
Finding Aid to the William R. Bascom Papers, 1933-1981

Finding Aid written by Bancroft Library Staff

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Finding Aid to the William R. Bascom Papers, 1933-1981

Collection Number: BANC MSS 82/163 c

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University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California

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Date Completed:

August 2010

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Collection Summary

Collection Title: William R. Bascom papers

Date (inclusive): 1933-1981

Collection Number: BANC MSS 82/163 c

Creators : Bascom, William Russell, 1912-1981

Bascom, Berta

Extent: Number of containers: 40 cartons, 3 boxes
Linear feet: 51.2

Repository: The Bancroft Library

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Abstract: Includes papers related to Bascom's lifelong work on West African art, culture, and folklore and his teaching at the University of California, Berkeley and Northwestern University. Materials include personal and professional correspondence; field notes; lecture notes; course notes; and manuscripts of books and articles. Some papers written by his wife Berta Bascom are also included.

Languages Represented: Collection materials are in English

Physical Location: Many of the Bancroft Library collections are stored offsite and advance notice may be required for use. For current information on the location of these materials, please consult the Library's online catalog.

Access

Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], William R. Bascom Papers, BANC MSS 82/163 c, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Alternate Forms Available

Copy of "Yoruba narrow band weaving," by William R. Bascom and Ruth M. Boyer (long version with appendices) is also available on microfilm with call number BANC FILM 2283.

Copies of Havana field notes and Santería copy book no. 2, Cuba, 1948 (carton 28) are also available on microfilm with call number BANC FILM 3266.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Robert H. Lowie Museum of Anthropology
University of California, Berkeley. Dept. of Anthropology
American Folklore Society
Kiowa Apache Indians
Santería
Gullahs
Yoruba (African people)
Pohnpei (Micronesia)
Faculty papers.
Lecture notes.
Manuscripts for publication.
Field notes.

Acquisition Information

The William R. Bascom papers were given to The Bancroft Library by Berta Bascom in July 1984.

Accruals

No additions are expected.

System of Arrangement

Arranged to the folder level.

Processing Information

Processed by Bancroft Library Staff in 2010.

Education and Work History

William Russell Bascom was a pioneer in the field of African Studies and Folklore. He received his bachelor's degree at the University of Wisconsin and his PhD from Northwestern University in 1936. He taught at Northwestern, Cambridge University, and the University of California at Berkeley, where he was also director of the Lowie Museum of Anthropology. During World War II, he joined the O.S.S. and co-authored *A Pocket Guide to West Africa*.

Work among the Yoruba People

Bascom was the first American anthropologist to do field work among the Yoruba people of Nigeria. He made his first trip to Nigeria in 1937 at the age of 25. Over the next 23 years he spent a total of 5 years among the Yoruba, learning their culture and folklore and describing in detail all aspects of their life. During his many periods of residence in Nigeria, he and his wife Berta Montero Bascom assembled one of the foremost collections of books and art of the Yoruba people, their folklore, and history.

Professional Activities, Awards, and Major Works

A one-time president of the American Folklore Society, Professor Bascom was awarded the prestigious Giuseppe Pitre International Folklore Prize for one of his 10 books, *Ifa Divination: Communication Between Gods and Men in West Africa*. Other major works include: *The Sociological Role of the Yoruba Cult-Group* (1944), *Ponape: A Pacific Economy in Transition* (1947), *The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria* (1969), *African Art in Cultural Perspective: An Introduction* (1973), and *Sixteen Cowries: Yoruba Divination from Africa to the New World* (1980).

Scope and Content of Collection

The collection includes papers related to Bascom's lifelong work on West African art, culture, and folklore and his teaching at the University of California, Berkeley and Northwestern University. Materials include personal and professional correspondence; field notes; lecture notes; course notes; and manuscripts of books and articles. Some papers written by his wife Berta Bascom are also included.

The collection is arranged into eight series: correspondence, writings and publications, research, teaching, U.C. Berkeley, professional associations, biographical materials, and Berta Bascom papers.

