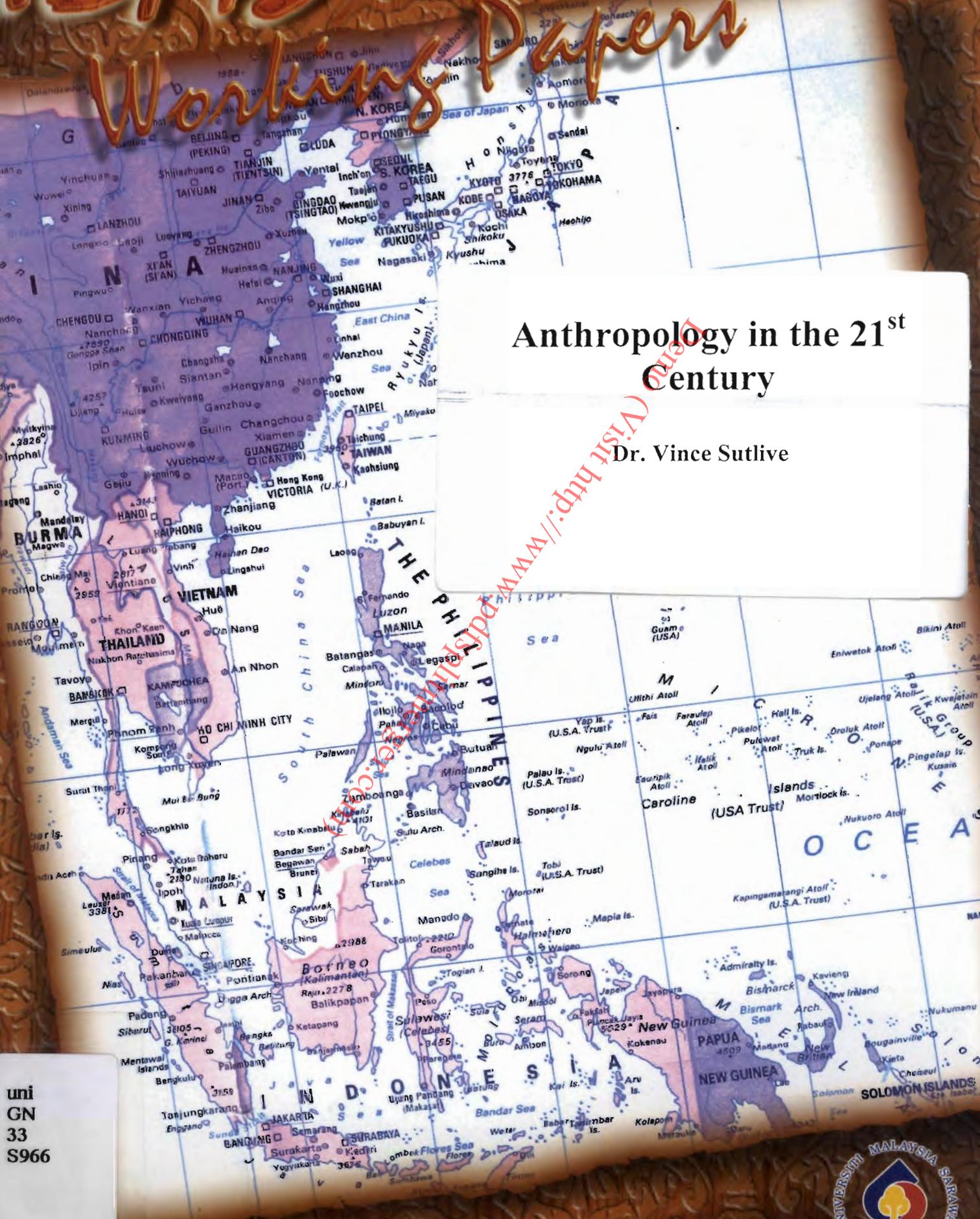


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Working Papers



Anthropology in the 21st Century

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Anthropology in the 21st Century

To save an 82-year-old grandmother huddled alone in her house in Pec, one rare Serbian soldier who had not lost his own humanity posted an eloquent sign on her front door: "A person lives here."

But most of his comrades apparently had learned to see Naxhie Salilu as something less than a person. Despite the sign on the door, Serbian soldiers set fire to her house. And when she managed to douse the flames, they tried again, and then a third time, according to an account by Washington Post reporter R. Jeffrey Smith. Only the arrival of NATO troops and the withdrawal of the Serbs saved her life.

Many others were not saved, how many we will not know. Ten thousand, one British official guesses.

How could Serbian soldiers, some of them hardly more than boys, loving sons in many cases, try to burn an 82-year-old grandmother alive, and joke about eating her once she was cooked? How could they shoot old men, throw grenades into rooms packed with women and children, decapitate and mutilate and torture?

This is the bloodiest century in history, if you count the number of dead in two world wars, and the other conflicts, 50 of which continue at present, according to a two-volume study published year before last at MIT. Most of these have been started by a leader *inside* the country, trying to get rid of people for one simple reason, viz., they are different. One historian has reckoned that every day since the end of World War II, there have been 1,000 soldiers and 5,000 citizens killed, a total of more than 75 million deaths.

I shall suggest a number of books for your reading, and begin with Neil Kressel's *Mass Hate: The Global Rise of Genocide and Terror*. Kressel notes a pattern that is clearly discernible in many of the recent and present-day conflicts. First, a dictatorship using a closed and manipulated press to dehumanize its intended victims. Nazi Germany made movies alternating footage of rats gnawing through granaries with footage of Jews working in German businesses. Rwandan Hutu referred to Tutsi as "insects". In Serbia, Kosovo Muslims were dehumanized as backward, overbreeding infidels and demonized as rapists of Serbian women.

If you have ever wondered about the conflict in Ireland, I urge you to read Leon Uris' *Trinity*, a monumental novel set in the 19th and 20th centuries, that describes the millennium-long struggle between English and Irish.

From its inception, anthropology took human diversity as its central problem. Commencing with the discovery of the New World in 1492 and a sea route to Asia in 1498, Europeans encountered previously unknown people whom they attempted to include in their bibliocentric ethnohistory. Thus, in little more than a quarter of a century, Amerindian populations were identified as 'the lost