

## SOME TECHNICAL TERMS USED BY ANTHROPOLOGISTS

(Compiled by Alan Macfarlane: for private use of students. This comes from [www.alanmacfarlane.com/lectures](http://www.alanmacfarlane.com/lectures) )

**Acephalous society:** Literally a “headless” society. Refers to a highly decentralized and relatively egalitarian form of political organizations.

**Action group (set) :** a group of people joined temporarily to accomplish some task or take part in some collective action.

**Affinal, affinity:** a relative by marriage, in-law. May include the relationship between corporate groups linked by marriage among their members.

**Age Grade (=Age Class):** A social category based on age, within a series of such categories, through which individuals pass in the course of the life cycle.

**Age set:** a group of individuals of similar age and of the same sex who share a common identity, maintain close ties throughout their lives, and together pass through a series of age-related statuses.

**Agnates, agnatic:** members of the same patrilineal (male) descent group, descent through the males.

**Alliance systems :** a system whereby descent groups or other kin groups are linked by a rule of prescriptive or recurrent marriage, so that the groups remain in an affinal relationship to one another across generations.

**Ancestor Worship:** The worship or propitiation of ancestors, particularly characteristic of societies organized in terms of corporate descent groups.

**Animism:** belief in spiritual beings, souls or doubles, which reside in natural objects (trees, rocks etc.)

**Anomie :** disorganization of personality and a feeling of alienation, rootlessness (Durkheim)

**Ascribed status :** Position ascribed involuntarily by an individual, for example sex, age.

**Association:** a social group based on shared interest or voluntary participation.

**Band:** Basic social unit in many foraging populations. Normally includes one hundred or fewer people, all related by kinship or marriage.

**Barter:** direct exchange of items, without the intervention of money.

**Big Man:** Figure often found among tribal horticulturalists and pastoralists. The big man occupies no office but creates his own reputation through entrepreneurial expertise and generosity to others. Neither his wealth nor his position passes to his heirs.

**Bilateral (kinship):** Kinship traced to relatives through both father and mother (= consanguineal, or cognatic)

**Brideprice/ bridewealth (progeny price):** (1) a gift from the groom and his kin to the wife and her kin prior to marriage. Legitimizes children born to the woman as members of the husband’s descent group. (2) Characteristically these payments balance a transfer of rights over the wife’s sexuality, work services, residence, fertility, etc.

**Bride service:** service performed by a future husband for his bride-to-be’s parents.

**Bureaucracy:** the specialized administrative organization concerned with the day-to-day running of the state.

**Causation:** often necessary and sufficient causes are distinguished. If A automatically causes B, it is the necessary and sufficient cause. If B cannot happen without A, but does not automatically follow from A, then A is a necessary but not sufficient cause.

**Cargo cults :** revitalization movements that attempt to gain European goods (cargo) by magical imitation of European behaviour and technology; typical of Melanesia.

**Cartesian:** the adjective from the philosopher Descartes, often as in ‘the Cartesian method’ (method of modern natural sciences) or ‘Cartesian disassociation’, the splitting of mind and matter etc. (cf. disenchantment)

**Caste** : (1) In Indian subcontinent, an endogamous social group incorporated within the stratified hierarchy of Hindu ideology. Some sociologists would apply more generally to endogamous, ranked social classes. (2) Caste system: a hierarchical system of groups with differential access to prestige and economic resources; in such a system, an individual's position in society is completely determined at birth.

**Charisma, charismatic**: a quality, coming from a person rather than from an office, that inspires intense loyalty and devotion; often has religious significance, linking prophet and followers.

**Chiefdom**: (1) Form of socio-political organization based on food production, usually agriculture or intensive horticulture, in which kinship remains important and generosity is associated with political office. Often a transitional form between tribal society and state. (2) a political system in which kin groups are linked together through a hierarchy of political and/or religious leadership.

**Civil society**: there are several meanings. One, derived from eighteenth century Enlightenment thought, refers to all associations and activities which lie between the State and its organs on the one hand, and the individual or citizen on the other (e.g. colleges, clubs, sects, firms etc. etc.)

**Civilization**: Variety of state with writing, exact practical sciences, full-time artists, and sophisticated art styles.

