

# Issues in Cultural Anthropology: Selected Readings 9780881332988 Waveland Press, 1987 David W. McCurdy, James P. Spradley 1987

Evolutionism in Cultural Anthropology is a wonderful book. As a history of evolutionism in anthropology, it nicely complements the author's slightly earlier *The Muse of History and the Science of Culture* (2000), which I reviewed in the pages of this journal (Sanderson 2003). It closely parallels my own *Social Evolutionism: A Critical History*, and even carries exactly the same subtitle, which I am sure, is purely coincidental. Cultural anthropology is sometimes called social anthropology, sociocultural anthropology, or ethnology. Cultural anthropology also includes pursuits such as ethnography, ethnohistory, and cross-cultural research.Â This union is not without justification, as cultural anthropology and sociology share a similar theoretical and philosophical ancestry. In what ways is cultural anthropology different? Cultural anthropology is unique because its history as a discipline lies in a focus on exploration of the "Other." That is, the anthropologists of the 19th century took a keen interest in the lives and customs of people not descended from Europeans. Cultural anthropology is a branch of anthropology focused on the study of cultural variation among humans. It is in contrast to social anthropology, which perceives cultural variation as a subset of a posited anthropological constant. The umbrella term sociocultural anthropology includes both cultural and social anthropology traditions. Anthropologists have pointed out that through culture people can adapt to their environment in non-genetic ways, so people living in different environments will often