



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the Buell Halvor Quain papers, 1935-1955

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	Buell Halvor Quain papers
Date:	1935-1955 (bulk 1935-1939)
Identifier:	NAA.2016-40
Creator:	Quain, Buell H. (Buell Halvor), 1912-1939
Extent:	4.25 Linear feet
Language:	Primarily English. Some materials are in Fijian, Portuguese and Trumai.
Summary:	The papers of Buell H. Quain (1935-1955) document his field work among the Fijian people and the Trumai and Kraho of Brazil. The papers consist primarily of field notes in original notebooks and as organized by topic. There are also hand-drawn maps, letters of correspondence, reading notes, introductory essays to posthumously published work, and photographs.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

There is currently no information available regarding the provenance of the Fiji Series of this collection. The Brazil series was received from the American Museum of Natural History in 2016.

Related Materials

Buell Quain is listed as a correspondent in the Ruth Landes papers and William Duncan Strong papers at the NAA. The William Duncan Strong papers include Ruth Benedict's Quain correspondence. Quain's Trumai research is held at Museu Nacional (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil). The Margaret Mead Papers and South Pacific Ethnographic Archives at the Library of Congress contains correspondence related to Quain. The manuscripts and photo collection of Fannie Dunn Quain, Buell Quain's mother, are held at the North Dakota State Archives and contain at least one photo of Buell Quain.

Processing Information

The papers arrived at the National Anthropological Archives through two deposits. Christy Fic processed the Fiji series in 2012, and Lisa Carney processed the 2016 accretion of Brazil papers in 2022. The papers were received partially arranged. The processing archivists rehoused the collection in archival folders and manuscript boxes. For the most part, the original organization has been retained. Carbon copies of the Brazil papers that had been interspersed with the original documents were separated due to the brittle quality of their paper. Folder titles were assigned by the archivists, based on the titles of Quain's documents.

Processed by Christy Fic, October 2012 and Lisa Carney, June 2022.

Restrictions

The Buell Halvor Quain papers are open for research.

Access to the Buell Halvor Quain papers requires an appointment.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical Note

Buell H. Quain was a promising young anthropologist in the 1930s who worked with the Indigenous peoples of Fiji and Brazil. Quain was born into a prominent family in Bismarck, North Dakota on May 31, 1912. He received his bachelor's degree in 1934 from the University of Wisconsin. Quain went on to study anthropology at Columbia University where he was mentored by Franz Boas and worked closely with other prominent anthropologists of the time, Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead. He wrote the section on the Iroquois for Mead's book, *Cooperation and Competition Among Primitive Peoples*.

After completing his master's degree in 1935, Quain went to Fiji where he spent a year studying the culture, stories, and songs of the Fijian people. He completed his dissertation upon his return to the United States and received his PhD from Columbia University in 1936.

Quain received a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation in 1938 and went to Brazil to conduct a research project on the Trumai, an indigenous community from the upper Xingu River. After three months, Quain left the community for more supplies, but was then prohibited from returning to the Trumai by government agents. This caused Quain great frustration which he expressed in his correspondence. Ultimately, Quain shifted his research focus and went to work with the Ge speaking Kraho people in the state of Maranhao.

Quain died by suicide on August 2, 1939. In a letter dated August 12, 1939, Quain left instructions for his estate and burial in which he claimed to be dying of a contagious disease and asked that his death not be investigated. However, his two indigenous companions suggested that Quain had been in good health prior to his death but had been distressed by recent letters received from family. Communications from him had indicated his continued feeling of discouragement after being prohibited from returning to the Trumai, in addition to describing family troubles.

All of Quain's books were published posthumously. His original field notes were in various states of organization at the time of his death. His mother, Dr. Fannie Dunn Quain, arranged the notes and gave them to Columbia University so that they could be prepared for publication.

A fictional account of Quain's final days, called *Nove Noites*, was published by Brazilian author Bernardo Carvalho in 2002. The English translation, *Nine Nights*, was published in 2007.

Sources Consulted

Eriksmoen, Curt. "Promising Anthropologist from Bismarck Died Young." *The Bismarck Tribune*, April 3, 2011.

Thomas, Erika. "Buell Quian (1912-1939): an Ethnologist without a Grave," *Human and Social Studies*, vol. VII, no. 2 (2018): 69-77.

Chronology

1912 May 12

Born in Bismarck, North Dakota

1934

B.A. in Zoology, University of Wisconsin

Registered with Department of Anthropology at Columbia University

1935-1936

First trip to Fiji Islands

1936

PhD, Columbia University

1938 February	Arrived in Brazil
1938 August to November	Lived with Trumai
1939 March to July	Lived with Kraho
1939 July 31	Left Kraho village with men nicknamed João and Ismael
1939 August 2	Died near Fazenda Serrinha, Brazil

Scope and Contents

The papers of Buell H. Quain document his research in Fiji and Brazil in the 1930s. The first series on Fiji contains an index file organized by informant and topic, his field notebooks, and reading notes. Among the Fijian people, Quain studied personal histories, kinship, social relationships, sexual activity, law, economics, and cooperative activities. He kept notes on daily activities, and collected folktales, songs, and linguistic notes.

