INTRODUCTION TO
ANTHROPOLOGY

ANTH 101
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J. Cultural Anthropology: The study of social institutions and practices

1. The development of the Neolithic and finally the end of the Stone Age with the rise of civilizations marks an important moment in human culture: the emergence of social institutions.

A social institution is an organization of large numbers of people into formal relationships governed over by social norms, rules, and laws. Examples of social institutions are the Family, Religion, Education, Economy and Politics (“FREEP”).

J. Studying Culture: Ethnography

2. Studying Culture: Ethnography

a. Ethnography is the firsthand personal study of a local cultural setting.

“Ethnographers try to understand the whole of a particular culture, not just fragments (e.g., only the economy, family or politics).”

(Spradley 2008)

• In pursuit of this holistic goal, ethnographers usually spend an extended period of time living with the group they are studying and employ many different techniques to gather information. (Watch: first contact with the Penan of Borneo)
b. Early ethnographers conducted research almost exclusively among small-scale, relatively isolated indigenous societies, with simple technologies, politics and economies.

The cultures of indigenous peoples are increasingly threatened by modernization.

Ethnographic Fieldwork involves the researcher taking part in the activities being observed. Ethnographers are trained to be aware of and record details from daily events, the significance of which may not be apparent until much later. Field notes are the traditional means of recording experiences.

Ethnographic goals:

i. Achieving Realism: The writer’s goal was to produce an accurate, objective, scientific account of the study community.

ii. Comparing Differences: The writer’s goal was to compare differences between culture in a non-biased way.
K. Marriage and Family (Kinship)

1. The many forms of marriage and family are cultural universals.
   While difficult to define cross-culturally, an approachable definition of Marriage involves the:
   social acknowledgment of a religious and/or legal union of two people (typically a male and a female).
   Culturally, marriage serves three clear purposes...

K. Marriage and Family (Kinship)

1. Cultural Functions of Marriage:
   a. Sexual regulation
      - Controls production of biological progeny (gene transmission);
   b. Education of children
      - Passes on cultural information;
   c. Economic unification/cooperation
      - Family consolidates resources through sharing and cooperation.

K. Marriage and Family (Kinship)

2. Types of Marriage
   a. Arranged-marriage (group-based societies)
      - Individuals are used as ‘bargaining chips’ in alliance-forming exchanges;
      - Maintain social cohesion and order;
      - More common in endogamous groups;
      - Increasingly uncommon today.
   b. Love-marriage (individualistic societies)
      - Not as recent as often thought;
      - Age may be a factor;
      - Marriage may not include alliance-forming;
      - Elopement and “wife-capture.”
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3. a. Kinship Relationships are relationships that have:
   Affinity (social) and/or Consanguinity (blood) = Kinship

b. Diagramming Kinship
   There are many ways of describing kin relations:
   i. Family Tree diagrams (genealogical)
   ii. Egoistic diagrams (sociological)
   iii. Branching diagrams (anthropological)
4. **Marriage as exchange**  
(the political-economic component to marriage)

a. **Dowry / Bride Wealth**

- **Dowry**: Gifts (traditionally livestock) from the bride’s family to the groom’s
- **Bride Wealth**: Gifts from the groom’s family to the bride’s

b. **Bride service**

Work done by the groom for the bride’s father;

5. **Descent Groups**

a. Membership in the descent group is automatically determined at birth by one of two rules of descent:

   i. **Unilineal descent**
      1. **Patrilineal descent**: belong to father’s group
         - ex: the Nuer
      2. **Matrilineal descent**: belong to mother’s group
         - ex: the Minangkabau

   ii. **Non-unilineal descent**: combination of 1 & 2
      (based on age cohorts or voluntary associations, “planned gifts”)
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5.b. Descent Groups - Living Arrangements
i. Nuclear family, Extended family, and non-relative family (household) – census info

ii. Locality norms – where do kin live?
  - matrilocal
  - patrilocal
  - neolocal
  - avunculocal

K. Marriage and Family (Kinship)

5.b. Descent Groups - Social Arrangements
iii. Clan, Sib, Phratry and Moiety
a. Clans – territorially bounded / property ownership implicit; ex: Scottish clans
b. Sibs – more widely dispersed; no common holdings ex: Native Americans, eg. Totems (toteman=relative)
c. Phratry: a loose association of several clans or sibs; ex: pre-classical Greece
d. Moiety: one of two associations of clans or sibs splitting the society into two parts ex: the Grand Valley Dani – “Wida” or “Wayya” groups

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6. Kinship Taboos and Norms
a. Taboo: Incest
   - Kin relations for which marriage and sex are forbidden;
   - Culturally universal;
   - Biological explanation only a small factor for incest taboos (only slight genetic abnormalities present)
   - However, where do you draw the line?

b. Norm: Cousin Marriage
   - Homogamy and Endogamy (marriage to partner in similar cultural group, such as class, race, age) are often encouraged;
   - Cross-cousin (children of brother/sister) more common than parallel cousin marriage;
Film Clip: Farm Song (7'36"
Marriage and family traditions in rural Japanese culture; note cultural diffusion.