Islands*. London: Routledge.
- Malinowski Bronislaw, 1935. *Coral Gardens and Their Magic. A Study of the Methods of Tilling the Soil and of Agricultural Rites in the Trobriand Islands*, Vol 1: The description of Gardening; vol 2: The Language of Magic and Gardening, New York, American Book Co. – London, Allen & Unwin.
- Malinowski Bronislaw, 1944. *Freedom and Civilization*. New York, Roy.
- Malinowski Bronislaw, 1945. *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays*, New York, Doubleday.
- Malinowski Bronislaw , 1967. *A Diary in The Strict Sense Of The Term*, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Malinowski Bronislaw, Julio de la Fuente, 1982. *Malinowski in Mexico: The Economics of a Mexican Market System*, Susan Drucker-Brown, ed. Routledge & K. Paul.
- Masson Elsie, 1915. *An Untamed Territory: The Northern Territory of Australia*, London, Macmillan.
- Masson Elsie, 1923. "Viva il Fascio! Black Shirts at Bolzano" *Forum. A Journal for thinking Australians*. Sydney: Braham. (17 January 1923). Vol. 1 (18), p. 12.
- Papanek Hanna, 1973. "Men, Women, and Work: Reflections on the Two-Person Career", *American Journal of Sociology* 78(4), p. 852–872.

Powdermaker Hortense, 1966. *Stranger and Friend; the Way of an Anthropologist*. New York, W. W. Norton.

Salvucci Daniela, 2017. "MFEA - Il progetto "Malinowski Forum per l'Etnografia E l'Antropologia", Segnalazioni, Ethnorêma 13, p. 163-165

Skalník Peter, 1995. "Bronislaw Kasper Malinowski and Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz: Science versus Art in the Conceptualization of Culture", in H. F. Vermeulen, A. Alvarez Roldan (eds.), *Fieldwork and Footnotes: Studies in the History of European Anthropology*, EASA, London; New York, Routledge. p. 129-142.

Stocking George W., Jr., 1995. *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology, 1888-1951*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press.

Stone Dan, 2003. "Nazism as Modern Magic: Bronislaw Malinowski's Political Anthropology", *History and Anthropology* 14(3), p. 203-218.

Strathern Marilyn, 2018. "Infrastructures in and of ethnography", *ANUAC*, vol. 7(2), p. 49-69.

Tauber Elisabeth, Dorothy Zinn, 2018. "Back on the verandah and off again: Malinowski in South Tyrol and his ethnographic legacy" *ANUAC*, vol. 7(2), p. 9-25.

Thompson Christina A., 1995. "Anthropology's Conrad: Malinowski in the Tropics and What He Read", *The Journal of Pacific History* 30(1), p. 53-75.

Thornton Robert J., 1985. "Imagine Yourself Set Down...": Mach, Frazer, Conrad, Malinowski and the Role of Imagination in Ethnography', *Anthropology Today* 1(5), p. 7-14.

Varga Lucie, 1936. «Dans une Vallée du Vorarlberg : d'avant-hier à aujourd'hui», *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*, 8 (37), p. 1-20, 1936.

Wayne Helena, 1985. "Bronislaw Malinowski: The Influence of Various Women on His Life and Works", *American Ethnologist* 12 (3), p. 529-540.

Wayne Helena, 1995. *The Story of a Marriage: The Letters of Bronislaw Malinowski and Elsie Masson*. Vol. I 1916-20. Vol. II 1920-35, London: Routledge.

Young Michael W., 2004. *Malinowski: Odyssey of an Anthropologist, 1884-1920*, New Haven, Yale University Press.

Young Michael W., 2018. «Le Jason de L'anthropologie: Vie, Œuvre et Legs de Bronislaw Malinowski», B é r o s e .  
<http://www.berose.fr/?Le-Jason-de-l-anthropologie-vie-oeuvre-et-legs-de-Bronislaw-Malinowski>, accessed June 17, 2018.

---

[1] Our research and the other activities of the MFEA has been made possible through funding by the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano. The MFEA project coordinators thank former University President Konrad Bergmeister for his recognition of the project's value and steadfast support.

[2] According to Bourdieu, in order to understand an individual social trajectory, we need to reconstruct each one of the social fields within which this trajectory has been developing, by looking at the objective relations between the considered individual agent and the other agents involved in the same field (Bourdieu, 1986: 72), considering their economic and cultural capital.

[3] Burke and Ulrich noted this in a presentation at the Symposium "The Malinowskian Legacy in Ethnography", held at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano in September 2017.

[4] As we know from the letters that Freud sent to Jung in 1911 (McGuire, 1974). Freud wrote "please take note of the fact that after the 31st of this month I shall be (not at Oberbozen but) at Klobenstein, on the Ritten/Tyrol Hotel Klobenstein. It is half an hour further on the same plateau." Source: 266 F 21 July 1911, McGuire 1974: 436. One month later he wrote from Klobenstein: "This place has a very special kind of beauty. I am planning to stay here until 14 September and then go directly to Zürich. Since my mental powers revived, I have been working in a field where you will be surprised to meet me. (Note: the allusion is to the work that would become *Totem and Taboo*)". Source: 268F, 20 August 1911, *ibid.*: 438. On 1st of September Freud wrote from Klobenstein "Here on the Ritten it is divinely beautiful and comfortable. I have discovered in myself an inexhaustible desire to do nothing, except for the hour or two that I spend reading new things, and I hate to think that the beginning of the next month will bring me back to hard labour". Source: 270F, *ibidem*: 442.

[5] The local newspaper *Bozner Nachrichten* reported on 07.08.1923 (p. 4): "Dr. Benedikt Pobitzer, lawyer in Bozen, sold his property with meadow and pasture in Oberbozen to University Professor Dr. Bronislaw Malinowski for 35.000 Lire"; a few days later the local newspapers *Volksblatt*, (on 11.08.1923 p. 6) and *Der Burggräfler* (11.08.1923, p. 6) reported the same news. Source: Digital Archive of the Teßmann Library, Bozen.

[6] During the Symposium "The Malinowskian Legacy in Ethnography" (Bozen-Bolzano, September 2017), Pier Paolo Viazzo pointed out that the historian Lucie Varga applied the Malinowskian ethnographic method to her historical-ethnographic research in an Alpine Valley. She thanked Malinowski in her published essay (Varga, 1936) for having assisted her and discussed her work.

[7] The following paragraph has in part been published in Tauber and Zinn (2018)

[8] This one internal linguistic border would become the area where one of the first anthropological studies on ethnicity in Europe took place (Cole and Wolf 1974, Stacul 2000/2001).

[9] On WWI in the Alps, see Labanca and Überegger (2015).

[10] Hannes Obermair 2005 [https://www.gemeinde.bozen.it/cultura\\_context.jsp?ID\\_LINK=782&area=48](https://www.gemeinde.bozen.it/cultura_context.jsp?ID_LINK=782&area=48)



(last access, 25.10.2018)

[11] It is not clear if this abbreviation refers to a name or to “Company”.

[12] Note (13) by Wayne, II: 244.

[13] Patrick Burke 2018, personal communication.

[14] Lucy Ulrich 2018, personal communication.

[15] Patrick Burke 2018, personal communication

[16] The support of the Malinowski family for these efforts, particularly grandchildren Rebecca Stuart, Lucy Ulrich and Patrick Burke, has been most generous and invaluable.

[17] <https://mfea.projects.unibz.it/>