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Mental and Social Condition of Savages
John Lubbock
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Anthropology

The first use of the word 'anthropology' in English was recorded in 1593, but its modern use to indicate the study and science of humanity became current in the late nineteenth century. At that time a separate discipline had begun to evolve from many component strands (including history, archaeology, linguistics, biology and anatomy), and the study of so-called 'primitive' peoples was given impetus not only by the reports of individual explorers but also by the need of colonial powers to define and classify the unfamiliar populations which they governed. From the ethnographic writings of early explorers to the 1898 Cambridge expedition to the Torres Straits, often regarded as the first truly 'anthropological' field research, these books provide eye-witness information on often vanished peoples and ways of life, as well as evidence for the development of a new scientific discipline.

The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man

Though professionally a banker and politician, John Lubbock (1834–1913) is best remembered for his scientific writings. As a boy, he was tutored by his father's friend, Charles Darwin, in natural history. He went on to make contributions to archaeology, anthropology and entomology. In this illustrated anthropological treatise, Lubbock applies evolutionary theory to the development of human civilisations, outlining the progression from ancient forms of art, relationships, religion, ethics, language and law to their counterparts in the present day. He argues that the social structures of ancient cultures can be interpreted through interaction with contemporary primitive cultures. Published in book form in 1870, the material for this work was first delivered as a lecture series at the Royal Institution. Lubbock's *Pre-historic Times as Illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages* (1865), in which he coined the terms Palaeolithic and Neolithic, is also reissued in this series.

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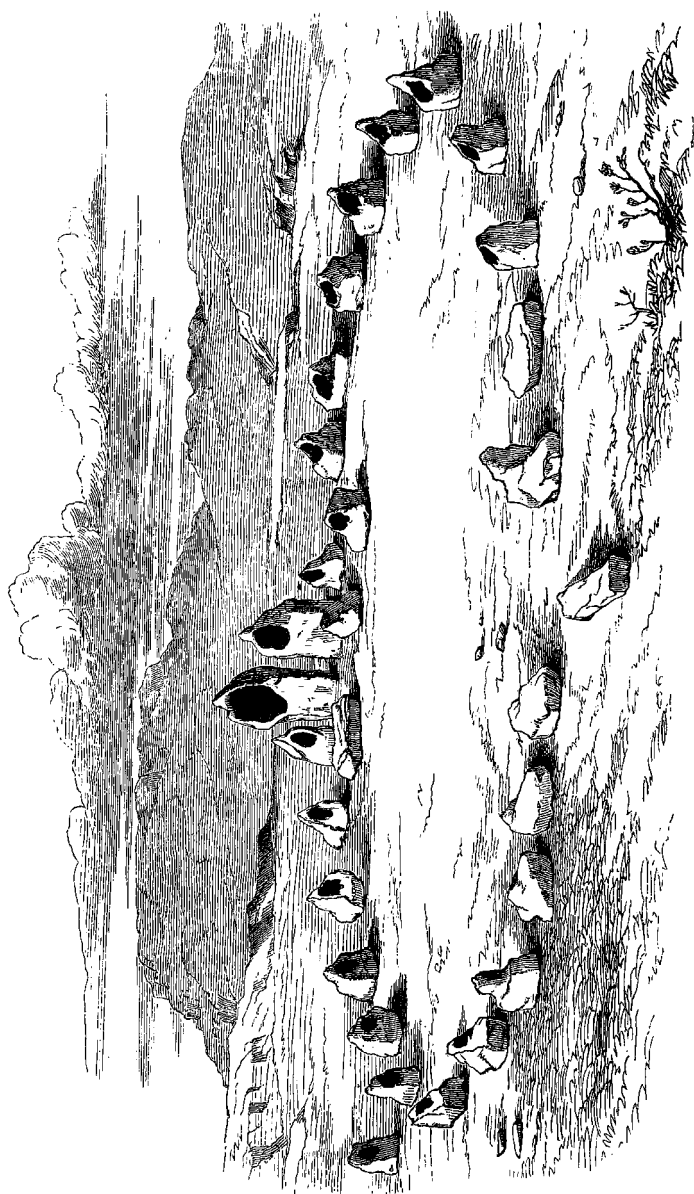
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GROUP OF SACRED STONES IN THE DEKHAN.

