THE UNNAMING OF KROEBER HALL

LANGUAGE, MEMORY, AND INDIGENOUS CALIFORNIA

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For Leslie

Every story should have a foundation; explain where something began and came from, and if you do not know the foundation, do not try to teach.
—Robert Spott, 1941

What is that thought so great and so sacred that cannot be expressed in our own language, that we should seek to use the white man's words?
—Juan Dolores, 1901

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ABBREVIATIONS

ALK	A. L. Kroeber Papers, 1869–1972. BANC MSS C-B 925, Bancroft Library, UCB
ALKFP	A. L. Kroeber Family Photographs, ca. 1870–1969. BANC PIC 1978.128, Bancroft Library, UCB
ASTP	Army Specialized Training Program
BIA	Bureau (formerly Office) of Indian Affairs
BNRC	Building Name Review Committee, UCB
CLA	California Language Archive, Department of Linguistics, UCB
DAR	Daughters of the American Revolution
DKH	Documents relating to the unnaming of Kroeber Hall (Garrett 2021)
ED	Ethnological Documents of the Department and Museum of Anthropology, 1875–1958. BANC FILM 2216, Bancroft Library, UCB (cited by reel and folder number)
FBP	Franz Boas Papers. Mss.B.B61, American Philosophical Society
GPAHP	George and Phoebe Apperson Hearst Papers, 1849–1926. BANC MSS 72/204c, Bancroft Library, UCB
KFP	Kroeber Family Papers, ca. 1802–1972. BANC MSS 82/132 c, Bancroft Library, UCB
LSA	Linguistic Society of America
NAA	National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NCIA	Northern California Indian Association
PAHMA	Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, UCB
RDA	Records of the Department of Anthropology, 1901–. CU-23, University Archives, Bancroft Library, UCB

TKP	Theodora Kroeber Papers, 1881–1983. BANC MSS 69/145c, Bancroft Library, UCB
TKQP	Theodora Kroeber Quinn Papers, AA-15, Arizona State Museum Library, University of Arizona
UC(B)	University of California (Berkeley)
UCOPAF	UC Office of the President, Alphabetical Files, 1885–1913. CU-5, Series 1, University Archives, Bancroft Library, UCB
UKLG	Ursula K. Le Guin Papers, ca. 1930s–2018. Coll. 270, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wrote this book in response to events at the University of California, Berkeley, where I work in the linguistics department. The discourse surrounding those events often expressed a sense of history that did not match my own understanding of my predecessors' work. Even within a single university community, people imagine their pasts very differently. This book is my way of grappling with dissonant memories of early-twentieth-century California anthropology and linguistics.

Though I write about many subjects here, I have a linguist's perspective, interests, and disciplinary formation. I am not trained in anthropology, history, Native American studies, cultural criticism, or archives scholarship. I know my background shows, but I have tried to be aware of multiple points of view, kinds of learning, and personal experiences, and to find empathy for others.

My thinking about Indigenous language work owes an incalculable debt to Yurok and Karuk friends and teachers. Those who shared their language with me include elders who have passed on: *'aawokw* Aileen Figueroa, Ollie Foseide, Jimmie James, Glenn Moore Sr., Archie Thompson, and Georgiana Trull (Yurok); and *kêemachkoo* Lucille Albers, Sonny Davis, and Vina Smith (Karuk). They were generous hosts and teachers whose foresightful commitment to their families and communities will matter for generations to come. And among dozens of Karuk and Yurok people I have learned with, I am especially grateful to Leo Canez, Victoria Carlson, Susan Gehr, James Gensaw, Annelia Hillman, Julian Lang, Carole Lewis, Barbara McQuillen, Seafha Ramos, Crystal Richardson, *'aawokw* Kathleen Vigil, and Brittany Vigil-Burbank. They have helped teach me what linguistics is for.

At Berkeley, I am lucky to be part of an eclectic, vibrant community of linguists. I am particularly grateful to the colleagues and students with whom I have often discussed matters that I write about here. They include

Patricia Baquedano-López, Chris Beier, Leanne Hinton, Larry Hyman, Peter Jenks, Keith Johnson, Lev Michael, Line Mikkelsen, Beth Piatote, Hannah Sande, and students in seminars on language revitalization and on the languages of California. I would not have been able to undertake this project without all I have learned from them.

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The late Victor Golla and Ira Jacknis taught me much over the years, in person and through their writing, about California linguistics and anthropology, respectively. In 2021, they both passed away in their intellectual prime. Some of what follows was written as imagined conversations with Ira or Victor. I wish these could have come to pass.

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At the MIT Press, I am grateful to Phil Laughlin, Haley Biermann, and Jim Mitchell, who have made the process of turning this into a real book as painless as I could imagine. Madhulika Jain at Westchester Publishing was very helpful throughout the production process. For meticulous copyediting and indexing, I am grateful to Susan Campbell and Erika Millen, respectively. For permission to reproduce manuscript images and photographs from several Kroeber collections in the Bancroft Library, thanks to Arthur Kroeber on behalf of the Kroeber family. Thanks also to Scott Braley and Irene Yi for sharing their marvelous photographs.

This book is partly about recent events. I began writing it in the summer of 2020 and finished in 2022. A few additions and corrections were possible in March 2023 before the final text went to the compositor. All websites and links cited in the notes and references were checked in September 2022 and were then correct and accurately quoted.

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I live and work on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded land of the Ohlone people, whose historical relationships with the land continue today. The language of this land is Chochenyo.

Ohlone creativity and resilience inspire Indigenous people worldwide. I hope that I and others at the colonial university that occupies their land, and in the many archives, museums, and scholarly disciplines that possess and use the cultural and linguistic heritage of Indigenous people, are also inspired to better serve those people's needs by listening, by hearing them, and by welcoming them as colleagues, students, teachers, and the owners of that heritage.

THE UNNAMING OF KROEBER HALL

1

KROEBER HALL

> "Finding what other makers made, speaking it, printing it, recovering it from neglect or oblivion, relighting the light of the word—this is the chief work of my life."
> —Orrec Caspro, in Ursula K. Le Guin, *Voices*, 2006

In 1901, the University of California initiated a systematic program to document the cultures and languages of California's Indigenous people and to collect their artifacts and even their ancestral remains. Today, as a result, more than any other American university, UC Berkeley has museums and archives filled with its own state's Native cultural heritage. The ownership and uses of this heritage have been contested for over a century.

I have taught at Berkeley since 1995. In 2019, an Indigenous California language activist and cultural leader visiting a seminar in my department said she felt physically sick on the Berkeley campus. Being present in places where I find joy in working reminded her of thousands of Native American ancestral remains stored in boxes on campus, and of objects of cultural value that are no longer with their makers. It recalled three centuries of colonization that have decimated and transformed Indigenous communities, and decades of extraction of tangible and intangible cultural heritages.

The materials and documentation of cultural heritage now stored at universities like Berkeley were taken or recorded by scholars and scientists who believed that Indigenous cultures would vanish as modernity effaced local ways everywhere. They assumed that what they ignored would be lost forever and that humanity would benefit from the knowledge and cultural expressions they collected. They also had privileged positions and the freedom to make choices in a destructive colonial regime. How we

remember their choices, how we name their work, and what we forget or leave unnamed are the central questions of this book.

Over many years and from multiple perspectives, at least since Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969), numerous writers have critiqued the early-twentieth-century interactions of academic and Indigenous communities in the United States. Within this broad landscape, the California situation is distinctive. Only there did a public university, in the immediate aftermath of genocide, take up what it described as the mission of documenting its state's Indigenous cultures and languages. UC peers early in the twentieth century were private universities in the eastern United States, like Columbia and Harvard, which showed no interest in the Native people of their regions.[1]

No small part in this history is played by my academic field, linguistics. American linguistics coalesced from two disciplines, one in anthropology (linguistic anthropology) and the other (historical linguistics) traditionally concerned with European and Asian languages with long written traditions. The Berkeley campus has two buildings that were named for foundational figures in linguistics: two of the twenty-nine signatories of the 1924 call for a Linguistic Society of America (LSA). That event marked the beginning of the professionalization of American linguistics and the end of an era when linguistics, anthropology, and folklore had far more porous disciplinary boundaries than they do today.[2]

The two academic disciplines that gave rise to linguistics in the United States are represented by the UC signatories of the LSA call: Benjamin Ide Wheeler, a historical linguist who was UC president from 1899 to 1919; and the anthropologist and linguist Alfred Kroeber, LSA president in 1940. Kroeber was one of only four LSA presidents who also led the American Folklore Society (in 1906) and the American Anthropological Association (in 1917–1918), signifying a combination of commitments that is rare today.[3] As if to recognize the two disciplines, Wheeler Hall was dedicated in 1917, and Kroeber Hall in 1960, a few months before Kroeber's death (see figures 1.1–1.2).

Berkeley's anthropology museum and departments of anthropology and art practice occupied Kroeber Hall for sixty years. In January 2021, after a decision promoted by campus activists; supported by hundreds of campus community members and multiple student groups; endorsed by a high-level committee of faculty, students, and staff; and made by

Figure 1.1
Dedication of Kroeber Hall, March 1960 (*Oakland Tribune*, 7 March 1960, p. 12). Left to right: UC Berkeley Chancellor Glenn Seaborg, Alfred Kroeber, UC Regent Catherine Hearst, and UC President Clark Kerr.

the university administration, Kroeber's name was removed from the building.

This book is about Alfred Kroeber's legacy and the unnaming of Kroeber Hall. Kroeber spent many years documenting California's Indigenous languages and cultures, and trained or inspired students and younger colleagues to do the same. The result was a unique corpus of written materials and sound recordings, accessible and valued today. In both academic and popular work, Kroeber argued forcefully against contemporary racism and eugenics; he collaborated with Indigenous scholars and uplifted their work, and advocated for Native cultural and land rights. How did he come to be excoriated as "racist" and "astonishingly detached from ethical standards" at his own institution? Why did its

Figure 1.2
Alfred Kroeber at Kroeber Hall, 1960 (ALKFP Box 1). The lettering on the building was later replaced and raised (as seen in figure 10.1).

leaders conclude that Kroeber's "views and writings stand in opposition to our university's contemporary values"? (For sources for these quotations, see below in this chapter and chapters 9–10.)

