Johann Friedrich Blumenbach Encyclopedia Article

Johann Friedrich Blumenbach

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Johann Friedrich Blumenbach

1752-1840

German physiologist known as the founder of physical anthropology. Born in Gotha, he received the doctor of medicine from the University of Göttingen in 1775 and remained there as professor until his death. He was the first to classify races into five groups: Caucasian, Mongoloid, Ethiopian, American, and Malay. The term Caucasian, referring to white people or Europeans, originated from his belief that the race developed in the Caucasus Mountains. He recognized the Caucasian or white race as the basic type, with other races evolving because of the demands of the environment. He measured skulls and collected many samples for his studies of comparative anatomy.