



IN
HARRIS

CULTURE
PEOPLE
NATURE

*An Introduction
to General
Anthropology*

*Fifth
Edition*

MARVIN HARRIS

University of Florida

fifth edition

CULTURE, PEOPLE, NATURE
An Introduction to General Anthropology



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This edition, together with the new cover, is intended to honor the memory of Morton H. Fried—in recognition of his contributions to the field of general anthropology, to the study of the evolution of social stratification and the state, and to the anthropology of contemporary China.*

He was my friend and colleague for over thirty years, starting from the time we were both assistant professors sharing the same grimy office and teaching introductions to general anthropology—I for Columbia College and he for Columbia University's School of General Studies. Without his coaching, moral support, and pots of Chinese tea brewed on the premises, I might not have survived the trauma of my teaching obligations (which in addition to general anthropology included Contemporary Civilization and Australia-Melanesia-Polynesia—I had just returned from fieldwork in Brazil). The only thing he expected from me was to let him throw open the window as soon as the temperature in the office rose above 45 degrees. I didn't mind—it was the only way we could see out.

While sharing that office, I learned to be an evolutionist and practitioner of general anthropology. It was from Mort that I learned that being a scientist doesn't mean you can't have political opinions. Also I was a primary beneficiary of his Faustian relationship with Columbia's Butler Library. He read everything, even the novels they used to remainder on the first floor. I learned the most from him after he would come back to the office from one of his weekly assaults on the Current Periodical Reading Room. Reading journals gave him an intellectual high and it was exhilarating just to listen to his flow of ideas. But nothing could top Morton Fried when he was putting it all together in front of 200 spellbound undergraduates in his introductory class.

Morton Fried is remembered with great fondness by all who knew him. His work will be acclaimed as long as there are anthropologists who are faithful to their comparative, evolutionary, and humanitarian callings.

Marvin Harris

* The cover photo depicts the pagodas of Mount Le (Le Shan), a traditional Chinese resort whose natural beauty evokes Taoist and Buddhist ideals of quiet introspective pleasure.

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TO THE INSTRUCTOR

The fifth edition of *Culture, People, Nature* continues to offer the student a comprehensive introduction to general anthropology. However, in this edition I have made major substantive changes to shift the critical focus from colonialism to contemporary issues in industrial states. I believe students are more likely to be engaged both ethically and intellectually if the problems of inequality and exploitation are brought home to them and expressed in terms of situations that they themselves confront.

The major substantive changes are as follows:

Chapter 2, Organic Evolution. “Scientific Creationism.” New section.

Chapter 4, The First Hominids. “The Evolutionary Road.” New concept; new diagram. “*Homo Habilis*”—updated. “Hunting and Plio-Pleistocene Hominids”—updated. “In the Beginning Was the Foot”—new section; new theories. “The Meat and Base Camp Scenario”—new section; updated.

Chapter 5, The Origins of Homo Sapiens. “Hunting Versus Scavenging Again”—new section; new theories. “The Origin of *Homo sapiens sapiens*”—new African data. “Hunting, Heat, and Big Brains”—new section; new theory.

Chapter 6, Race, Human Variation, and the Forces of Evolution. Extensive rewriting and editing of materials on racial variation, the origin of skin color, and the IQ controversy.

Chapter 9, The Old World Paleolithic. “Central and Eastern European Upper Paleolithic”—new section. “Upper Paleolithic Art”—new theories; updated.

Chapter 10, The Neolithic and the Rise of Chiefdoms and States. “The Neolithic in the Middle East”—new theories; updated. “The Causes of the Neolithic”—new theories; updated.

Chapter 11, The Second Earth. “When Was America Discovered?” Updating of controversies. “Developments in Highland Mexico”—edited and updated. “Developments North of Mexico”—revised, expanded. “The Development of States in South America.” Updated.

Chapter 12, Production. “Optimal Foraging Theory.” New section. “Energy and the Evolution of Culture.” New section.

Chapter 13, Reproduction. New chapter.

Chapter 14, Relations of Production. “Infrastructural Versus Structural Aspects of Economies.” New section. “The Division of Labor.” New section.

