

Chapter 1: The Anthropological Study of Religion

Chapter One

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF RELIGION

CHAPTER OUTLINE

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

- The Holistic Approach
- The Study of Human Societies
- The Fore of New Guinea: An Ethnographic Example
- Two Ways of Viewing Culture
- Cultural Relativism
 - Postmodernism
 - Universal Human Rights
- The Concept of Culture
- Viewing the World

THE STUDY OF RELIGION

- Attempts at Defining Religion
- The Domain of Religion
- Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religion
 - The Evolutionary Approach
 - The Marxist Approach
 - The Functional Approach
 - The Interpretive Approach
 - The Psychosocial Approach
- The Biological Basis of Religious Behavior
 - Belief in Spirit Beings
 - The Evolution of Religion

CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

BOX 1.1 KAREN MCCARTHY BROWN AND VODOU

BOX 1.2 MALINOWSKI AND THE TROBRIAND ISLANDS

BOX 1.3 EVANS-PRITCHARD AND THE AZANDE

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Anthropology is the study of humanity. Anthropologists study human societies as integrated wholes, an approach that is termed holism. This approach is seen in the broad scope of anthro-

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pology, which is often divided into the fields of physical anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and cultural anthropology. This approach requires that societies be studied over long periods of time, during which the investigator lives within the community and participates in the lives of the people under study, a technique known as participant observation. The final product is an ethnography, a descriptive study of a human society.

An outside observer of a community usually imposes his or her system of analysis on the group under study (etic perspective). It is natural to use one's own society as the basis for interpreting and judging other societies, a tendency called ethnocentrism. Many anthropologists attempt to see the world through the eyes of the people being studied (emic perspective) and describe and understand people's customs and ideas but do not judge them, an approach called cultural relativism. The goal is to study what people believe, not whether or not what they believe is true.

A central concept in anthropology is culture. Culture includes all aspects of the human experience that are passed down from generation to generation. Culture gives meaning to reality; we live in a real, physical world, but our minds interpret this world through a cultural lens.

Religion is a difficult concept to define cross-culturally. We can list some approaches to a definition. An analytic definition focuses on the way in which religion manifests itself or is expressed in a culture. A functional definition is concerned with the role that religion plays in a society. An essentialist definition looks at what the essential nature of religion is and emphasizes the fact that religion is the domain of the extraordinary, a system of beliefs and behaviors that deals with the relationship between humans and the sacred supernatural.

In this book we will define religion as a set of cultural beliefs and practices that usually include some or all of a basic set of characteristics: a belief in anthropomorphic supernatural beings; a focus on the sacred supernatural; the presence of supernatural power that is found in supernatural beings as well as physical beings and objects; the performance of ritual activities that involve the manipulation of sacred objects to communicate with supernatural beings and/or to influence or control events; and an articulation of a worldview and moral code. Religion also provides for the creation and maintenance of social bonds and mechanisms of social control within a community and provides explanations for the unknown and a sense of control for the individual.

There have been many theoretical approaches to the study of religion. The evolutionary approach, developed in the late 1800s, focused on the questions of when and how religions began and how they evolved from the simple to the complex. This evolution was seen as a natural consequence of human nature, and the religions of "primitive" peoples were remnants of an earlier, simpler evolutionary stage. Early religions included animism, the belief in spirits and ghosts, and animatism, the belief in a generalized supernatural force.

The Marxist approach is based upon the writings of Karl Marx who saw religion as being a construction of those in power, designed to divert people's attention from the miseries of their lives. This misery was seen as being the result of exploitation of the masses by those in power under the capitalist system. He saw religion both as a means of compensation and as a way of getting people to go along with a capitalist culture that is not in their best interests.

The functional approach asks the question: What does religion do? For example, Malinowski concluded that magic functions to provide control and certainty in an otherwise uncertain sit-

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uation. The interpretive approach is associated with Clifford Geertz who believed that the task of anthropologists was to make sense of cultural systems by studying meaning. He described religion as a cluster of symbols that provides a charter for a culture's ideas, values, and way of life. The psychosocial approach is concerned with the relationship between culture and personality and the connection between the society and the individual.

