

# Book Reviews

## Life of an Anthropologist

**Alfred Kroeber.** *A Personal Configuration.* THEODORA KROEBER. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1970. xii, 292 pp., illus. \$7.95.

Alfred Kroeber is rated by most scholars as the greatest anthropologist of his time. Theodora Kroeber, his second wife, was his devoted companion from their marriage in 1926 until his death in 1960 at age 84. Since the length and closeness of Theodora's relationship to Alfred exceeded that of any other person, her qualifications as his biographer are unique. She is, in addition, a seasoned writer, with a very perceptive but restrained style well suited to biography, as her earlier biography of Ishi, the last "wild" California Indian, so amply demonstrates. In her biography of her husband she has wisely refrained from introducing amusing or bizarre trivia that might have increased the book's appeal to the general reader but would have blurred the main focus on Kroeber's development as a scholar. Though she lacks a professional degree in anthropology her competence in this field, as shown also in her earlier book *The Inland Whale*, is greater than she admits in her preface.

The first chapter, dealing with Kroeber's youth, is enlightening both in its account of the influences that shaped his intellect and personality and as a study of certain aspects of American culture in the late 19th century that are insufficiently known to the present generation. The young Alfred was fortunate in his background of an upper-middle-class, bilingual family, early private tutors, and excellent schools—all free from the racial, national, and religious prejudices to which most children are exposed. Living near Central Park, he also had access to the major museums that had already been established in New York. After earning his M.A. degree in literature at Columbia University, Kroeber began his study of American Indian languages with Franz Boas, under whose direction he took his Ph.D. in anthropology in 1901.

In the same year he was appointed

to the faculty of the University of California at Berkeley, where he taught until his retirement in 1946. Anthropologists throughout the world are familiar with the fruits of his research, which continued for the rest of his life and encompassed many cultures, but Theodora quotes him as saying that his wide-flung historical and theoretical interests were rooted in his fieldwork with the living Indians of California.

Theodora's narrative of Kroeber's personal life is especially interesting to those of us who knew him largely as an exacting mentor in the lean and competitive period of the economic depression of the 1930's. It shows more than the usual amount of warmth and affection toward his family, which often included relatives beyond his wife and children. It also explains the personal circumstances of his excursion into another intellectual field.

Earlier than most social scientists, Kroeber had been reading the works of Freud and his disciples. A series of traumatic experiences, which would have impaired the productivity of a less dedicated scholar, led him into a more active concern with psychoanalysis. His first wife died in 1913, after several years of a lingering illness. He was also deeply moved by Ishi's death in 1916. Furthermore, from 1915 to 1922 an ear infection caused severe symptoms including partial loss of physical equilibrium.

Partly because his condition had been incorrectly diagnosed as psychogenic, Kroeber began a psychoanalysis in 1917 during a stay in New York. The next year, in California, he retained his position as director of the museum but took a two-year leave of absence from teaching and the chairmanship of anthropology in order to practice psychoanalysis. He returned to anthropology officially after the leave but continued to treat some patients until 1922. During this period of illness and his venture into psychoanalysis he continued to write in anthropology, producing important articles and three books, of which two, the *Handbook of the Indians of California* and his 1923 *Anthropology*, are among his most distinguished works.

Later sections of this biography throw light on other aspects of Kroeber's scholarly development. A short bibliography at the end lists a selection of his major works and also a few articles about him, written mostly after his death. Anyone who was personally acquainted with Alfred Kroeber will find his knowledge of the man considerably augmented by Theodora's account. For those also who never had the privilege of direct contact with him, her book provides a meaningful addition to the history of anthropology.

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## Prehistoric Technology

**Tools of the Old and New Stone Age.** JACQUES BORDAZ. Photographs by Lee Boltin. Published for the American Museum of Natural History by the Natural History Press, Garden City, N.Y., 1970. xiv, 146 pp. \$5.95.

Bordaz describes some of the main categories of prehistoric stone tools of Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic age, with special reference to the technology of their manufacture, the raw materials of which they were made, and, where possible, the ways in which they were used. This main theme is developed against the background of the archeological sequence of those periods, which is described in broad outline in terms of changing subsistence patterns as well as changing prehistoric cultures. At the introductory level, this is a much more attractive approach to such a vast subject than the typological and taxonomic one so often used in the past.

The result is a good short introductory book, with plenty of accurate information on the technological side, and it is pleasing to note that much of the incidental discussion of important, more general aspects of the Paleolithic sequence is in reasonably up-to-date terms, in view of the rapid progress of discovery and research on the one hand and on the other the time a book must spend in the press. There is a long list of works for further reading, which students should find very useful in spite of a number of curious omissions. Among the illustrations, most of the line drawings are at least adequate; photographing flints satisfactorily presents many problems, and one feels that the quality of reproduction here may not