**Clan (sib)**: a unilineal descent group or category whose members trace patrilineal descent (patri-clan) or matrilineal descent (matri-clan) from an apical ancestor/ancestress but do not know the genealogical links that connect them to this apical ancestor.

**Classificatory kinship terms** : label given by Lewis Henry Morgan to a system in which a single term is applied to several kin types (lineal and collateral, maternal and paternal, etc.) with the effect of lumping into one category, e.g. the English term 'Uncle' (cf. to Descriptive...)

**Cognatic descent**: tracing descent through all ancestors, male and female.

**Cognitive**: related to the processes of cognition, the process of *thinking* and *knowing* (in contrast to emotions and motivation).

**Communitas** : the egalitarian, communal ideology, behaviour, and social relations that often accompany liminality (being on a margin).

**Community**: (1) the largest group of persons who normally reside together in face-to-face association (2) A group based on a common name, place, blood links (Tonnie).

**Compadrazgo**: a term used in many Hispanic cultures to denote social links created by sponsorship of children in rites of passage like baptism or confirmation.

**Consanguinity, consanguineous** : relationships based on presumed biological links.

**Contagious magic** : formulas applied to something in order to affect something else that is closely related to it (e.g. burning the hair or finger nails of victim)

**Contract/Status**: as used by lawyers (esp. Maine), the difference between relations based on choice, some kind of agreement, and those based on birth or non-choice. The movement to modern societies often thought to be the movement from status to contract based systems.

**Corporate Group**: (1) A social group whose members act as a legal individual in terms of collective rights to property, a common group name, collective responsibility, etc. (2) Groups that exist in perpetuity and manage a common estate. Includes some descent groups and modern industrial corporations.

**Cosmology**: A people's beliefs and assumptions regarding the world – what entities and forces control it, how the universe is organized, and what humans' role and place within the world are.

**Couvade** : the custom of a man displaying the symptoms of pregnancy and/or birth while his wife is pregnant and/or giving birth.

**Cross cousins** : children of siblings of the opposite sex.

**Cross-cousin marriage:** In alliance theory (especially in its early versions), a rule or practice of marriage between father's sister's child and mother's brother's child (a man's marriage with MBD is 'matrilateral', with FZD is 'patrilateral'.)

**Culture:** (1) That which is transmitted through learning, behaviour patterns, and modes of thought acquired by humans as members of society. Technology, language, patterns of group organization, and ideology are aspects of cultures. (2) the customary manner in which human groups learn to organize their behaviour in relation to their environment. (3) the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and to generate social behaviour.

**Culture of Poverty:** The theory, initially advanced by Oscar Lewis, that a generally similar way of life (marked by exploitative and fragile sexual relations, psychological stress, and fragile family structures) occurs among the urban poor in many parts of the world.

**Cultural Relativism:** An ethical position insisting that since cultures are diverse and unique and embody different conceptions of the desirable, they can only be understood and evaluated in terms of their own standards and values.

**Cultural ecology:** the study of the way people use their culture to adapt to particular environments, the effects they have on their natural surroundings, and the impact of the environment on the shape of culture.

**Descent group:** all members of a descent group maintain that they are descendants of the founder of that group and share access to the group's territory and estate.

**Descriptive kinship terms:** label given to a system in which distinct terms or combinations of basic terms are used to designate specific relationships, e.g. 'father's brother' or 'mother's brother' rather than uncle (see 'Classificatory...')

**Diffusion:** The borrowing by one society of a cultural trait belonging to another society as the result of contact between the two societies.

**Disenchantment:** opposite of enchantment. As used by Weber, means the separation out of physical and spiritual, the Cartesian (q.v.) separation of the natural world from the religious world in Protestantism etc.

**Divination:** Foretelling the future by trying to contact the supernatural by any one of several means: drawing straws, reading palms, trance states, or rubbing-boards, etc.

**Division of labour:** the technical and social manner in which work is organized in a society.

**Domestic Group:** A social group occupying or centred in a dwelling house, living (and usually eating) together, and characteristically exercising corporate control over family property.

**Domestic Mode of Production:** Term used by Sahlins and Meillassoux about economic systems where the bulk of production takes place within the domestic family.

**Domestication:** process by which people control the distribution, abundance, and biological features of certain plants and animals, in order to increase their usefulness to humans.

