Finding Aid to the Notes on the Caddoan Stock MS.865

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Abstract: This is a typed copy of a manuscript by Alexander Lesser and Gene Weltfish entitled "Notes on the Caddoan Stock" regarding language based in Pawnee, Wichita, Kitsai, and Caddo languages, along with a letter from Lesser to Frederick Webb Hodge, dated 1931 November 3.
creator: Lesser, Alexander, 1902-1982
creator: Weltfish, Gene, 1902-1980
Scope and Contents
This is a typed copy of a manuscript by Alexander Lesser and Gene Weltfish entitled "Notes on the Caddoan Stock" regarding language based in Pawnee, Wichita, Kitsai, and Caddo languages, along with a letter from Lesser to Frederick Webb Hodge, dated 1931 November 3. The article was published as "Composition of the Caddoan Linguistic Stock" in Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collection, vol. 87, no. 6, 1932 May 14.
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Acquisition
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Access
Collection is open for research. Appointments to view materials are required. To make an appointment please visit http://theautry.org/research/research-rules-and-application or contact library staff at rroom@theautry.org.
Biographical note
Alexander Lesser (1902-1982) was an American anthropologist. Working in the Boasian tradition of American Cultural Anthropology he adopted critical stances of several ideas of his fellow Boasians, and became known as an original and critical thinker, pioneering several ideas that later became widely accepted within anthropology.
Lesser studied at Columbia University. As an undergraduate he studied philosophy with John Dewey and did his graduate studies in anthropology with Franz Boas. His first wife was Gene Weltfish, a fellow anthropologist and Caddoanist. He studied the culture and history of the Pawnee people and other Plains Indians, specializing in the study of kinship among the Siouan peoples. His 1933 work on the Ghost dance among the Pawnee was the first anthropological study of a cultural revitalization movement.
Besides his contribution to Plains ethnography, Lesser is well known for his documentation of the Kitsai language. He held teaching positions at Columbia University, Brooklyn College, and Brandeis University before ending his career at Hofstra University, where he was chair of the department of anthropology and sociology from 1960 to 1965.
Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Lesser

Biographical note
Gene Weltfish (Born Regina Weltfish) (August 7, 1902 - August 2, 1980) was an American anthropologist and historian working at Columbia University from 1928 to 1953. She studied with Franz Boas and was a specialist in the culture and history of the Pawnee people. Her 1965 ethnography The Lost Universe is considered the authoritative work on Pawnee culture to this day.
Weltfish married fellow graduate student Boasian anthropologist and Siouanist, Alexander Lesser, and they remained married for 15 years. The two did their first field work together in Oklahoma, working on Siouan kinship systems. Initially not sure which indigenous tribe to work with for her dissertation, Weltfish met a Henry Moses of the Pawnee tribe in New York and decided to do her work with his community. She arrived in the mostly monolingual community with no prior knowledge of the Pawnee language, but during her studies she picked it up. She focused on the study of aesthetics and craftsmanship, learning the art of basket-making practiced exclusively by Pawnee women.

She is also known for the 1943 pamphlet for the U.S. Army called The Races of Mankind, which she co-wrote with Ruth Benedict, meant to teach military personnel about the cultural differences between the peoples of the world. In the text they argued that perceived differences between the races are cultural rather than biological. Among the data used in the text was an IQ study that had found higher scores among some northern Blacks than among some southern Whites. The pamphlet was not widely circulated within the army, and eventually it was banned as subversive. Weltfish was engaged in social activism and attracted the attention of the FBI which suspected her to be a communist. Her 16 year appointment at Columbia was terminated, and she was unable to find an academic position for nearly a decade. In 1961 she found employment at Fairleigh Dickinson University, where she worked until 1972.


**Subjects and Indexing Terms**
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Caddo Indians
Caddo language
Indians of North America -- Languages
Kitsai language
Pawnee Indians
Pawnee language
Typescripts
Wichita Indians
Wichita language