

Margaret Mead:

An American Phenomenon, 1901-1978

Margaret Mead strongly identified herself with America and American culture. She felt that she came from the heart of American society. Her grandmother, Martha Ramsay Mead, who gave her most of her early education, grew up in the little town of Winchester, Ohio, which had been founded by two of Margaret's great-great grandfathers. Margaret's father was a professor of economics at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania; her mother was a sociologist whose doctoral dissertation dealt with the adaptations of Italian immigrants to American life; and her grandmother was a schoolteacher who developed advanced ideas on the proper education of children. Thus Margaret was a third-generation woman social scientist.

With such a family background, Margaret never had an identity crisis. Nothing within herself distressed her. She knew who she was and where she came from. In her autobiography she wrote "I was always glad that I was a girl. I cannot remember ever wanting to be a boy. It seems to me this was because of the way I was treated by my parents. I was a wanted child, and when I was born I was the kind of child my parents wanted."

Her parents and grandparents were religious skeptics, but Margaret at the age of 11 had herself baptized in the Episcopal Church and all her life she retained a firm religious faith. She enjoyed going to church because it contributed to her sense of rootedness. Her faith was emotional rather than intellectual, and she felt no inconsistency between her dedication to science and her religious feeling.

When she was young, Margaret painted; wrote poetry, the beginnings of a novel, and short plays for school occasions; and she edited the *Barnard College Bulletin*. But she became convinced that she did not have the "superlative talent" needed to become a professional artist or writer. She chose science instead, in the belief that "science is an activity in which there is room for many degrees, as well as many kinds, of giftedness." Yet she could not forgo her love of words and imagery, or her artist's

delight in creating a world out of impressionistic details. No one who has read the beautiful opening pages of *Coming of Age in Samoa* can fail to be caught by her poetic spell. Her artistic impulse made her one of the great interpreters of anthropology to the wider public.

Few scientists have demonstrated so clearly the uses of the seeing eye and of imagination in both science and art. After each of her field studies of the societies of the South Seas, she published a technical monograph which contributed to anthropological theory, as well as a book for more general readers. *Coming of Age in Samoa* was followed by *Social Organization of Manu'a*, and *Growing Up in New Guinea* by *Kinship in the Admiralty Islands*.

In much of her scientific work she was decades ahead of her time, for example, in her interest in comparative education and her concept of culture as a communication system. Her far-reaching contributions to anthropology are well illustrated in *Socialization as Cultural Communication*, edited by Theodore

*Chairman of the Department of Anthropology, University of California, San Diego.

Schwartz*, in which each of the contributors based his article on her seminal ideas.

One of her colleagues has described her fieldwork as having a style that no one could emulate, compounded by talent, energy, and rapidity. In everything she did, she worked very fast, with self-confidence and an absence of self-doubt. She was not introspective, and she possessed an inner harmony.

Margaret began early to devote part of her time and energy to the American Association for the Advancement of Science. She became an officer of Section H-Anthropology, in 1950. She served on the Council of the Association, on the Board of Directors, and on several special committees before and after her election to the presidential succession in 1973. Her long relationship with the AAAS gave her an almost proprietary interest in the organization. This made for some interesting exchanges when she joined the Board of Directors as president-elect.

Perhaps because of the extreme difference in our bodily proportions (I am six four and she was about five one), which may have reminded her of her third husband, Gregory Bateson, who is even taller than I, she loved to argue with me on almost any subject. She would make some outrageous statement, which I would gullibly challenge, and we were off on what other Board members called

AAAS Socio-Psychological Prize

Submission of entries in the 1979 competition for the AAAS Socio-Psychological Prize of \$1000 is invited. Established in 1952 with funds donated by Arthur F. Bentley, the prize is awarded annually for a meritorious paper that furthers understanding of human psychological-social-cultural behavior. The prize is intended to encourage in social inquiry the development and application of the kind of dependable methodology that has proved so fruitful in the natural sciences.

Entries should present a completed analysis of a problem, the relevant data, and interpretation of the data in terms of the postulates with which the study began. Purely empirical studies, no matter how important, and purely theoretical formulations, no matter how thoughtful, are not eligible.

The winning entry will be selected by a Committee of Judges selected by a management committee consisting of officers of the AAAS Sections on Anthropology (H), Psychology (J), and Social and Economic Sciences (K), and the Executive Officer of AAAS. The prize will be presented at the 1980 Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California, 3-8 January.

Unpublished manuscripts and manuscripts published after 1 January 1978 are eligible. The deadline for receipt of entries is 1 July 1979. For entry blank and instructions, write to the AAAS Executive Office at the AAAS address.

our "Margaret and Roger" act. Underneath this verbal horseplay, we were fond of each other and shared much mutual respect.