What we perceive and think of as our reality is actually a creation of our brain. Information entering the brain through the sense organs are organized and interpreted by the brain into a "reality." The brain is also capable of creating realities that are indistinguishable from the reality that lies outside of the body. Various religious experiences may be "realities" that are created by the brain.

All religious systems appear to contain concepts of supernatural anthropomorphic causal agents. One explanation for this is the concept of theory of mind, the idea that people know, or think they know, what is going on in other people's minds. The human brain extends this into the minds of other living and nonliving entities.

Many ideas have been proposed to explain the evolution of religion. Some have suggested that religion arose to fulfill social needs, imposing order and stability on society. Some have focused on the human awareness of death. Others see religious as a by-product of how the human brain works. Thus we feel that we occupy our bodies (not that we are our bodies), and that we infer purpose, goals, intention, and design where there is none, attributing human characteristics to a range of inanimate objects.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 1 the student should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of holism and the importance of the holistic approach.
- Describe the approach and methodology of the field of anthropology.
- Explain what a culture area is and explain why this and method of food getting are used as a basic way of describing a culture.
- Explain the causes of *kuru* among the Fore, as an example of holism.
- Explain the difference between emic and an etic analysis.
- Describe cultural relativism and its importance for anthropological studies.
- Explain the concept of culture.
- Identify the basic approaches to defining religion, including the associated definitions.
- List the characteristics generally associated with religion.
- Identify and explain the basic approaches to the study of religion.
- Describe how the design and functioning of the human brain gives rise to religious beliefs.

GLOSSARY

- Agnosticism:** The idea that the nature of the supernatural is unknowable, that it is as impossible to prove the nonexistence of the supernatural as it is to prove its existence. (p. 25)
- Analytic definition:** A definition that focuses on the way religion manifests itself or is expressed in a culture. (p. 14)
- Animatism:** The belief in an impersonal supernatural power. (p. 17)
- Animism:** A belief in spirit beings. (p. 15)
- Anthropology:** The study of humanity. (p. 1)
- Anthropomorphic:** Nonhuman entities that have human characteristics. (p. 22)
- Archaeology:** The study of prehistoric people from the analysis of their physical and cultural remains. (p. 2)
- Cognition:** The processes of the human brain, including perception, attention, learning, memory, concept formation, and problem solving. (p. 24)
- Collective conscious:** A set of beliefs shared by members of a social group that function to limit the natural selfishness of individuals and promote social cooperation. (p. 18)
- Cultural anthropology:** The study of contemporary human societies and their cultures. (p. 2)
- Cultural relativism:** Attempting to analyze and understanding cultures other than one's own without judging them in terms of one's own culture. (p. 10)
- Culture:** Human beliefs and behaviors of a society that are learned, transmitted from one generation to the next, and shared by a group of people. (p. 13)
- Culture area:** A geographical area in which societies share many cultural traits. (p. 3)
- Divination:** Supernatural techniques for obtaining information about things unknown, including events that will occur in the future. (p. 8)
- Emic perspective:** The study of a society through the eyes of the people being studied. (p. 10)
- Essentialist definition:** A definition that looks at the essential nature of religion. (p. 15)
- Ethnocentrism:** Using one's own culture as the basis for interpreting and judging other cultures. (p. 10)
- Ethnographers:** A person who produces an ethnography. (p. 3)
- Ethnographic present:** Speaking or writing about cultures in the present tense although what is described might no longer exist. (p. 3)
- Ethnography:** The descriptive study of human societies. (p. 3)
- Etic perspective:** The study of a society using concepts that were developed outside of the culture. (p. 9)
- Evolutionary approach:** An approach that focuses on the questions of when and how religion began and how it developed through time. (p. 17)
- Foraging bands:** Small communities that subsist by hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plant foods. (p. 2)
- Functional approach:** An approach that is based on the function or role that religion plays in a society. (p. 18)
- Functional definition:** A definition that is based on the role that religion plays in a society. (p. 15)

