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Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/810840md>

Journal

Journal of California and Great Basin Anthropology, 11(1)

ISSN

0191-3557

Author

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Publication Date

1989-07-01

Peer reviewed

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The Putnam-Kroeber Relations in the Development of American Anthropology

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WHILE a student at Columbia University, Alfred L. Kroeber (1876-1960) served as a volunteer worker in the Department of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, under the direction of Frederic W. Putnam (1839-1915). In 1899 Kroeber was an assistant to the Jesup Expedition for the study of Arapaho Indians sponsored by that museum; the following year he was made assistant for the Jesup Expedition report and awarded the Hagen Fellowship upon recommendation of Putnam.

In 1901 Putnam, Curator of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, and part-time Curator of Anthropology at the American Museum of Natural History, was made chairman of an Advisory Committee to develop a department and museum for Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. (For biographical sketches of Putnam, see Boas 1915; Tozzer 1935.)

In September, 1903, Putnam was given the title of Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Museum of Anthropology, all sponsored by Mrs. Phoebe A. Hearst. Putnam had a leave of absence from the Peabody Museum to spend part of his time in California, and beginning in 1904 he resigned his part-time position at the American Museum in order to spend three months of each year at the University of California (Dexter 1966a, 1966b, 1976).

At first, Mr. G. J. M. E. d'Aquin served as secretary of the committee overseeing development of the anthropology department

and museum at Berkeley and reported regularly to Putnam. In December, 1902, he was replaced by Kroeber, who became executive officer in charge and sent weekly reports to Putnam on progress both in the department and the museum. (For biographical sketches of Kroeber see Rowe 1962; Steward 1962, 1973.) Kroeber spent the rest of his life devoted to research and education concerning California ethnology and to developing the Department and Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. His list of publications totals well over 400. He aided Putnam in publishing a bulletin on the Department of Anthropology at the University of California (1905), and prepared a report on "The Archaeology of California" for the *Putnam Anniversary Volume* (1909). He also published an obituary on Putnam soon after the latter died in 1915. Kroeber's major and best-known work was the *Handbook of the Indians of California* (1925), and he became universally known as the authority on California ethnology and one of the founders of American anthropology.

PUTNAM-KROEBER RELATIONS

When Kroeber was first appointed to the California project he wrote a note of appreciation to Putnam, "I enclosed a message to you from Mrs. Hearst who arrived at the museum and was sent to me by Dr. Saville. I have had one to the same effect. I am greatly pleased with the result and very much obliged to you for steering [*sic*] me through the negotiations."

Kroeber immediately set to work on what became a life-long career in California anthropology. Even at the beginning he was recognized as an authority. Concerning a manuscript he sent to the publication committee, Putnam wrote to Kroeber 13 June 1902,

I have sent to the secretary of our committee the letter of Dr. Boas in relation to your linguistic manuscript. Since Dr. Boas is strongly of the opinion that you know more than anybody else about the California language, and he would not think of editing anything you write upon that subject, I have made that statement to the committee.

As soon as Kroeber was placed in local charge, Putnam wrote to him 29 December 1902,

I hope all is going well with you in California. Before you receive this I suppose Mr. d'Aquin will have left, and you will be executive officer in charge; so I shall look to you for weekly communications informing me of what is going on, what comes in for the department, and what you and Mr. [Pliny] Goddard are doing in the way of instruction, etc. Please keep me posted on what takes place.

Kroeber frequently worked with the California natives. On 11 February 1903 he wrote to Putnam, "I have had a Tulare Indian with me since I wrote you last [the informant remained for 17 days], with whom I am investigating the Yokuts language. I have also had him explain the symbolism [found] in whatever baskets from his region we have in the Museum." In 1906 he published an account of the Yokuts language in the *Boas Anniversary Volume* (1906).

Because the original museum building was starting to sink under the heavy load of museum collections and the rapid increase of acquisitions, the university collection was gradually moved to an empty building at the Affiliated Colleges in San Francisco in the spring of 1903, and finally completed a year later.

Kroeber passed on many thoughts and suggestions he had for the developing department and its museum. While these were much appreciated, Putnam felt some need of restraint, writing to Kroeber 5 November 1903,

As to suggestions for future work: I think that should come after consultation with me as head of department. I beg of you, however, not to be in the least backward in making such suggestions to me that you think would advance the interest of the department. I am always ready to receive ideas and to carry them out so far as practical.

