

Spying by American Archaeologists in World War I

(with a minor linkage to the development of the Society for American Archaeology)

David L. Browman*

I am interested in detailing two aspects linked to the issue of several archaeologists working for the U.S. Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) during the First World War. These spying activities were part of the controversy surrounding the censure of Franz Boas by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) for his published letter of October 1919, in which Boas claimed that four unnamed researchers were involved in espionage activities using archaeological research as a front. As they were unnamed, who were these four archaeologists?

A recent work by Charles Harris and Louis Sadler listing ONI agents during the war includes nine individuals (2003: 371–379) who conducted archaeological research as a 'cover' while simultaneously carrying out intelligence gathering for the ONI. All potential candidates for these four unnamed agents comprise: Theodoor de Booy (Agent 141), Thomas Gann (Agent 242), John Held (Agent 154), Samuel Lothrop (Agent 173), J. Alden Mason (Agent 157), William Mechling (Agent 52), Sylvanus Morley (Agent 53), Wilson Popenoe (Agent 219), and H. Joseph Spinden (Agent 56). As well, in addition to the spying issue, I also want to follow one nearly fortuitous thread to do with this event, that contributed to the formation of the Society for American Archaeology.

World War I and American Archaeological Espionage

While Boas did not publish the names of the four archaeologists, we can make a reasonable guess about who they were. The following is a very brief summary of the field activities, during the First World War, of all of the nine archaeologists listed as ONI agents, with the four most likely to be those accused of spying by Boas discussed first.

William Hubbs Mechling (1888–1953) received his A.M. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1910. He went as the Hispanic Society of America 'Fellow', as one of the half-dozen student researchers to participate in the International School of American Archaeology and Ethnology in México City, in its second year of operation in 1911–12, when Boas served as its director. Mechling received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1917, and was then hired by the Field Museum in Chicago. Because of his 'reserve officer' status, he was called up to satisfy various wartime obligations before he assumed his duties at the museum. Mechling was commissioned as an ONI agent and quickly recruited his friend J. Alden Mason.

John Alden Mason (1885–1967) received his Ph.D. from the University of California – Berkeley in 1911. Mason was also a University of Pennsylvania 'Fellow', during its second year, at the International School in México City, where he became friends with Mexican archaeologist Manuel Gamio. Mason met Mechling first at Pennsylvania, then collaborated with him at the International School, and the following year both continued research in eastern Canada. Mason accepted the job offer of Curator at the Field Museum in 1917, and in April, Mechling telegraphed Mason in Chicago, requesting that he come to Washington D.C. and join him at the ONI.

Mechling and Mason then went to Mexico and requested permits to work in the Yucatan, ostensibly to collect for the Field Museum. Utilizing the cover of doing archaeology, they began espionage work for ONI. But Mechling was not cut out for the spying business. He immediately ran into trouble, was arrested, and thrown in jail. Mason contacted Gamio and they managed to get Mechling released from jail. But because Mason blew his cover by getting help from Gamio, the ONI recalled and disenrolled Mechling and Mason in September, so the pair had less than six months of disastrous careers as spies (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 50–53).

Manuel Gamio was Boas's first Ph.D. student in archaeology. In addition to being a colleague from the International School, he was then working for the National Museum of Mexico. Based on materials published by Harris and Sadler (2003), Rutsch (1997) and Stocking (1968, 1974), I have reconstructed the following correspondence sequence between Gamio, Boas, and others, in the summer of 1917. In July, Gamio wrote to Boas about the arrest, noting that Mason and Mechling had applied for permission to conduct archaeological work in the Yucatan. Gamio thought that they were working for both the Field Museum in Chicago and the Peabody Museum at Harvard. Boas wrote to Berthold Laufer at the Field Museum to ask what Mason was doing. Laufer replied that Mason had been granted leave from the Field Museum to work on a political mission for the government. Laufer indicated that the archaeological project was an intelligence cover, but asked Boas not to tell Gamio. Boas wrote Alfred Tozzer to find out how the Peabody Museum was involved, but Tozzer replied that because of confidentiality, he could not comment. Later in August, Laufer told Boas that Mechling had been hired to begin work in July, but had contacted Laufer saying that he had to delay the start of his position because of previous military commitments. Laufer also indicated his intention to pass these details on to Gamio. Whether Laufer did so is unclear,

* Washington University, St. Louis.
Email: dlbrowma@artsci.wustl.edu

but Boas wrote Gamio, saying that Mason and Mechling were not working for the Field Museum, but were acting as government agents. Gamio replied, indicating surprise, and noted that he had offered Mechling a job at the National Museum in Mexico City when he had come in April, but Mechling had declined, and Mechling and Mason had then gone to the Yucatan.

