Photographs of African people and culture, circa 1904-1950

American Museum of Natural History
Special Collections-Library
Central Park West at 79th Street
New York, NY 10024
COLLECTION INFORMATION

Repository: American Museum of Natural History, Special Collections-Library
Central Park West at 79th Street
New York, NY 10024

Collection: Photographs of African people and culture, circa 1904-1950

Creator: Unknown

Inclusive Dates: circa 1904-1950
Bulk Dates:

Call Number: PPC.A381

Extent: 0.25 linear feet (1 box)

Physical Description: 73 Photographs, loose and mounted, including 14 photographic postcards, accompanied by handwritten notes on several photographs and separate sheets of paper.

Condition: Good. Some mounted photographs very curved, may prevent vertical storage. Three photographs in folder 3 somewhat dirty.

Prepared by/Date: Deborah Tint, October, 2011

Revised by/Date:
SCOPE AND CONTENT

The majority of this collection consists of photographs and photographic postcards of African people, locations and objects. Many of the photographs are portraits and various cultures are represented. Most of the images are captioned and several items are accompanied by brief notes.

The earliest dated item is among a group of photographs collected by Franz Uri Boas for research (Folder 1). These include various objects of ritual and daily use, pygmies at the 1904 St. Louis Exposition photographed by Jesse Tarbox Beals, a portrait of Michael Ansah, a student at the Tuskegee Institute, and two photographs marked “A daughter of the Kraal” and “A native hut.” Boas is considered the “Father of Modern Anthropology” for his pioneering work on race, culture, and language, particularly within the cultures of American Indians. Boas became Curator of Ethnology at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) from 1900-1903 and served as Curator of Anthropology at AMNH from 1904-1905. Boas also studied the culture of African-Americans.

There is a 1922 photograph of Jose Goncalves Correia, a collector on many American Museum of Natural History ornithological expeditions, with a group of Cape Verdean men (Folder 2). Accompanying the photograph is a descriptive note on Ornithology letterhead from Robert Cushman Murphy dated 1944. Murphy, an authority on ocean birds and a conservationist, worked at the AMNH for 35 years as curator and later as chair of Ornithology. He retired in 1955. The note is addressed to Dr. Harry Lionel Shapiro and discusses the physical characteristics of Cape Verdeans. Dr. Shapiro, curator of physical anthropology and chair of the department of anthropology at AMNH, studied the effects of environment on race and is credited with laying the foundation for forensic anthropology.

Other notable items include photographs of a Kikuyu circumcision (Folder 3), and depictions of Zulu kraals and an African chief with his family in western dress donated by H. Nilson and Fred R. Bunker (Folder 6). Three sculptures are represented: a Benin bronze head, one of a pair on view in the AMNH Hall of African Peoples (Folder 9), a figurative sculpture (Folder 7), and a Bakuba (Kuba) cup (Folder 10). There are three remarkable studio portraits of a San man of South Africa (Folder 4). A set of fourteen printed postcards and one snapshot, dated 1950, focus on hairstyles and scarification from Niger, Sudan, Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire. The snapshot is labeled on the verso with a personal anecdote (Folder 12).
SEPARATED MATERIAL
An item, #11 on the original container list, Field Notes – Trip to Nigeria 1911, is not in box.

ACCESS CONDITIONS AND RESTRICTIONS
Requests to use the collection should be made in advance to the Senior Special Collections Librarian, who may be contacted at 212-769-5420 or at speccol@amnh.org

ARRANGEMENT NOTE
This collection did not appear to follow an obvious arrangement and has been kept as one series in the order of the original inventory created in 1989.
The Boas photographs in folder one, originally part of this collection, were at some point removed and placed with the Franz Boas collection, PPC.B63. It was subsequently decided that they would be more appropriately housed with this collection and returned to PPC.A381.

PREFERRED CITATION

SOURCE OF ACQUISITION
Collection found in Enid Schildkrout’s office and transferred to Special Collections by Paula Dowling in Anthropology in April, 1989.

SUBJECTS

PERSONAL NAMES
Boas, Franz, 1858-1942.
Beals, Jessie Tarbox
Correia, José G., 1881-1954.
Murphy, Robert Cushman, 1887-1973.
Shapiro, Harry L. (Harry Lionel), 1902-1990.
Klein, Alfred J.
Chapin, James Paul, 1889-1964.

CORPORATE NAMES
Louisiana Purchase Exposition (1904 : Saint Louis, Mo.). Board of Lady Managers

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES
São Vicente Island (Cape Verde)
Kenya
South Africa
Zululand (South Africa)
Benin
Dakar (Senegal)
Niger
Sudan
Guinea
Côte d'Ivoire

TOPICAL TERMS
Tuskegee Institute
Kikuyu (African people)
Circumcision (religious ceremony)
San (African people)
Pygmies
Storm water retention basins
Sculpture
Implements, utensils, etc.
Kuba (African people)
Bakuba
Clothing and dress
Rites and ceremonies
Manners and customs
Body marking
Scarification (body marking)
Dwellings
Hairstyles

UNCONTROLLED
Ansah, Michael E.
Foster, Robert
Kraals
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thirty-five photographs marked “from the Boas collection”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Three photographs marked “Bushman, South Africa.” undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Four photographs of huts and people, numbered. undated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Five photographs of hunting party, kraals, chief with family, Zululand, captioned. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>One photograph of people near water retention pond, captioned. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>One photograph of figurative sculpture, marked, “West Africa, Given to H.L. Shapiro by Robert Foster, July 7, 1950.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>One photograph of a Benin bronze head. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Two photographs marked, “Bakuba cup - property of Dr. James Chapin”. undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Two photographs of men and hut, marked “Davenport, Africa.” undated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Fourteen photographic postcards printed in Dakar and one snapshot (two with captions on verso) accompanied by typed note, “Received May 18, 1950 from Mrs.Goodwin (see her letter to Dr. Shapiro) Dakar, West Africa.”</td>
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</tbody>
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