Whenever the situation called for it, Margaret's practical common sense was a tower of strength. During the 2 years we spent together on the Board of Directors, the AAAS was on the edge of serious financial trouble, and it was necessary to be very careful in all our activities. Our principal task, together with my predecessor as president, Leonard Reiser, was to find a new executive officer to replace William Bevan, who had resigned to accept a distinguished professorship at Duke University. Margaret took this very seriously. Her profound good judgment about individuals and her eloquent tongue were among the decisive factors in our choice of Bill Carey and in persuading him to take the job.

Because she was so earnest and plain-spoken in her public appearances, it was easy to believe that she had little sense of humor. But in fact she could make a wickedly funny speech when she wanted to. Her quick wit and ready rejoinders, delivered in the flat, clear voice that was so familiar to millions of radio listeners, enlivened many of our dinners after a daylong meeting of the Board.

Margaret Mead had a remarkable ability to bring her insights from comparative studies of the small diverse cultures of Oceania to bear on the problems of contemporary America. She became a kind of modern oracle because of her sensitiv-

ity to what was significant in American life. Her book, *Culture and Commitment*, written in the 1960's, dealt with the relations between the generations just at the time when these had become critically important in the United States.

She developed into what can best be described as a public citizen. She never held political or bureaucratic office, yet she influenced many aspects of national and international policy. This influence might have been greater if she had not talked and written so much on so many different matters. But Margaret was an "idea person," who had more ideas in a month than most people have in a lifetime, and like the other rare people who have many original ideas, she was often unable to tell her good ideas from her bad ones.

Above all else, Margaret loved conversation. If she had had her way, her whole life would have been spent in good talk. She hated being alone and on her trips she didn't like to stay in hotels.

Her autobiography, *Blackberry Winter*, and her more recent *Letters From the Field* give insights into her own self-image. Two aspects are particularly notable: her concern about her posthumous reputation and her interest in herself as a woman. Three long chapters in *Blackberry Winter* describe the birth and upbringing of her only child, her daughter Dr. Mary Catherine Bateson (linguist and anthropologist, a fourth-generation woman social scientist) and of her granddaughter, Sevanne Margaret Kassarian.

Margaret received almost every honor that can be given to an anthropologist, but these honors came late. She was elected to the National Academy of Sciences at the age of 73, with one of the highest votes ever recorded in an Academy election. A special tribute came at the AAAS annual meeting in Boston in 1976, when an entire daylong symposium was devoted to "Margaret Mead: Fifty Years of Anthropology."

It is likely that Margaret cherished the hope she would be able to die in the field and not in a hospital. She and Ted Schwartz, with several colleagues, were planning to meet during the Christmas holidays in Manus to round out her years of study of the culture of the islanders. The others are carrying out this plan. But Margaret will not be there.

—ROGER REVELLE

Asian Regional Seminar Held in New Delhi

Representatives of 18 developed and developing nations met in New Delhi, 4-6 October 1978, to address the applications of science and technology in the development process in Asia.

The Indian National Science Academy (INSA), the Indian Science Congress Association (ISCA), and the AAAS co-sponsored the seminar, with support for international travel from the U.S. National Science Foundation. The seminar's objectives were to provide specific examples of new programs, projects, and technologies; to identify problems and priorities in applying science and technology; and to draft recommendations for government policy planners.

The seminar was one in a series of meetings convened by nongovernmental organizations in preparation for the U.N. Conference on Science and Technology for Development to be held in Vienna in August 1979.

Participants came from Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, and the United States.

The discussions were organized into four working groups: energy, natural resources, and environment; food, population, and health; settlements, transportation, communication and education; and technologies for development.

It was felt that the uses of science and technology should be assessed on a more individual basis by each country, weigh-

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San Francisco Meeting in 1980

It is not too early to begin thinking about the next Annual Meeting in San Francisco (3-8 January 1980). If you have suggestions for a symposium for the San Francisco Meeting, please submit the following information no later than 15 March 1979:

- a. Name, address, affiliation, and phone number of person who would arrange the symposium (if more than one arranger is proposed, specify which one is to receive correspondence).
- b. Title of proposed symposium
- c. Brief (about 200 words) statement of the purpose of the symposium.
- d. List of probable speakers (do not confirm until the proposal is accepted), their affiliations, and probable topics.

All proposals are subject to review, and if the material submitted is inadequate for the purpose of reviewing, the proposal will be returned. Notification about acceptance, conditional acceptance, or nonacceptance will be sent about the beginning of May. Preliminary programs with confirmed speakers are due in mid-June. Final program copy, suitable for publication, is due in early August.

We are particularly interested in symposia which deal with the latest developments in science and technology and the implications of these developments for society.

Send your proposals to the AAAS Meetings Office at the AAAS address.