Chapter 17, Law, Order, and War in Prestate Societies. “Why War?” New section.

Chapter 18, The Political Economy of the State. “The Origins of States”—revised, updated. “Hawaii: On the Threshold of the State.” New section.

Chapter 20, Gender Roles and Human Sexuality. New chapter. Most sections new or updated.

Chapter 21, Religion. New chapter. Combines sections from previous chapters 21 and 22.

Chapter 24, Applied Anthropology. New chapter. Most sections new.

Chapter 25, The Anthropology of an Industrial Society. New chapter. Integrates materials on the United States from previous editions. Many new sections.

In effect, there are four new chapters in this edition: one on anthropological demography, the second on gender hierarchies, the third on applied anthropology, and the fourth on the United States viewed in anthropological perspective. This was made possible with a minimal increase in length by reorganizing chapters and shifting coverage of some material. The treatment of colonialism is less extensive than in the past, but the subjects of poverty and racial, class, caste, ethnic, and gender exploitation receive, if anything, more emphasis than in previous editions. For instance, new Chapter 25 concentrates on social problems of widespread concern, such as alienation in the workplace, poverty, unemployment, the concentration of wealth, ethnic and race relations, crime, and welfare.

The major organizational change involves grouping the chapters into parts. The parts are "Physical Anthropology," "Language and Culture," "Archaeology and Prehistory," "Infrastructure," "Structure," "Superstructure," and "Anthropology and Modern Life." In addition, there is an introductory chapter, and an appendix: "A History of Theories of Culture." The purpose for this reorganization is to improve the book's unity and coherence by making the logic behind the sequence of chapters more explicit. One favorable result of the grouping of chapters, for example, is that "Language" is now in the same part as "The Nature of Culture."

Another is that "Production" and "Reproduction" are grouped together. A third is that the chapter that deals with gender hierarchies is grouped with the other chapters that deal with stratification phenomena. Finally, the reorganization allows the grouping of two new chapters, "Applied Anthropology" and "The Anthropology of an Industrial Society," which gather together sections previously scattered throughout the book (plus many new sections).

Many people have contributed to the preparation of this fifth edition of *Culture, People, Nature*. Numerous reviewers commented on the previous edition or read the manuscript for this edition. I wish to thank the following for their helpful suggestions, many of which I have incorporated in this edition:

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I also wish to thank Alan McClare of Harper & Row for his advice and support in writing an "unbland" textbook, and Joan Gregory for making the manuscript into a textbook. I am also grateful to David Price for his assistance in revising the bibliography, checking citations, and revising the maps showing the paleontological, archaeological, and ethnological sites and localities mentioned in the text. As always, my thanks to Madeline Harris for her invaluable help.

Marvin Harris

TO THE STUDENT

I hope that you will find this textbook both informative and provocative. In keeping with the many different kinds of research that anthropologists carry out, it covers a broad range of subjects spanning millions of years and the entire inhabited globe. Its aim, like that of anthropology, is to provide a scientifically valid account of the evolution of human nature and of human cultures from the remote past to the present. It seeks to answer the most fundamental questions about human existence: where our species came from; what human social life was like in the past; what it is like today; and what it may be like in the future.

As the twentieth century draws to a close, we confront a world in which an understanding of sexual, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences is indispensable not only for the welfare of nations but for the survival of our endangered species. To meet global challenges we must learn to think in global terms. And this means that we must

acquire an up-to-date scientific knowledge of the processes that have shaped and continue to shape human nature and human cultures. We cannot hope to control these processes if we do not understand them first. In this sense, anthropology is a practical science even when it deals with subjects that are remote in time and space. Its facts and theories are indispensable to everyone who aspires to be a well-informed and responsible partner in the human enterprise.

To serve this aspiration, I have drawn links wherever possible between the subject considered—be it fossil ancestors or the beginnings of agriculture—and the practical problems and dilemmas of modern life, especially those having to do with inequality, poverty, racism, sexism, alienation, and war. Part VII, “Anthropology and Modern Life,” should leave no doubt that anthropology is not merely about bones, pots, and exotic customs, but about you and me, our friends and relatives, and our own everyday way of life.

Marvin Harris

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