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Human Culture: Highlights of Cultural Anthropology (2nd Edition)

By Carol R. Ember, Melvin R. Ember

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A Brief Empirical Introduction to Cultural Anthropology

Human Culture presents the highlights of the popular *Cultural Anthropology*, 13th edition by the same author team. It provides students with an empirical introduction to cultural anthropology, and helps them understand humans in all their variety - and why such variety exists.

This new 2nd edition places an increased emphasis on immigration, migration and globalization. Additionally, the size of the book (13 chapters) makes it useful for quarter courses, as well as for courses that encourage a lot of supplemental reading.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

In This Section:

I. Author Bio

II. Author Letter

I. Author Bio

Carol R. Ember started at Antioch College as a chemistry major. She began taking social science courses because some were required, but she soon found herself intrigued. There were lots of questions without answers, and she became excited about the possibility of a research career in social science. She spent a year in graduate school at Cornell studying sociology before continuing on to Harvard, where she studied anthropology primarily with John and Beatrice Whiting. For her Ph.D. dissertation she worked among the Luo of Kenya. While there she noticed that many boys were assigned "girls' work," such as babysitting and household chores, because their mothers (who did most of the agriculture) did not have enough girls to help out. She decided to study the possible effects of task assignment on the social behavior of boys. Using systematic behavior observations, she compared girls, boys who did a great deal of girls' work, and boys who did little such work. She found that boys assigned girls' work were intermediate in many social behaviors, compared with the other boys and girls. Later, she did cross-cultural research on variation in marriage, family, descent groups, and war and peace, mainly in collaboration with Melvin Ember, whom she married in 1970. All of these cross-cultural studies tested theories on data for worldwide samples of societies. From 1970 to 1996, she taught at Hunter College of the City University of New York. She has also served as president of the Society of Cross-Cultural Research and was one of the directors of the Summer Institutes in Comparative Anthropological Research, which were funded by the National Science Foundation. She is now executive director at the Human Relations Area Files, Inc., a nonprofit research agency at Yale University.

After graduating from Columbia College, **Melvin Ember** went to Yale University for his Ph.D. His mentor at Yale was George Peter Murdock, an anthropologist who was instrumental in promoting cross-cultural research and building a full-text database on the cultures of the world to facilitate cross-cultural hypothesis testing. This database came to be known as the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) because it was originally sponsored by the Institute of Human Relations at Yale. Growing in annual installments and now distributed in electronic format, the HRAF database currently covers more than 370 cultures, past and present, all over the world. He did fieldwork for his dissertation in American Samoa, where he conducted a comparison of three villages to study the effects of commercialization on political life. In addition, he did research on descent groups and how they changed with the increase of buying and selling. His cross-cultural studies focused originally on variation in marital residence and descent groups. He also conducted cross-cultural research on the relationship between economic and political development, the origin and extension of the incest taboo, the causes of polygamy, and how archaeological correlates of social customs can help draw inferences about the past. After four years of research at the National Institute of Mental Health, he taught at Antioch College and then Hunter College of the City University of New York. He served as president of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research and was president (since 1987) of the Human Relations Area Files, Inc., a nonprofit research agency at Yale University, until his passing.

II. Author Letter

Dear Colleague,

I have always viewed textbook writing as a special challenge. Most of us specialize, in some way, in the advanced courses we teach or are asked to teach, in our regional or topical fields of interest, and with the usual colleagues we see at conferences. It is refreshing to move outside the box. Working on the textbook does just that, it encourages you to read books and articles in fields you don't normally read and to look at connections across subfields. And most important of all, it makes you think about the gaps in our collective knowledge.

But a textbook also presents other challenges, such as the style of writing, which is a particular challenge. How do you make something complex understandable but not sound patronizing or simple-minded? How do you make it interesting? How do you make it authoritative, but not authoritarian? And when describing other cultures, how do you convey respect for other people?

Human Culture, 2nd edition is an abridged version of the 13th edition of *Cultural Anthropology* that is specifically designed for shorter terms and for courses with a lot of supplementary material. Shortening a book presents even more challenges. What chapters are most essential for a good grounding in anthropology? What examples are more important than others? In general, we have found that writing less is actually harder than writing more!

We have always taken revisions seriously. It is a time to reflect on what needs to be added what needs to come out, and what needs to be rearranged. One of the most significant changes in the 13th edition of *Cultural Anthropology*, and in this abridged version, is a greater emphasis on how cultural anthropology has made important contributions to the lives of people. These contributions are highlighted in nine boxes new to this edition. Other new boxes deal with gender issues and roles.

To emphasize the importance of culture change and globalization, we have moved that material toward the beginning in an integrated chapter on culture and culture change. In response to requests, we have added a chapter on the arts. Finally, to make way for more culture change material to be added earlier, we combined material formerly from the first two chapters into an integrated chapter called "Explanation and Evidence."

If you have comments, suggestions, or criticisms, I would welcome them. My email address is Carol.ember@yale.edu.

Sincerely,

Carol R. Ember
Yale University

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Joan Cross:

The book Human Culture: Highlights of Cultural Anthropology (2nd Edition) give you a sense of feeling

enjoy for your spare time. You can utilize to make your capable a lot more increase. Book can being your best friend when you getting pressure or having big problem together with your subject. If you can make reading through a book Human Culture: Highlights of Cultural Anthropology (2nd Edition) being your habit, you can get much more advantages, like add your own personal capable, increase your knowledge about many or all subjects. You can know everything if you like open up and read a reserve Human Culture: Highlights of Cultural Anthropology (2nd Edition). Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science e-book or encyclopedia or other individuals. So , how do you think about this publication?

Marvin Seto:

Information is provisions for individuals to get better life, information presently can get by anyone from everywhere. The information can be a understanding or any news even an issue. What people must be consider if those information which is in the former life are challenging to be find than now is taking seriously which one is acceptable to believe or which one the particular resource are convinced. If you receive the unstable resource then you understand it as your main information you will see huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen within you if you take Human Culture: Highlights of Cultural Anthropology (2nd Edition) as the daily resource information.

Salvatore Anthony:

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Edward Sullivan:

Reading can called thoughts hangout, why? Because when you are reading a book particularly book entitled Human Culture: Highlights of Cultural Anthropology (2nd Edition) the mind will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each aspect that maybe unfamiliar for but surely will become your mind friends. Imaging each and every word written in a publication then become one web form conclusion and explanation this maybe you never get before. The Human Culture: Highlights of Cultural Anthropology (2nd Edition) giving you another experience more than blown away your thoughts but also giving you useful data for your better life with this era. So now let us present to you the relaxing pattern at this point is your body and mind is going to be pleased when you are finished reading it, like winning a. Do you want to try this extraordinary spending spare time activity?

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