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- Holism:** The study of human societies as systematic sums of their parts, as integrated wholes. (p. 1)
- Horticulture:** The use of cultivated domesticated plants without the use of fertilizers, plows, irrigation, and other agricultural technologies. (p. 2)
- Human universal:** Characteristics that are found in all human societies. (p. 3)
- Interpretive approach:** Idea that cultural systems are understood by studying meaning; religious is a cluster of symbols that provides a charter for a culture's ideas, values, and way of life. (p. 20)
- Linguistic anthropology:** The study of language. (p. 2)
- Marxist approach:** Idea that religion is a construction of those in power, designed to divert people's attention from the miseries of their lives; a way of getting people to go along with capitalist culture. (p. 18)
- Modernity:** A philosophical movement based on ideas of rationality, objectivity, reason, and science as the means of gaining knowledge, truth, and progress. (p. 11)
- Operant definition:** A definition in which we define our terms so that they are observable and measurable, and therefore can be studied. (p. 14)
- Participant observation:** A research method whereby the anthropologist lives in a community and participates in the lives of the people under study while at the same time making objective observations. (p. 2)
- Pastoral nomads:** Societies that subsist primarily by herding domesticated animals. (p. 2)
- Physical anthropology:** The study of human biology and evolution. (p. 2)
- Postmodernism:** An emphasis on subjectivity over objectivity and a tendency towards reflexivity, or self-consciousness; all knowledge is seen as being a human construction that scholars must seek to deconstruct. (p. 11)
- Psychosocial approach:** An approach to the study of religion that is concerned with the relationship between culture and personality and between society and individual. (p. 21)
- Religion:** The realm of culture that concerns the sacred supernatural. (p. 16)
- Sacred:** An attitude wherein the subject or object is set apart from the normal, everyday world and is entitled to reverence and respect. (p. 15)
- Small-scale:** Describes relatively small communities that practice foraging, herding, or technologically simple horticulture (p. 3)
- Supernatural:** Entities and actions that transcend the natural world of cause and effect. (p. 15)
- Symbol:** A shared understanding about the meaning of certain words, attributes, or objects; something that stands for something else. (p. 14)
- Theory of mind:** The idea that people know, or think they know, what is going on in other people's minds. (p. 22)

DISCUSSION TOPICS

- How does anthropology compare with other social sciences that you may be familiar with?

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- Cultural relativism is one of the core concepts of anthropology. Are there any limits to this concept? If so, what are they? Is there a place in anthropology for the idea of universal human rights?
- Is it possible to fully understand a religion if you do not believe in its basic tenets?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of an emic analysis? What are the advantages and disadvantages of an etic analysis?
- How would you personally define the term *religion*?
- The concept of holism suggests that religion affects and is affected by other domains of culture. In our own culture, how does religion interact with other realms of culture?
- Why do you think religion is universal?

STUDENT PROJECTS

- In order to illustrate the concept of holism, select a general topic of interest. It can be music, a hobby, sports, etc. Discuss how that topic can be studied as an anthropological study. Search the Internet to find anthropological discussions that touch on that topic.
- While it is not possible to travel to different parts of the world during the semester, it is possible to visit some venue associated with another culture in one's own community. It can be an ethnic restaurant, museum of ethnic art, a community center run by a particular ethnic group, or a church or temple. Visit the location and make observations. Write a brief ethnography.
- Interview a student who is from another country attending your school. Find out what aspects of your culture the international student finds strange, amusing, or difficult to understand and why.
- Design a survey about the definition of religion. Ask a number of students how they would define religion and whether they would include certain phenomena (e.g., alien abduction, magic) or not and why.
- Many countries have entered into treaties guaranteeing certain universal human rights and many organizations exist fighting for universal human rights. What are some of the rights are thought to be universal? Do you agree with these? What rights would you include, if any?

VIDEOS

Anthropologists at Work: Careers Making a Difference. Insight Media. 1993, 36 min.
Shows anthropologists working in applied settings.

Civil Religion. Insight Media. 1999, 60 min.
Looks at the myths, symbols, and holidays of civil religion in America.

