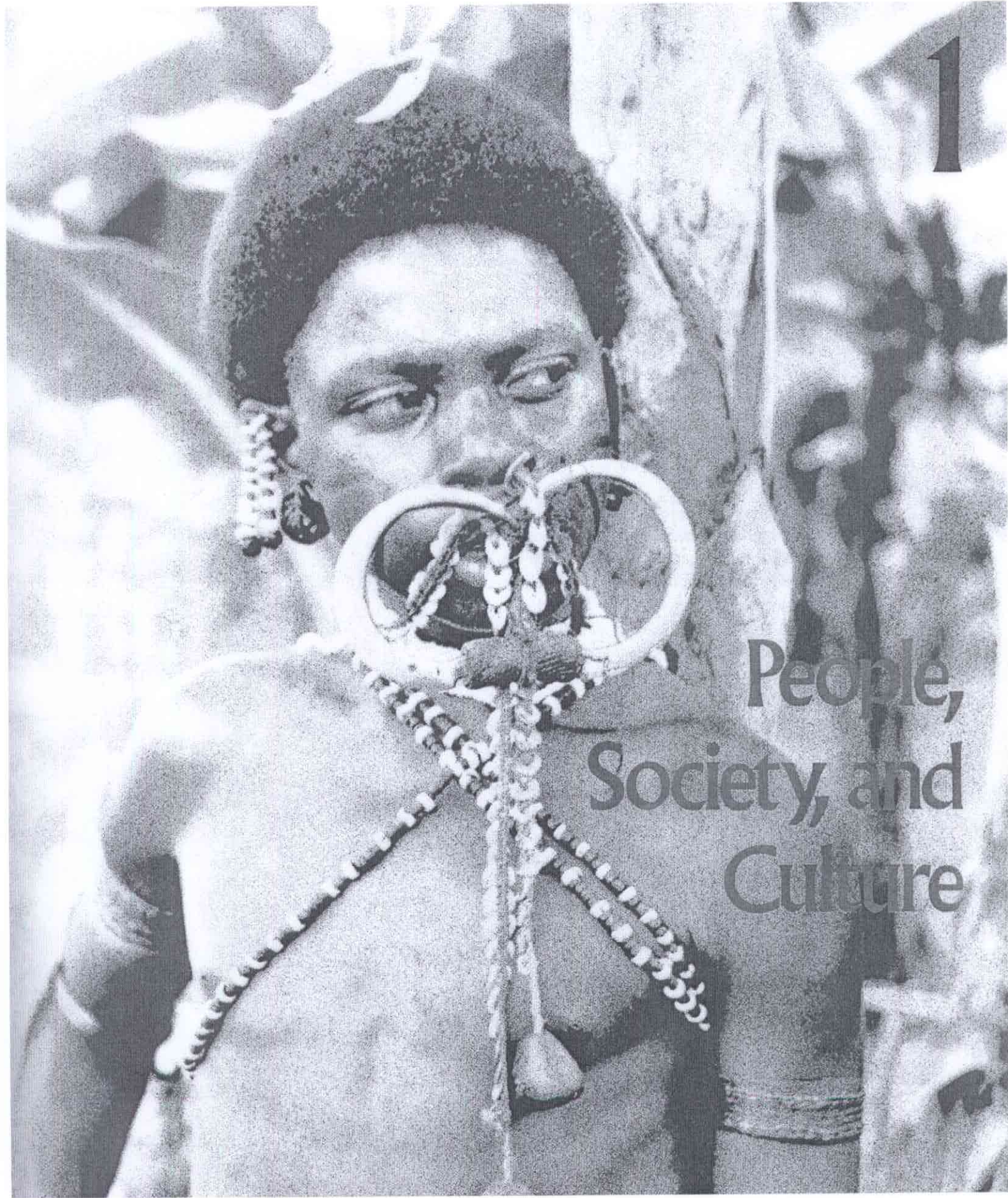


1

People,
Society, and
Culture



Anthropology Defined

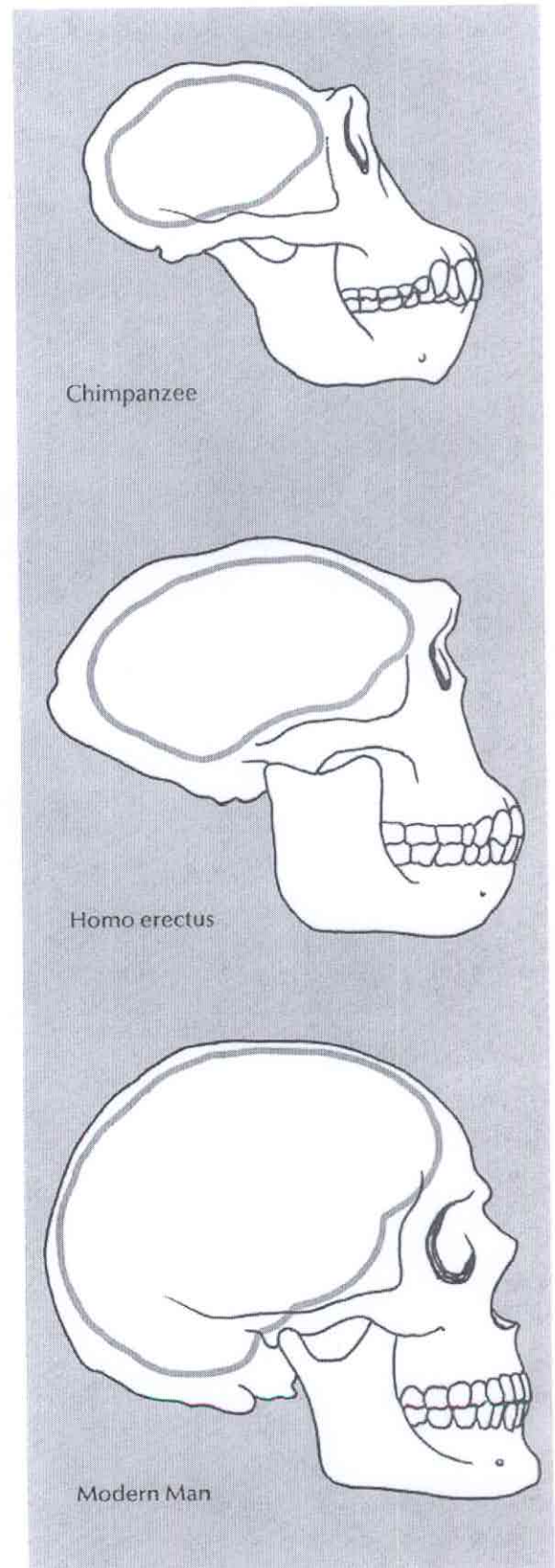
Anthropology, the scientific study of humankind, is usually divided into three interrelated fields of specialization: physical anthropology, archeology, and (the subject of this book) cultural and social anthropology. Physical anthropologists are concerned principally with the study of human evolutionary origins, physical variation, and genetically determined human potential. Archeologists specialize in historical reconstruction based on the material evidence of cultural development through time. Many cultural and social anthropologists are interested in the historical development of culture also, but they focus more on the varying ways of life of contemporary peoples and the relatively recent aspects of their past.

This division of anthropology into three main branches is only an indication of differences in specific subject matter and methods of study, the inevitable consequence of necessary specialization. For achievement of a full understanding of people and their relation to society and culture the integration of knowledge from all three fields is required.

What the physical anthropologists have learned, for example, about human evolution and the gradual development of our biologically based capacity for culture is essential for an understanding of the way the development of culture has been affected, both facilitated and inhibited, by our

“What the physical anthropologists have learned . . . about human evolution and the general development of our biologically based capacity for culture. . . .”

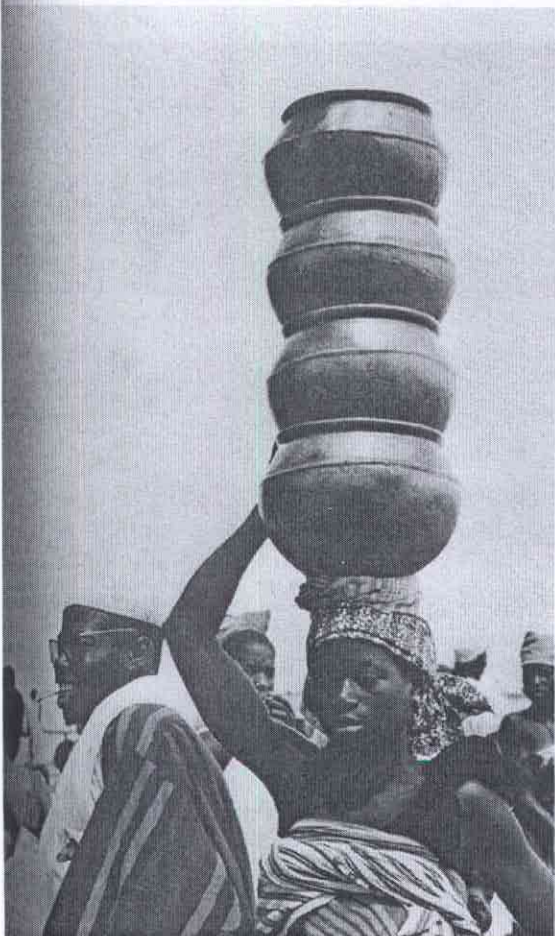
Figure 1-1. As our brain grew larger, our face grew proportionately smaller. A comparison between the modern human *Homo erectus*, the first member of our own genus, and a chimpanzee. Red outline shows increasing brain size. (After Enid Kotsching.)





"What has been discovered of the essential biological sameness of all human beings as members of a single species supports a premise basic to the cultural and social anthropologists' approach. . . ."

Figure 1-2. *a.* Manipuri fishermen, India. (Courtesy of the Press Information Bureau, Government of India.) *b.* Town meeting, Woodstock, Vermont. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress.) *c.* Pottery seller at Segou, Mali. (United Nations.) *d.* Japanese boys. (Courtesy of the Embassy of Japan.)



d

“The basic question archeologists seek to answer—how cultures develop and change through time—is an equally fundamental question in cultural and social anthropology.”

Figure 1-3. Temple of the Inscriptions, Chiapas, Mexico, an early center in the development of the complex culture of the Maya. (Courtesy of the Mexican Government Tourism Department.)

