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978-1-108-01750-3 - Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of  
Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom, Volume 1

Edward Burnett Tylor

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### **Primitive Culture**

Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) was an English anthropologist who is widely considered the founder of anthropology as a scientific discipline. He was the first Professor of Anthropology at the University of Oxford from 1896 to 1909, and developed a broad definition of culture which is still used by scholars. First published in 1871, this classic work explains Tylor's idea of cultural evolution in relation to anthropology, a social theory which states that human cultures invariably change over time to become more complex. Unlike his contemporaries, Tylor did not link biological evolution to cultural evolution, asserting that all human minds are the same irrespective of a society's state of evolution. His book was extremely influential in popularising the study of anthropology and establishing cultural evolution as the main theoretical framework followed by anthropologists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Volume 1 contains discussion of social evolution, language and myth.

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# Primitive Culture

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VOLUME 1

EDWARD BURNETT TYLOR



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# PRIMITIVE CULTURE:

RESEARCHES INTO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MYTHOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY,  
RELIGION, ART, AND CUSTOM.

BY

EDWARD B. TYLOR,

AUTHOR OF "RESEARCHES INTO THE EARLY HISTORY OF MANKIND," &c.

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"Ce n'est pas dans les possibilités, c'est dans l'homme même qu'il faut étudier l'homme :  
il ne s'agit pas d'imaginer ce qu'il auroit pu ou dû faire, mais de regarder ce qu'il fait."  
—DE BROSSES.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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## P R E F A C E.

—•—

THE present volumes, uniform with the previous volume of "Researches into the Early History of Mankind" (1st Ed. 1865; 2nd Ed. 1870), carry on the investigation of Culture into other branches of thought and belief, art and custom. During the past six years, I have taken occasion to bring tentatively before the public some of the principal points of new evidence and argument here advanced. The doctrine of survival in culture, the bearing of directly-expressive language and the invention of numerals on the problem of early civilization, the place of myth in the primitive history of the human mind, the development of the animistic philosophy of religion, and the origin of rites and ceremonies, have been discussed in various papers and lectures,\* before being treated at large and with a fuller array of facts in this work.

The authorities for the facts stated in the text are

\* *Fortnightly Review*: 'Origin of Language,' April 15, 1866; 'Religion of Savages,' August 15, 1866. Lectures at Royal Institution: 'Traces of the Early Mental Condition of Man,' March 15, 1867; 'Survival of Savage Thought in Modern Civilization,' April 23, 1869. Lecture at University College, London: 'Spiritualistic Philosophy of the Lower Races of Mankind,' May 8, 1869. Paper read at British Association, Nottingham, 1866: 'Phenomena of Civilization Traceable to a Rudimental Origin among Savage Tribes.' Paper read at Ethnological Society of London, April 26, 1870: 'Philosophy of Religion among the Lower Races of Mankind,' etc. etc.

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## PREFACE.

fully specified in the foot-notes, which must also serve as my general acknowledgment of obligations to writers on ethnography and kindred sciences, as well as to historians, travellers, and missionaries. I will only mention apart two treatises of which I have made especial use: the 'Mensch in der Geschichte,' by Professor Bastian of Berlin, and the 'Anthropologie der Naturvölker,' by the late Professor Waitz of Marburg.

In discussing problems so complex as those of the development of civilization, it is not enough to put forward theories accompanied by a few illustrative examples. The statement of the facts must form the staple of the argument, and the limit of needful detail is only reached when each group so displays its general law, that fresh cases come to range themselves in their proper niches as new instances of an already established rule. Should it seem to any readers that my attempt to reach this limit sometimes leads to the heaping up of too cumbrous detail, I would point out that the theoretical novelty as well as the practical importance of many of the issues raised, make it most inadvisable to stint them of their full evidence. In the course of ten years chiefly spent in these researches, it has been my constant task to select the most instructive ethnological facts from the vast mass on record, and by lopping away unnecessary matter to reduce the data on each problem to what is indispensable for reasonable proof.

E. B. T.

*March, 1871.*



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