
Reviewed by WILLIAM J. SAMARIN

This book on anthropology contains what at first glance looks like a Bingo board. The author describes it as “a sort of cultural equivalent of the periodic tables of chemistry” (p. 171). Both comparisons miss the mark. More to the point is the name “map of culture.” Its purpose is to show the 100 basic complexes of activities observable in human behavior covered by the term culture.

The chart is claimed by the author to be the only thing of its kind today (p. 171). Hitherto, outlines of culture consisted of certain traditional classifications which were filled out by the investigator. One gathered information concerning certain topics: marriage, death, food production, attitudes toward elders, etc. But “no one had defined any basic units of culture” (p. 39).

For the first time in such detail some such units are postulated. These are the Primary Message Systems (PMS) which form the basis of the chart.

Any such theoretical innovation is bound to arouse discussion and controversy. And since the book contains several other new concepts, subjects for discussion should be abundant for several years.

Practical Insights

The missionary understandably has little interest in the theoretical under- girding of modern anthropology. What he is concerned most about is the unraveling of the skein of culture. His problems are preeminently practical.

It is for this very reason that one can highly recommend this book. By manner of presentation and by content, it achieves the author’s goal of explaining what culture is. At the very outset he states that “the ultimate purpose of this book . . . is to reveal the broad extent to which culture controls our lives” (p. 38).

The author captures your interest with the opening sentence: “Though the United States has spent billions of dollars on foreign aid programs . . .” He maintains it by a lively style (“Time talks. It speaks more plainly than words”), and frequent allusion to “strange” behavior and “exotic” peoples. His experience as a practicing anthropologist provides him with personal anecdotes.

Hall intends his book to be practical. Having had experience in training Point Four technicians, he has some reasoned opinions on why the United States has so often failed in technical assistance, military aid, and diplomatic fronts:

Honest and sincere men in the field continue to fail to grasp the true significance of the fact that culture controls behavior in deep and persisting ways, many of which are outside of awareness and therefore beyond conscious control of the individual (p. 35).

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For this same reason missionaries often feel frustrated when they see little visible result in their work and cannot determine the reasons.

In order to see the reasons, one must understand the nature of culture. It is therefore inescapable that some theoretical orientation be formulated.

One of the basic theoretical concepts on which this theory of culture rests is that culture in its entirety is a form of communication (p. 37). This is the reason for the title of the book: "In addition to what we say with our verbal language we are constantly communicating our real feelings in our silent language—the language of behavior" (p. 10). The term communication is used in a special sense, here freely defined as "the ways in which man reads meaning into what other men do" (p. 38).

It is understandable that language is used as a model throughout the discussion. Although linguists may not be in complete agreement with the parallels demonstrated between language and other aspects of culture, they cannot dismiss the author's discussion as linguistic naïveté for he had as collaborator an eminent linguist, Dr. George L. Trager. But this is not an analysis of linguistic structure. Rather, analogies are drawn from language in the description of culture as a communications system.

**Components of Culture**

Analogous to the three basic "components" of language, then, are the components of culture, namely, isolates (like sounds), sets (like words), and patterns (like grammar or syntax). Another set of integratable grids is provided by the "ten basic foci of activity that combine to produce culture" (p. 37). These are the Primary Message Systems (interaction, association, subsistence, bisexuality, territoriality, temporality, learning, play, defense, and exploitation).

The PMS are fundamental to Hall's and Trager's theory. They are convinced that there is an unbroken continuity between the time when there were no men and no cultures and the present cultural behavior of human beings. All cultural activities must therefore be traceable to the animal past, "for culture is bio-basic—rooted in biological activities" (p. 44). What has been taken for granted by anthropologists is here made explicit: man is an animal whose culture goes back in an unbroken line to his precultural days. This behavior is given the name *infra-culture*.

One more set of grids completes the structure. This is the "major triad." Man has three "modes of behavior" (p. 66) or "levels of integration" (p. 90) by which human behavior is structured. This "crucial trio" (p. 37), the technical, informal, and formal, is at the heart of Hall's theory. It can most easily be illustrated by the PMS of Interaction, where the technical is revealed as language (that is, linguistic structure), the informal in gesture, and the formal in "tone of voice."

**The Place of Religion**

The Christian should be interested in the place to which religion is assigned. Its bio-basic origin is ascribed to the PMS of Defense (along with defense groups and public health). The technical part of religion is found in religious ceremonies, the informal in individual attitudes to the supernatural, and the formal in belief systems.

Although Eugene Nida also believes
that religion is linked with communication,¹ his view is to be distinguished from that of Hall. Nida sees religion as communication with the supernatural. Hall, on the other hand, if I read him correctly, takes religion to be a defensive system whose communicative nature is found in its meanings to members of a single culture.

The subject of religion is not the only one which Hall and Nida have in common. Both should be read to get some insight into culture as communication. (By some accident Nida omits Hall's book in his bibliography and Hall ignores Kenneth L. Pike's Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior, which is also an attempt to deal with the subject, in his.)

This review must not end in the clouds of theory, for The Silent Language is an eminently practical book. The price of fifty cents could hardly be spent for a better contribution to the missionary's pleasure and profit.


Reviewed by
JOSEPH E. GRIMES

Sister Inez's volume is intended to be the first of a new series of Behavior Science Field Guides. These guides are developed along the general lines of the Outline of Cultural Materials and represent a further elaboration of the Murdock tradition in ethnography. The author herself has had wide field experience, and draws on it in her presentation.

"The Guide is a directive in theory and procedure in the study of customs, beliefs, and traditions as related to the development, training, and rearing of the child." It is not intended to cover all of culture but only to help the field investigator who is studying child-rearing customs. It includes introductory notes on Sister Inez's methodology and field equipment and continues with a highly suggestive list of questions regarding birth, child rearing, naming, the behavior of children, and their education and play.

For filling in gaps in field work this guide should prove extremely valuable. On the other hand, it does not help one decide what aspects of culture to study, or how the thing studied fits in with the rest of the culture. In other words, it contains questions of the "what" variety, but not of the "why" variety, which are ultimately more useful in attaining cultural understanding. If one sets out simply to write quantities of data without a focusing problem area within which to view the data, it is likely that one will end up with nothing more than lists of data. The theoretical emphasis necessary for productive interpretation of data that are gathered is not within the purview of this volume. For this reason Sister Inez's work is to be recommended as a valuable check list, but not as a field worker's panacea.

Joseph E. Grimes is a missionary linguist working with the Wycliffe Bible Translators. He is the author of several contributions to PA, including one related to the kind of book which he reviews here. It is "Ethnographic Questions for Christian Missionaries," Vol. 6, No. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1959), pp. 275-276.