The Concise Dictionary of Social and Cultural Anthropology will provide invaluable assistance to anthropological researchers both old and new. It provides an authoritative single point of reference to the wide range of technical terms that professional anthropologists are expected to understand.

David Zeitlyn, Oxford University

The Concise Dictionary of Social and Cultural Anthropology is an accessible, hands-on guide to the hundreds of terms the student of anthropology and the general reader will encounter in dealing with anthropological and ethnographic literature. It includes related terminology from allied fields such as sociology, economics, and geography.

The focus is on key concepts in anthropology, with a number of biographies included to identify influential figures who have formulated central theories and conducted the most famous field research within cultures around the world. Extensive bibliographical references provide pointers for further research.

Anthropology is a relatively young discipline with a complex history. Anthropological research encompasses hundreds of cultures and provides a valuable perspective on an increasingly globalized world.

Written by a researcher and librarian expert in the fields of social and cultural anthropology, this Concise Dictionary offers an invaluable reference to the terminology and accomplishments of this far-reaching and diverse field.

Mike Morris is the anthropology subject consultant for Oxford University's Bodleian Libraries. For over twenty years he has also managed the library at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology in Oxford.
Concise Dictionary of Social and Cultural Anthropology
Concise Dictionary of Social and Cultural Anthropology

Mike Morris
To Matthew
Contents

Acknowledgments viii
Introduction ix
List of Illustrations x

CONCISE DICTIONARY OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY 1

Major Sources 279
References 280
I’d like to thank the following people for their various contributions towards making this dictionary.

Rosalie Robertson and Julia Kirk at Wiley-Blackwell, and the several reviewers whose helpful comments they supplied, as well as Hazel Harris for copy-editing. Stephanie Ogeneski and Daisy Njoku at the Smithsonian for help with pictures.

In Oxford: David Zeitlyn at ISCA, for his suggestions and comments on the draft (errors and omissions remain mine). Nadine Beckmann for supplying fieldwork photos and advice. Mark Dickerson of the Pitt Rivers Museum, for assistance with references and sources. Margaret Robb, formerly Social Sciences Librarian, for encouraging me to complete this book, and Louise Clarke, her successor, for further support. The staff of the Oxford Kidney Unit, Churchill Hospital, who have worked hard to keep me alive and functional for many years. Vicky Dean at ISCA, for patient and loyal friendship. Louise Trevelyan and Matthew Morris, for providing a life away from work.

Lastly, I acknowledge Meg Douglas, who died when this book was in its earliest stages, and whose kindness, intelligence, and compassion enlightened her many friends.
Introduction

Anthropology is a relatively young discipline with a complex history. In a world that is increasingly accessible and globalized, the new student needs a quick guide to help them even begin to untangle the web of allusions that academic anthropology may often evoke. Having come to the subject unprepared myself, many years ago, I empathize with readers struggling to make sense of what should be a vital and vibrant area of study.

I hope this text provides the beginner with a starting point for comprehension; in addition to the necessarily brief definitions of terms (which chiefly focus on concepts rather than particular peoples or places), I provide bibliographical references to a mixture of anthropological classics, related works from outside the field, and current ethnology, for both background reading and further research.

Terms referred to in the text that have their own separate entries are shown in **small capitals**.
List of Illustrations

Figure 1  Alcohol. Anthropologist Nadine Beckmann tasting pombe, a local beer, Ulugura mountains, Tanzania. Photo copyright: N. Beckmann. 6

Figure 2  Art. A wooden mask from the Fang people of West Africa shown at an American exhibition, 1960. Photo: US Information Agency; National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution NAA INV 0600 3500. 15

Figure 3  Boas. Franz Boas poses for a figure in an exhibition showing a Kwakiutl ceremony, c. 1895. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, negative MNH 8300. 26

Figure 4  Cooking. A kitchen with an open fire, Eastern Tanzania. Photo copyright: N. Beckmann. 50

Figure 5  Crow terminology. 53

Figure 6  Durkheim. Emile Durkheim was a seminal figure in sociology and anthropology. Photograph used by permission of Oxford University, School of Anthropology. 75

Figure 7  Economic anthropology. A vegetable stall in Ngongoro village, Uluguru mountains, Tanzania; its owner also sells gold and rubies. Photo copyright: N. Beckmann. 77

Figure 8  Elder. Nadine Beckmann accompanies her research assistant, Aysha, to meet the latter’s prospective grandmother-in-law, Mwanasalehe. Photo copyright: N. Beckmann. 79
List of Illustrations

