

Conrad Phillip Kottak

Fourth Edition

Anthropology

The Exploration of Human Diversity



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Conrad Phillip Kottak
University of Michigan



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Fourth Edition

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To my mother,
Mariana Kottak Roberts

Preface

This book comes about as close to being new as any revision can. The entire third edition was typed into a computer, allowing me to scrutinize every word, sentence, paragraph, and caption, to attend to style as well as content. I was able to respond to hundreds of suggestions from users and reviewers of previous editions. The result, I hope, is a more “user-friendly” introduction to anthropology.

Word-by-word revision reduced sentence length and complexity, enhancing comprehension. The third edition’s excess verbiage has been removed, as new boxes, chapters, sections, photos, and features have been added. Without sacrificing scholarship, I’ve attempted to offer a simpler, more direct, and more interesting style.

One new feature is the inclusion of twenty-five **issues boxes**, one in each chapter. These provide students with an opportunity to consider anthropology’s relevance to today’s world and their own lives. Some boxes examine controversial issues; others are personal accounts of field experiences, which add human feeling to the presentation of anthropology’s subject matter. Many boxes apply or illustrate a point by bringing in an example familiar to students from their enculturation or everyday experience.

What about **content** revision? In addition to **updating** in all chapters, there is a **new introductory section** and **three new chapters**: “Culture” (10), “Field Techniques” (11), and “The Future” (25). Many chapters have **new sections**—responses to users’ and reviewers’ suggestions and to my recent teaching experience. For example, because my students so often ask me, “What can I do with an anthropology major?” or “How will anthropology help me get a job?” I’ve added a discussion of anthropology and careers (in Chapter 24).

Topics that have been added or expanded include:

Culture, relativism, and ethnocentrism (Chapters 1 & 10)

Reproductive strategies (Chapter 4)

Punctuated equilibrium theory (Chapter 6)

Levels of culture (Chapter 10)

Ethnography versus other research techniques (Chapter 11)

World systems (Chapter 22)

Economic development and applied anthropology (Chapter 23)

Social trends and the future (Chapter 25)

There have been some changes in **chapter order** to reflect the way introductory anthropology is taught in most schools. The chapter on “Language” now comes earlier, following the new chapters on “Culture” and “Field Techniques.” “Economic Systems” now comes right after “Strategies of Adaptation.” The old chapter on biology, society, and culture is now the “Sex Roles” chapter. The two religion chapters have been condensed into one, and the focus is no longer on anthropologists’ names but on ideas and concepts.

Some users of the third edition complained about the omission of the second edition’s chapter “Contemporary American Culture.” In the new edition, I’ve included a revised essay on American popular culture as an Appendix—so as not to intrude on the formal subject matter. Instructors may assign—or ignore—the appendix as they wish.

The Random House staff and I also took suggestions by third edition users and reviewers seriously in planning the illustrations

for the text. We've increased the number of illustrations, choosing almost all new photos and cartoons. Many charts have been simplified, and they are easier to read thanks to the use of color.

We've added a number of new pedagogical devices at the end of each chapter in response to users' suggestions: **summary**, **study questions**, a **glossary** defining terms boldfaced in the chapter, and a short list of **suggested readings**. In addition, a complete **bibliography** appears at the end of the book.

The new **instructor's manual** contains a list of **free films** for adopters, organized by topic. (Order forms for the films are available from Random House sales representatives.) The instructor's manual also contains a huge selection of multiple-choice, true-or-false, and essay questions. These are also available on diskette for use with the **computerized test-maker**, making it possible for instructors to generate entirely new tests from questions included on the diskette.

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I owe thanks to many colleagues at Random House: Chris Rogers, for his help in planning, implementing, and distributing the fourth edition; Jennifer Sutherland and Jean Davis for conscientious and efficient work as project editors; Barbara Salz, photo editor, and Kathy Bendo, photo manager, for their careful and creative work on the photos and cartoons; Pat Cahalan and Evelyn Katrak for judicious copyediting; John Lennard, for conceiving and executing the attractive new design of the book; Laura Lamorte and David Saylor, for shepherding the manuscript through production; and Edith Brady, marketing project manager, and the Random House sales representatives for making sure that instructors got to sample *Anthropology: The Exploration of Human Diversity*.