**Dowry:** (1) the woman's share of the inheritance from the group of her birth, which is taken with her upon marriage. (2) the valuables or estate transferred by a bride's relatives to her, her husband, or her children in connection with her marriage.

**Ecology:** the study of plant and animal populations and communities and their relationships with one another and with their environment.

**Elementary System (of Kinship).** In Lévi-Strauss's theory, systems of kinship and marital alliance where all members of one's society are potentially incorporated in kinship categories and where these categories serve to define a system of marital alliances (exchange of women between groups).

**Emic:** a research strategy that seeks the native viewpoint; relies on informants to say what is and is not significant; actor-oriented. (cf. etic)

**Endogamy:** marriage of individuals within the same social group.

**Ethnic boundary markers:** any overt characteristics that can be used to indicate ethnic group membership.

**Ethnic group:** (1) People whose particular customs and cultural heritage differ from other such groups and from the main body of society (2) a named social group based on perceptions of shared ancestry, cultural traditions, and common history that culturally distinguish that group from other groups.

**Ethnocentrism:** Viewing other peoples and ways of life in terms of one's own cultural assumptions, customs, and values.

**Ethnography:** The documenting and analysis of a particular culture through field research.

**Ethnographic present:** the description of a culture at one point in time, often giving the impression that the account is reliable for any period in the past or future.

**Ethnology:** the task of classifying, comparing, and exploring cross-cultural differences and similarities. (often used as synonym for cultural anthropology)

**Etic:** a research strategy that relies on the scientist's criteria of significance; shows reasons and results of behaviour and beliefs that natives may not recognize; observer-oriented. (cf. emic)

**Evolution:** Descent with progressive genetic modification; the process of change in organisms.

**Exogamy:** cultural rule that requires members of a group to marry outside that group.

**Extensive cultivation** – See “Slash-and-burn”.

**Extended family group:** (1) residential group consisting of two or more families of at least two generations. (2) a domestic group or composite of domestic groups consisting of two or more nuclear families linked together through parent and child (patrilineal extended family, matrilineal extended family) or through siblings (fraternal or sororal extended family).

**Fallow:** The period or process whereby the fertility of soil is regenerated after a crop has been harvested.

**Feud, feuding:** (1) Continuing hostility, enmity, and recurrent aggression between social groups. (2) violent extralegal conflicts that occur between subgroups of the same society.

**Feudalism:** a social and economic system whereby land is held, by conferred right, by members of a privileged class, who can command the labour of a lower class that works the land.

**Fieldwork:** A broad term for research in which social/cultural anthropologists (and other social scientists) engage, involving close study and partial participation in the life of a community or group (characteristically in a setting that contrasts culturally with that in which the observer normally lives.)

**Folk society:** a term used by Robert Redfield for homogeneous tribal and peasant societies having close face-to-face relations, with kinship and religious practices playing important roles.

**Forces of Production:** The technology and physical resources used in production (viewed, in Marxist theory, as comprising, along with *social relations of production* (q.v.), the economic base of a society.)

**Functionalism:** (1) Modes of theoretical interpretation in social institutions – how they fit together. (2) Theoretical approach to anthropology that emphasizes concern with the part each unit within a culture plays in the total existence of that culture.

**Gemeinschaft:** equivalent to ‘Community’, meaning the deep affective bonds of relations based on status, blood, geography etc. Opposed to **gesellschaft**, translated as society or association, meaning the contractual organization and voluntary ties of modern societies.

**Genealogical method:** a method for discovering kin terms and mapping social relationships (W.H.Rivers is one of the originators).

**Generalized reciprocity:** (1) gift giving without any immediate return or conscious thought of return. (2) Principle that characterizes exchanges between closely related individuals; as social distance increases reciprocity becomes *balanced* and, finally, *negative*.

**Genitor:** biological father.

**Genotype:** the genetic make-up of an organism, the complete set of genes inherited from parents.

**Globalization:** tendency towards homogeneity and uniformity across the world (e.g. McDonald's, Coke etc.)

**Great Tradition:** The cultural pattern of a major civilization, as represented in its religion, literature, art, etc. – in contrast with the ‘Little Traditions’ distinctive of local communities.

**Habitus:** a term developed by Bourdieu, and very similar to the older anthropological term ‘custom’. The habitus are a set of deep constraints and rules and ways of acting, which govern

much of human behaviour without ever being made explicit – e.g. rules about space, time, dirt, gender etc.