Figure 9  Eskimo terminology.  83
Figure 10  Fieldwork. Nadine Beckmann talking with Aysha and Mwanasalehe (see also elder). Photo copyright: N. Beckmann.  95
Figure 11  Funeral rites. Shah Nasr Ed-Din’s funeral, in what was then Persia, 1896. Photo: A. Sevrugin (?), National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, DOE Mid East: Iran NM 53942 04049200.  102
Figure 12  Hawaiian terminology.  116
Figure 13  Hunting. Arrows from the Pima Reservation, Arizona, 1902. Photo: D. L. W. Gill; National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, negative 2678A.  125
Figure 14  Iroquois terminology.  135
Figure 15  Lévi-Strauss. A photograph inscribed by Lévi-Strauss to Oxford colleagues, 1964. Used by permission of Oxford University, School of Anthropology.  149
Figure 16  Market. St George’s Market Hall, Belfast, Northern Ireland, 2007. Photo: Mike Morris.  159
Figure 17  Medical anthropology. David Cameron, a dentist, examines a Papuan boy, 1947. Photo: J. Fitzpatrick; National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, DOE Oceania: Massim: Trobriands, Australian Dept., 05032100.  164
Figure 18  Nationalism. Republican (Catholic) murals on the Falls Road, Belfast, Northern Ireland, 2007. Photo: Mike Morris.  177
Figure 19  Native American. Wa-kma-he-za, a Lakota Oglala, 1910. Photo: D. L. W. Gill, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, BAE GN 3302A.  178
Figure 20  Nutritional anthropology. Onions and rice on a market stall, Eastern Tanzania. Photo copyright: N. Beckmann.  183
Figure 21  Omaha terminology.  185
Figure 22  Purity. An outside bathroom in Eastern Tanzania, with pit latrines (right) and shower area (left). Photo copyright: N. Beckmann.  208
| Figure 23 | Radcliffe-Brown. “R-B” (center front) with his class of 1945–6 at Oxford. Fortes sits at his left. Photo: Gillman & Soame, used by permission of Oxford University, School of Anthropology. | 211 |
| Figure 24 | Religion. A room in the American Legation, formerly a Chinese temple, 1904. National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution DOE Asia: China: Beijing (Peking), NM 90351 04491400. | 216 |
| Figure 25 | Sudanese terminology. | 244 |
| Figure 26 | Women. Nadine Beckmann in the women’s section at a hitima (funeral rite) in rural Eastern Tanzania. Photo copyright: N. Beckmann. | 272 |
AAA. See American Anthropological Association.

Aboriginal. The earliest known occupant (or feature) of a region; often (capitalized) specifying Indigenous peoples of Australia. “Aborigine” is often considered offensive. Early anthropologists and sociologists such as Radcliffe-Brown and Durkheim were greatly interested in Australian Aboriginal societies. These have been examined by specialists such as B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen; and, more recently, by such writers as Howard Morphy and Ian Keen.

Abu Sunbul (Egypt). See Burckhardt.

Acculturation. A process by which one group of people’s identity is modified by meeting another: one culture introduces elements that are accepted or resisted by the other, leading to the weaker group remaining partially autonomous, the assimilation of the weaker group into the stronger unit, or occasionally a merged culture. Members of the dominant culture may be physically present or act on the other remotely. Even when acculturated, the weaker group may not totally assimilate. In general use, acculturation and assimilation may be used synonymously. See also syncretism, the adoption of elements of one religion into another.

Acephalous. Having no head; of a state or people, having no formal leader (as in foraging cultures—see Hunter-Gatherer).

Achievement/ascription. A distinction made by Parsons, one of five such pattern variables, or sets of alternative social strategies. Achieved status derives from competition with one’s peers; ascribed status comes through
2 acquisition

one’s birth. While it may be claimed that “traditional” (see TRADITION) societies ascribe status and “modern” societies favor achievement, certain areas (e.g. GENDER roles) may be more complicated.

acquisition. See LANGUAGE ACQUISITION.

act. To perform a deed, or the deed itself. The definition of an “act” has been much discussed in SOCIOLOGY. See also AGENCY (the ability to act), BROKER, COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE, ROLE, SPEECH ACT. In common use, of course, “acting” often implies theatrical role-playing.


action anthropology. A form of APPLIED ANTROPOLOGY in which the anthropologist works for the interests of a minority culture that is in difficulty of some kind, facilitating that culture’s decisions. Pioneered by Sol Tax from the 1930s onward.

