

Mary Haas and Berkeley Linguistics

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Mary Rosamund Haas left us on May 17, 1996, after a long illness. At the age of 86 she was one of the last survivors of the generation that produced the flowering of linguistics in this country during and immediately after World War II.

This is not the place or time to expatiate on America's very subsidiary role in the historical, neogrammarian Germany-centered linguistics of the 19th and early 20th centuries; it is sufficient to name Whitney of Yale and Buck of Chicago in this connection. But I cannot omit Berkeley's off-center role as a place where the study of American Indian languages was carried on as a part of anthropological studies and where Alfred Kroeber was a leader in such study.

By the early decades of the 20th century, much of the fire had gone out of the 19th century linguistic efforts in this country. However, though Kroeber's linguistic work in California had almost ceased in favor of more strictly ethnological concerns, a new figure had emerged. At Columbia University, the physicist Franz Boas (Ph.D. Kiel, 1881) had, because of fieldwork as a geographer in the country of the Eskimos and Kwakiutl, become a full-fledged anthropologist. This intense interest in the culture of non-literate 'primitives' led straightway into the recording and analyzing of linguistic texts. This all-embracing anthropology was what he taught at Columbia.

Among his linguistic pupils was Edward Sapir, whose career included finally a professorship at Chicago (1925-1931) and then a Sterling professorship at Yale (1931-1939). Sapir taught and brought on to the doctorate a rather small, but very select, group of pupils. At Mary's death, this group has now completely passed away. My own claim to be the last surviving member of the group of Sapir's pupils rests not on my doctorate in Sanskrit in 1931, but on my having attended some of Sapir's lecture courses in linguistics after 1931.

Here perhaps I may digress a little. In India there is a playful, but still serious, habit of tracing the succession of teachers and pupils in a form called (in Sanskrit) the guru-sisya-parampara 'the succession of pupils of a teacher.' As a teacher of linguistics as it centers on India I am given a place in such a succession. The habit will bear transplanting into American Indian linguistics: Boas is the original guru in that parampara (since he had no teacher in linguistics) and his pupil is Sapir, and Mary was Sapir's pupil. Many in Mary's memorial gathering are Mary's sisyas and their sisyas in succession. The line of teachers and pupils centered on Berkeley forms a perfect guru-sisya-parampara.

Mary's linguistic training started, as did that of so many others in that period, in the study of Indo-European comparative grammar, first at Chicago and then at Yale. When Sapir moved to Yale in 1931, she followed him there, continued linguistic training in a broad way, and in 1932 began her fieldwork on the American Indian languages of the Southeastern USA. This culminated first in her Ph.D. (1935) on the Tunica language of Louisiana and later in her all-embracing recording and reconstructing of the Muskogean language family and other languages of that area, an important part of the legacy she has left behind.

When the linguistics community of this country was coopted into the military effort of World War II, from 1941 on, Mary worked on the language of Thailand, first at the University of Michigan, then in the Army Specialized Training Program at Berkeley. This work on Thai

continued after the war in a lectureship at Berkeley (1945), combined with general linguistics teaching. In the general cut-throat atmosphere in the linguistics world after the war, Berkeley's interest in Thai lost out to that at Michigan. However, Berkeley's great post-war expansion, due in large part to the GI Bill and to California's population explosion, included a great increase in interest in linguistics, and (thanks in part to Kroeber's long-continuing concern) especially in the recording and study of the California Indian languages. A special, non-departmental program in linguistics was established, through which William Bright earned his B.A. in 1949 (Ph.D. 1955). Mary was appointed Assistant Professor of Oriental Languages in 1948.

The general national expansion in linguistics already referred to as 'cut-throat' led in 1953 to Berkeley's establishment of a linguistics department, of which of course Mary was one of the founding members as Associate Professor (Professor in 1957). Her devoted work in the running of the department, the teaching of students, and the training of the long succession of graduate students who won Berkeley degrees continued until her retirement in 1977. She was one of the notable gurus in the succession of linguistics teachers in this country in this century.