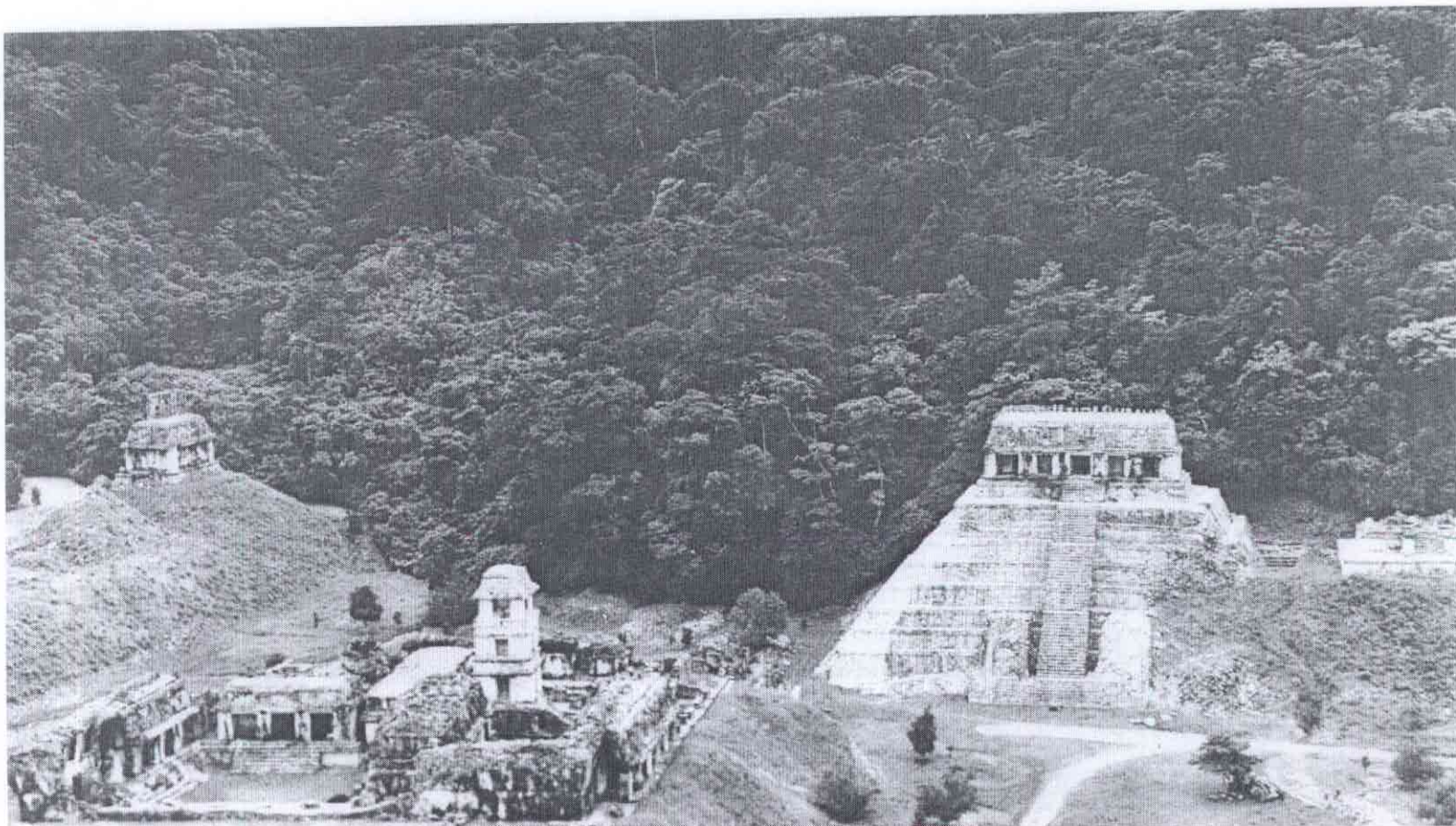
animal capacities and limitations. What has been discovered of the essential biological sameness of all human beings as members of a single species supports a premise basic to the cultural and social anthropologists' approach: that most differences in the patterned behavior of human groups cannot be explained by reference to inherited physical or “racial” differences but must be ascribed to differences in culture.

The work of the archeologist provides insights that are equally relevant to the interests of the cultural and social anthropologist. The basic question archeologists seek to answer—how cultures develop and change through time—is an equally fundamental question in cultural and social anthropology. Primarily it is the archeologists' methods of study that distinguish them; the concepts they deal with are the same.

In this book a composite term, *cultural and social anthropology*, is used for the third and largest basic field of specialization in anthropology. Most anthropologists in the United States prefer the shorter term *cultural*

anthropology. By it they mean the branch of anthropology that is concerned with the scientific study of all aspects of the world's cultures—and of the factors that have affected their development—all dimensions of the differing ways of life of Africans, Middle Easterners, Asians, Aboriginal Australians, Pacific islanders, Europeans, and Americans, old and new. (The term *ethnology* is frequently used as a synonym for cultural and social anthropology.)

However, some anthropologists define the field of their interest more narrowly. Traditionally, they have regarded society, not the somewhat broader category of culture, as the appropriate subject of their inquiry. Like their British counterparts, they refer to themselves as social rather than cultural anthropologists and concentrate their attention on what they perceive as the more readily objectifiable, or concrete, aspects of people's ways of life—the organization of their social, economic, and political relations and the beliefs that accompany and support such organization. In contrast, most cultural



anthropologists take an approach that encompasses the study of all of culture, not just those aspects that constitute the structure of society. This means that in addition to their interest in social organization, economics, political systems, and religion, cultural anthropologists may be equally concerned with such cultural phenomena as technology, values, world view, the environmental conditioning of personality, art, and language.

But, as with differences between the other fields of anthropology, the differences that sometimes separate cultural and social anthropologists are principally ones of approach and emphasis. The compound term *cultural and social anthropology* is used herein because this book will deal both with those aspects of culture that social anthropologists have traditionally been most concerned about and with the broader aspects of people's ways of life as defined by cultural anthropologists. Wherever the term *culture* is used alone here, it is intended to encompass the somewhat more restricted concept of *society*.

Often linguistics is considered as still another separate field within anthropology. Because the capacity for language is both basic to the capacity for culture and one of its most important manifestations, the subject of language is included here as an integral part of cultural and social anthropology.

Our Evolutionary Origins

Anthropologists regard people, society, and culture as parts of nature. Human origins and the origins of society and culture are perceived as being closely linked, as having developed together from the outset.

Humankind could not have evolved alone, without society and culture, and no one of them could continue to exist without the others.

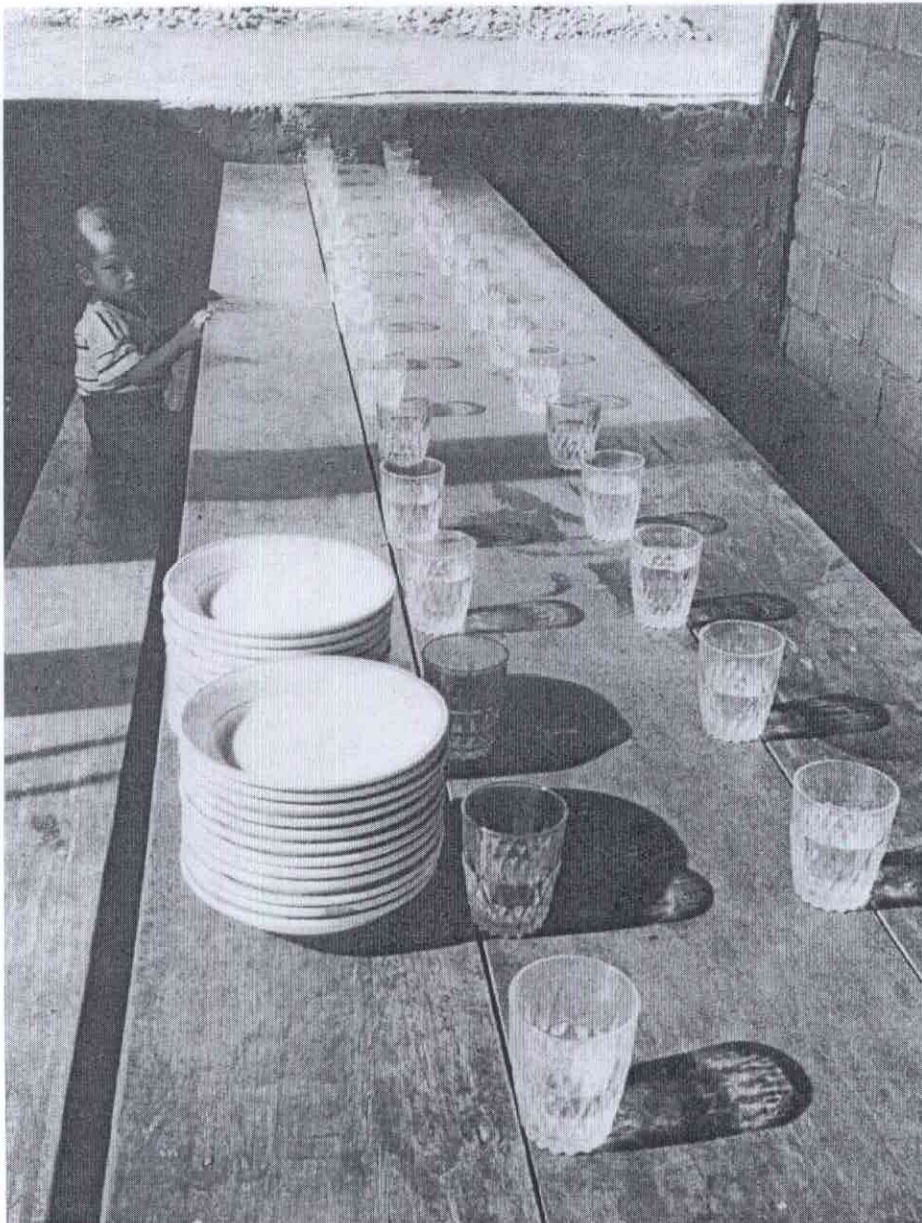
First, our ancestors were animals. Gradually they acquired culture. Or more exactly, our animal attributes were largely established before we began to develop our capacity for living in society and using culture. This essential animality was and probably always will be a limiting factor in the development of culture. Conversely, once our early prehuman ancestors began to develop the ability to use culture, this new faculty had a similarly limiting effect on the physical aspects of their further evolution. Those who were best able physically and intellectually to utilize culture to live in society—to learn, store, speculate upon, and transmit their learning, to cooperate and communicate with others—had the best chances of surviving and passing on this valuable adaptive capacity. Those constitutionally less well equipped to use culture finally lost out and ultimately either were assimilated by their competitors or became extinct.

Like humankind itself, culture has also evolved. The several-million-years-long record of our evolutionary descent from ancient, not overly bright near human forebears is complemented by the material record of progressively more efficient adaptation that begins with evidence of the use of the simplest stone, bone, and wood tools and continues through the remains of early Middle Eastern and Asian farming communities, the complex societies of early America, and the Classic Period of the Mediterranean to the industrially based societies of the modern world. But the fascinating account of the interrelated origins and early evolutionary development of society, culture, and humankind is not our principal subject here. It is referred to only to support the premise that people, society, and culture, all having

evolved together, are all the products of nature. If some sort of potentially discoverable order prevails generally in the relations between the other aspects of nature—between the elements, all other organisms, the earth, and the rest of the universe—then it follows logically that such order prevails also in the relations between people, society, and culture, and that the forces that govern this order can be known. This is the knowledge the anthropologist seeks.

“It is the biologically based need for nourishment that is demonstrably universal.”

Figure 1-4. Waiting for lunch at a Philippine child care center. (Peace Corps.)



Animal Needs, Cultural Means, and Human Personality

As members of a single animal species, *Homo sapiens*, all people share a common set of fundamental needs derived from their common biologically determined requirements for survival. Among these are the need for nourishment and shelter, for the reduction of sexual tension, and for economic and social cooperation. This is a minimal list. Probably most anthropologists would want to alter or amplify it, each in his or her own way. At this point only the basic concept is critical: that all we humans share such needs and can meet them only by cultural means.

For example, people everywhere must eat, but the kinds of nutritive materials they consume and the ways they acquire and process their foods vary with their culture. It is the biologically based need for nourishment that is demonstrably universal. The specific means of meeting the need for food are cultural; all cultures, no matter how organized, must provide a system for getting food. Almost as essential is the human need for some kind of shelter from rain, snow, cold, wind, and sun and for protection from hostile fellow humans and predatory animals. The universality of people's need for the reduction of sexual tension again illustrates the distinction between the biologically determined sex drive common to all humans and the variety of patterned cultural means particular human groups have developed for channeling this basic impulse. The same can be said for the various ways people have worked out for coping with their need for some socially based system of cooperation: to make a living; to produce, protect, and provide for their families; and to get along with others.