**Holistic:** Applied to anthropology: concerned with the whole human condition – biology, psychology, society, and culture in all times and places.

**Horticulture:** Cultivation of crops using hand tools (e.g., digging stick or hoe).

**Hunter-Gatherers:** Human populations that rely in subsistence exclusively (or almost exclusively) on wild foods, hunted and collected. Some modern hunter-gatherers receive subsistence food from governments or missions or do minimal cultivating.

**Hydraulic society:** an advanced agricultural society making use of irrigation and tending to have a high degree of political centralization.

**Ideal type:** a simplified model against which real cases can be measured, a bench mark (Max Weber)

**Ideology:** (1) A cultural belief system, particularly one that entails systematic distortion or masking of the true nature of social, political, and economic relation. (2) values and beliefs about how the world is or should be ordered that are consciously and systematically organized into some form of program.

**Image of Limited Good:** A world view, supposed to be characteristic of many Meso-american (and other) peasants, whereby the good things of the world (money, honour, reputation, success) are in limited, finite supply – hence where you can attain your goals only at other people's expense (George Foster).

**Incest:** (1) act of mating with or marrying a close relative. (2) incest taboo – a rule prohibiting sexual intercourse between specific categories of kin.

**Indigenous peoples:** culturally distinct peoples who have occupied a region longer than peoples who have colonized or immigrated to the region.

**Kindred:** all the bilateral relatives of an individual.

**Kinship:** (1) Relationship based on or modelled on the culturally recognized connection between parents and children (and extended to siblings and through parents to more distant relatives.) (2) The social recognition and expression of genealogical relationships. Kinship is not only actual but may be based on supposed ties of blood.

**Kula ring:** a ceremonial exchange of valued shell ornaments in the Trobriand Islands, in which white shell armbands are traded around the islands in a counter clockwise direction and red shell necklaces are traded in a clockwise direction.

**Latent functions:** the unintended and unrecognized consequences of a cultural practice.

**Law:** a body of social norms in a society, which its members must abide by and which may be enforced by an agency recognized as having political authority in that society.

**Levirate:** marriage of a man with his dead brother's widow.

**Life cycle:** the life process through birth, maturation, old age, death, and in some traditions beyond.

**Lineage:** descent group based on demonstrated descent.

**Little Tradition:** The patterns of culture distinctive of local communities or regions within a complex society.

**Magic:** (1) strategies people use to control supernatural power (2) use of external means (e.g. spells, manipulation of physical things) to control supernatural power (as opposed to witchcraft, which is internal, a state of being)

**Mana:** sacred force associated with Polynesian nobility, causing their persons to be taboo.

**Market:** The abstract relationship of supply and demand in the buying and selling processes of a money economy.

**Marketplace:** A physical setting within which buying and selling (and barter) take place.

**Marriage:** (1) An institutionalised form of relationship in which sexual relationships and parentage legitimately take place. (2) Socially recognized relationship between a socially recognized male (the husband) and a socially recognized female (the wife) such that children born of their union are socially accepted as their offspring.

**Matrilineal descent:** descent through female lines (also known as 'uterine')

**Maximization:** A theoretical assumption that individuals (or groups or firms) will make decisions rationally in such a way as to achieve maximum reward (whether in money, power,

etc.); an assumption underlying classical and neoclassical economics and formalist economic anthropology.

**Means of Production:** In Marxist analysis, the resources used in the process of production (tools, land, technological knowledge, rare material, etc.); *Social Classes* are defined with reference to their differential relationship to the means of production (e.g. owners vs. wage laborers).

**Millenarian movement:** a social movement espousing a belief in the coming of a new world (a millenium), in part through supernatural action.

**Mode of Production:** In Marxist theory, a complex of productive relationships: e.g., *capitalist*, entailing relationships between wage labours and employers; or *feudal*, entailing relationships between serf and lords, etc. two or more modes of production may coexist within the same society (in Marxist theory, a *social formation*).

**Money** (general purpose): Currency that functions as a means of exchange, a standard of value, and a means of payment; opposed to special-purpose money (e.g. tea or cowrie shells)

**Myth:** (1) a sacred tale expressing the unobservable realities of religious belief in terms of observable phenomena. (2) stories that reveal the religious knowledge of how things have come into being.