The second series contains research materials from Brazil that were organized after his death. Included are a letter he wrote to missionaries near the Trumai, and typed field notes that have been organized by topic, such as: maps, folktales, kinships terms, daily activities, census, household observations, land and property, and house inventories. Duplicate copies of these notes are included in the papers. Also included are photocopies of the foreword and introduction to his posthumously published book, *The Trumai Indians of Central Brazil*. An indexed album of photos contains images from the upper Xingu river and the Trumai community, as well as photos from Quain's stay among the Kraho.

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or National Anthropological Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in two series: (1) Fiji, 1935-1936; (2) Brazil, 1938-1955.

Selected Bibliography

1942. *The Flight of the Chiefs: Epic Poetry of Fiji*. New York: J.J. Augustin.
1948. With Ruth Benedict. *Fijian Village*. Chicago, Ill: Univ. of Chicago Pr.
1955. With Robert F. Murphy. *The Trumai Indians of Central Brazil*. New York: J.J. Augustin.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Fijians
Mehim (Krahô/Crahao)
Trumai

Cultures:

Fijians
Mehim (Krahô/Crahao)
Trumai

Places:

Brazil
Fiji

Container Listing

Series 1: Fiji, 1935-1936

3.25 Linear feet

Typed field notes

Scope and Contents: Loose sheets of typed material approx. 3" x 8". Organized by subject.

Contents:

Box 1, Folder 1	Bici, 1937 Notes: Sociological history; history of personality; sex, dreams; attitudes toward property; activities; father and son (Simeli levu and lailai).
Box 1, Folder 2	Bolalevu, undated Notes: Participation according to status; relations with affinals; non-kin relations; personality; miscellaneous activities.
Box 1, Folder 3	Jojopeni, undated Notes: Status; family; personality; activities.
Box 1, Folder 4	Bulisivo, 1937 Notes: Personal and family history; status; activities as chief; personality; relations with wife and family; property; miscellaneous activities; (Sabesa, Joseya, Vilo, Suna, etc).
Box 1, Folder 5	Kavaiya, 1937 Notes: Sociological history and status; personality; extra-familial relations: legal difficulties; relations with family; miscellaneous activities; Namu; Keleivi's sickness, death, funeral; Narieta, Laetei, and Kavaiya's children.
Box 1, Folder 6	Manueli, 1937 Notes: Sociological relations (status, marriage, kin); attitude, sex, personality; work (activities); Narogo, Vatili.
Box 1, Folder 7	Nabete, 1937 Notes: History of status and social participation; attitudes and miscellany; family, Litiyana et al.
Box 1, Folder 8	Naicadra, 1937 Notes: Sociology;religious function; activities; Baseva, Bolai levu, Kinisimere.
Box 1, Folder 9	Ratupeni, 1937 Notes: Status; personality and sex; miscellany.

Box 1, Folder 10	Ravulolo, 1937 Notes: Status; history and personality; birth ceremonies (economic difficulties); activities.
Box 2, Folder 1	Rokobuli, 1937 Notes: Sociology, religious function; participation; personality; Lui, Unaisi, Didi, Sayasi.
Box 2, Folder 2	Solomoni, 1937 Notes: Sociology and personality; status, extra-family relations, personality; miscellaneous; iliseva, Atilina, Siteri, Ilisiveca.
Box 2, Folder 3	Velema, 1937 Notes: History and personality; religious functions.
Box 2, Folder 4	Waiseya, 1937 Notes: History and personality; activities; Laisana, Matua, Drisi.
Box 2, Folder 5	Miscellaneous individuals, 1937 Notes: Bari; Dranu & Monasa; Ratu Orisi; Semi; Tomasi; Vauliasi & wife; Yavala; miscellaneous: several persons per card; miscellaneous facts about individuals.
Box 2, Folder 6	Small children, 1937 Notes: Relations with adults: infants and affection, training and discipline, activities (Dakaiwale); unsupervised activities.
Box 2, Folder 7	School children, 1936-1937 Notes: Activities et al.; Sunaki, Mataseti, Tevita Veisere, Melika, Tevita Vereyalawa, Saolo; Alifereti lailai.
Box 2, Folder 8	Activities of young people, 1937 Notes: Men; women.
Box 2, Folder 9	Sex, 1937 Notes: Sex activity of children, development of modesty; premarital sex; conception of coitus, abnormality; virginity & attractiveness (men & women); sexual division of activities; masculinity, circumcision and sex criteria; femininity (sexual initiative, etc.).
Box 2, Folder 10	Adult attitudes, 1937 Notes: Dominant attitudes, shame and fear; miscellaneous, humor, death, et al.
Box 3, Folder 1	Extra-village law, undated Notes: Legal aspects of war; Burenitu vs. Raralevu; Ravulolo vs. the half-casts, Namo vs. Williama (Chinese); individuals vs. the crown.
Box 3, Folder 2	Intra-village law, 1937