Thanks are also due to reviewers of the third edition and to my colleagues in anthro-

pology who use the book and send me comments, corrections, and suggestions. Special thanks go to Leslie Sponsel of the University of Hawaii. Dr. Sponsel not only suggested that I add chapter-by-chapter study questions; he also provided me with the actual study questions he uses with his students. Many of these—or related questions—have been incorporated into this edition. Dr. Sponsel also suggested the chapter on the future. I also thank two former Michigan introductory anthropology students: Andrew Hartmann and Tod Woolf presented me with a carefully annotated copy of the third edition, candidly pointing out everything they liked and disliked about it.

As always, my wife, children, and mother offered support and inspiration during my work, which lasted more than a year. I renew my dedication of this book to Mariana Kottak Roberts, for kindling my interest in the human condition, for reading and commenting on what I write, and for the insights about people and society she continues to provide.

After more than twenty years in anthropology and eighteen years of teaching, I have benefited from the knowledge, help, and advice of so many friends, colleagues, and students that I can no longer fit all 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 to a class of 600 students, with the help of a dozen teaching assistants each time. Feedback from students and teaching assistants keeps me up-to-date on the interests, needs, and perceptions of the people for whom this book is written. I continue to believe that effective textbooks must 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
Ann Arbor, Michigan

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Applied Anthropology

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Sociocultural Anthropology and Sociology

Anthropology, Economics, and Political Science

Anthropology and the Humanities

Anthropology and Psychology

Anthropology and History

North Americans are a parochial people. Although we study and travel more than ever, we still avoid foreign languages and world geography. We think it's fine to export our ways of doing things, but we rarely stop to consider lessons from other cultures. "That's just human nature." "People are the same all over the world." These statements can be heard in conversations, in the mass media, in a thousand scenes in our daily lives. These generalizations about "human nature" promote the erroneous idea that people in other countries have more or less the same desires, feelings, and aspirations that we do. They proclaim that because people everywhere are basically the same, they will be eager to receive the values, practices, and products of an expansive American culture. Often, this assumption turns out to be wrong.

Anthropology offers a broader perspective. Most people think that anthropologists study fossils and/or primitive cultures, and, indeed, my own field work has taken me to remote villages in Brazil and Madagascar. In Brazil, I sailed with fishermen in primitive craft in Atlantic waters. Among Madagascar's Betsileo people, I worked in rice fields and took part in ceremonies that required me to enter tombs and rewrap the corpses of decaying ancestors. But anthropology is actually much more than the study of primitive peoples. It is a comparative science that examines all societies, from simplest to most complex, from humanity's remote past to the most modern nations. The other social sciences offer explanations based on observations made in a single society, usually the United States. Anthropology, on the other

Cultural anthropologist Richard Lee doing ethnographic field work among the !Kung Bushmen, a hunting and gathering population in southern Africa's Kalahari desert. (Irvén DeVore/Anthro-Photo).



hand, provides a distinctive cross-cultural, comparative perspective. This viewpoint constantly compares the customs and organizational schemes of one culture with those of others.

To become a cultural anthropologist, one must survive a rite of passage called ethnographic field work. Normally, this entails at least a year's residence in another society, living with the natives and learning about their customs. No matter how much the anthropologist learns about a native culture, he or she remains an alien there. That experience of alienation affects us profoundly. Having lived in another culture, having learned to respect other customs and beliefs, anthropologists can never forget that there is a wider world, that there are other interpretations than the ones North Americans accept without thinking.

HOLISM, COMPARISON, VARIATION, AND CHANGE

Humans are the world's most adaptable animals. In the South American Andes, people awaken in villages 17,500 feet above sea level and trek 1,500 feet higher to work in tin mines. Tribes in the central Australian desert worship animals and discuss philosophy. Human populations survive malaria in the tropics. Men have walked on the moon. The model of the *Starship Enterprise* in Washington's Smithsonian Institution symbolizes the desire to seek out new life forms and civilizations, to boldly go where no human has gone before. Wishes to know the unknown, to control the uncontrollable, and to bring order to chaos find expression among people of all times and places. Although constraints do operate, flexibility and adaptability are basic human attributes. Human history is

founded on these attributes, and such human diversity is the subject matter of anthropology.

