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

Finding Aid written by Bancroft Library Staff
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Collection Summary

Collection Title: William R. Bascom papers
Date (inclusive): 1933-1981
Collection Number: BANC MSS 82/163 c
Bascom, Berta
Extent: Number of containers: 40 cartons, 3 boxes
Linear feet: 51.2
Repository: The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California, 94720-6000
Phone: (510) 642-6481
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Email: bancref@library.berkeley.edu
URL: http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/

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
Santeria
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carton 1, Folder</th>
<th>1-75</th>
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<td>Carton 2, Folder</td>
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<td>Carton 3, Folder</td>
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<td>Carton 4, Folder</td>
<td>1-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carton 5, Folder</td>
<td>1-38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **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

Subseries 2.1. Reviews. 1936-1969

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

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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

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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 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 15, Folder 27  "Folklore and the African." 1973
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 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 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
Subseries 2.3. Major Works. 1949-1981

Carton 22, Folder 1-32
Carton 23, Folder 1-33

Yoruba Proverbs: 1926-3500. 1961
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
Carton 24, Folder 31-35
Carton 24, Folder 36
Carton 24, Folder 37-38
Carton 24, Folder 39
Carton 24, Folder 40
Carton 24, Folder 41-43
Carton 24, Folder 44
Carton 24, Folder 45
Carton 24, Folder 46

Africa: bibliography. undated
African art. 1953-1968
African collections. 1960-1976
African culture. undated
African independence. 1960-1963
African sculpture. 1959-1973
African tribes. undated
Akara. undated
American Indian tribes. undated
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  Ilard 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
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**
- Folder 11-15: **Gullah. 1939**
- Folder 16-18: **Georgia. 1939-1940**
- Folder 19-46: **Kiowa Indians. 1935-1936**
- Folder 1-19: **Kiowa Indians. 1935-1936**
- Folder 20-31: **Micronesia/Ponape. 1946**
- Folder 32-46: **Yoruba alphabetical files: untitled-Boromu. 1937-1951**
- Folder 1-58: **Yoruba alphabetical files: Meko-slaves. 1937-1968**
- Folder 1-23: **Yoruba alphabetical files: social-Yewa. 1937-1968**
- Folder 24-37: **Yoruba chronological notes, September 1937-July 1938. 1937-1968**
- Folder 1-14: **Yoruba documents. undated**
- Folder 15-20: **Yoruba technology. 1937-1938**

### 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**
  - **African Arts-Anthropology A. 1946-1976**

  **Carton 32, Folder 1-56**

  **Carton 33, Folder 1-57**
  - **Anthropology C53--By-Aspects of Culture. 1940-1979**

  **Carton 34, Folder 1-41**
  - **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**
  - **Black Cultural Research Project. 1971-1978**

  **Carton 35, Folder 3-5**
  - **Folklore Program. 1963-1975**

  **Carton 35, Folder 6**
  - **Graduate Studies in African Literature. 1969**

  **Carton 35, Folder 7**
  - **Library. 1958-1959**

  **Carton 35, Folder 8-9**
  - **Research grants, applications, and proposals. 1957-1981**

  **Carton 35, Folder 10**
  - **Strike, Anthropology Department. 1969-1970**

  **Carton 35, Folder 11**
  - **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**
  - **Adult Education Council-American Folklore Society. 1936-1978**

  **Carton 36, Folder 1-57**
  - **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
Untitled-cocoa. 1941-1948

Carton 37, Folder 1-12
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
Meetings: African Art Symposium. 1968

Carton 37, Folder 14
Meetings: Africa conferences. 1943-1961

Carton 37, Folder 15
Meetings: Culture and Folklore Symposium. 1939

Carton 37, Folder 16-17
Speeches and lectures. 1951-1963

Carton 37, Folder 18
Lecture: 7 Afro-Cuban Myths. 1976

Carton 37, Folder 19
Travel: Africa. 1970

Carton 37, Folder 20
Travel: Ivory Coast. 1962

Carton 37, Folder 21
Travel: Nigeria. 1975

Carton 37, Folder 22
Sabbaticals. 1963-1977


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
Curriculum vitae. undated

Carton 37, Folder 24
Academic record and application for fellowships. 1933-1940

Carton 37, Folder 25
Applications and appointments. 1941-1949

Carton 37, Folder 26
UC considerations. undated
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<tr>
<th>Carton 37, Folder</th>
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<td>Carton 37, Folder</td>
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<td>Carton 37, Folder</td>
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<td>William Bascom publicity. 1946-1970</td>
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<td>55-56</td>
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<td>Box 1, Folder 1-2</td>
<td>Who's Who. 1939-1981</td>
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<td>Box 3, Items 1-30</td>
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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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 3</th>
<th>Correspondence. 1981-1993</th>
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<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 4</td>
<td>Writings: including &quot;7 Afro-Cuban myths.&quot; 1976-1977</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 5</td>
<td>Publications/reprints. 1954-1976</td>
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<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 6</td>
<td>Textile publication by Berta and William Bascom. 1976</td>
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