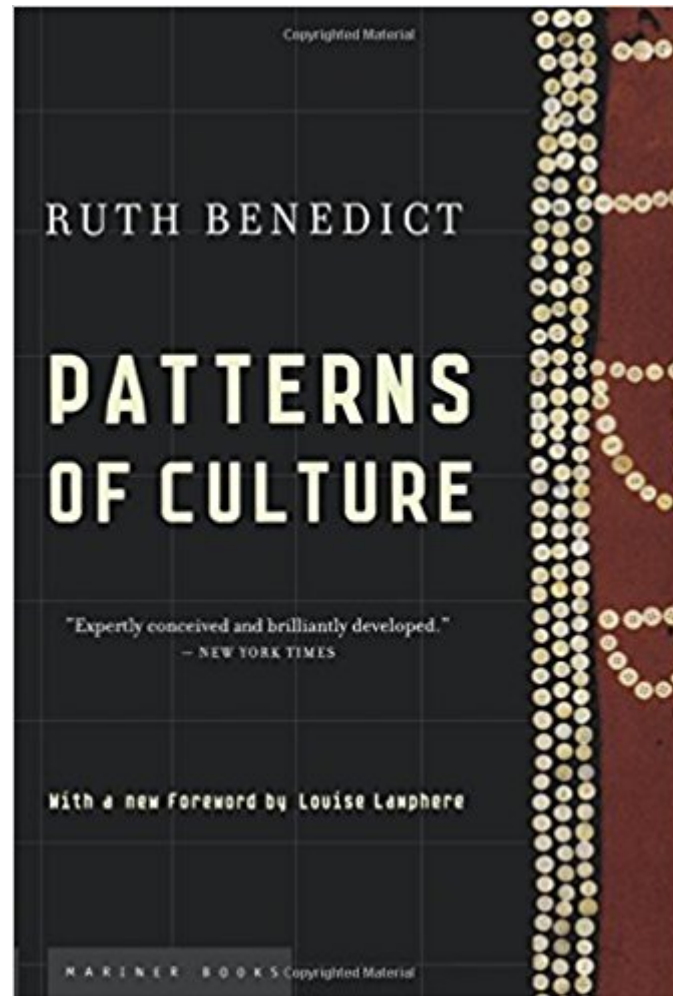




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# Patterns Of Culture



## Synopsis

"Unique and important . . . Patterns of Culture is a signpost on the road to a freer and more tolerant life." -- New York Times  
A remarkable introduction to cultural studies, Patterns of Culture is an eloquent declaration of the role of culture in shaping human life. In this fascinating work, the renowned anthropologist Ruth Benedict compares three societies -- the Zuni of the southwestern United States, the Kwakiutl of western Canada, and the Dobuans of Melanesia -- and demonstrates the diversity of behaviors in them. Benedict's groundbreaking study shows that a unique configuration of traits defines each human culture and she examines the relationship between culture and the individual. Featuring prefatory remarks by Franz Boas, Margaret Mead, and Louise Lamphere, this provocative work ultimately explores what it means to be human. "That today the modern world is on such easy terms with the concept of culture . . . is in very great part due to this book." -- Margaret Mead  
Benedict's Patterns of Culture is a foundational text in teaching us the value of diversity. Her hope for the future still has resonance in the twenty-first century: that recognition of cultural relativity will create an appreciation for 'the coexisting and equally valid patterns of life which mankind has created for itself from the raw materials of existence.'" -- from the new foreword by Louise Lamphere, past president of the American Anthropological Association  
Ruth Benedict (1887-1948) was one of the most eminent anthropologists of the twentieth century. Her profoundly influential books Patterns of Culture and The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture were bestsellers when they were first published, and they have remained indispensable works for the study of culture in the many decades since.

## Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Mariner Books (January 25, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0618619550

ISBN-13: 978-0618619559

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars 13 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #36,947 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #34 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Customs & Traditions #111 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Ethnic Studies #151 in Books >

## Customer Reviews

RUTH BENEDICT (1887–1948) was one of the twentieth century's foremost anthropologists and helped to shape the discipline in the United States and around the world. Benedict was a student and later a colleague of Franz Boas at Columbia, where she taught from 1924. Margaret Mead was one of her students. Benedict's contributions to the field of cultural anthropology are often cited today.

enjoying the book

The cover and quality of the physical book is great. Also, this is a classic text which is a good read for any Anthropology student!

very nice, I like it, It is what I expect. The quality is very good. ^\_^ I like it .

thank you

Service very good. 4 star rating for a book in good condition as described. A lot of highlighting not mentioned. Would recommend this book to social scientists especially anthropologists

For generations of students and readers, Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* has served as a general introduction, not only to anthropology as an academic field of enquiry, but to our variegated diversity of cultures. The structure of the book is at once so simple, so compact, and so sharply outlined, that it never fails to impress the reader by its analytical rigor and logical coherence. The study of three sharply contrasting cultures--the Zuni Pueblos of New Mexico, the natives of Dobu in Melanesia, and the Indian tribes (mostly the Kwakiutl) of the American Northwest coast--form the core chapters of the book. They are bracketed by three introductory chapters and two concluding essays. The opening part insists on the role of custom in shaping human behavior, the diversity of cultural traits, and the coherence of a culture brought about by a dominating principle. The last two chapters make a plea for cultural relativism and for tolerance towards individuals who do not fit into the dominant social pattern. The diversity of cultures and the coherent pattern that they form are presented as the core message of anthropology. The argument is made stronger by references to

other social sciences and by powerful metaphors. According to Benedict, all the possible human behaviors are distributed along a great "arc" which covers the whole range of possible cultural traits. Each culture then select along this arc a configuration of human possibilities that fits its environment and forms a coherent whole. The analogy here is with language and linguistics: "In cultural life as it is in speech, selection [from the inventory of physically available possibilities] is the prime necessity"--and capsulated in the famous Digger Indian proverb that serves as epigraph to the book: "In the beginning God gave to every people a cup of clay and from this cup they drank their life." Another analogy is with psychology and medical science. The dominant pattern of each culture is compared to the categories used in psychiatry to classify human behavior. Schizophrenia, hysteria, and manic depression are not a bundle of disconnected traits, they form a coherent whole and allows the physician to make an informed diagnosis. Similarly, "self-torture here, head-hunting there, prenuptial chastity in one tribe and adolescent licence in another, are not a list of unrelated facts, each of them to be greeted with surprise wherever it is found or wherever it is absent." A culture, like an individual, is a more or less consistent pattern of thought and action. Each tribal society or primitive culture can thus be understood by its constitutive formula. As the author succinctly states at the beginning of each case presentation, the Zuni are "a ceremonious people

Read this in a philosophy class 32 years ago and I'm enjoying reading it again. Gave a copy to a mentee.

I read this book many years ago and I haven't looked at it lately. So, this is strictly from memory. What I remember about the book is that from the book I acquired this "insightful idea" : that as we learn our own culture we become a "prisoner" of our ONE culture. We become a prisoner because we only know ONE culture. If we only know ONE culture we have "no choice" but to "live and think" WITHIN that ONE culture. But, if we know two or three or twenty cultures we can then "free" ourselves from living and thinking and perceiving in ONE way. We will then have choices BETWEEN more than one way of life, we will have choices between more than one way of thinking and we will have choices between more than one way of perceiving the world. The knowledge of more than one culture gives us "more freedom" of choice. Thus we cease to be "a prisoner of culture". We become somewhat of an "overman" because we are "free to choose" among many cultural possibilities that people with only ONE culture cannot. And, we can become a "participant observer" among many cultures. We can choose how to live, perceive, and think among many more possibilities which gives us "more freedom" of action. This "insight" has freed me to choose "the

best" aspects among many cultures thus enriching my life and giving me more choices about how to live my life. If this book does the same for you, then it has served its purpose. I recommend the book because of the "cultural freedom" you may acquire from reading it. Email:

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