The specific claims about Kroeber's work offered in support of unnaming Kroeber Hall, accepted by many at Berkeley and beyond, are erroneous or unsubstantiated. Yet the actions, choices, and words of anthropologists and linguists over more than twelve decades have led to harm, including understandable anger and pain for many people, especially Indigenous people, both within and outside the academy. At issue, I argue, are impacts of the presuppositions and research choices of memory documentation ("salvage" ethnography and linguistics) as defined by Franz Boas, executed more fully by his student Kroeber than by any other Boasian, and motivated by what the linguist Michael Krauss (1992:8) later called an "urgent [need] to document languages before they disappear." His word *disappear* is critical, and other terms it evokes: *death*, *extinction*, *loss*, and (their precursor) *endangerment*.

While I disagree with many of the specific assertions made by advocates of unnaming, I do believe it was right to unname Kroeber Hall. That name brought pain to those who should feel welcome. In the twenty-first century, an edifice with anthropological tenants need not take its name from an era of extractive, patronizing academic attitudes toward Native people. Monuments have meanings in the present that it can be injurious to ignore.

Kroeber's assumptions and choices expose his intellectual blind spots, as ours will reveal ours. Seeing his clearly today, we can readily imagine other pasts. In an iconoclastic time, I will show, he was an expedient target at a university unprepared to recognize its own foundational, ongoing, systemic contributions to the displacement and erasure of Indigenous people. It also served the interests of non-Indigenous academics to imagine that Kroeber's failings lay in concrete past actions that are easy to deplore rather than in presuppositions and research choices that remain common in 2022. In short, the unnaming of Kroeber Hall represented a serendipitous alliance between activists' desire for salutary change and elites' need to deflect a threatening discomfort.

A PROPOSAL TO UNNAME KROEBER HALL

At Berkeley, a committee appointed by the chancellor evaluates proposals to unname buildings that are named after people who may no longer seem deserving. On 1 July 2020, the Building Name Review Committee received a "Proposal to Un-Name Kroeber Hall" (DKH 1). I will call it the Proposal. Its authors were unnamed and remain unknown, but it came with a letter of endorsement signed by influential campus figures, including both the executive vice chancellor and provost and the chair of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act Advisory Committee.[4] It was submitted at the same time as proposals to unname two other buildings, and in the wake of an earlier unnaming (chapter 10).

An important backdrop to the unnaming of Kroeber Hall is the history of difficult relations between California's Indigenous people and UC Berkeley. This has many dimensions, including a sense of marginalization among Native students, staff, and faculty, but a focus has been Berkeley's immense collection of ancestral remains (chapter 8). The university is widely recognized as having been slow and obstructionist in returning

them to tribes since the 1990 passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). This has led to a lack of trust among tribes and even within the university. In 2019, for example, I attended a southern California meeting of UC librarians discussing cultural heritage collections. When I said I thought current Berkeley campus leaders had a more positive approach to repatriation than their predecessors, there was spontaneous disbelieving laughter around the table.

Berkeley discontent with the Kroeber name goes back several decades, mostly driven by the treatment of Ishi, a Yahi man who lived in the UC anthropology museum between 1911 and 1916 (chapter 7). Gerald Vizenor's 1995 play *Ishi and the Wood Ducks* includes a satirical scene, set in Kroeber Hall, in which a Committee on Names and Spaces considers a proposal by Kroeber himself to rename the building Ishi Hall. In 1999, a statement that Kroeber and others' treatment of Ishi was "abhorrent" was endorsed by nineteen anthropology faculty members. A decade later, in 2011, Berkeley cohosted a conference on Ishi; and, in 2012, a campus theater staged a play about Ishi (with Kroeber as a character) that was widely deplored as offensive and for which the theater department apologized. In 2018, the *Daily Cal* student newspaper published a commentary criticizing Ishi's treatment as well as an editorial that urged renaming Kroeber Hall and other buildings named for those who "oppressed and discriminated against people of color."[5] The Proposal itself called Kroeber's research practices "reprehensible," writing that his work "had fundamentally flawed assumptions and was astonishingly detached from ethical standards."

After the Proposal was submitted, comments were invited; 85 percent of 595 comments favored unnaming, including 230 of 264 that were made public (DKH 2). Dozens of public comments criticized Kroeber as "racist"; one referred to his "racist, inhumane pseudoscience." Unnaming was endorsed by the anthropology department faculty (Hirschkind 2020a,b); by student groups, such as the American Indian Graduate Student Association, the Berkeley Native American Law Student Association, and the Graduate Assembly; and by the *Daily Cal,* which stated that Kroeber "studied Indigenous Californians using a starkly racist ideology" (Shok 2020) and "devoted his life to acts or advocacy of racial oppression

and subjugation—desecrating and violating Indigenous lands and lives" (Bassett 2020).

Many public comments emphasized repatriation failures. A group of Native students pointed to ongoing impacts (Cesspooch et al. 2020):

> UC Berkeley's administration, students, faculty, and Anthropology Department continue to benefit from stolen land and the genocide of Indigenous peoples. Berkeley's lack of improvement on the repatriation process demonstrates that this is not a distant legacy, but an entrenched and continuous reality. Native students at Berkeley have long voiced these concerns and the proposal to un-name Kroeber Hall and cleanse the campus of celebratory reminders of this past . . . is consistent with a long legacy of Native advocacy.

Their emphasis on repatriation was echoed by the anthropology faculty, whose statement devoted more words to that matter than to Kroeber. In addition to numerous comments from students, staff, and alumni, almost a dozen public comments came from scholars who had published about aspects of Kroeber's work or in areas related to it; most favored unnaming. Two of these were also published as blog posts; the phrase "cancel culture" was used.[6]

A Berkeley policy states: "The legacy of a building's namesake should be in alignment with the values and mission of the university." These values take the form of a list of principles, such as, "We affirm the dignity of all individuals and strive to uphold a just community in which discrimination and hate are not tolerated." The naming policy has an important lacuna; its original formulation referred to a person's "principal" legacy. In either case, the implication is that naming is less about historically situated individuals of the past than it is about what they evoke in the present—their legacies.[7]

One complexity was noted by the task force that established the present Berkeley framework. No honoree, it wrote, "should be expected to reflect modern values in every aspect of their life." For example, it reported that a Yale University committee found that Frederick Douglass's "principal legacies as an abolitionist and an advocate for civil rights overrode some of his problematic statements contrasting African Americans with American Indians."[8] The Yale committee itself pointed out that "interpretations of . . . principal legacies are subject to change" and may vary from person to person: "Determining the principal legacies of a

namesake obliges the University to study and make a scholarly judgment on how the namesake's legacies should be understood. Prevailing historical memories may be misleading or incorrect, and prevailing scholarly views may be incomplete."[9] Where misleading memories replace scholarly judgment, decisions about naming may cast more light on the judges than on the judged.

The Proposal identified three actions as showing that Kroeber did not live up to Berkeley's values. First, it said, his "treatment of . . . Ishi and the handling of his remains was cruel, degrading, and racist." Second, "Kroeber and his colleagues engaged in collection of the remains of Native American ancestors, which has always been morally wrong." And third, he "pronounced the Ohlone to be culturally extinct, a declaration that had terrible consequences for these people." On these three criticisms, see chapters 7, 8, and 9, respectively.

The Proposal also raised more general critiques. One was that Kroeber accepted and (in his writing) spread the "myth of the vanishing Indian" (see chapter 2). Another was a metacritique: he "is a hostile symbol to many Native Americans and it is important to remove his name from the building." In other words, the mere connotations of his name today—what it evokes in the twenty-first century, fairly or otherwise—warranted the unnaming of Kroeber Hall.

I evaluate all these critiques below, in the context of Kroeber's work and early UC history. The specific claims itemized above do not stand up to scrutiny, but the general critiques have some validity. As I also discuss, the limitations of early-twentieth-century research practice raise significant questions for linguistics and allied fields in the present.

ALFRED KROEBER

Born in 1876, Kroeber grew up in a middle-class German American household near Central Park in Manhattan. His mother was born in New York to German parents; his father was an importer of European clocks who had come to the United States as a boy of ten. Alfred's first language was German, and he had a German accent when he first went to school at age nine. He described the humanistic German-Jewish milieu of his childhood and schooling as "the carry-over of the Europe of Voltaire" and "the mellow golden sunset of the German civilization of

Kant and Goethe" (T. Kroeber 1970:27). The first book he read was an abridged German translation of *Robinson Crusoe*, and even as a child he was especially interested in linguistic patterns.

Kroeber entered Columbia College in 1892 and received bachelor's and master's degrees in literature. In 1896, he took an anthropology class from a new faculty member, Franz Boas. Adapting methods of classical philology, Boas had students read texts in Indigenous languages of North America to figure out grammatical patterns. Much later, Kroeber (1955–1956) recalled having been "enormously stimulated." Discovering grammatical structure was "fascinating," he added; "Boas' method was very similar to that of the zoologist who starts a student with an etherized frog or worm and a dissecting table." The simile is telling: the "science of man" was about specimens, not people. Yet philological analysis to infer linguistic structure can be satisfying and even inspiring, as it was to Kroeber (and to me ninety years later). Linguistic work, he wrote, "largely steered me into becoming an anthropologist." Kroeber's first research project, assigned by Boas, involved documenting Inuktun (Polar Inuit) language and short texts with several Indigenous people infamously brought to New York by the polar explorer Robert Peary.[10] To this day the texts exist only in manuscript, as in figure 1.3, though English translations of most were published.[11]

As a PhD student in anthropology (figure 1.4), Kroeber did fieldwork in Montana, Oklahoma, and Wyoming and wrote a dissertation on Arapaho art (1901a). He spent the fall of 1900 in California, and moved there in the summer of 1901 for what would be the rest of his life. There he met his first wife Henriette (Rothschild), whom he married in 1906. She contracted tuberculosis in 1908 and struggled with it for five years before dying in 1913.[12] Kroeber married his second wife Theodora (Kracaw Brown) in 1926, and with her raised four children (figures 1.5–1.6).[13] Three children became professors (of history, literature, and psychology); the fourth was a celebrated writer, Ursula Le Guin. Alfred died in 1960, Theodora in 1979, and the four children between 2009 and 2019.

