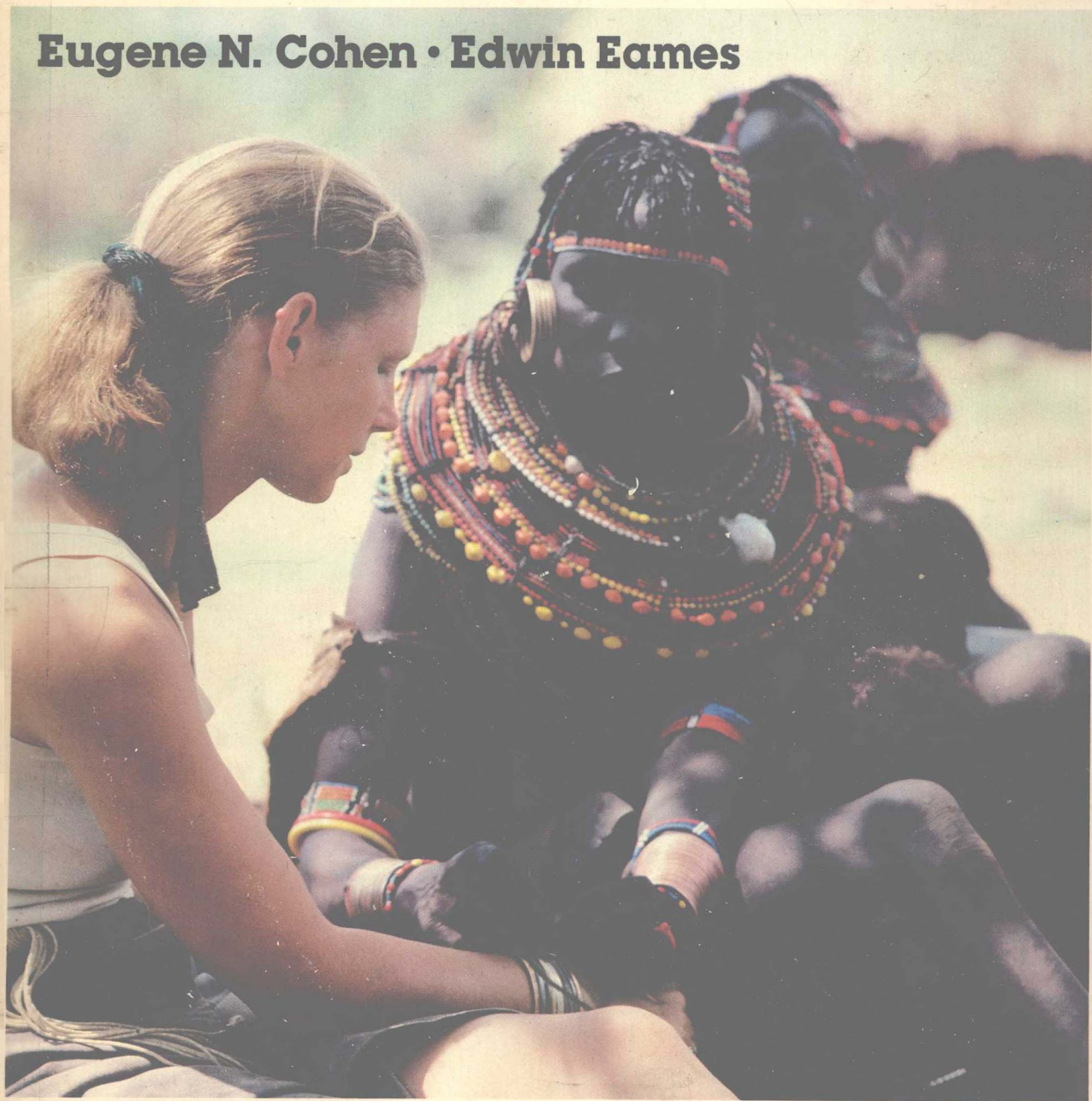


Cultural Anthropology

Eugene N. Cohen • Edwin Eames



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Cultural Anthropology



Little, Brown and Company
Boston Toronto

To Helen, Robert, and Michael
and
Phyllis, Mona, David, and Lori

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Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 81-81413
ISBN 0-316-149918

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Hal

Published simultaneously in Canada
by Little, Brown & Company (Canada) Limited

Printed in the United States of America

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge permission to use material from the following sources.