	Notes:	Bolalevu vs. Vaulini; Vei'arogi, Sunaki vs. Bici, Karalaini vs. Atilina; administrative trouble, Bulisivo vs. Dranu, Bolalevu and young men; legal difficulties of sex and marriage, Solomon vs. Iliseva, Unaisi vs. Kolaya, Lui and Rokobuli's brother, Namo and Ema, Vauliasi; Bari vs. Litiyana, Kavaia, Nabete, Bolalevu, Suniya; Kevaiya vs. Solomonivs, RatuVuki (theft); divining; women's law (Litiyana vs. Radebu).
Box 3, Folder 3	Sociology & economics 1 of 4, 1937 Notes:	General; marriage: accounts of ceremony and exchange, kin determinants in marriage; tabu relationships; funerals.
Box 3, Folder 4	Sociology & economics 2 of 4, 1937 Notes:	Birth exchanges; menstruation and pregnancy, etc.; political structure; chieftanship.
Box 3, Folder 5	Sociology & economics 3 of 4, 1937 Notes:	Chieftanship; priests; inheritance (miscellaneous); social relationships (kin).
Box 3, Folder 6	Sociology & economics 4 of 4, 1937 Notes:	Property and exchange; ownership of land.
Box 3, Folder 7	Cooperative activities 1 of 3, 1937 Notes:	(Daily routine); economic (with attendant obligations): housebuilding (theory and practice), planting (theory and practice), hunting.
Box 4, Folder 1	Cooperative activities 2 of 3, 1937 Notes:	Entertainments; guests; government: work, administration, sanitation; councils of govt. and church.
Box 4, Folder 2	Cooperative activities 3 of 3, 1937 Notes:	Church; Christian feasts.
Box 4, Folder 3	Miscellaneous: religion, disease, history, material culture & technology, folklore, miscellany, linguistics 1 of 2, 1937-1937 Notes:	Religion: Tevoro, Kinds of Tevoro, Luve ni wai, Vu ni Vanua, shrines, human relations with Tevoro (bari); magic, sorcery, etc.; nature of soul, disease, history, material culture & technology.
Box 4, Folder 4	Miscellaneous: religion, disease, history, material culture & technology, folklore, miscellany, linguistics 2 of 2, 1936-1937 Notes:	Technology, folklore, miscellany, linguistics.
Box 6, Folder 9	Melanesia bibliography, undated Notes:	Loose sheets of paper numbered 1-7.
Box 6, Folder 10	Outline of research, undated Notes:	Loose sheets of paper.
Box 7, Folder 1	Reading notes 1 of 3, undated	

Notes: Special remarks in literature; circumcision, technology, sex; notes on folklore from literature; Deacon, Malekula; Ershine; Henderson, Discoveries of Fiji.

Box 7, Folder 2 Reading notes 2 of 3, undated
Notes: In Lokerby; Pritchard, Polynesian Reminiscences; Thomson, Diversions of a Prime Minister; The Fijians.

Box 7, Folder 3 Reading notes 3 of 3, undated
Notes: Williams Volume I Custom; Williams (Calver) Volume II Missions.

Box 7, Folder 4 Drawing of Fijian man & woman with envelope, 1937
Notes: Fragile, brittle paper broken in pieces. Needs conservation. Postmarked July 24, 1937, Spokane, Washington.

Field notebooks

Box 4, Folder 5 Daily report I, 1936
Notes: Field notebook.

Box 4, Folder 6 Daily report II, 1936
Notes: Field notebook.

Box 4, Folder 7 Daily report III, 1936
Notes: Field notebook.

Box 4, Folder 8 Daily report IV, 1936
Notes: Field notebook.

Box 5, Folder 1 Daily report V, 1936-1937
Notes: Field notebook.

Box 5, Folder 2 Daily report VI, 1937
Notes: Field notebook.

Box 5, Folder 3 Daily report VII (return from Macuata), 1937
Notes: Field notebook.

Box 5, Folder 4 Daily report VIII (from Bici - marriage), 1937
Notes: Field notebook.

Box 5, Folder 5 Daily report IX [illegible] story, 1937
Notes: Field notebook.

Box 5, Folder 6 Folktales book I (more stories from Solomoni), undated
Notes: Field notebook.

