



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the Lewis Cotlow films, 1949-circa 1969

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Human Studies Film Archives
Title:	Lewis Cotlow films
Date:	1949-circa 1969
Identifier:	HSFA.1985.11
Creator:	Cotlow, Lewis, 1898-1987
Extent:	Film reels (8 hours 16 minutes; color sound; 17,400 feet; 16mm) Linear feet
Language:	English .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Received from Lewis Cotlow in 1978 and the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History in 1985 and 1987.

Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Please contact the archives for information on availability of access copies of audiovisual recordings. Original audiovisual material in the Human Studies Film Archives may not be played.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical / Historical

Explorer and filmmaker Lewis Cotlow directed expeditions between 1940 and 1969 while carrying the Explorers Club Flag to the Amazon, Africa, Australia, and New Guinea.

Scope and Contents

Original film, prints, elements, sound materials and associated texts from the following films produced by explorer Lewis Cotlow: SAVAGE SPLENDOR, ZANZABUKU, VANISHING AFRICA, TWILIGHT OF THE PRIMITIVE, PRIMITIVE PARADISE, JUNGLE HEADHUNTERS, HIGH ARCTIC, IN SEARCH OF THE PRIMITIVE.

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 As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today.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 Anthropology Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Chimbu (Papua New Guinean people)
- Dani (New Guinean people)
- Enga (Papua New Guinean people)
- Inuit
- Medlpa (Papua New Guinean people)

Cultures:

- Inuit

Types of Materials:

- Sound films

Places:

- Africa, Eastern
- Arctic regions
- Canada
- Congo (Brazzaville)
- Congo (Democratic Republic)
- Kenya
- North America
- Oceania
- Papua New Guinea
- South America
- Tanzania
- Uganda

Container Listing

Savage Splendor, 1946-1947

Film reels (63 minutes; color sound; 2750 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film was made in the course of the Armand Denis-Lewis Cotlow African expedition in 1946 and purports to be the first color footage shot in Africa. Following the adventures of a big game safari while on a photographic and animal catching mission through the Belgian Congo (Zaire) and Kenya, the film creates a panorama of the people, wildlife, and landscapes of central Africa. Indigenous peoples depicted include the Basongo-Meno, Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri forest, Enya (Wagenia), Fulani, Dan, Baule, Kuba, Mangbetu, Tutsi, and Masai. Encounters between the hunting party and various groups of people along the route are filmic reenactments and fabrications, replete with indigenous "celebrations," dances, rituals, and hunting scenes. The filmmakers join up with big game hunter Carr Hartley at his animal stockade in Rumuruti, Kenya to film the capture of a variety of animals destined for zoos around the world. Animals depicted in the film include elephants, lions, buffalo, hippopotami, giraffe, oryx, ostrich, antelope, aardvark, grebe zebra, rhinoceros, pelicans, and vultures.

Legacy Keywords: Language and culture ; Expeditions ; Safaris ; Big game hunting ; Landscapes ; Zoology ; Denis, Armand ; RKO Pictures
HSFA 1985.11.1

Jungle Headhunters, 1949

Film reels (73 minutes; color sound; 2350 feet)

Notes: Edited film made in the course of the Lewis Cotlow Amazon expeditions and in association with RKO Radio Pictures. The film is a compilation of footage shot during three expeditions into the Amazon region of South America (1940, 1945, and 1949) with a narrative constructed around a journey to locate and film the Shuar (Jivaro) of the western Amazon region of Peru. Film opens with a preliminary encounter with the Cuna Indians of the San Blas Islands off the eastern coast of Panama followed by embarkation upriver from the Brazilian port of Belem at the mouth of the Amazon and continuing by motorized dugout canoe into the Mato Grosso region. First contact sequences with indigenous people are filmic reenactments and several of the dances have been dubbed over with contemporary western dance music. Footage of ethnographic interest includes: Bororo settlements in the Mato Grosso; feather headdresses worn by men; river travel; fishing techniques; a wrestling match (most likely among upper Xingu people); Yagua dances and hunting near the Peruvian border in the Andes; and body painting, dress, music, and dances among the Colorado of eastern Ecuador. Film concludes with sequences shot among the Shuar of the Sepa River area, including *jivarias* (settlements), bathing, manufacture of poisonous darts, making of *nijimache* (fermented yucca beer), *tsantsa* (shrinking of human head), and accompanying *tsantsa* dance.