There is another feature in Mary's career which needs emphatic mention. The intense national competition which led to the department's establishment in 1953 led at the same time to those concerned (especially Kroeber, Mary Haas, and myself) stressing to the university administration that a survey of California Indian languages should be set up, to be conducted through the department and funded in such a way that trained and interested students should be enabled to make field trips to record these languages, especially those in danger of near extinction, and to analyze them with a view to using them for degree dissertations and eventual publication. The administration agreed, the funding was provided (and has continued ever since), and has yielded in the neighborhood of 40 (or is it many more?) published monographs and many papers and articles, and the survey still continues (now as the Survey of California and Other Indian Languages) to yield most valuable linguistic material. As the department's most notable specialist in the geographically delimited subfield, Mary was of course the ideal person to plan and administer the survey -- *si requiris monumentum, circumspice* 'if you wish to see her monument, look at UCPL.' Few of us achieve such a monument.

It hardly needs saying that Mary herself did fieldwork in the California languages and used her great knowledge of the North American Indian languages as well as the results of others' work in the Survey to add much that was both original and definitive to our knowledge of these languages and their history. Not being myself a specialist in this field, I can hardly speak profitably of her work in detail. However, I should say that I find most spectacular her demonstration (1958) that two of the California languages, Yurok and Wiyot, were indeed, as Sapir had suggested, closely related to the Algonquian languages of the northeastern and north central parts of the continent. Mary's work will always occupy a central and preeminent place in the linguistics of North America.

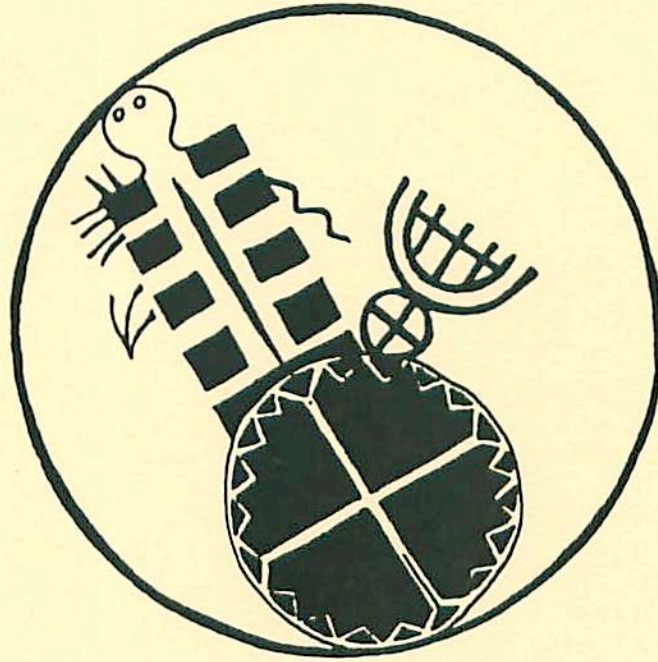
Mary's contribution to the university included of course the usual stints of administrative work -- chairman of the department for the statutory period, member and chairman of the committee for the Faculty Research Lecture (her lecture was in 1964-5), co-founder and director of the Language Laboratory. Upon her retirement in 1977 she received the Berkeley Citation, which is the equivalent of an honorary degree (for it is many years since such a degree has been given at Berkeley). In 1984 she was elected a Berkeley Fellow.

The lengthy list of her honors is in your hands.

And so, goodbye, admiringly and affectionately, to Mary, colleague and teacher of us all.

REPORT 10

**SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA AND
OTHER INDIAN LANGUAGES**



**THE HOKAN, PENUTIAN &
J.P. HARRINGTON CONFERENCES
And
THE MARY R. HAAS
MEMORIAL**

**June 28-29, 1996
University of California at Berkeley**

Leanne Hinton, Editor

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of

MARY R. HAAS

Professor emeritus of Linguistics

at the University of California at Berkeley

INTRODUCTION

This volume of the Survey Reports is the Proceedings of the Hokan, Penutian and J.P. Harrington Conferences, held at the University of California at Berkeley on June 28-29, 1996. Part I includes five of the papers that were presented at that conference, and also a paper by George V. Grekoff, who was unable to attend the conference but arranged in advance to submit an article for inclusion in the Proceedings. During the conference, a memorial session was also held for Mary R. Haas, who died a month before the conference. Part II of this volume consists of the presentations that were made about her life and research.

We gratefully acknowledge grants from Joseph Cerny, Vice Chancellor for Research and Dean of the Graduate Division, and William Simmons, Dean of Social Sciences, that helped make this conference possible.

Leanne Hinton
Volume and Series Editor

THE HOKAN, PENUTIAN AND J.P. HARRINGTON CONFERENCES

and the

MARY R. HAAS MEMORIAL SESSION

June 28-29, 1996
University of California at Berkeley, Alumni House

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PART II

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