**Nation-state:** socio-political system with a government and sharp contrasts in wealth, prestige and power.

**Nationality:** an ethnic group which claims a right to a discrete homeland and to political autonomy and self-determination.

**Nature** (vs. Culture): In symbolic analysis, especially as pioneered in the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, a polarity between the realm of plants and animals and the world of humans.

**Neo-colonialism:** The process whereby industrial nations control the political and economic life of nominally independent countries through investment and support of local elites.

**Neolocal residence:** residence after marriage where the couple live separately from either set of parents.

**Neolithic:** “New Stone Age”: the level of technology, marked by food producing and the use of ground and polished stone tools, characteristic of much of the “tribal” world before the advent of colonialism.

**Neolocal:** rule of post marital residence; establishing a new place of residence.

**Network analysis:** Social relationships are plotted for specific individuals and constitute their social networks. Networks are then compared for linking and overlapping.

**Nomadism:** A mode of life based on the shifting of population to move with livestock (in accordance with needs for pasturage).

**Nuclear Family:** Co-resident group consisting of a married couple and their children. Also called elementary family or biological family.

**Office:** Permanent political status.

**Oracle :** a person specially able to obtain guidance from supernatural agencies; a technique with sacred objects and special rites which secures supernatural guidance.

**Palaeolithic:** “Old Stone Age”: the vast period marked by chipped and flaked stone tool industries.

**Paradigm:** as used by Kuhn, a world-view or cosmology which determines the questions which are asked across a range of sciences.

**Parallel cousins :** children of siblings of the same sex.

**Participant observation:** Common ethnographic technique; ethnographers participate in some of the events that they are observing and describing in an attempt to improve their rapport with informants and hence their data.

**Pastoralism:** A mode of life where herding (of cattle, sheep, camels, goats, horses, etc.) provides the major subsistence.

**Patrilineage :** a lineage formed on the basis of patrilineal descent.

**Patrilineal descent:** tracing descent through males (also known as ‘agnatic’).

**Peasant:** A member of an agrarian social class or estate whose productive labour supports an elite (characteristically urban) as well as providing for subsistence.

**Pictographic writing:** the earliest kind of writing system, consisting of pictures that stand for concepts.

**Polyandry:** variety of plural marriage in which there is more than one husband.

**Polygamy:** any marriage involving more than two spouses.

**Polygyny:** marital relationship involving multiple wives.

**Postmodernism:** a reaction to modernism. David Harvey (after Hassan) gives the following oppositions to give a flavour; in each case the terms are modernism/post-modernism: purpose/play, design/chance, hierarchy/anarchy, art object and finished work/process and performance, distance/participation, creation/decreation, presence/absence, genre/text, paradigm/syntagm, selection/combination, signified/signifier, origin or cause/difference or trace. And so on. (see Harvey, Condition of Postmodernity, p.43 for full table).

**Potlatch:** A feast marked by distribution and destruction of valuables, as a demonstration of wealth and status, characteristic of the Kwakiutl and some other Northwest Coast (U.S.) Indians.

**Primogeniture :** inheritance rule that makes oldest child (usually oldest son), the only heir.

**Prophet:** an individual who receives divine revelation, usually by visions or dreams, concerning a restructuring of some aspect of society or of a people's beliefs.

**Protestant ethic:** World view associated with early ascetic Protestantism, which values hard and constant work as a sign of salvation (Max Weber).

**Race:** a category based upon physical traits.

**Racism:** the explanation of a people's behaviour in terms of genetic endowment, usually associated with a belief in the innate superiority and inferiority of particular groups.

**Rank society:** a society having no socially structured unequal access to economic resources, but having socially structured unequal access to status positions and prestige.

**Rationality:** (1) the tendency to justify or explain actions by emphasizing their efficient contribution to ends. (2) Max Weber classified social action as (a) instrumentally rational, where object and persons are used as relatively efficient instruments or means for attaining one's own rationally pursued and calculated ends; (b) value-rational, where an end is pursued for its own sake, regardless of its prospect of success (c) affectual, determined by emotion, (d) traditional, determined by ingrained habit.

**Reciprocity:** A mode of exchange marked by continuing obligation to reciprocate particularly in kind: governs exchange among equals.