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THE
ORIGIN OF CIVILISATION
AND THE
PRIMITIVE CONDITION OF MAN.

MENTAL AND SOCIAL CONDITION OF SAVAGES.

BY

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK, BART., M.P., F.R.S.

AUTHOR OF 'PREHISTORIC TIMES' ETC.: VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY:
FELLOW OF THE LINNEAN, GEOLOGICAL, ENTOMOLOGICAL, AND OTHER SOCIETIES.

LONDON:
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P R E F A C E .



IN my work on 'Prehistoric Times' I have devoted several chapters to the description of modern savages, because the weapons and implements now used by the lower races of men throw much light on the signification and use of those discovered in ancient tumuli, or in the drift gravels; and because a knowledge of modern savages and their modes of life enables us more accurately to picture, and more vividly to conceive, the manners and customs of our ancestors in bygone ages.

In the present volume, which is founded on a course of lectures delivered at the Royal Institution in the spring of 1868, I propose more particularly to describe the social and mental condition of savages, their art, their systems of marriage and of relationship, their religions, language, moral character, and laws. Subsequently I shall hope to publish those portions of my lectures which have reference to their houses, dress, boats, arms, implements, &c. From the very nature of the subjects dealt with in the present volume, I shall

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have to record many actions and ideas very abhorrent to us; so many in fact that if I pass them without comment or condemnation, it is because I am reluctant to fatigue the reader by a wearisome iteration of disapproval. In the chapters on Marriage and Religion more especially, though I have endeavoured to avoid everything that was needlessly offensive, still it was impossible not to mention some facts which are very repugnant to our feelings. Yet were I to express my sentiments in some cases, my silence in others might be held to imply indifference, if not approval.

Montesquieu¹ commences with an apology that portion of his great work which is devoted to Religion. As, he says, 'on peut juger parmi les ténèbres celles qui sont les moins épaisses, et parmi les abîmes ceux qui sont les moins profonds, ainsi l'on peut chercher entre les religions fausses celles qui sont les plus conformes au bien de la société; celles qui, quoiqu'elles n'aient pas l'effet de mener les hommes aux félicités de l'autre vie, peuvent le plus contribuer à leur bonheur dans celle-ci. Je n'examinerai donc les diverses religions du monde que par rapport au bien que l'on en tire dans l'état civil, soit que je parle de celle qui a sa racine dans le ciel, ou bien de celles qui ont la leur sur la terre.' The difficulty which I have felt has taken a different form, but I deem it necessary to say these

¹ 'Esprit des Lois,' liv. xxiv. ch. 1.

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few words of explanation, lest I should be supposed to approve that which I do not expressly condemn.

Klemm, in his 'Allgemeine Culturgeschichte der Menschen,' and recently Mr. Wood, in a more popular manner ('Natural History of Man'), have described the various races of man consecutively; a system which has its advantages, but which does not well bring out the general stages of progress in civilisation.

Various other works, amongst which I must specially mention Müller's 'Geschichte der Americanischen Urreligionen,' M'Lennan's 'Primitive Marriage,' and Bachofen's 'Das Mutterrecht,' deal with particular portions of the subject. Maine's interesting work on 'Ancient Law,' again, considers man in a more advanced stage than that which is the special subject of my work.

The plan pursued by Tylor in his remarkable work on the 'Early History of Mankind,' more nearly resembles that which I have sketched out for myself, but the subject is one which no two minds would view in the same manner, and is so vast that I am sure my friend will not regard me as intruding on a field which he has done so much to make his own.

Nor must I omit to mention Lord Kames' 'History of Man,' and Montesquieu's 'Esprit des Lois,' both of them works of great interest, although written at a time when our knowledge of savage races was even more imperfect than it is now.

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Yet the materials for such a work as the present are immense, and are daily increasing. Those interested in the subject become every year more and more numerous; and while none of my readers can be more sensible of my deficiencies than I am myself, yet after ten years of study, I have been anxious to publish this portion of my work, in the hope that it may contribute something towards the progress of a science which is in itself of the deepest interest, and which has a peculiar importance to an Empire such as ours, comprising races in every stage of civilisation yet attained by man.

HIGH ELMS, DOWN, KENT:

February, 1870.

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Erratum.

Page 87, for Dulaure, vol. i. p 260 read vol. ii.