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Culture. Insight Media. 1991, 30 min.
Defines and explores the main dimensions of culture.

How Beliefs and Values Define a Culture. Insight Media. 1997, 24 min.
Looks at how art, music, history and religion shape cultural beliefs and values.

What is Religion? Insight Media. 1992, 60 min.
Looks at the cultural and social functions of religion and considers religious pluralism in the United States.

WEB SITES

www.aaanet.org/ Website of the American Anthropological Association

www.aaanet.org/sar The Society for the Anthropology of Religion of the American Anthropological Association

http://fora.tv/2006/02/13/J_Stephen_Lansing_A_Thousand_Years_in_Bali A Lecture on the Water Temples on Bali

http://julianwalkeryoga.gaia.com/blog/2009/1/v_s_ramachandran_temporal_lobe_epilepsy_and_religious_experience Videos with V. S. Ramachandran, UC San Diego, on Temporal Lobe Epilepsy

<http://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/begin/dna/prions> The Mystery of Kuru, Genetic Science Learning Center, The University of Utah

www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/kuru/kuru.html National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke Kuru Information Page

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/humanspark/episodes/program-three-brain-matters/video-full-episode/418/> "Brain Matters," from the PBS Series *The Human Spark* with Alan Alda.

www.religioustolerance.org Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance

www.wamware.com/world-religions World Religions Project

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

Pascal Boyer. *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.

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Andrew Newberg, Eugene D'Aquili, and Vince Rause. *Why God Won't Go Away*. A study of brain function and how the brain creates stories, beliefs, and rituals.

William Paden. *Interpreting the Sacred: Ways of Viewing Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992. An overview of theoretical approaches to religion.

Carl Sagan. *The Demon Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1996). A skeptical look at supernatural beliefs and phenomena.

TEST QUESTIONS

Multiple Choice Questions

1. Which of the following would *not* be an appropriate task for an anthropologist?
 - a. translating a religious text in the Navaho language
 - b. excavating the ruins of a Mayan temple
 - c. filming an American religious ceremony
 - d. studying the chimpanzees of the Gombe National Park
 - e. all of the above would be appropriate tasksAnswer: e page 2
2. A study of a people's religious beliefs and rituals would be a part of the study of:
 - a. cultural anthropology
 - b. linguistics
 - c. archaeology
 - d. physical anthropologyAnswer: a page 2
3. Anthropologists study societies as systematic sums of their parts, a concept known as:
 - a. relativism
 - b. ethnology
 - c. holism
 - d. postmodernismAnswer: c pages 1-2
4. A method of studying communities that is unique to anthropology is:
 - a. questionnaires
 - b. participant observation
 - c. psychological tests
 - d. recording of oral literature and songsAnswer: b page 2
5. An ethnography is a:
 - a. comparative study of the social systems of many societies
 - b. study of the physical characteristics of a human population
 - c. analysis of a nonhuman primate species
 - d. descriptive study of a society or cultureAnswer: d page 3

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6. An example of an ethnography is:
- Goodall's study of chimpanzee behavior
 - Herskovits's study of economic anthropology
 - Johanson's study of the fossil hominids from Hadar
 - Malinowski's study of the Trobriand Islanders
- Answer: d page 3
7. An anthropologist travels to the Fore of New Guinea and produces an ethnography. This ethnography is a(n):
- comparison of Fore society with other New Guinea societies
 - a description of Fore society and culture
 - analysis of the Fore language
 - analysis of the biological and genetic characteristics of the Fore people
- Answer: b page 3
8. Which of the following might also be referred to as an ethnographer?
- a physical anthropologist
 - an archaeologist
 - a cultural anthropologist
 - a linguistic anthropologist
- Answer: c page 3
9. Geographical areas wherein are found societies that share a great many characteristics are known as:
- culture areas
 - ethnographic zones
 - ecological regions
 - societal areas
- Answer: a page 4
10. Two main ways that anthropologists organize societies are by:
- culture area and food getting strategies
 - level of religious complexity and gender stratification
 - gender ratio and child rearing strategies
 - kinship system and language spoken
- Answer: a page 6
11. Societies characterized by low population density, no full-time specialists or social stratification, whose food is obtained primarily from gathering, hunting, and fishing are:
- foragers
 - pastoralists
 - horticulturalists
 - intensive agriculturalists
- Answer: a page 7
12. *Kuru*, a disease found among the Fore, is caused by:
- microscopic particles transmitted through cannibalism
 - a parasite transmitted through poorly-cooked pork
 - a hereditary factor passed on through the mother to her children