This is not a biography or a full account of Kroeber's anthropological work. It seems useful, all the same, to lay out my sense of his career's arc as it relates to language and the other themes of this book. Oversimplifying, I have come to think of that arc as having four phases.[14]

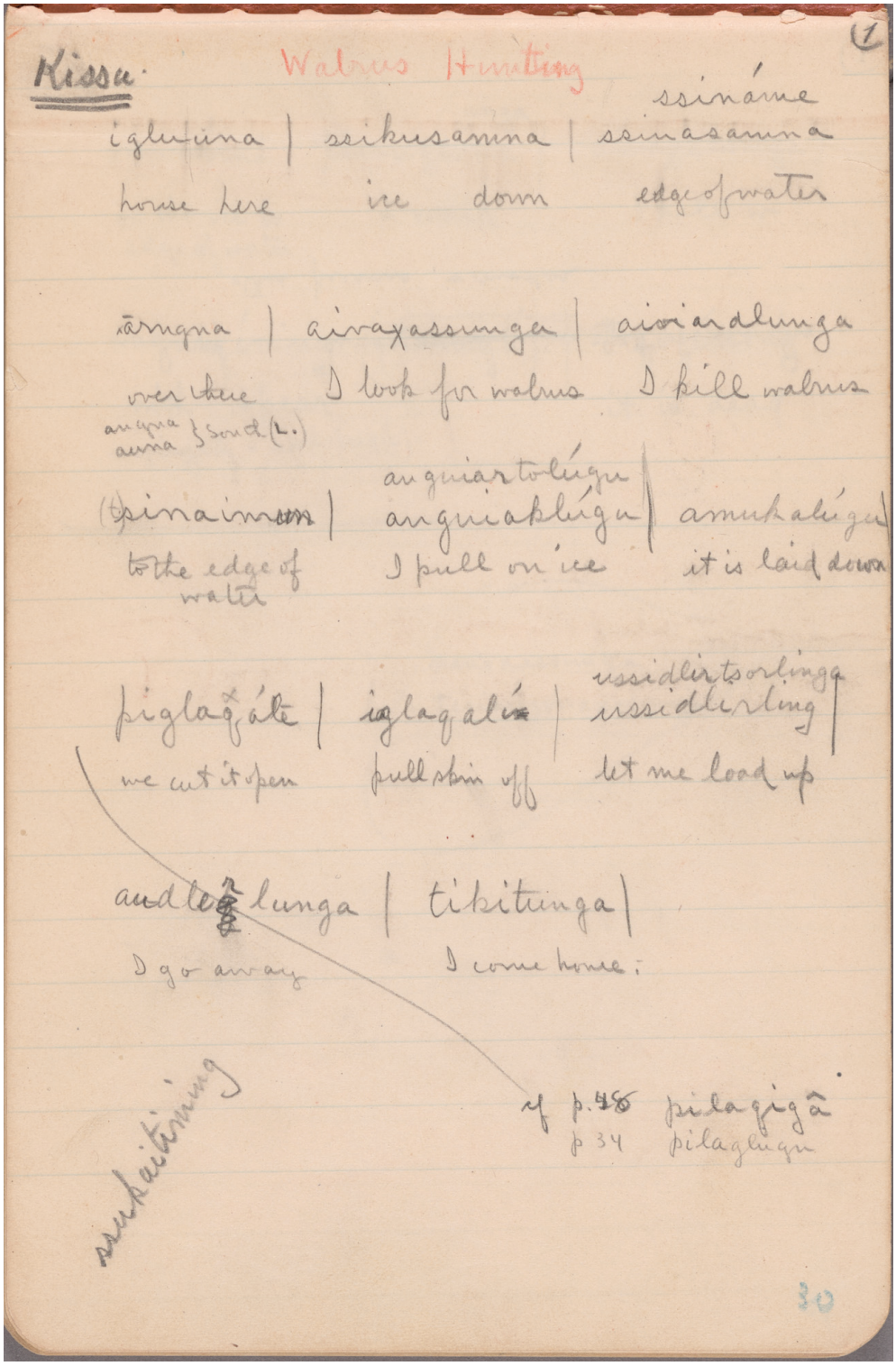

Figure 1.3
Information about walrus hunting, told by Qisuk in Inuktun, October 1897 (ALK Ctn 9:25, p. 1). This was the first Indigenous text that Kroeber transcribed.

Figure 1.4
Alfred Kroeber as a PhD student, 3 December 1899 (ALKFP Box 1).

From 1900 into the 1910s, Kroeber focused primarily on Indigenous California, along the philologically grounded lines of his graduate training. This was the period of most of his California fieldwork, as he documented languages, texts, and cultural practices, analyzing language relationships in order to explain linguistic and cultural diversity. Institutionally, he worked to build an anthropology program and maintain an amicable relationship with its benefactor, maintaining it against serious challenges to his vision.

Kroeber's writing then moved in broader and more synthetic directions, and generally away from linguistic work. Beginning in 1915, he published an influential series of papers that served to demarcate anthropology as an academic field within the social sciences and to highlight what might now be called its anti-racist implications (see chapter 9). A New York sabbatical yielded a book (1919b) on the people of the Philippines; with Zuni linguistics and ethnography and Mexican and

Figure 1.5
Kroeber family, St. Helena, 1931. With Alfred and Theodora were the four Kroeber children: from left, Theodore, Clifton, Ursula, and Karl.

Peruvian archaeology, he also moved beyond California in his firsthand research. Kroeber seems to have been looking for new intellectual and personal centers of gravity during what Theodora Kroeber (1970) called his "hegira," in the wake of the deaths of Henriette in 1913 and Ishi in 1916 (see chapter 7). He suffered at that time also from undiagnosed Ménière's disease, which for several years caused pain and enough vertigo that "onlookers assumed he was drunk" (T. Kroeber 1970:87), and which left him deaf in one ear.

Kroeber's prominent books of the 1920s reflect the first two phases of his career. His *Handbook of the Indians of California* (1925, completed in 1919) is a summation of his research since 1900, informed by the work of many others. His textbook *Anthropology* (1923) gives a sustained argument in favor of cultural relativism and against racist "Nordicism" and a eugenics movement that was popular even among progressive elites (chapter 9).

Though he influenced many students, Kroeber was not a great teacher. The anthropologist Katharine Luomala (1986) recalled an undergraduate

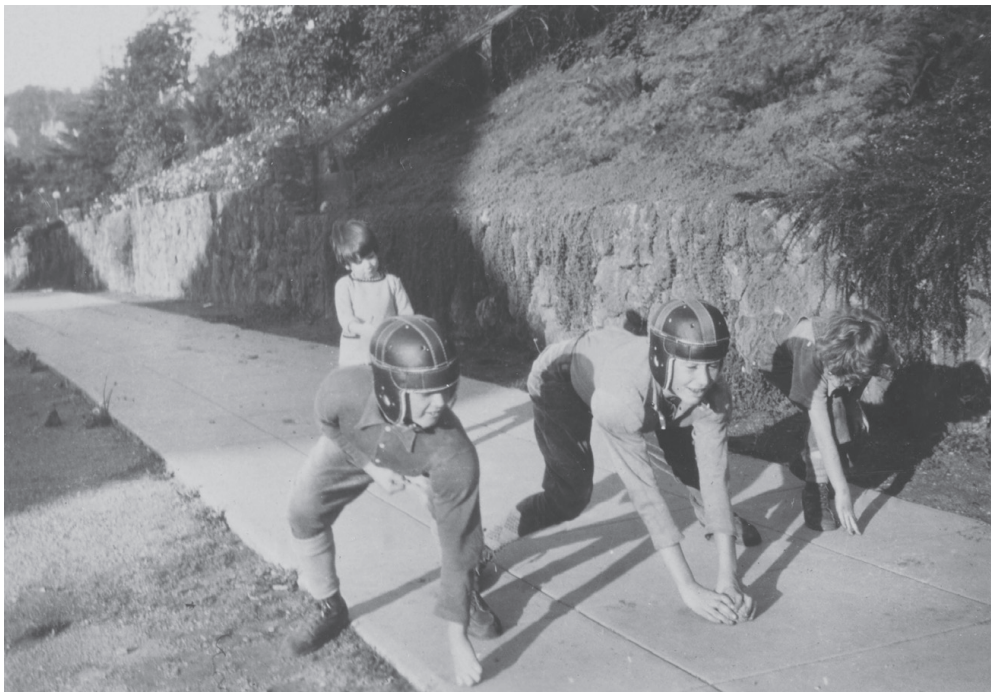

Figure 1.6
Kroeber children playing football, Arch St., Berkeley, November 1932 (ALKFP ALB v. 4). Front, from left, Theodore, Clifton, and Karl; Ursula was the quarterback.

class in the late 1920s. Kroeber had a "charismatic" look, but "strolled back and forth on the platform talking as if to himself. . . . There was no substance. I guess he saved his energies for his books." As a mentor, he is said to have inherited Boas's sink-or-swim style. Cora Du Bois called him a "rather casual advisor" who, asked for guidance in field ethnography, "looked thoroughly perplexed" and eventually said, "Be sure you have a good supply of pencils and note books."[15]

In the 1930s and 1940s, Kroeber's books *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America* (1939, completed in 1931) and *Configurations of Culture Growth* (1944a) were concerned with identifying distinctive complexes of cultural elements, what Kroeber (1957) later called *styles*, and with describing the processes by which "cultures" or "civilizations" accrete such elements, a concern already present in his *Handbook* and other work. Institutionally, Kroeber's commitments in this period included a long involvement with the research infrastructure of linguistic and anthropological fieldwork in North America. The sources of research

funding had shifted from the individual capitalists and other philanthropists who supported their favorite projects in the 1890s and 1900s to endowments and foundations they created, like the Carnegie Corporation. Kroeber was prominent among the anthropological and linguistic elites who assigned funds and research projects to younger scholars.

