

BEHAVIOR SCIENCE OUTLINES



# OUTLINE OF WORLD CULTURES

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## PREFACE

The success of the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) in achieving broad inter-university support and in obtaining substantial outside funds for the expansion of its work has emphasized the need for supplementing the topical classification of the Outline of Cultural Materials with a new outline organizing and classifying the known cultures of the world. The present work is a preliminary attempt to fill this need. It is issued in the hope that it will stimulate criticism and correction so that a revised and definitive Outline of World Cultures can be prepared within a very few years.

The lack of a classification of the world's cultures has hampered the work of HRAF in several ways. In the first place, each decision to process the materials on a new region or culture has necessitated extensive preliminary research to define the precise geographical and temporal limits of each culture for which a new file is to be established. This has often resulted in considerable delay in the initiation of actual work on the new files. The present outline should largely obviate the need of preliminary research in the future and thus greatly expedite the beginning of actual processing.

A second defect of the work of HRAF to date has been its inability to excerpt materials in the sources processed that pertain to cultures other than those for which files have been definitely established. For example, data on the Austrians, the Jews, and the Sudeten Germans encountered in the sources covered for Czechoslovakia have been omitted and thus lost because no files had been established to receive them and because neither time nor funds were available for the research necessary to set them up definitively. The present outline provides a place for data on every society in the world, including extinct historical and prehistoric peoples. In the future, therefore, no item of cultural or background information will be overlooked or lost because contained in a source dealing primarily with another society.

A third difficulty has been that of assuring that the societies selected for processing approach the ideal of a representative sample of the world's cultures. The special requirements of the member universities and of contracting agencies will necessarily lead in many instances to the selection of societies which will not appear in a world sample or will find a place there only when the sample becomes very large. In general, however, the member institutions are primarily interested in HRAF for the comparative or cross-cultural research which it will facilitate, and sampling is of the utmost importance for such purposes. The financial contributions of the member institutions should in general, therefore, be used to add new files which will contribute toward and help round out a representative world sample of known cultures. The analysis of past and present cultures required to compile this outline has made it possible to draw up such a world sample and to arrange the cultures included in an order of priority such that at any point they will constitute a reasonably representative sample of all those known to history and ethnography. New cultures can hereafter be chosen for processing so as to extend progressively the size and range of the sample.

The societies and cultures of the world are classified in this outline according to a flexible system under which each society or group of culturally related societies is designated by a symbol consisting of one or two letters followed by a number and denoting an actual or potential file of classified information. Except for the letter W, which is reserved for a few potential files of worldwide information, each initial letter denotes a major geographical region of the world. Eight such great regions are distinguished, as follows:

- A Asia, exclusive of Indonesia, the Middle East, and Asiatic Russia.
- E Europe, exclusive of the portion ruled directly by the Soviet Union.
- F Africa, exclusive of the northern and northeastern portions which belong culturally with the Middle East.
- M Middle East, comprising southwestern Asia and northern and northeastern Africa.
- N North America, including the northern portion of Central America.
- O Oceania, comprising Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and the islands of the Pacific Ocean.
- R Russia, including the portions of Europe and Asia ruled directly by the Soviet Union.
- S South America, including the West Indies and the southern portion of Central America.

For each of the above eight major regions, a few potential files of very general information are distinguished merely by adding a number to the letter representing the region, e. g., A1, E2, F3. All other potential files are designated by a second letter which represents a regional subdivision, usually political, of the major region, e. g., AA for Korea, EA for Poland, FA for French West Africa. Within each such sub-region, each potential file of specific cultural information is designated by an added number, e. g., AM11 for the Vietnamese, E19 for the Imperial Romans, FX13 for the Hottentot. Specific allowance is made for important linguistic groupings and culture areas as well as for geographical regions, and likewise for historical and archeological cultures as well as for contemporary tribes and nations.

The enumeration and classification of cultures is reasonably complete and definitive for five of the eight major regions--Europe, Africa, Russia, North America, and South America. For Asia, the Middle East, and Oceania it is incomplete for a few of the regional subdivisions, notably for India, New Guinea, and aboriginal Australia, where only a substantial number of the most fully described societies have been separately enumerated. The system of classification, however, is purposely flexible. As additional cultures are

distinguished, they can be added to those of the appropriate regional sub-division by assigning them the next higher numbers. Similarly, as mistakes are discovered in the present classification they can be rectified by combining two or more potential files into one or dividing a single file into two or more separate ones.