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- d. toxins introduced by Indonesian mining operations

Answer: a page 8

13. The Fore believe that *kuru* is caused by the:

- a. breaking of a taboo
- b. displeasure of an ancestral spirit
- c. transmission of a microorganism
- d. activities of a sorcerer doing evil magic

Answer: d page 8

14. From the etic perspective, Western medicine sees *kuru* as an infectious disease. From the emic perspective, the Fore believe that *kuru* is caused by the:

- a. breaking of a tabu
- b. displeasure of an ancestral spirit
- c. transmission of a microorganism
- d. activities of a sorcerer doing evil magic

Answer: d page 8

15. Anthropologists attempt to see the world through the eyes of the people in the community they are studying. This is:

- a. emic analysis
- b. functional analysis
- c. etic analysis
- d. psychosocial analysis

Answer: a page 9-10

16. After cremating their dead, the Yanomamö grind the ashes and later add the ashes to a banana stew to be consumed. Most Americans might feel that drinking the ashes of the dead to be disgusting. On the other hand, anthropology tells us that we should not judge the customs of others by our own standards. This latter attitude towards other cultures is called:

- a. holism
- b. ethnocentrism
- c. cultural relativism
- d. participant observation

Answer: c page 10

17. The Wogeo of New Guinea believe that Wogeo traditions are the only valid traditions in the world and that Wogeo speech is uniquely pure. They refuse to speak the languages of the communities with which they trade because their neighbors make the sounds of dogs. This attitude is an example of:

- a. cultural relativism
- b. ethnocentrism
- c. morality
- d. righteousness

Answer: b page 10

18. The point of view that all knowledge is a human "construction," that there are multiple viewpoints and truths, and that we must be aware of our own viewpoints and biases, is referred to as:

- a. modernity
- b. essentialism
- c. postmodernism
- d. Marxism

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Answer: c page 11

19. Culture consists of:
- a. innate behavioral patterns that humans share with the apes
 - b. an appreciation of the fine arts and literature
 - c. nutrients upon which bacteria can grow
 - d. learned and traditional patterns of behavior

Answer: d page 13

20. The first use of the term *culture* in anthropology appeared in 1871 in a book written by:
- a. James Frazer
 - b. Robert Edgerton
 - c. Edward Tylor
 - d. Melford Spiro

Answer: c page 13

21. Defining terms so they are observable and measurable is called a(n):
- a. analytic definition
 - b. functional definition
 - c. anthropological definition
 - d. operant definition

Answer: d page 14

22. In an analytic definition of religion, the study of the organization and leadership of a religious system represents the:
- a. social dimension
 - b. ritual dimension
 - c. institutional dimension
 - d. narrative dimension

Answer: c page 15

23. A definition of religion that is concerned with the role that religion plays in a society is a(n):
- a. analytic definition
 - b. functional definition
 - c. essentialist definition
 - d. psychosocial definition

Answer: b page 15

24. A belief in spirit beings is termed:
- a. animatism
 - b. animism
 - c. agnosticism
 - d. anthropocentrism

Answer: b page 15

25. The term *supernatural* refers to:
- a. an attitude of reverence and respect
 - b. a belief in spirit beings such as spirits and gods
 - c. belief in a general supernatural force
 - d. things that are above the natural and not subject to the laws of nature

Answer: d page 15

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26. The operant definition of religion proposed in this textbook includes the following characteristics:
- a. a belief in anthropomorphic supernatural beings
 - b. a focus on the sacred supernatural
 - c. an articulation of a worldview and moral code through narratives
 - d. all of the above

