

Marc-Adélaré Tremblay (1922 -)
et R.J. Preston

(1985)

“Anthropology”

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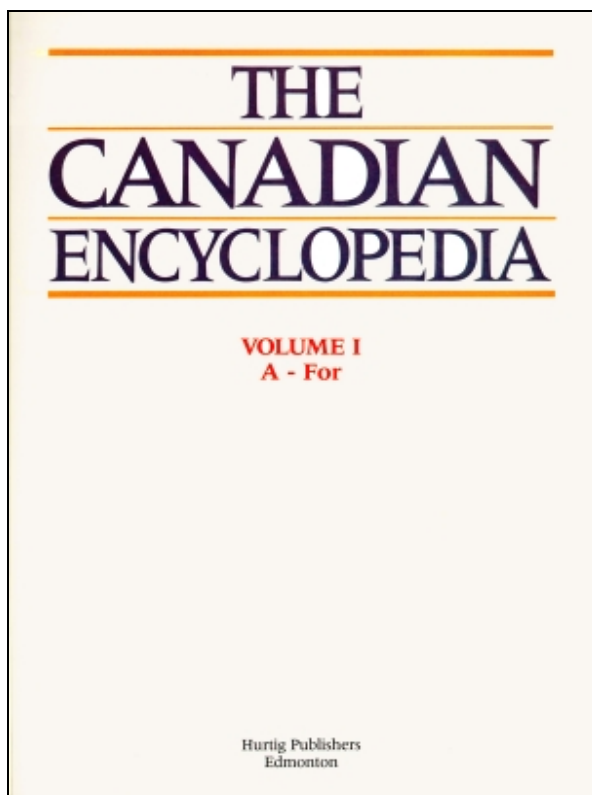
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Introduction

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Anthropology is the comparative study of past and contemporary cultures, focusing on the ways of life and customs of all peoples of the world. Specialty subdisciplines have developed within anthropology, owing to the amount of information collected and the variety of methods and techniques used in anthropological research. These subdisciplines are physical anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, ethnology and theoretical anthropology, and applied anthropology.

Physical Anthropology is the study of the evolution and physical varieties of humankind. It includes the physical measurement of skeletal remains and of living people (anthropometry) ; the study of human genetics, with comparisons to the genetic makeup of other primates ; the study of primate behaviour for a detailed description of their social behaviour and comparative generalizations about primate social organization. Research of this kind indicates how the social behaviour of early human groups might have been organized (see *ANTHROPOLOGY, PHYSICAL*).

ARCHAEOLOGY studies the prehistory, and some of the history of mankind through digging up and analysing the remains of past cultures. Archaeology also dates the origins of human occupations in various parts of the world, the origins of tools, other artifacts, art and structures that have developed over the ages. Archaeologists seek to reconstruct the development and total cultures of past peoples.

Linguistic Anthropology, or **ethnolinguistics**, is the study of the organization of language, including the identification and analysis of units of speech, from the simplest units of sound to the complex and various combinations of sound and meaning that are used in the thousands of languages spoken in the world today. Historical and comparative study also makes it possible to reconstruct languages that are no longer spoken, and to establish the relationships among languages. The linguistic anthropologist may also study nonverbal forms of communication and the rules for the proper use of speech (pragmatics) (*see ANTHROPOLOGY, LINGUISTICS*).

Ethnology and theoretical anthropology are the scientific core of anthropology and are described in detail in this entry. Anthropology evolved partly from the specialties mentioned above, and partly from the description of particular, living cultures (ethnography). As our knowledge of prehistory, history and the present varieties of culture increased, anthropology developed as a science that aimed at elaborating comprehensive explanations of social life (theoretical anthropology). Through the comparative analysis of individual behaviour and culture patterns, the science has tried to formulate generalizations and universal tendencies (ethnology). This development followed from improvements in research tools and practical models from which to describe reality. Ethnography is associated with exploration and descriptive work, often among distinctive, nonEuropean tribes, whereas theoretical anthropology employs abstract hypotheses and perspectives from other disciplines, as well as more abstract tools of observation and analysis. Ethnology puts the 2 together, using theoretical models and a wide empirical knowledge of different cultures to allow for comparisons and the formulation of general cultural norms.

Applied Anthropology is the use of anthropological knowledge for solving practical problems of human groups. This application has

been tried mostly in small communities struggling with problems of poverty, or of rapid cultural, technological or economic change. It is also concerned with developing new forms of education to help people cope with rapid change, or with more effective ways of improving the health of the community.