actor/network theory (ANT). A sociological approach associated with Bruno Latour, John Law, Michel Callon, and others that has influenced several SOCIAL SCIENCES. It stresses the performative nature of networks, and, controversially, can be said to ascribe AGENCY, the ability to act, to non-human elements of a network—people and the things they use interact to perpetuate the network. Critics have argued that ANT underplays the real political and power relations involved in its area of study. ANT is a branch of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY STUDIES.


adaptation. In biology and anthropology, the response of a population or individual to new environmental (see ENVIRONMENT) factors. Individuals develop physically in differing ways according to local conditions; over a longer period populations evolve (see EVOLUTION). Adaptation also operates at various cultural levels, through behavior and SOCIAL ORGANIZATION.

adat. Customary law in Islamic (see ISLAM) South-East Asia, as distinct from religious law, or SHARI’A.

Further reading: Davidson & Henley (2007).

address terms. Relationship terms used directly with their subject, to talk to them. May be employed more loosely than reference terms (terms used to talk about others), as when calling an older cousin “uncle.”

adelpthic polyandry. A form of polyandry—marriage to multiple husbands—in which the husbands are brothers (or are regarded as such). From Greek, adelphi (“brothers”).

adivasi. A member of the ABORIGINAL tribal peoples of India. From Sanskrit, “original inhabitant.”
adolescence. See YOUTH.

adoption. The voluntary extension of kinship ties to people outside one’s immediate biological family, most often involving adults adopting children. It may be mainly understood as a legal commitment, a more permanent step than fostering.

Legal adoption derives from ancient Rome; the Romans distinguished between beneficial “changes” of parent and cases in which birth parents had died. In non-western societies the anthropologist may find such distinctions less useful, as a fluid range of practices and attitudes may present themselves. One area of interest is transnational adoption (see transnationalism), with issues such as questions of ethnicity and identity.


Adorno, Theodor (1903–69). German philosopher, influenced by Marx; member of the Frankfurt School (see critical anthropology). He adopted a critical stance toward the mass media and positivism, attacking the “culture industry” on the grounds that it twisted art to its own repressive ends, and toward spurious rationalism. His works include Minima moralia (1974 [German 1951]), Prisms (1967 [German 1955]), and Negative dialectics (1973 [1966]). See also Habermas.

advocacy. The practice of speaking for another (the Latin root means “called to [support]”). The notion of advocacy in the social sciences and the ethical questions surrounding it have become issues in areas such as applied anthropology, development, human rights, and particularly action anthropology.

aesthetics. A term originally taken from the Greek for “things perceptible,” the precise meaning of which was contested by Alexander Baumgarten and Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century. Its English use encompasses both the theory of sense perception and the investigation of the principles of beauty in the arts (see art). For anthropologists, key questions include what criteria are valid in the study of art of non-western cultures (see culture), what the function of art is, and what it may mean.


affect. Generally used as a verb; as a noun, “affect” refers in psychology to emotional response to stimuli or thoughts. Its consideration is an issue in anthropology of the body.

affiliation. Used generally to describe adoption (literally or metaphorically), affiliation also has two meanings in anthropology. It describes the relationship of a child to its parents, and hence to lines of descent
affine. See affinity.

affinity. Kinship held through marriage (e.g. “in-laws”) as opposed to birth (consanguinity). Those connected by affinity are termed “affines.”

affluent society. See original affluent society.

afterology. A term adopted by Marshall D. Sahlins (from a phrase by Jacqueline Mraz) to describe disparagingly post-modernism, post-structuralism, and similar phenomena.


Agamben, Giorgio (1942–). See sovereignty.

agamy. A marriage custom whereby people are free to marry members of their own group as well as members of another group. Compare the narrower expectations involved in endogamy and exogamy.

age-class system or age system. A means of organizing men (seldom women) into groups based on common age and role (“age sets” passing through the same “age grades” together), typically in East Africa or the Americas. The most common distinction is the separation of young men from their elders.

ageing. The last stages of physical maturity; later adulthood. A folksy image of the kinds of peoples studied by anthropologists would involve revered elders dispensing wisdom to the young, but this is not necessarily accurate. In some ways people are just as constrained by societal expectations (and factors such as gender) in old age as in youth. It is certainly true, however, that in industrialized societies people quite often regard the elderly as a burden, requiring expensive medical and personal care. A further aspect of ageing is the occasional emergence of a gerontocracy.


agency. The ability of an individual (“agent”) or group to act of their own volition, without constraint by structure. Certain schools of social thought stress agency (see political anthropology). Contrast cultural determinism.


aggression. Of particular interest in psychology (see psychological anthropology). Anthropologists have uncovered a wide range of aggressive practice, including conventions regarding who is likely to be a victim, and under what circumstances. Aggression may result in full-blown violence or
alcohol  5

the capitulation (or flight) of the target. It is often studied in relation to young males (see YOUTH), in relation to children, and in relation to situations that provoke aggression.