Answer: d page 16

27. The concept of animatism refers to a belief:
- a. in spirit beings
 - b. that it is impossible to prove the existence of a supernatural power
 - c. that humans are set off from the animal world
 - d. in an impersonal supernatural power

Answer: d page 17

28. Late nineteenth century anthropologists who saw “primitive” societies as presenting an early stage in the development of religion were using the:
- a. functional approach
 - b. essentialist approach
 - c. evolutionary approach
 - d. psychoanalytic approach

Answer: c page 17

29. Who wrote, “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature”?
- a. Edward Tylor
 - b. Bronislaw Malinowski
 - c. Karl Marx
 - d. Sigmund Freud

Answer: c page 18

30. There are many approaches to the study of religion in anthropology. One approach is to ask the question: What does religion do? What roles does religion play in human societies? This approach is referred to as the:
- a. functional approach
 - b. psychosocial approach
 - c. evolutionary approach
 - d. cognitive approach

Answer: a pages 18-20

31. Which of the following anthropologists is most closely associated with the functionalist approach?
- a. Melford Spiro
 - b. Edward Tyler
 - c. Alfred Radcliff-Brown
 - d. Bronislaw Malinowski

Answer: d page 19-20

32. Ethnographic fieldwork among the Trobriand Islanders was carried out by:
- a. E. E. Evans-Pritchard
 - b. Bronislaw Malinowski
 - c. Karen McCarthy Brown
 - d. Alfred R. Radcliffe-Brown

Answer: b page 19

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33. The interpretative approach, in which religion is described as a cluster of symbols that together make up a whole, was developed by:

- a. Sigmund Freud
- b. Melford Spiro
- c. Clifford Geertz
- d. James Frazer

Answer: b page 20

34. The approach to the study of religion that is concerned with the relationship between culture and personality and the connection between society and the individual is the:

- a. psychosocial approach
- b. the functional approach
- c. the analytic approach
- d. the Marxist approach

Answer: a page 21

35. Some neuroscientists conclude that the brain is capable of creating religious experiences. Which of the following is evidence for this conclusion?

- a. People suffering from temporal lobe epilepsy often report intense religious experiences as part of their attacks.
- b. People who report having intense religious experiences often report having had brain trauma or brain injury in childhood.
- c. Brain scans of people in deep meditation show a decreased activity in the parietal lobe of the brain, in an area responsible for giving us a sense of our orientation in space and time.
- d. All of the above.

Answer: d page 22

36. Theory of mind refers to the idea that:

- a. children are born with “blank slates” and slowly develop a mind through observation and trial and error
- b. people are not capable of seeing events as the result of randomness or coincidence
- c. people know, or think they know, what is going on in another people’s minds
- d. the evolution of a large brain was largely responsible for the development of the human mind

Answer: c pages 22-23

37. The term *cognition* refers to:

- a. unconsciousness
- b. the totality of all perceptions
- c. conscious intellectual activities including perception, reasoning, and feeling
- d. a form of psychotherapy

Answer: c page 24

38. An agnostic:

- a. has not made up his mind about the existence of the supernatural
- b. believes that there is no supernatural

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- c. says that it is impossible to prove or disprove the existence of the supernatural
 - d. none of the above
- Answer: c page 25

True/False Questions

- 39. The study of religious art excavated from now extinct cultures is a part of the field of archaeology.
Answer: T page 2
- 40. An important method of field study in anthropology is participant observation.
Answer: T page 2
- 41. Anthropologists frequently apply the term *primitive* to small-scale societies.
Answer: F pages 2-3
- 42. Karen McCarthy Brown's study of vodou in New York City is an example of an ethnography.
Answer: T pages 3, 11
- 43. Northwest Coast, East African Cattle, and Melanesia are names of culture areas.
Answer: T pages 4-6
- 44. Foragers practice simple farming with hand tools, are seminomadic, and lack full-time specialists.
Answer: F page 7
- 45. The Fore of New Guinea practice mortuary cannibalism, that is, they eat the body of their deceased relatives.
Answer: T page 8
- 46. The Fore of New Guinea believe that the disease *kuru* is caused by evil forest spirits.
Answer: F page 8
- 47. An outsider who applies his or her own cultural orientation to the analysis of another culture is performing an emic analysis.
Answer: F pages 9-10
- 48. A person who judges another society in terms of his or her own culture is said to be ethnocentric.
Answer: T page 10