The preparation of this outline incidentally provides an opportunity to indicate to scholars wishing to use the Files precisely what materials are available for research purposes. A letter H in parentheses after the name of a file indicates that each of the sixteen university members of HRAF already possesses a file of classified information on the particular region or culture which is sufficiently complete to be usable for research purposes. A letter P in parentheses indicates that such a file is currently in process of preparation and should be available at member institutions within a few months after the publication of this outline. A letter C in parentheses indicates that a substantial amount of information, not as yet reprocessed by HRAF, is assembled in organized form in the files of the Cross-Cultural Survey at Yale University (Room 241, Institute of Human Relations), where it is available for the use of scholars who can visit New Haven.

When the new system for the regional classification of cultures goes into effect with the publication of this outline, the member institutions of HRAF must be prepared for a modest number of procedural changes. They will shortly begin to receive small amounts of material on many cultures for which complete files are not projected, at least for the immediate future. They can readily absorb such materials if they will simply provide a set of single separator cards bearing the identifying symbols for the regions and cultures distinguished in this outline. When they then receive, for example, a few notes on the Sudeten Germans culled incidentally from the sources processed for Czechoslovakia, they can place these behind the card numbered EL10 (Sudeten Germans). Not until a complete file is undertaken on the Sudeten Germans will it be necessary to devote a full set of separator cards to this file. The new system will make it possible for HRAF to process a considerable amount of scattered information on many peoples, including cultural summaries and selective bibliographies, long in advance of systematic coverage of the sources, and such materials are likely to have utility for certain restricted research purposes. They will, of course, be arranged in the order of the category numbers of individual slips, as in the case of completed files.

The new system will also necessitate certain changes in referring to "Sources Processed" and "Texts"--numbered respectively 111 and 116 in the Outline of Cultural Materials. Hitherto HRAF has pursued two different procedures with respect to the location of full bibliographical references and of the complete text of the sources covered. Sometimes, e. g., for the Navaho, they have been deposited in the file for the particular culture, and sometimes, e. g., for Indochina, they have been deposited in the file for the region or political division rather than in that for the individual culture. Neither of these systems allows for ready reference to the appropriate bibliography slips

or complete text in the case of notes on one culture culled from sources processed for another.

This difficulty will be overcome in the future by indicating, in the upper right-hand corner of every file slip, not only the name of the region, culture, and/or sub-culture primarily covered by the source but also, by the symbols of this outline, both the file or files under which the slip will be placed and that under which the bibliographical data and complete text will be found. For example, a few sheets with incidental data on the Thai of Siam excerpted from a source dealing primarily with the related Laotians of Indochina might bear the following notation on the upper right-hand corner:

AM1 Indochina  
Laotians (AM8)  
Thai (A06)

The postposited symbols in parentheses would indicate that these particular sheets contained information on both the Laotians and the Thai and would be filed under both AM8 and A06 but not in the file on Indochina, whereas the preposited symbol without parentheses would indicate that the bibliography slips and complete text would be found in File AM1 on Indochina and not in either the Laotian or Thai files. If a particular sheet contained only information on the Thai and none on the Laotians, the "(AM8)" would be omitted or crossed out. If it contained general data on Indochina, this would be indicated by a postposited as well as a preposited symbol, thus: AM1 Indochina (AM1), and an additional copy would be placed in the general Indochina file. In short, postposited symbols in parentheses indicate each file which is to receive a copy of the note, while a preposited symbol without parentheses indicates the file where the reference materials are to be found.