A lot of work has been done on aggressive behavior among other animals, for instance PRIMATES. The theories of the Austrian ethologist Konrad Lorenz, who regarded aggression as inbuilt, were popular in the 1960s but have latterly been rejected in favor of more culturally nuanced explanations.

agnate. See AGNATIC.

agnatic. In KINSHIP, a term for relation by DESCENT from the father’s side of the family; a person so related is an “agnate.” The mother’s-side equivalent terms are ENATE and UTERINE; see also COGNATIC, PATRILINEALITY.

agricultural involution. See INVOLUTION.

agriculture. Literally, the cultivation of the soil (for FOOD and so on), but usually understood to include wider PRACTICES such as raising livestock. Studied particularly by anthropologists interested in DEVELOPMENT issues (e.g. RURAL politics and economics) but issues also include large-scale land use in technologically sophisticated ways.

agronomy. The study of land management, RURAL economy and related areas.

AIDS. Acquired immune deficiency syndrome, which develops from the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) to allow infection, was first identified around 1982 and has had major impacts around the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where mortality rates remain high. As the PANDEMIC developed, judgmental attitudes toward some early victims hampered efforts to treat and prevent it. See also DISEASE, RISK, SEX.


alcheringa. See DREAMING.

alcohol. The general name for a number of chemical compounds with assorted uses (for example ethanol) produced naturally or artificially. Ethanol is the basis of “alcoholic” DRINKS. Naturally fermented drinks have a long history of recreational use, use in RITUAL, and use other contexts, in many CULTURES, although not everywhere: for instance, they are forbidden according to Islamic (see ISLAM) and Sikh CUSTOM. Even in the US, Prohibition in the 1920s criminalized alcohol.

Alcohol works on the BRAIN to alter mood and lower inhibitions, which can create social problems (such as CRIME and VIOLENCE), ILLNESS, and long-term dependency. Many social scientists have investigated methods of treatment and rehabilitation for alcohol abusers.

Ali ibn Abi Talib, Caliph (c. 600–661). See shia.

alliance. A relationship created by marriage, not just between the spouses but encompassing “in-laws.” From the French scholarly tradition as elaborated in LÉVI-STRAUSS’ classic work on ELEMENTARY STRUCTURES. “Alliance systems” may involve SYMMETRICAL ALLIANCE or ASYMMETRICAL ALLIANCE (that is, differing forms of MARRIAGE exchange); “alliance theory” stresses these connections and their social importance rather than, as in some anthropological writings, viewing connections of DESCENT as being central to social cohesion (see DESCENT THEORY). As with much THEORY, alliance theory tends to describe ARCHETYPES that do not always appear so neatly in reality. See also CROSS-COUSIN.


alliance systems. See ALLIANCE.

alliance theory. See ALLIANCE.

allograph. In LINGUISTICS, either a particular written form of a given letter-symbol (grapheme) or one of a number of letters or combined letters representing a PHONEME.

allometry. In biology, the study of relative growth rates among parts of a body, human or otherwise, especially where one feature appears out of proportion with what may be expected (e.g. where a human baby’s head develops faster than other parts). From Greek, “other” and “measure.”
allopathy. A term used in homeopathy to describe conventional medical approaches (compare biomedicine). It refers to treatment inducing a reaction in the sufferer which counters their symptoms; “homeopathy,” by contrast, specifies treatment that would, if given in sufficient amounts, induce these symptoms.

allophone. In linguistics, a variant form of the same sound (compare phone); for example, “p” in “span” and “p” in “pan” are regarded as distinct allophones since “p” is only aspirated (produced with a breath) in the second case.

Al-Qaida. See terrorism.

alter. (noun) A term used when discussing relationships: a person to whom ego stands in some relationship. From Latin, “another”.

alterity. The state of “otherness,” difference; a property of what one group conceives of as the “other.” For example, a migrant group of South Asians living in London may be conceived of as marked by alterity.