In addition to corresponding with Gamio, Boas wrote to Ezekiel A. Chavez, a Mexican colleague and an official working high up in the Mexican government, and who had been involved with him in the formation of the International School, to denounce the espionage activities of Mason and Mechling. Chavez wrote back in September, asking Boas to return to Mexico, to help stop this kind of endeavor by U.S. researchers. Boas wrote to Aurelio M. Espinoza, Snr., who was a Mexican folklore specialist then at Stanford University, who had advised Boas and Mason on folklore research in Oaxaca for the International School and on their later project in Puerto Rico. And Boas also complained to other colleagues around the country, for example, writing to Robert H. Lowie at Berkeley in December 1917, saying that he had determined that in addition to Mechling and Mason, Sylvanus Morley and Joseph Spinden were spying for the American war effort in Latin America (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 285–287).

Sylvanus Griswold Morley (1883–1948) completed his A.M. at Harvard in 1908, and continued graduate work through 1909, but never finished his Ph.D. Morley was hired by the Carnegie Institution of Washington (CIW) in 1914 to head their new program on Mayan archaeology. He was a member of the Cosmos Club in Washington D.C. and when the war began, he was approached by fellow club associate Charles Alexander Sheldon, Chief of Naval Operations, to provide a list of anthropologists who possibly could be recruited as agents (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 46, 48). Morley was commissioned as an officer in the Naval Reserves, and was in charge of searching for German submarine bases, combating pro-German activities, and organizing an intelligence network to cover the coast of Central America.

Herbert Joseph Spinden (1879–1967) obtained his Ph.D. in 1909 at Harvard. Following graduation, he took a position at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), where in 1915 he began a five-year project in Central America. Morley wrote to the AMNH in April 1917, asking them to send Spinden to work with him. Spinden continued his archaeological explorations while working for the ONI. The AMNH was pleased with his activities, and in March 1918 they instructed him to continue working for Morley and the ONI for another year (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 109). When Central America was divided into five information gathering sections by the ONI in April 1918, Spinden was assigned Section 3, El Salvador and the Pacific coast of Honduras and Nicaragua. In November his area was expanded to cover Panama and Colombia as well (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 270), suggesting that Spinden was an effective agent and informant.

The research institutions to which these archaeologists were associated knew of the collaboration of their

personnel with the ONI. CIW paid Morley the difference between his ONI and Carnegie salaries (Brunhouse, 1971: 115), and the AMNH and Field Museum did the same for their personnel. Neither Morley's nor Spinden's associations with the military were secret, both having been publically, and often, seen wearing Naval uniforms, and their participation was well-known to the stateside anthropological community. For example, during the summer and fall of 1918, when Morley was back in the U.S. recovering from malaria, he visited anthropologists in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Chicago, Kansas City, and Santa Fe, and a 'noteworthy aspect of this journey was that Morley traveled in uniform' (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 266). However when he was in Central America, 'Morley conspicuously maintained his archaeological cover' (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 240). The ONI ultimately deployed about three dozen agents and sub-agents in Central America, and a close reading of Harris and Sadler suggests that Morley may have recruited over two dozen of them, accomplishing his ONI orders to organize an espionage network. The field 'cover', along with the fact that Morley recruited so many of his fellow archaeologists, no doubt contributed to Harris and Sadler's hyperbole (2003: xiii, 315) that 'Morley was arguably the finest American spy of World War I', and that he ran 'arguably the best American intelligence network in World War I'.

There has been considerable confusion about the exact number, and the identity, of the archaeological ONI agents in past discussions. Because Boas reported that he knew of four such individuals, most discipline historians have only sought to identify four archaeologists as agents. But because there were more than four archaeologists so involved, as can be seen from the list made by Harris and Sadler, it is not surprising that the particular archaeologist identified as being one of the four has varied depending on the author. Morley and Spinden are almost always named. Mason and Mechling are usually, but not always, included as the other two. While there is no overarching uniformity among the identification of the others, one noted expert, David Price, who has written extensively on anthropologists spying during the latter part of the twentieth century, included Samuel Lothrop along with Morley and Spinden, in a list of three individuals (Price, 2000: 24, 2003: 33).

Samuel Kirkland Lothrop, Jr. (1892–1965) alternated between living in Massachusetts and in Puerto Rico as a child, because his father had business interests in Puerto Rico. Lothrop entered graduate school at Harvard in 1915, and was named the Peabody Museum research associate for Central America, getting to know Morley from his fieldwork there, as well as from his membership in the Cosmos Club. Morley sent Lothrop a telegram in Honduras in April 1917 asking Lothrop to leave his field project and meet in him in Washington D.C., where Lothrop then was commissioned and joined John Held as one of Morley's first civilian agents (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 60, 63). His wife, Rachel Warren Lothrop, was also commissioned as a civilian agent (Agent S-32), and was ONI's only female overseas field agent (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 189, 201).

