



Smithsonian

*National Museum of Natural History*

Guide to the Ananda Kentish  
Coomaraswamy films, circa 1920-1930

Human Studies Film Archives  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Human Studies Film Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy films
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1920-1930
<b>Identifier:</b>	HSFA.1989.02
<b>Creator:</b>	Coomaraswamy, Ananda K. (Ananda Kentish), 1877-1947 Holmes, Burton, 1870-1958
<b>Extent:</b>	17 Film reels (black-and-white silent; approximately 16,000 feet; 16mm)
<b>Language:</b>	No linguistic content; Not applicable .

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Received from the Foundation for Traditional Studies in 1989.

### Processing Information

Titles are supplied by the archivist for untitled films.

### Preferred Citation

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy films, 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.

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## Scope and Contents

Film shot and collected by Ananda Coomaraswamy, former Curator of the Asian Section of the Boston Museum of fine Arts, documenting Cambodia, Thailand, India, Ceylon, and Japan.

Collection contains supplementary materials, namely, associated texts.

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 As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today.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:

- Dance
- Festivals
- Performing arts

Types of Materials:

- silent films

Places:

- Cambodia
- Ceylon
- East Asia
- India
- South Asia
- Thailand

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## Container Listing

### Cambodian Dramatic Dances, circa 1920

1 Film reel (25 minutes; silent black-and-white; 546 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film documents an ancient Cambodian dance of Hindu origin which was performed at Phnom Penh and Angkor Wat into the first half of this century. Dances illustrate two popular legends: Prince Chey Chet and the jealousy between his two wives, Suvinchar and Surya and the story of Prea Somut and Princess Butsumali.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.1

### Indian Dramatic Dances (The Nautch) and Yakkun Netuma: Devil Dancing in Ceylon, circa 1920-1930

1 Film reel (18 minutes; silent black-and-white; 536 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited films shot in India. The first film documents the nautch dance, a style of Indian-influenced dance with characteristic movements of the head and hands, and depicts the dance's communicative function. Filmed are dances in Mathura (northern India) and Conjeevaran (southern India) and Muhammadan dancing girls in a Kashmir garden. The second film documents a devil dance which is performed by professional dancers to exorcise the demons of disease.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.2

### Holi Festival Near Mathura, circa 1924

1 Film reel (silent black-and-white; 141 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Footage documents the gathering of Indian Hindu pilgrims for a Holi festival near the city of Mathura, Uttar Pradesh in northern India. Film includes scenes of children on a manual-type ferris wheel and dance and musical performances and shots of large crowds of villagers.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.3

### Siam Court Dancers of Bangkok and Siam Street Dancers of Bangkok, circa 1925

1 Film reel (11 minutes; silent black-and-white; 241 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Incomplete edited film, suspected to be professionally produced, documents young women dancers and a masked dancer in ceremonial dress in a palace courtyard and street dancers in Bangkok, Siam (Thailand).

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.4

### Fiji War Dance at Beqa, circa 1925

1 Film reel (7 minutes; silent black-and-white; 139 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Incomplete edited film of three Fijian dances which captures the visual elements of these performances. Dances include a sitting dance, club dance, and spear dance. Shown are sitting women with musical accompaniment in the form of clapping and bamboo stamping tubes, dancers oiled with perfumed oil

as a sign of appreciation, and adult male dancers wielding war clubs adorned in barkcloth and pandanus sheaths in a standing male dance known as a *meke wau*, and a performance which depicts historical battles. Film concludes with a spear dance by adolescent males.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.5

Burma: Pwe Festival and Miscellaneous, circa 1925

1 Film reel (6 minutes; silent black-and-white; 126 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film documents a *pwe* ceremony typically held to commemorate the dedication of a house or monastery. Included are scenes of *pwe* musicians playing drum, xylophones, and flutes while young girls dance. Also recorded are shots of local inhabitants and women washing clothes at river's edge and brief shots of Pagan, the old Burmese capital, and the Ananda temple.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.6

In Japan, circa 1920-1930

1 Film reel (16 minutes; silent black-and-white; 361 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film believed to be a compilation of professionally made film and amateur film. Depicted are various scenes of daily life including: monks in a village at the base of Mt. Fuji, rickshaws, travelling on a narrow gauge railway through a Japanese village, peasants carrying heavy loads, rice cultivation with oxen, and boatmen traversing the Hozu rapids with tourists.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.7