Box 5, Folder 7 Book two - folklore II, undated

	Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 5, Folder 8	Folktales III Solomoni, undated Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 5, Folder 9	IV Folktales, undated Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 5, Folder 10	Folktales & songs etc. Velema I, undated Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 5, Folder 11	Song II & III & IV from Velema, undated Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 5, Folder 12	Songs from Velema V, undated Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 5, Folder 13	Miscellaneous material from Velema, undated Notes:	1- Kinship; 2- Priestship; 3-Tevaro classification, 4- Souls, etc.
Box 6, Folder 1	Material from Lekuta, undated Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 6, Folder 2	Impersonal material, undated Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 6, Folder 3	Land, undated Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 6, Folder 4	Linguistics, undated Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 6, Folder 5	Personal histories in relation to ceremonial exchange et al., undated Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 6, Folder 6	Yankona ceremonial, undated Notes:	Field notebook.
Box 6, Folder 7	Journal, undated Notes:	Field notebook included dated entries from Aug. 16, Aug. 20, and Sept. 16.
Box 6, Folder 8	Information from I-[illegible] June 1, 1936/ II - Kanaya: June 9, 1936 Notes:	Field notebook.

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Series 2: Brazil, 1938-1955

1 Linear foot

Correspondence and manuscript drafts about Trumai, 1938-1955

Box 8, Folder 1	Correspondence, 1939 Notes: Envelope containing photographs of hand-drawn map; letterhead from North Dakota Anti-Tuberculosis Association, Inc.; copy of Buell's last letter to missionaries Mr. and Mrs. T. Young who were in Xingu Country 15 days up the river from the Trumai, July 23, 1939.
Box 8, Folder 2-4	Trumai Classification of Technology and Material Culture 1 of 3, undated Notes: Partial index; pages 1-98: food, daily activities, healing ceremony & sickness, death and mourning, miscellaneous, bodily processes.
Box 8, Folder 3	Trumai Classification of Technology and Material Culture 2 of 3, undated Notes: Pages 99-229: children, pertinent psychological attitudes, sex, individuals, geneology, kinship, history, Kama yura.
Box 8, Folder 4	Trumai Classification of Technology and Material Culture 3 of 3, undated Notes: Pages 230-332: property/ownership/trade, trouble about sex, authority, administration and law, imitation, etiquette, general, group ceremonies, religion & speculative thought.
Box 8, Folder 5	Trumai loose typed field notes 1 of 3, undated Notes: Contents list, maps, linguistic notes, folktales.
Box 8, Folder 6	Trumai loose typed field notes 2 of 3, undated Notes: Kinship terms, calendar of daily activities, census by house, diary, household description.
Box 8, Folder 7	Trumai loose typed field notes 3 of 3, undated Notes: Land & property, drawings, trip notes.
Box 8, Folder 8	Biographical information: book front matter, 1955 Notes: Photocopy of front matter from The Trumai Indians of Central Brazil: Foreword by Charles Wagley, Feb. 1955; Introduction by Robert F. Murphy, Jan. 1955.
Box 8, Folder 9	Photocopy of Trumai Classification of Technology and Material Culture 1 of 3, undated Notes: Buell Quain's Trumai fieldnotes page references to subjects, 25 pages; Trumai Classification of Technology and Material Culture, pages 7-98.
Box 8, Folder 10	Photocopy of Trumai Classification of Technology and Material Culture 2 of 3, undated Notes: Pages 99-229.

Box 8, Folder 11 Photocopy of Trumai Classification of Technology and Material Culture 3 of 3, undated
Notes: Pages 230-332.

Box 9, Folder 1 Carbon copy of Trumai Classification of Technology and Material Culture 1 of 3, undated
Notes: Pages 7-139.
Documents are brittle.

Box 9, Folder 2 Carbon copy of Trumai Classification of Technology and Material Culture 2 of 3, undated
Notes: Pages 140-229.
Documents are brittle.

Box 9, Folder 3 Carbon copy of Trumai Classification of Technology and Material Culture 3 of 3, undated
Notes: Pages 230-332.
Documents are brittle.

Box 9, Folder 4 Carbon copy of loose typed field notes (incomplete), undated
Notes: Incomplete carbon copy. Originals in folders 5-7.
Documents are brittle.

Photographs of Trumai and Kraho, 1938-1939

Box 10, Folder 1 List of photographs, 1938-1939
Notes: List describing photos by number included with the album. Geographic photos of Mato-Grosso; Xingu river; Trumai community: Trumai houses, Trumai community members (Janaji, Kajar, Majbu, Tun, Autu (captive - Tsuja woman), Jawala, Katauka, Jati, Erami, Jani, Jumunuwa, Tay, Majuwa, Aloari, Oirupa, food preparation, effigy preparation, dance; scenes in the Kraho village.

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