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To the Instructor

We decided to write this introductory text when we found that, using existing texts, it was difficult to motivate our students without skimping on important concepts. From our more than three decades of teaching experience we have noticed that students responded favorably to ethnographic accounts based upon fieldwork. Therefore, a fundamental feature of our presentation is the integration of ethnographic data with analysis throughout the text to clearly – and interestingly – document the scientific process that is the basis of the anthropological study of human behavior.

Carefully abridged ethnographic accounts written by professional anthropologists, as well as original and unpublished ethnographic data from the authors' own field research, begin each chapter. These accounts introduce students to the basic scientific material of cultural anthropology and to its technical vocabulary. We chose ethnographies that reflect the divergent and world wide interests of cultural anthropologists. These range from descriptions of the subsistence patterns of a New Guinea Highland tribe (Chapter 3) to the study of female impersonators in the United States (Chapter 13), from the dedication of a bridge in South Africa (Chapter 2) to the celebration of a birthday party for a bridge connecting New Jersey and Pennsylvania (Chapter 2). In addition to standard ethnographies, historical sources have been tapped for their descriptions. An account of the encounter with the Buganda king by a British traveler more than one hundred years ago opens Chapter 7, and a de-

scription of a Maori revolt against British authority a century ago introduces the topic of social change (Chapter 12). In Chapter 5 we have selected an unusual format, a play script to begin the chapter. This play, based upon an actual incident in the lives of a group of Tlingit Indians, introduces the importance of kinship in an innovative way. Language and culture (Chapter 11) begins with a description of language acquisition by a fieldworker's son who accompanied him to a tribal area of India.

These opening ethnographic accounts are the basis for the general discussion in the chapter. From Chapter 3 on, a tripartite division – ethnography, contextual analysis, and comparative perspective – takes the student from specific data to generalization and theoretical construct. For instance, Chapter 10 begins with a description of child rearing among the Ngoni. Their socialization techniques are then discussed in the context of the history of Ngoni migration and military domination. In the comparative section various socialization techniques are then described, generalizations are derived, and theoretical explanations are explored. This model parallels the process of moving from ethnography to generalization characteristic of the discipline.

Our initial enthusiasm for the ethnographic approach has been heightened by the responses of students and colleagues to earlier versions of this text. Students' comments and criticisms as well as those of professional reviewers have had an impact upon this final version. We believe the changes based upon their

responses make this one of the best volumes available for an introductory course in cultural anthropology.

We have provided a broad coverage of the field while at the same time incorporating a variety of approaches to enhance the effectiveness of the text. Included are an extended discussion of anthropological methods of research and analysis, a systematic presentation of the mutual interplay of theory and data, an emphasis on anthropology's contribution to an understanding of the modern world, and a focus on the human as well as the institutional aspects of life.

Since fieldwork is the foundation of ethnographic description, we have provided students with a glimpse of both the human and scientific aspects of this singular method of data collection. In Chapter 1 a variety of personalized fieldwork accounts provide insight into the many problems encountered while doing fieldwork. Using the material provided a student can be taken from the initial steps of defining a research problem and obtaining funds to the completion of the fieldwork.

Theoretical explanations are among the most important contributions of anthropologists to the understanding of human behavior. Throughout the text theoretical explanations of particular aspects of behavior are developed. Chapter 2 provides explanations of the various theories current in anthropology. Using the incest taboo and the way different theories explain its universality, we are able to document the varied approaches of the current major theoretical positions held by cultural anthropologists. By focusing on fieldwork and theory early in the book, we feel that students will be better able to appreciate the scientific underpinnings of cultural anthropology. In our later discussions of subsistence, marriage and the family, kinship, war, origin of the state, and mental illness we present various theoretical positions and critically evaluate them. In teach-

ing, however, we have found that students are often bewildered by abstract theoretical explanations that are not solidly moored in concrete empirical data. Therefore, we have tried to attain a balance of theory and data – that combination that will most clearly convey meaning to students. For example, Chapter 8 takes a complex arena of human behavior – religion – and subjects it to a sustained and systematic theoretical position derived from the work of Victor W. Turner. Taking the theoretical position he developed to explain the religious practices and beliefs of the Ndembu people of Central Africa, we show its utility and value in explaining the religious beliefs and practices of other cultures; from this one specific application, we hope students will see the usefulness of theory in enlarging our understanding of human behavior.