In the last part of Kroeber's career, especially after his 1946 retirement, he returned at last to his formative interest in languages and texts. He resumed Mojave fieldwork in 1953 and 1954 (when he was in his seventies), edited a Luiseño grammar, and published a significant series of papers on general linguistics. The late 1940s and the 1950s also saw the formal revival of linguistics at Berkeley; Kroeber was an advocate for creating a new linguistics department that housed a program of systematic California language documentation. Finally, he spent a significant part of this period preparing Karuk, Mojave, and Yurok text collections that would not be published until after his death.

Born ten months after Kroeber died, I am removed in time from what I write about. I can only draw inferences about his and others' intentions and reactions, but the written record masks much that I would like to know. His daughter wrote that he "didn't reminisce" and that "getting his own past out of him was like pulling hen's teeth" (Le Guin 2004b:11). Subtitled *A Personal Configuration*, Theodora's biography is striking for its emotional detachment; it is "not intimate in any sense which would betray Kroeber's lifetime preference for keeping his intimately personal life intimately personal" (1970:viii).

With his "rambunctious" family, as his son Karl Kroeber (2003a:142) put it, Alfred showed a "mischievous sense of humor." With colleagues, he was inclined to be practical and conciliatory. His correspondence is voluminous but emotionally reserved, except when writing to his sister Elsbeth, his daughter Ursula, or an intimate friend like Berna (Rudovic) Pinner, with whom he was gossipy; or when complaining about a bête noir like the eccentric linguist J. P. Harrington, who alienated almost everyone. Kroeber was politically liberal but exhibited what Julian Steward (1973:22) called "extreme conservatism" in institutional matters. Regna Darnell (2000a:262) saw him as a "peacemaker" who urged Boas not to speak out in a cause Kroeber saw as perilous. A doggedly rational person who "shaved with Occam's razor" (Le Guin 1991), he clung to an ideal of scholarly detachment that may now seem either

charming (in its bygone optimism) or misguided (given the social impacts of inaction).

A public reserve is not unexpected in someone raised in the 1880s in a middle-class family of recent immigrants; even Kroeber's daughter called him "a Victorian . . . and a bit of a Puritan."[16] To students he could be "mean if he wanted to and very strict," said Du Bois (Seymour 2015:74). Prudishness clouded his judgment—famously, in his evaluation of societies that practice girls' puberty ceremonies, which he called "one slight grade lower in the scale of civilization" (1925:135). In the 1920s, he was censorious of the bohemian lifestyle of his former student L. S. (Nancy) Freeland and her husband, the writer and linguist Jaime de Angulo, saying he would not advise students to visit their Berkeley home without "a very serious warning" because "morally and socially, the milieu was undesirable." Privately he called de Angulo an "unutterable swine," often expressing disappointment that Freeland had left Berkeley's graduate program.[17] (In 1935, he would call her Sierra Miwok grammar "one of the best executed pieces of work in American linguistics, and perhaps the very best expressed one."[18])

Kroeber's record of supporting women was mixed. After meeting his family in 1903, Pliny Goddard wrote him that "I don't understand your attitude toward girls with such sisters as you have" (30 October, ALK Box 16:4). A decade later, regarding a job at the UC anthropology museum, Kroeber told his colleague T. T. Waterman that "women are unqualifiedly barred" (21 May 1913, RDA Box 85). In 1929, he told Elsie Clews Parsons that "if ever Anthropology gets to be prevailingly a feminine science I expect to switch into something else" and that he thought she would too (13 April, RDA Box 118); and in 1932, his brilliantly original student Lila O'Neale was hired not in anthropology but in UC's household arts (later decorative art) department.[19] It is possible to see why George Foster, a student in the 1930s, could say Kroeber was "basically antagonistic to women" (Buzaljko n.d.a).

Yet Kroeber was also an advocate for many women students, beginning with Freeland, who entered the graduate program in 1916.[20] He coauthored papers with his students Anna Gayton, Catherine Holt, Gladys Nomland, O'Neale, and Jane Richardson Hanks, mostly with them as first authors. Hanks recalled his "devotion" and "loyalty" to a "brilliant group of women students" in the 1920s and 1930s, while the Harvard

anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn was said to have "teased" Kroeber "about his women Ph.D.'s" (T. Kroeber 1970:263).[21] Laura Thompson, whose Berkeley PhD was from 1933, recalled in 1984 that "Kroeber certainly created an environment in which women could become anthropologists, a very rare possibility in those days. In fact, I left Harvard and went to Berkeley because of the treatment of women in the Department."[22]

In later years, Kroeber worked to get a Berkeley position for the linguist Mary Haas, who would in the 1950s and 1960s succeed him as the dominant figure in California language documentation.[23] And after he retired, he strongly supported an effort to hire Du Bois, writing that she would be "quite a prize" for Berkeley and was "universally respected . . . as having perhaps the best intellect in her age-group in the profession."[24] If Kroeber could not easily imagine women in his profession during the early decades of his career, his sensibilities seem to have changed by the 1940s, when he was happy that his academic successors might be Du Bois and Haas.

ARCHIVAL LEGACIES

A century after Kroeber and half a century after Haas, many steps led me in turn to California language documentation. I came to Berkeley in 1995 as a historical linguist whose research was based on texts in languages like Hittite and Ancient Greek. My academic heritage was in one of the two founding strands of American linguistics, Kroeber's and Haas's in the other. Three Berkeley experiences changed my path. One was a seminar taught by my colleague Leanne Hinton with two elders who shared their Yowlumne knowledge.[25] In it, I learned how the language differed from earlier descriptions, raising questions about linguistic change in an era of social transformation. A second was exposure to Berkeley's collections relating to the Indigenous languages of California, including extensive materials in my own department. No linguists were studying these; I remember thinking that if our archive instead held Hittite tablets, it would be full of European scholars. A third transformative experience was helping at the Breath of Life Archival Institute (chapter 4), where I witnessed inspiringly creative uses of archival documentation. On their own, Indigenous language learners and activists were engaged in the philological work that many academic linguists seemed to disdain.

My shift to Yurok and (later) Karuk philology was partly an accident, based on personal connections, but it was serendipitous. I would not have started to work with Yurok had it not been for my colleagues Juliette Blevins and Leanne Hinton; nor would I have begun working with Karuk but for Susan Gehr and Ruth Rouvier in the Karuk Tribe language office and my colleagues Alice Gaby and Line Mikkelsen. And I would not have worked with either language were it not for the generosity of many Karuk and Yurok people who welcomed me into their homes and communities.

Yurok is the language Kroeber worked most with, so archival material from this language is especially rich at Berkeley. At first I studied this on its own, as a bundle of decontextualized artifacts. Over time, thanks to students, colleagues, and above all Yurok people themselves, I came to see how rewarding it is to make textual and linguistic description accessible to many audiences, especially those whose parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents created the material it is based on. I had a similar experience a decade later when I began work with the Karuk language. I came to collaborate with Indigenous people from an atypical starting point, the archive, but it has helped me appreciate continuities and changes across more than a century of detailed records in complex, heterogeneous communities.

I have two roles in relation to archival language material. One is that of a contributor and user. As a linguist, I have worked with elders who wished to record their languages and stories for their families and communities, and with learners, teachers, and activists passionately committed to continued language vitality based partly on those records. I also have a broader role as the director of Berkeley's California Language Archive, which began with Haas's and some of Kroeber's collections and has grown over decades of donations from researchers and community members.

When I first became involved with an archive, I was, like most linguists, naïve about cultural heritage in the aftermath of genocide. In 2013, I had a memorable experience when an Indigenous linguist was donating unique recordings of elders speaking her language. She would have digital copies, and we agreed that she could always change her mind and take the originals back; but she was sobbing as she signed a gift form. I have thought about this for a long time, and I believe she was in tears because a colonial institution is able to archive what her own tribe lacks the resources to curate. To secure her heritage, she felt she had to give it up. So her

recordings joined the many thousands of Indigenous words, baskets, and bodies that fill the shelves of colonial museums and archives. As Yakima elder Russell Jim said more than thirty years ago (Hunn 1990:67–68), "First the whiteman takes our land, then he takes our fish, now he wants to take our language."

I say all this to clarify my position. My academic life since 2001 has crucially involved Indigenous languages. Like many linguists, I love learning about grammar, vocabulary, and usage and glimpsing connections among languages, texts, and sociocultural patterns. Some of my work involves collaborating with Indigenous teachers, activists, and learners to support language reclamation, often by making documentation accessible and useful. I do this with documentary corpora created in research by Kroeber, his students and colleagues, and their successors over many years. A sympathy for Kroeber thus colors how I write, but it is not always shared by people in the communities whose intangible and tangible heritage he collected.

To state matters bluntly, two framings compete to structure Kroeber's legacy. Each has its narrative. In one narrative, anthropologists and linguists have been part of the apparatus of state-sponsored dispossession and genocide. This is a story of the control and objectification of nonwhite bodies by invaders and their willing or unwitting scientist collaborators, whose consignment of Indigenous people to "extinction" validated the theft of land, ancestral bodies, and cultural patrimony. Where this narrative resonates, it is understandable that Kroeber's name evokes pain.

