



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Preliminary guide to the George Eaton Simpson photographs, 1936-1964

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National Anthropological Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Anthropological Archives
Title:	George Eaton Simpson photographs
Date:	1936-1987
Identifier:	NAA.PhotoLot.93-14
Creator:	Simpson, George Eaton, 1904-1998
Extent:	521 Prints (silver gelatin) 90 Negatives (photographic) (acetate) 70 Lantern slides 347 Negatives (photographic) (nitrate) 185 Color slides 4 Prints (Kodachrome color)
Language:	Undetermined .
Digital Content:	Image(s): George Eaton Simpson photographs

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The collection was donated to the National Anthropological Archives by George E. Simpson in 1992.

Related Materials

Additional photographs from Simpson are held in National Anthropological Archives Photo Lot 2001-24.

The George Eaton Simpson Film Study of Plaisance, Haiti, 1937, accession No. 92.12.1 in the Smithsonian Institution Human Film Studies Archives contains silent black and white film footage of Plaisance, Haiti shot by Simpson and his colleagues. The footage contains events also depicted in the photograph collection including work coumbites, marketplace scenes, a wedding ceremony, a funeral, drumming and dancing at a social gathering, and a dancing demonstration. Included in this accession are 21 audiotapes recorded by Simpson and Joseph G. Moore during their fieldwork in Jamaica and Trinidad.

The Joseph G. Moore Collection: Jamaican Revival and Kumina, 1957-1958, accession No. 92.1.1 in the Smithsonian Institution Human Film Studies Archives contains related material to Simpson's study of Jamaican Revival Zion and Kumina. The collection contains film footage of Morant Bay and West Kingston, Jamaica shot in 1957. The footage was originally intended for the "Odyssey" program or possibly a short feature. Some of it ended up being featured on the CBS program "Lamp Unto My Feet" which also includes interviews with Joseph G. Moore and George Eaton Simpson. There is over 10 hours of footage, and in 1992 Simpson, Smithsonian Institution Human Film Studies Archives Director John Homiak, and research associate Ken Bilby recorded approximately 10 hours of commentary about the footage. This collection also contains audio recordings made in 1993 of a discussion between Simpson, Homiak, and Bilby concerning the relation of Jamaican Revival with Rastafari.

Sound recordings by Simpson held in the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections in the Folkways Records Collection and the Moses and Frances Asch Collection.

Oberlin College has a manuscript collection of George Eaton Simpson's papers (RG 30/64) that document Simpson's research and academic work.

Other Finding Aids

A detailed item-level inventory is available in the repository.

Available Formats

Digital surrogates is available online.

Processing Information

Not all of the negatives have associated prints, and not all the prints have associated negatives. There are a few copy negatives of prints and slides in the collection. Many prints and slides are annotated; however some contain conflicting information.

While the lantern slides contain images that for the most part are duplicates, they are listed separately and arranged according to numbered lists included with them. This is done mainly because lantern slides were predominately used for presentations and therefore had a specific purpose for Simpson.

The materials were received in numerous packets, both labeled and unlabeled, and organized by location and format. Many of the sequences were not in order, and often separated into numerous packets. None of Simpson's notes from his fieldwork remain, so arrangement is based on the information available, primarily the print annotations and his published works. The collection was processed by Adam Fielding, 2010.

Preferred Citation

Photo Lot 93-14, George Eaton Simpson photographs, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Access to the collection requires an appointment.

The negatives are in cold storage and require advanced notice to access.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Biographical Note

George Eaton Simpson (1904-1998) was an anthropologist whose focus was the various social aspects of Caribbean religions. He wrote over 60 articles and books, and taught sociology and anthropology at Oberlin College from 1947-1971.

Born in Knoxville, Iowa, Simpson received his B.S. from Coe College in 1926, his M.A. from the University of Missouri in 1927, and his Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1934. In 1947 he began teaching at Oberlin College in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. In addition to teaching classes, Simpson served on numerous committees and as department chair.

