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Final Exam

Since its conception, the field of anthropology has changed throughout the years. Not just the discipline itself, but the ideas that have cycled and recycled through by many of the people in the field. There are three periods of thought; the Formative Period, the Classical Period, and Global Anthropology. As the periods progress and go into the other, the schools of thought change. There are evolutionists and then later on there are neo-evolutionists that believe in the same thing as the original ones but they also have something else to add to the theory. This is the same with other theories in anthropology. These theories arise from the change that is going on in the world and this change in turn affects how people see and think about the world around them. People are becoming more aware and less ethnocentric, or at least that’s the hope, about the different cultures and people that inhabit the world. Each new theory has something different to offer and it inspires new theories to stem off of them whether it because someone likes the idea or they completely oppose it. Knowing this, it is important to know the different theories of anthropology because to understand even the old outdated ones is to understand human thought on other humans.

**Evolution**

Evolutionism was the notion that everything could be described by evolution. Many anthropologists wrote about evolution and how it is a universal rule to how the world and its human inhabitants worked. While a neo-evolutionist, Morton Fried fits the bill as an evolutionist, believing in evolution when it comes to anthropological studies. He proposes the development of social inequality due to the evolution of societies (McGee &Warms 2012) and the development of social stratification. The first society in the evolution stage is egalitarian. Egalitarian societies had no chiefs or social ladders. These people were usually foragers and there were as many positions of prestige as there were that wanted it. There is no specialization in these societies and trade is a casual exchange between individuals who belong to different kin-groups (Fried 1960).

The next stage is the rank society. Prestige here is starting to form because there are less prestige positions that people who can fit them (Fried 1960). There is chiefdom in ranked societies but the chiefs do not have much power. The sponsor religious feasts but they cannot use force or power to carry out any authority. To elaborate more on the limited prestige, chiefdomship is usually inherited.

When ranked societies became stratified one, this is where everything took a turn according to Fried in this line of evolution. Stratified societies seem similar to ranked societies and this may be true but the essential difference is that social stratification begins to rear its head at this point. Social stratification means that some members of society have limited access to resources while others have unrestricted access due to rank (Fried 1960). For Fried (1960) social stratification was the turning point and the underlying cause for many things that appear in modern society. The passage into stratified societies gave rise to the complex division of labor and the emergence of control institutions is associated with the final shift from kinship to territory means (Fried 1960). The final level is the state society. State societies are even more advanced than stratified. They are defined by territory and bring more people together that are not even kinsman to each other. That being said, Fried does point out that not all societies go through the four stages nor do they have to go through all the stages. At the end of his essay, Fried concludes that this is his attempt to link up the emergence to social stratification and the state.

**Historical Particularism**

On the other side of evolution is historical particularism. While not coined by him, Franz Boas was the pioneer of this area. He did not like the unilinear thinking of the evolutionists and how flawed their way of thinking was. Boas believes that the history of a society should be looked at in a historical context; one must study the history of the society and follow the facts, not put a theory into the facts. In his article, he viciously attacks the evolutionists for their sloppy methods and their logic. Not only that, but Boas was a very important man. He developed the disciplines of American Anthropology; cultural, physical, linguistics, and archaeology.

To study cultures, one has to understand them correctly. Boas states that cultures are the product of their history and that they are sui generis, that they create themselves through the borrowing and exchange between cultures. An example is the Navajo. They speak a language that is native to the Canadian area but they migrated south. While they have kept their language from the north, they have taken to raising sheep just like the other Southwestern Indians.

Another theory that Boas criticizes is diffusion. Diffusionists believe that cultures borrowed and influenced each other because they noticed how many cultures worshipped the sun or built similar structures. While a good observation, one cannot fathom how the Aztecs borrowed the idea of worshipping the sun from Egyptians when they were leagues away from each other and existed in different eras. To rebut against the diffusionists, Boas introduces parallelism. Parallelism introduces that certain phenomena throughout the world has happened and that there are similar solutions simply because there are only a few ways to solve problems and that many cultures happen to come across the same solution. The example Boas (insert date here) used is marriage. There are only so many ways to have a unity between a man and woman and while there are variations (multiple women to a man, multiple men to a woman, a man and woman) they are seen throughout the world, the most common being polygamy and monogamy.

**Functionalism**

While American anthropologists had Boas, Great Britain was dealing with the rise of diffusionists and functionalists (McGee & Warms 2012). Functionalism is divided into two different schools; psychological functionalism that is linked to Bronislaw Malinowski and structural functionalism which is linked to Emile Durkheim. The focus here will be on Malinowski and psychological functionalism. Psychological functionalists focus on culture institutions serve to meet the basic and psychological needs of people in society (McGee & Warms 2012). Malinowski’s personal goal was to show how cultural beliefs and practices contributed to the functioning of a society while providing individuals with biological or psychological needs in the process (McGee & Warms 2012). He believed that there were seven universal biological and psychological needs. To demonstrate such a thing, Malinowski wrote about the Kula ring in the Trobriand Islands. Malinowski was the pioneer of fieldwork and was the person that makes it so that anthropologists would have to do fieldwork as well to show validity in their writing and research.

