

## **Anthropology and classification of developing societies**

Almost to the end of the 19th century, evolutionism determined the complexion of the new science. A major task of cultural anthropology was thought to be that of classifying different societies and cultures and defining the phases and states through which all human groups pass—the linear interpretation of history. Some groups progress more slowly, some faster, as they advance from the simple to the complex, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, from the irrational to the rational. It suffices to quote an American anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan Other quotations from a Scotsman, John F. MacLennan, or an Englishman, Edward B. Tylor, would take the same position.

## **Anthropology Trends in Development Study**

By the beginning of the 20th century, many cultural anthropologists had already begun to turn toward what might be called a more pluralistic viewpoint. To account for the variety of societies and cultures and the broadening of the differences that separated them, they suggested taking the total circumstances of each human group into account by considering the whole of its history, the contacts that it had had with other groups, and the favourable or unfavourable circumstances that had weighed on its development. Such a view was distinguished by a marked relativism: each culture represented an original development, conditioned as much by its social as by its geographical environment and by the manner in which it used and enriched the cultural materials that came to it from neighbours or others (through

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“diffusion”) or from its own creativity (through “invention” and “adaptation”).