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Wendell Clark Bennett 1905-1953

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WENDELL CLARK BENNETT  
1905-1953

When Wendell Bennett died of a heart attack while swimming off the South Beach at Martha's Vineyard on September 6, 1953, our profession lost a leader who was at once an active and very productive field worker, a fine and beloved teacher, and a worker for anthropology of extraordinary administrative ability. Bennett combined these talents effectively for the advancement of knowledge, the development of students and for the benefit of our science in its relations with government and the research councils.

Although he contributed more to Andean archeology than any man of his generation, and was a keen specialist in that field, he was trained to be, and remained, an anthropologist in the broad sense and a believer in broad approaches—areal, cross-cultural and interdisciplinary. It will be hard for many of us, to whom he was known primarily through some particular interest, to realize how great a loss we have all experienced.

Bennett was born in Marion, Indiana, on August 17, 1905. In 1927 he graduated from the University of Chicago and remained there for graduate study, receiving his M.A. in 1929 and his Ph.D. in 1930. Part of this time, in 1928 and 1929, was spent in the Hawaiian Islands, where he was on the research staff of the Bishop Museum, and where he worked on the archeology of Kauai. His report is one of the relatively few on Polynesian prehistory.

His next field trip, in 1930, and 1931, was with Robert Zingg to the Tarahumara of northern Mexico. Their monograph, published by the University of Chicago, was one of the first modern studies of the Indians of remote parts of Mexico and one of the very few on northern Mexico. Although his primary interest became centered in archeology, Bennett continued to collect ethnographic data whenever he had an opportunity and, characteristically, his materials were always available for the use of others.

On his return from Mexico, Bennett began an association with the American Museum of Natural History, as Assistant Curator of South American Archaeology, which was to last until 1938. His first field trip to the Andes, made for the Museum in 1932, was, in several senses, his most important one, for there he found a lasting and absorbing interest and established an immediate reputation as a Peruvianist.

In the early thirties Andean archeology had reached a point beyond which further basic progress without field studies was virtually impossible. Uhle, and Kroeber, with his students, had laid the chronological framework as far as it was then possible to go. Bennett chose Tiahuanaco, in Bolivia, for his first excavations because of the key position of the Tiahuanaco style in the Peruvian coast sequence and because literally nothing was known of the stratigraphy of the type site in the Titicaca Basin. Ignorance of Tiahuanaco had not prevented unfounded speculation about the site from passing as fact, but Bennett, as he did so often later, wanted to see for himself. Here he established his well known Early, Classic and Decadent pottery sequence and related it to two major building periods and some of the stone sculpture. This work laid the foundation for all later studies of the nature of the spread of Tiahuanaco influences over vast areas of the Central Andes, a problem in which Bennett was interested for the rest of his life and to which he made the latest and most important contribution in his posthumously published account of his last field work, in 1950, at Wari, near Ayacucho, Peru. Stopping briefly in Venezuela on his return from Bolivia, Bennett made the first properly controlled excavation in that country.

In 1934, Bennett returned to Bolivia, extending our knowledge of Tiahuanaco in both the lowlands and the Titicaca Basin, and discovering a new phase of highland archeology called Chiripa. This he considered to be post-Classic and pre-Decadent Tiahuanaco. As field work progressed in the region, largely inspired by his own work, he decided that his judgment was based on mistaken stratigraphic interpretation. He retracted his earlier opinion in 1947, placing Chiripa in a much earlier position.

Wendell Bennett and Hope Ranslow were married on October 30, 1935. In the following year they went together to the north coast of Peru, where, in those days before paved highways, life in the remoter districts was far from easy. Bennett's work in Virú Valley on that trip was largely responsible for the later choice of Virú for the concentrated joint campaign undertaken there in 1946, in which he took an active part. Again, in 1938, he and his wife returned to northern Peru, this time to the highlands, where he made the first

truly scientific excavations at Chavín de Huantar and where he threw much new light on the little known Recuay culture. He also discovered a hitherto unknown manifestation of Tiahuanaco influence at Wilkawain, in the Callejón de Huaylas.

During the middle and late thirties Bennett's wide experience in Latin America and his ability to work with others led to his appointment to several committees of the Division of Anthropology and Psychology of the National Research Council. He was also editor of the section on South American Archaeology in the *Handbook of Latin American Studies* from 1936 to 1940. When the Institute of Andean Research was founded, in 1937, Bennett was a charter member, serving as secretary-treasurer from its beginning through 1942, when he became chairman for the next four years. From 1947 until his death he was a member of the Institute's steering committee. His associates in that small group will always recall his practical wisdom and already miss his counsel.

In 1938 Bennett left the American Museum to become Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin, where he taught until 1940, when he joined the Faculty at Yale as associate professor. He became a full professor in 1945, and chairman of the Department of Anthropology in 1949. He was also a Research Associate of the Peabody Museum and a Fellow of Pierson College.

On a field trip to Colombia in 1941 he again pioneered in the delineation of archeological distributions and sequences in little-known regions.