Series 1. **Correspondence 1936-1981**

Physical Description: Cartons 1-5, carton 6, folders 1-45

Arrangement

Arranged as received into 3 subseries: alphabetical, subject correspondence, and personal correspondence.

Scope and Content Note

Includes personal and professional correspondence on the subject mainly of Bascom's work and travels.

Subseries 1.1. **Alphabetical correspondence 1936-1981**

Physical Description: Cartons 1-5, folders 1-38

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by name of correspondent.

Scope and Content Note

Includes incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Carton 1, Folder
1-75
Carton 2, Folder
1-78
Carton 3, Folder
1-96
Carton 4, Folder
1-70
Carton 5, Folder
1-38

A-C 1936-1979

D-Hi 1941-1978

Ho-Nu 1939-1981

Nu-St 1939-1977

St-Z 1937-1978

Subseries 1.2. **Subject correspondence. 1937-1978**

Physical Description: Carton 5, folders 39-71

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by subject

Scope and Content Note

Includes incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Carton 5, Folder
39-71

A-Y. 1937-1978

Subseries 1.3. **Personal Correspondence. 1937-1972**

Physical Description: Carton 6, folders 1-45

Arrangement

Chronological by date

Scope and Content Note

Includes incoming and outgoing correspondence.

Carton 6, Folder
1-45

Personal correspondence. 1937-1972

Series 2. **Writings and Publications. 1936-1981**

Physical Description: Carton 6, folders 46-81, -cartons 7-24, folders 1-29

Arrangement

Arranged into 4 subseries: reviews; abstracts, papers, and publications; major works; and editorial correspondence.

Scope and Content Note

Includes reviews of work by others and of Bascom's own writing, manuscripts, reprints, drafts, and correspondence about writings and publications.

Subseries 2.1. **Reviews. 1936-1969**

Physical Description: Carton 6, folders 46-81, -carton 7

Arrangement

Arranged as received in numerical order

Scope and Content Note

Includes editorial articles and reviews of articles written by Bascom

Carton 6, Folder
46-81

Numbers 1-37. 1936-1969

Carton 7, Folder
1-48

Numbers 1-81. 1947-1972

Subseries 2.2. **Abstracts, Papers, and Miscellaneous Publications. 1937-1981**

Physical Description: Cartons 8-11

Arrangement

Arranged as received, mostly chronological

Scope and Content Note

Includes a variety of materials written by Bascom for publication. Drafts, reprints, and some correspondence are included.

Carton 8, Folder
1-44

Abstracts, papers, and publications. 1937-1960

Carton 9, Folder
1-44

Abstracts, papers, and publications. 1959-1964

Carton 10, Folder
1-55

Abstracts, papers, and publications. 1964-1981

Carton 11, Folder
1-50

Abstracts, papers, and publications. 1977-1981 and undated

Subseries 2.3. **Major Works. 1949-1981**

Physical Description: Cartons 12-23, box 2

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by title

Scope and Content Note

Includes drafts and reprints of major publications by Bascom. Some research notes and correspondence are also included. This subseries includes extensive research materials collected for Bascom's signature work *Ifa Divination: Communication Between Gods and Men in West Africa*.