In Korea, circa 1920-1930

1 Film reel (7 minutes; silent black-and-white; 125 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film believed to be mostly amateur film with some professionally produced footage. Although entitled Korea, film begins with the site of Murkoden, Manchuria where early Chinese emperors were entombed and a scene of street activity and rug making in Tientsin, northeastern China. Segment shot in Korea includes dance sequences.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.8

Hagoromo: A Japanese No Play, circa 1925

1 Film reel (31 minutes; silent black-and-white; 812 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film depicts a classical Japanese Noh drama about the legend of Hagoromo, an angel who lost the feathered cloak which would enable her to return to heaven.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.9

Indonesia, circa 1920-1930

1 Film reel (15 minutes; silent black-and-white; 500 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film is a compilation composed of an incomplete film by Burton Holmes and incomplete film or films of unidentified origins. Included are a harvest celebration dance in Bali, shadow puppetry, various court dances and performances

by itinerant women dancers, Hindu and Buddhist shrines, market scenes, examples of batik making and carving, and the harvesting and pounding of grain. Scenes of a Balinese cockfight are also featured.

Supplementary materials: Holmes, Burton. The Burton Holmes Lectures. 10 vols. Battle Creek: Little-Preston Company, Ltd., 1901; Holmes, Burton. The World is Mine: An Autobiography. Culver City: Murray and Gee, 1953; Caldwell, Genoa, ed. The Man Who Photographed the World: Burton Holmes Travelogues, 1892-1938. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.10

Dances of the South Sea Islands, circa 1927

1 Film reel (17 minutes; silent black-and-white; 424 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film is a compilation believed to be composed of an incomplete film made for Paramount Pictograph which includes segments on dance in Samoa, Tonga, and New Zealand and PRINCESS MALAWAKA IN THE NATIVE HAWAIIAN HULA (Cine Art Productions, 1927). Featured are a demonstration of dance in Tonga including the royal *laka-laka*, the Samoan *siva-siva* with twirling of long knives and the related war dance, the martial *haka-haka* dance of the Maori, and the *Poi*, a Maori women's dance.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.13

Unspoiled Bali, circa 1924

1 Film reel (8 minutes; silent black-and-white; 196 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film produced for Cine-Log Film includes scenes of Bali and features shots of women carrying loads on their way to market, various market scenes and landscapes, and a demonstration of batik techniques.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.14

Street Life in Java and How Batik is Made in Java, circa 1920-1930

1 Film reel (10 minutes; silent black-and-white; 268 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited films record various street scenes in Java (Indonesia), including people on their way to market and market scenes and the process of making batik textiles.

Supplementary materials: Holmes, Burton. The Burton Holmes Lectures. 10 vols. Battle Creek: Little-Preston Company, Ltd., 1901; Holmes, Burton. The World is Mine: An Autobiography. Culver City: Murray and Gee, 1953; Caldwell, Genoa, ed. The Man Who Photographed the World: Burton Holmes Travelogues, 1892-1938. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1977.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.15

A Good Sikh Never Cuts His Hair, circa 1920-1930

1 Film reel (6 minutes; silent black-and-white; 113 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film shows the wearing of topknots and turbans by Indian Sikhs and illustrates the technique of tying the hair and turban. Included is a depiction of the martial technique of throwing

the steel "ring" worn around the turban by Sikhs in the British regiments.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.16

Les Danseuses de S.M. Sisowaith, Roi du Cambodge, circa 1925

1 Film reel (8 minutes; silent black-and-white; 162 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film produced for Indo-Chine Film shows court scenes with elaborately-dressed women dancers and men playing drums, cymbals, xylophones, and flutes.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.12

Miscellaneous India, circa 1920-1930

1 Film reel (26 minutes; silent black-and-white; 650 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Footage, composed partially of outtakes from Indian Dramatic Dances (The Nautch), includes various scenes of Indian drummers and dancers, seated dancer with sitar player, street dancers, and a dance enactment of the ten avatars of Vishnu.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.17

Miscellaneous Japan, circa 1920-1930

1 Film reel (6 minutes; silent black-and-white; 137 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Footage, composed of stills and moving images, includes various shots of domestic scenes, landscapes, and a staged dramatic performance.

Local Numbers: HSFA 1989.2.18