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49. *Human universals* refer to biological characteristics of human beings that reflect a common biology.
Answer: F page 12
50. Postmodernism highlights the scientific method and rationality in the discovery of knowledge.
Answer: F page 11
51. Robert Edgerton believes that all cultural practices are valid and must be accepted in the context of the society's culture.
Answer: F page 12
52. Culture is based upon the use of symbols or shared understanding about the meaning of things.
Answer: T page 13
53. An analytic definition focuses on the way that religion manifests itself or is expressed in a culture.
Answer: T page 14
54. The essentialist definition of religion emphasizes that religion is the domain of the extraordinary.
Answer: T page 15
55. All societies have clearly understood terms to label the domain of culture we call religion.
Answer: F pages 16-17
56. Animatism refers to the idea of an impersonal supernatural force.
Answer: T page 17
57. Émile Durkheim and Alfred Radcliff-Brown are associated with the evolutionary approach to the study of religion.
Answer: F pages 18-19
58. Sigmund Freud applied some of his concepts to the analysis of religious phenomena.
Answer: T page 21
59. Gods and ghosts are examples of anthropomorphic supernatural beings.
Answer: T page 22
60. The idea that visions and other religious experiences are the product of brain function is what is meant by theory of mind.
Answer: F pages 22-23

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Essay Questions

61. How does the study of anthropology differ from sociology and psychology? (page 2)
62. Define the four fields of anthropology. How does each relate to the study of religion? (page 2)
63. What is the nature of ethnographic research? How does it differ from research in other disciplines? (pages 2-3)
64. What is meant by the term “culture area”? What do societies in the same culture area tend to have in common? Why? (page 4-6)
65. What are some of the important differences in social structure among peoples practicing different food-getting strategies? (page 7)
66. How does the study of *kuru* among the Fore of New Guinea illustrate the concept of holism? (pages 6-8)
67. Think of a political and economic issue that you have read about that has occurred in another part of the world. How would you describe and analyze this event from an ethnocentric viewpoint and from a cultural relativistic viewpoint? (page 10)
68. We can approach the study and understanding of other peoples through both etic and emic analysis. What is the essential difference between these two views? How does each contribute to our understanding of human societies? (page 11)
69. What are the differences between modernity and postmodernism? (page 11)
70. Is the concept of universal human rights consistent with the concept of cultural relativism? Why or why not? (page 12)
71. What criteria would you use in deciding whether or not a particular cultural practice should be eliminated in apparent contradiction of cultural relativism? (page 12)
72. When reading an ethnography about the Fore what is the difference between Fore society and Fore culture? (page 13)
73. “Culture gives meaning to reality.” What does this mean? Give some examples. (pages 14)
74. Within the analytic definition of religion, what is contained within the narrative, ritual, and ethnical dimensions? (page 15)

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75. An essentialist definition of religions sees religions as dealing with the realm of the sacred supernatural. What is mean by the terms *sacred* and *supernatural*? (page 15)
76. Which of the definitions of religion discussed in the book do you like the best? Why? How would you personally define the term *religion*? (pages 14-16)
77. Two early approaches to the study of religion were the evolutionary approach of Tyler and Frazer and the psychosocial approach of Sigmund Freud. What are the essential features of these two approaches? (pages 17-18, 21)
78. Compare and contrast the essential concept of the evolutionary, Marxist, functional, interpretative, and psychosocial approaches to the study of religion. Which scholars are associated with each of these approaches? (pages 17-21)
79. Give some examples of how brain function can produce what are prescribed as religious experiences. (page 22)
80. How does the theory of mind relate to the phenomenon of animism? (pages 22-24)