

Important Concepts for Anthropologists

HSP 3UI

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Ethnographic studies examine the culture and traditions of distinct peoples, and how these change over time.

Myths include stories that explain the origins of the world and human beings. Some people believe these while others don't; either way they tell what's **important** to the society, and what behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable.

Kinship is the idea that members of a social group define themselves as descended from common ancestors.

The **ideal** of the "family" is very different in different areas has drastically changed over the years in some places. Anthropologists study this.

Brief Case Studies- The Family

19th Century China The ideal family was headed by two married sons, often called a "joint-family." The mothers-in-law dominated their daughters-in-law. Women were married very young, and families traced their heritage through their male ancestors.

What would an Anthropologist conclude about Ancient Chinese society based on the above information ?

The Tikopia of the South Pacific All kinship groups were ranked in order of importance and ruled over by a single chief. Within the family each member was also ranked.

What would an Anthropologist conclude about Tikopian society based on the above information ?

Canada In the last few years single-parent families have become very prevalent. Common-law marriages are common and legally recognized. Divorce rates are close to 50%.

What would an Anthropologist conclude about Canadian society based on the above information ?