Carton 12, Folder
1

***Africa and Its Peoples* . 1953**

Carton 12, Folder
2-9

***African Art in Cultural Perspective* . 1972-1974**

Carton 12, Folder 10-26	African Arts catalog. 1963-1967
Carton 12, Folder 27-40	African Folktales in the Americas: birds-notes. 1977-1981
Carton 13, Folder 1-9	African Folktales in the Americas: notes-trickster . 1977-1981
Carton 13, Folder 10-87	African Folklore in the New World: Abimbola-Pursuing Calabash. 1975-1977
Carton 14, Folder 1-45	African Folklore in the New World: race-won't. 1975-1977
Carton 14, Folder 46-54	"Ashanti Gold Weights." 1973
Carton 14, Folder 55-58	Collier's Encyclopedia: "African Peoples." 1959
Carton 14, Folder 59-62	Encyclopedia Britannica: "Peoples of Africa." 1960-1965
Carton 15, Folder 1-26	Encyclopedia Britannica: "Peoples of Africa." 1960-1965
Carton 15, Folder 27	"Folklore and the African." 1973
Carton 15, Folder 28	"History of Africa: The African Contribution." 1969-1971
Carton 15, Folder 29-44	Ifa Divination: Communication Between Gods and Men in West Africa. 1949-1971
Carton 16, Folder 1-31	Ifa Divination: Communication Between Gods and Men in West Africa. 1652-1974
Carton 17, Folder 1-32	Ifa Divination: Communication Between Gods and Men in West Africa. 1956 and undated
Carton 17, Folder 33	"Myths." Undated
Carton 17, Folder 34	"Myths from Erindilogen." undated
Carton 17, Folder 35	"Myths from Ifa." undated
Carton 17, Folder 36	Myths, photographs. undated
Carton 17, Folder 37-39	Ponape: A Pacific Economy in Transition . 1963-1965
Carton 18, Folder 1-19	Ponape: A Pacific Economy in Transition . 1963-1965
Carton 18, Folder 20-26	"Secret Societies." undated
Carton 18, Folder 27-43	Sixteen Cowries . 1976-1978
Carton 19, Folder 1-10	Sixteen Cowries . undated
Carton 19, Folder 11-14	"The Sociological Role of the Cult Group Among the Yoruba." undated
Carton 19, Folder 15-16	World Book Encyclopedia: Field Enterprises: "African Negro." 1958-1959
Carton 19, Folder 17-39	"Yoruba Narrow-Band Weaving." undated
Carton 20, Folder 1-17	The Yoruba of Southwestern Nigeria . 1957-1972
Carton 20, Folder 18-34	Yoruba Proverbs: 1-425. 1961
Carton 21, Folder 1-34	Yoruba Proverbs: 401-1925. 1961

Carton 22, Folder 1-32 **Yoruba Proverbs: 1926-3500. 1961**
Carton 23, Folder 1-33 **Yoruba Proverbs. 1961**

Subseries 2.4. **Editorial Correspondence. 1947-1980**

Physical Description: Carton 24, folders 1-29

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Scope and Content Note

Identified by Bascom as "Editorial Correspondence", this subseries is mainly correspondence regarding various publications. Also included are some drafts and notes.

Carton 24, Folder 1-29 **Editorial Correspondence. 1947-1980**

Series 3. **Research. 1941-1979**

Physical Description: Carton 24, folders 30-60,-carton 31, cartons 38-40 and box 2

Arrangement

Arranged into 3 subseries: alphabetical files, field notes, and note cards.

Scope and Content Note

Includes notes and field notes, note cards, correspondence, and some drafts of publications on a variety of research subjects. Research materials on the Yoruba Tribe in Africa are abundant. Also included is some of the research Bascom did as a student.

Subseries 3.1. **Alphabetical files. 1939-1978**

Physical Description: Carton 24, folders 30-60,-carton 25

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by subject

Scope and Content Note

Contains a variety of materials relating to Bascom's research, including notes, manuscripts, and correspondence.

Carton 24, Folder 30 **Africa: bibliography. undated**
Carton 24, Folder 31-35 **African art. 1953-1968**
Carton 24, Folder 36 **African collections. 1960-1976**
Carton 24, Folder 37-38 **African culture. undated**
Carton 24, Folder 39 **African independence. 1960-1963**
Carton 24, Folder 40 **African sculpture. 1959-1973**
Carton 24, Folder 41-43 **African tribes. undated**
Carton 24, Folder 44 **Akara. undated**
Carton 24, Folder 45 **American Indian tribes. undated**
Carton 24, Folder 46 **Ashanti notes. 1947**

