

Memory Against Culture



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In "Memory Against Culture", the renowned anthropologist Johannes Fabian assesses the contemporary practice of anthropology and its emerging shape as a discipline across the globe. In twelve essays ranging from theoretical reflections to re-examinations of past ethnographic work, Fabian addresses central theoretical debates within the discipline and the social sciences more broadly - about language and time, history and memory, and ethnography and recognition. Together the essays illuminate Fabian's pluralist vision of an anthropology that always makes the other present by opening itself to conversational and transnational practices, refusing epistemological claims that privilege any one point of view, voice, or language. Fabian returns to his own landmark book, "Time and the Other", to consider how the role of the other in anthropological inquiry has transformed over the past two decades. He explores the place of linguistics in contemporary language-centered anthropology, and he ponders how studies of material culture imbue objects with 'otherness'. Meditating on the place of memory and forgetting in ethnography, he draws from his

own ethnographic work in the Congo to ask why Africa, the site of so much early anthropological study, continues to be forgotten in the wake of colonization. Arguing for the importance of remembering Africa, Fabian focuses on the relationship between thought and memory in the Swahili language. In so doing, he suggests new methods for investigating memory practices across cultures. Turning to the practice of ethnography, he examines the role of the Internet and the place of field notes and other memoranda in ethnographic writing. At once wide-ranging and incisive, "Memory Against Culture" is a significant reflection on the state of the field by one of its most thoughtful and engaged practitioners.

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