In another narrative, early-twentieth-century academic and public discourse was marked by virulent racism that some anthropologists and linguists opposed. Kroeber and others sought to show that Native Americans, widely dehumanized as infantile or barbaric, have "civilizations" (his word) as complex and diverse as any, and languages and artistic and cultural traditions as worthy of appreciation and study as anyone's. Indigenous people, traumatized by genocide and marginalized by oppression, seemed to be losing cultures and languages, so Kroeber spent a career recording knowledge he thought would otherwise perish. In this narrative, the records of stories that he wrote down and encouraged others to write down, told by scores of culture bearers in dozens of languages, are an enduring legacy.

This book is my attempt to understand the dissonance between these narratives—between my own sense of Kroeber's legacy and different perspectives expressed, often by people I admire, in recent discourse at Berkeley and beyond. I believe Kroeber intended during his career to help Indigenous collaborators and friends. Yet it is undeniable that many of their descendants, and others in their communities, feel that his work brought harm. Part of what interests me is a disjuncture between intention and impact that can affect any of us, even as we try to be empathetic and mindful toward others.

The unnaming of Kroeber Hall involved judging Kroeber's values, so it is important to try to understand why he made the choices he did. Why did he think his work mattered? What did he feel it was for? His reticence and reluctance to reminisce are obstacles in this context. Kroeber rarely explained the broader goals of his work, apart from dicta to the effect that anthropology promotes "tolerance" (1923:506). In chapter 11, I consider his more personal reflections; I sometimes also view him through the lens of Ursula Le Guin's fiction. The two had long discussions of language and literature. In 1955, for example, she wrote him with questions about his new paper on statistical inferences of linguistic time depth.[26] In the same year, she read a book on literary, philosophical, and linguistic semantics, with selections from Boas, the logician Alfred Tarski, and the linguists Leonard Bloomfield, Edward Sapir, and Benjamin Lee Whorf, among others. Reacting to what she saw as a turn away from cultural interests and toward formalism, she told Kroeber that linguistics was apparently becoming "a self-contained, self-feeding, & conceivably completely abstract science . . . with a *very* narrow basis." He responded that he mostly agreed: for many linguists, "the precision has become an obsessive end in itself."[27]

Stories were a major part of Kroeber's relationship with his daughter. In her childhood, she recalled, he told Native American creation stories "by the campfire, on a dark and stormy night."[28] Later, they talked and wrote to each other about poetry and fiction (and he served as her literary agent). About Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–1955), she wrote her parents in 1956 that she "hardly spoke during the three days" it took her to read its three volumes. It was better than Lord Dunsany "because [it was] longer, more consistent, & more absolutely convincing. . . . Forgive the raving," she eventually concluded, "but how often does one read a

new book that one *knows* to be a 'great' one?" Kroeber responded six days later that had just read Tolkien's first volume "with absorption, but with not quite the fascination of Dunsany."[29]

Le Guin's own imaginative writing features prominent characters who do just the kind of language and text documentation that drew her father into his profession. Unlike him, they clearly articulate a set of humanistic values that strike me as central in her oeuvre and his. One such figure is Orrec Caspro, the protagonist of *Gifts* (2004a) and a major character in its sequel, *Voices* (2006). He is a storyteller and collector whose self-description in *Voices* plainly expresses what its author also valued: "Finding what other makers made, speaking it, printing it, recovering it from neglect or oblivion, relighting the light of the word—this is the chief work of my life" (75).

My main argument here is that the "chief work" of Alfred Kroeber's life was to document the words of Indigenous people and find spaces for them to tell their stories. This is his primary legacy in the twenty-first century. At a time of rapid cultural transformation, he and his students recorded narratives, life histories, songs, law, oratory, conversational practices, and systems of geographical knowledge from dozens of communities in California and elsewhere. This unique material has incalculable value today. Kroeber did not anticipate all the uses of what he recorded, but he knew it should not fall into "neglect or oblivion."

My argument is not that Kroeber simply let "the subaltern speak," in Gayatri Spivak's (1988) phrase. This is hardly straightforward, as she has shown. Kroeber's collaborators were constrained by an oppressive colonial system. In that system he had more power, of course, but was himself also constrained in some ways. The cultural and linguistic documentation that he and his collaborators assembled emerged from interactions to which each participant brought goals and presuppositions that were structured by their unequal positions. Reading and listening to what they recorded requires thoughtful attention to the positions and commitments of all participants, not least of which was Kroeber's deeply rooted belief that Indigenous cultural expressions were intrinsically worth preserving.

My argument is also not that Kroeber "saved" languages, stories, or cultures. The outside (white) "savior" trope is demeaning and inaccurate. It is not outsiders but Indigenous people who do the work of relighting their words.[30] Kroeber had his own agendas, and was no savior. But

there was enough overlap between his goals and his collaborators' interests for his work to be critical today for many who are reclaiming what he recorded.

A second argument concerns the long process that ended in 2021 with the unnaming of Kroeber Hall. Such moments are in the air in the early 2020s, but this specific process also goes back to the nineteenth-century foundation of a land-grant university by a nation and state that displaced Indigenous people to take their land, devastated their cultures and families, and often tried to end their lives; and to the subsequent anger and pain brought about by university actions of the past fifty years. Changing the name of one building at an institution that still celebrates its colonial project and honors those responsible for colonial depredations was, I contend, a way to deflect attention from self-examination.

ROAD MAP

The rest of this book has four main parts. In part I, "Inventing California" (chapters 2–3), I contextualize Kroeber's work historically, socially, and intellectually.[31] California was "invented" inasmuch as its boundaries correspond to no geological, ecological, or precolonial sociocultural lines. Invaders constructed it for their own purposes; Native people had to choose how to respond to overwhelming outside forces. Inventing California crucially also included the building of institutions like universities and museums, and the removal to them of Indigenous cultural heritage.

In part II, "Indigenous Voices" (chapters 4–6), I write about work with languages and texts. I describe the documentary corpora of sound recordings and written materials that Kroeber and his colleagues and students assembled in their work with Indigenous people throughout California and elsewhere. Their work was novel and created unique resources that are in continual use by Native communities and others today. In facilitating and promoting the language work of Juan Dolores (Tohono O'odham) and Gilbert Natches (Numu), Kroeber also played a role in the beginning of written literature in two Indigenous languages.

Part III, "Native Bodies" (chapters 7–8), concerns Ishi's life in the Bay Area and the collection of ancestral remains in early UC archaeological projects. Key questions concern anthropological and archaeological ethics a century ago and Kroeber's culpability in relation to actions that

would be inexcusable if they happened today. Times are very different now, however, and I argue that Kroeber's choices were ethical given the circumstances he faced.

In part IV, "Indian Land" (chapters 9–10), I write about actions Kroeber took in the service of Indigenous land (and other) rights, and I evaluate the assertion that he had an impact on negative government decisions. This is unfounded. I also write about the broader picture of UC relations to Indian land, and rehearse well-known facts about the sources of UC wealth. Here I examine the decision to unname Kroeber Hall, and show how the university used it to avoid discussion of its responsibilities.

Finally, in a conclusion (chapter 11), I reflect on the implications of the Kroeber Hall history for universities and for academic practice in fields like my own, linguistics. Our work is not done: it has hardly begun.

I

INVENTING CALIFORNIA

2

DISPOSSESSION AND DOCUMENTATION

> In the beginning there was no land, but water was everywhere. Sailing around on the water on a sort of a boat were two beings. These beings were the creator & maker. Their names are Wolf & Coyote. Wolf was god the master mind, who had the power to wish or create. Coyote was just the opposite. He was foolish, always causing trouble, and most of the time when Wolf would plan something worthwhile, he would always endeavor to upset Wolf's plans. . . .
>
> Seeing all water, they agreed to make land. So Wolf created a dust on the palm of his hand, and he pour[ed] the dust on the water. Land began to form, and grow bigger. Coyote asked Wolf for more land so he could walk around more, and he urged Wolf to add more land.
>
> —Mose Wayland, "The beginning," 1935

Everywhere in California, Indigenous people tell stories about their world, how and why it is, and how to live in it. In a 1935 oral-history project run by Alfred Kroeber (chapter 5), Paiute elder Mose Wayland told Lee Warlie the story that begins as quoted above.[1] I would not presume to say what it meant to Wayland, but as I now read it, it seems partly to concern the creation of social and ecological balance in domains like birth, death, food plants, and water: balance between the destructive excesses urged by Coyote and the creative work of Wolf. A balance of land and water is especially critical in Wayland's arid Owens Valley. There and elsewhere, Native people nurtured equilibria over millennia before Euro-American people came to despoil them.

The linguistic and cultural diversity of North America posed an explanatory challenge for Europeans and American settlers as early as Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787). The challenge was only intensified in California, whose Indigenous language diversity

Figure 2.1
Indigenous California languages. Kumeyaay is at least six languages (Miller 2018); Yokuts, often said to be one language (Silverstein 1978, Golla 2011:147–156), is diverse and may be better described as a group of languages. Map by Hannah Haynie and Maziar Toosarvandani, 2011, colorized by a Wikipedia user.

exceeds that of any comparable area in the western hemisphere. As figure 2.1 shows, California has more than ninety languages; they belong to twenty-one of about sixty North American language families. Its cultural complexity is similarly profound.[2]

Kroeber first came to California in 1900 as a twenty-four-year-old graduate student. In a short-term position at the Academy of Sciences

in San Francisco, he collected and cataloged cultural artifacts and worked with several Native communities in California. In August 1901, PhD in hand, he returned to what would be a lifelong position at the University of California, then only a few decades old and rapidly transforming itself from a modest college into a research institution with international ambitions. In California, Kroeber found histories and social realities unlike what he had known growing up in New York, or as a Columbia undergraduate and graduate student, or in his PhD work with Arapaho people.