Men take part of this thing called the Kula, which is the exchanging of mwali (armbands) and soulava (necklaces), holding onto them for a period of time, and them exchanging back (Malinowski 1922). Kula is not done a need basis because the objects exchanged are essentially useless and cannot be used properly; the mwali are either too small for anyone, even children to use, or too big to be properly worn and the same for the soulava (Malinowski 1922). Such things seem purposeless and many people would wonder what the point of exchanging this object would be. Malinowski (1922) answers this by using the Crown Jewels in England as an example. In his experience in looking at them, he thought that they were ugly and useless but having them preserved and shown to the public had some sort of purpose. The Crown Jewels were like heirlooms and were passed down through the generations and are considered priceless and precious. The items exchanged in the Kula hold their value in being constantly exchanged and only being possessed for a time versus the fact that the Crown Jewels must stay in constant possession to be of any value (Malinowski 1922).

The exchange of mwali and soulava is the main part of Kula. This act though comes with a strict set of rules. Transactions can only be done between partners and these partners behave as friends and therefore create mutual duties and obligations (Malinowski 1922). Such a bond means that they must come to the aid to the other if any danger comes to them. This bond stretches across the islands, on land and across the sea, like one interwoven fabric (Malinowski 1922).

The items exchanged cannot go in a different direction, they must go in the direction they have been designated. One must be exchanged for the other. In the exchange, as said many times before, a can only hold the item for so long before giving it away or else he will get a bad reputation for being too slow or hard when it comes to the Kula (Malinowski 1922). This ownership though allows a man to exhibit his article and tell how he got this particular item and who he is going to give it too. While seeming like trade, Kula seems to function as a way to create bonds across the Trobriand Islands and much more.

**Cultural Ecology**

Malinowski was a neomaterialist in functionalism. Another sort of neomaterialist is ecological. Roy Rappaport was influenced by ecological biologists when it came to his work (McGee &Warms 2012). To explain cultural stability, he adopted the feedback system, something that regulates relationships in culture between people, pigs, food, and warfare. He focuses on the Tsembaga in New Guinea. His thesis states that ritual cycles are very important to these people and other tribes that belong to the same language use it to regulate relationships between the nonhuman and human components of the environment that surrounds them (Rappaport 1967). To more specific, the rituals aid in maintaining communities, resdistributing land among the people, and limits fighting (Rappaport 1967).

An example of a ritual is the pig feasts that happen when the pig population begins to get overpopulated. Ordinarily, the domestic pigs that are raised wouldn’t be killed but on special occasions, such as the pig feast, they are killed. These pig feasts are similar to the potlatches that Mauss mentions in his writing *The Gift*.

The ritual cycle start off with warfare. There, the enemy has to be defined and then taboos are put into place. Before every fight the men eat salted pig fat which causes them to sweat and while it gives them a burst of energy, they can only fight for so long. This is probably done so that fighting does not last a very long time. After the fighting is done, usually by truce, then the division of territory is done. This is done by the planting of the rumbin. Rumbin is a ritual plant and as it is planted into the ground, the ancestors are called upon (Rappaport 1967). Then the pigs are killed and are dedicated the ancestors. Kaiko is the pig festival that results after the fight but the winners are still in debt to their allies (Rappaport 1967). Kaiko lasts for about a year and in this year the allies are being paid back by having sporadic feasts held for them which courting displays would take place and trade as well. Kaiko ends when the debt is finished off and bride and child wealth payments to these allies. After one ritual cycle, there is usually another fight. This cycle of war and feasts keeps the balance and equilibrium between the people and the world around them.

**Symbolic Anthropology**

Symbolic anthropology is the analysis of symbols in a given culture. Symbolic anthropologists believe that symbols are a shared system of meaning within the historical context and that culture is embedded in people’s interpretation of the events and things around them (McGee & Warms 2012). To put it simply, the people in the culture construct their culturally reality through these symbols. Marcel Mauss, the nephew of Emile Durkheim, wrote a book called *The Gift*. In the excerpt chosen in McGee and Warms book is about the potlatches that take place on the Northwest coast of North America. In this society, there is the obligation to give, receive, and then repay. It’s sort of like a credit system except that there is honor involved and prestige which is what the giving of wealth symbolizes. The higher the prestige one has the more people that owe him.

Usually, the potlatches were just small ceremonies of giving away wealth but at one point, there was an inflation of goods. Once a year in the winter, the wealth was given away and whatever was leftover was destroyed. While many Westerners would look on in horror, it made sense to these people. They were showing off their wealth in giving and destroyed what was left because just how wealthy they were.