Our status as the most adaptable of all the

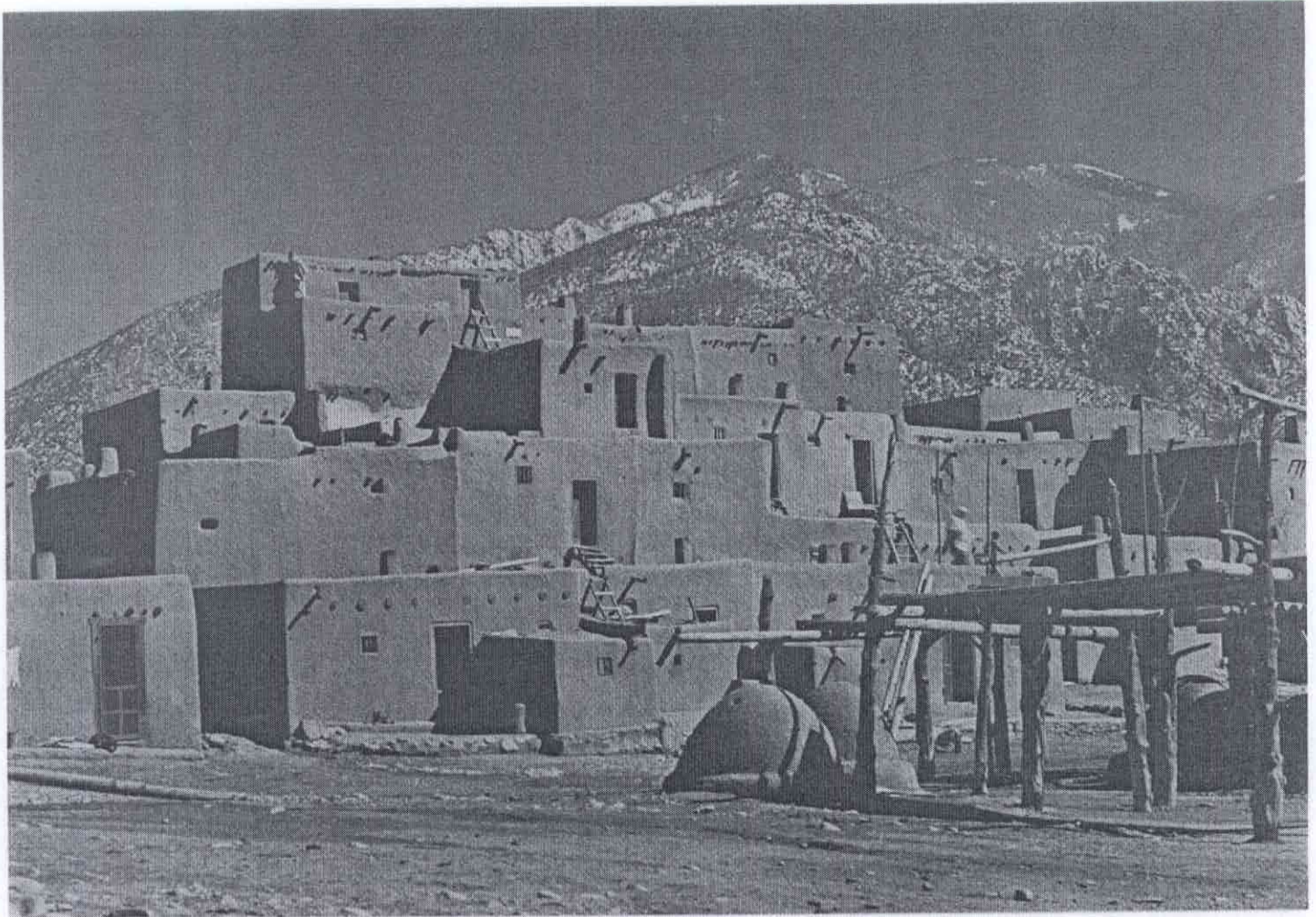


“. . . all cultures, no matter how organized, must provide a system for getting food.”

Figure 1-5. Gathering coconuts in Kampong Riam, Sarawak, eastern Malaysia. (United Nations.)

animals derives from our reliance on culture to meet our needs rather than on genetically determined responses or structural changes. Our ancestors, often living under harshly uncomfortable natural conditions, in competition with each other and with other animals physically far stronger, survived and came ultimately to prevail as the domi-

nant species through reliance on this capacity. Their adjustment to shifting environmental circumstances was dependent neither on discrete genetically determined changes in physique—the growth of a heavier shell, stronger teeth, or a keener sense of smell—nor on constitutionally dictated “instincts.” Rather, it was dependent on their ability to



“Almost as essential is the human need for some kind of shelter. . . .”

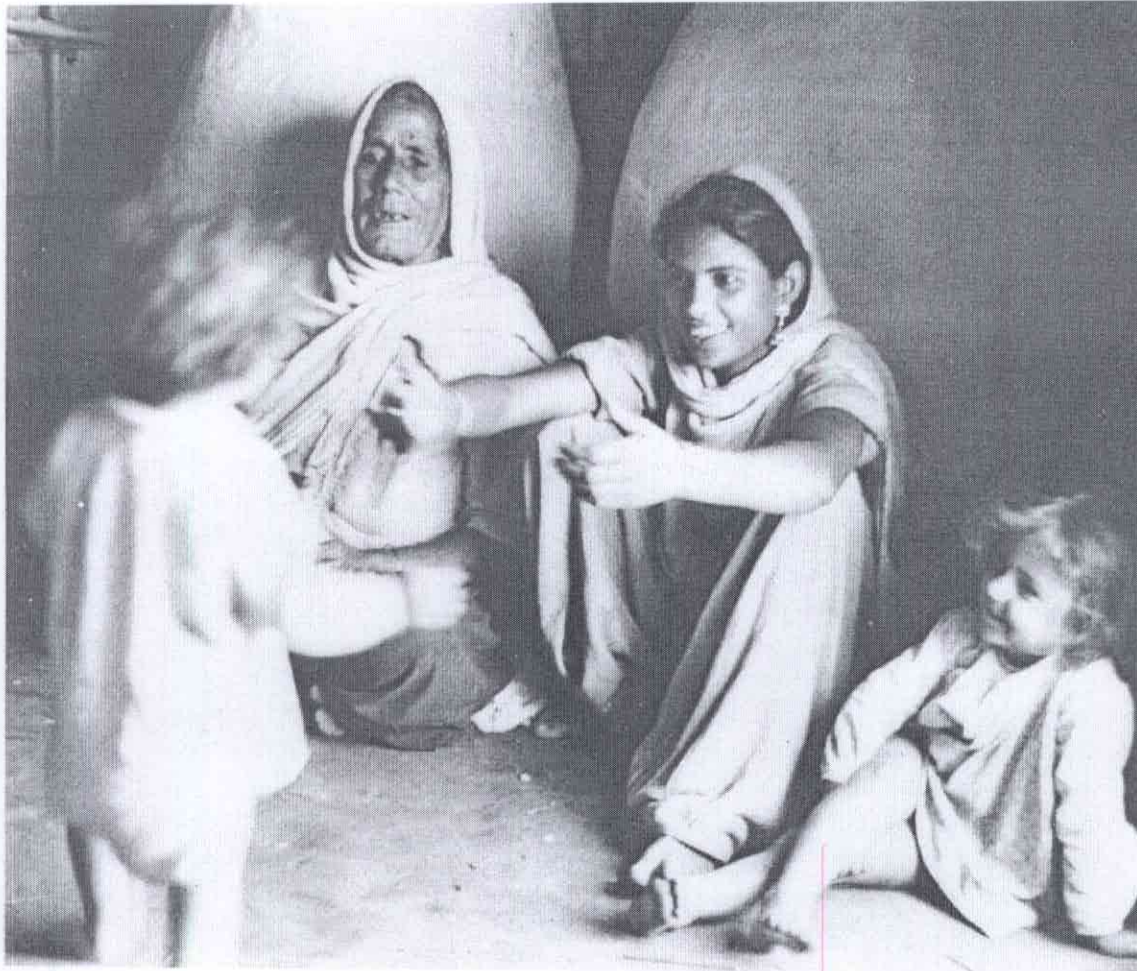
Figure 1-6. Taos Pueblo, New Mexico. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress.)

think and to alter their behavior accordingly, to learn, unlearn, and relearn cultural behaviors necessary to their survival under changing conditions.

In the past many anthropologists regarded the human capacity for culture as unique, arguing that this ability distinguished us absolutely from all other animals. Now most would qualify any such assertion with reference to the growing evidence for impressive tool-making abilities and complex systems of communication and cooperation—all apparently learned—possessed by some of the great apes, our closest primate relatives (see Hewes 1973; Jay 1968; Jolly 1972; Premack 1971; Van Lawick-Goodall 1972; Washburn and Moore 1973).

Many anthropologists now assert that it is more accurate to think of this human capacity to use culture as a relative rather than an absolute distinction. But if the ability to use culture can no longer be regarded as wholly unique to our species (our closeness to the chimpanzees is becoming constantly more apparent, for example), the extent of people’s reliance on society and culture as a principal means of adaptation still clearly sets us *Homo sapiens* apart.

Another anthropological premise so fundamental as to be almost a truism must also be stated: *Culture is learned*, in contrast, for example, to physical appearance and intellectual potential, which are primarily determined by heredity. A hypothetical Siberian



"Another anthropological premise so fundamental as to be almost a truism must also be stated: *culture is learned. . .*"
Figure 1-7. An Indian family group from the Punjab. (United Nations.)

Eskimo infant taken from its family at birth and raised by Congolese Pygmies would grow up to look like its Eskimo parents. But the patterns of its cultural behavior and its specific personality would be similar to those of the Pygmies among whom it was brought up. A white Australian baby cared for from infancy to adulthood by Australian Aborigines would mature as white in appearance but Aboriginal in its cultural behavior. A newborn African black adopted by Native Americans would resemble its biological parents in appearance but would behave like the Indians in whose culture it was raised and whose personality type it had acquired.

This point is emphasized because much of cultural behavior, once learned, appears to be so "natural" that it can easily be perceived as instinctive, as biologically or

"... so much of cultural behavior, once learned, appears to be so "natural" that it can easily be perceived as instinctive, as biologically or "racially" determined."

Figure 1-8. These young women from Senegal physically resemble many Americans. It is the culture they have learned that is different. (United Nations.)



“racially” determined. Take the culture of the United States, for instance, and the way American infants are gradually conditioned to meet their basic biological needs in the particular ways dictated by their culture. The formation of food habits illustrates this vividly. For all of the first and most formative years of their lives children in the United States are clearly trained in the culturally proper actions and attitudes related to eating: what they should eat and how, the appropriate combination of foods, the right way to serve them, the proper times to eat, the correct utensils to use, “good” table manners, and so on. Once the more intensive phases of this training period are past and the young are permitted, usually at adolescence, to begin to make their own decisions, they have already acquired strong feelings about food, definite likes and dislikes, sensations of pleasure and repugnance, often ideas of ritual purity and uncleanness as well. From then on their food preferences may change over the years, but only within a quite narrow gamut of the total possible range. Present Americans with a toasted grasshopper, objectively nutritious and considered tasty by some Africans and most Japanese, and they would probably lose their appetites. A hungry but devout Moslem Middle Easterner would likely feel the same way about the offer of a ham-on-rye. High-caste Hindus in India and Pakistan are conditioned by their culture to abhor beef. Most thirsty Chinese would decline a proffered glass of cow’s milk with a shudder of disgust. Further examples could be taken from the way North American children are trained to meet their other basic biologically determined needs: the carefully prescribed rituals of excretion and washing, for instance, or American ideas on the right and wrong forms of sexual behavior, appropriate dress, or any other type of conduct culturally defined as “correct.”