When Central America was divided into five ONI information gathering sections, Lothrop was assigned Section 2, the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, although he was soon transferred to Section 1, Costa Rica. Interestingly, Lothrop employed Mayan hieroglyphs to encode his espionage materials. Later in 1918, Lothrop resigned his position as civilian agent and joined military intelligence (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 180–181, 212). Archaeological survey and collecting was part of the cover used not only by the ONI agent employees from the CIW and AMNH, but the Lothrop's also continued archaeological fieldwork while functioning as agents, part of which was included by Sam in his 1921 Ph.D.

John Held, Jr., (1889–1958) was a museum artist from Salt Lake City who came to New York City in 1912, and became friends with Spinden through archaeological illustration work at the AMNH. In 1916 Held met Morley at the Archaeological Institute of America's school in Santa Fe. Morley offered Held a position as archaeological artist on the CIW's 1917 expedition to Central America, and when Morley moved over to work for the ONI, he brought Held with him as one of his civilian sub-agents (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 51, 62). Held purportedly was hired by the CIW to study Maya art forms, but his real job was to sketch the coastline and scout for military operations. Held and Morley were given responsibility for ONI Section 4, the Caribbean coast of Honduras (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 180).

Thomas Francis William Gann (1867–1938) was appointed as British district medical officer in British Honduras (Belize) in 1894, and served for next three decades, retiring in 1923. He began exploring Maya ruins as soon as he arrived in Central America. As an amateur archaeologist, he also worked with Morley, accompanying him on several expeditions (Wallace, 2010: 25). During the war, he became one of Morley's most important ONI sub-agents, and he conducted his intelligence work while using the cover of being an archaeologist with research funds from both the Heye Foundation and the CIW. During this period he was employed as an agent by both the American and British governments (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 37, 162, 240).

The ethnobotanist Frederick Wilson Popenoe (1892–1975) met Morley at the Cosmos Club in Washington D.C., where they were both members. He began his ONI stint as an associate of the Peabody Museum, ostensibly working on the evaluation of archaeological resources on their behalf as an 'Agricultural Explorer', first under the official aegis of the Department of Agriculture, and then for the University of California, Berkeley. He collected intelligence in the Andean republics as well as throughout Central America (Harris and Sadler, 2003: 136, 302).

The espionage activities of Theodoor de Booy (1881–1919) have been overlooked by previous discipline historians. De Booy began archaeological explorations in the Caribbean islands in 1909. He secured a position with the Museum of the American Indian (MAI), continuing this work in 1912, and returned to New York frequently to consult with Franz Boas, Marshall Saville, and other

anthropologists at the MAI, AMNH, and Columbia University. In early 1918 de Booy began archaeological work in Venezuela for the University Museum at Pennsylvania, concomitantly working for the ONI. While in Venezuela, he utilized his archaeological credentials as a cover identity for his espionage activities. When Saville wrote of de Booy's death in 1919, he referred to this work under the official Department of State 'Inquiry Force' listing, rather than the actual ONI association (Saville, 1919: 182–183).

In addition to these nine ONI agents with archaeological associations, Robert Brunhouse (1971: 113), David Price (2008: 9) and Paul Sullivan (1989: 132) list another Mesoamerican archaeologist, Arthur Wiltse Carpenter (1890–1954), as an American spy. However, I do not believe Carpenter was an American agent, even though Morley and Carpenter were both Harvard and Peabody Museum graduate alumni and also ran a joint CIW/Peabody Museum archaeological project in Central America in 1915–16. Harris and Sadler (2003: 370–380) provide the official list of 257 agents recruited by the ONI in the war, and Carpenter's name is not on that list. Indeed, Harris and Sadler (2003: 138–140) say Carpenter was deliberately not recruited because of his pro-German feelings, and observe that some expatriate Americans in Guatemala complained that Carpenter might be a German spy because of his explicit German sympathies.

At one point I thought George Amos Dorsey (1868–1931), former curator at the Field Museum, and with extensive Latin American archaeological interests, might be added to this list. Dorsey received his Ph.D. from Harvard in 1894. After working for two decades as a curator at the Field Museum, he resigned in 1915 to become an officer in the U.S. Navy, and later Assistant Naval Attaché in Spain and Portugal in 1917–21. Dorsey became involved with the ONI through Lt. Commander Edward Breck, Agent 61. Breck had started in the espionage business for the U.S. during the Spanish-American War, spying in Spain. In World War I, Breck was ordered to infiltrate the German community in Brazil and Argentina in 1917–18, and 'succeeded spectacularly' (Dorwart, 1979: 130). Breck then was sent to Portugal, where he worked with Dorsey, continuing espionage activities. However, Dorsey was operating there as an embassy official, not as an archaeologist.

There were other archaeologists like Dorsey involved in intelligence gathering in the war who did so as members of the armed services and did not utilize their professional backgrounds as 'covers'. For example, archaeologists William C. Farabee of the University of Pennsylvania, and Marshall H. Saville of Columbia University, both served in U.S. Army Intelligence in Europe. We should note that the use of archaeology as a cover in World War I was not unique to Yankees working in Latin America. Thus the British employed Thomas E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) and Sir C. Leonard Woolley in Syria, and Gertrude L. Bell in Egypt and Iraq, as agents to gather intelligence of German activities, while these three utilized their archaeological researches as covers.