HSFA 1985.11.6

Zanzabuku, 1954

Film reels (83 minutes; color sound; 2400 feet; 16mm)

Notes:

Edited film produced in association with Republic Pictures and made in the course of the Lewis Cotlow Third African Expedition in 1954 to Tanganyika (Tanzania), Uganda, Kenya, and the Belgian Congo (Zaire). The film crew's eight month safari covered over 15,000 miles with the goal of filming a variety of African animals. The expedition visits the animal stockade of Carr Hartley in Rumuruti, Kenya and films the zoo-catching enterprise while they rope and crate animals. The simulated hunt of a leopard by Turkana men and the successful trapping of another leopard by son of Carr Hartley becomes the filmic justification for a fabricated African "celebration" attended by Turkana, Masai, and Kuria peoples. Ethnographic footage includes the music, dances, ostrich plume headdresses, and ivory lip plugs of the Turkana; the attire and jewelry of Masai women; and dances and rituals among the Kuria. Other indigenous people depicted in the film include the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri forest who demonstrate the building of a liana bridge across a river and "celebrate" its completion with music and dance. In Tanganyika (Tanzania), the film crew joins another big game hunter, Pellegrini, and films the capture of an elephant, a hippopotamus, and a rhinoceros.

Legacy Keywords: Language and culture ; Expeditions ; Safaris ; Animals Africa ; Dance ; Adornment Africa ; Rites and ceremonies

HSFA 1985.11.2

Primitive Paradise, 1961

2 Film reels (45 minutes; color sound; 1600 feet; 16mm)

Notes:

Edited film produced and distributed by Excelsior Picture Corporation was shot in the course of the Cotlow New Guinea expeditions in 1958 and 1959 to the Australian territory of Papua New Guinea and West Irian, Dutch New Guinea (Irian Barat). The expedition visits a number of patrol posts in the territories and accompanies various Australian and Dutch district patrol officers on their circuit. In the Mount Hagen area the expedition films a murder trial presided over by the patrol officer and practices associated with the lamentation of the dead. Sequences include a Dani pig feast (Balim Valley) and a mock raid by the Kukukuku who also display courthship rituals and the mummification of dead relatives. Film concludes with a major *sing-sing* (probably the "Hagen Show") at which Aiome Pygmies, the "mudmen" of the Asaro River region, and Minj, Enga, Hageners, Chimbu, and Goroka peoples ceremonially display themselves.

Cameraman: Whiteman, Bede ; Production Assistant: Frazer, Alan ; Production Supervisor: Wood, Francis C. Jr. ; Music Supervisor: Fuchs, Herman ; Creator Maps and Titles: Videart, Inc. ; Tanguiluma: Snook, Capt. ; Territorial Administrator: Clelland, Brig. ; District Commissioner: Sena ; Assistant to Medical Officer: Donga ; Officer: Greenley, Bob ; Patrol Officer: Gonzalez ; Nurse: McFarland, Betty

Legacy Keywords: Language and culture ; Food preparation threshing sago ; Feasts cooking pits pigs ; Construction bridge building New Guinea ; Clothing bark cloth manufacture ; Mummification ; Housebuilding cane weaving thatch ; Transportation canoes dugouts ; Weapons stone ; Ceremony celebration sing sing ; Adornment headdress feathers shell ; Warfare feuding ; Litigation ; Feuding blood feuds informal justice ; Police native conscripts ; Public health ; Mourning greif amputation of fingers ; Ancestors effigies ; Art effigies statuary ; Nudity penis sheath ; Dancing ceremonial ; Drumming feasting ; Masks mud ceremony ; Mutilation mourning ; Expeditions ; New Guinea ; Wahgi Valley (New Gineau) ; Mt. Hagen New Gineau ; Maprik New Gineau ; Baliem Valley (Netherlands New Gineau) ; Benabena ; Sepik River (New Gineau) ; Oceania ; Dani (New Guinea people) ; Mt. Hagen tribes ; Enga (New Guinea people) ; Ming ; Chimbu (New Guinea people) ; Papua New Guinea Government ; Dutch New Guinea Government