Anthropology is a young science with high ambitions to describe, understand and explain the origins, varieties and purposes of mankind's customs, beliefs, languages, institutions and lifeways ; to find general cultural norms ; and to provide practical guidance for humankind.

Historical Development of Anthropology.

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Curiosity about the lifeways and customs of different peoples is probably as old as humankind. People everywhere learn to recognize as relatives or friends those whose actions, language and dress are familiar. We learn to notice cultural differences, because these differences of speech, appearance and activities define for us what it is to be a "stranger." An enduring record of different customs has been made as far back as the earliest known written records, in ancient Greece, Mesopotamia, China and other centres of civilization. Travellers and philosophers in many parts of the world speculated about the origins of humanity, the use of fire, language, the rise of cities and kingdoms, laws, religion, metals, war, art, agriculture, music and so on. The European age of discovery brought a renewal of interest in the "strange" peoples and customs that were observed by explorers, traders and missionaries.

Anthropology as a profession, as a study by people dedicated to the science of culture, arose during the late 1800s, with the main theoretical interest being cultural evolution, or the determination of when and

where human civilization appeared for the first time and how civilizations spread and developed. Cultures, according to this view, are natural systems, developing in organization and content according to natural laws and progressing gradually towards "high" culture - ie, technical, intellectual and moral excellence. Each person and society was thought to be engaged in this progressive change, but at different rates. Those at the slowest rates remained at the level of savagery, those at medium rates had entered the stage of barbarism (typically as horticulturalists or pastoralists), and those progressing at the fastest rates achieved literacy and finally an industrial economy. This concept of culture was thought to be universal, applying to all humankind. The force behind this progress was thought to be absolute, inevitable and irreversible, sometimes called "the psychic unity of mankind" or human nature.

The next major theoretical interest to develop in anthropology was called historicism. Where evolution held that all cultures necessarily passed through the same stages towards the same goal, the culture historians thought this scheme too simple and uniform to fit the reality of human variations. These historians set out to identify, for each culture, what was invented and what was borrowed (diffusion), a distinction which raised a number of questions requiring researched and documented answers. How were the various hunting tools developed? How did the different pastoral economies form? How did agricultural practices in different parts of the world come about? How did the development of villages with permanent occupation aid the growth of a complex agricultural economy? When did the ability to make metal tools appear? Specific questions were asked about particular cultures and the answers were brought together to give a composite picture of the development of cultural traditions. Each composite was viewed as an emergent system - a system developing according to its own circumstances and with its own direction, integrating items that were borrowed over the years from neighbouring cultures or even from distant cultures. People did not repeatedly reinvent their ways of life, but rather learned their cultures automatically, as a part of what we call "received tradition" - those things that people of a society have always known to be useful, true or good. Anthropological historicists, or ethnohistorians, have continued to contribute to our understanding of cultures by reconstructing particular histories.

Another basic interest in theoretical anthropology, strong in the period between the world wars, was the search for universal functions (useful, integrating relationships) that exist in all cultures. The focus of attention is the process by which groups adapt themselves to their natural environment and promote collective activities that ensure the fulfilment of human needs. Basic survival needs are those related to metabolism, reproduction, bodily comforts, safety, movement and health. Secondary needs arise from the ways that people in groups deal with the basic needs, establishing institutions that will function to fulfil economic, kinship, political and other needs by regulating the norms of behaviour and the selection of members for these activities. Symbolic needs are satisfied through communication norms, religious beliefs and ceremonies, and expressions of art, including myths and tales. These anthropologists, termed "functionalists", try to understand how each culture met these needs and what kinds of social institutions were customarily used.

Similar to the functionalists' interest in universal human needs, the interest of the culture and personality theorists centered on the old controversy of the relation of nature to nurture, with special attention to the cultural foundations of personality. The characteristics of child rearing and temperament were found to vary a great deal from one culture to another. Some cultures, for instance, were remarkably permissive ; others were restrictive. Some were characterized by a strong show of emotions and others by little emotional expression. Some showed great consistency in the way that children were treated while others showed little predictability in response to children's behaviour. The various combinations of these norms for child rearing were found to lead to different adult characteristics, and to contribute to the norms of adult behaviour (such as aggressive, placid, friendly, suspicious) for each culture. The ways that persons in each culture mature from infancy through old age is of great interest to many anthropologists today. More recent work in cognitive anthropology has emphasized variability of individual responses to cultural socialization,

By comparison, structural anthropology looks for universal rules of human thought, usually far from our normal awareness, in unconsciously learned (and used) regularities in the mind. The example of

language is helpful ; we make sentences as we talk with each other, and our sentences always follow rules of grammar, yet we are scarcely aware of the rules we use. We don't think to ourselves, "first the noun, then the verb" as we talk to each other. Much of our behaviour is similarly guided by rules in our deep unconscious, which we use intuitively and easily. In this way we organize our social relations, enjoy the meaning in a book or story, and sense the 'rightness' of a ritual such as a wedding, a funeral or a church service. Structural anthropologists believe that all rules of this sort are variations on a few universal "deep' rules, which they are trying to discover. Once again, the interest is in defining human nature or psychic unity.