The Censure Controversy at the AAA, and the NRC Actions

Boas's letter (see quote below) charging four archaeologists with spying resulted in his censure by the AAA. Among the factors contributing to this action was the level of patriotism being exhibited by the anthropological community. For example, at the Peabody Museum at Harvard, the top floor of the museum had been converted to a military radio school during the war, and part of the first floor had been taken over as classrooms for the Army Training Corps. Nearly the entire museum staff was involved in the war effort: Oric Bates died while training to become an artillery officer; Roland Dixon was working on 'special investigations' through the State Department (a cover for intelligence work); Alfred Kidder was serving as an officer in the infantry in France; Charles Peabody was commissioned as an officer to teach ROTC military science; and Alfred Tozzer was an officer in the aviation section (Willoughby, 1919: 238–240). And this same level of patriotic fervor was seen at other U.S. anthropology departments.

In addition, the United States was undergoing a political spasm, with the populace becoming nearly jingoist about recent foreign immigrants, expressed in part in the 'Red Scare' of 1919–20. In the century prior to 1890, immigration was mainly from northern and western Europe, and less than two percent of that group was Jewish. But in the quarter century from 1890 to 1914, immigration came primarily from southern and eastern Europe, and more than ten percent of the new immigrants were Jewish. Leonard Dinnerstein (1994: 58, 77) argues that the Jewish component of the new immigrants were particularly discriminated against during the 'Red Scare' because of their presumed association with Bolshevism, due to the popularity of socialist ideologies in eastern Europe.

Into this context we have the letter by Franz Boas, 'Scientists as Spies', dated October 16, 1919, and published in *The Nation*. Most relevant to our discussion, Boas wrote (1919b: 797):

'A person, however, who uses science as a cover for political spying, who demeans himself to pose before a foreign government as an investigator and asks for assistance in his alleged researches in order to carry on, under this cloak, his political machinations, prostitutes sciences in an unpardonable way and forfeits the right to be classed as a scientist.'

'By accident, incontrovertible proof has come to my hands that at least four men, who carry on anthropological work, while employed as government agents, introduced themselves to foreign governments as representatives of scientific institutions in the United States, and as sent out for the purpose of carrying on scientific researches. They have not only shaken the belief in the truthfulness of science, but they have also done the greatest possible disservice to scientific inquiry. In consequence of their acts every nation will look with distrust upon the visiting foreign investigator who wants to do honest work, suspecting sinister designs.'

The American anthropological community already knew about the activities that Boas was describing here. The

accused archaeologists had contributed to the successful war effort, and were viewed by many as patriots and heroes for having helped win the war. They were friends and colleagues from the AMNH, CIW, Field Museum, Peabody Museum, University Museum, and academic departments.

As noted above, Boas had known about this 'spying' and he had communicated his feelings about it to various anthropologists, for more than two years prior to this fateful letter, so it might appear disingenuous of him to write in October 1919 implying this had just come to his attention – if we ignore the possible political strategy related to disciplinary conflicts. Boas had made no secret about his own vigorous German sympathies during the war – for example, see his strongly pro-German letter in the *New York Times* (Boas, 1916). In fact, as Harris and Sadler argue (2003: 287):

'What is clear is that Franz Boas did everything he could to blow Mason and Mechling's cover, which, along with their own indiscretion, helps to explain why their mission failed so miserably. But Boas by no means confined himself to exposing Mason and Mechling.'

Harris and Sadler then provide details of Boas's other actions in 1917 trying to derail this aspect of the American government's war effort, such as writing about it to Mexican colleagues and officials as well as to U.S. anthropologists.

Thus in 1919, few if any of Boas's colleagues would have been surprised by the charges in his letter, but they would have most likely seen them in terms of the anthropological political battles (more below) of the day. They would have viewed this letter in the context of their knowledge of Boas's German sympathies during the war, his two years prior involvement in this spying controversy, and his distress at having researchers previously associated with him at the International School in Mexico City using archaeological covers while conducting intelligence activities against Germany in Central America. And those who knew Boas personally knew that his very active participation in pro-German groups in the U.S., such as in the Germanistic Society of America, seemed contrary to the actions of even his own sons, Ernst and Henry (Heine), both of whom served in the American armed forces. Ernst joined the U.S. Army as a captain and was sent to France, where he was in charge of a medical division at a base hospital; and Henry apparently was a combat soldier (Boas, 2004: 196, 215).

The question of whether some official response to Boas's letter should be made was discussed among the U.S. anthropological community, with an eye to possible action at the upcoming AAA meetings in December in Cambridge, Massachusetts. For example, archaeologist William H. Holmes, who had tangled with Boas before, over securing a position at the Field Museum, denounced the letter as 'traitorous' and 'reprehensible' and called for a concerted effort to end Boas's control of U.S. anthropology (Meltzer and Dunnell, 1992: xxiv).

