
An Analysis of the Cultures and Beliefs in the Book, Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches by Marvin Harris

It is already Friday afternoon of the finals week. I am done with my 4 finals and I am about to submit my anthropology final examination paper. I have to pack and do laundry before the night because I want to go to a party tonight to have some fun. Well, I think I deserve it. This week was one of my busiest weeks ever. It's the first time that I had 5 finals, including the paper. I have to wake up tomorrow early morning. My flight to my hometown leaves at 6 am, hopefully from Pullman airport. The most exciting of going home besides seeing my family and friends again is that its summer over there. My hometown, Lima, Peru, has one of the mildest weathers in South America as it is in the coast of Peru. Well, it is time to get everything ready for this fun night an especially the morning.

It is already Sunday morning and after a long flight and several stops, I am already at home. My parents and other relatives picked me up from the airport and they took me to an especial restaurant where they wanted to talk with me about my life here at the United States. They ask me several questions. First, they ask me concerning tennis, as I am here at the U of I playing for the Vandal Tennis Team. I told them it was a pretty good semester of tennis and I had good results, and that next semester is supposed to be pretty tough, as the team is going to make a lot of travels. Besides talking about this, that took us a long time, my relatives and especially my parents were concerned about my grades and the courses that I took this semester. I told them I took calculus 3, computer science, chemistry 112, engineering statics and introduction to anthropology. I told them that I got good grades in all of my courses. They were asking me details of each of the courses I took and when they asked me concerning the "Introduction to Anthropology course," we start a really long talk.

While reading Marvin Harris book, I was mostly attracted and engaged by the witchcraft and religion practice. People engage in witchcraft because it is exciting and entertaining. According to Marvin Harris, people take part in occult and mystical practices such as Ouija and Zen regularly. This is mainly in part due to the popularity of being a member of a "counter culture." This is a culture that exists in opposition to the scientific and philosophical advances of the current century. The people who take part in these activities think mainly that feelings and imagination are good. On the other side, they think science and objectivity are bad. People practicing witchcraft just want to feel and have a great time. Now, talking about religion, it is pretty much very similar stuff. Religion goes through a non-logical approach to the world than science. A large number of religions support the idea that man was created by an all-knowing god. They have the idea that events are fated, and many other facts and ideas that are not

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supported by science.

Having already read Marvin Harris and his broad definition about environmental determinism, we can affirm that it is defined as the notion that the physical environment has a massive and often controlling (and perhaps never changing and generationally stable) effect on human beings, in essence dictating their abilities in all realms of life and society. In a more geographic definition, environmental determinism can be defined as the thought that the environment, most notably its physical factors such as landforms or weather, determines the patterns of human culture and society development. Environmental determinists believe that it is these environmental, climatic, and geographical factors alone that are responsible for human cultures, and they argue that individual decisions or social conditions have virtually no impact on cultural development. However, as an anthropologist student, what mainly matters is the environmental determinism explained and represented by Marvin Harris because it is the one that takes an anthropological approach through different cultures, from both currently and primitive ones.

Why is breastfeeding so important for a baby and her mother, and why is it important for a baby to learn what and how to eat certain types of food? Parental ethnotheories are, by Meredith Small's definition, "parental belief systems that have complex cultural, psychological, and personal histories." (Small 1998: 56) These beliefs are generally learned from one generation to the next, and are critical for the baby's growth. The issue is that during the first months of a baby's life, he or she does not have the capability to chew or consume any type of food besides the breastfeed given by their mother. This is just made most commonly for the first several days of the baby, and by then, he or she must start to take a much wider variety of food.

They are part of something called enculturation. Each one pertains to a unique and single culture, although "most cultures exhibit a particular configuration or style." (Miner, 1)

Thomas Jefferson stated that "Indians should be studied as a part of the rest of nature. American Indians are specimens, like mammoth bones and the fruit trees in his own garden, to be empirically investigated and objectively understood"(Thomas p. 29). This view point was startling to me when i first read it, but i came to understand that in many ways anthropologist today still do this with cultures that represent the hunter gatherer life style. Its a way to study our past. I think that is why Jefferson made this statement. Despite what he said Jefferson still sought to make america a melting pot and in doing so it still required that native americans get rid of their culture. Alice Fletcher was an anthropologist who sought to record the Indian culture before it disappeared. She also was a supporter of making sure that indians lived as the white culture did. Tis set up the Daws act that eventually led to the destruction of indian culture

Chapter 5 is about Morgan's theory of social evolution and on page 48 it talks about how Morgan believed that savagery and barbarism were germs carried in the mind. He concluded

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that intermarrying with whites could get rid of this biological flaw and result in respectable citizens. Unfortunately, his research became widely accepted in anthropology circles. “The highest percentage of people with lactose tolerance occurred among populations in a region that substantially overlapped the ancient territory of the Funnel Beaker culture” (Wade, 2006, 137). By this phrase I can say that the fact that some people are currently intolerant to lactose is simply human evolution and not a light metabolism deflection. We can see how broad and complex can be the term human evolution from now, and we can also explain not only the changes of human in physical aspects but also culturally and psychologically.

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