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Foreword

About 10 years ago, I wrote in the foreword of my previous book, *Kultur, kultur-analyse og kulturetik*, [Culture, Cultural Analysis, and Culture Ethics] that it had been in progress for a considerable period of time. So has this book! The question is: when is a manuscript actually ready? It can always be improved, and the writer – in this case myself – is gaining new knowledge and greater insight into the subject, all the time; and thus the manuscript may continually be improved.

Naturally, this would be perfectly alright were it not for the fact that the book would never be completed and published! It goes without saying that I have been faced with this dilemma. Is the work good enough? Am I to elaborate on this or that? Should I not make time to read this or that book, which has just come to my attention, etc?

But then I received a recently published book, written by one of the grand old men in anthropology, Marvin Harris, professor at Columbia University 1953-1980. It was published in 1999 and in its presentation the following is said: “He presents his current views on the nature of culture, addressing such issues as the mental / behavioral debate, emics and etics, and anthropological holism”¹.

And of course! ‘... his current views ..’. That is, those he has *now* reached. In the same manner as Harris’ in one of his most recent books conveys his view this book conveys the writer’s – that is my – view on the concept of culture, cultural analysis and cultural understanding *at this point in time*. However, I will naturally keep up my work with the issues of this book, and in the future I will exercise my prerogative to become wiser and to gain new insight into these issues.

The book addresses people who deal with other people who are rooted in other cultures than their own, either out of interest and/or in a professional capacity. However, the book may also be used as a point of departure for analyses of different cultures and intercultural co-action in various contexts.

During the process of writing I have benefited greatly from my own experience from Samoa, the Fiji Islands, and New Zealand in Oceania; from China, North Korea, Bangladesh, and India in Asia, as well as from Ghana, Gaza, Bangladesh, Greenland and other countries. Also, I have had great pleasure and inspiration from conversations and discussions with students and course participants in different contexts.

The book was initially written in Danish. First and foremost, because I ‘reflect’ and ‘express thoughts’ best in my own language, based on my own *culture foundation*, to use the terminology of the present book. However, another reason is

¹ The cover of Marvin Harris’ book: *Theories of Culture in Postmodern Times*, London 1999, 224p.

that there is a need to contribute to Danish research development and research knowledge within the social sciences in a broad sense. Now the time has come to translate it into another language, namely English, whereby it itself will become an intercultural product.

My colleagues at Aalborg University have assisted with critical dialogue and friendly encouragement, not least the research group at International Business Economics (IBE). Especially, I am indebted to Associate Professor John Kuada who has debated a range of more or less completed manuscripts with me with much professionalism.

A number of persons outside IBE have also kindly commented and eagerly offered critique on various drafts. Not all comments have been taken into account, partly because they have not all pointed in the same direction, partly because some of them have pointed in another direction than the one in which I was heading. But without exception they have all contributed to a clarification of the text and making the arguments more trenchant. Among the many contributors to the various writing phases I especially want to thank Arne Brandt, Malene Gram, Loni Gullestrup, Maria Gullestrup, Flemming Nørgaard, Jens Olesen and not least Iben Lund, publisher's reader, who all have offered many appropriate comments on the various drafts. For the present edition in English I also want to thank Gitte Thomsen for the great and careful commitment in the translation of the Danish text into English and her excellent work.

Needless to say that I assume full responsibility of the present book.

As in earlier processes of writing, I have benefited greatly from short or somewhat longer periods of tranquillity for thinking and writing. For one there was a four-month stay at the Department of Sociology at University of Auckland in New Zealand, a one-month stay at the Danish former monastery of San Cataldo south of Naples in Italy, and 2 x 14 days' research at the refugium of Klitgården in Skagen, Denmark. The Danish Social Science Research Council (SSF), His Royal Highness Crown Prince Frederik's Fund, and the fund of Den Obelske Familiefond have kindly contributed towards making these research stays possible. I am greatly indebted to these institutions for the tranquillity and collegial inspiration thus achieved.

For mental support and loving encouragement I am also greatly indebted to my wife Lise Gullestrup. I hope I will be able to repay in small part her support in connection with her own ongoing writing.

October 2006
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Translator's note

The present book is a translation of *Kulturanalyse – en vej til tværkulturel forståelse* (2003). A number of the references in the original book are made to Danish editions. As the readers of the English version are expected to be English speaking the Danish references have been omitted and replaced by English ones where this has been possible. Reference not directly cited in the book have been left as they were in the Danish edition.