

MIRROR FOR HUMANITY

A CONCISE INTRODUCTION
TO CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY



CONRAD PHILLIP KOTTAK

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TO CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Conrad Phillip Kottak

University of Michigan

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To My Daughter
Juliet Kottak Mavromatis

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A Concise Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

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and Chair of Anthropology at the University of Michigan, where he has taught since 1968. In 1991 he was honored for his teaching by the University and the state of Michigan. In 1992 he received an excellence in teaching award from the College of Literature, Sciences, and the Arts of the University of Michigan.

Professor Kottak has done field work in cultural anthropology in Brazil (since 1962), Madagascar (since 1966), and the United States. His general interests are in the processes by which local cultures are incorporated into larger systems. This interest links his earlier work on ecology and state formation in Africa and Madagascar to his more recent research on global change, national and international culture, and the mass media.

The second edition of Kottak's case study *Assault on Paradise: Social Change in a Brazilian Village*, based on his field work in Arembépe, Bahia, Brazil, from 1962 through 1992, was published in 1992 by McGraw-Hill. In a project during the 1980s, collaborating with Brazilian and North American researchers, Kottak blended ethnography and survey research in studying "Television's Behavioral Effects in Brazil." That research is the basis of Kottak's book *Prime-Time Society: An Anthropological Analysis of Television and Culture* (Wadsworth 1990)—a comparative study of the nature and impact of television in Brazil and the United States.

Kottak's other books include *The Past in the Present: History, Ecology and Cultural Variation in Highland Madagascar* (1980), *Researching American Culture: A Guide for Student Anthropologists* (1982) (both University of Michigan Press) and *Madagascar: Society and History* (1986) (Carolina Academic Press). Six editions of Kottak's texts *Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity* and *Cultural Anthropology* were published by McGraw-Hill in 1994.

Conrad Kottak's articles have appeared in academic journals including *American Anthropologist*, *Journal of Anthropological Research*, *American Ethnologist*, *Ethnology*, *Human Organization*, and *Luso-Brazilian Review*. He has also written for more popular journals, including *Transaction/SOCIETY*, *Natural History*, *Psychology Today*, and *General Anthropology*.

In current and recent research projects, Kottak and his colleagues have investigated the emergence of ecological awareness in Brazil, the social context of deforestation in Madagascar, and popular participation in economic development planning in northeastern Brazil.

Conrad Kottak appreciates comments about his textbook from professors and students. He can be readily reached by e-mail at the following internet address:

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Ordinarily we are unaware of the special lens through which we look at life. It would hardly be fish who discovered the existence of water. Students who had not yet gone beyond the horizon of their own society could not be expected to perceive custom which was the stuff of their own thinking. *Anthropology holds up a great mirror to man and lets him look at himself in his infinite variety.*

(Kluckhohn 1944, p. 16—his emphasis)

Preface

Like other Overture Books, *Mirror for Humanity* (MFH) is intended to provide a concise, relatively low-cost introduction to a field, in this case cultural anthropology. The combination of shorter length, lower cost, and readability should expand the instructor's options for assigning varied additional reading—case studies, ethnographic monographs, readers, and other supplements. This book may also work well in a quarter system, if traditional cultural anthropology texts have proved too long for a one-quarter course.

MFH is also an up-to-date introduction: Anthropology, reflecting the world itself, seems to change at an increasing pace. **The introductory text should not restrict itself to subject matter defined a generation ago and ignore contemporary changes.** Included in MFH, for example, are discussions of the demise of the Soviet Union and its relevance to issues of ethnicity and nationalism, the growing significance of multiculturalism in North America, and anthropology's increasingly transnational, multilocal, and longitudinal perspectives.

