

Review of Analytical Concepts

“Arts & Ideas of Asia” (HRS 70/71)

Below is a summary of the concepts that have been and continue to be central to thinking critically about culture in the Application Exercises & Unit Challenges. The elements of culture described at length in the “Essential Elements” essay are reviewed briefly here; the verbs used to describe the relationship of those elements, which were not explicitly addressed in that essay, are also included. The verbs are key: they will all be used together to analyze historical records assigned for the final unit of the course.

cosmic forces: abstract, fundamental causes or factors such as "fate," "moral obligation," "sin," which often have a psychological element; people typically think of cosmic forces, which include physical forces such as gravity and electrical attraction, as too small, subtle or vast to perceive directly.

evidence: information gathered from historical records to investigate practice, reflection & social web.

inspire & deepen: verbs used to describe the way practices give rise to and shape the thoughts and feelings of those who participate in the practice.

motivate & focus: verbs used to describe the way reflection supports both the practice and the social web of individuals involved in it, intensifying participants’ attentiveness to that practice and thereby intensifying those participants’ commitment to practice and to each other.

invisible beings: divine personalities, including the supreme God, usually personified, but also lesser spiritual beings like angels and demons, as well as saints, ghosts, ancestors and other spirits of dead people. Religious people typically feel such beings are subtly present when called upon, though they remain invisible to most. But the notion of an unseen power is also relevant to non-religious worldviews: many people, for example, personify entities such as "mother" nature and "lady" luck.

mutual influence: the recurring cycle of practice, social web and reflection shaping each other.

participate/perpetuate: verbs used to spotlight the way that engaging the participation of people in distinct roles within a social web perpetuates that practice, and also the reflection by those participants.

practice: habitual engagement in activities or skills that invite reflection, religious or secular, including especially art forms, customs & rituals; practice may beformally prescribed in an authoritative source, passed on through observing another’s behaviors, or developed informally by one person.

reflection: becoming aware of and directing one’s thoughts & feelings. In the context of art, rituals and customs, reflection involves both taking in how one is being affected, and working with thoughts and feelings to remain engaged in the practice and attentive to what one is experiencing.

IMPORTANT: as used in this class, the verb “reflect” is always **done by a person** on or about something (e.g., “I reflected on the significance of the bread and wine before taking them in my mouth.”) –NOT to describe the way a situation “reflects” some underlying cause or factor (e.g., “The packed classrooms reflect the fact that many students were unable to sign up for the courses they wanted during registration”).

social web: the structured network of relationships between people in consistently defined communities both small and large; these include families, ethnic groups, and states, who take on particular roles in such relationships, usually in the context of some practice.

weave & reinforce: verbs used to describe the way that doing a practice together creates and strengthens a social web of relationships between people taking on different roles in relation to one another.