HSFA 1978.1.2/1985.11.5

High Arctic, circa 1963

Film reels (1 hour; color sound; 2100 feet; 16mm)

[Video: High Arctic, circa 1963, 1978.01.001-002, clip 1](#)

[Video: High Arctic, circa 1963, 1978.01.001-002, clip 2](#)

Notes:

Edited film was made in the course of two expeditions to the Canadian Arctic region of Ellesmere Island, Jones Sound, and Baffin Island in 1962 and 1963. In focusing on the life of an extended Inuit "family," Cotlow attempts to portray the adaptation and survival strategies necessary in the frigid environment of the northern Arctic. Sequences focus on family life, relationships between family members, preparation and cooking of meals, a "trial marriage," transportation by dog sleds, building of an igloo, seal hunting with a *teliwak* hunting screen, walrus hunting, and killing of a polar bear. Other footage includes trading of fur pelts, target practice with both rifle and harpoon, soapstone carvings, making of caribou sinew thread and the sewing of parkas, and gift giving to the children by the filmmaker.

Producer: Sinclair, Douglas

Legacy Keywords: Language and culture ; Hunting techniques of seals polar bears ; Food quest hunting ; Food consumption seal meat ; Houses construction of igloos ; Hides used as bedding used as clothing ; Garb use of animal skins ; Nomadism Eskimoes ; Singing as palliative to work Eskimoes ; Work groups construction of igloos ; Play children Eskimoes ; Transportation dog sleds ; Trapping pelts ; Trade trapping pelts trading posts ; Carving soapstone Eskimos ; Marriage conventions of trial marriage Eskimos ; Sewing garb

HSFA 1978.1.1/1985.11.7

In Search of the Primitive, circa 1966

Film reels (50 minutes; color sound; 1800 feet)

Notes:

Edited film used by explorer Lewis Cotlow on lecture tours throughout the United States. A compilation of footage from JUNGLE

HEADHUNTERS, the film shows travel through regions of the Amazon by riverboat, motorized dugout canoe, mule, and foot. Ethnic groups depicted in the film include the Cuna, Bororo, Yagua, Colorado, and Jivaro.

HSFA 1985.11.8

Vanishing Africa, 1969

Film reels (72 minutes; color sound; 2600 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film, used on lecture tours, is a compilation of footage Cotlow shot to produce two earlier films on Africa, SAVAGE SPLENDOR and ZANZABUKU, and additional footage shot on a third expedition to equatorial Africa in 1969. Ethnic groups depicted include; Turkana, Masai, Kuria, Watusi, Babira, Fulani, Wagenia, Kuba, Mangbetu, and Mbuti Pygmies. Much of the footage is devoted to the animal catching adventures of Carr Hartley, a big game hunter and world wide zoo supplier who maintains a stockade in Rumuruti, Kenya.

Legacy Keywords: Language and culture ; Expeditions ; Big game hunting ; Animals Africa

HSFA 1985.11.3

The Twilight of the Primitive, circa 1969

Film reels (50 minutes; color sound; 1800 feet)

Notes: Edited film by explorer Lewis Cotlow of the Matto Grosso region of Brazil shot in 1968. Film begins with a visit to Orlando Villas Boas who escorts Cotlow and party to the settlements of the upper Xingu people. Ethnographic footage includes village dwellings, body painting, ritual dances, and a wrestling match among unidentified neighboring groups. Other footage of indigenous people includes the Shavante, their village settlements, and the initiation rituals of young men. The filmmakers also visit the Shuar (Jivaro) of the Morona River area and film a simulated "hostile encounter" with male members of the group and the reenactment of a headhunting raid, head shrinking, and *tsantsa* dance. Included are scenes of women harvesting and preparing manioc and plantains, bathing children, and making clay pots. Footage shot among the men includes gathering, spinning, and weaving of cotton; harvesting of sugarcane; making of blow guns, poison darts, and spears; and gathering of *achiote* plants for body painting.

HSFA 1985.11.4