**Redistribution:** Major exchange mode of chiefdoms, many archaic states, and states with managed economies.

**Relations of Production:** In Marxist theory, the social relationships through which production (and distribution and consumption) are organized in a society (relations of production and *forces of production*. q.v. together define *a mode of production*, q.v.)

**Religion:** (1) any set of attitudes, beliefs, and practices pertaining to supernatural power, whether that power be forces, gods, spirits, ghosts, or demons. (2) the worship of supernatural forces or beings that provide shape and meaning to the universe.

**Revolution:** a fundamental change in the rules governing social, political and other relations, an overturning (as changing cricket to football), as opposed to 'rebellion', which is just changing the players.

**Rite of Passage:** A ritual dramatizing the transition from one social state to another (e.g., a wedding or funeral)

**Ritual:** (1) Behaviour that is formal, stylised, repetitive, stereotyped, and performed earnestly as a social act. Rituals are held at set times and places and have liturgical orders.(2) organized and stereotyped symbolic behaviours intended to influence supernatural powers.

**Role:** The behaviour patterns appropriate to an individual acting in a particular social capacity.

**Sacrifice:** the giving of something of value (often by destroying or killing it) to supernatural beings or forces.

**Secret societies:** groups that restrict their membership and maintain secrecy about their rituals, group practices, and special esoteric knowledge.

**Segmentary:** Of descent systems, defining descent categories with reference to more remote apical ancestors so that the descent categories form a treelike structure (including successively wider ranges of descendants).

**Shaman:** a part-time religious practitioner who serves as intermediary between ordinary people and supernatural beings and forces; often goes into 'possession' or trance to communicate with the spirits.

**Sibling:** general term for brother or sister without specifying sex.

**Sign:** in the strict sense, something which conveys information, including physical objects, colours, sounds, movements, and even silence, by way of a direct relationship between the signified and the signifier (e.g. road signs)

**Slash and burn:** Form of extensive horticulture in which the forest cover of a plot is cut down and burned before planting to allow the ashes to fertilize the soil.

**Social Class:** A division of society, defined in terms of its relationship to the means of production, within a system of such classes, hierarchically ordered, and marked by a consciousness of their collective identity and interests.

**Social mobility:** the process of changing status in a system of stratification

**Social Stratification:** Division of society in terms of inequality; differential ranking or status of social groups, classes, or categories.

**Social Structure :** (1) The organization of a group or society seen in terms of structures of positions and roles: a formal abstraction from the ongoing social relations within communities. (2) the part of culture that people use to generate and interpret social interaction.

**Society:** A population marked by relative separation from surrounding populations and a distinctive culture (complex societies may include two or more distinctive cultural groups incorporated within a single social system).

**Sorcery:** the malevolent practices of magic.

**Spirit possession:** the control of a person by a supernatural being in which the person becomes that being.

**State:** (1) A political entity that exercises sovereign rights over a territory and exercises power through centralized, hierarchical political institutions of control, revenue extraction, and enforcement of law and civic duty. (2) A political unit with centralized decision-making affecting a large population. Most states have cities with public buildings; full-time craft and religious specialists; and "official" art style; a hierarchical social structure topped by an elite class; and a governmental monopoly on the legitimate use of force to implement policies.

**Status :** (1) The rights and duties in a reciprocal role relationship (social identity relationship); the rights, privileges, and duties, and social worth accorded to members of a social class or category. (2) a position within a social structure.

**Structural functionalism** (1) theory that emphasizes how various elements of social structure are integrated and function to maintain social order and equilibrium. (2) the variety of functionalism that assumes that cultural features fulfil the needs of societies for orderly relations, minimal conflict, conformity, and so on. (3) a functional approach in social anthropology that is concerned with how social structures are maintained.

**Structuralism** (1) Structural analysis; technique developed by French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. A position that assumes uniformities in human thought, particularly classification, resting on universal features of the human brain. Aims not at explaining sociocultural similarities and differences, but at uncovering cultural themes and relationships and cross-cultural similarities. (2) The theoretical tradition, most closely associated with the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, that seeks to find, beneath cultural phenomena, the structures of mind – particularly the logic of opposition – they express.

