Descriptive Summary

Languages: English

Contributing Institution: Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego
9500 Gilman Drive
La Jolla 92093-0175

Title: Bruce M. Knauft Papers

Identifier/Call Number: MSS 0031

Physical Description: 0.6 Linear feet (2 archives boxes)

Date (inclusive): 1980-1985

Abstract: Papers of an American anthropologist, consisting largely of carbon copies of anthropological field notes taken by Bruce Knauft and his wife Eileen when they lived among the Gebusi people of Papua New Guinea from 1980-1982. The notes include information on social structure, kinship, and culture, with especial emphasis on spiritual activities of the Gebusi, including transcriptions of audio recordings made at seances.

OFF-SITE STORAGE

COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE. ALLOW ONE WEEK FOR RETRIEVAL OF MATERIALS.

Scope and Content of Collection

The collection consists largely of carbon copies of anthropological field notes, some in manuscript and some in typescript. The notes were written by Bruce Knauft and his wife Eileen and are based on their experiences among the Gebusi. Although some of the materials are dated as late as 1985, the actual field research took place during the years 1980-1982. The notes reflect the Knaufts' investigations into concepts of social structure among the Gebusi, including ethos, myths, and beliefs. Also included is information about kinship relationships and interrelationships among several Gebusi villages and outlying bush hamlets, and Eileen Knauft's notes on temperature, rainfall, food availability, and subsistence. Also included is a small folder of correspondence containing letters written by Knauft explaining aspects of his work.

The main thrust of Bruce Knauft's investigation was directed towards the spirit world of the Gebusi. In this regard he made extensive studies of 62 seances, seance songs, rituals, and witchcraft. This interest is reflected in the collection by a group of transcriptions from tape recordings of individual seances.

The materials are arranged in categories as suggested by Knauft himself in a letter to UCSD's Barbara Jones. This letter can be found in the CORRESPONDENCE (Box 1, Folder 1). With the exception of the Field Report and a folder of miscellaneous notes, the materials are arranged alphabetically by category. The folder of miscellaneous notes includes several untitled documents as well as a narrative written in the Gebusi language.

Biography

Bruce M. Knauft is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Emory University in Atlanta. Born on January 25, 1954, Knauft graduated Magna Cum Laude in anthropology from Yale University in 1976. He received his M.A. in anthropology from the University of Michigan in 1979, and he earned his PhD. in anthropology from Michigan in 1983.

From 1980 to 1982 Knauft and his wife Eileen lived in remote villages of Papua New Guinea's Western Province among the Gebusi tribe. During this time the Knaufts participated in all activities of tribal life and acquired a working knowledge of the Gebusi language. Much of the material gathered among the Gebusi was used in writing Knauft's dissertation titled Good Company and Anger: The Culture and Sociology of Sorcery Among the Gebusi of the Strickland Plain, Papua New Guinea (1983), and his book Good Company and Violence: Sorcery and Social Action in a Lowland New Guinea Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

The focus of Knauft's research was directed toward the unusually large rate of homicides within the Gebusi tribe. Also of interest to him was tribal genealogy and the kinship relationship between the Gebusi and neighboring tribes. Knauft sought to explain the sharp contrast between the tribe's notions of good fellowship versus their attitudes toward punishment and homicide. He found that beliefs in witchcraft or sorcery represented a bond between members of the tribe, their friends, and within family units. Such beliefs, he found, were as important a bond as other aspects of socialization and fraternization.

Bruce Knauft has received many awards and honors, including the C.S. Ford Cross-Cultural Research Prize in 1976 and a Guggenheim Foundation research grant in 1985. His articles have appeared in numerous scholarly journals.

Publication Rights

Publication rights are held by the creator of the collection.

Preferred Citation
Acquisition Information
Acquired 1986.

Restrictions
The Bruce Knauft Papers cannot be used without the permission of Bruce Knauft, Department of Anthropology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia 30322.

Subjects and Indexing Terms
Homicide -- Papua New Guinea -- Western Province
Ethnology -- Papua New Guinea -- Western Province
Oceania
Witchcraft -- Papua New Guinea -- Western Province
Gebusi (Papua New Guinea people)

CORRESPONDENCE

Box 1, Folder 1  1980 - 1985

FIELD NOTES

Box 1, Folder 2  Field report
Box 1, Folder 3  Census - Residence
Box 1, Folder 4  Comings and goings
Box 1, Folder 5  Death and illness
Box 1, Folder 6  Disputes
Box 1, Folder 7  Ethos
Box 1, Folder 8  Events calendar
Box 1, Folder 9  Food and weather
Box 1, Folder 10  Funeral rituals
Box 1, Folder 11  Gebusi tribal report
Box 1, Folder 12  Homosexuality
Box 1, Folder 13  Initiation
Box 1, Folder 14  Kinship - Charts and tabulation (genealogy)
Box 1, Folder 15  Kinship - History
Box 1, Folder 16  Kinship - Marriage
Box 1, Folder 17  Kinship - Terminology
Box 1, Folder 18  Leadership
Box 1, Folder 19  Lexical statistics
Box 1, Folder 20  Morality
Box 1, Folder 21  Myths and narratives
Box 1, Folder 22  Naming and taboos
Box 1, Folder 23  Population statistics by villages (lineages)
Box 1, Folder 24  Physical disorders
Box 1, Folder 25  Residence - Personal histories
Box 1, Folder 26  Rituals and feasts
Box 2, Folder 1-2  Seances - Texts and master lists
Box 2, Folder 3  Seances - Mediumship
Box 2, Folder 4  Seances - Songs
Box 2, Folder 5  Social structures
Box 2, Folder 6  Sorcery and witchcraft
Box 2, Folder 7  Spirit beliefs
Box 2, Folder 8  Trade goods
Box 2, Folder 9  Traditional times
Box 2, Folder 10  Tribal relations
Box 2, Folder 11  Villages
Box 2, Folder 12  Miscellany