In Neo-Marxism, or historical materialism, the emphasis is placed on economic systems, modes of production and exchange of goods. Neo-Marxists believe that these economic, production and exchange factors are the products of confrontations between various elements of the social system. They are trying to prove that in the capitalist mode of production, labourers are exploited by the interests of capital, and that as a result they benefit only in small measure from their efforts at production.

A more recent approach to social analysis is cognitive anthropology, the study of units of thought and their combinations. Cognitive anthropologists seek the rules by which different cultures organize their knowledge in their own distinctive styles. The point is to understand cultural features as they are understood by the people within the particular culture and to explain these features to a wider audience outside the culture.

Early anthropologists investigated communities of people in isolated places cut off from the modern world. Since WWII the isolation of these small groups has ended. The study of stability and change has concentrated on cultural contacts, urbanization, industrialization, the effect of media and schools, and other dynamic factors that are transforming even the most remote peoples of the world. There is a renewed interest in cross-cultural studies, using the comparative method to derive general norms and universals of culture, whether in child rearing, mental health or religion. The emphasis is no longer on single items of culture as they are distributed around the world but on the

relationships among many items, or clusters of cultural traits and their dynamic interdependency.

Concept of Culture.

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The classic definition of culture, still widely accepted, was published over 100 years ago by E.B. Tylor. It is 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.' From an anthropological perspective, virtually every mature human being is thoroughly endowed with his or her culture. Everyone knows a language ; knows how to act towards relatives, friends or strangers ; how to take a place in society ; how to use many of the basic tools ; how to make an exchange of goods or services ; how to regard the persons who have political power or social prestige ; when to evaluate things, actions or ideas as good or bad ; and how one's particular world is arranged in size, shape and purpose. People know these things, and they have a sense of what is excellent in each of these aspects of their culture ; perhaps a sense of what an ideal person should be. But what is ideal to an 18th-century Montréal gentleman is a far cry from the ideal for a Vancouver artist or a prairie farmer, a Maritime fisherman or an Inuit mother. In order to deal with these differences, the concept of culture is divided into major segments such as technology, economics, kinship and social organization, value systems and ideology.

Technology refers to the things manufactured and the knowledge and skills required to make them. Technology is responsive to the physical environment and to the level of cultural development, so that a northern hunting culture, for example, will be different from a tropical farming culture.

Economics refers to exchange and trade and may involve goods and services, or a less tangible exchange of rights and privileges. This trade may be within a community or among different groups. Often

the trade is more than simple exchange, giving a stable and dependable bond, or alliance, to the group.

Kinship and social organization refer to the relations among the people of a group, and include the way an individual knows how to act and what to expect in his relationships to others, as well as whom he may or may not marry, from whom he may inherit property or other rights, and to whom he should will his estate and responsibilities.

Value systems and religious belief and behaviour are the aspects of culture that are closest to the human significance or meanings of events, beyond the events themselves. Birth, reaching adulthood, marriage and death are charged, in the minds of most people, with special value, and often with spiritual meaning. This is also true of the aspects of life that are most closely linked with getting a living, such as rituals of hunting, agriculture or pastoralism. Ideologies, world view and cultural imperatives provide people with their sense of the way the world is constituted or arranged, and how the persons must act to be in harmony with the world, rather than at risk of harm through being in conflict with the natural order. Ideologies are maps or images of what the arrangement of society should become, a statement of the ideal toward which the group should strive.

Each of these major segments of culture has attracted many studies, both at the level of describing how that segment is defined for particular cultures and also how similar or different it may be when viewed cross-culturally. Information about particular cultures, and for crosscultural comparisons, arises from the basic anthropological activity - field studies.

