



ANTHROPOLOGY IN SIMPLE WORDS

Booklet 1

WHAT IS ANTHROPOLOGY?

An introduction to the study of humans

By Fras Omer

Why Does Anthropology Matter?

Anthropology helps us understand humanity in all its diversity. It explores our cultures, beliefs, languages, histories, and biological makeups, and how we create meaning and live together.



Why do cultures differ?

Cultures are shaped by history, environment, and human creativity.



Why do people believe different things?

Cultures through their belief systems give meaning to life and shape how each interpret the world in their own way.



What Distinguishes us from Other Animals?

Anthropology explores what we share and what makes us unique.

Three Core Ideas

That guide anthropologists

Three main ideas are used in anthropology to understand humans and their environment.



1- Holism

Humans, to be understood, should be studied as a whole.



2- Cultural Relativism

Cultures should be understood on their own terms, not judged by the standards of another culture.



3- Cross-cultural Comparison

By comparing different cultures, we discover both the diversity of human life and our shared humanity across cultures.

Example From Everyday Life

Greetings Around the World.

A simple greeting like “Hello” can look very different depending on where you are and who you greet.



1- Among Tebitan People

A well-known example is among some people in Tibetan, where historically, sticking out one's tongue was a sign of respect and good intentions. Traditionally it was demonstrated that one was not the reincarnation of a cruel king named Langdarma, who was told that he had had a black tongue, thus by showing one's tongue, a person signaled a peaceful intentions.



2- Nose-to-Nose

Hongi greetings of Māori people in New Zealand. When two persons greet each other by pressing their noses and often their foreheads, it symbolizes sharing breath of life.

Similar in Gulf region, it is common among people who know each other, where men traditionally greet one another by Nose-to-Nose as a symbol of respect, honor and friendship.



3- Shaking hands is the most universal one

Although handshaking is one of the most universal greetings practices worldwide, its social meaning is culturally shaped. In the Netherlands, a firm handshake typically conveys respect, confidence and recognition of the other person. In other societies, however, the gesture may be interpreted differently, reflecting distinct cultural norms, values, and expectations regarding interpersonal interaction.

The Importance of Anthropology in a Globalized world

In Understanding cultural diversity.



1- Promotes Cultural Understanding

Anthropology helps us understand and appreciate cultural differences, reducing prejudice and fostering mutual respect.



2- Building Empathy

It encourages us to listen and learn from others.



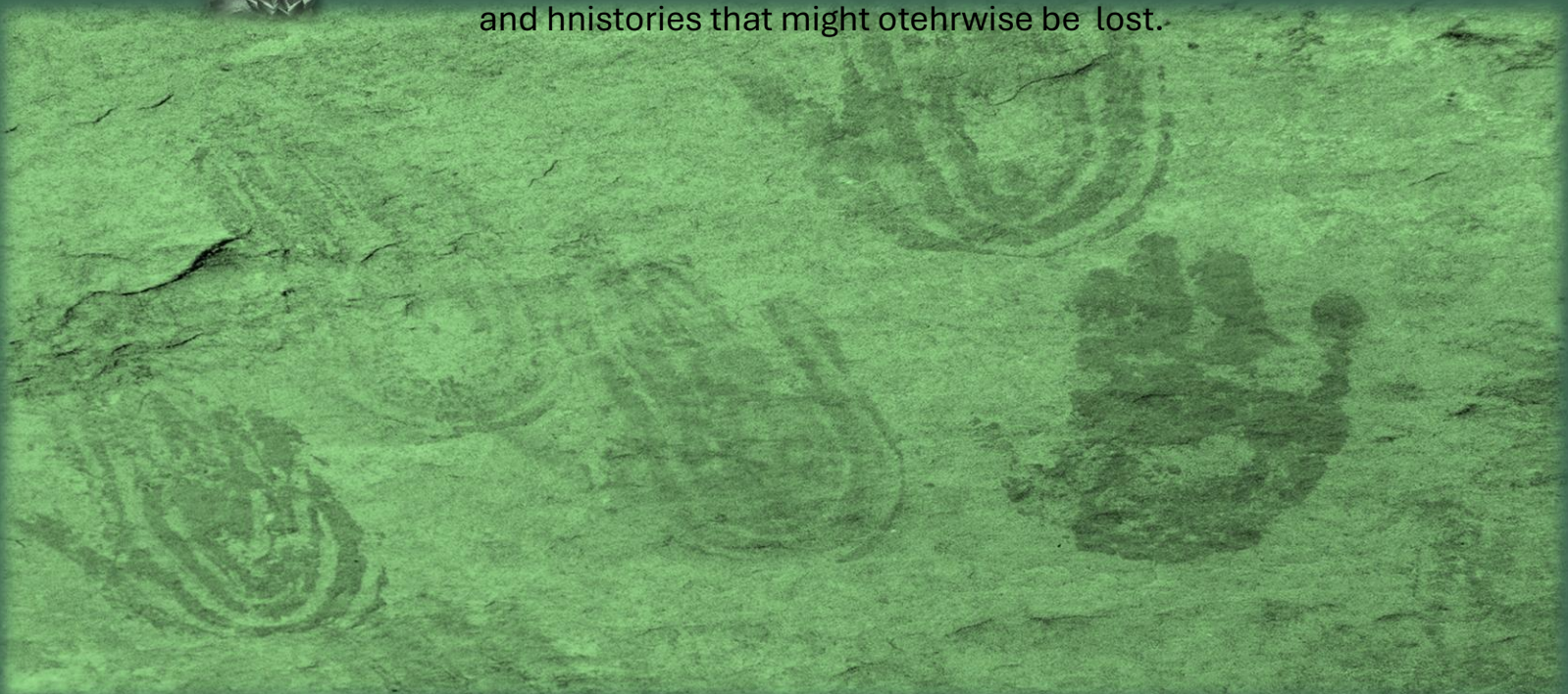
3- Addressing Real World Challenges

It contributes to health, education, human rights, and global challenge.



4- Preserves Human Heritage

It documents, and protects cultures, languages, traditions, and histories that might otherwise be lost.



Key Terms

Words to Know



Culture

The shared Values, norms, beliefs, customs, and practices of a group of people.



Ethnography

The process (Method) of studying and writing about a culture through observation and participation.



Holism

The idea that humans must be understood as complete beings.



Ritual

A symbolic action or ceremony that carries meaning.



Identity

A sense of who we are, shaped by culture, history and experience.

Questions to Think About

In Anthropology, questioning is essential.



- What Parts of your culture do you take for granted?
- How may someone from another culture see your daily habits?
- What do we all have in common despite our differences?

“Anthropology teaches us that to understand others, we must first be curious, open minded and willing to learn”

Learn More



- . “Sapiens” By Yuval Noah Harrari.
- . “The Interpretation of Culture” By Clifford Geertz.
- . “Social and Cultural Anthropology: A Very Short Introduction” by John Monaghan and Peter Just.

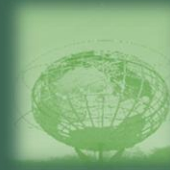


Watch the Video

Watch my YouTube video

“What is Anthropology?”

<https://www.youtube.com/@Frasomer>



Explore More Topics

Continue your journey with the other booklets in the Anthropology in Simple Words Series.



“Textbooks offer countless definitions of anthropology, and most describe it as the study of human beings. But what does that really mean? What does it mean to study ourselves? To me, anthropology is the lifelong journey of understanding who we are, across all cultures and throughout all of history, while exploring who we have the potential to become.”

Anthropology in Simple words Series

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