SPRADLEY

conformity and conflict

READINGS IN CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

NINTH EDITION

CONFORMITY AND CONFLICT

Readings in Cultural Anthropology

NINTH EDITION

James Spradley

David W. McCurdy
Macalester College

An imprint of Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

New York • Reading, Massachusetts • Menlo Park, California • Harlow, England
Don Mills, Ontario • Sydney • Mexico City • Madrid • Amsterdam

Acquisitions Editor: Margaret Loftus
Supplements Editor: Tom Kulesa
Project Coordination and Text Design: York Production Services
Cover Designer: Kay Petronio
Cover Photos: Photodisk, Inc.
Art Coordination: York Production Services
Photo Researcher: Karen Koblik
Electronic Production Manager: Valerie Zaborski
Manufacturing Manager: Helene G. Landers
Electronic Page Makeup: York Production Services
Printer and Binder: R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company
Cover Printer: Phoenix Color Corp.

For permission to use copyrighted material, grateful acknowledgment is made to the copyright holders on page 408, which are hereby made part of this copyright page.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

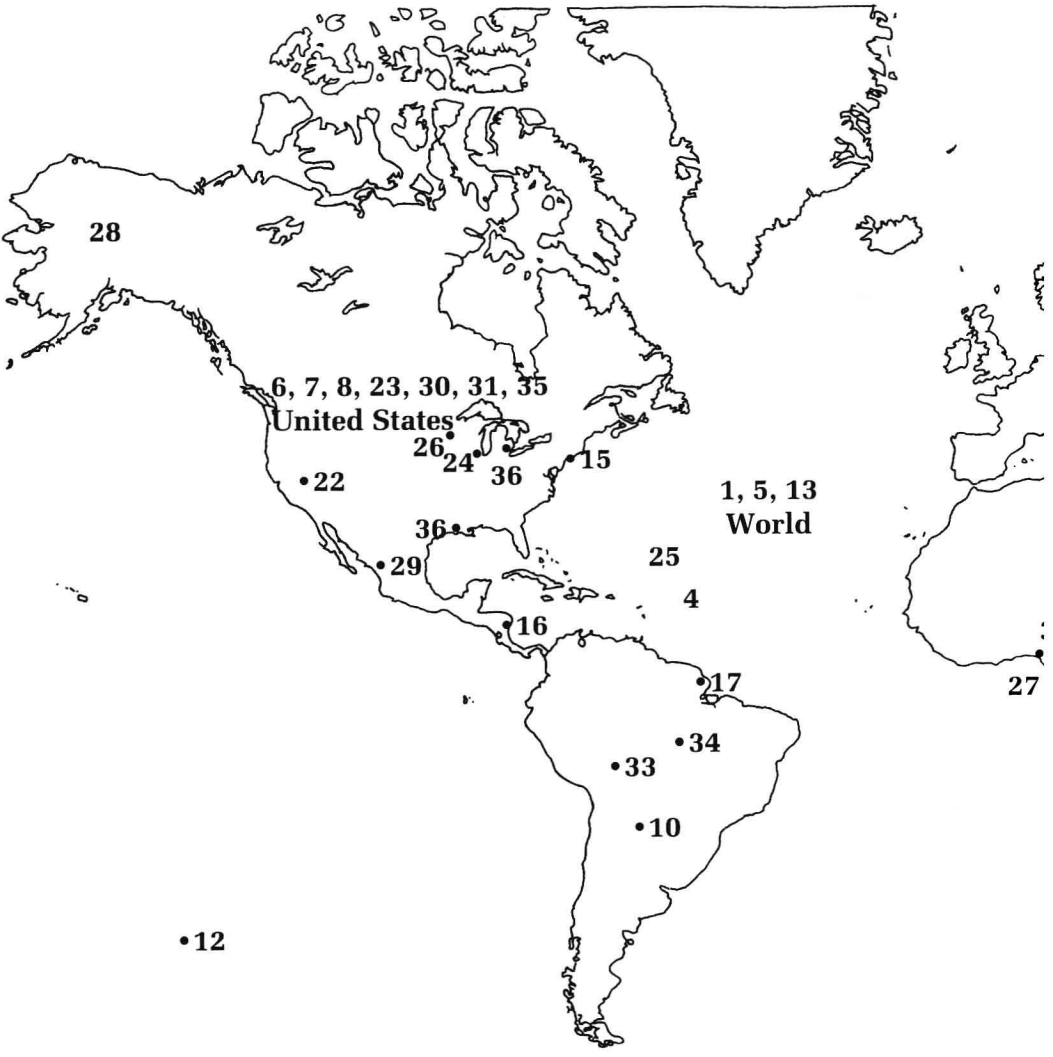
Conformity and conflict: readings in cultural anthropology/James P. Spradley, David W. McCurdy, [editors]. —9th ed.
p. cm.
Includes index.
ISBN 0-673-52510-4
1. Ethnology. I. Spradley, James P. II. McCurdy, David W.
GN325.C69 1996
305.8—dc20 96-27415
CIP