Specific sections of the text are designed to illustrate the anthropological contribution to an understanding of the world we live in. Our contemporary world is to a significant degree the consequence of five hundred years of European colonial hegemony. In Chapter 12 we explore colonialism not as an isolated historical interlude, but as the framework within which the social structure of our planet has been transformed. Social change, for Western culture as well as for tribal and peasant cultures, is presented within the context of the colonial experience. Among the most serious problems facing our time is the question of war. Interest in war as a social and cultural phenomenon has recently emerged in cultural anthropology, and this new interest is reflected in our extensive treatment in Chapter 6. We find it perplexing that although marriage and family are given extensive coverage in cultural anthropology, the question of divorce is rarely discussed in introductory textbooks. As the number of divorces per year in the United States approaches the two million mark, it seems incumbent upon cultural anthropologists to make their findings

available to a wider audience. We do this in Chapter 4. In order to understand the modern world, material from American and Western society has been included as well as the more traditional data from tribal and peasant society.

Although cultural anthropologists recognize the human aspects of their discipline, this side of cultural anthropology is rarely described to the introductory student. An entire chapter, Chapter 9, describes the variety of ways in which people enjoy themselves. In addition to topics such as food, sex, and games, actual recipes that can be tried by students are included in this chapter. The humanistic component of cultural anthropology is introduced throughout the text as well.

There are four parts to the text: Part I, "The Uniqueness of Cultural Anthropology," introduces the unique manner in which cultural anthropologists collect and analyze data about human behavior in diverse cultural settings. Part II, "Dimensions of Social Behavior," looks at the ways in which people in different cultures order their lives. "Learning the System," Part III, explores the processes of acquiring culture and how cultures change. In Part IV, "Retrospect and Prospect," we look at cultural anthropology within the context of a changing world. By beginning with data collection and analysis we provide a foundation for understanding and evaluating the substantive findings of the field. By concluding with a view of the future of cultural anthropology, we are able to identify its enduring qualities as a scientific and humanistic inquiry into the human condition.

Within the text specific teaching aids are used to enhance its effectiveness. Key terms and important concepts are italicized in the text for easy reference. Each chapter concludes with a world map indicating the location of all groups discussed in that chapter. In addition maps on the inside front and back covers show the locations of all peoples discussed in the

text. Maps provide information that students should acquire as part of their introduction to cultural anthropology. Each chapter ends with a concise summary and a list of the key terms introduced. The terms are listed in the order in which they appear within the text, thus providing a skeleton framework for chapter review. Definitions of terms and concepts can be found within each chapter and in the comprehensive glossary at the end of the book. An annotated suggested readings list at the end of each chapter provides readily available material that students can use as a starting point for information about specific areas of anthropological work. A reference bibliography at the back of the book identifies the sources used in writing the text. It can be used by those students wishing to explore more advanced topics in anthropology or who are given assignments requiring reading and research.

An instructor's manual has been prepared to accompany the text. It contains more than 700 test items. We believe that the ethnographic emphasis of the text can be strengthened through the use of ethnographic films. Therefore, we include in the manual a selected and annotated list of films to supplement each chapter.

Acknowledgments

Writing a text book is neither a simple nor easily accomplished task, and we were fortunate in having had the assistance of many friends, colleagues, and co-workers. We would like to acknowledge the aid and encouragement of our colleagues at Baruch College, in particular Norman W. Storer, Chairman of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Larry Arno and the staff of the Audiovisual Center, and Harold Iverson and the staff of the library. Virginia Lotz, secretary of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, cheerfully assumed the responsibility for the numerous details related to the

writing of this text. Avrama Gingold and Sandra Dean not only typed and retyped several versions of the manuscript, but also offered editorial suggestions and comments. Particular thanks are owed to Ceal Holzman who, in her capacity as research assistant, provided bibliographical material, film reviews, library research, and critical evaluations of our writing.

