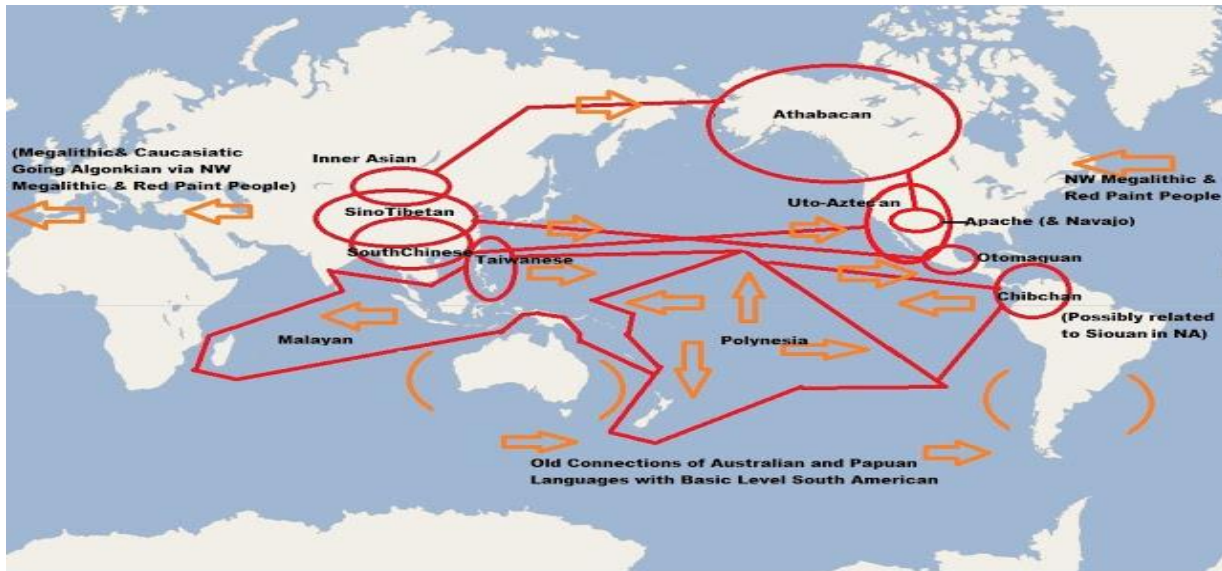


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My essay

A big part of a cultural anthropologist's job is to go out into other cultures, live there, and learn about the way other people live. This is called fieldwork, and it is a very important method of studying cultures. Unfortunately, with all the turmoil, warfare, and tension in the world today, it can be very hard. This is shown by the following chart:



Yep, all of these places are dangerous, that's why they are circled in red.

Most anthropologists today are probably going to end up someplace scary. It will be dangerous for them, especially because they will be foreigners in their chosen locations, and nobody really trusts foreigners. The anthropologist might stand out like a sore thumb in their host community. People will see him or her as a possible threat, not just a visitor. They might be regarded as a spy or some kind of meddler with a hidden agenda. "Due to the rising insecurity in



eastern Congo, the Rwandan government started deploying more soldiers and spies to this region. These spies were naturally suspicious of foreigners,” one anthropologist writes. When a researcher is seen with suspicion, it will be difficult to establish good rapport and to become a part of the community as a participant observer.

It might also make it hard to find participants to interview. Even if you met people to interview, they might be afraid to speak openly. They could fear the trouble they could get into if they were seen talking to the anthropologists. They might fear that the wrong people could find out what they said and that they would become a target. This has happened to informants in Rwanda: “some government officials had interrogated a few of my participants. They told these officials what was discussed during our interviews. I was too terrified to ask Joseph for any particular details...I’m completely terrified that people are going to be thrown in jail.” People might try to give a safe answer and hold back what they really think in order to avoid trouble. This affects the validity of the researcher’s information.

It would be really dangerous to be in that kind of place. The anthropologist in Rwanda had to pretend to join the Rwandan Patriotic Front to avoid suspicion. When she had to get out, she had to send a coded message to her supervisors because she was afraid the government was reading her emails. She was literally, constantly, afraid for her life. “Six months of stress, panic and fear had finally caused me to have a complete breakdown. This is too much. I can’t take it anymore and there’s no sense for me to stay here,” she writes. She was forced to leave her work early, and still struggled with the effects of fear after she returned home. It is difficult to work that way.



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In Conclusion, Every anthropologist should be aware of the challenges of field work in potentially dangerous environments. There are lots of dangerous places today. It will make it harder for researchers to fit into a community, to find willing subjects, and simply to live and do their jobs. Any researcher going out to where there is fighting or tension should be prepared to face these issues.