Three archaeologists related to the 'spying' accusations – Lothrop, Morley, and Spinden – were members of the AAA Executive Council that was considering Boas's letter.

If he had named them, the three might well have excused themselves. Two other archaeologists on the council also had been involved in intelligence operations with the U.S. Army – Farabee and Saville. And a sixth, Dixon, had just finished working on ‘special investigations’ for the State Department, another cover for intelligence work. Hence at least half a dozen members of the Executive Council, who were being asked to consider Boas’s letter attacking intelligence gathering by anthropologists, had themselves only just been mustered out of various U.S. intelligence operations. A resolution was introduced by Neil Judd to censure Boas. Voting in favour were Roland B. Dixon, William J. Farabee, J. Walter Fewkes, William E. Gates, George B. Gordon, Samuel J. Guernsey, Carl E. Guthe, Stansbury Hagar, Frederick W. Hodge, Earnest A. Hooton, Benjamin Talbot B. Hyde, Neil M. Judd, Alfred V. Kidder, Samuel K. Lothrop, George G. MacCurdy, Sylvanus G. Morley, Marshall H. Saville, H. Joseph Spinden, Harriet N. Wardle, and Harris H. Wilder. Voting against were Pliny E. Goddard, Alfred J. Kroeber, Robert H. Lowie, Nels C. Nelson, Elsie Clews Parson, Charles Peabody, Frank G. Speck, Leslie Spier, Louis R. Sullivan, and Alfred M. Tozzer (Tozzer, 1920: 93–94). The AAA Executive Council thus voted to censure Boas by a vote of 20 to 10, an action that also resulted in stripping Boas of his National Research Council (NRC) council membership.

Some discipline historians have seen this response as unexpected, because Boas was one of the founders of the AAA. But he actually may have expected worse consequences. Boas was friends with former Columbia University psychology professor John McKeen Cattell, who was then the editor of the journal *Science*. Cattell had opposed several of the initiatives of President Nicholas M. Butler at Columbia University, and Butler had unsuccessfully tried to force him into retirement in 1913. Butler had been obliged to back down when the faculty led by John Dewey and Franz Boas strongly supported Cattell. However, when Cattell wrote several congressmen in 1917 on Columbia University letterhead asking them to ‘support a measure against sending conscripts to Europe against their will’, the war-time patriotic atmosphere allowed Butler and the trustees to fire Cattell on October 4, 1917 (Bender, 1987: 287). Boas initially sent his letter to *Science*, but Cattell refused to publish it explicitly because of its content (Lesser, 1981: 18). Thus, if his former campus colleague and ally Cattell had rejected his letter, Boas certainly knew he was likely to stir up adverse reactions when he then resubmitted it to *The Nation*.

The reaction to Boas’s letter needs to be seen in terms of the broader war fervour, as well as within the narrower context of the anthropological milieu. I have touched upon the broader context already, in terms of the patriotism that was rampant, the fact that many of the anthropologists had been actively involved in the war, and the general xenophobic isolationism that was building in the country in the late teens and early twenties of the twentieth century. For a pro-German, Jewish immigrant, to attack respected U.S. anthropologists for supporting the Allied war effort to defeat Germany,

would surely bring an adverse reaction from both the public and AAA.

Of often overlooked significance, one of the specific charges included in the AAA executive council’s censure action, was that Boas had ‘abused’ his professional position by employing this letter for his own political ends. There were on-going battles for the control of the AAA by archaeologists, physical anthropologists, and socio-cultural anthropologists. During the first decades of the twentieth century, the majority of officers of the then three main anthropological groups – the American Anthropological Association; Section H, American Association for the Advancement Science; and the American Folk-Lore Society – comprised mainly archaeologists and physical anthropologists associated with the government (through the Bureau of American Ethnology, the Smithsonian Institution, and the United States National Museum) or trained at Harvard. In the second decade, with Harvard program founder Frederic W. Putnam having died in 1915, and with the emergence of many new programs, Boas saw his opportunity to try to remake American anthropology more to his own views. The period from the mid-teens to the mid-twenties of the early twentieth century saw a competition for the realignment of power bases within the discipline, and Boas was in the middle of the fray.

Hence there was a clear subtext to the censure, an ongoing battle for control of the direction of anthropology. George Stocking (1968: 276) suggested the vote was along sub-disciplinary lines – archaeologists and physical anthropologist *for* censure, and socio-cultural anthropologists *against* censure. The problem with this characterization is that there were four archaeologists who voted *against* censure, comprising forty percent of the total vote *against* censure, and similarly there were at least four ethnologists who voted *for* censure.