Member institutions should be aware that it will by no means always be necessary to set up separate files corresponding to each potential file distinguished in this outline, even when substantial materials have been processed. It will save separator cards and often be only slightly inconvenient to the researcher if several related files are combined into one. This outline, for example, distinguishes five different potential files for Czechoslovakia, namely, EB1 (Czechoslovakia), EB2 (Historical Czechoslovakia), EB3 (Pre-historic Czechoslovakia), EB4 (Czechs), and EB5 (Slovaks). All five can quite satisfactorily form a single actual file. Here, historical and prehistoric materials will be naturally segregated to a large extent by topic. The same will be true to a lesser degree for the EB1 materials, which will be mainly geographic, demographic, economic, and political. On strictly cultural topics Czech and Slovak materials can be readily distinguished by the notations on the upper right-hand corner of the individual slips. If this particular combination file were actually set up, it would be only necessary for the member institution to place a note behind the separator cards for EB2, EB3, EB4, and EB5 stating that the materials for these potential files are actually deposited under EB1.

The representative sample of the world's known cultures was arrived at in the following manner. The initial decision was to select 400 cultures as slightly better than a ten per cent sample of all those known to history and ethnography. These were allocated to the eight major regions in the following proportions: 60 each to Africa, North America, and Oceania, 50 each to Asia and South America, and 40 each to Europe (including its colonial offshoots), the Middle East, and Russia. The regions with the greatest cultural diversity, the largest number of distinctive cultures, and the most adequate descriptive materials have received the larger numerical representation. On the other hand, the proportional representation is appreciably greater for the regions with the largest populations and the most complex civilizations. Thus nearly a third of the total sample are literate peoples from history and the modern world. The choice represents the best compromise of which the author is capable between the sociological point of view which would emphasize population and the anthropological point of view which would emphasize cultural diversity. In leaning somewhat in the former direction he is motivated by the theoretical consideration that the societies with the largest populations and most complex civilizations are presumably, by and large, those whose cultures have proved best adapted to the conditions of human existence and therefore deserve a slightly disproportionate representation in a sample which will be used primarily in the comparative study of man's cultural adaptations. Primitive cultures, though proportionately underrepresented, have been accepted in sufficient numbers so that probably no known major variation in patterned human behavior is actually unrepresented in the sample.

The sample for each of the eight major regions was selected independently in such a way as to be fairly representative of all the geographical sub-regions and culture areas and to include, so far as possible, only cultures on which sound and substantial descriptive information is available. The sample cultures for each region were then arranged in a numerical order or priority, starting with a culture already processed by HRAF and ordering the rest so that at any given point the selection up to that point would be as representative as possible of the entire region. This seemed preferable to any purely random or chance arrangement since it allowed for giving preference to the best described culture whenever there was an alternative among several equally representative ones.

The sample cultures for all eight regions were then interdigitated in accordance with the numerical representation assigned to each, yielding a total sample of 400 arranged in numerical order. This is presented in full in Appendix A. In the text, each of the sample cultures is identified by a letter S in parentheses, followed by a numeral denoting whether it falls into the first, second, third, or fourth quartile of the total sample.

Future ethnographic and historical research will certainly result in many changes in the sample, making possible the inclusion of cultures now excluded for lack of data, the elimination of some discovered to be too similar to others, and the substitution of one for another representative of a particular

sub-region on the basis of superiority of descriptive information. The author will welcome all suggestions for the improvement of the sample as well as for the expansion and correction of the classification of cultures itself.

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# CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	i
W World	1
A Asia	2
A Korea	2
B Japan	2
C Ryukyus	3
D Formosa	4
E Greater China	4
F China	5
G Manchuria	5
H Mongolia	6
I Sinkiang	6
J Tibet	6
K Himalayan States	7
L Southeast Asia	7
M Indochina	8
N Malaya	9
O Thailand	9
P Burma	10
Q Greater India	10
R Assam	11
S East Pakistan	12
T Pakistan	12
U Afghanistan	12
V Kashmir	13
W India	13
X Ceylon	15
Y Minor Asiatic Colonies	15
Z Asiatic Islands	16
E Europe	17
A Poland	18
B Czechoslovakia	18
C Hungary	19
D Rumania	19
E Bulgaria	20
F Yugoslavia	20
G Albania	20
H Greece	21
I Italy	22



