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Biography of Ruth Fulton Benedict

Judith Modell

of articles sent by various individuals, to such miscellanea as academic hoods and honorary medals. In addition to the individual keys, there is a useful although incomplete cross-referencing guide that lists the incoming correspondence from single individuals but distributed in more than one collection of papers. This guide allows one to quickly locate nearly all the letters in the Library's collections that may have been written by, say, Franz Boas or Edward Sapir.

Along with the Bancroft's own collections, the Library houses the University Archives, which now include the Department of Anthropology Archives--extensive but incomplete correspondence concerning departmental affairs since the department was established in 1901. The material is not arranged consistently, some by year and some by sender, and there is no index or reference key. This material is governed by loan and use policies different from those affecting Bancroft collections, which in practice usually means that it is less restricted as for example regarding photoduplication. The Bancroft Library itself does not participate in Interlibrary Loan, but all Bancroft materials, including special orders for microfilming and copying, remain Bancroft property and must eventually be returned to the Library.

In addition to the individual papers and the departmental archives, there are a variety of other materials available. The Lowie Museum has deposited in the Bancroft its collection of manuscript data and field-notes, mostly dealing with the California Indians and including at least samples of the work of most of the persons affiliated with the department during the first several decades of its existence.

The Library keeps fairly restricted hours, and potential users are advised to write ahead for schedules. Questions about the Archives should be directed to the University Archivist; general Bancroft inquiries should be directed to the Head of Public Services, The Bancroft Library, The University of California, Berkeley, California 94720.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

(As a regular feature we hope to include not only listings of current research by investigator and topic, but also more extended statements by individual researchers.)

A BIOGRAPHY OF RUTH FULTON BENEDICT

Judith Modell

In An Anthropologist At Work Margaret Mead published selected private and public writings of her teacher, colleague and friend, Ruth Benedict. The resulting volume suggested to me the need for a fuller biography. Benedict's life has particular relevance today, both for women trying to reconcile their ambitions with prevailing concepts of appropriate female roles and motivations, and for anthropologists taking a close look at the formation of their discipline.

At her death in 1948 Benedict left her papers to Vassar College (which she attended, 1905-1909) and among documents Mead did not publish I have found valuable clues to the development of Benedict's thought and personality. For example, a number of drafts, notes, revisions and experiments in her work on the three feminists Mary Wollstonecraft, Margaret Fuller, and Olive Schreiner show Benedict's early struggles with questions that later informed her anthropological writings. It is in these early pieces that she deals with the significance of upbringing and begins to work toward an understanding of how society molds the behavior of its members.

Mead discussed the doubts and despairs that plagued Benedict, and included letters, journal entries, and poems documenting the theme of a woman's search for satisfaction. Mead, however, accepted limits for her book which did not permit the tracing of intricate connections between Benedict's private writings and her anthropology. Coming from a training in literature gives me a somewhat different point of view, and I intend to make explicit connections Mead left implicit, such as those between the content of Benedict's poetry and her professional anthropological writings. In going beyond Mead I will also consider the effects of a virtually all-female early family environment, and the expectations bred within it, and my analyses of Benedict's later response to social work, teaching, and to her childless marriage will be informed by recent changes in attitudes to the compromises forced upon American women. My interpretation of Benedict's entry into anthropology in 1919 will connect in detail her own personal ambivalences with general social conceptions of male and female realms.

Although I did not know Benedict personally, I am doing extensive interviews with her students and contemporaries in order to test my own insights against the knowledge of those who knew her and the development of anthropology first hand. In general, I will also use a variety of secondary materials not relevant to An Anthropologist At Work, such as materials on women's education in the early twentieth century. Most importantly, however, I hope my interpretation will reap the unconscious and conscious benefits accruing from the current concern of both women and anthropologists for increased self-awareness.

RESEARCH NOTES:

Stephen Dow Beckman, Associate Professor of History at Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon, is completing a book-length biographical study of George Gibbs, nineteenth century ethnologist and linguist, based on his doctoral dissertation (U.C.L.A. 1969).

Ilse Bulhof, Assistant Professor at the University of Texas at Austin, is studying the relationship of history and cultural anthropology in German historicism, with an emphasis on the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, Johan Huizinga, Max Weber and Karl Mannheim.

Regna Darnell, Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, has just completed a book "Readings in the History of Anthropology" for Harper and Row. Its focus is on the relationship of the practitioner to the history of his discipline, including considerable material written by anthropologists and others about the history as well as an effort to define the social context within which anthropological