Encountering anthropology for the first time, students are often amazed by its breadth. Anthropology is a uniquely **holistic** science. It is concerned with the whole of the human condition, encompassing past, present, and future; biology, society, and culture. **Society**, organized life in groups, is shared with other animals, but culture is distinctly human. **Cultures** are traditions that govern the beliefs and behavior of people exposed to them. Children learn these traditions by growing up in a particular society. Cultural traditions include customs and opinions developed over the generations about proper and improper behavior. Cultural traditions answer such questions as: How do we do things? How do we view the world? How do we distinguish right from wrong? Culture produces consistency in behavior, thought, and activity by members of the same society. The most critical element of cultural traditions and behavior is their transmission through *learning* rather than through biological inheritance.

Bound neither by time nor space, anthropology confronts major questions: Where did we come from? What are we now and where are we going? Anthropology confirms that much of the diversity we see in cultures, as in nature, reflects adaptation to varied natural circumstances. In culture as in life, variation and change are constant. Our genus, *Homo*, has changed in the past, and humans go on changing today.

When did our ancestors separate from those remote great-aunts and great-uncles whose descendants are chimpanzees and gorillas? By studying the past, by examining the fossilized bones and tools of our ancestors, anthropologists attempt to answer many questions. Where and when did *Homo sapiens* originate, and how has our species changed? How has biological change been affected by changes in culture and society?

EVEN ANTHROPOLOGISTS GET CULTURE SHOCK*

I first lived in Arembepe during the (North American) summer of 1962. That was between my junior and senior years at New York City's Columbia College, where I was majoring in anthropology. I went to Arembepe as a participant in a now defunct program designed to provide undergraduates with experience doing ethnography—first-hand study of an alien society's culture and social life.

Brought up in one culture, intensely curious about others, anthropologists nevertheless experience culture shock, particularly on the first field trip. Culture shock refers to the whole set of feelings about being in an alien setting, and the ensuing reactions. It is a chilly, creepy feeling of alienation, of being without some of the most ordinary, trivial—and therefore basic—cues of one's culture of origin.

As I planned my departure for Brazil in 1962 I could not know just how naked I would feel without the cloak of my own language and culture. My sojourn in Arembepe would be my first trip outside the United States. I was an urban boy who had grown up in Atlanta, Georgia, and New York City. I had little experience with rural life in my own country, none with Latin America, and I had received only minimal training in the Portuguese language.

New York City direct to Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. Just a brief stopover in Rio de Janeiro; a longer visit would be a reward at the end of fieldwork. As our airplane approached tropical Salvador, I couldn't believe the whiteness of the sand. "That's not snow, is it?" I remarked to a fellow field team member. . . . My first impressions of Bahia were of smells—alien

odors of ripe and decaying mangoes, bananas, and passion fruit—and of swatting ubiquitous fruit flies I had never seen before, although I had read extensively about their reproductive behavior in genetics classes. There were strange concoctions of rice, black beans, and gelatinous gobs of unidentifiable meats and floating pieces of skin. Coffee was strong and sugar crude, and every table top had containers for toothpicks and manioc (cassava) flour, to sprinkle, like Parmesan cheese, on anything one might eat. I remember oatmeal soup and a slimy stew of beef tongue in tomatoes. At one meal a disintegrating fish head, eyes still attached, but barely, stared up at me as the rest of its body floated in a bowl of bright orange palm oil. . . .

I only vaguely remember my first day in Arembepe. Unlike ethnographers who have studied remote tribes in the tropical forests of interior South America or the highlands of New Guinea, I did not have to hike or ride a canoe for days to arrive at my field site. Arembepe was not isolated relative to such places, only relative to every other place I had ever been. . . .

I do recall what happened when we arrived. There was no formal road into the village. Entering through southern Arembepe, vehicles simply threaded their way around coconut trees, following tracks left by automobiles that had passed previously. A crowd of children had heard us coming, and they pursued our car through the village streets until we parked in front of our house, near the central square. Our first few days in Arembepe were spent with children following us everywhere. For weeks we had few moments of privacy. Chil-