Althusser, Louis (1918–90). French structuralist (see structuralism) philosopher (born in Algeria), influenced by Gramsci and a critical disciple of Marx. Althusser popularized the idea of the “ideological state apparatus”: social elements (e.g. the media) that promulgate the dominant ideology. A sufferer of bipolar disorder, he strangled his wife in 1980 and died in an institution. Major works include For Marx (1969 [French 1965]) and Lenin and philosophy (2nd ed. 1977 [French 1969]).

altruism. Concern for the wellbeing of others rather than oneself. Coined (in French) by Comte in the nineteenth century. Altruism is an issue in such areas as game theory, and numerous explanations for its development and forms (e.g. kin selection altruism, reciprocal altruism) have been advanced.


Amazonia. The region around the Amazon river, home to outstanding resources in terms of rainforest, plants, and animals, and a shrinking and diverse number of indigenous peoples. About half of Amazonia is in Brazil, and much interest has been generated by the struggle of local peoples with its government.

Amazonia has been investigated by Lévi-Strauss and by specialists such as John Hemming, David Maybury-Lewis, and Peter Rivière. It continues to exert a powerful fascination for the ordinary reader as much as the expert.


ambilineal. A term first used by Edmund Leach to denote a kinship system in which one may claim membership of the matrilineal (see matrilineality) or patrilineal (see patrilineality) group (the mother's
or father’s side of the family), though not both. Firth and others have occasionally discussed “ambilateral” relations (the prefix “ambi” comes from Latin, “of both sides”).

ambilocality. In post-marital residence, the custom of a married couple residing with, or near to, either the husband or wife’s relatives, as opposed to, for example, neolocal residence (setting up home in a new place).

American anthropology. The North American tradition in anthropology is characterized historically by a division into four fields, including cultural anthropology, itself distinct from the British tradition of social anthropology.

An age of gifted amateurs and evolutionary theorists, such as Morgan, in the mid-nineteenth century led, in both the US and in Britain, to the birth of an academic discipline under the guidance of figures such as Franz Boas. The American Anthropological Association formed to represent the new profession, which eventually gained popular attention through the writings of Benedict, Margaret Mead and others. Theorists such as Sapir developed new insights into the cultural dimension of linguistics. Many of this generation had been taught directly by Boas.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, the influence of Lévi-Strauss and structuralism was felt, as well as a concern with reflexivity, as anthropologists began to take full account of their own cultural backgrounds and biases. American anthropology has also absorbed post-modernism (see writing culture), a development now old enough to inspire retrospective analysis and lead to a plethora of new theoretical avenues.


American Anthropological Association. A major anthropological organization, with over 10,000 members. Founded in 1902, it has numerous sections and runs an annual meeting. Its many publications include American anthropologist, American ethnologist, and Anthropology news, and its titles are accessible via the AnthroSource online portal (http://www.aaanet.org).

American Indian. An inaccurate (see Indian) but not generally offensive term that has been steadily replaced in American English by Native American.

American Museum of Natural History. The AMNH (http://www.amnh.org) houses a vast collection that includes a substantial anthropology section, formed in 1873. Several major figures, principally Boas and Margaret Mead, have worked here.

Amerindian. Indigenous (person, group, or language) to North, South, or Central America; Native American. See also Indian.

amitalocality. See avunculocal residence.
AMNH. See AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.

amoral familism. A term coined by Edward Banfield to describe a supposed prioritizing among MEDITERRANEAN societies of the material, short-term interests of one's family over those of the community. The concept has since been challenged. Compare LIMITED GOOD.


Amritsar (India). See SIKHISM.

Anansi. See TRICKSTER.

ancestor. One from whom a person or group claims DESCENT. The ancestor usually pre-dates the descendant’s grandparents or may be a mythical person or creature. There is a wide variety of attitudes and PRACTICES relating to ancestors, for example concerning who is considered important, how they are remembered, and for what. Anthropologists such as Maurice BLOCH have studied these practices. See also ANCESTOR WORSHIP, DESCENT GROUP.

ancestor worship. In several parts of the world, groups of people of the same lineage, CLAN, or other relationship group venerate ANCESTORS, and perform rites to them. This can be seen as an exercise in POWER, strengthening the family against outsiders; it is also tied up with the belief that ancestors influence the lives of their descendants. The phrase “ancestor worship” is itself contentious owing to its origins in a nineteenth-century view of human development, and to the diversity of practices that it covers.


Andamanese. See NEGrito.

