



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the John and Naomi Bishop collection, 1977-1996

Cataloging supported by Smithsonian Institution Women's Committee.

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Scope and Contents.....	1
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	3
Oral Histories with Visual Anthropologists, 1999-2009.....	6

Collection Overview

Repository:	Human Studies Film Archives
Title:	John and Naomi Bishop collection
Date:	1977-2009
Identifier:	HSFA.1987.07
Creator:	Bishop, Naomi Hawes Bishop, John Melville
Extent:	Film reels (color sound; 16mm) Video recordings Sound recordings Linear feet
Language:	Supplementary materials are in English.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Received in multiple accessions from John and Naomi Bishop. Initial accessions of the Melamchi films were received in 1987 and 1990, and additional groups of material were received in 2002, 2008, and 2017.

Preferred Citation

John and Naomi Bishop collection, Human Studies Film Archives, Smithsonian Institution

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.

Scope and Contents

Edited films, outtakes, stills, and narration tracks by John and Naomi Bishop. Includes footage shot in the village of Melamchi, Nepal, for the film *Himalayan Herders*.

Supplementary material: Supplementary materials: audio tapes, 35mm slides, black-and-white stills.

Annotatations (recorded narratives) are by John Bishop, documentary filmmaker, Naomi Bishop, anthropologist, John Homiak, Human Studies Film Archives and Nogabu, cultural informant from Melamchi. Footage complements [Melemchi Village, 1989].

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 As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary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:

- Helambu Sherpa (Nepalese people)
- Music

Cultures:

- Helambu Sherpa (Nepalese people)

Types of Materials:

- Sound films
- Video recordings

Places:

- Asia
- Malemchigāon (Nepal)
- New England
- North America

Container Listing

Melemchi Village, Nepal, 1986

10 Film reels (5 hours; color sound; 10,800 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Full film record documents the cultural ecology of a Sherpa village at the head of the Helembu Valley, Nepal.

Footage begins with shots of Rhesus monkeys at the Buddhist shrine of Swayambanath in Kathmandu valley as part of research project observing the behavior of temple monkeys. Footage in the Melemchi village focuses on both subsistence and religious aspects of Helembu Sherpa culture. Documentation of subsistence includes herding and domestic activities of the Sherpa patrilineal households; harvesting changa, the high altitude barley from which the staple food, thombu is made; women threshing wheat in fields; women dairying in family pastures; spinning lambs wool; weaving jackets; grinding grain and flour on the grindstone; women making yoghurt, butter and cheese; weaving bamboo mats. Documentation of religious and ritual depicts the coexistence of Buddhist and local Bon animist practices; a Nyin Lo ceremony conducted by a bombo (shaman) to exorcise bad spirits; the the torna (a ritual object representing a temporary house for the gods); man in trance drumming and calling spirits; chicken sacrifice; beating a woman with steamed branches to expunge the evil spirits from her; a Mikha Kyurgen puja done to reverse the negative effects of gossiping; the TupuTsezchu Festival, one of four festivals held annually in Melemchi to commemorate the work of Guru Rempeche, the Bodhisattva who brought Buddhism to Tibet; the Nara festival which honors the founding of the gomba(local Buddhist temple); the decapitation of a yak as an offering. Also documented is the funerary practice composed of the procession where the deceased is carried in a chair to the funeral ground for cremation. Sequences also depict men carving decorations for the woodwork adorning houses; an arranged marriage; Sherpa man teaching a class to young students; playing the "adorje," a trumpet made out of a human thigh bone; lama reading Tibetan texts.

Legacy Keywords: Language and culture ; Temples prayer wheels Nepal ; Harvests barley Nepal ; Barley method of harvest Nepal ; Animal husbandry milking cows Nepal ; Seances spirit mediums ritual Nepal ; Mediums ritual spirit communication Nepal ; Spirits mediums communication with Nepal ; Ritual spirit mediums seances Nepal ; Chanting as part of ritual Nepal ; Musical instruments drums cymbals horns bells Nepal ; Agriculture corn barley grains Nepal ; Food preparation churning butter cheese Nepal ; Altars seances Nepal ; Animal sacrifice as part of ritual Nepal ; Purification ritual Nepal ; Mills grinding flour water driven Nepal ; Weaving wool looms Nepal ; Pastoral activities herding miling grazing Nepal ; Bells for keeping birds from crops Nepal ; Quarrying boulders for building stones Nepal ; Mortuary practices pallequin procession

cremation Nepal ; Funerals cremation Nepal ; Priest lama chanting Nepal ; Temple gumpa ceremony Nepal ; Bread ceremonial Nara bread gumpa Nepal ; Dancing ritual social Nepal ; Woodworking carving Nepal ; Altars gumpa Nepal ; Flags prayer flags raising of Nepal ; Potatoes cultivation of Nepal ; Shrines gumpa Nepal
HSFA 1987.7.1

Melemchi Village, Nepal, 1989

Film reels (6 hours 5 minutes; color silent sound; 13,000 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Full film record depicting life in the Sherpa village of Melemchi at the head of the Helembu Valley, Nepal. Footage complements Melemchi Village, 1986.