A number of our colleagues have been very helpful in supplying photographs. William Bascom, Gerald Berreman, Alan Beals, Robbins Burling, Paul Doughty, Raymond Firth, James Gibbs, Robert Glasse, Paul Hocking, Anthony Leeds, Lorna Marshall, Esther Newton, Lisa Peattie, Arnold Pilling, Victor W. Turner, and Eric Wolf generously shared their photographs with us. Our only regret is that we could not use all of the photographs they supplied.

We are grateful to the following people who reviewed portions of the manuscript or helped us obtain specific materials incorporated in the text: Ruth Almstedt, San Diego State; Sandra Barnes, University of Pennsylvania; William Bascom, University of California at Berkeley; Roger Basham, College of the Canyons; Peter Bertocci, Oakland University; Jean Briggs, Memorial University, Newfoundland; James Gibbs, Stanford University; Walter Goldschmidt, UCLA; Michael Harner, New School for Social Research; Mary Hyatt, Baruch College; Selma Koss-Brandow, Trenton State; Mervyn Meggitt, Queens College CUNY; Anthony Mendonca, Community College of Allegheny County; Salo Weindling; and Daniel Yakes, Muskegon Community College. The editorial staff at *National Geographic* and Elizabeth Meyerhoff deserve our special thanks for providing the photograph used for the front cover. Particular appreciation is owed to James Gibbs who reviewed an earlier version of the manuscript and stayed with our project until comple-

tion. We must also include that large number of anonymous individuals who critically reviewed the manuscript. We did not always agree with their reviews, but a considerable number of their suggestions found their way into our text and we do appreciate the effort and thought they gave our work.

Writing is only the initial step in producing a finished book. Between the authors and the final product stand a large number of individuals whose time and professional input are an absolutely necessary ingredient. The staff at Little, Brown contributed a level of interest and competence that converted a manuscript into a textbook. Jane Aaron and Garret White were extremely helpful in initiating and supervising the project. Janet B. Welch, developmental editor, took what was often an unwieldy manuscript and transformed it into an integrated teaching tool. Almost every page of the text reflects her professional skill and involvement. Cynthia Chapin, book editor, was responsible for establishing a production schedule and keeping us to it. Thanks are also due Laurel Anderson, photo researcher, Frances Garelick, copyeditor, and Andrea Pozgay, permissions editor. Barbara Anderson and Billie Ingram, editorial assistants, handled the myriad details that are always part of producing a book.

Our wives, Helen and Phyllis, gracefully accepted the madness associated with writing this text. Missed dinners, lost weekends, interminable phone conversations, and houses littered with papers, files, typescript, and books were tolerated with good humor and understanding. Finally, we must acknowledge the help, albeit anonymous, of our students whose criticisms and comments of earlier versions of the text were important contributions to its final form.

To the Student

A basic challenge you'll face in an introductory anthropology course is becoming familiar with what appears to be a bewildering variety of tribal and peasant groups. Cultural and social groups are to cultural anthropology as elements are to chemistry; they are the real-life material whose behavior researchers observe and record. From these observations come the fundamental theories that you'll study in this course. To help you become familiar with these many groups, we've included a world map at the end of each chapter that shows the name and locations of the groups discussed. We hope these maps will be helpful as you review the text.

All scientists use words that have special meaning within each scientific discipline; for example, *calorie*, which to most of us is something to count, has a technical meaning — a unit of heat — to a chemist. Anthropologists, too, use a special, technical vocabulary. In the text, we have alerted you to an anthropological term or concept by italicizing it and providing the anthropological definition. You'll also find lists of these key terms at the end of each chapter and a glossary at the back of the book that should help you review new terms.

In the vocabulary of cultural anthropology there is one term — *tribe* — that is not only widely used, but also defies a clear-cut and universally accepted meaning. It would be impossible to write a text in cultural anthropology without using the words *tribe* and *tribal*. What do they mean, and how do we use them? Many anthropologists use the term *tribe* to refer to a particular level of political organization, usually defined as simple and lacking complex institutions. Other definitions of this term stress the lack of a written language and emphasize kinship relations as basic attributes. In this text, we use the terms *tribe* and *tribal* to refer to groups having a particular means of making a living and obtaining food: *hunters and gatherers* who hunt wild animals and gather vegetable foods growing in the wild, *gardeners* who grow their own food, but use a simple technology without the use of plows or draft animals, and *pastoralists* who tend herds of domesticated animals. Our usage is primarily *economic* and differentiates *tribal* people from *peasants* who are farmers using plows, draft animals, and fertilization techniques that permit continuous cultivation.