Thus our basic human needs are per-

ceived as universally similar, the consequence of our membership in a single animal species, but the particular means by which we meet these needs are determined by our culture, by where and specifically how we learn to cope with the needs we share with all other human beings. The fact that people meet their animal needs by cultural means creates for the anthropologist a paradox, for *Homo sapiens* is extraordinarily flexible, capable of more adaptive variability than any other animal. Yet once the human personality is developed and is conditioned by culture to meet individual needs in particular culturally approved ways, a person often becomes so set in these ways that he or she would rather perish than change. Perhaps this talent for maintaining a balance between the conservatism required for cultural stability and continuity and the flexibility essential for adaptation to continuously shifting circumstances has been the secret of our survival, at least so far.

Cultural Means and Anthropological Categories

Because people’s fundamental biological needs can be met only by cultural means, it follows that all cultures, no matter how remarkably diverse they appear, must fulfill a number of common basic functions necessary to the support of human life. For this reason all cultures must resemble one another in their most essential attributes. These necessarily universal aspects of culture can be categorized as systems, as particularly organized ways of fulfilling requirements common to all people. At least seven of these systems or categories can be analytically separated. Each, no matter how varied in specifics of form, content, and function, is



"The term *technology* is used to refer to the system of tools, artifacts, and techniques used by particular people to modify conditions and resources in their environment to meet their basic material needs."

Figure 1-9. Georgian farmers at rest, U.S.S.R. (Courtesy of Novosti Press Agency, Moscow, U.S.S.R.)

discernible as an aspect of every people's way of life.

These categories will be referred to here as *technology, economic organization, social organization, political organization, ideology, the arts, and language*. Culture can be perceived as an integrated whole composed of these categorically separable systems, all meaningfully related and having as their principal reason for being the fulfillment of human needs. Perceived in this way, many of what other-

wise seem to be striking and absolute differences between cultures are revealed as only variations of specific form and content on fundamental, universal themes.

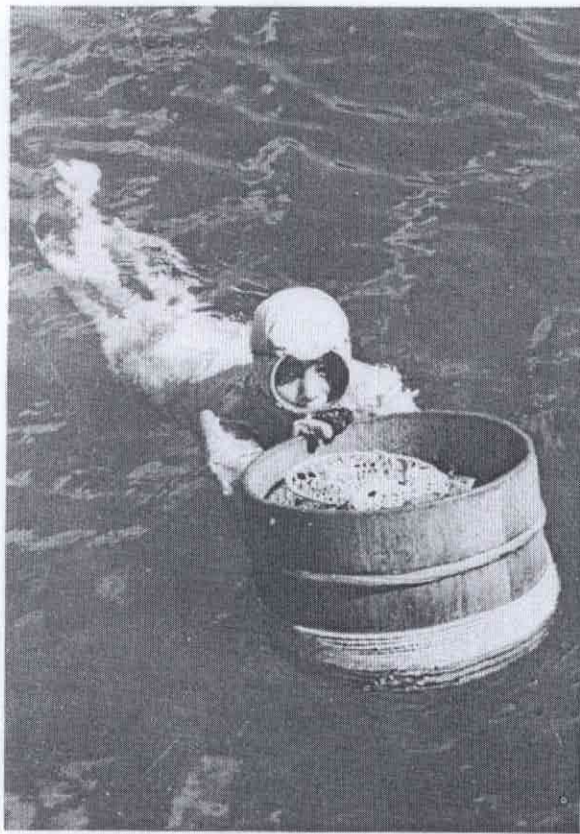
Technology

The term technology is used to refer to the system of tools, artifacts, and techniques employed by a particular people to modify conditions and resources in their environment to meet their basic material needs.

“Among Japanese and Korean islanders in the Northwest Pacific, shellfish gathered from the ocean floor by women divers are an important part of the food supply.”

Figure 1-10.

Woman diver, Japan. (Courtesy of the Embassy of Japan.)

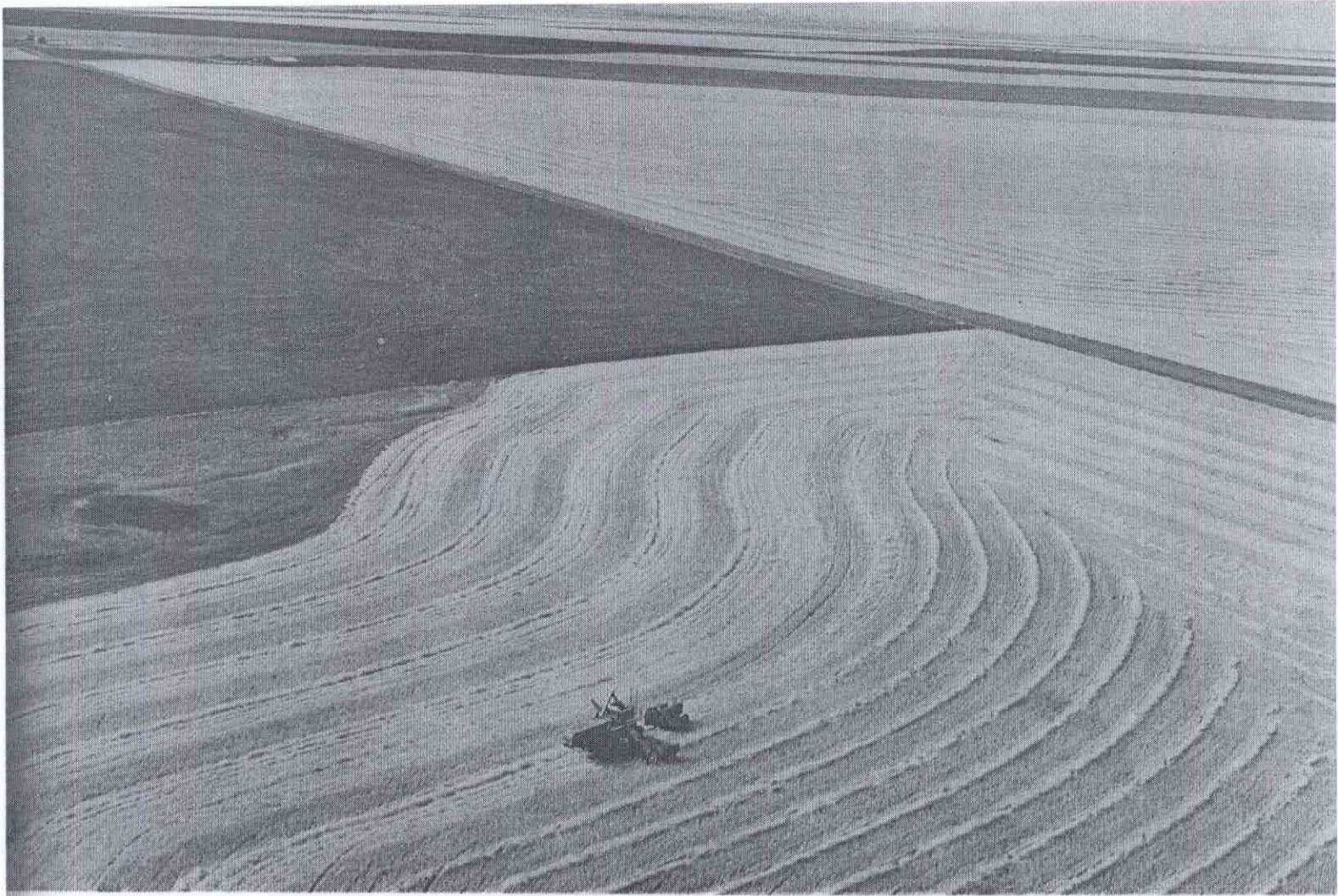


Again the need for food provides a basic illustration. Every people must have some system of techniques for getting food. It is the specifics of such systems that vary. Among Japanese and Korean islanders in the Northwest Pacific, shellfish gathered from the ocean floor by women divers are an important part of the food supply. In the Amazonian rainforest food is provided by hunters who bring down their game with blowguns and poison darts. In northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland nomadic Lapp herdsmen obtain most of their food from their reindeer. In Fiji and the Ivory Coast the inhabitants derive an important part of their food supply from cultivating tubers called taro. In the temperate regions of Southwest Asia, Europe, and North America farmers grow cereal grains as a major source of food. And now, in some places, nutritious foods are synthesized from chemicals. (The human need for nourish-



“In the Amazonian rainforest food is provided by hunters who bring down their game with blowguns and poison darts.”

Figure 1-11. Forest hunter, Brazil. (OAS Photo.)



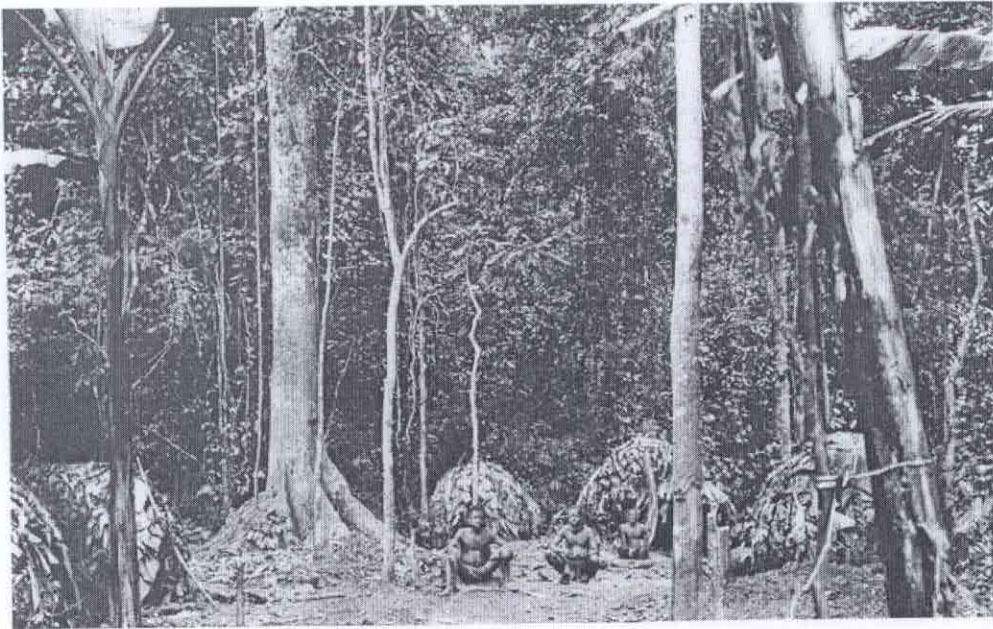
“In the temperate regions of Southwest Asia, Europe, and North America farmers grow cereal grains as a major source of food.”

Figure 1-12. Wheat farming in Canada. (The Photographic Survey Corp., Ltd.)

“The human need for nourishment is universal. What differ are the ways people meet it.”

