

COVENANT UNIVERSITY

TUTORIAL KIT

PROGRAMME: SOCIOLOGY

ALPHA SEMESTER

100 LEVEL



Raising A New Generation Of Leaders

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Answers (Soc 112: Introduction to Anthropology)

1. Describe clearly six aspects of African culture that are still been observed despite massive social changes due to foreign influence

Due to foreign influence, massive social changes have taken place in African culture through social, technological, economic and political innovations. However, in African culture, certain things are still been observed.

- i. Language: which goes beyond the verbal aspect to include signs and symbols including differences in occasions and mood. Black attire is for mourning the dead. White is to appease angry gods for peace to reign. Aso-oke, especially among the Yorubas is for festivals such as marriage ceremony, or burial celebration of very old persons. Drum beating carries tales, educates people and castigates erring members of society.
- ii. Norms and Values: African culture is encapsulated in artifacts, folkways, beliefs customs and traditions. They help to define accepted behaviour, maintain the social system and in stimulating positive interactions and institutions in society.
- iii. Collectivism: African societies are communalistic in nature with majority of them being organized on kinship and lineage systems. For most societies, the man is the head of the family and the symbol of authority.
- iv. Marriage Patterns: Africans hold dearly to their marriage patterns and accompanying ceremonies. Chastity is highly acknowledged and rewarded by a man's family if the woman at marriage is a virgin.
- v. Economic Life: African societies have been noted for three main occupations which include, hunting and gathering, pastoralism and agriculture including fishing and horticultural activities. Even in recent times. The bulk of African economic activities are still subsistent in nature.
- vi. Religious Beliefs: everything in Africa is deeply rooted in one religious belief or the other. Such as: belief in Supreme Being (God); belief in deities or lesser gods; belief in spirits (celestial and ancestral ones); belief in magic and medicine including the use of sorcerers and existence of witchcraft.

2. How would you describe the historical development of anthropology?

The origin of anthropology can be traced to the ancient world when travelers and philosophers observed and speculated about the cultural diversity and physical differences among people across the world. They noticed that society differed from place to place and that people's body shape and skin colour were also different. This ignited in people the desire to understand human origins and human development.

The first known Philosopher who drew up an anthropological perspective on the nature of man was Xenophanes (570-475BC). Herodotus (484-425BC), a Greek traveler and writer, visited many parts of the world. He described the life style of the people that he met such as their physical characteristics, language, customs, institutions, laws, belief systems, political and military organizations.

These classical works were rediscovered by European Scholars in the 12th century. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), emphasized the importance of the social environment in an attempt to understand human nature rather than looking to the creator as the source of knowledge. Also, travelers such as Marco Polo (1254-1324) showed considerable interest in foreign peoples and their customs while the accounts of their provided a strong foundation for anthropology.

Kings and Monarchs became interested in foreign peoples, partly in the hope of expanding their trade and empire including the curiosity for knowledge about other life styles and so sponsored exploratory expeditions. Consequently, many explorers gave sensational accounts of the physical appearances and the social life of the people they came across on their voyages.

3. State and explain the methods through which anthropology can be studied as a scientific field of study.

As a discipline, anthropology combines the approaches of both the biological and social sciences.

Historians of anthropology such as Marvin Harris indicate two major frameworks through which empirical anthropology has arisen.

- i. Interest in comparisons of people over space.
- ii. Interest in long term human processes as viewed through time.

One of the first scholars to carry out comparative ethnographic studies was the medieval Persian scholar, Abu Rayhan Biruni in the 11th century. Like modern anthropologist, he engaged in Participant Observation with a given group of people as he learnt their language, studied their culture and presented his findings with objectivity and neutrality using cross-cultural comparisons. Anthropology therefore emphasizes more on qualitative researches with emphasis on cross-cultural comparisons. This is studied using the following methods:

- i. Comparative approach
- ii. Systems approach
- iii. Holistic approach
- iv. Case study approach

4. As the most comprehensive science of man, anthropology has a strong relationship with other academic disciplines. Discuss

Anthropology is the most comprehensive science of man and his works as it studies the origin and evolution of Homosapiens. However, it is not the only science that deals with man and his works. Anthropology has a close relationship with other social sciences such as Sociology, Psychology, Geography, Political Science, Economics, etc. They are mostly concerned with aspects of human behavior.

It also has a strong relationship with the humanities such as History, Literature and Music. For the biological sciences such as Anatomy, Physiology, Embryology, they are concerned with the physical aspects of man or man's physical structure.

It has a special relationship with some natural and physical sciences such as Zoology, Physics and Geology. Infact, geology has provided a chronology or time sequence with which to measure the age of man and his culture.

5. Using the theory of evolutionism, describe clearly the dynamism of evolution based on natural selection.

Evolution involves a change in hereditary endowment continuing through successive generations of time. The evolution theory assumes that all organisms are related to one another and have a shared common ancestry. This theory was first put forward by Charles Darwin in his 1859 publication of the "Origin of Species". Darwin's argument was that all organisms possess a reproductive capacity to increase their numbers progressively; many of those born do not themselves contribute offsprings to the next generation due to different levels of fertility. Also, no two individuals are ever absolutely identical.

In terms of the dynamism of evolution based on natural selection, Gregor Johann Mendel presented this biological mechanism using an experiment involving the breeding of Peas. He tried to show the importance of genes in the evolution process.

Sutton (American) and Boveri (German) independently using microscopic scientific research discovered the importance of chromosomes in cell formation and fertilization. According to them, our genes are contained in the cell nucleus while the cells are the basic building blocks of the body. According to them, the number of chromosomes is constant for each species. In man there 46 chromosomes, but in animals closest to man such a gorilla, chimpanzee and orangutan, there are 48 chromosomes.