GENOCIDES AND THEIR AFTERMATH

California underwent two waves of colonial genocide. First, under Spanish rule (1769–1821), Indigenous people along the southern and central coast were brought to forced-labor camps (Franciscan missions) that featured branding, flogging, rape, and stocks. Thousands died of malnutrition and disease in a system whose goal, in Kent Lightfoot's (2005:59) words, was to "transform the population of pagan Native Californians into a peasant class of Hispanicized laborers." Benjamin Madley (2019) has called the missions "California's first mass incarceration system." Indentured servitude and related practices continued after Mexican independence (1821) and after California was ceded to the United States (1848). Resistance was severely punished under all three regimes. At Mission Santa Clara in San José, for example, after the Lakisamne Yokuts rebel leader Yozcolo was killed in 1839, his severed head was displayed in front of the church for two or three months.[3]

Second, beginning in 1848, the gold rush brought hundreds of thousands of Americans to California; miners, ranchers, and others killed and displaced tens of thousands of Native people in areas outside the mission system. Over the next twenty-five years, California's Indigenous population fell from 150,000 to 30,000. Genocide—a term first applied to California by Theodora Kroeber and Robert Heizer (1968:19)—was supported by US and California government policies and funding and implemented by the US Army, volunteer militias, and vigilante bands. The barbarity of its implementation has been well documented.[4]

California is also unusual in that the United States ratified no treaties with the state's Indigenous people; land was seized without even nominal

payment. In 1851–1852, eighteen treaties were in fact signed with California Indians, who were then removed from their land, but the US Senate "rejected the treaties and . . . imposed an injunction of secrecy," as Larisa Miller (2013b:39) wrote. In the late nineteenth century, instead of treaty reservations, there were military reservations to which Indigenous people were forcibly removed; conditions were brutal and disease was widespread. As Madley (2016:306–307) described the 1860s, "Confinement to federal reservations was a death sentence for many of the state's Indian people, whether they were starved to death, worked to death, shot, hanged, massacred, or died of sickness there." Others lived in small communities (rancherias) in or near their unceded ancestral land, often working for white people; some tried to pass, or lived in hiding. Indians were mostly not US citizens and had few rights or opportunities in American society.[5] Health care and education were inadequate; languages and lifeways were suppressed; cultural and religious freedoms were denied; economies and families had been shattered.

Early in the twentieth century, philanthropic organizations clearly documented the conditions confronting California's Indigenous people. The nascent Sequoya League described one southern California reservation in a 1901 letter to the US government (Lummis 1901:459):

> The only land which the Indians cultivate—or anyone can cultivate—is of small patches in ravines. Some of these patches are but a few square yards in area. The rest is mountainous, rocky, has some trees upon it, and is suitable only for cattle. . . . There are some patches of open land near the top of the mountain, fit for the growing of grain in favorable years; but the Indians are averse to living up there because of the heavy winter snows. . . . They state, also, that the places with water are already taken up. . . . Why this worthless mountain land was ever reserved for the Indians, we confess our inability to understand. . . . In any event, it is unfit for human occupancy, and inadquate to support human life.

In a 1904 petition, the Northern California Indian Association (NCIA) drew a comparably stark picture (Heizer 1979:111). Dispossession and eviction had left Native people on "worthless tracts" of land:

> Sometimes, as at Crescent City, they have taken refuge upon the ocean beach. Sometimes, as at Seven Mile, Colusa County, on the Sacramento River, they are squatted upon a levee, or, as at Grand Island, also upon the Sacramento,

> ten or twelve families occupy an old cemetery mound three or four acres in extent, outside the levee and frequently subject to overflow, where every turn of the spade brings up the bones of their ancestors, and their only water supply is a well 10 feet deep in this charnel pit.

"Usually no Indian child is permitted to attend a white school," the NCIA wrote, due to "rampant" racism that "shuts off the Indian from all progress and even from justice."

Impacts of genocide, ethnic cleansing, and dispossession were plainly described by Kroeber. Nobody working with Indians "could escape the shattering that their society underwent and listening to tales of their deprivations and spoilation" (1962:58). And a Yurok elder's stories evoked "uncontrollable sobs . . . when his massive frame would struggle and heave for minutes" (1976:162). This was because he "felt sorry for all the people that used to live" in the places he was speaking about, according to Kroeber's interpreter Weitchpec Frank in 1902, and "for the o[ld] man (his father?) who told him the story" (ALK Ctn 12:19, p. 98). His was the trauma of a "holocaust survivor," in Thomas Buckley's (1989:440) words.

In 1906 and 1908, responding to appeals such as those quoted above, Congress allocated a total of $150,000 to buy land for California Indians. C. E. Kelsey, NCIA secretary and director for over a decade, was appointed as California special agent of the Office of Indian Affairs from 1906 to 1913. To prod Congress, Miller (2013a:3) explained, Kelsey had "orchestrated the rediscovery and removal of the Senate's injunction of secrecy from the [unratified] California Indian treaties." In his government role, he arranged to buy forty-five land tracts for rancherias, ideally land that could be farmed. The example of what is now the Blue Lake Rancheria was detailed by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (Smith 1909:132):

> Of the Indians in Humboldt county, 33 souls constitute what is known as the *Blue Lake Band*. In his efforts to procure land for these Indians, the Special Agent met with great difficulty, owing to the fact that the land of Humboldt county is largely barren ridges surrounding small fertile valleys held at $200 per acre and more. At length, however, he succeeded in obtaining an offer from the Brizzard heirs to sell 29.5 acres of land fairly suitable, and acceptable to the Indians, and this purchase has been authorized at an expenditure of $1500.

Figure 2.2
Robert Spott, Berkeley, 1933 (ALKFP ALB v. 4).

However well-intentioned the program, more than thirty people received fewer than 30 acres, in comparison to the thousands taken from them.

Many communities remained landless, including all those near the Bay Area in central coastal California, and reservation conditions were mixed, so the loss of land remained a central problem and a cause of activism. A 1926 Commonwealth Club of California meeting in San Francisco featured Yurok leader Robert Spott (figure 2.2; see chapter 6).[6] He emphasized what white people had taken (Spott 1926:133):

> In the old time, away back, we had a place where we used to go and pick berries for our winter supply. Then, again, we had a hunting ground where we killed the game for our winter supply. And again, we had a place where we used to go to gather acorns for our winter supply. Then, again, we could go up along the river to where a fishing place was left to us. But today, when we go back to where we used to go for our berries, there is the sign "Keep out." What are we going to do?

> Then again we go to where we used to hunt. You see the sign again, "Keep out. No shooting allowed." All right. We go away. Then again, we go down to where we used to fish. That is taken up by white men. What are we going to do? We cannot do anything.

Indigenous people elsewhere in the state described comparable experiences. In eastern California, Paiute elder Jennie Cashbaugh spoke in 1935 about the American invasion of Owens Valley. Her family was forced to "move off the old home grounds that we thought belonged to us" and live "where nothing could be raised" (ED 154.1):

> All we can see is "no shooting allowed," "no trespassing," what can we do, nothing, but hang our heads in shame and sorrow. For once we had lived & roamed the Valley in peace and harmony but today is selfishness and greed, nowhere to gather the seeds and herbs for medicine and food, we have to eat the white man's food entirely. We get sick the white man's sickness and get white man medicine and our lives is rather shorter than that of the old time Indians lived.

Wailacki-Concow historian William Bauer (2016:102–103) rightly called such treatment "ethnic cleansing." To quote another Paiute elder in 1935, Edith Dewey, Indians "are waiting for a just settlement from the United States for the lands it has taken from them, timber and mineral, reserving forest to rent to some one else for a large sum of money without paying the owner, the California American Indians" (ED 154.1).

At the 1926 Commonwealth Club meeting mentioned above, US and California Indian policies and practices in various domains were described and condemned. From the State Board of Health, Edward Glaser (1926:127–128) spoke about conditions in reservations and rancherias:

> Tuberculosis is a leading disease and cause of death. Quoting,—"a number of middle aged and old couples told us their children were all dead or only one or two living out of a family of 10, 12, or 14, the rest having been killed by tuberculosis during childhood or adolescence." "He sick long time, he cough lots, he get very weak and he died" was a common story.
>
> It has been estimated that fully one-third of the Indians in California have trachoma. . . . In Northern California many of the older Indians are blind or nearly so from trachoma. . . . The communicable diseases find the Indians easy prey and outbreaks of smallpox and diphtheria are not uncommon. Universal among them is malnutrition.

In education, too, circumstances were grim. The goal of US Indian education policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was cultural assimilation, if possible through boarding schools (since these removed students from families and home cultures).[7] A federal official explained this in 1885 (Thompson 2013:16):

> These schools strip from the unwashed person of the Indian boy the unwashed blanket, and, after instructing him in what to him are the mysteries of personal cleanliness, clothe him with the clean garment of civilized men and teach him how to wear them. They give him information concerning a bed and teach him how to use it; teach him how to sit on a chair, how to use knife and fork, how to eat at a table, and what to eat. While he is learning these things, he is also learning to read and write, and, at the same time, is being taught how to work, how to earn a living.

Cultural practices were deliberately shorn. A former superintendent of the Fort Mojave School wrote Mojave leader Pete Lambert in 1900, congratulating him on his new position as chief. His letter combined callous recollection and ominous encouragement (Sherer 1966:18):

> My dear Pete, . . . I can remember when I first took you into the Ft. Mohave school and what a time I had in cutting your hair for the first time. I can see now all the old Mohave women standing around crying, while you covered your long hair with your arms and told me that I wouldn't dare to cut that hair off, but the hair was cut in spite of all your efforts and the direful predictions of the Mohave women. I compelled you to have your hair cut off, not because of any objections to the long hair in itself, but merely because the long hair was a symbol of savagery. . . .
>
> When Supt. McKoin asks you to bring him 150 children or any number of children, don't rest either night or day until the Superintendant's request is obeyed.