In 1904, Mrs. Hearst felt the need to reduce support for the department because of financial reverses she had suffered. Kroeber wrote to Putnam 15 May 1904,

Mr. Clark wrote President Wheeler that Mrs. Hearst would not continue the Exploration on the Antiquity of Man or the Archaeological and Ethnological Survey of California. . . . I am very sorry about the breakup on your account, that it should come just as you had started out to build up a great Museum here. I am confident, however, that in the end the great Museum will come; and in the interim of curtailment you will perhaps be able to float things along with outside help, and when the tide turns again everything will then be on a double bottom. . . . I will go on with the Museum work as if everything were continuing, but will incur no new expenses and try to wind up everything. . . . I cannot tell you anything as to my own course. I hope you will write me how things stand without making them any better than they are. I hope particularly you will let me know whether Mrs. Hearst really wants to keep me or whether she would be relieved if I should go.

(Alice C. Fletcher, another protégé of Putnam, made an effort to remove Kroeber from the department; fortunately she did not succeed because Kroeber had the full support of Putnam.)

Kroeber prepared two papers for the new anthropological series and was anxious to have them published in view of the local situation. He soon published on the language of the southern California coast, and on types of Indian culture in California for the University of California *Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* (Kroeber 1904a, 1904b). He wrote to Putnam 20 May 1904,

I have now been working four years in California and three at the University and have got out nothing on California ethnology except a short, joint paper. It will be especially desirable for me to have published something if the constriction at present going on shall result in my elimination from the department, a contingency which in the absence of information I regard as possible. In any case I like to get things done; nothing is ever sure until it is accomplished.

Kroeber wrote again to Putnam 24 May 1904,

It is now nearly two weeks since Mrs. Hearst telegraphed Mr. Clark that the California work was to be cut off. My hearing nothing from you leaves me to think that the outcome has been worse than you were at first led to believe. I hope everything will come out well for yourself. We young fellows always come out alright in the end because we have those like yourself to look out for us.

One week later Putnam wrote to Kroeber,

She [Mrs. Hearst] regards it as simply a temporary suspension of the work she wishes to carry on. I had three interviews with her, and I believe the result will be that our Archaeological and Ethnological Survey of the State will have to be entirely suspended unless we can get aid from others to carry it on. . . . I am glad you are working away at the museum cataloging, etc., and I know you will not get discouraged but keep bravely at the work . . . of course this whole matter has struck me pretty hard. I do not want anything I undertake to fall through, and I am not by any means giving up the idea of having a great anthropological center on the Pacific Coast. I look upon this episode as one of the little mountains which one always finds in his path when trying to do anything of importance. We must simply get over it.

Kroeber replied 7 June 1904, "Like you, I have not lost faith in the future of the department. We may be retarded, but we have gone too far to have everything disbanded."

While Mrs. Hearst was in London, Putnam wrote 11 December 1904 to reassure her on the value of Kroeber's work in the department, stating,

Dr. Kroeber brought into order the best collection of ethnological material from several parts of California that there is in a museum . . . Dr. Kroeber is a most energetic and faithful worker and is at the building early and late looking after everything.

In spite of better offers elsewhere, Kroeber remained loyal to California, writing to Putnam 23 February 1905,

I wrote you that I had an offer from New York [American Museum of Natural History] . . . I took California. I hope our prospects will now finally begin to realize. Chicago and New York have both sunk more money in California ethnology than we. . . . We really must get into the game as far as California ethnology is concerned. In a few years the state will be dry for a museum. If we cannot do something before then, we may as well quit now. Boas has offered me field work for New York this summer, but I am not going to take it. I am working for this place or none while I am here. But I have now done no field work for a year. You will see that with the openings in the East I cannot go on indefinitely doing nothing. . . . Meanwhile I will hold the fort. And until the game is no longer worth the candle in California, I will fight it out here.

Three weeks later he wrote again,

Can you not come to California this summer to stay a whole year? It would be the best thing that could happen to affairs here. You must realize as well as the rest of us that your position here is not so secure as it might be. . . . If you can convince her [Mrs. Hearst] and Mr. Clark that there is work to be done here, that what you can do and that if they will give you the opportunity and only reasonable support you will actually do what Mrs. Hearst has always had in mind—build up a great museum for the university—everything will then, again, be on a promising basis instead of clouded in doubt.

That year Putnam (1905) published with Kroeber's help a synopsis of the Department of Anthropology at Berkeley in support of the efforts of all of those involved in organizing anthropology at the university and to show its potential.

Kroeber wrote again, 10 February 1906,

suggesting that he be appointed officially secretary of the department to give formal recognition of the post to which he was appointed by the executive committee, which had not met for two years. He also assured Putnam that President Wheeler had become more favorably impressed by Putnam and his work. Kroeber related that, "the president was much more cordial about your relation to the university, by its prestige, than the daily routine services of a dozen ordinary able teachers whom nobody had heard of and whom there are thousands." Putnam promptly requested on 22 February 1906, that Kroeber be given an official appointment from the Regents as secretary of the Department of Anthropology and also made a request that he be raised from the rank of instructor to assistant professor with an increase in salary for both Kroeber and Goddard. (For a biographical sketch of Goddard, see Kroeber 1929.) Both were praised as "Loyal to the core, to California, and would rather remain with us there than take positions with higher salaries elsewhere."