Introduction

Anthropology is a scientific discipline that takes as its subject matter human beings and human behavior. Traditionally, it has been divided into four major fields: *physical anthropology*, *archaeology*, *linguistics*, and *cultural anthropology*. Together these four branches constitute the total discipline of anthropology often called *general anthropology*.

Physical anthropologists study human biology, describing the genetic and physical characteristics of humanity. They also investigate the origins of the human species. The search for the physical remains – fossil bones and teeth – of our ancestors is a central activity in physical anthropology. Through the work of the late Louis Leakey in East Africa the search for our human ancestors is probably that aspect of anthropology most familiar to the general public. His research in East Africa revolutionized our knowledge about the antiquity of human origins.

Archaeologists study humanity's past by excavating, or literally digging up, the physical remains of past cultures. These remains can range from buried and forgotten cities to small and broken pieces of pottery. Usually, no written records exist that describe these past cultures or ways of life. Therefore, archaeologists must reconstruct them from the remains, or artifacts, that are uncovered. Certainly, the most well-known archaeological discovery was the excavation of the tomb of Tutankhamen, a pharaoh of ancient Egypt.

Linguistics is the scientific study of language. Recording the numerous nonwritten languages spoken by tribal people and analyz-

ing their grammatical structures occupies a major place in linguistic anthropology. Linguists also investigate the biological and physical bases of human speech and the possibility of language capacity among nonhuman primates. A specialized field of study in linguistics, historical linguistics, investigates the relationships between separate languages. Thus, linguists are able to show that languages as diverse as Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Persian, English, Russian and ancient Hittite are all descended from a prehistoric and now extinct language called Indo-European.

Cultural anthropologists study all aspects of human behavior and thought. Describing the varied customs, manners, and ways of life of different groups all over the world is a basic task of this branch of general anthropology. In addition, explaining and understanding human behavior is an important goal for cultural anthropologists. For these reasons cultural anthropology is often classified as a social science, sharing close ties and common interests with sociology, psychology, political science, economics, and history.

What ties these diverse subfields of anthropology together? Primarily it is their interest in the human condition. From their different perspectives and approaches they illuminate the problems of our origin, history, and behavior. Cultural anthropology and archaeology share an interest in the history and development of human culture. What the cultural anthropologist observes directly, the archaeologist infers indirectly from the artifacts uncovered in the process of excavation. Physical

anthropologists and cultural anthropologists share overlapping concerns. The cultural anthropologist often turns to the findings of physical anthropology to ascertain the physiological and biological framework of human behavior. Attempting to determine the impact of language upon behavior and thought, cultural anthropologists use the specialized research and theories developed by linguists.

It is from the integration of these different branches that anthropologists develop a *holistic* or integrative view of humanity. This view incorporates the biological, historical, and cultural dimensions of the human condition. Cultural anthropology is unique among the social sciences. Not only does it bring to the study of humanity an awareness of the historical and biological aspects of our behavior, but it is distinctive in terms of the breadth of its subject matter and its methods of research and analysis.

Traditionally, cultural anthropology was defined as the study of non-Western tribal people. This dimension differentiated cultural anthropology from the other social sciences that took as their subject matter literate civilizations and Western society. Although many people still view anthropology as the study of tribal

people, more and more anthropologists have shifted their interest to the study of modern society. Today, you are as likely to find an anthropologist doing research in New York City as in the islands of the South Pacific. Thus, the emphasis on the study of non-Western tribal people no longer defines cultural anthropology.

Over the years, the significance and relevance of cultural anthropology have been debated and widely discussed. When cultural anthropology was defined as the study of tribal people, it was suggested that such study would provide insight into our own past. As anthropologists direct their attention to the study of American and Western society, they can perhaps provide a significant understanding of our own behavior and institutions. In 1979, Andrew Young, then the United States Ambassador to the United Nations, presented a posthumous award to Margaret Mead, one of the most illustrious figures in anthropology. In presenting this award, he said, "It would be wonderful to have some anthropologists sitting in our National Security Council. . . . Such representation . . . might help the United States better understand social and cultural changes at a time when we are hard-pressed to make sense of these mammoth forces that confront us." (1979).

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