The chromosomes help to determine the sex of a person, as male and female have different genetic makeup. A woman has 23 pairs of chromosomes, but a man has 22 pairs and 2 unmatched

chromosomes. One of the 2 unmatched chromosomes is the Y while the other is the X which is identical in size and form to one of the 23 pairs of the female chromosomes.

7. Enumerate and discuss the sub-fields of anthropology.

The sub-fields of anthropology include:

- i. **Social Anthropology:** It is the study of relationships among persons and groups. It is the closest to Sociology as it looks at how people interact, organize and govern themselves including creating meaning out of life.
- ii. **Physical Anthropology:** This can also be called Biological Anthropology and it focuses on the study of humans in their biological, evolutionary and demographic dimensions.
- iii. **Archaeological Anthropology:** This is the study of human past through its material remains. Artifacts or material remains are examined in order to deduce patterns of human behaviour and cultural practices.
- iv. **Linguistic Anthropology:** This seeks to understand the processes of human communications – verbal and non-verbal, variations in language across time and space; the social uses of language and the relationship between language and culture including the misconceptions experienced by people.
- v. **Cultural Anthropology:** This is the study of the different ways in which people make sense of the world around them. Its focus is on cross-cultural comparison with emphasis on ethnographic studies. It considers issues such as kinship, religion, economic organizations, gender relations, myths, beliefs, festivals etc.

10. Describe clearly your understanding of the characteristics of culture.

Culture can be described as the totality of the way of life of a people or their learned behaviour pattern passed on from generation to generation. Its characteristics include:

- i. Culture makes man unique and differentiates him from other animals who act based on instincts.
- ii. Culture is the main vehicle for social learning or acculturation and passing of societal values to younger generation.
- iii. It is the main instrument through which roles, functions and statuses between men and women, parents and children, etc are defined.
- iv. Culture is an on-going process that enables us to understand the “good” and “bad” aspects of life.
- v. Culture provides a process for meeting the basic economic needs of individuals and groups.
- vi. Culture helps to provide explanation for the events of the Earthly world and the world beyond comprising our ancestors and the unborn generation.

17. What in your understanding constitutes the study of anthropology?

Anthropology studies the totality of man, his past, present and future. It concerns itself with the complexity of cultures across human societies. It relies on knowledge derived from the social, biological, humanities and physical sciences.

A central concern of anthropologists is the application of knowledge to the solution of human problems through their researches, teaching and professional lives.

Anthropology is the science of humanity. Its origin can be found in the humanities, natural sciences and social sciences. It is derived from the Greek word “anthropos” meaning man or humanity and “logia” meaning study. Its critical focus is on the culture of man across societies.

19. Culture is the central focus of anthropology. Discuss.

The concept culture was developed out of the need for an objective term to characterize the similarities and wide differences between groups of people.

In anthropology, culture encompasses language, arrangement of family life, group loyalties and ways of perceiving the world (both the physical and the world beyond). Culture puts a control on man’s

drives, influences his eating habits, display of emotions and sexual behaviour. In terms of definition, Edward Tylor (1871) defined culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. Also, Clyde Kluckhohn (1945) defined culture as the historically created design for living, explicit and implicit, rational and non-rational, which may exist at any given time as a potential guide for the behaviour of men.

Culture therefore is learned and shared as a distinctive way of life of a group of people or as a complete design for living.

20. Describe clearly the stages of man's evolution as described by Charles Darwin.

Man's origin and history is clearly related to the entire animal kingdom and as stated by Charles Darwin, man evolved through apes, based on the process of natural selection. This claim has been supported by researchers such as Paleontologists (through digging up of ancient human bones with odd appearances) using geological dating and radioactive materials to determine the relative antiquity of fossils and stone tools from different continents. Many of the human fossils to be scientifically described were discovered in Germany.

The stages of man's evolution include:

- i. *Aegyptopithecus*: lived about 30 million years ago and is said to be the common ancestor from which apes and modern man descended. This was a forest dwelling primate that moved on all fours.
- ii. *Ramapithecus*: it emerged about 14 million years ago as a more advanced primate. It is said to be the earliest known creature that describes man's descent.
- iii. *Australopithecus*: lived in different parts of Eastern and Southern Africa about five million years ago. They are regarded as the great ancestor of man as found through paleontological evidence. It was observed that its canine teeth did not project beyond the row of teeth and looking like that of modern man and the premolar teeth were unlike those of apes. It walked upright and had the ability to make simple tools.
- iv. *Homo-erectus*: made popular by a Dutch doctor Eugene Dubois, who between 1891 and 1892 discovered some fossilized teeth, thigh bones and skull caps across different parts of Africa, Asia and Europe. The skull and brain were said to be smaller than that of modern man but were still bigger than that of apes. Their origin dates back to about 500,000 years ago. They could create fire, hunt for bigger animals, had some form of language and social organization.
- v. Neanderthal man: this was first discovered in an area called Dusseldorf in West Germany. They are regarded as the direct ancestors of modern man and they lived between 100,000 and 40,000 years ago. They made stone tools such as knives, scrapers and spears. They also created shelters such as caves and made clothing materials. They buried their dead and performed various rituals.
- vi. *Homo-sapiens* (Modern man): This is the form human beings now look all over the world from Africa, Europe, Asia, Latin America, South America, North America, etc. Scientific evidence shows that man in its modern form first appeared between 35,000 to 40,000 years ago in Africa and Asia before spreading to Europe and other parts of the world. This explains why it is said that civilization started in Africa, precisely in Egypt.