During the San Francisco earthquake of 18 April 1906, the museum and its collection did not suffer severe damage, but it was a very trying time for the staff members. Kroeber as always took charge of the situation and remained on duty for any assistance he could give.

In the winter of 1906-07 Putnam was not well enough to go to California. He asked President Wheeler to permit Kroeber to go east to take part in national anthropological meetings, see eastern museums, arrange for exchanges of specimens, and especially to confer with Putnam on departmental problems and progress.

In the winter of 1908 Putnam was again in poor health. Kroeber reported to Putnam's daughter, Alice, and depended on her to use her judgment in passing on information and

whether or not to encourage him to go to California. It was a critical time for the department. Kroeber wrote Alice 19 February 1908, "I realize that he would be here if he could, at this time when the provision for the support of the department is to expire, and new arrangements of one part or another must be made." Kroeber was much concerned, but did not want to alarm Putnam unduly. Fortunately, the latter's health improved and he soon departed for his annual visit to California. Mrs. Hearst invited Putnam to stay at her hacienda and assured him of continued support although at a reduced level. After his return to Harvard, Putnam wrote to Kroeber 28 August 1908,

Notwithstanding all the worry I had in California about the department, the trip did me much good and I am feeling in fine condition. In fact better than for years before I was taken sick [angina pectoralis]. I feel now as if I was good for hard work.

However, as he approached the age of 70 in the spring of 1909, he resigned his active positions at the Peabody Museum and at Berkeley. He wrote to Kroeber 9 May 1909,

This resigning is an awful hard thing as my heart is in the work we have been doing in California and I feel that the museum and the department are in a firm basis and that you and Goddard are permanent fixtures and will grow up with the department and museum and will see both developed as they are sure to be with the energy and labor you will give to the work.

Kroeber responded 22 May 1909,

I realize fully how hard it must be for you to withdraw from the activity you have so long been accustomed to . . . I have no doubt however that whether in an official capacity or otherwise you will continue to exert the same influence in anthropology and accomplish as much work as in the past.

CONCLUSION

Alice Putnam, who followed her father's career closely, recorded in her diary that, "Of

all of his students and assistants Kroeber was one of the most faithful to F. W. Putnam." The relationship between Putnam and Kroeber over many years was always respectful and to mutual advantage. They complemented each other—the administrator on one hand and the researcher-teacher on the other hand. They always supported each other to the fullest extent, and together they established the science of anthropology in California.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the family of F. W. Putnam, the Archives of Harvard University, the Archives of the Lowie Museum of Anthropology and the University of California at Berkeley for the privilege of studying and quoting from the Putnam-Kroeber correspondence.

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A Crescent from the Southern San Joaquin Valley, California

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A complete crescent was discovered in the Elk Hills, California (Fig. 1), just north of Buena Vista Lake in the southern San Joaquin Valley. The specimen was found in the berm of a bladed road and not in association with a known archaeological site. It therefore is recorded as an isolated find (IF-KER-388). The location of the discovery is on a generally north-facing, and badly eroded, slope of the Elk Hills at an elevation of 115 m. (380 ft.), some 27 m. (90 ft.) above the nearby valley floor. Its precise provenience is unknown but presumably it was deposited in the immediate vicinity of the place of discovery.

Crescents typically are viewed as dating from the late Pleistocene or early Holocene and have been used as marker artifacts, along with fluted projectile points, for cultures dating to those times. Such artifacts are known from California and the Great Basin (Tadlock 1966; Davis et al. 1969; Davis and Panlaqui 1978:Table 9; Moratto 1984:76) and often are discovered in association with fossil lakeshores.

In the southern San Joaquin Valley, crescents have been reported from surface contexts near Tulare (Gifford and Schenck 1926:86; Riddell and Olsen 1969:126, Fig. 4h, k-o) and Buena Vista and Kern lakes (Gifford and Schenck 1926:85-86, Plate 26). Wedel (1941:99-100, Plate 39w-y) recovered six fragmentary specimens from Site No. 2 (CA-KER-60) at Buena Vista Lake, mostly from depths of 36 to 40 in. (90 to 100 cm.). Three crescent fragments were discovered in the buried component of CA-KER-116 at Buena Vista Lake (Fig. 1; Fredrickson and Grossman 1977:Table 2, Fig. 4d-f), radiocarbon dated to