However other events indicate that we cannot wholly ignore a sub-disciplinary component. Stocking (1968: 285) argued that Boas remained aloof from the AAA until about 1911, because he saw it as being controlled by government physical anthropologists and Southwestern archaeologists. But by the mid-teens, Boas had decided that the AAA could not be overlooked and sought to influence its direction. He and other socio-cultural colleagues were viewed as attempting to take over control of the AAA, and the World War I period brought one component of this power struggle to a head. Thus there is support for the partial explanation of the censure vote as an effort to thwart Boas and his colleagues’ attempt to seize institutional control and reorganize the discipline.

While there are many aspects to explore, one I wish to highlight was that the shortage of funds was a major obstacle to conducting field research. In the spring of 1916, when it appeared that the U.S. would become involved in World War I, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) took the lead in developing the NRC to aid in the impending conflict. Contributions from the NRC were very significant to the organization of science and technology during the war effort. Thus President Woodrow Wilson requested the NAS to extend the NRC post-war. Plans included a new Di-

vision of Anthropology and Psychology, which was established as one of seven divisions when the NRC was reorganized in 1919. This division was viewed as an important potential source for anthropological funding. Anthropologists are political animals and a protracted struggle broke out to get individuals friendly to one's viewpoint named to the NRC council and to exclude competing factions.

Because of Boas's previous conflict with Charles Doolittle Walcott at the SI/BAE, it is not surprising that when the executive committee of NRC asked Walcott to suggest knowledgeable individuals to nominate anthropologists for the new division's council, Walcott recommended the government anthropologists William Holmes and Aleš Hrdlička, and ignored Boas, who was lobbying quite strongly to be appointed. Based on advice from Holmes and Hrdlička, among those suggested to represent anthropology in the first draft version of the division in 1918 were the eugenicists Charles B. Davenport and Madison Grant. After the NRC received protests from several anthropologists regarding these two nominees, the NRC asked the AAA instead to nominate candidates for the next draft. The AAA appointed a subcommittee, comprising Franz Boas, Aleš Hrdlička and Alfred Tozzer, to name this new slate. But because Boas and his socio-cultural colleagues feared that physical anthropologists might get control of the NRC, they then by-passed this AAA subcommittee's recommendations of March 1919, and instead arranged for the AAA executive council to provide yet another list which excluded Holmes and Hrdlička.

The Washington anthropologists were furious when they learned of this stratagem (Stocking, 1968: 292). After a confrontation, Hrdlička was put back on an alternate list of anthropologists-at-large. Thus when the Division of Anthropology and Psychology of the NRC was organized on October 20, 1919, the AAA nominees included Boas, Dixon, Fewkes, Kroeber, Laufer, and Wissler. But there were also three anthropologists-at-large nominated separately – Goddard, Hrdlička, and Tozzer. The Executive Committee of this new NRC division was composed of three psychologists – Walter V. Bingham, Walter D. Scott, and Carl E. Seashore – and three anthropologists – Boas, Fewkes, and Wissler. So by early October 1919, not only were Boas and his colleagues seemingly in control of the anthropological component of the NRC committee, but they had excluded the archaeologist Holmes. And even though Boas was not able to keep physical anthropologist Hrdlička off the NRC committee, he continued to fight him by opposing Hrdlička's election to NAS in 1919 (Stocking, 1968: 292).

Holmes did not go quietly. He was incensed and looking for payback and Boas's letter provided him with an opportunity. In two notes to Hodge, just before the December AAA council meeting, Holmes argued there were quite a few 'who do not favour Prussian control of anthropology in this country that we are determined now to end the Hun regime' and stated that 'the Prussian regime, the vicious, scheming, minority of the association has ruled long enough' (Holmes to Frederick Hodge, December 20 & 24, 1919, quoted in Sturtevant, 1975: 4–5). Holmes also wrote Lothrop, asking that he ensure that Boas was

stripped of his NRC position (Holmes to Samuel Lothrop, December 26, 1919, quoted in Harris and Sadler, 2003: 288). All these issues were an integral part of the climate and context of the AAA council meeting that considered Boas's letter.

There is another extremely important but altogether overlooked linkage in the conflict between Boas and the Washington researchers, in terms of anthropologists spying in the war. A Dutch-born ethnologist friend of Boas, Herman Marie Bernelot-Moens (1875–1938) (whose name is often anglicized to just Moens), was accused in 1918 by the Department of Justice of being a German spy working in the U.S. using anthropology as a cover. Notably Boas (1919a) was in communication with Bernelot-Moens on November 25, 1919, just before the AAA considered his letter, to continue providing Bernelot-Moens with advice on the appeal of the court verdict.

The story about Bernelot-Moens's original trial in *The Washington Post* provides some details (Anonymous, 1919: 9):

'No secret is made now that Moens was under surveillance of secret agents of the United States almost from the hour he landed in 1914 with a passport for the United States, Mexico and Japan. It is frankly admitted now that he was suspected of being a German spy.'

