Chapter 1

The Essence of Anthropology

What Is Anthropology?
• The study of humankind everywhere, throughout time.
• Seeks knowledge about what makes people different and about what they all have in common.

What Do Anthropologists Do?
• Anthropologists are concerned with the description and explanation of reality.
• They formulate and test hypotheses concerning humankind so they can develop theories about our species.
How Does Anthropology Compare to Other Disciplines?

• Anthropologists focus on the interconnections and interdependence of all aspects of the human experience, past and present.
• This holistic and integrative perspective equips anthropologists to grapple with the issue of globalization.

The Development of Anthropology

• Anthropology as a distinct field of inquiry is relatively recent.
• The encounter with other peoples began 500 years ago as Europeans sought to extend their trade and political domination to all parts of the world focused attention on human differences.
• Europeans gradually came to recognize that despite all the differences, they might share a basic humanity with people everywhere.

Anthropologists

• Dr. Jayasinhji Jhala is from Dhrangadhra in Gujarat, northwest India.
• A member an aristocratic caste of warriors, he grew up in the royal palace of his father, the maharaja.
• He earned a master’s in visual studies from MIT, followed by a doctorate in anthropology from Harvard.
Holistic Perspective

- A fundamental principle of anthropology, that the various parts of culture must be viewed in the broadest possible context in order to understand their interconnections and interdependence.

Culture-bound

- Theories about the world and reality based on the assumptions and values of one’s own culture.

Visual Counterpoint

- Infants in the United States typically sleep apart from their parents, but cross-cultural research shows that co-sleeping is the rule.
- The photo on the right shows a Nenet family sleeping in their tent. The Nenet are arctic reindeer pastoralists in Siberia.
Fields of Anthropology

- Physical Anthropology
- Archaeology
- Linguistic Anthropology
- Cultural Anthropology

Applied Anthropology

- The use of anthropological knowledge and methods to solve practical problems, often for a specific client.
Physical Anthropology
• Also called biological anthropology.
• Focuses on humans as biological organisms, evolution, and human variation.
• Analyze fossils and observe living primates to reconstruct the ancestry of the human species.

Physical Anthropology
• Molecular Anthropology
  – Uses genetic and biochemical techniques to test hypotheses about evolution, adaptation, and variation.
• Paleoanthropology
  – The study of the origins of the human species.

Physical Anthropology
• Biocultural
  – Focusing on the interaction of biology and culture.
• Forensic anthropology
  – Specializes in the identification of human skeletal remains for legal purposes.
• Primatology
  – The study of living and fossil primates.
Cultural Anthropology
• The study of customary patterns in human behavior, thought, and feelings.
• Focuses on humans as culture-producing and culture-reproducing creatures.
• Two main components: ethnography and ethnology.

Culture
• A society’s shared and socially transmitted ideas, values, and perceptions, which are used to make sense of experience and which generate behavior and are reflected in that behavior.

Ethnography
• The systematic description of a particular culture based on firsthand observation.
Ethnology
• The study and analysis of different cultures from a comparative or historical point of view, utilizing ethnographic accounts and developing anthropological theories that help explain why certain important differences or similarities occur among groups.

Fieldwork
• The term anthropologists use for on-location research.
• Participant observation - The technique of learning a people’s culture through direct participation in their everyday life over an extended period of time.

Anthropologists Learn From Informants
• The researcher here is Dutch anthropologist Harald Prins, a coauthor of this book.
• Doing fieldwork among the Plains Apache Indians in Oklahoma, he is using a camera to document part of the community’s oral history project with tribal chief Alfred Chalepah.
Archaeology

• Studies material remains in order to describe and explain human behavior.
• Study tools, pottery, and other features such as hearths and enclosures that remain as the testimony of earlier cultures.

Rapa Nui

• A tiny volcanic island in the middle of the southern Pacific Ocean, also known as Easter Island. The landscape is punctuated by nearly 900 stone “heads,” some towering to 65 feet, called moai by the islanders.

Cultural Resource Management

• A branch of archaeology tied to government policies for the protection of cultural resources and involving surveying and/or excavating archaeological and historical remains threatened by construction or development.
Linguistic Anthropology
Studies human languages:
• Description of a language - the way a sentence is formed or a verb conjugated.
• History of languages - the way languages change over time.
• The study of language in its social setting.

Empirical
• Based on observations of the world rather than on intuition or faith.
• Theory
  – An explanation of natural phenomena, supported by a reliable body of data.
• Hypothesis
  – A tentative explanation of the relation between certain phenomena.

Anthropology's Comparative Method
• Uses the methods of other scientists by developing hypotheses and arriving at theories.
• Anthropologists make comparisons between peoples and cultures past and present, related species, and fossil groups.
Questions Of Ethics

Anthropologists have obligations to:
• Those whom they study.
• Those who fund the research.
• Those in the profession who expect a study to be published so they can further the research in the field.

Anthropology and Globalization

• Globalization refers to worldwide interconnectedness, evidenced in global movements of natural resources, human labor, finance capital, information, infectious diseases, and trade goods.
• The forces driving globalization are technological
• innovations, lower transportation and communication costs, faster knowledge transfers, and increased trade and financial integration among countries.