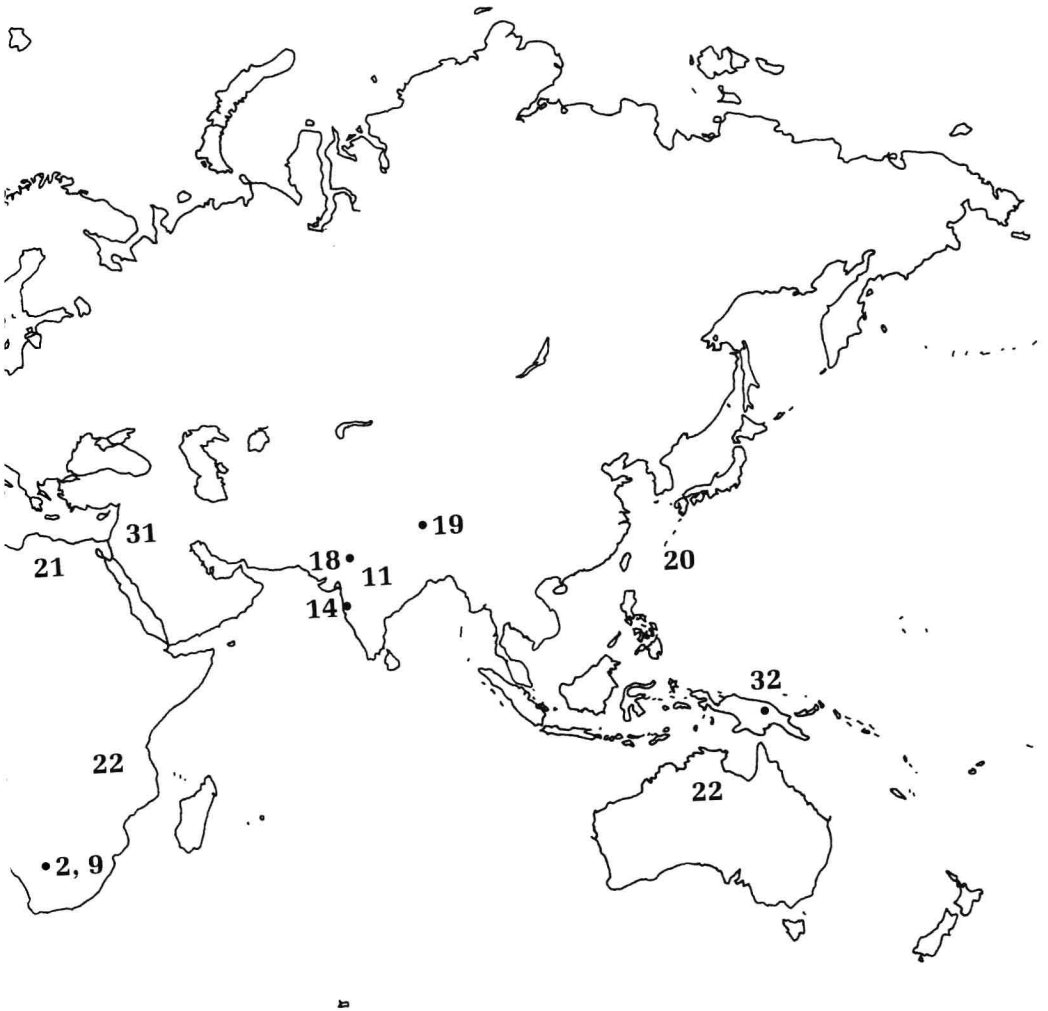
ISBN 0-673-52510-4

4567890—DOC—9998

World Map and Geographical Placement of Readings

The numbers on this map correspond to the reading numbers and indicate the places on which the articles focus. Screened maps also accompany readings themselves, and white areas on these maps highlight the subject locations. Readings labeled as world on this global map do not include white areas.





Preface

Cultural anthropology has a twofold mission—to understand other cultures and to communicate that understanding. When preparing the first edition of this book twenty-seven years ago, we sought to make communication easier and more enjoyable for teachers and students alike. We focused on the twin themes stated in the title—conformity, or order, and conflict, or change—while organizing selections into parts based on traditional topics. We balanced the coverage of cultures between non-Western and Western (including American), so students could make their own cultural comparisons and see the relationship between anthropology and their lives. We chose articles that reflected interesting topics in anthropology, but we also looked for selections that illustrated important concepts and theories because we believed that anthropology provides a unique and powerful way to look at experience. We searched extensively for scholarly articles written with insight and clarity. Students and instructors in hundreds of colleges and universities responded enthusiastically to our efforts, and a pattern was set that carried through eight subsequent editions.