Carton 24, Folder 47	Atinga. undated
Carton 24, Folder 48-49	Badagry texts. 1941-1942
Carton 24, Folder 50	Bambara. 1960-1961
Carton 24, Folder 51	Congo tribes. undated
Carton 24, Folder 52	Cross references. undated
Carton 24, Folder 53-54	"Discovery" of Africa. undated
Carton 24, Folder 55-56	Divination verses. undated
Carton 24, Folder 57	Folklore and politics. undated
Carton 24, Folder 58	Folklore research in Africa. 1963
Carton 24, Folder 59	Grant applications. 1966
Carton 24, Folder 60	Guinea Coast tribes. undated
Carton 25, Folder 1	History, 19th century. 1966
Carton 25, Folder 2	Humor. undated
Carton 25, Folder 3	Ibidan division. undated
Carton 25, Folder 4	Iland Ibeji. 1975
Carton 25, Folder 5	Language and culture. undated
Carton 25, Folder 6-7	Maps. undated
Carton 25, Folder 8-27	Myths by Babalorisha. undated
Carton 25, Folder 28-29	Nigeria. 1960-1965
Carton 25, Folder 30	Ovimbundu. 1960
Carton 25, Folder 31	Prestige and social approval. 1939
Carton 25, Folder 32	Race and culture. undated
Carton 25, Folder 33	Rituals. undated
Carton 25, Folder 34	Segy, Ladiscas. 1949-1951
Carton 25, Folder 35	Sotho. undated
Carton 25, Folder 36-38	Student work by Bascom. 1939
Carton 25, Folder 39	Tribes. undated
Carton 25, Folder 40	Webber-Green project. 1966-1968
Carton 25, Folder 41	West Sudan tribes. undated

Carton 25, Folder
42-44

Yoruba. 1962-1978

Subseries 3.2. **Field notes. 1935-1968**

Physical Description: Cartons 26-31, folders 1-20

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by the subject of the research

Scope and Content Note

Includes notes taken by Bascom during field research and some backup material to those notes. Most importantly the Yoruba documents transcribed by Bascom for his research on the Yoruba tribe are included. Please note that the documents have dates, but the dates referred to in the finding aid refer to the dates of Bascom's work on those documents.

Carton 26, Folder
1-10

Cuba. 1948

Carton 26, Folder
11-15

Gullah. 1939

Carton 26, Folder
16-18

Georgia. 1939-1940

Carton 26, Folder
19-46

Kiowa Indians. 1935-1936

Carton 27, Folder
1-19

Kiowa Indians. 1935-1936

Carton 27, Folder
20-31

Micronesia/Ponape. 1946

Carton 27, Folder
32-46

Yoruba alphabetical files: untitled-Boromu. 1937-1951

Carton 28, Folder
1-55

Yoruba alphabetical files: Buku-Meko. 1937-1968

Carton 29, Folder
1-58

Yoruba alphabetical files: Meko-slaves. 1937-1968

Carton 30, Folder
1-23

Yoruba alphabetical files: social-Yewa. 1937-1968

Carton 30, Folder
24-37

Yoruba chronological notes, September 1937-July 1938. 1937-1968

Carton 31, Folder
1-14

Yoruba documents. undated

Carton 31, Folder
15-20

Yoruba technology. 1937-1938

Subseries 3.3. **Notecards. undated**

Physical Description: Cartons 38-40 and box 2

Arrangement

Arranged as received

Scope and Content Note

Consists of notecards, mainly 3X5 cards with notes on a variety of subjects.

Carton 38, Box
1-5

Notecards. undated

Carton 39, Box
1-4

Notecards. undated

Carton 40, Box
1-5

Notecards. undated

Box 2

Notecards. undated

Series 4. **Teaching. 1940-1979**

Physical Description: Carton 31, folders 21-29, and Carton 32-34

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by course title, then chronologically.

Scope and Content Note

Includes teaching notes for anthropology and folklore classes taught by Bascom at both Northwestern University and the University of California at Berkeley.

Carton 31, Folder
21-29
Carton 32, Folder
1-56
Carton 33, Folder
1-57
Carton 34, Folder
1-41

African Arts-Anthropology A. 1946-1976

Anthropology A-Anthropology C53, 1945-1963. 1945-1963

Anthropology C53--By-Aspects of Culture. 1940-1979

Folklore-Tribes. 1940-1979

Series 5. **UC Berkeley. 1957-1978**

Physical Description: Carton 35, folders 1-11

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically

Scope and Content Note

Documents Bascom's career at UC Berkeley and includes committee records and information about the folklore program and his research grants.