Still, rapid change notwithstanding, **anthropology has a core.** Even the briefest text must expose anthropology's nature, scope, and roles as a **science**, a **humanities** field, and a **mirror for humanity**. Anthropology is a *science*—a “systematic field of study or body of knowledge that aims, through experiment, observation, and deduction, to produce reliable explanations of phenomena, with reference to the material and physical world” (*Webster's New World Encyclopedia*, 1993, p. 937). Clyde Kluckhohn (1944, p. 9) called anthropology “the science of human similarities and differences,” and his statement of the need for such a science still stands: “Anthropology provides a scientific basis for dealing with the crucial dilemma of the world today: how can peoples of different appearance, mutually unintelligible languages, and dissimilar ways of life get along peaceably together?” (Kluckhohn 1944, p. 9). Cultural anthropology has compiled an impressive body of knowledge, which this textbook attempts to encapsulate.

Anthropology is also a *humanities* field. In fact, cultural anthropology may well be the most humanistic of academic fields, because of its fundamental respect for human diversity. Anthropologists listen to, record, and represent voices from a multitude of nations and cultures. We strive to convince our students of the value of local knowledge, of diverse world views and perspectives. Cultural anthropology brings a comparative and nonelitist perspective to forms of creative expression, including art, narratives, music, and dance. Cultural anthropology influences and is influenced by the humanities. For example, adopting an anthropological view of cre-

ativity in its social and cultural context, recent approaches in the humanities have paid greater attention to mass and popular culture and to local creative expressions. Another convergence between anthropology and the humanities is the view of cultural expressions—"unwritten behavior, speech, beliefs, oral tradition, and ritual" (Clifford 1988, p. 39)—as patterned texts whose meanings must be deciphered in a particular cultural context. A final link between anthropology and the humanities is the study of ethnographic accounts as forms of written, visual, or auditory representations of other cultures and experiences (Clifford 1988; Marcus and Fischer 1986).

Anthropology's final basic role is as a *mirror for humanity*—a term derived from Clyde Kluckhohn's metaphor, expressed in his book *Mirror for Man* (1944), which suggested the title of this text. By looking at other cultures we can see ourselves more clearly:

Ordinarily we are unaware of the special lens through which we look at life. It would hardly be fish who discovered the existence of water. Students who had not yet gone beyond the horizon of their own society could not be expected to perceive custom which was the stuff of their own thinking. *Anthropology holds up a great mirror to man and lets him look at himself in his infinite variety.* (Kluckhohn 1944, p. 16—his emphasis)

This point reminds me of one of my teachers, Margaret Mead. Although Kluckhohn wrote the popular book entitled *Mirror for Man*, anthropologists remember Mead for her unparalleled success in demonstrating anthropology's value and relevance in allowing Americans to reflect on cultural variation and the plasticity of human nature. Mead conveyed the anthropological perspective to a broad public in a way no contemporary anthropologist does. She represented anthropology so effectively because she viewed it as *a humanistic science of unique value in understanding and improving the human condition*. This book is written in the belief that anthropologists should remember and emulate Margaret Mead's example.

No single or monolithic theoretical perspective orients this book. Instructors with a wide range of views and approaches should be able to use it effectively. MFH is derived from my longer McGraw-Hill text *Cultural Anthropology 6e*, but with new writing and updating. MFH condenses and reduces 19 chapters into 14, with conceptual and textual reorganization. Most notably, the chapters on language (5) and religion (6) directly follow those on culture (2), ethnicity (3), and race (4), instead of being placed toward the end of the book. The organization is intended to cover core and basics, while also illustrating prominent current issues. MFH concludes with three chapters especially relevant to anthropology's role in today's world: Applied Anthropology (12), Development and Innovation (13), and Cultural Exchange and Survival (14).

MFH has four important chapters not consistently found in cultural anthropology texts: Ethnicity and Ethnic Relations (3), The Cultural Construction of Race (4), Gender (10), and Cultural Exchange and Survival (14). These and other chapters explore the nature, role, and preservation of human diversity in the face of globalization. I recognize and try to show how linkages in the modern world system have both enlarged and erased old boundaries and distinctions as described in standard anthropology textbooks. People travel more than ever, but migrants maintain their ties with home, so that they live multilocally. With so many people "in motion," the unit of anthropological study expands from the local community to the transnational diaspora.

