

A history of anthropology thomas hylland eriksen

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Anthropology: A Comprehensive Summary

What is Anthropology?

Anthropology, according to Thomas Hylland Eriksen, is "the comparative study of human beings and their cultures." It is a diverse field that examines all aspects of human society, including its history, language, art, religion, and politics.

What According to Eriksen is the Study of Anthropology?

Eriksen believed that anthropology is not simply the study of "other" cultures but also a reflection on our own. By comparing and contrasting different cultures, anthropologists can gain insights into the human condition and the nature of culture itself.

What Did Thomas Hylland Eriksen Believe In?

Eriksen emphasized the importance of:

- Fieldwork, which involves spending extended periods of time in different cultures to gain firsthand experience.
- Cultural relativism, which respects and understands cultural practices outside of one's own frame of reference.
- Reflexivity, which requires anthropologists to be aware of their own biases and how they might influence their research.

The 3 Theories of Anthropology

According to Eriksen, there are three main theories in anthropology:

- **Cultural materialism:** Focuses on the relationship between economics and culture.
- **Structuralism:** Emphasizes the underlying structures and patterns that organize culture.
- **Symbolism:** Examines how symbols and rituals shape human experience.

The 4 Main Studies of Anthropology

Anthropology is divided into four main subfields:

- **Biological anthropology:** Studies human evolution, genetics, and biology.
- **Cultural anthropology:** Examines human culture and social organization.
- **Linguistic anthropology:** Analyzes language and communication patterns.
- **Archaeology:** Investigates human history and culture through the study of material remains.

The 4 Stages of Anthropology

Eriksen also identified four stages in the development of anthropology:

- **Early anthropology:** Focused on classifying and describing different human societies.
- **Functionalism:** Emphasized the role of institutions in maintaining social order.
- **Structuralism:** Examined the deep structures that underlie cultural practices.
- **Postmodern anthropology:** Challenges traditional assumptions and emphasizes the fragmented and subjective nature of culture.

Who is the Father of Culture Anthropology?

Franz Boas is widely considered the "father of American cultural anthropology." He emphasized the importance of fieldwork and cultural relativism, and his theories laid the groundwork for much of modern anthropological research.

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