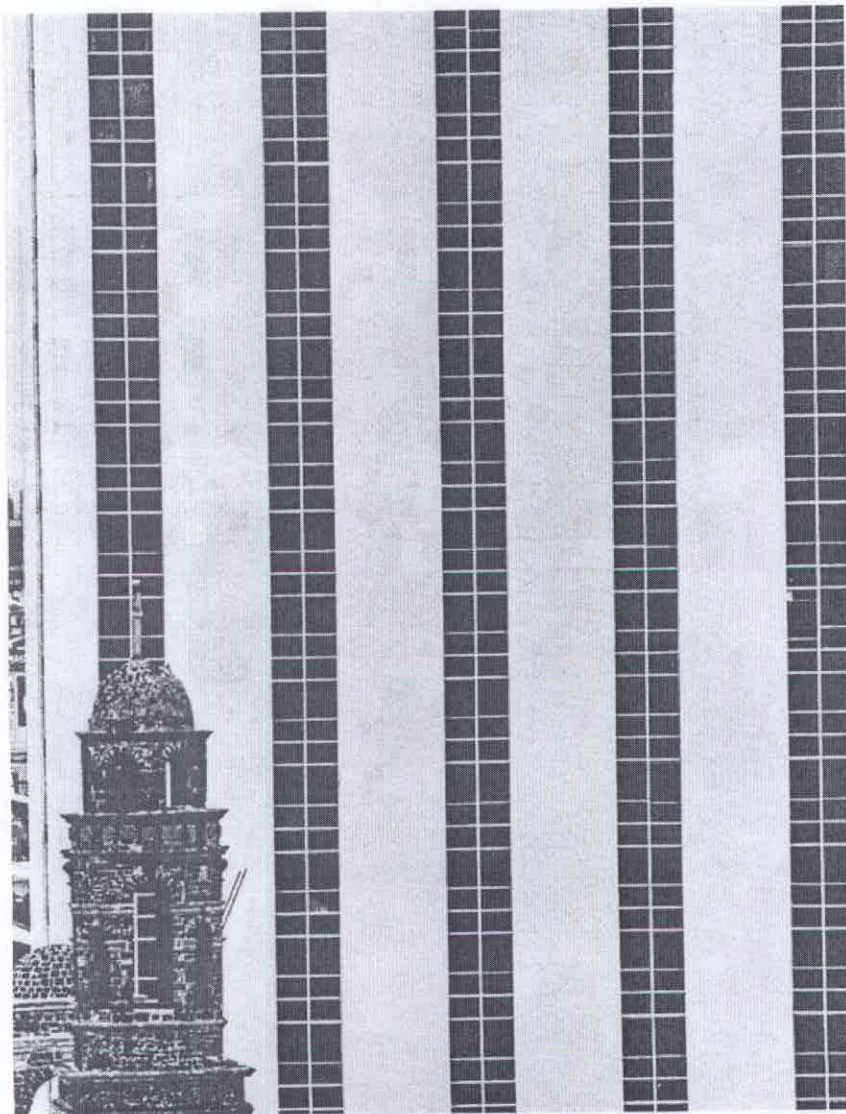
Figure 1-13. Indian rice farmers. (Courtesy of the Press Information Bureau, Government of India.)





"The need for shelter . . . is similarly universal."

Figure 1-14. Mbuti Pygmy camp in the Ituri forest, Zaire. (Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.)



". . . to the constructions of steel, preformed concrete, and polyurethane foam found in the urban centers of most industrialized parts of the world."

Figure 1-15. Nonoalco-Tlatelolco, an urban settlement for seventy thousand in Mexico City. (Courtesy of the Mexican Government Tourism Department.)

ment is universal. What differ are the ways people meet it.)

The need for shelter, for protection from weather and from predators, is similarly universal. The forms of shelter range from the simplest windbreaks of sticks, leaves, and dried skins still used by small groups of Aborigines in the Australian "outback" and the ice-built igloos of some Eskimo to the constructions of steel, preformed concrete, and polyurethane foam found in the urban centers of most industrialized parts of the world. The need for clothing and for a means of transport, and the variety of ways in which these requirements are met, further reinforces the point: Technology is a necessary system that is culturally universal. The forms technology takes are what differ.

Economic Organization

Economic organization, in the terms used here, encompasses the techniques utilized in organizing the production and allocation of

"They also require some system for organizing themselves for work. . . ."

Figure 1-16. Peruvian threshers. (OAS Photo.)



"They also must have a system for distributing the products of their work."

Figure 1-17. The market at El-Harrach, Algeria. (United Nations.)



"People can survive only within some framework of social relations that provides a basis for relating to and relying on other individuals and other groups for cooperation."

Figure 1-18. A Japanese nuclear family. (United Nations.)



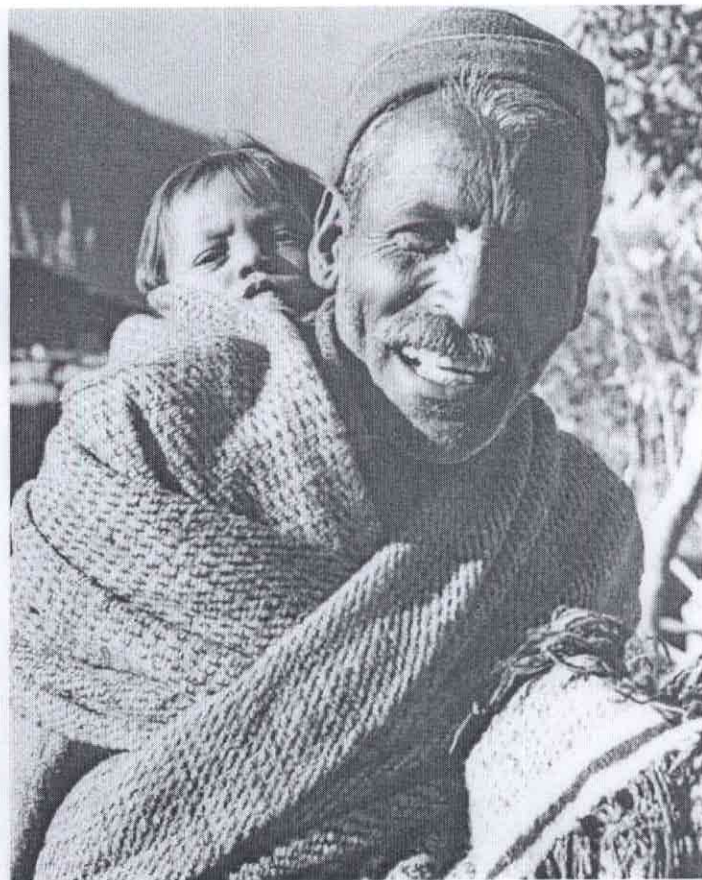
the goods and services people require to meet their material needs. Every human group must have some system for allocating productive goods, the land and tools its members use to produce other goods. They also require some system for organizing themselves for work, whether they are shellfish divers, Amazonian hunters, Lapp pastoralists, or East German industrialists. They furthermore must have a system for distributing the products of their work. The need for some form of economic system is the universal. How the system is organized varies from culture to culture.

Social Organization

What is true of economic organization is also true of social organization. People can survive only within some framework of so-

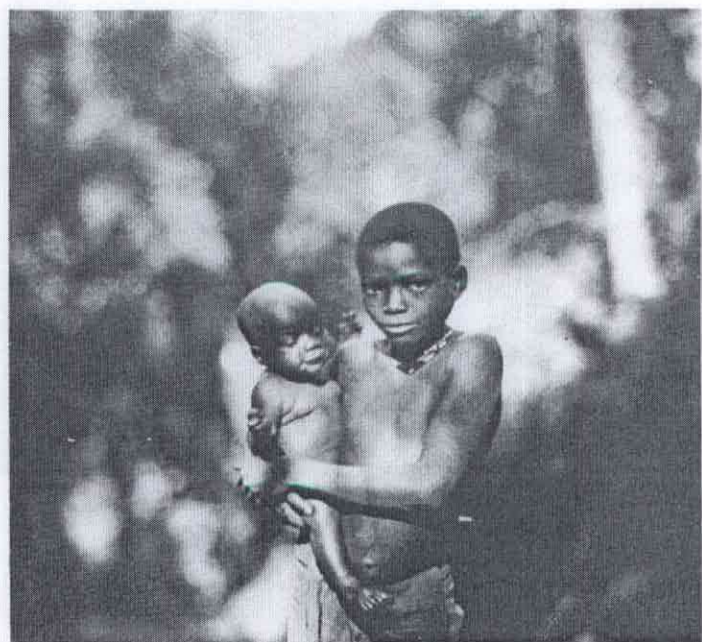
cial relations that provides a basis for relating to and relying on other individuals and other groups for cooperation. The universality of this requirement is a consequence of our biological nature, particularly the long period of dependency in infancy and early childhood, when the young human is learning the behaviors necessary to survival. Because an individual must rely on learning rather than instinct as a means of staying alive, and because this learning should last at least up to early adolescence, the young must be protected and cared for until able to protect and care for themselves. For this and for other important reasons as well, some form of primary group, based initially on family ties, is a universal.

People everywhere also organize themselves into other kinds of social groupings



“... the young must be protected and cared for until able to protect and care for themselves.”

Figure 1-19. *a.* A San Blas Indian mother and child. (OAS Photos.) *b.* A North Indian grandfather and his grandson. (Courtesy of the Information Office, Embassy of India.) *c.* Two Ladakhi matrons with a young kinswoman. (Press Information Bureau, Government of India.) *d.* A Tanzanian girl with an infant left in her care. (Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.)





“In every society some means must be provided for making decisions on matters that affect the group members’ survival.”

Figure 1-20. Election day in Kyoto. (Courtesy of the Embassy of Japan.)

that complement, extend, and occasionally replace the family: secret societies, clubs, castes, social classes, groups based on ethnic or sexual differences, and so on. The requirement for some system of social groupings is again the universal; the forms and processes of the system are the variables.

Political Organization

In every society some means must be provided for making decisions on matters that affect the group members’ survival. There must be some way of controlling conflict within the society and some way of regulating relations with other societies. This need for the maintenance of internal order and for the governance of relations with other

societies is the universal. The forms and processes by which the need is met range from small, autonomous family bands to populous, interdependent nation-states; from reliance on common custom to development of voluminous legal codes; from intrafamilial feuding to atomic war.

Ideology

Some guiding set of beliefs explaining the nature of the world and of people’s relation to it and to the cosmos, always accompanied by some system of observances that symbolically reinforce these beliefs and sanction the actions they require, is still another universal aspect of culture. Among most of the world’s peoples a major component of the ideologi-

