

FOREWORD

At first it was not my intention to write a foreword to the present work. I therefore included some questions, usually treated in a foreword, into Chapter III of the Introduction. However, after reading, in proofs, the whole of the book and especially the Introduction, I deem it necessary to add some explanations, in order to be well understood. In fact, my remarks concerning "Theories affecting investigator's work" (Section 3, pp. 6-10) may produce the quite wrong impression that I altogether disagree with all my predecessors and contemporaries and with all theoreticians. My intention was not to write about ethnography in general and to find out "theories helping investigator's work". The whole of the science of ethnography is of course helpful for a collector of original data, and I need not emphasize it. It is clear, at least for those who are engaged in the collecting and analysing of original materials. A great number of original investigations among the various ethnical units and groups, now carried out in all parts of the world, a great number of theoretical works, and very rich ethnographical collections found in the museums put the modern investigator into a new position, very favourable for both the theoretical result of the work and the collecting of new data. However, this favourable position also imposes great obligations on the modern investigator. Ethnography is no more a new field: the observer cannot be a naive romantic who is looking for exotic facts and situations unforeseen by the European complex; he cannot let himself to be carried away by imagination for heaping artificial constructions, perhaps satisfying one's aesthetic feeling, but perfectly useless, even dangerous, for the science; he also cannot become a collector who has no other aim but "collecting", for this attitude will soon lead to an unproductive waste of energy, which is now much needed for the passing through the coming, perhaps already going on crisis; moreover, he cannot refuse to face life, such as it is, as a historian often does, for Ethnography has ceased to be a "science about primitive tribes" which has nothing to do with "civilized mankind". The old ethnography of the nineteenth century is dead. The ethnographer-historian is nowadays working at the restoration, as far as possible, of the complexes of the past; the field ethnographer, armed with all possible theoretical knowledge, is describing and analysing "living" complexes, as *complexes* in their functional and historical aspects. In this respect the ethnographer comes near to the historian and all those specialists who are dealing with various aspects of culture (i.e. Ethnography) among the so-called civilized ethnical groups. In fact, the study of cultural complexes is not of yesterday. But it was confined to special manifestations of the complexes. The study of the common law, stimulated by a practical need of its codification, or merely of comprehensive recording for practical use; the study of the social organization, language, art, various aspects of technology, etc. stimulated by various reasons; even the study of the technical and, naturally, economic processes imposed by their functioning—all these special studies actually dealt with the same phenomenon of "cultural adaptation in man" which called to life the *ethnographer* and stimulated the organization of the new science of ethnography. We can now leave aside the question as to the practical stimuli which undoubtedly were greatly responsible for the existence of ethnographers and ethnography, but the philosophical premises are of importance for our present treatment. The almost general theoretical conception, even among the most clear-thinking people, was, firstly, that all cultural complexes, besides those with which the Europeans were familiar, were relatively simple and primitive, so that any educated man could understand and describe them and, secondly, that by studying them it was possible to write the history of the present civilized mankind. At the first contact with the realities it appeared, almost at once, that the culture of supposedly primitive peoples was not as simple as it had originally seemed and, a curious fact, a great number of ethnographers "specialized" in "material culture", "social organization", "religion", "language", even "folk-lore", "decorative art", "family", "primitive economics", etc. to such a degree that they easily could have degenerated into an inferior class of technologists, philosophers, philologists dealing with "primitive phenomena". However, the pressure of life was strong enough