

Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family (1871) / Ancient Society (1877)

Lewis Henry Morgan went into the forest  
He met the Ojibwa  
He lived with the Iroquois  
He noticed the two had the same kinship system and  
Wondered how widespread that system might be.

He mailed kinship surveys all over the country  
He did his own research and  
Combed through ethnography  
He sent out more surveys all over the world and  
Recognized six different systems out there.

Eskimo, Iroquois, Omaha, Crow,  
Hawaiian, Sudanese--  
That's all that there are out there  
Remarkably few for the millions of people and  
Thousands of cultures we find on the earth.

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Morgan saw that not all cultures were the same,  
So he carried out a survey to find what was to blame  
He organized his data for scholars all to see  
In a three-stage evolutionary typology.

There were savages, barbarians, and civilizations too  
Ordered by technology and how they got their food  
Fishing produced savagery, writing produced states,  
and herding produced barbarians with powerful chiefs.

Not everyone was happy with this scheme,  
For they felt it measured progress through purely Western themes  
Though it strikes us as simplistic now and rather out of date  
At the time and for its influence it really was first rate.