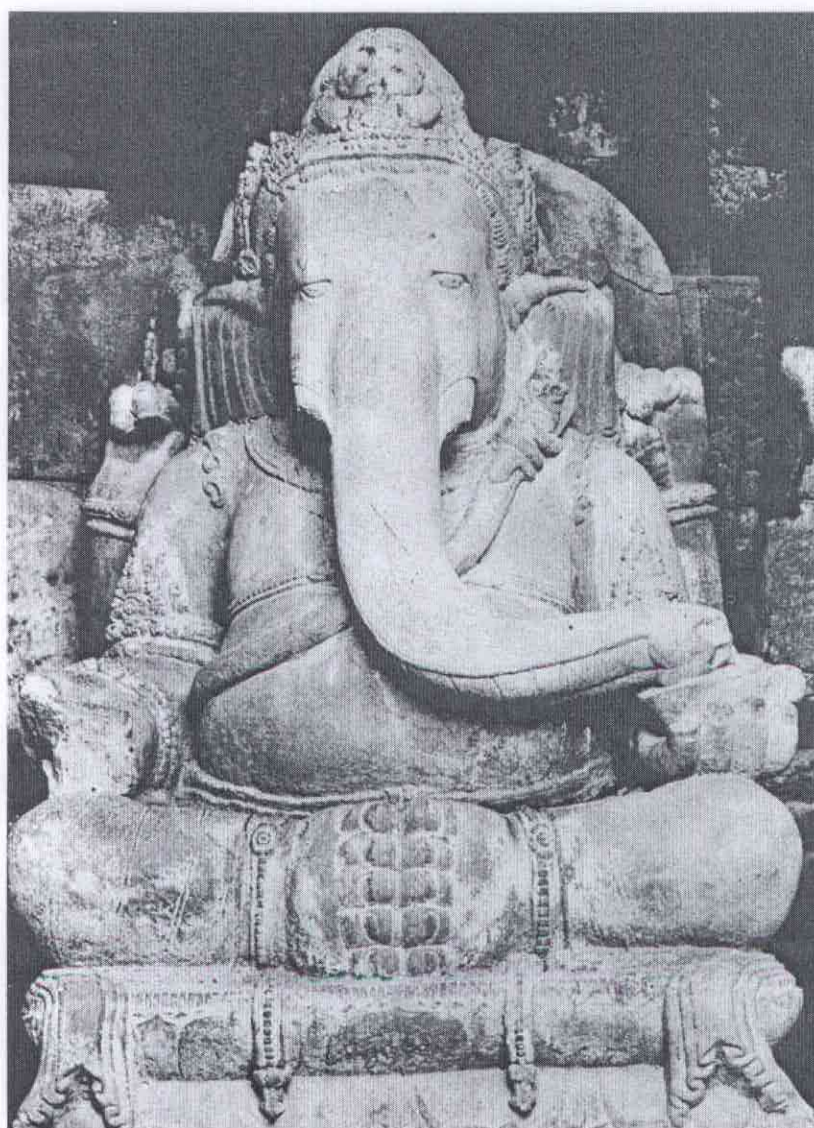
cal system is based on concepts of supernaturalism that usually entail belief in one or more beings endowed with miraculous powers: gods, spirits, angels, demons, prophets, and so on. Frequently these beliefs are described within the context of myths in which the origin of the world is recounted with apocryphal embellishments that serve both as a guide to good behavior and as a warning of the punishment in store for those who do "wrong."

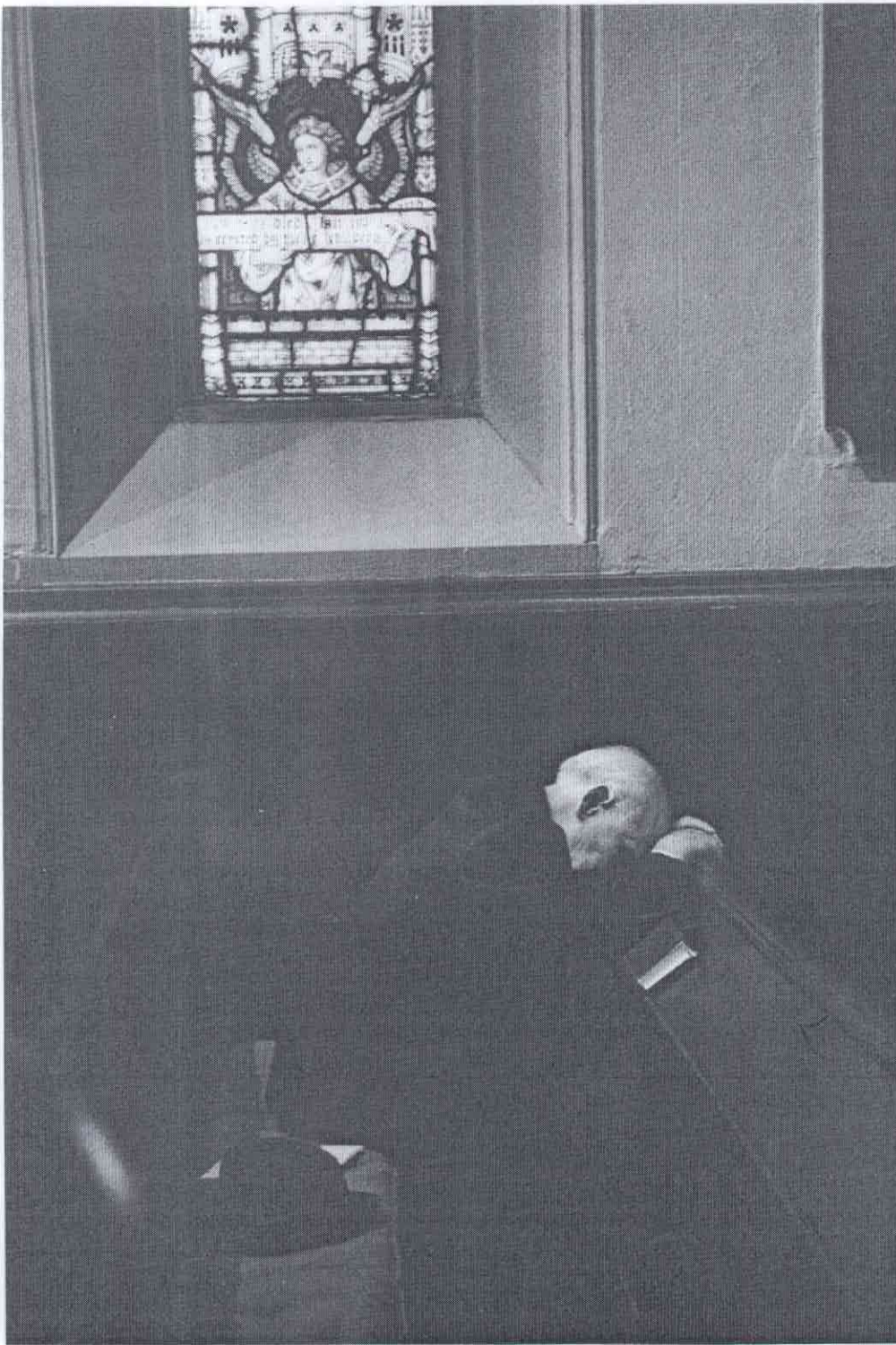
An accompanying set of ritual actions, sacrifices, prayers, and other observances

functions not only to reify and reinforce belief but also to provide people with a means for taking formal action to achieve or maintain a secure position for themselves in relation to the supernatural as they perceive it. Often these rituals are led by priests, religious specialists who act as intermediaries between human beings and the supernatural. Among a smaller but not insignificant number of the world's peoples, supernaturally based belief systems have been partially replaced by secular, nonreligious ideologies, frequently based on ethical

"... concepts of supernaturalism that usually entail belief in one or more beings endowed with miraculous powers: gods, spirits, angels, demons, prophets, and so on."

Figure 1-21. Ganesha, the elephant-headed god, Java. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress.)



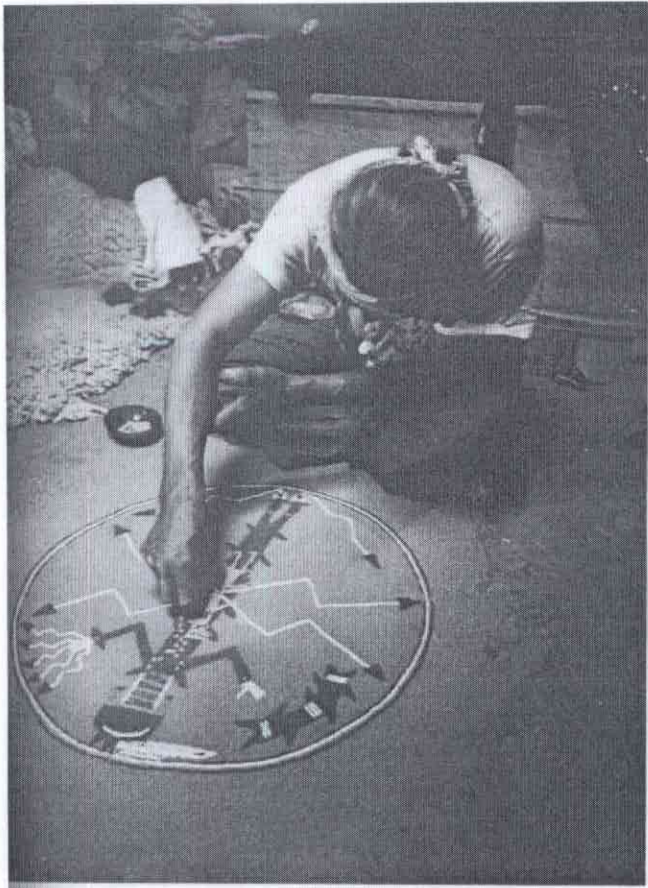


“An accompanying set of ritual actions, sacrifices, prayers. . . .”
Figure 1-22. Canadian at prayer. (National Film Board of Canada.)

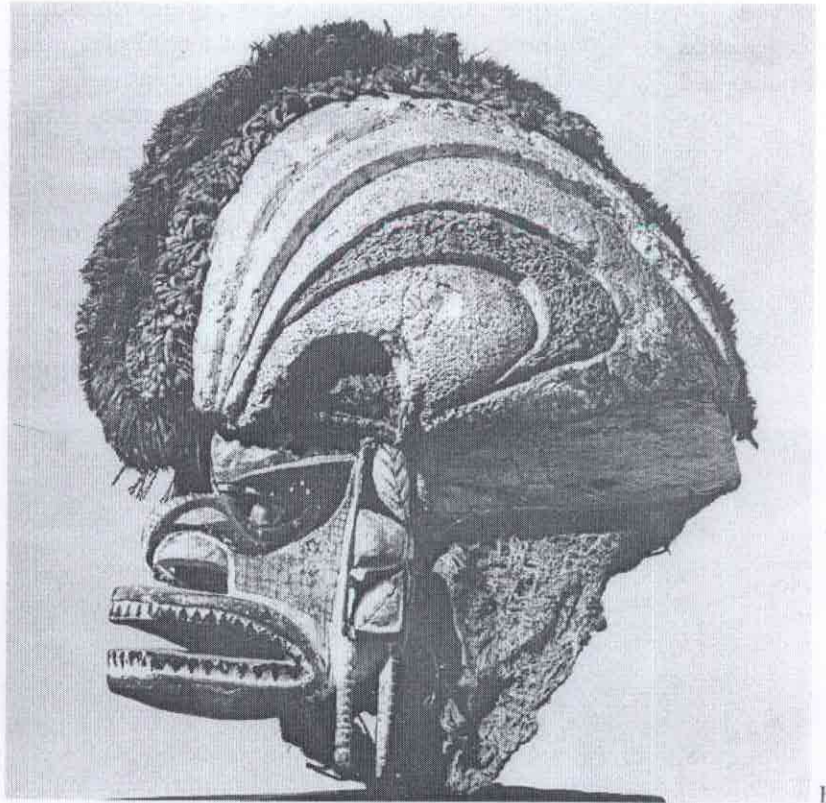
or political principles. Once more it is the presence of some system of beliefs that is the universal; the specifics of ideological form, content, and function are what differ.

The Arts

Some system of techniques for the exaltation of experience through manipulation of the senses is another universal aspect of cul-



a



b



c

"The graphic and plastic arts, personal adornment, music, dance, drama, and oral literature are among the frequently combined forms through which this apparently universal need for aesthetic experience is expressed."

Figure 1-23. *a.* A Navaho sand painter. (Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.) *b.* Helmet mask, New Ireland, Melanesia. (Courtesy of the Museum of Primitive Art.) *c.* Cosmetology in Kentucky. (Jan W. Faul/Appalachian Regional Commission.) *d.* Balinese dancers. (Courtesy of the Cultural and Educational Division, Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia.)

