



## History of Anthropology Newsletter

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# Did the Arch-Evolutionist Make a Deathbed Recantation?

George W. Stocking Jr.

Frederic Ward Putnam

"Sources, with particular Reference to the Southern Sudan," Cahiers d'etudes Africaines 11 (1971):129-179 (a critique of E-P's teacher, C.G. Seligman.)

"Genesis of a Social Anthropologist: An Autobiographical Note," The New Diffusionist 3 (Jan., 1973):17-23.

"Fragment of an Autobiography," New Blackfriars (Jan. 1973):35-38.

"Some Reminiscences and Reflections on Fieldwork," Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford 4(1973):1-12.

"Operations on the Akobo and Gila Rivers, 1940-41," Army Quarterly and Defense Journal (forthcoming).

"Some Reminiscences on Fieldwork in the '20s," Anthropological Quarterly (forthcoming).

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CLIO'S FANCY -- DOCUMENTS TO PIQUE THE HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

DID THE ARCH-EVOLUTIONIST MAKE A DEATHBED RECANTATION?

The following unsigned item presumably by Frederick Ward Putnam, Curator of the Peabody Museum and Professor of American Archaeology and Ethnology from 1886 to 1909, was found in the Putnam Papers, and is reproduced here in its entirety with the permission of Miss Adelaide Putnam and the Harvard University Archives. The spacing of the original typescript would suggest that the last two paragraphs were a later addition.

At twelve o'clock, March 6, 1895, Dr. Fewkes came into the Laboratory of the Peabody Museum. He first had a little conversation with Mr. Willoughby about a specimen upon which Mr. Willoughby was working.

He then went to Dr. Dorsey's table, where Dr. Dorsey was preparing for a lecture, and took up Mr. Morgan's work on Ancient Society. About six feet from Dr. Dorsey's table, Mr. Knoblauch, a student in Archaeology I, was engaged in his regular hour of laboratory work. Dr. Fewkes took up Morgan's work on Ancient Society and opened a discussion with Dr. Dorsey upon Mr. Morgan's theories. Dr. Dorsey made the statement that Morgan himself after he had written the book changed and modified his views very much and said that if he had had it to do over again he would not have written the book, or would have written it very differently. Dr. Fewkes asked his reason for so thinking, and Dr. Dorsey told him that Mr. Morgan had told Professor Putnam so; and that Professor Putnam thought as he did, that Morgan was too hasty in his conclusions.

Dr. Fewkes then said that he (meaning Professor Putnam) had a reason for saying this. Dr. Fewkes then walked around the other side of the table where he was certainly as near Knoblauch as Dr. Dorsey, and perhaps nearer, and made the

statement that Morgan was too deep for Professor Putnam, and that Professor Putnam could not understand him. This remark the student, Mr. Knoblauch, must certainly have heard.

Dr. Dorsey feeling that this was an outrage, came into my office, immediately on the departure of Dr. Fewkes, and told me about it, and I had the above taken down from Dr. Dorsey's dictation.

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In relation to Mr. Morgan: He and I were the best of friends and for several years after 1874 he was in the habit of making me a yearly visit and staying at my house for a week or more at a time and I also visited him several times in Rochester. At these visits we always discussed anthropological matters and his views and theories were often the special subject of our discussions. During one of these visits as I distinctly remembered he stated that he was living a generation too early and got founded in his beliefs before he had the facts now on hand, but that it was too late to renew his work and do it all over with the knowledge of late discoveries and that I must take the matter up and show where he had made mistakes and also what of his would stand. (He died in Dec. 1881.)

Once when talking upon the subject with Dr. Dorsey I told him not to follow Morgan too closely as Morgan had himself felt that some of his views should be greatly modified.

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#### QUERIES

I am currently engaged in a project related to the American Ethnological Society between the years 1840 and 1851. If anyone can shed information on the whereabouts of the papers for this Society during this time, I would appreciate it. Robert E. Bieder, The Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton, Chicago, Illinois 60610.

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#### NEWS AND NOTES

##### HISTORY OF SCIENCE SOCIETY

The Society's meetings in San Francisco this December will include a panel on "Form and Function: Women as the Object of Scientific Study," in which Elizabeth Fee (SUNY, Binghamton) will present a paper on "Mothers and Matriarchies in 19th Century Anthropology."