Carton 35, Folder
1-2
Carton 35, Folder
3-5
Carton 35, Folder
6
Carton 35, Folder
7
Carton 35, Folder
8-9
Carton 35, Folder
10
Carton 35, Folder
11

Black Cultural Research Project. 1971-1978

Folklore Program. 1963-1975

Graduate Studies in African Literature. 1969

Library. 1958-1959

Research grants, applications, and proposals. 1957-1981

Strike, Anthropology Department. 1969-1970

Summer sessions. 1954-1955

Series 6. **Professional Associations. 1936-1978**

Physical Description: Carton 35, folders 12- and Carton 36, folders 1-

Arrangement

Arranged alphabetically by association or activity title

Scope and Content Note

Documents Bascom's involvement in a variety of professional organizations, including the American Folklore Society.

Carton 35, Folder
12-56
Carton 36, Folder
1-57

Adult Education Council-American Folklore Society. 1936-1978

American Folklore Society-UNESCO. 1937-1976

Series 7. **OSS Work during World War II. 1941-1948**

Physical Description: Carton 36, folders 58-63, Carton 37, folders

Arrangement

Arranged in alphabetical order

Scope and Content Note

Includes notes and correspondence by Bascom when he worked for the OSS in Africa during WW II.

Carton 36, Folder
58-63
Carton 37, Folder
1-12

Untitled-cocoa. 1941-1948

Cocoa-U.S. employees. 1941-1948

Series 8. **Meetings, Talks, and Travel. 1962-1975**

Physical Description: Carton 37, folders 13-22

Arrangement

Arranged into loose groups of meetings, talks and speeches, and travel.

Scope and Content Note

Includes materials regarding mostly professional meetings, talks and speeches given, and other travel such as sabbatical trips.

Carton 37, Folder
13
Carton 37, Folder
14
Carton 37, Folder
15
Carton 37, Folder
16-17
Carton 37, Folder
18
Carton 37, Folder
19
Carton 37, Folder
20
Carton 37, Folder
21
Carton 37, Folder
22

Meetings: African Art Symposium. 1968

Meetings: Africa conferences. 1943-1961

Meetings: Culture and Folklore Symposium. 1939

Speeches and lectures. 1951-1963

Lecture: 7 Afro-Cuban Myths. 1976

Travel: Africa. 1970

Travel: Ivory Coast. 1962

Travel: Nigeria. 1975

Sabbaticals. 1963-1977

Series 9. **Biographical Materials. 1933-1981**

Physical Description: Carton 37, folders 23-56, Box 1, and Box 3

Arrangement

Arranged as received

Scope and Content Note

Includes UC Biobibliography forms, CVs, copies of "Who's Who" articles, and diaries. Other material includes job applications and information regarding appointments, fellowships, and awards.

Carton 37, Folder
23
Carton 37, Folder
24
Carton 37, Folder
25
Carton 37, Folder
26

Curriculum vitae. undated

Academic record and application for fellowships. 1933-1940

Applications and appointments. 1941-1949

UC considerations. undated

Carton 37, Folder
27-48

UC Biobibliographies. 1959-1980

Carton 37, Folder
49-52

UC appointment and promotions. 1957-1977

Carton 37, Folder
53

Photographs, unidentified. undated

Carton 37, Folder
54

Pitre Prize. 1967-1970

Carton 37, Folder
55-56

William Bascom publicity. 1946-1970

Box 1, Folder 1-2
Box 3, Items 1-30

**Who's Who. 1939-1981
diaries. 1946-1980**

Series 10. **Berta Bascom's papers. 1954-1993**

Physical Description: Box 1, folders 3-6

Arrangement

Arranged as received

Scope and Content Note

Includes correspondence, papers, and publications by Berta Bascom, William Bascom's wife and a scholar in her own right.

Box 1, Folder 3

Correspondence. 1981-1993

Box 1, Folder 4

Writings: including "7 Afro-Cuban myths." 1976-1977

Box 1, Folder 5

Publications/reprints. 1954-1976

Box 1, Folder 6

Textile publication by Berta and William Bascom. 1976