

About This Book

Since the thirties the psychoanalysts have looked for many explanations of complex civilized behavior in the tabus and drives of primitive man. Dr. Benedict was one of the first anthropologists to implement these theories with technical data. She visualizes culture as an integrated whole, applying to groups the psychological concepts usually reserved for individuals.

In this book she compares three cultures dominated by one ruling motivation. The Zuñi Indians of New Mexico are Apollonian in their sobriety and moderation, their love of ritual and their effacement of the individual before society. The Kwakiutls of Vancouver Island are in almost direct antithesis to the Zuñi with their Dionysian preference for individual rivalry and ecstasies; they have *paranoid* delusions of grandeur. While the Dobus of Melanesia—a race of Iagos, secretive, dour, prudish and treacherous—see life in terms of personal conflict with a harsh environment; they have a *schizophrenic* fear of nature and a morbid suspicion of their neighbors.

However, the moral that Dr. Benedict points is that although these cultures evince clinical deviations from our norm, abnormality in any culture is simply the failure of the individual to adopt socially valued drives—that cultures (our own included) cannot be compared on an ethical basis, but simply as coexisting and equally valid patterns of life. Today when racial and cultural prejudices have brought our civilization to the edge of Armageddon, her message is one that has a desperate importance.