Continuing, the article reports:

'It was while 'shadowing' Moens with a view to ascertaining his exact mission to this country and his proposed trips to Mexico and Japan that the government agents came into contact with the various phases of the professor's labors in the field of anthropology. In fact, his arrest on the charge of having improper photographs in his possession rather interrupted the main investigations, which is understood not to be complete even at this date.'

Bernelot-Moens, writing in defense of his actions in 1922, provided additional information on the charges made under the Espionage Act of 1917, reporting that Bureau of Investigation (BOI, later reorganized as the FBI) agents stated (Bernelot-Moens, 1922: 40):

'That colored teachers under his influence openly inculcated enemy principles and caused pupils to write on the blackboard un-American sentiments, that incitement of civil war between the blacks and whites in order to help the Germans was in his program, that he had been spreading such propaganda in this country since 1914, and that he was a German spy on the payroll of the Imperial government at \$300 a month.'

The espionage charges apparently lacked adequate legally definitive evidence to be readily pursued. However while detaining Bernelot-Moens in October 1918, BOI agents searched his belongings, and a collection of up to 200 photographs of eight different young, naked, black women was found (Herzog, 1921: 18). As a result, in addition to espionage charges, a separate charge relating to pornography was added (Bernelot-Moens, 1922: 35). In the court

documents for the defense, Bernelot-Moens's photographs were said to be typical of the kind of nude pictures that Boas and other anthropologists were collecting in an attempt to define the physical attributes of geographic human variation. Boas was one of several individuals who provided written support in a December 1918 affidavit for Bernelot-Moens' legal defense, testifying that they found 'these pictures to be of scientific and artistic value'.

Hrdlička was a prime witness for the prosecution in this case. The prosecution proved that Bernelot-Moens had lied about his credentials, and had no university degrees. Hrdlička testified that despite Boas's support, that Bernelot-Moens was an 'imposter', who possessed no scholarly credibility, and that Bernelot-Moens had neither the credentials, nor knowledge of a genuine scientist (Kornweibel, 1998: 199, 213, 216). While the evidence for espionage was apparently indeterminate, Bernelot-Moens was found guilty on the pornography charge in April 1919. A bitter Bernelot-Moens later wrote (1922: 41):

'Hrdlička of the Smithsonian Institution, who, through political pull had been transformed from a good cigar-maker into an anthropologist, succeeded in persuading a jury which saw not a scientist in Mr. Moens but a German spy, that the pictures were without any scientific value.'

In Bernelot-Moens' subsequent appeal of his case, the court found that the prosecution had failed to prove that he intended to sell these photographs, and in March 1920, thus reversed the conviction for pornography (*Moens v. United States*, 50 App. D.C. 15; 267 F.317).

The prominence of Hrdlička for the prosecution vs. Boas for the defense in the Bernelot-Moens spy trial makes it clear that this case must be considered as another component of the Boasian vs. Washington anthropologists political battles, including the AAA censure vote. Certainly the fact that in late 1919 Boas was actively supporting a European colleague who was using anthropology as a 'cover' while allegedly spying for Germany in the U.S., while at the same time Boas was complaining about Yankee anthropologists allegedly using the discipline as a 'cover' while spying for the U.S. in Latin America, rendered the ethical aspect of his complaint moot for many of the AAA Executive Council members.

An Aspect of the Subsequent NRC Funding Impact on U.S. Archaeologists

One significant component of these political conflicts among the U.S. anthropologists was that in the battle for controlling distribution of funds from the new Division of Anthropology and Psychology of the NRC, with Boas now removed due to the AAA censure, the socio-cultural faction ultimately lost out to the Washington group and its allies. This power shift was graphically evident later when the division initiated its research grant program in 1929. Between 1929 and 1933, the division made awards to 25 anthropologists and 20 psychologists, and tellingly the great majority of anthropology grants went to archaeologists (Poffenberger, 1933: 43). Some significant further details on the involvement of the division and NRC with

the development of U.S. archaeology at this period are covered in *Setting the Agenda for American Archaeology: The National Research Council Archaeological Conferences of 1929, 1932, and 1935* (O'Brien and Lyman, 1998).

Actions of the division's personnel also were significant in the establishment of the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) in 1934. Concrete action about forming a national association exclusively for American archaeology was discussed by the Committee of State Archaeological Surveys (CSAS), an active component of the Division of Anthropology and Psychology of the NRC. This culminated in December of 1933 when CSAS board members met to formally consider establishing such a national level organization. Carl E. Guthe, as CSAS chairman, agreed to oversee promulgating the venture, and in the spring of 1934, he sent out a prospectus detailing the suggested national society to a list of about 200 amateur and professional archaeologists. After incorporating their suggestions for changes, he submitted the revised prospectus to the CSAS, which accepted it on May 10, 1934. A CSAS committee was then set up to draft a constitution, bylaws, and articles of incorporation, and to select candidates and prepare a ballot for election of officers. After the legal documents were approved, and with the subsequent election of officers, the official organizational meeting for this new national archaeological society, developed by the CSAS of the NRC, was held December 28, 1934, and the Society for American Archaeology came into existence (Browman, 2010).

