



In the Museum of Man: Race, Anthropology, and Empire in France, 1850-1950

Alice L. Conklin

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In the Museum of Man offers new insight into the thorny relationship between science, society, and empire at the high-water mark of French imperialism and European racism. Alice L. Conklin takes us into the formative years of French anthropology and social theory between 1850 and 1900; then deep into the practice of anthropology, under the name of ethnology, both in Paris and in the empire before and especially after World War I; and finally, into the fate of the discipline and its practitioners under the German Occupation and its immediate aftermath.

Conklin addresses the influence exerted by academic networks, museum collections, and imperial connections in defining human diversity socioculturally rather than biologically, especially in the wake of resurgent anti-Semitism at the time of the Dreyfus Affair and in the 1930s and 1940s. Students of the progressive social scientist Marcel Mauss were exposed to the ravages of imperialism in the French colonies where they did fieldwork; as a result, they began to challenge both colonialism and the scientific racism that provided its intellectual justification. Indeed, a number of them were killed in the Resistance, fighting for the humanist values they had learned from their teachers and in the field. A riveting story of a close-knit community of scholars who came to see all societies as equally complex, *In the Museum of Man* serves as a reminder that if scientific expertise once authorized racism, anthropologists also learned to rethink their paradigms and mobilize against racial prejudice—a lesson well worth remembering today.

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