Andes. The largest mountain range in the world, running along the western coast of South America through countries such as Colombia, Peru, and Chile.

androcentrism. A viewpoint placing men at the centre; early anthropologists have been criticized for what are now perceived as androcentric assumptions (e.g. that men are “naturally” superior to women).

androgyne. The condition of possessing both male and female sexual characteristics; being a HERMAPHRODITE. From the Greek for both “man” and “woman.”

anglophone. English-speaking (person, country, or other community).

animal. Animals can be studied in at least three main ways. They may be viewed as physical resources to be exploited: for FOOD in such areas as AGRICULTURE; entertainment (as in fox hunting, cock fighting, horse racing, and other SPORTS); for scientific and medical research; or for RITUAL.
purposes (see also SACRIFICE). On a more abstract level, animals are SYMBOLS or METAPHORS by which to classify the world (see e.g. TOTEMISM). In a third way, people can be insulted if they are compared to certain animals.

Some animals develop significance (e.g. in TABOOS regarding FOOD) in particular cultures—as in those that abstain from eating pigs, and those that ascribe special STATUS to cattle (see CATTLE COMPLEX, HINDUISM). Such processes involve an element of CLASSIFICATION.

See also AGGRESSION, ANTHROPOMORPHISM, DARWINISM, ETHNOBIOLOGY, ETHNOZOLOGY, ETHOLOGY, EVOLUTIONARY ANTHROPOLOGY, FOLK CLASSIFICATION, HUNTING, NATURE AND CULTURE, PASTORALISM, PRIMATE, PROPERTY, SHAMAN, SOCIOBIOLOGY, TERRITORIALITY, TRANSHUMANCE.

Further reading: Leach (1964); Morris (1998); Kalof & Fitzgerald (2007).

animism. The belief that inanimate objects and natural phenomena have SOULS. Animism was viewed by nineteenth-century religious theorists as part of a PRIMITIVE outlook that might be supplanted by RATIONALISM.

anisogamy. MARRIAGE between partners of unequal STATUS—either HYPERGAMY (“marrying up” to a higher group) or HYPOGAMY (“marrying down”). Marriage between social equals is ISOGAMY.

Année sociologique. A pioneering journal founded by DURKHEIM and associated with his influential school of SOCIOLOGY.

anomie. A sociological term to describe a condition characterized by breakdown or disregard of NORMS. First used in this way by DURKHEIM in Suicide (1897): societies regulate desires by setting frameworks for goals; when such frameworks are broken, goals become unobtainable and anomie conditions result, with rising instances of suicide.

A social system may also become anomie when norms are applied unevenly or unclearly, or during WARS (for example), when norms may be waived. See also URBANISM.

ANT. See ACTOR/NETWORK THEORY.

anthropocentrism. The assumption that mankind is the centre of existence. Compare ETHNOCENTRISM.

anthropogeography. A type of HUMAN GEOGRAPHY principally associated with Ratzel in the late nineteenth century. Ratzel regarded geography not simply as a natural science but as one also partly concerned with cultural and political elements. Compare GEOGRAPHICAL DETERMINISM, GERMAN ANTHROPOLOGY.

anthropological linguistics. Anthropologists have had an interest in LANGUAGE from the earliest beginnings of the discipline, for example Sir
William Jones’ work on Sanskrit in the eighteenth century. Many writers compiled dictionaries and grammars of colonies in which they worked, and key early twentieth-century figures such as Boas and Malinowski began to develop insights into how language reveals the underlying outlook of a society.

A little later, the Whorfian hypothesis—loosely, the argument that a particular worldview is closely tied to the linguistic means available for its expression—allied language to a cultural understanding of the world. By the 1960s, ethnoscience or the “new ethnography” had led to a greater interest in folk classification.

Following the work of Chomsky, anthropologists and linguists have diverged: while linguists (mostly) view language as a discrete system capable of independent study, anthropologists are keen to see it as something that operates primarily in a social setting.

Areas such as sociolinguistics, the ethnography of speaking, and discourse theory (see theory) have been fertile ground for Dell Hymes, John Gumperz, and many others, and for sympathetic linguists such as Deborah Tannen. Recent work also encompasses metaphor, and the expression of relations of power, gender differences, linguistic minorities, and so on. Since the turn of the millennium the Internet has begun to emerge as a field of interest.


Anthropological Survey of India. See Indian anthropology.

Anthropology. The scientific study of humankind, including human origins, institutions, beliefs, and social and cultural forms. The word comes from Greek, “speaking of man,” and seems to be late sixteenth century, though a growing interest among western writers concerning the peoples encountered by travelers, traders, and explorers is evident much earlier (and goes back at least to Herodotus).