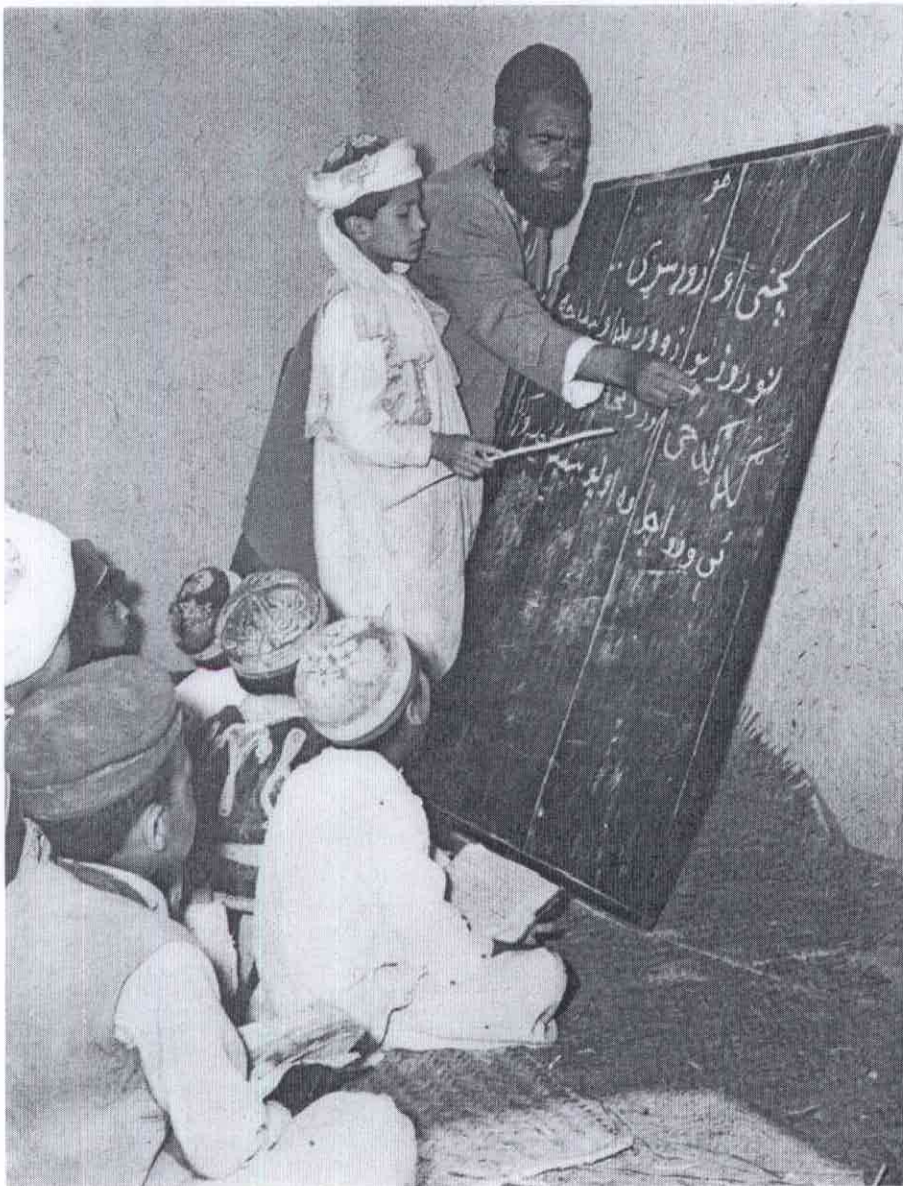


d

ture. Among every human group there is to be found some such set of techniques, serving always to heighten and intensify feeling and thought. Often, but by no means invariably, this entails an effort to create in an object, in a movement, in a sound, or in a

“The universality of language and its integral relation to the processes by which culture is learned. . . .”

Figure 1-24. A language lesson in rural Afghanistan. (United Nations.)



concept something beautiful. But it is the purposeful exaltation or intensification of experience, concern for the creation of a sensation that transcends mere “beauty,” that appears to be the more fundamental attribute of such systems. The graphic and plastic arts, personal adornment, music, dance, drama, and oral literature are among the frequently combined forms through which this apparently universal need for aesthetic experience is expressed.

Language

Language is the last of the major categories of culture to be considered here. The universality of language and its integral relation to the processes by which culture is learned, used, changed, and passed on are obvious. As with all other aspects of culture, it is the form, the particular content and certain specific functions of language, that differ from people to people.

How Culture Is Studied—And Why

Cultural and social anthropology as a discipline is based on the collection and theoretical analysis of information on nearly every aspect of the various ways of life of the world’s peoples. Most of this information is collected by anthropologists working in the field. Anthropological, or ethnographic, fieldwork usually involves the careful study at first hand of the patterned behavior of a particular human group—a family band, a local community, one or more segments of some larger societal unit, a tribe, or a nation. The descriptive account written on the basis of such fieldwork is called an *ethnography*.

The methods used for collecting and analyzing ethnographic data depend on the anthropologist’s subject and the specifics of his or her methodological and theoretical

orientation. For example, an anthropologist may be intent on collecting all the information possible as fast as possible on an only recently "discovered" people whose traditional way of life is undergoing rapid change and may soon be irreversibly transformed as a result of contact with technologically more powerful outsiders. He or she may concentrate intensively on the testing of a few carefully selected hypotheses and consequently gathering data on only one or two aspects of a culture such as the subsistence technology, marriage system, political behavior, or music of a people whose basic way of life is already fairly well known.

In either instance the anthropologist's work is likely to entail two initial phases. First, he or she will become acquainted with the available literature on the people whose culture is to be studied. The anthropologist will try also to become acquainted with what is known of the ways of life of neighboring groups, on the often correct assumption that people who live in the same region and under similar circumstances are likely to have similar cultures. He or she will endeavor to learn as much as possible about their language.

Then the anthropologist usually goes to "the field" to live among the people being studied, for a period that may range from several months to several years. To increase the chances for observation, to shorten his or her cultural distance from the subjects, the anthropologist usually tries to participate in their culture to whatever extent possible, as much as they will allow. If the anthropologist finds the language especially difficult, or if time in the field is limited, an interpreter will probably be needed, at least at the outset. An interpreter who is a member of the culture may also serve as an important informant and as a helpful intermediary for the anthropologist in establishing the con-

tacts and rapport essential to successful fieldwork.

At the same time that he or she will have an objective, scientifically derived system for approaching the study of the people's culture and for categorizing its aspects, the anthropologist will also be interested in learning how the people themselves perceive their way of life. Their image of themselves, their perception of their relation to their culture, and their ideas on how their society operates are also a part of the anthropologist's data.

Fieldwork is often difficult. The physical conditions under which the anthropologist must work are frequently much less comfortable than those to which he or she has been accustomed. Foods may taste strange; the water may cause sickness; unfamiliar insects and exotic bacteria are likely to attack. The fieldworker may miss accustomed surroundings and find it difficult to adjust to the very different life-style of the people he or she is living among and studying. Probably many of them will not like or trust the anthropologist. Undoubtedly the anthropologist will not like or trust all of them.

The need to learn everything about a people one has never seen before, who may find one's questions silly, impertinent, or threatening and who speak a language one can scarcely comprehend, may further complicate the task. To these difficulties will be added methodological and theoretical dilemmas related to the cross-cultural applicability of a variety of techniques of ethnographic data collection: testing, mapping, filming, recording, sampling, census taking, and so on. Because of other commitments the anthropologist may be able to stay in the field for only a few months during what turns out to be a wholly atypical time in his or her subjects' lives. The "group" to be studied may number several hundred thousand. The anthropologist may occasionally

want to give up, but, happily, most persevere. For them the physical discomforts, psychological adjustments, and methodological difficulties of fieldwork are all potentially part of the data and are satisfactorily offset by the intellectual and emotional adventure of getting to know the "natives" of another culture, reaffirming some old truths about all people, perhaps learning a few that are new, and submitting what is learned to the critical scrutiny of colleagues with the hope that some part of the observations may be both of lasting scientific value and of benefit to the people who were studied.

Traditionally, anthropologists have tended to concentrate their attention on the study of "non-Western" or "non-European" peoples, those whose ways of life differ most markedly from the European and American middle-class cultural settings from which most anthropologists have so far come. As a result of the steady expansion of European colonial domination from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries, Europeans and non-Europeans found themselves in increasingly frequent and prolonged contact. Often, to justify colonial domination, missionaries were sent out to preach "the truth" and to guide native peoples in the abandonment of their "heathenish" ways. To maintain effective control over their colonial subjects the Europeans needed to understand them. Many of our earliest firsthand ethnographic accounts were provided by missionaries and colonial administrators. Frequently they were followed to "the field" by trained anthropologists employed by the colonial powers.

In accordance with an exploitative tradition that has proven discouragingly tenacious, the tribal and peasant peoples studied rarely had an opportunity either to assess the relevance to their needs of the anthropologists' research design or to react to their

research conclusions. Usually these were published abroad and only in a European language. Recently a small number of "native" (or non-Euroamerican) anthropologists have begun to work among their own peoples, and in other cultures as well. This new and valuable research development should both enlarge the range of our knowledge of world cultures and deepen our awareness of the urgent problems of survival, emancipation, and self-determination that indigenous peoples face nearly everywhere.

So far most British anthropologists have worked primarily in Africa and Asia and in the British-controlled territories of the Pacific. French anthropologists have worked principally in the areas of Equatorial and West Africa under French colonial control and in French Oceania. Until the last decades the majority of North American anthropologists worked with American Indians. With the end of colonialism, some newly independent areas became accessible to anthropologists who were not citizens of the former colonial powers. Largely for these reasons the anthropological tradition of studying peoples variously, inaccurately, and objectionably termed "nonliterate," "primitive," "native," or "non-Western" first developed. And it persists. Because of this tradition the professional preparation of most anthropologists is still directed toward preparing them to work outside their own cultures, although answers to many of their scholarly queries might just as properly be sought through study of themselves and of their own ways of life. Tradition, habit, and lack of experience are the only significant obstacles. Ultimately they must be overcome, because "ultimately" (probably by the end of this century) the cultures that have been the principal object of the anthropologists' first-hand study—small, relatively isolated, exotic human groups—will

almost all have come under cultural assault from technologically and politically more powerful peoples, and most will have disappeared. The chance to learn from them will then be lost forever. Considering this, perhaps the anthropologists' past propensity for the study of relatively small communities of technologically more primitive peoples has some justification. However, a shift in interest is already evident. Increasingly, young anthropologists are turning their attention to such equally compelling subjects as economic development, industrialization and its cultural prerequisites and consequences, race and ethnic conflict, mental health, overpopulation, the causes and characteristics of rural and urban poverty, sexism, economic imperialism, and modern warfare.