**Substantivism** in anthropological economics, the view that economic theory, using such concepts as "maximization" and "economizing", cannot be meaningfully applied to the study of primitive or non-Western economic systems. (the opposite is 'Formalist', where western economic theories and models are used).

**Succession:** Assumption of an office that has been vacated; the pattern whereby successors are chosen.



**Swidden** See “Slash-and-burn”.

**Symbol:** (1) A sign that is related to the thing it refers to (its referent) in a conventional (rather than natural) manner (i.e. is arbitrary). A *cultural* (or *ritual*) symbol is an object or other sign that has a range of culturally salient meanings. (2) a sign whose meaning is arbitrary, being determined by social convention and learning.

**Syncretism:** the blending of historically distinct traditions.

**Taboo** (sacred); (1) forbidden, especially by supernatural sanctions (from Polynesian *tapu*). (2) prohibition; interdiction backed by supernatural sanctions.

**Technology:** (1) ‘traditional effective action’ (Mauss). (2) the skills and knowledge by which people make things and extract resources.

**Teleological fallacy:** the assumption that every pattern which serves a given function was deliberately designed by someone (e.g. God) to serve that function.

**Third World:** A loose category of about 120 countries characterized by low standards of living, high rates of population growth, and general economic and technological dependence upon wealthier industrial nations. (invented in the 1950’s by A.Sauvy)

**Totemism:** Symbolic association between a social group (e.g., a lineage or clan) and a kind of bird, plant, or natural phenomenon. In “classic” forms, a member of the social group has some special religious relationship (e.g. a food taboo) toward members of the natural species.

**Traditionalism:** tendency to justify or explain actions by emphasizing their conformity to accepted and long-standing patterns. (cf. rationality)

**Transhumance:** Seasonal movement of nomadic peoples according to the availability of pasturage.

**Tribe:** (1) Form of socio-political organization generally based on horticulture or pastoralism, more rarely on foraging or agriculture. Socio-economic stratification and centralized rule are absent in tribes, and there is no means of enforcing political decisions. (2) A small-scale society characterized by a distinctive language and culture with a political identity but not central, hierarchical institutions.

**Unilineal:** type of descent and descent group, either patrilineal or matrilineal. Children of descent-group members of one sex are automatically included as descent-group members, while children of members of the opposite sex are excluded.

**Urbanization:** The movement of rural or small-town populations into cities, the growth of cities.

**Uterine:** kinship through female links.

**Uxorilocality:** a couple’s residence with the wife’s group.

**Virilocality:** a couple’s residence with the husband’s group.

**Voluntary associations:** organizations like burial societies, social clubs, and trade associations that people join.

**Warfare:** Formalized armed combat by groups representing rival political communities.

**Wealth:** objects or resources that are useful or that have exchange value.

**Witchcraft:** the practice of attempting to harm people by supernatural means, through the emotions and thought processes alone, not by using any tangible objects. Often believed to be inherited.

**World system:** A social system encompassing the entire world and entailing a single division of labour.

## NOTE ON SOURCES AND FURTHER REFERENCE MATERIAL

Technical terms are taken, among other places, from the following textbooks – which all contain many other useful definitions. There is inevitably dispute and some of the above definitions are contentious.

Victor Barnouw, *Anthropology : A General Introduction* (1979)

Carol and Melvin Ember, *Cultural Anthropology* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1977)  
Michael Howard and P. McKim, *Contemporary Cultural anthropology* (1983)  
Conrad P. Kottack, *Cultural anthropology* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 1982)  
Roger M. Keesing, *Cultural Anthropology, A Contemporary Perspective* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1981)  
John Lewis, *Anthropology Made Simple* (1969)  
James L. Peacock and A. Thomas Kirsch, *The Human Direction: An Evolutionary Approach to Social and Cultural Anthropology* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 1980)  
James Peoples & G Bailey, *Humanity: An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn., 1994).  
James P. Spradley and David W. McCurdy, *Anthropology; the Cultural Perspective* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1980).

Three further very useful ways of expanding the above are:

*The Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 1968), a multi-volume survey.  
*The Companion Encyclopaedia of Anthropology: Humanity....* ed. Tim Ingold (Routledge, 1994)  
*Macmillan Student Encyclopaedia of Sociology*, ed. Michael Mann (1983)  
*Macmillan Dictionary of Anthropology*, ed. Charlotte Seymour-Smith (1986)