The gifts are a sort of exchange but there are people that mistranslate the givings seen in potlatches and the Kula ring. Cuq, mentioned by Mauss (1925), says that this is bartering, a very primitive form of today’s credit system. He says that this bartering is done with very little to no trust and that it is part of an evolutionary cycle that goes from barter, to direct sale, and then finally to credit. According to Cuq, barter is founded on having no trust in the other and that isn’t a very ‘smart’ thing to do. Money is more convenient because one does not need to seek out a person that has the object they desire.

In truthfulness, there is a lot of trust that goes on in these potlatches. There is trust in that the person giving away the items will be paid back. The obligation of giving and paying back represents honor, prestige, and trust. Not only that but it is the spirit of giving because to these people, everything they give away has a little part of their spirit. Giving away a part of oneself is a big deal requires a lot of trust. These potlatches are very important are not as simple as many people make them out to be. They are complex and hold a lot of symbolism for the people that participate in them.

**Gender**

Today’s world is no stranger to gender equality, especially in numerous places in the work force and careers. While there were prominent women in the field of Anthropology, they were excluded from parts of the discipline and were marginalized (McGee & Warms 2012). The discussions of women anthropologists were also very limited in textbooks to the introduction. In the 1960s and 1970s though feminist movements were sweeping the United States and the research done by feminist anthropologists focused on the roles of women in societies around the world (McGee & Warms 2012). One of the women who wrote during this time was Eleanor Leacock. In her work she argues that the gender relations in Native America and other aboriginal people around the world are due to European contact.

That being her thesis, Leacock also says that to accurately look at a society, one must look at all of the history; pre and post-colonial. She looks at the Wyandot people that an anthropologist, Powell, looked at. According to Powell, the women were family heads among these people and that the family heads would be the one to choose the only male to be on the clan council (Leacock 1983). The men dealt with warfare and this seemed like a sexist practice and undermined the positions women actually held. Once European contact was made, there was an emphasis made on the military councils and then the Dawes Act of 1887 undercut the economic activities that were traditionally controlled by women (Leacock 1983).

According to Leacock (1983) the origins of hierarchy occurred because specialization occurred when egalitarian societies became ranking societies, a concept that Morgan Fried had theorized. Women began to be placed into the house hold to look after children and the home. Women produced the labor, other people, and not the commodities themselves which are made by the men (Leacock 1983). This is due the fetishizing of the commodity itself and not the production of it.

For Leacock (1983), the subordination of women in aboriginal people should be looked at in a historical context and not a psycho-biological given.

**Globalism**

The world as it stands today is united. Not united in the sense that everyone is willing to work together and cooperate, but united in the sense that people have access to other people and outside information. European contact introduced many things to the New World, good and bad and as the New World evolved, they too began to spread their culture around the world. In the 1980s, it had come to pass that Western influence had to be accounted for in the study of indigenous peoples. People in other countries know what is happening in others via television and even tribal peoples have television. Not only that but the sale of tribal crafts are able to be purchased online when traditionally they would be used for ceremonies or ritual, not revenue.

Theodore Bestor’s article is about kaiten-zushi and konbini; the first being a sushi conveyor belt and the latter a chain convenience store in Japan. His thesis is that these two commercial forms reflect the complex rewiring of circuitry of food distribution, both domestically and globally (Bestor 2006).

Kaiten-zushi is a phenomenon that started in the 1950s and became popular in the 1990s (Bestor 2006). The fall of the fishing industry in Japan resulted in the importing of fish which made fish more widely available around the world (Bestor 2006). Before kaiten-zushi was popular, the sushi maker was seen as an artisan, not just another service worker (Bestor 2006). There was a certain relationship between the chef and customer but as kaiten-zushi became more popular this relationship became severed (Bestor 2006). Similar to the chefs in the United States, they are just seen as another service worker one does not need to interact with unless certain circumstances are met. As Bestor (2006) points out, this is because zaiten-zushi became more about the prices of the food they were getting and what exactly they were eating, not the skill or expertise that was needed to get into it.

Kaiten-zushi has spread to the United States and other places around the world, not just in Japan. This plays on a theory written by another anthropologist that states that the West is not the only center of globalization but that there are many centers of globalizations around the world.

Konbini is a chain convenience store that exists in Japan, similar to 7-Eleven in the United States. Currently, konbini sells things such as software, food, telephone cards, and etc. (Bestor 2006). There are also printing and copying services offered along with home delivery purchases where the product can be delivered directly to the house or to a different konbini for pick up (Bestor 2006). This chain store, while convenient, is destroying traditional Japanese stores. Many stores were small, family-owned stores but the konbini stores would buy out these stores (Bestor 2006).

**Conclusion**

As the world changes, so does the theory of anthropology. Not because the world is changing but because anthropologists are realizing that they need to adapt to what is going on and that there are different methods to understanding what is going on in the ever changing world. Not just one theory can fit into one culture and one point view can’t fit the culture. Just one point of view or theory could lead to the omission of information. All of the above periods and schools of thought have allowed for people to learn more about different cultures around the world. While there are arguments on whether some of them are valid or not, each theory and observation has led to something new and better. Even now, theory is changing and improving as different thinkers begin to observe the world as it is changing.

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