Théodore-Jules-Ernest Hamy (better known as Ernest-Théodore Hamy) was born on 22 June, 1842 in Boulogne-sur-Mer, a town in northern France near the border with Belgium. His father, Théodore-Auguste Hamy, was a pharmacist in Boulogne-sur-Mer. Hamy studied in various schools as a boy and pursued his secondary education in Paris where he obtained a baccalaureate in letters in 1860 and a baccalaureate in the sciences in 1861. He decided to study medicine at the Faculty of Medicine in Paris and interned at the Salpêtrière under the guidance of Jean-Martin Charcot. There he met the French physician,
neurologist, and anthropologist Paul Broca in 1864. As a result of this meeting Hamy became an extern at the Hôpital Saint-Antoine under Broca. Since Hamy was interested in anthropology Broca invited him to become an assistant at the Société d'anthropologie de Paris [Anthropology Society of Paris]. The science of anthropology was professionalizing at this time and Broca had established the Société d'anthropologie de Paris in 1959 to promote anthropological research. One of Hamy’s first duties at the Society was to form a collection of human skulls for the Society's museum. Hamy gained further experience when he participated in archaeological excavations, in 1864, of the Merovingian cemetery at Hardenthun (Pas-de-Calais) conducted by Daniel Haigneré, who was an archaeologist and Hamy’s former schoolteacher at the Institution Haffreingue.

During this time Hamy also took courses at the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle [National Museum of Natural History] on osteology with Henri Milne-Edwards and prehistory with Edouard Lartet. Hamy was intrigued by the recent discovery of flint artifacts found with extinct animal fossils in glacial deposits, which indicated that humans lived during the Ice Age. Geologists and archaeologists throughout Europe were uncovering similar artifacts and this encouraged Hamy to look for Ice Age artifacts near his hometown. Hamy and his friend Henri-Émile Sauvage, an amateur geologist and paleontologist who was honorary director of the Station aquicole in Boulogne-sur-Mer and curator of the local municipal museum, excavated the Quaternary deposits around Boulogne-sur-Mer where they found stone tools. This early excursion into Paleolithic archaeology led to the publication of a book titled Étude sur les terrains quaternaires du Boulonnais et sur les débris d'industrie humaine qu'ils renferment (1866).

Hamy became a member of the Société d'anthropologie de Paris in 1867 and his research into anthropology expanded. He was invited to study the Egyptian mummies and skulls collected by François-Auguste-Ferdinand Mariette as part of the preparation for the 1867 Exposition Universelle held in Paris. Meanwhile he completed his thesis on the human intermaxillary bone in the normal and pathological state (L’os intermaxillaire de l’homme à l’état normal et pathologique) in 1868. Broca appointed Hamy préparateur and chef de travaux at the Laboratoire d’Anthropologie at the École pratique des hautes études in 1868. In 1869 Hamy traveled to Egypt with Broca, the zoologist and anthropologist Armand de Quatrefages, and the archeologist François Lanormant as part of the official delegation celebrating the opening of the Suez Canal. During this visit Hamy and Lenormant found time to collect prehistoric flint axes and knives from the Nile basin.

Following the excavations of Henri de Longuy, Edouard Loydreaux, and Jules Martin at Santenay, Edouard Lartet directed Hamy to excavate caverns in the valley of Dheune, in Santenay, in 1870. Hamy and Henri de Longuy excavated the bone breccias of several caves including Pointe du Bois, grotte de Saint-Jean and grotte de Saint-Aubin, grotte de la Roche-Fendue du Bois de la Fée where they found Neolithic artifacts and two human skeletons. Hamy’s
scientific activities were interrupted in 1870 during the terrible period of the Franco-Prussian war. While Paris was under siege by German soldiers Hamy served as a surgeon to the Troisième Légion of the Pas-de-Calais. In 1872 Hamy left his position at the Société d'anthropologie de Paris and became aide-naturaliste (assistant) to Armand de Quatrefages at the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle. Quatrefages held the chair of Anthropology at the Museum and over the next decade he and Hamy examined many of the human fossils recently found in Pleistocene deposits in Europe. Quatrefages and Hamy used the accepted techniques of craniometry (careful measurements of the shape of the skull, particularly the cephalic index and the facial angle) to identify several distinct human races that existed in Europe during the Ice Age. In three papers published between 1873 and 1874, and later expanded upon in their book *Crania ethnica* (1882) they identified a Canstadt race (represented by the Neanderthal skull from Germany and other similar skulls), a Cro-Magnon race (represented by the skeletons found at Les Eyzies and other sites), and brachycephalic races (represented by fossils found at Furfooz in Belgium and Grenelle in France). Hamy published many papers describing newly discovered human fossils from the Ice Age that were important not only for the evidence they provided about the nature of these early humans but also because he helped to establish the techniques that defined how to examine human fossils. It is also important to recognize that Hamy and Quatrefages focused on the problem of identifying prehistoric human “races” rather than discussions of human evolution, since the fossils they examined appeared to be fully human.