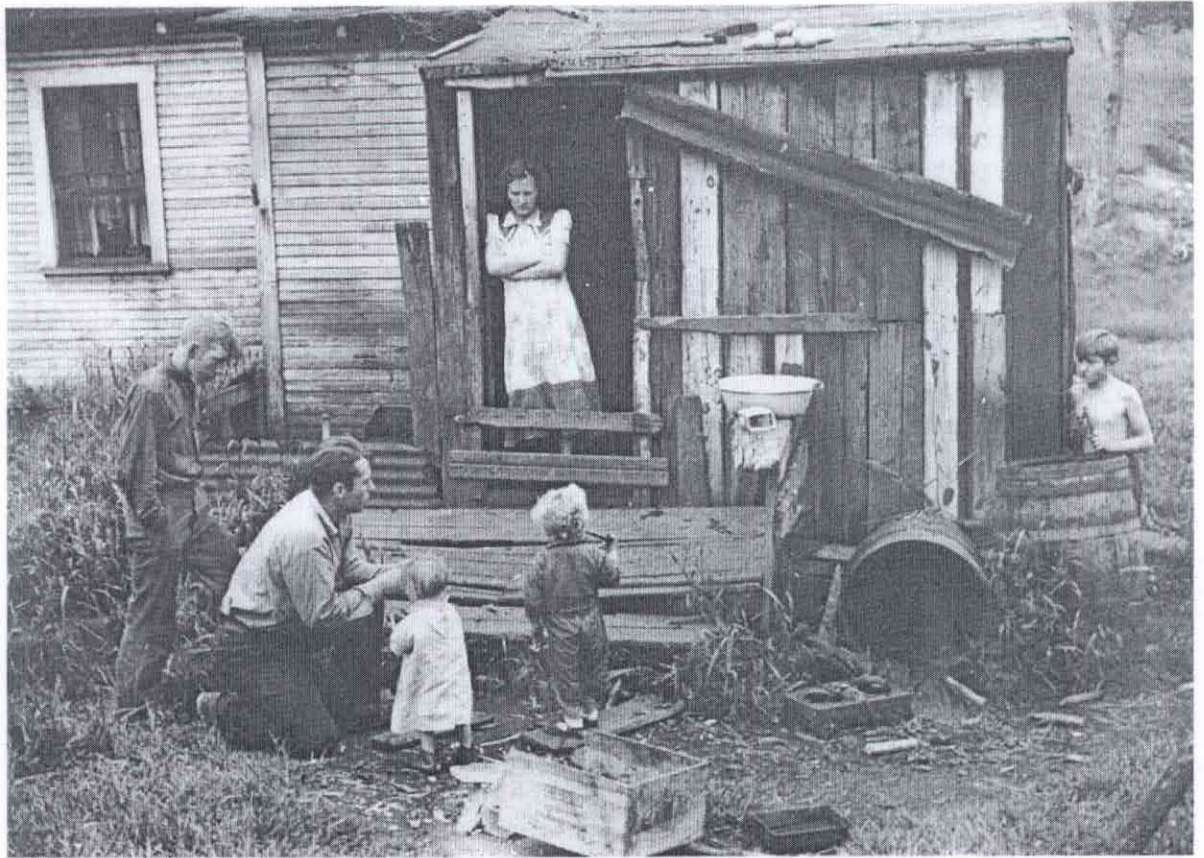
Obviously, the anthropologist working in the field reviews the data as they are being collected, checking discrepancies in information, shifting the direction of the investigation, the content of the sample, and the techniques of inquiry as circumstances change and his or her knowledge of the people's culture grows. However, it is often only when the anthropologist has returned from the field that there is time to analyze and organize the information in final form. Some of it may be written up and published in purely descriptive ethnographic reports. This kind of publication constitutes a basic contribution to the anthropological literature, a repository from which all other anthropologists can draw for teaching materials, in preparing their own research, in writing, and, increasingly, in working as partisans in the self-determination struggles of the still dominated peoples they have studied.

Or the returned fieldworker may attempt a theoretical analysis of the data gathered. The development of theory in cultural and social anthropology (or ethnology) proceeds from the collection of data in two phases.

First the anthropologist works out a theoretical explanation of the information. He or she then tests the theory within the context of data on like phenomena collected by other anthropologists who have worked in other cultures. Increasingly anthropologists rely on statistical techniques to support their findings. Frequently the anthropologist returns to the field for more information, by this process working optimistically toward the confirmation of his or her conclusions, often discovering the need for further testing and the modification of the original explanation. Occasionally the anthropologist may decide to reject a first theory entirely and search for an alternative interpretation. Sometimes such testing is deferred; the explanation is left to stand as a hypothesis to be tested later by others.

In teaching, the anthropologist's first task is to introduce students to the wide variety of cultural ways in which people meet their common human needs. At the same time the anthropologist introduces them to those theoretical concepts that he or she believes serve best to make these cultural variations meaningful. Gradually this should lead the students toward a more objective appreciation of themselves and others, and of the combination of unique historical events, environmental circumstances, and universal processes that shape the lives of people and determine the forms of society and culture everywhere.

Beyond developing a greater tolerance for the differing ways of others and a greater objectivity about themselves, students of cultural and social anthropology may come to see familiar problems in new perspective. Poverty, family disorganization, racism and sexism, political exploitation, warfare, and ideological oppression can be perceived not as universal, irrevocable aspects of human fate but as products of particular sets of sociocultural circumstances, circumstances



“Poverty, family disorganization, racism and sexism, political exploitation, warfare, and ideological oppression can be perceived not as universal, irrevocable aspects of human fate, but as products of particular sets of sociocultural circumstances. . . .”

Figure 1-25. A West Virginia coal miner and his family. (Courtesy of the Library of Congress.)

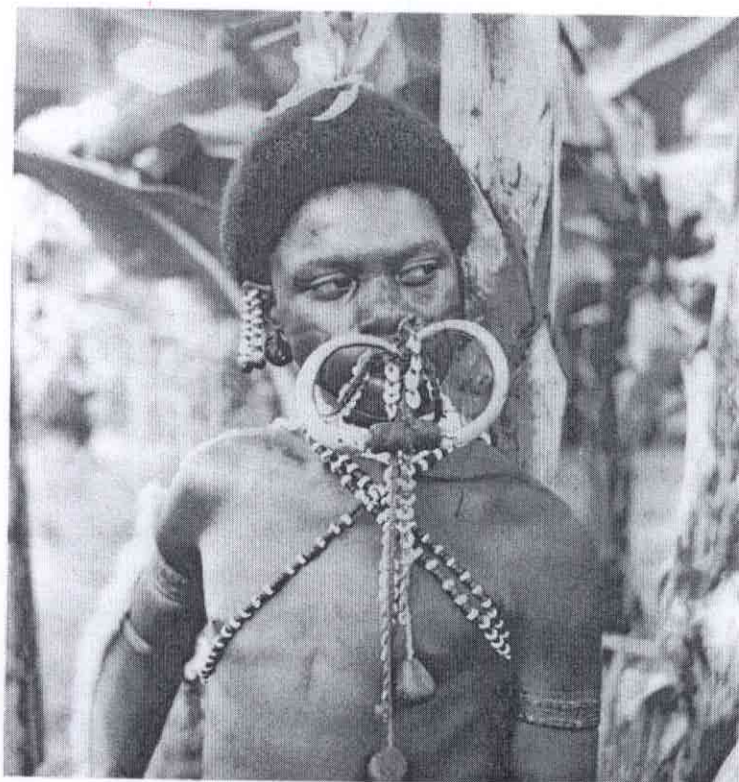
that can in some instances be altered—if not to solve all human problems in any final sense, at least to reduce their severity and the suffering they cause.

From an anthropological perspective, whatever is learned about people anywhere is ultimately relevant to understanding people everywhere. The following chapters are organized to illustrate this premise, with ethnographic examples of the variety of cultural ways in which people provide for their common human needs, with some theoretical suggestions as to how such cultural variation can be explained, and finally with attention to the potential utility of anthropology in ameliorating some of humanity’s most pressing current problems.

Summary

Anthropology, the scientific study of humankind, is usually divided into three related basic fields: (1) physical anthropology, the study of human evolution, variation, and growth; (2) archeology, the study of cultural development on the basis of the material remains of people’s antecedent ways of life; and (3) cultural and social anthropology, the study of all aspects of the ways of life of contemporary or historically recent peoples.

We are cultured animals. During the several millions of years of our evolution those of our ancestors best able to use culture as a means of adaptation—to communicate and



“... whatever is learned about people anywhere is ultimately relevant to understanding people everywhere.”

Figure 1-26. A young Melanesian. (Courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.)

cooperate with their fellows, to control their aggressive impulses for the sake of societal survival, to think out solutions to their problems, and to plan ahead—had the best chances of surviving long enough to pass on this valuable ability. By this process people, society, and culture evolved together.

Now, as members of a single species, all humans share a common set of fundamental needs: for food, for protection, for social cooperation, for belief, for esthetic experience, and for communication. These can be met only by cultural means. In order to survive, every culture must meet these needs for at least most of its members. Consequently, all cultures necessarily share certain

fundamental attributes, the systems by which our universal human needs are met. These systems, or aspects of culture, are studied by anthropologists according to the following categories: technology, economic organization, social organization, political organization, art, and language.

The anthropologist studies culture, records variations in its component aspects, and develops and tests theories to explain them. The goal of such explanation is achievement of the objective understanding of people and their relationship to society and culture (and to the rest of the natural environment) that is essential for accurate prediction and effective human action.

Suggested Readings

In addition to other general introductory texts that deal with the subject of cultural and social anthropology there are several fairly recent, smaller books that take a sometimes different but essentially complementary approach to the

one taken here. Among the best of these are Beals's *Culture in Process*, Peacock and Kirsch's *The Human Direction: An Evolutionary Approach to Social and Cultural Anthropology*, and Wolf's *Anthropology*. Hammond's *Cultural and Social Anthropology: Introductory Readings in Ethnology* is a collection especially designed to complement the text you are using.

For an idea of the essentially social anthropological approach try Bohannan's *Social Anthropology* or Mair's *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*.

On the relationships between the evolution of people and the evolution of society and culture see Spuhler's excellent collection *The Evolution of Man's Capacity for Culture*. Two other good general works dealing with aspects of the same subject are Birdsell's *Human Evolution: An Introduction to the New Physical Anthropology* and Campbell's *Human Evolution: An Introduction to Man's Adaptation*.

The interplay between people's biologically determined needs and their cultural means of coping with them is succinctly developed by Goldschmidt in the "Introduction" to his *Exploring the Ways of Mankind*; see also Alland's *Evolution and Human Behavior*; a collection edited by Montagu, *Culture: Man's Adaptive Dimension*; and Weiss and Mann's *Human Biology and Human Behavior: An Anthropological Perspective*.

For an excellent critical history of the development of cultural and social anthropology as a science see Harris's *The Rise of Anthropological Theory* and also Voget's *History of Ethnology*. Brew's *One Hundred Years of Anthropology* is an account that emphasizes the parallel development of physical anthropology and archeology.

Although there is no single general guide to anthropological fieldwork, a publication of the Royal Anthropological Institute, *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*, and Murdock's *Outline of World Cultures* illustrate the detailed variety of data anthropologists may collect in the field. See also the titles published in the Spindlers' series, "Studies in Anthropological Method," particularly Langness's *The Life History in Anthropological Science* and Williams's *Field Methods in the Study of Culture*. Naroll and Cohen's encyclopedic *A Handbook of Method in Cultural Anthropology* contains a long section on "The Field Work Process."

Many of the ethnographies listed in the references at the back of this book also contain descriptions of the problems of fieldwork in non-Western cultural settings. Among the best of the special works on ethnographic method are Golde's *Women in the Field*, Kimball and Watson's *Crossing Cultural Boundaries*, Spindler's *Being an Anthropologist: Field Work in Eleven Cultures*, and Wax's *Doing Fieldwork: Warnings and Advice*. Lewis's *A Study of Slum Culture* is a good example of the modification of traditional field techniques to meet the requirements of the growing number of anthropologists working in modern urban settings. On this same theme see "In the Field" in Hannerz's *Soulside: Essays in Ghetto Culture and Community*. For a now classic account of the ups and downs of life in the field see Bowen's *Return to Laughter*, Berreman's *Behind Many Masks: Ethnography and Impression Management in a Himalayan Village*, "The Politics of Field Work" in Diamond's *In Search of the Primitive*, and Read's *The High Valley*.

On the relevance of anthropology to the pressing problems of the contempo-

rary world see Hymes's *Reinventing Anthropology* and Jorgensen and Truzzi's *Anthropology and American Life*.

Fried's *The Study of Anthropology* provides a lively introduction for anyone considering anthropology as a career.