This ninth edition retains the features of earlier edition—the focus on stability and change, the coverage of a broad range of societies, the combination of professionalism and readability in selections, the view that anthropology provides a perspective on experience, and carefully integrated organization. As in previous editions, I have revamped topics and added or subtracted selections in response to the suggestions of instructors and students across the country. Anthropology and the world it seeks to understand have changed since the first edition of *Conformity and Conflict*. Most new articles have been written in the last four years. Several articles were created especially for this volume, and three are substantially revised versions of previous selections. There are major revisions to the parts on language and communication, ecology and subsistence, economic systems, roles and inequality, law and politics, religion and worldview, and culture change and applied anthropology. In all, out of thirty-six articles, fourteen are new, three have been extensively revised, and one has been brought back from earlier editions. Every part has a least one new or revised selection.

I have also continued the expanded special features that have appeared in past editions. Part introductions include discussion of many basic anthropological definitions for instructors who do not wish to use a standard textbook but find it useful to provide students with a terminological foundation. Article introductions seek to tie selections to anthropological concepts and explanations in a coherent and systematic way.

Contents

CONFORMITY AND CONFLICT

1

CULTURE AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Viewed as a whole discipline, anthropology is a wide-ranging social and biological science concerned with most aspects of human existence. It includes *physical* (biological) *anthropology,* the study of human biology and paleontology; *archaeology,* the reconstruction of past cultures through the investigation of things people have left behind; and *anthropological linguistics,* the study of language structure, meaning, and history. It also includes the subfield, *cultural anthropology.*

Cultural anthropology emerged as an academic discipline by the middle 1800s, although the first American anthropology department did not appear until the turn of the century. The discipline was formed by a few inquisitive Europeans and Americans who became interested in the varied customs of nonwestern peoples. These early anthropologists coined the term *culture* to stand for the system of learned beliefs and customs that characterized the total way of life for a particular society. Differences among societies could be explained as the outcome of different learned cultures. Although the definition of culture has been modified over the years, as we will see below, the concept remains central to the discipline.

Few of the first anthropologists studied culture in the field. Instead, they relied on the reports of colonial officials, travelers, and missionaries. By the late 1800s, however, anthropologists began to stress the importance of first-hand observation and inquiry. This resulted in a strong fieldwork tradition, called *ethnography* (the discovery and description of a culture) that persists to this day, which sets anthropology off from other social sciences.

For much of its history, cultural anthropology largely involved the study of nonwestern societies. American anthropologists, for example, worked hard to record the traditional cultures of Native American groups during the early part of the century. British ethnographers studied the diverse cultures of African kingdoms and tribes, as well a large number of societies found in other parts of what was then the British empire. Indigenous peoples from every part of the world were the subject of anthropological inquiry.

During more recent decades, however, anthropologists have become interested in a wider variety of societies and social groups. As indigenous groups have become part of larger nation states, anthropologists have increasingly studied subcultures within more complex societies. Certainly World War II and the Cold War stimulated this trend. The United States government employed anthropologists to describe societies in whose territories it fought and where it would later administrate. The Cold War, marked by competition with Russians for influence in developing nations, stimulated an unprecedented growth in the number of U.S. academic anthropology programs. It also forced anthropologists to identify new groups to study. Anthropologists concerned with India, for example, began to study peasant villages or city wards.

Today, the problem of what to study in anthropology is even more complex. Most groups around the world are part of much larger social systems. African tribes or Indian villagers who once led relatively separate, isolated lives now find themselves participating in national politics and world markets.

But how can a discipline originally dedicated to the study of small, contained societies contribute to an understanding of today's world? Other social scientists have carried on research in complex societies for decades and have evolved special methodologies to do so. Is there anything special that anthropology can contribute to an understanding of human behavior in the contemporary world?

In many ways the answer to this question is no. The various social sciences often share the same interests. Yet, as a result of their intensive cross-cultural experience, anthropologists have developed a unique perspective on the nature and the significance of *culture*. This view has emerged from over a century of fieldwork among populations whose behavior was dramatically different from the anthropologists' own. Why, for example, did Iroquois women participate with apparent relish in the gruesome torture of prisoners? How could Bhil tribesmen put chili powder in the eyes of witches, blindfold them, and swing them over a smoky fire by their feet? What possessed Kwakiutl chiefs to destroy their wealth publicly at potlatch ceremonies? Why did Rajput widows cast themselves upon their husbands' funeral pyres? Why did Nagas engage in raids to acquire human heads? In every case, anthropologists were impressed by the fact that this "bizarre" behavior was intentional and meaningful to the participants. Bhils wanted to swing witches; to them it was appropriate. Kwakiutl chiefs made careful investments to increase the wealth they destroyed. These acts were planned; people had a notion of what they were going to do before they did it, and others shared their expectations.

Culture

The acquired knowledge that people use to interpret their world and generate social behavior is called *culture*. Culture is not behavior itself, but the knowledge used to construct and understand behavior. It is learned as children grow up in society and discover how their parents, and others around them,