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Though it strikes us as simplistic now and rather out of date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.