J Switzerland	23
K Austria	23
L Germany	23
M Denmark	24
N Sweden	24
O Finland	25
P Norway	25
Q Iceland	25
R Ireland	26
S Great Britain	26
T Netherlands	27
U Luxembourg	27
V Belgium	27
W France	28
X Spain	29
Y Portugal	29
Z European Islands	30
F Africa	31
A French West Africa	31
B Portuguese Guinea	34
C Sierra Leone	34
D Liberia	35
E Gold Coast	35
F Nigeria	36
G Fernando Po	41
H Cameroon	41
I French Equatorial Africa	43
J Nilotic Sudan	46
K Uganda	48
L Kenya	49
M Zanzibar	50
N Tanganyika	51
O Belgian Congo	53
P Angola	57
Q Northern Rhodesia	59
R Nyasaland	60
S Southern Rhodesia	61
T Mozambique	62
U Swaziland	62
V Bechuanaland	62
W Basutoland	63
X South Africa	63
Y Madagascar	65
Z African Islands	66

M Middle East	67
A Iran	68
B Turkey	69
C Cyprus	69
D Syria	69
E Lebanon	70
F Israel	70
G Jordan	71
H Iraq	71
I Kuwait	72
J Saudi Arabia	72
K Oman	72
L Yemen	73
M Aden	73
N Eritrea	73
O Somaliland	74
P Ethiopia	74
Q Arab Sudan	76
R Egypt	78
S Sahara and Sudan	79
T Libya	82
U Tunisia	83
V Algeria	83
W Morocco	84
X Spanish Morocco	85
Y Rio de Oro	86
Z Middle East Islands	86
N North America	87
A Alaska	87
B Greenland	88
C Canada	89
D Northern Canada	89
E British Columbia	90
F Prairie Provinces	91
G Ontario	92
H Quebec	92
I Newfoundland	93
J Maritime Provinces	93
K United States	94
L New England	94
M Middle Atlantic States	94
N Southeastern States	96
O South Central States	97

P	East Central States	98
Q	West Central States	99
R	Northwestern States	100
S	California	103
T	Southwestern States	105
U	Mexico	106
V	Yucatan	109
W	Guatemala	110
X	British Honduras	111
Y	Middle America	111
Z	North American Islands	111
O	Oceania	113
A	Philippines	113
B	Indonesia	116
C	Borneo	116
D	Sumatra	117
E	Java	118
F	Lesser Sundas	120
G	Celebes	120
H	Moluccas	120
I	Australia	121
J	New Guinea	123
K	Melanesia	125
L	Massim	125
M	Bismarck Archipelago	126
N	Solomon Islands	127
O	New Hebrides	128
P	New Caledonia	129
Q	Fiji	129
R	Micronesia	130
S	Polynesia	132
T	Polynesian Outliers	132
U	Western Polynesia	133
V	American Polynesia	133
W	British Polynesia	134
X	French Polynesia	134
Y	Easter Island	135
Z	New Zealand	135
R	Russia	137
A	European Russia	137
B	Baltic Countries	137
C	White Russia	138

D	Ukraine	138
E	Moldavia	138
F	Great Russia	139
G	Finno-Ugrians	139
H	Caucasia	140
I	Georgia	141
J	Armenia	141
K	Azerbaijan	142
L	Russian Central Asia	142
M	Turkmenistan	142
N	Uzbekistan	143
O	Tadzhikstan	143
P	Kirghizstan	143
Q	Kazakhstan	143
R	Siberia	143
S	Altai Region	144
T	Central Siberia	144
U	Northern Siberia	144
V	Yakutia	145
W	Russian Mongolia	145
X	Southeast Siberia	145
Y	Northeast Siberia	146
Z	Russian Islands	146
S South America		147
A	Central America	147
B	Panama	148
C	Colombia	149
D	Ecuador	151
E	Peru	151
F	Bolivia	153
G	Chile	154
H	Patagonia	155
I	Argentina	155
J	Uruguay	156
K	Paraguay	157
L	Brazil	158
M	South Brazil	158
N	East Brazil	159
O	Northeast Brazil	159
P	Mato Grosso	160
Q	Amazonia	162
R	Guiana	164
S	Venezuela	165
T	Lesser Antilles	166
U	Puerto Rico	167

V Hispaniola	168
W Bahamas	168
X Cuba	168
Y Jamaica	169
Z South American Islands	169

Appendix A: Sample of World Cultures	170
--------------------------------------	-----