Some children were kidnapped from their families; corporal punishment was widespread. For speaking their language, Mojave, one former student recalled that "five lashes of the whip" were the penalty for the first offense; another remembered being forced to stand on tiptoes during dinnertime with his mouth on a ring in the wall.[8]

Through such practices, the US education system had a profoundly destructive impact on Indigenous languages. A critical tool of ethnocide was language suppression, whose effects included what the Kenyan

writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) called "colonial alienation." About British rule, he wrote, "The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation" (9). Before colonization, Gĩkũyũ was the language "of our evening teach-ins, . . . our immediate and wider community, and . . . our work in the fields" (11). The imposition of English in schools "resulted in the disassociation of the sensibility of [the] child from his natural and social environment, what we might call colonial alienation" (17). For Ngũgĩ, therefore, it was essential to reclaim and revalorize Gĩkũyũ in order to overcome the "imperialist-imposed tradition of contempt for the tools of communication" and "transcend colonial alienation" (28). The same idea often underpins California language activism.

A practical goal of government schools was to train Native people for manual and domestic labor in the Euro-American economy. Schools had a military atmosphere. For example, Frances Hunter (Tule River Reservation) attended Sherman Indian School in Riverside, California during the 1920s and later recalled her experiences (Williams and Tracz 2016:83):

> When we went to school we had to get in line to march to breakfast with the band playing. Just like, you know, how the soldiers do, how they march? Every time, three times a day. . . . For breakfast, dinner, and supper . . . on Sunday, they'd have line inspection, and you'd have to stand there for two hours. [They'd] look at your shoes, see if you'd shined your shoes. See if you've got your clothes all pressed. Some of them used to faint out there.

California schools also featured what Irving Hendrick (1976:168) described as "incompetent teachers, inefficient use of supplies, and poor provision of health, sanitation, and recreation." He noted that a 1923 third-grade final examination included these questions: "Who found America? What is cotton made of? Tell what you know about Eli Whitney. What is fiber? Where do the clouds come from?" A 75 percent score was required to graduate from the third grade.

VANISHMENT AND COLLECTION

Another critical context for Kroeber's work is the "myth of the vanishing Indian," whose manifestations in the American cultural imagination were pervasive.[9] These included written work, from James Fenimore Cooper's

Last of the Mohicans (1826) to Joseph K. Dixon's *The Vanishing Race* (1913), as well as visual representations in many modalities. Edward S. Curtis (1907–1930) began a twenty-volume series with an image "meant to convey . . . that the Indians as a race, already shorn in their tribal strength and stripped of their primitive dress, are passing into the darkness of an unknown future" (vol. 1, plate 1). The financier J. P. Morgan funded Curtis's project, and President Theodore Roosevelt himself justified it in a foreword (vol. 1, xi): "The Indian as he has hitherto been is on the point of passing away. . . . It would be a veritable calamity if a vivid and truthful record of [the] conditions [of precolonial life] were not kept."

The Curtis print in figure 2.3 is representative in the nostalgia it is meant to evoke: the subject is not wearing his real clothes, for example, and Euro-American objects are absent. The photograph was taken near Walker Lake, Nevada, on Agaidɨkadɨ Paiute land. It interests me because Curtis used it to depict a precolonial Paiute artist of his imagining, ten years after Kroeber's work with an actual Paiute artist, Gilbert Natches, whose artistic style was non-"traditional" and whose language documentation reflects linguistic hybridity (see chapter 6).[10]

Vanishment was the intended outcome of US policies in areas like education and land ownership, but Native people did not vanish. They persisted and succeeded. If the year of the Wounded Knee Massacre (1890) was "a cruel, low, painful point," as David Treuer (2019:15) has written, it was "a low point from which much of modern Indian and American life has emerged." In the decades around 1900, change began through the agency of Indigenous leaders; many were active in the Society of American Indians (1911–1923).[11] Influential in California were Euro-American allies like Helen Hunt Jackson, author of *A Century of Dishonor* (1881) and the widely read *Ramona* (1884), and those who led the Northern California Indian Association and Sequoya League, which bought and advocated for land, food, and medical supplies for Indian communities. These organizations were succeeded by Indigenous-led organizations, the Mission Indian Federation (founded in 1919) and California Indian Brotherhood (1926), which were instrumental in securing Native rights and laying the groundwork for reforms such as the right to seek compensation for land seizures.

Still, the vanishment myth was ubiquitous. With it came a desire for artifacts and souvenirs of Native life, influencing academic projects in

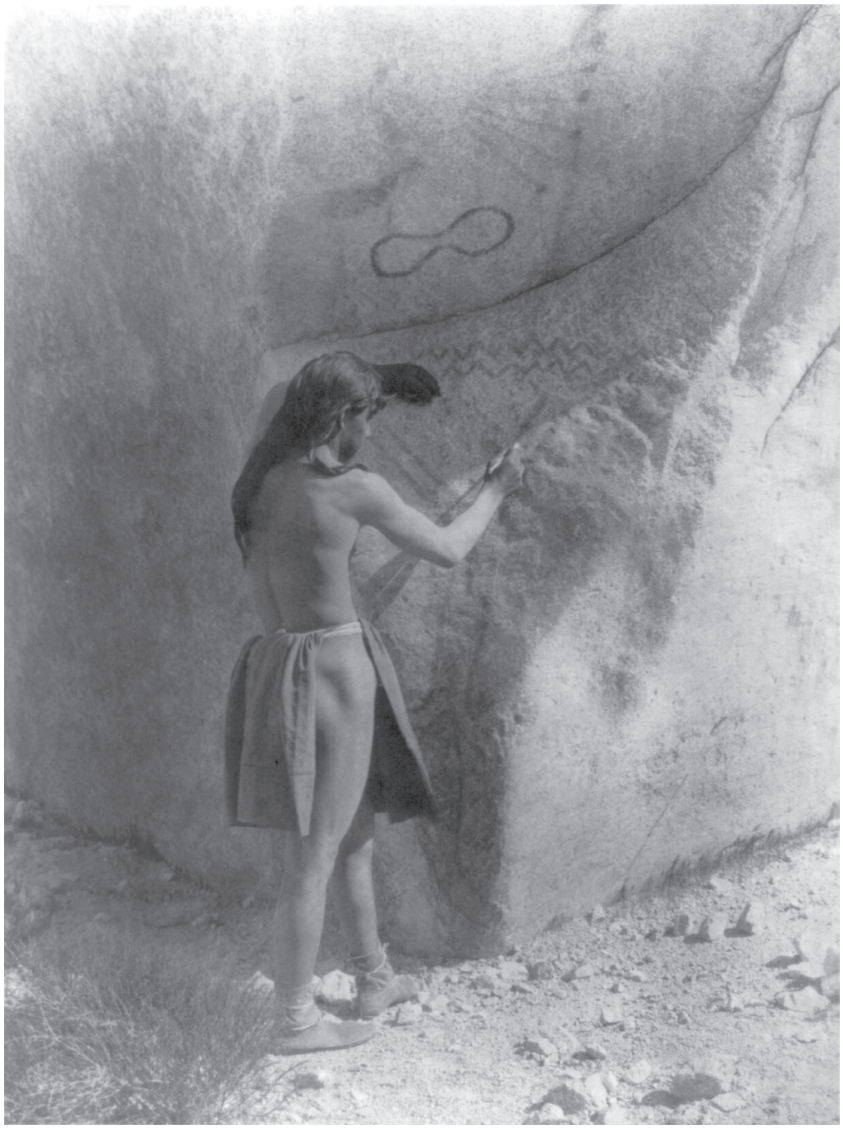

Figure 2.3
Edward S. Curtis, "The primitive artist—Paviotso," 1924 (Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/2002719666/).

at least three domains. One was language and cultural practices. Popular depictions of Indian people featured exoticizing glimpses of their cultures and languages throughout North American colonization. Long before Kroeber came to California, Alexander S. Taylor (1860–1863) published 150 articles on the "Indianology of California" in the *California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences*. A typical article includes an Island Chumash vocabulary, place names, and assorted details about physiognomy, boats,

and California condor "veneration" (Heizer 1973:40–48). Information about Indigenous lifeways and speech fed an insatiable public hunger.

A second domain was material culture. White people avidly collected objects used in Indigenous ceremonies and daily life. This included outright theft, as well as purchase that could be coercive or at unfair prices. The involvement of wealthy collectors and museums led to a profitable secondary market; even artists who sold their work freely might not see its full market value. In California, some buyers understood their activities as benefiting impoverished weavers, but the basket trade also had the effect of removing objects from their social contexts and disrupting Indigenous cultural practices. At the same time, the vitality of weaving practices was threatened by ecological damage that made it harder to find basketry materials and by American schooling that removed young people from the cultural settings where they could learn to gather and weave.[12]

Archaeology provided a third domain: digging up relics of Indigenous life, notably including ancestral remains buried over centuries and millennia. This also goes back to Jefferson, who excavated burial mounds near Monticello and has been called the "father of American archaeology."[13] In the nineteenth century, where land was taken from Native Americans, amateur archaeologists and other settlers dug for artifacts and human remains; professionals working for museums, universities, and the US government were also involved. In a mania for "skull collecting," to quote Ann Fabian's (2010) book, remains from North America and around the world found their way into museum collections.[14]

One prominent collector was the San Francisco philanthropist Ph(o)ebe Hearst (figure 2.4).[15] She bought art and antiquities from around the world, and sought a museum to house her large and growing collections. In the 1890s, Hearst began supporting UC, which put her on its board of regents. "I should like to organize a regular department of American Indian Antiquities," she wrote to UC president Wheeler (13 August 1901, UCOPAF Box 7). That department later described itself as having been established to "organize . . . several archaeological and ethnological expeditions maintained on behalf of the University by Mrs. Phoebe A. Hearst" (Putnam 1906:2). A local newspaper described her role ("Indian Lore" 1901):

> A department of Indian anthropology will be added to the University of California for the investigation of Indian remains and languages. Mrs. Phebe Hearst is the founder of the new chair and is providing the funds for the

Figure 2.4
UC leaders Benjamin Wheeler and Phoebe Hearst, ca. 1910–1915. Bain News Service (Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/2014691185/).