In considering ethnic and national cultural identities, Chapter 3 examines multiculturalism in North America and the revival of ethnic expression and conflict in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Chapter 14 focuses on issues of cultural exchange and survival in a global culture driven by flows of people, technology, finance, images, information, and ideology. Different degrees of destruction, domination, resistance, survival, adaptation, and modification of native cultures have followed contact between cultures and ethnic groups. Indigenous peoples have devised various strategies to resist attacks on their autonomy, identity, and livelihood. New forms of political mobilization and cultural expression have emerged from the interplay of local, regional, national, and international cultural forces.

I am pleased to have been one of the textbook authors chosen to participate in the **Gender in the Curriculum** Project of the American Anthropological Association. In that project I was paired with Yolanda Moses, who commented extensively on, and met with me to discuss, the treatment of gender issues in my texts *Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity* and *Cultural Anthropology*. The lessons I learned have also been incorporated in MFH, in which gender issues are the focus of a separate chapter (10) but are also considered throughout the text.

Pedagogy: MFH incorporates suggestions made by users of my other texts and pre-publication reviewers of this one. The result, I hope, is a sound, well-organized, interesting, and "user-friendly" introduction to cultural anthropology.

MFH contains several **issues boxes**, intended to give students a chance to consider anthropology's relevance to today's multicultural world and to their own lives. Some boxes examine current events or debates. Others are personal accounts of field experiences, which add human feeling to the presentation of cultural anthropology's subject matter. Many boxes illustrate a point by bringing in an example familiar to students from their enculturation or everyday experience.

A **glossary** defining terms boldfaced in each chapter is found at the end of the book, along with a **bibliography** of references cited.

Available for use with MFH is an **ethnographic case studies** book *Culture*

Sketches by Holly Peters-Golden. This supplement profiles several of the cultures discussed in MFH. Dr. Peters-Golden has taught introductory anthropology at the University of Michigan, using my textbook, for several years.

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I am grateful to many present and past colleagues at McGraw-Hill. I thank Jill Gordon, McGraw-Hill's anthropology editor, for her support and input. Sylvia Shepard, my former developmental editor, will also recognize her contribution, especially in helping me conceptualize Chapters 3 and 14. Lori Pearson, a previous anthropology editor at McGraw-Hill, helped me develop the idea of this book; I appreciate her enthusiasm. I continue to enjoy working with Phil Butcher, McGraw-Hill's social science publisher.

I thank Linda Richmond for her efficient work as editing supervisor and for keeping everything moving on schedule. It's been a pleasure to work again with Barbara Salz, photo researcher, and Kathy Bendo, photo manager. I also thank Mary Louise Byrd, for her copyediting; Joan O'Connor, for conceiving and executing the design; Kathryn Porzio, for shepherding the manuscript through production; and Lesley Denton, marketing project manager.

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I thank all the colleagues and students who have used my other texts and who have sent me their comments, corrections, and suggestions—personally, through McGraw-Hill sales representatives, and via e-mail. Anyone—student or instructor—with access to e-mail (internet) can send me messages and suggestions at the following address: ckottak@umich.edu

As usual, my family has offered me understanding, support, and inspiration during the preparation of *Mirror for Humanity*. I dedicate this book to my daughter, Juliet Kottak Mavromatis, M.D., who continues our family tradition of exploring human diversity and diagnosing and treating the human condition.

After 27 years of teaching, I have benefitted from the knowledge, help, and advice of so many friends, colleagues, teaching assistants, and students that I can no longer fit their names into a short preface. I hope they know who they are and accept my thanks.

Annually since 1968 I've taught Anthropology 101 (Introduction to Anthropology) to a class of 500-600 students, with the help of 7-12 teaching assistants each time. Feedback from students and teaching assistants keeps me up-to-date on the interests, needs, and views of the people for whom MFH is written. I continue to believe that effective textbooks have to be based in enthusiasm and in practice—in the enjoyment of one's own teaching experience. I hope that this product of my experience will be helpful to others.

Conrad Phillip Kottak

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