Simpson conducted fieldwork in the Caribbean, specifically Haiti, Jamaica and Trinidad, and Nigeria. He focused primarily on Caribbean religions such as Vodun in Haiti, Rastafarianism in Jamaica, and the Spiritual Baptists in Trinidad. His fieldwork has been documented in numerous articles and books, including "The Vodun Service in Northern Haiti", "The Shango Cult in Nigeria and Trinidad", and Black Religions in the New World. He occasionally

collaborated on articles with fellow anthropologists Joseph G. Moore and J. Milton Yinger. He also served as a visiting professor at several leading universities.

He was the recipient of numerous honors and awards including the Wellcome Medal for Anthropological Research, the Anisfield-Wolf Award in Race Relations (with J. Milton Yinger), Doctor of Humane Letters – Oberlin College, and Doctor of Humane Letters – Coe College.

Scope and Contents

The collection documents George Eaton Simpson's fieldwork in Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Nigeria from 1936-1964. There are 704 images in several formats including negatives, prints, and slides. The photographs were primarily made by Simpson, but a few were made by Frederic Ramsey, Jr. Ramsey's prints are stamped on verso with his name. Many prints and slides are annotated by Simpson.

The collection also includes a few reprints of articles based on Simpson's field work and words and musical transcription from Savalou Ricourt, a musician of Port au Prince in 1937.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged into six series:

- 1. Haiti, 1936-1937
- 2. Jamaica, 1953, 1957
- 3. Trinidad, 1960
- 4. Nigeria, 1964
- 5. Lantern slides, undated
- 6. Publications, 1940-1987

Local Call Number(s)

NAA Photo Lot 93-14

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Agriculture
- Christian sects
- Cooking
- Dance
- Drummers (Musicians)
- Dwellings
- Fishing
- Garifuna (Caribbean people)
- Haitians
- Jamaicans
- Markets

Medicine
Orisha religion
Rastafari movement
Religion
Revivals
Schools
Spiritual Baptist -- Trinidad and Tobago
Trinidadians
Voodooism
Yoruba (African people)

Cultures:

Haitians
Jamaicans
Trinidadians
Yoruba (African people)

Types of Materials:

Lantern slides
Photographs

Names:

Ramsey, Frederic, 1915-1995

Places:

Haiti
Ibadan (Nigeria)
Jamaica
Trinidad

Container Listing

Series 1: Haiti, 1936-1937

Box 1 (photographs)

Box 2 (photographs)

Box 6 (photographs)

Box 7 (photographs)

Scope and Contents: Series 1 consists of images from Haiti in 1936-1937. The 1936 images were primarily taken at Milot, Fort Liberté , and Cap Haitien, and the 1937 images are predominantly located in Plaisance. Subjects include people, buildings, houses, street views, coumbites (communal work groups), a wedding ceremony and procession, markets, social gatherings with drumming and dancing, dancing demonstrations, and Vodun ceremonies.

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Series 2: Jamaica, 1953, 1957

Box 2 (photographs)

Box 7 (photographs)

Scope and Contents: Series 2 consists of images from Jamaica in 1953 and 1957. The images are primarily located in Kingston, Spanish Town, and Morant Bay. Subjects include people, buildings, houses, outdoor scenes, Revival Zion leaders and ceremonies, Jonkonnu (spelled John Canoe in Simpson's annotations) dancers, Rastafarian activists and leaders, and instruments described as Kumina-related (spelled Cumina in Simpson's annotations).

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Series 3: Trinidad, 1960

Box 3 (photographs)

Box 4 (photographs)

Box 8 (photographs)

Scope and Contents: Series 3 consists of images from Trinidad in 1960. The images are primarily located in Maracas Bay, Tunapuna, and Port of Spain. The subjects of this series are Shango Cult and the Spiritual Baptists (sometimes referred to as Shouters). Included are religious participants, ceremonies, processions, baptisms, temples, and shrines and altars.

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Series 4: Nigeria, 1964

Box 3 (photographs)

Box 4 (photographs)

Box 8 (photographs)

Scope and Contents: Series 4 consists of images from Nigeria in 1964. The images are primarily located in Ibadan and Lalupon. Subjects include people, markets, a dance festival, temples, ceremonies, and shrines.

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Series 5: Lantern slides, 1937, 1953

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Series 6: Publications by Simpson, 1940-1987

Box 5

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