Filmed in the winter of 1989, the project was conceived to document the cultural ecology of Melemchi with the focus on the interactions between herd management, Sherpa cyclical wage labor and migration to India. Footage featuring holidays and religious ceremonies include: preparations made for Losar, Tibetan New Year which include pounding rice for rice flour (samba), baking "gipattis," (fried bread), the mounting of a new prayer flag, burning incense, villagers receiving blessings from their elders, gambling and cardplaying activities traditionally played on Losar; Yung, Buddhist ceremony where lamas read sacred texts in honor of Buddha's birthday; prostrations at Buddhist shrine. Footage of subsistence activities include: digging compost; the "Lari" system of farming where family and friends exchange help in reaping the crops; various kinds of work associated with transhumant zomo herds including the collection of fodder, milking and cheese making; building a new roof on a cow shed; women using sheeps wool to weave material for Sherpa jackets; men plowing fields using two bulls; cutting firewood and stockpiling for upcoming year. Footage relating to the seasons and climate include: snowball fights, children building snowmen, the seasonal migration to lower winter pastures. ; Landscape and wildlife shots include the Yangrigang mountain where goddess Amachabriagi dwells across from Helembu valley, scenes of Ganesh Himal on the edge of Kathmandu valley, plateau farming, Rhesus monkeys around village temple, scenes of village fields in snow. Other events featured included: men congregating at a village forum to discuss issues such as the coming of electricity to Melemchi; picnic for the dedication of a new school; the distilling of Sherpa beer (chang) to make liquor (rakshi); rope handmade from nettle fibers; male sheep sold at Dasain festival; men using two-man saw to cut planks for new house. Also featured is a traditional Sherpa marriage "gapte kyungen" involving symbolic bride capture followed by the wedding celebration. Various interviews with Melemchi men and women with different social experiences and generational backgrounds included.

Collection is annotated by John Bishop, documentary filmmaker, Naomi Bishop, anthropologist, John Homiak, Human

Studies Film Archives, and Nogabu, cultural informant from Melemchi.

Legacy Keywords: Language and culture ; Temples prayer wheels Nepal ; Harvests barley Nepal ; Barley method of harvest Nepal ; Animal husbandry milking cows Nepal ; Seances spirit mediums ritual Nepal ; Mediums ritual spirit communication Nepal ; Spirits mediums communication with Nepal ; Ritual spirit mediums seances Nepal ; Chanting as part of ritual Nepal ; Musical instruments drums cymbals horns bells Nepal ; Agriculture corn barley grains Nepal ; Food preparation churning butter cheese Nepal ; Altars seances Nepal ; Animal sacrifice as part of ritual Nepal ; Purification ritual Nepal ; Mills grinding flour water driven Nepal ; Weaving wool looms Nepal ; Pastoral activities herding miling grazing Nepal ; Bells for keeping birds from crops Nepal ; Quarrying boulders for building stones Nepal ; Mortuary practices palquin procession cremation Nepal ; Funerals cremation Nepal ; Priest lama chanting Nepal ; Temple gompa ceremony Nepal ; Bread ceremonial Nara bread gompa Nepal ; Dancing ritual social Nepal ; Woodworking carving Nepal ; Altars gompa Nepal ; Flags prayer flags raising of Nepal ; Potatoes cultivation of Nepal ; Shrines gompa Nepal

HSFA 1990.5.1

New England Fiddles, 1984

1 Film reel (28 minutes; color sound; 1,062 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film presents seven of the finest traditional musicians as they play in their homes and at dances and contests, passing their fiddle playing styles to younger fiddlers, and commenting on their music. Featured are Ron West (Yankee), Paddy Cronnin (Irish), Ben Guillemette(Quebecois), Wilfred Guillette (Quebecois), Harold Luce (Yankee), Gerry Robichaud (Maritime), and the Cape Breton style of Joe Cormier.

HSFA 2002.3.8

Films by John Bishop, 1977-1996

Film reels (16mm)

Notes: Films by filmmaker John Bishop: THESUS PLAY (1977); YOYO MAN (1978); CHOOSE LIFE (1984); HAND PLAY (1986); NEW ENGLAND FIDDLES (1984); NEW ENGLAND DANCES (1990); THE LAST WINDOW (1989) and HIMALAYAN HERDERS (1996); video project of Khmer Court Dances (1984 and 1992).

HSFA 2002-003

Cambodian dance, 1995

Film reels (28,000 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Cambodian dance shot in 1995.

HSFA 2008-019

Oral Histories with Visual Anthropologists, 1999-2009

Local Number: HSFA 2017.6.1

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Further Lane, 2011
Notes: HSFA 2017.6.2

In the Wilderness of a Troubled Genre, 2013
Notes: HSFA 2017.6.3

Oh What a Blow That Phantom Gave Me! Edmund Carpenter, 2017
Notes: HSFA 2017.6.4