Hamy traveled to Copenhagen and Stockholm in 1874 to examine the ethnological and anthropological collections in their renowned museum in order to reorganize the anthropological collections of the Muséum national d'histoire naturelle. He continued to investigate the prehistoric archaeology and anthropology of France and beginning in 1877 he participated in the work of the Commission de la topographie des Gaules and the Commission de géographie de l'ancienne France. Hamy collaborated with archaeologist Alexandre Bertrand, director of the Musée d'Archéologie Nationale (Museum of National Archaeology), on an installation for the 1878 Exposition Universelle held in Paris. Their exhibit displayed artifacts from the Stone Age, the pre-Roman Gallic period, the Roman occupation, and the Frankish period in France.

Hamy also participated in the organization of the Musée ethnographique des Missions scientifiques located at the Trocadéro Palace, which was also part of the Exposition Universelle. The museum collected together ethnographic artifacts from cultures around the world that were held in the collections of numerous institutions in Paris. This display of ethnographic objects was intended to stimulate interest in colonial expansion and the success of the exposition led to calls for the creation of a permanent ethnographic museum. Quatrefages supported this idea and the Chambre des députés (Chamber of Deputies) accepted this proposal. On 19 July 1880 the Minister of National Education, Jules Ferry, signed the decree creating the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro.
Hamy was appointed curator of the museum and director of scientific missions. The museum contained an impressive collection of ethnographic, prehistoric, and physical anthropology specimens. Hamy’s principles for arranging the collections in the museum were laid out in an influential book, *Les Origines du Musée d'Ethnographie* (The Origins of the Museum of Ethnography) published in 1890, which reflected the attitude of many scientists of that time that biological and cultural phenomena were linked. Hamy also wanted to reconcile the prevailing views of biological and cultural evolutionism and with the idea of diffusionism. Hamy served as curator of the museum from 1880 until he resigned in 1906 in protest over the dismal state of the museum’s budget and the lack of support for the institution. The museum was reorganized into the Musée de l’Homme (Museum of Man) in 1938.

Many of the leading French anthropologists, including Hamy, Quatrefages, Broca, Gabriel de Mortillet, and Paul Topinard attended the Congrès anthropologique held in Moscow in 1879. In 1882 Hamy founded and edited the journal *Revue d’ethnographie* which ceased publication in 1889 when it merged with *Matériaux pour l'histoire primitive et naturelle de l'homme* (edited by Emile Cartailhac and Ernest Chantre) and with *Rêve d'Anthropologie* (edited by Topinard) to form the new the journal *L’Anthropologie*. For many years Hamy
had been interested in the indigenous peoples of the Americas. This led him to establish the Société des amériéanistes (Society of Americanists) in 1895, which was devoted to the ethnological and anthropological study of the native people and cultures of the New World. In 1887 Hamy was part of a scientific mission to Tunisia that studied the archaeology and ethnology of the Berbers. He was also an active participant in the Congrès international d'anthropologie et d'archéologie préhistoriques (International Congress of Prehistoric Anthropology and Archaeology) and was president of the 1906 meeting in Monaco.

Hamy was a member of many of the leading scientific societies in France. He became a member of the Société académique du Boulonnais in 1866. He was a member of the Société d'anthropologie de Paris from 1867 to 1908, serving as its president in 1884 and 1906. Hamy was a member of the Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques in 1877 and served as secretary of the Section de géographie historique et descriptive beginning in 1886. He was a member of the Société des traditions populaires and was its president in 1887 and 1895. Hamy was a founding member in 1872 of the Association française pour l'avancement des sciences (French Association for the Advancement of the Sciences) and served as its president in 1901. He was appointed a member of the prestigious Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres in 1890.

He was also a member of the following institutions:

Société de biologie
Société de géographie
Commission des missions scientifiques et littéraires
Société des américanistes de Paris
Société de l'histoire de Paris et de l'Île-de-France
Société des amis des monuments parisiens
Société française d'histoire de la médecine
Académie nationale de médecine
Société d'anthropologie de Lyon, (corresponding member)

Hamy was also a corresponding or honorary member of scientific institutions in many other European counties.

Hamy received many honors during his long career. He was made an Officer of the Légion d'honneur in 1889. He was also an Officier de l'Instruction publique; a Commandeur de l'ordre d'Isabelle la Catholique; a Commandeur de l'ordre de Saint-Otaries de Monaco; an Officier de l'ordre de Léopold; and chevalier de l'Etoile Polaire, d'i Saint-Stanislas, des Saints Maurice et Lazare.
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