While the issues relating to archaeologists spying in World War I were not initially and explicitly linked to archaeological institutional development, the political actions resulting from the disciplinary skirmishes included in the censure of Boas, and in the fight for control of the direction of anthropological research, as well as research funding, had the unintended consequences of providing an arena, and an institutional base for the formation of the Society for American Archaeology.

References

- Anonymous** 1919 Moens, Mystery Man. Agent, named in Bruce case, trailed by Secret Service. Suspected as German Spy. *The Washington Post*, May 30: 9.
- Bender, T** 1987 *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time*. New York: Knopf.
- Bernelot-Moens, H M** 1922 *Towards Perfect Man: Contributions to Somatological and Philosophical Anthropology*. New York: Privately printed.
- Boas, F** 1916 Why German-Americans Blame America. *New York Times*, January 8, 1916: 8.
- Boas, F** 1919a Letter of November 25, 1919, Franz Boas to Herman M. Bernelot-Moens. Franz Boas Collections, 1862–1942, Item 635, American Philosophical Library Archives, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Boas, F** 1919b Scientists as Spies. *The Nation* 109: 797.
- Boas, N F** 2004 *Franz Boas, 1858–1941: An Illustrated Biography*. Mystic, CT: Seaport Autographs Press.
- Browman, D L** 2010 Founding 'mothers' of the Society for

- American Archaeology. *The SAA Archaeological Record* 10(2): 31–34.
- Brunhouse, R L** 1971 *Sylvanus G. Morley and the World of the Ancient Mayas*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Dinnerstein, L** 1994 *Antisemitism in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dorwart, J M** 1979 *The Office of Naval Intelligence: The Birth of America's First Intelligence Agency 1865–1918*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press.
- Harris, C H, III and Sadler, L R** 2003 *The Archaeologist Was A Spy: Sylvanus G. Morley and the Office of Naval Intelligence*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Herzog, Alfred W** 1921 Tyranny and Autocracy in a Republic. *The Medico-Legal Journal* 38(2): 18–19.
- Kornweibel, T, Jnr.** 1998 *Investigate Everything: Federal Efforts to Compel Black Loyalty During World War I*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Lesser, A** 1981 Franz Boas. In Silverman, S (ed.) *Totems and Teachers: Perspectives on the History of Anthropology*, pp. 1–34. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Meltzer, D J and Dunnell, R C** 1992 Introduction. In Meltzer, D J and Dunnell, R C (eds.) *The Archaeology of William Henry Holmes*, pp. vii–l. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- O'Brien, M J and Lyman, R L** (eds.) 1998 *Setting the Agenda for American Archaeology: The National Research Council Archaeological Conferences of 1929, 1932, and 1935*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- Poffenberger, A T** 1933 Division of Anthropology and Psychology. In Howell, W H (ed.) *A History of the National Research Council, 1919–1933*, pp. 39–43. Washington D.C.: Reprint and Circular Series of the National Research Council No. 106.
- Price, D H** 2000 Anthropologists As Spies. *The Nation* 271(16): 24–27.
- Price, D H** 2003 Cloak and Trowel: Should archaeologists double as spies? *Archaeology* 56(5): 30–35.
- Price, D H** 2008 *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Rutsch, M** 1997 La concepción de ciencia, ética y educación en la correspondencia de Ezequiel A. Chávez y Franz Boas. In Rutsch, M and Serrano, C (eds.) *Ciencia en los Márgenes: ensayos de historia de las ciencias en México*, pp. 127–166. México D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Saville, M H** 1919 Theodoor de Booy. *American Anthropologist* 21: 182–185, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/aa.1919.21.2.02a00060>.
- Stocking, G W, Jnr.** 1968 The scientific reaction against cultural anthropology, 1917–1920. In Stocking, G W, Jnr. (ed.) *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, pp. 270–307. New York: Free Press.
- Stocking, G W, Jnr.** (ed.) 1974 *A Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883–1911*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sturtevant, W C** 1975 Huns, Free-thinking Americans, and the AAA. *History of Anthropology Newsletter* 2(1): 4–6.
- Sullivan, P R** 1989 *Unfinished Conversations: Mayas and Foreigners between the Wars*. New York: Knopf.
- Tozzer, A M** 1920 Anthropology at the Cambridge Meeting and Proceedings of the American Anthropological Association. *American Anthropologist* 22: 86–96.
- Wallace, C** 2011 Reconnecting Thomas Gann with British interest in the archaeology of Mesoamerica: An aspect of the development of archaeology as a university subject. *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology* 21(1): 23–36, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/bha.2113>.
- Willoughby, C C** 1919 52nd Annual Report of the Curator for 1917–1918, Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Anthropology. Report of the Curator. *Harvard University, Annual Reports of the President and Treasurer of Harvard College*, pp. 234–242. Cambridge.