Anthropology emerged as a distinct field in the later nineteenth century, at which point it began to grow from a by-way of earlier disciplines (history, philosophy, and later linguistics and especially sociology), or the pursuit of amateurs (see armchair anthropology), into a recognized academic endeavor as practiced by Tylor, Boas, and other leading scholars.

During the twentieth century, figures such as Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, and Radcliffe-Brown in Britain; Margaret Mead, Benedict, and Kroeber in the US; and numerous others advanced the standing and scope of anthropology. The subject developed different concerns in different countries, from American cultural anthropology, with its four fields orientation, to British social anthropology, German völkerkunde, and so on (see also Chinese anthropology, Dutch anthropology, French
anthropology at home

ANTHROPOLOGY). In the same way, the theoretical leanings of early anthropologists (such as EVOLUTIONISM and DIFFUSIONISM) yielded over time to a more nuanced understanding of what had been called PRIMITIVE peoples. Influences from related areas such as the SOCIOLOGY of DURKHEIM or WEBER, or the LINGUISTICS of SAUSSURE and SAPIR, opened new and radical perspectives.

As the twentieth century progressed, European anthropologists became more aware of their own ties with COLONIALISM; the multidisciplinary influence of STRUCTURALISM spread, as did political currents such as MARXIST anthropology.

With the advent of POST-MODERNISM and REFLEXIVITY, the subject entered a period of introspection (see also WRITING CULTURE). Today new branches continue to emerge, from MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY to the investigation of new technologies. See also ETHNOGRAPHY, ETHNOLOGY, HISTORY OF ANTHROPOLOGY.

Further reading: Harris (1990); Eriksen (2004); Rosman et al. (2009); Strang (2009[b]).

anthropology at home. The ethnographic study of one’s own SOCIETY. Of particular interest to European anthropologists in the 1980s, as funding for travel became tighter and as a way of circumventing access difficulties. See also AUTOETHNOGRAPHY.

Further reading: Jackson (1987).

anthropometry. Comparative measurement of the BODY to determine average dimensions in different ages, groups, and so on. Measurements might include height, weight, and ratios. Generally more studied in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, anthropometry is now often associated with outmoded theories on RACE and physical difference, but is still used with fossil records and in public health.

Further reading: Ulijaszek & Komlos (2010).

anthropomorphism. The attribution of human-like feelings or motivations to non-human entities: most obviously ANIMALS but also God.

apartheid. In politics, the policy in twentieth-century South Africa (from Afrikaans and Dutch, “apartness”) of “separate development” for non-white ethnic groups. Enshrined in law following the election of the National Party in 1948, it was vociferously opposed in the wider world and most of its laws were repealed in 1991.

apical ancestor. An ANCESTOR (real or supposed) shared by members of a SEGMENTARY SOCIETY; the one who sits at the apex (top) of any GENEALOGY.

Apinayé. See PARALLEL DESCENT.

**applied anthropology.** A field in which the anthropologist deals with a practical issue concerning a population or region, either by informing social policy or by direct action. This often takes place outside academia. Many US anthropologists have preferred the term “practicing anthropologist.” See for example the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (http://practicinganthropology.org). Compare (in their various implications concerning the anthropologist’s involvement or detachment) ACTION ANTHROPOLOGY, ADVOCACY, DEVELOPMENT.

Further reading: *Anthropology in action* [journal].

**appropriate technology.** Technology suited to the cultural and ecological context in which it will be used. Typically thought of as simple, cheap tools and machines that can be employed in DEVELOPMENT. Compare INTERMEDIATE TECHNOLOGY.

**Arabia Felix.** The old Roman name for the Arabian peninsula; “Arabia the fortunate.”

**archaeology.** The scientific study of the remains and ARTEFACTS left by the cultures of the past, from comparatively recently to as far back as PREHISTORY. Inasmuch as it frequently concerns ancient (rather than modern) societies, it is a sister discipline to anthropology. For terms relating to archaeology see ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALOGY, FOUR FIELDS, LITHIC, MATERIAL CULTURE, PROCESSUAL, QUATERNARY, SALVAGE ETHNOGRAPHY, SERIATION.

**archaeology of knowledge.** A particular approach to the HISTORY of thought developed by FOUCAULT: the products of differing disciplines in a particular age are compared, to give a picture of the kind of understanding available at that time. Knowledge is linked to POWER structures. Compare HISTORY OF IDEAS.