Field Research

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Field Research was once left to the travellers, traders and missionaries who cared to write about peoples and their cultures. The first anthropologists were social philosophers and intellectuals who understood cultures through the 'armchair studies' of historical and travel documents. Only in the last decades of the 1800s did anthropology become a discipline based upon fieldwork and the accumulation of firsthand observations. Training in field methods of observation is an important part of anthropological apprenticeship. Data are usually gathered through systematic observation of daily events, and participation observation in events and situations that are of special importance to the people (such as economic activities, social relationships and ritual acts). The anthropologist seeks out and interviews people who possess special and relevant knowledge and who communicate with accurate detail and completeness (key informants). Every fieldworker develops a method for recording and classifying his data so that he can draw upon accurate and appropriate information in writing up his scientific reports. Anthropologists often stay in the field for a year or more, in order to establish good relations with the people they are studying and to be thorough and accurate in making a record of what people say and do. This kind of field research requires special human skills as well as skill in anthropological theories, concepts, methods and techniques. The observer must also explain who he is, what he is doing, the reasons for doing his research, the use that he will make of the information he collects, how long he will stay, and other questions that are a part of honesty and courtesy towards one's hosts. He must not only abide by the ethical principles of his profession, but also by the ethical principles of the people he is living with and then writing about.

Anthropology in Canada.

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The fathers of Canadian anthropology were the missionaries who lived in French Canada in the 1600s. These men, such as Fathers Le-Clercq, Le Jenne and Sagard, were deeply interested in knowing the lifeways and beliefs of the native people they lived among, and they provided the detailed descriptions that were used by professional anthropologists, from the early "armchair" social philosophers to the historically oriented anthropologists of today. Canadian anthropology grew from records written by dedicated individuals whose profession was religion (Jesuits and other missionaries), or who were explorer-traders such as Lescarbot, or 2 centuries later teachers in our early universities, such as Sir Daniel Wilson at Toronto or John William DAWSON at McGill (in the mid-1880s). Government employees, in particular with the GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF CANADA, made important records of their travels, including details about the native people they met and observed in the course of their work. The most important of these men is George Mercer DAWSON, who was employed by the Geological Survey from 1875 and rose to be its director in 1895. It was his sustained support more than that of any other one person that resulted in the establishment of a professional basis for Canadian anthropology, though he died before it was given formal recognition.

In 1910 PM Wilfrid Laurier established a Division of Anthropology within the Geological Survey, marking the beginning of professional anthropology in Canada. Offices were in the Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa, and professionally trained men were recruited from England and the US. From Professor Boas came Edward SAPIR, who had just completed his doctorate and was embarking on a brilliant career in anthropology. From Oxford's Professors Tylot and Margett came Charles Marius BARBEAU, a Rhodes scholar born in rural Québec. Barbeau's work at the NATIONAL MUSEUM (*as* it became

known) was only one part of his contribution to Canadian anthropology. Les Archives de folklore at Université Laval originated in his great collections of French Canadian material culture, songs, stories and tales, and in his students, especially Luc Lacourcière's, work to establish the archives (1944). Barbeau also recruited to the museum a fellow student from Oxford, Diamond JENNESS. Sapir and Barbeau both made ethnographic studies and collections of the cultures of the Indians of the Northwest Coast, following George Mercer Dawson and Boas in this area. Jenness is best known for his research in the Arctic among the COPPER INUIT. But each also worked in many other areas of Canada, recording traditions and songs, studying native languages, and collecting artifacts for the museum. William WINTENBERG and Harlan Smith worked archaeological sites to build the collections of prehistoric artifacts. These men, with a very few others, had nearly sole responsibility for the development of the profession in Canada from 1910 until 1925, when Sapir left Canada and Thomas McIlwraith took the first academic position in anthropology at a Canadian university. Five years later, McIlwraith was still the sole member of his department, and the very slow growth of anthropology is shown by the fact that the next universities to hire anthropologists, UBC and McGill, did so only in 1947. The first doctoral dissertation that is distinctly anthropological was appropriately based upon the Jesuit records and other documents on the subject, "The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures, 1504-1700 : A Study in Canadian Civilization." The author, Alfred G. BAILEY, received his degree in history because in 1934 there was no anthropology doctoral program. The first PhD in anthropology was granted in 1956, with only a few more being granted until the late 1960s. The 1970s brought a boom in university development and in professional anthropology, and by 1980 about 400 people with doctorates in anthropology were employed in Canada, and many more with a master's degree. Harry Hawthorn built the department at UBC and set a standard for the use of anthropological research as a guide to policy in his classic report to the federal government, coauthored by M.-A. Tremblay, *A Survey of the Contemporary Indians of Canada* (1966, 1967). K.O.L. Burrige and C.S. BELSHAW at UBC, and R.F. SALISBURY at McGill, did internationally admired research in Melanesia on the religion and other beliefs and the economics of the colonized native people of the area. Research in Africa has been undertaken by nearly 100 anthro-

pologists, of which the work of R.B. Lee of University of Toronto on the political economy of the bushmen is probably the best known.

