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We should not underestimate the effects on our discipline that giving first priority to the understanding of change may have. There has been a comfortable convention in social anthropology till now of treating "social change" as if it were a topic of anthropological investigation like "religion" or "domestic organization," something that may be discussed in addition to, and preferably subsequent to, other substantive fields in the description of social systems. But if we couch our description of these aspects of society as if we were dealing with forms that do not entail and reflect processes, we cannot expect that the terms and concepts we develop in this description will serve us with equal facility in the description of changing forms.

To understand social change, what we need to do as social anthropologists is to describe all of society in such terms that we see how it persists, maintains itself, and changes through time. This may mean recasting many of our terms for the description of social systems, not merely adding a chapter of additional data. To do the job of analyzing change adequately may mean that we will do some of the old jobs less adequately, or at least less simply, than we have been doing. To someone who does not share this priority, the efforts may look unnecessarily complicated and relatively fruitless. But for those who give the understanding of change high priority, it is wishful

thinking to expect that we can build indiscriminately on all the concepts that our discipline has developed for other purposes.

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