**archetype.** A first model, a prototype. Archetypes may appear as stock characters in stories or NARRATIVES (“heroes,” “villains,” and so on), or may
otherwise represent particular things or situations. Often associated with the psychologist Carl Jung.

**archipelago.** A group of (often volcanic) islands, or the sea area enclosing them; for example, the Malay Archipelago.

**architecture.** The art and science of designing and constructing buildings, as well as other edifices, such as bridges and ships. One aspect of **material culture.** The cultural significance of *house* design is one area studied: as well as the practical aspects of architecture, which will be modified according to purpose (for dwelling, for storage, as places for particular activities), built forms make symbolic statements about the conception of **space** (see **symbolic anthropology**).

**Further reading:** Carsten & Hugh-Jones (1995).


**Argonaut.** A legendary Greek hero; the Argonauts accompanied Jason in their ship, the *Argo*. Malinowski alludes to them in the title *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*.

**Aristotle** (384–322 BCE). See binary opposition, category, commodity, mimesis, oligarchy.

**armchair anthropology.** The “armchair” prefix in general use refers to critics who air views based on reading or speculation rather than first-hand knowledge of a subject (hence “armchair general,” one who theorizes about the conduct of a war). Pioneers such as Frazer, who did not do their own fieldwork, were sometimes later dismissed as “armchair anthropologists.”

**arranged marriage.** Marriage between partners who are chosen by other people, typically parents. In British discourse, often regarded as a “problem” to do with families with origins in South Asia.

**art.** The skill or technique required to produce aesthetically meaningful work using objects, spaces, and/or bodies; and the products of this work. In Western traditions, art typically encompasses literature, painting, sculpture, dance, drama, and film. In anthropology, art is particularly the province of **material culture.** Art can aid understanding of a culture’s
conventions and concerns, and writers such as Leach and Lévi-Strauss have discussed its symbolic significance (see Symbolic Anthropology). See also Literary Anthropology, Scrimshaw, Visual Anthropology.


**Artefact** or **Artifact**. Anything produced by people, as opposed to naturally occurring: utensils, tools, weapons, art, and crafts. Often used in the context of historical or archaeological finds. From Latin, “made by skill.” See also Material Culture, Museum, Technology.

**Artisan**. A skilled manual worker or craftsperson (e.g. a carpenter, ceramicist, or plumber), sometimes regarded as socially intermediate between the professional and laboring classes.

**Aryan (languages)**. See Indo-European.

**ASA**. See Association of Social Anthropologists.

**Asad, Talal** (1932–). Saudi Arabian anthropologist, raised in Pakistan and educated at Oxford, where he gained a doctorate in 1968. As of 2011 he teaches at the City University of New York. An early critic of colonialism in anthropology, he has since concentrated on issues of religion and
ascendant in the context of notions of modernity (see modern), with a focus on the Middle East. His works include Anthropology and the colonial encounter (ed., 1998 [1973]), Genealogies of religion: discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam (1993), and Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity (2003).

ascendant. A kinship term for those preceding ego: father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and so on going backwards, including collateral relatives such as uncles. Compare descendant.

ascription. See achievement/ascription.

ashram. An Indian religious retreat, associated with self-denial and austerity. A famous example was Gandhi’s ashram near Nagpur. From Sanskrit, “toward religious exertion.”

Asia, southeastern. See southeast Asia.

Asiatic mode of production. A type of economic system characterized by Marx as one in which villagers possessing no private property co-exist with non-productive “parasitic” cities and a “despotic” state. The villagers have no class relationship with these groups. The theory has been criticized for its Eurocentric (see eurocentricism) viewpoint. See also mode of production.

assimilation. A term to describe how immigrant communities adapt to, or are absorbed into, the host culture. Originally conceived as a simple matter of the newcomer adopting majority ways, it is now viewed as a two-way process by which both parties are modified. See also acculturation, cultural pluralism.

assisted reproduction. See reproductive technologies.

association. A group of people with a common identity, purpose, or cause. Associations are usually characterized by having some degree of organization, for instance rules and set procedures, and by exclusivity (an association for women will not be open to men). They may be drawn together by a common trade or profession (e.g. the American Anthropological Association); ethnicity or race (e.g. the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People); gender (e.g. the Women’s Rights Project); or a combination of factors. Maine famously observed that associations based on status—usually of family—have gradually given way to those based on contract—that is, one chooses to belong to them. One popular form is the “voluntary association.” See also relations of relations.

A more abstract meaning of association (as introduced by the philosopher Locke) refers to “association of ideas” and similar meanings.