Common trends dominate the development of anthropology in Canada, in spite of differences in language or distances between the various universities and museums. Part of the reason for this uniformity is the widespread influence of the ideas of Boas and his students. Moreover, anthropology in English Canada is built on an interest in the native people of Canada, who lived in small, isolated communities. This fact led to anthropological emphasis on the empirical field-study tradition, with participant observation and interviews with key informants, and resulted in reports that described the technology, economics, social organization, values and world view of each particular community. In many of these communities, people were conscious of their past history, sometimes from a sense of discontent with their present situation and with a concern that the past was slipping away from them without a satisfactory or secure new way of life to replace the old. The anthropologist's interest in traditions could then be an occasion to record the past before it was forgotten. Since the early studies by Boas, Jenness and others of small, tradition-oriented communities in the Arctic, and since the studies by Boas, Barbeau, Sapir and others of Northwest Coast Indian communities, the empirical study of small and isolated communities has continued to occupy the interests of many Canadian anthropologists.

In French Canada anthropology has built upon rural and small-town studies of the Québec region and its people, again emphasizing the study of small and relatively isolated groups. The development of anthropology in Québec is based upon the classic studies of French Canadians by early sociologists. The most important figure is Leon GÉRIN, whose "L'Habitant de St-Justin" illustrated how, in rural Québec, the old European patriarchal system continued in organizing the community's lifeways. The American Everett C. Hughes also influenced Québec anthropology with his *French Canada in Transition* (1943), a study of the process of industrialization in the town of Drummondville. Another American, Horace Miner, wrote *St-Denis : A French Canadian Parish* (1939), which became a model for community studies in Québec. Miner, an anthropologist, and the sociolo-

gists Gerin and Hughes all made extensive use of participant observation and key-informant interviewing during their field research.

Anthropology expands by learning about people, and the particular people that anthropologists study have an important influence upon the general and theoretical ideas that are developed. In English Canada the development of anthropology was guided by the studies of small communities of native people, with research in other areas of Canada and the world gradually increasing during the 1960s and 1970s. This wider horizon gives a valuable broadening of empirical and theoretical materials to Canadian anthropology, while the original interests in native peoples continues to develop as well. In Québec the studies of rural and small-town communities added to the cultural "mapping" of more isolated areas that continued through the 1960s, especially at Université de Montréal and at Laval. The anglophone McGill University supported this research, but also developed a research program on social change among the James Bay Cree. In the 1970s the regional studies continued, but with more defined focus upon socioeconomic disparities and Marxist interpretations. Laval and Montréal also became interested in the James Bay Cree, and McGill sponsored research in Africa and Latin America. Applied anthropology has grown partly in response to the needs of native people and organizations during the 1970s.

During the 1970s and 1980s increasing specialization within anthropology has provided more refined methods and precision in research, but this specialization has meant that some topics have not received the attention they deserve. In both English Canada and Québec, the study of urban centres is barely begun, and their size and complexity will continue to challenge anthropologists to develop method and theory. Many of the less densely settled areas of Canada still remain to be studied. The emphasis on economic and ecological aspects of culture has resulted in too little emphasis on the family, on male-female relationships, the social and value aspects of work, beliefs and ideology, and the organization of industrial, professional and bureaucratic groups. The feminist perspective may provide a critical and corrective effect on research in all regions, and in all aspects of study. Canada has developed excellent resources for training professional anthropologists who may do this work. As of 1980 there were gradu-

ate programs leading to the PhD in anthropology at 9 universities across Canada : Alberta, British Columbia, Laval, McGill, McMaster, Manitoba, Montréal, Simon Fraser and Toronto. There were at least 14 professional organizations in Canada representing anthropologists, of *which* the Canadian Ethnology Society, founded in 1973 and publisher of the journal *Culture*, is the most broadly representative. There are over 20 other journals or monograph series.

Anthropology is a young discipline, although it is one of humankind's oldest interests. In the past century, the study of human variety and of the universal human qualities that underlie the variety has developed successfully in Canada and in other areas of the world. Much has been done ; much remains to be done. if we are to understand human nature, we must be able to understand the many ways that this nature is expressed, and the new ways that will develop in the future. When our knowledge has the accuracy and completeness that a science of humankind works to provide, this understanding can give reliable guidance for efforts to improve the condition of all people, everywhere. Anthropologists study humanity and serve human interests and values.

R.J. Preston and M.-A. Tremblay

End.