> maintenance of the department. The gift comes as the result of an interest she has long felt in the archaeological relics of the former masters of the country, in the investigation of which she has already spent considerable money.

The first (short-lived) US linguistics department was established at UC in the same year, headed by Wheeler. Its first PhD dissertation was by Pliny Goddard (1905b) on an Indigenous language of California, Hupa.

CALIFORNIA MEMORY DOCUMENTATION

Kroeber's teacher Franz Boas (see figure 2.5) was a foundational figure in anthropology. As a linguist, Boas formulated influential principles and parameters of language description, edited the *Handbook of American Indian Languages*, and founded the *International Journal of American*

Linguistics and edited it from 1917 to 1939.[16] Based on collaborations with Charles Cultee, Ella Deloria, George Hunt, and others, he published grammars and texts for several Indigenous languages of North America.[17] And as Roman Jakobson (1944:189) emphasized, Boas's view of phonemic and other structural patterns in language, of which speakers are not consciously aware, came down through his student Edward Sapir into American structuralism. Jakobson implied that cultural phenomena generally exhibit the same "logic of the unconscious" for Boas. An analytic goal was therefore to understand the systems underlying local cultural and linguistic facts.

The 1901 appointment of Boas's first Columbia PhD student at the University of California was arranged by Boas, Hearst, and Wheeler. As "the first Boasian," in Ira Jacknis's (2002) phrase, Kroeber worked in a way that shared many of the assumptions, positive impacts, and limitations of his teacher's research practice. Much of what has been said about Boas thus also applies to what I will call Kroeber's *memory documentation*. Especially thoughtful discussions of Kroeber's work in relation to Boasian ideas are those of Thomas Buckley (1989, 1996, 2002) and Jacknis (2002).

Several ideas and assumptions in Kroeber's work merit special mention. One is *cultural essentialism*. Boas wrote to Kroeber in 1899 that a key goal was finding what is "characteristic of the life and mode of thought of the Indian" (Jacknis 2002:523). Indian people were seen not as historically situated individuals negotiating fraught social worlds in the wake of genocide, but as potential archetypes of timeless cultures whose expressions include languages, stories, songs, ceremonies, customs, and the like. This sprang from the romantic nationalism that also inspired Johann Gottfried Herder's collection of Latvian folksongs and the Grimms' of German folklore; Child's English and Scottish ballads; music by Dvořák and Grieg; and Elias Lönnrot's *Kalevala*, built from Finnish folk traditions. Later American examples included John Lomax's documentation of Texas folk music and Zora Neale Hurston's of African American folklore. As the twentieth century unfolded, of course, a far darker side of essentialism and nationalism became plain.

In the European tradition just mentioned, as early as Herder and still for Boas and Kroeber, language and texts were seen as critical cultural expressions. Kroeber had come to anthropology from literary and linguistic study and averred in 1917 that "my actual work will always be

literature" (Golla 1984:260).[18] Boas himself explained in 1905 that nobody "would advocate the study of antique civilizations or, let me say, of the Turks or the Russians, without a thorough knowledge of their languages and of the literary documents in these languages; and contributions not based on such material would not be considered as adequate." For Indigenous American cultures, therefore, "literary material" made "available for study" would be "the foundation of all future researches."[19]

A second idea is what Marvin Harris (1968:250) called "historical particularism." An earlier idea, which dominated nineteenth-century American anthropology, was that cultural traits tend to evolve along certain universal pathways, so that societies and civilizations could be ordered according to how far they had progressed. Northern Europeans were often seen as the most advanced by advocates of this evolutionary perspective. Boas argued instead that similar traits can originate in dissimilar ways, depending on cultural context: "The same ethnical phenomenon may develop from different sources" (1896:904). Individual cultural products, expressions, and other traits are therefore not meaningful in isolation; they just "illustrate descriptions" of entire cultures (1887:486), which can be scientifically evaluated only as ensembles.

A corollary of historical particularism is *cultural relativism*. If societies cannot be arranged in an evolutionary scheme, implying a ranking of how advanced they are, then each is in principle the culmination of its own history, and there is no cross-cultural measure of value according to which it is ranked. There is no global hierarchy of more and less advanced peoples, cultures, or languages. Matti Bunzl (2004) has stressed the historical relationship between these ideas and essentialism. "In contrast to the [Enlightenment] conception of a uniform development of civilization," he wrote, Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt argued that "each human group could be understood only as a product of its particular history, propelled, in turn, by a unique *Volksgeist*" (437). (See chapter 3 of this book for some concrete consequences of historical particularism and cultural relativism.)

Historical particularism as a research program, though liberal and what would now be called anti-racist in its implications, contained within it the seeds of its own undoing. Any school that seems to eschew generalization and encourages the accumulation of particulars runs the risk of appearing to be mere list-making. In California, Kroeber and his students assembled

Figure 2.5
Franz and Gertrude Boas, ca. 1895. Albumen print by J. R. Rockwood (FBP U5-1-8).

inventories of cultural traits for specific tribes and areas. "It may seem to a distant observer," Boas (1920b:314) admitted, "that American students are engaged in a mass of detailed investigations" without broader implications. That observer was not so distant in the end. In a review of Kroeber's *Configurations of Culture Growth* (1944a), Leslie White (1946:78) complained about Boas: "Not only did he fail to see the forest for the trees, he could scarcely see the tree for the branches, or the branches for the twigs. And no two twigs were the same." He thought Kroeber was also overly attached to particulars: he "seems to love facts . . . for their own sake, much as one might love the feel of velvet or the hard, chaste beauty of porcelain"; he "worships at the shrine of induction," though "no amount of mere accumulation of facts will ever produce understanding" (83–84). This question of the reason for documentation also worried Kroeber for many decades (chapter 11).

A third idea, *vanishment*, is a corollary of cultural essentialism. Boas and Kroeber accepted the vanishment conception that was prevalent in

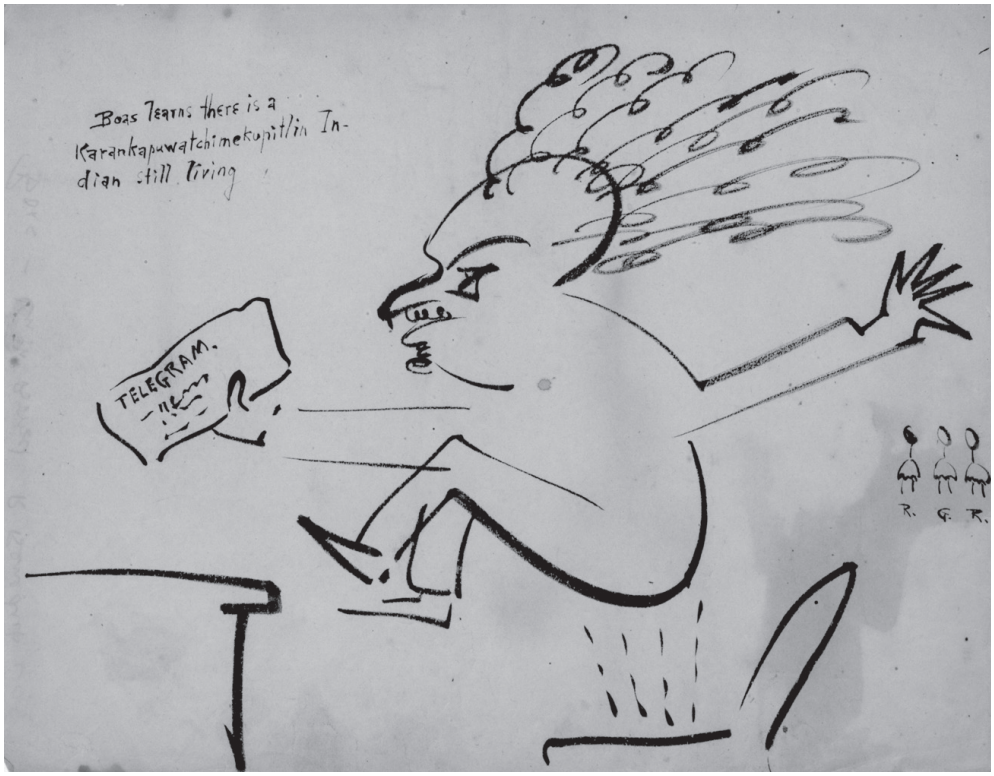

Figure 2.6
Jaime de Angulo, "Boas learns there is a Karankapuwatchimekupitlin Indian still living," undated (Jaime de Angulo Papers, MS 14, Box 7:14, Special Collections and Archives, University Library, UC Santa Cruz). Boas's students Ruth Benedict, Gladys Reichard, and Ruth Bunzel are depicted at the right.

Euro-American society: they believed that the Indigenous languages and cultures of North America were doomed to disappear. Boas stated his view in an 11 April 1901 letter to Zelia Nuttall (Farrell and Hull 2001), suggesting that UC hire one of the young "philologists" he was training, and in an 11 May 1901 letter to Hearst (UCOPAF Box 6:97):

> [To Nuttall:] In California we have an enormous mass of Indian tribes and languages about which we know practically nothing. . . . You are aware that all these tribes are on the verge of extinction, and that it is only a question of a very few years when their languages, and with them their traditions and the records of their customs, will have disappeared.
>
> [To Hearst:] With the advance of our civilization, primitive customs, habits, and traditions of the natives of our continent are disappearing rapidly, and in many regions the natives themselves are on the verge of extinction. Their