As he became increasingly prominent professionally Bennett was asked to serve in proportionately responsible positions. From 1939 to 1942 he was the representative of the American Anthropological Association in the Division of Anthropology and Psychology of the National Research Council and chairman of the Committee on Latin American Anthropology of the same division from 1941 to 1944. In 1942, when the National Research Council, the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies consolidated their several committees on Latin America, Bennett was appointed executive secretary of their Joint Committee on Latin American Studies. During the war years he was much occupied by this position, and as a member of the Ethnogeographic Board from 1942 to 1945. Both of these joint, wartime groups gave valuable service at a most difficult and often chaotic time. Their contributions to the war effort were due in no small part to Bennett's administrative skill and diplomacy.

Except for a brief field trip to the Cuenca region of Ecuador in 1944, Bennett did no further field work until 1946, when he took part in the Virú Valley Expedition, making intensive excavations at the Gallinazo site he had first reported in 1936. He had, however, undertaken an increasing number of important tasks, including the preparation of a large part of Volume II of the *Handbook of South American Indians*, and the writing of *Andean Culture History*, with Junius Bird, for the American Museum of Natural History. Together these constitute the most useful concise summaries of Andean archeol-

ogy available today. He also edited, and contributed importantly to, a symposium on *A Reappraisal of Peruvian Archaeology*. In addition, he was largely responsible for a review of the archeology of northwestern Argentina published in 1948.

In 1945, Bennett became a member of the Board of Directors of the Social Science Research Council. The following quotation is from *Items*, published by the Social Science Research Council in September, 1953:

Before he became a director in 1945 the Council had shared with other sponsoring organizations the advantage of his membership on the Ethnogeographic Board, 1942-45. It is significant that he was chosen to write the history of that wartime agency; his objective account of its activities, published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1947, is an outstanding appraisal of the use of scholarly and scientific resources in the public service. During the early war years he was also executive officer of the Joint Committee on Latin American Studies, whose wartime aid to government was substantial. The Council is deeply indebted to Wendell Bennett for his sustained and careful analysis of continuing problems of policy and operation, and for his discerning judgment, as a member of its Executive Committee since 1946 and its chairman since 1951. Of unique value to the Council were his tact and discrimination as chairman of the 1947 Committee on Aims, Organization, Operation, and Executive Leadership of the Council.

The field of area research and training and the Council's efforts to improve the social science aspects of area training programs owe much to Wendell Bennett's knowledge and interest. He was a member of the Council's Committee on World Area Research throughout its existence from 1946 to 1953, and his analytical report on its survey of the facilities for Area Studies in American Universities, published by the Council in June 1951, earned repeated expressions of gratitude and commendation from university and government administrators and others concerned with the development of scientific knowledge of different areas of the world.

When problems of evaluating programs for the international exchange of persons were felt to be acute by supporting foundations and government agencies, and the assistance of the Council was sought, it turned to Wendell Bennett for an assessment of appropriate Council activities relating to these problems. His work, in cooperation with other members of the staff, indicated a lack of established knowledge concerning the impact of American educational experience on foreign students, and defined the Council's role as that of planning and promoting research on such experience. As chairman of the resulting Committee on Cross-Cultural Education appointed in 1952, he guided the development of its plans with wisdom and foresight; and his counsel will be sorely missed as its work proceeds.

At Yale his interest in area research and cross-cultural studies was reflected in his chairmanship of the Area Studies Executive Committee and his service as consultant to the Human Relations Area Files.

Perhaps the best indication of the esteem of his colleagues was Bennett's almost constant service to the American Anthropological Association in a number of capacities, beginning before the war, and culminating in his presidency in 1952.

Full as was his life, and varied as was his service to anthropology, over and above his own scholarly work and teaching, Bennett was never too busy to

continue his pattern of kindly, thoughtful helpfulness. His memory will remain with all of us who knew him to the end of our careers, and his fundamental contributions to our science will outlive the youngest of his friends.\*

ALFRED KIDDER II, *University of Pennsylvania*

\* A full bibliography of Wendell Clark Bennett appears on pages 268-70 of *American Antiquity* 19, No. 3 (January, 1954). To this should be added: (1) Review of *Les Civilisations Précolombiennes* by Henri Lehmann, *AAH*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (1954), p. 320, and (2) *Ancient Art of the Andes* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1954).

#### FOR WENDELL CLARK BENNETT

This is a lonely time, uprooted, estranged,  
The fierce Gods dead but not the longing or the dread.

He journeyed under the signs of Anthropos  
Cook pots, finery, shells, skeletons,  
Broken lines at many rims;  
The brittle tongues of disquiet  
Out of the dark pool where run  
The tides by which Joshua and we observe the sun.  
He measured strictly, the trail being narrow  
The echoes falling; a singing in the wind  
Voices sparrow-chirping where the caves begin;  
The carven faces risen from the rock  
Fixed in their silence; they had words for him.

In the past he saw our shadow  
And on the taut clay lips  
The print of our violence and finger tips;  
The constellations steadily wheeling  
Over the shaping hands  
And the sea where they steered  
By skill and law to the imagined islands.

Having dealt with prophecy  
He was no man to watch a foreboding chart  
Tracing the broken rhythms of the heart.  
He returned by way of love to the beginning sea.

—EUGENE DAVIDSON