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The Nature and Scope of Anthropology

Anthropology is concerned with man in the present as well as in the past. Ethnologists, another special group of Anthropologists, are concerned with the life ways of living peoples- how people are born and trained to live in their society, how they choose their mates, marry, make a living and organize their relations with their fellow men. The Ethnologist explores these and many more subjects.

To a large extent ethnologists concentrate on so-called "primitive" cultures, or what we shall speak of as the cultures of "non-literate" peoples. In recent years, however, ethnologists have also turned their attention to the larger and more complexly organized societies of Europe, Africa, Asia and America.

A third special field is physical anthropology. Like the ethnologists, many physical anthropologists spend much time and research on modern populations. One primary purpose is to understand the genetic basis for the differences man exhibits in physical form, both to identify the evolutionary processes that differentiated man from other animals and to explain the nature and significance of human variation. Other physical anthropologists devote themselves to the study of ancient or fossil forms of man and his relatives or explore the functional significance of anatomical variations.