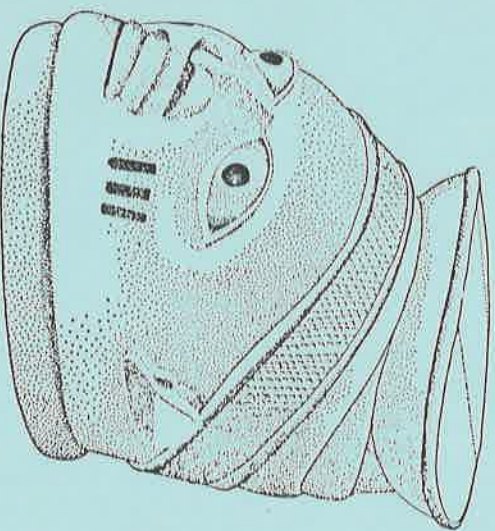


Films on AFRICA  
available in  
AUSTRALIA

(SECOND SUPPLEMENT)  
FILMS OF THE COLONIAL FILM UNIT



COMPILED BY  
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FILMS OF THE COLONIAL FILM UNIT AVAILABLE IN AUSTRALIA

BY

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This filmography provides information on the films of the Colonial Film Unit (1939-1955), and its successors, held in the National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra and the National Film Lending Collection of the National Library of Australia, Canberra. The Archive's Collection was obtained from the South Pacific Commission.

Abbreviations

CFU: Colonial Film Unit  
NFA: National Film and Sound Archive  
NFLC: National Film Lending Collection

Historical Background

The British Colonial Film Unit (CFU) was established in 1939 and became part of the Films Division of the war-time Ministry of Information, with the Colonial Office having control over policy matters. The original purpose of the CFU was to explain the war to unsophisticated colonial audiences, particularly in Africa. Some instructional films for adults were also produced and released and it was on the production of instructional films that the CFU concentrated after the war. In the post-war period there was for a time dual control of the CFU which was exercised by the Colonial Office and the Central Office of Information but in 1950 the Colonial Office assumed sole control.

After the war several production teams were sent to east and west Africa to make films to get across ideas to predominantly illiterate populations on health and hygiene, on maternity care and child welfare, on nutrition and food production, on village improvements and so on. It was a fundamental aim of the CFU that it should train local people so that eventually the colonies should set up their own local film units. Apart from the fact that it would save the British Government money it was also believed that the best people to make adult education films would be local people who were familiar with local traditions and customs. CFU film schools were held in the Gold Coast, the West Indies and Cyprus; local units were established in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and the West Indies. (The local government film units that were established in Central Africa, Malaya, and India were a result of different initiatives.) By 1952 the CFU had ceased making films itself although it continued to provide processing and editing facilities until 1955. In its life-time the CFU had been responsible for the production of 280 short films.

The films ranged in length from approximately 7 minutes to about 30 minutes, the majority being in black and white and in 16mm. In most cases the films were shown with a spoken commentary (or later a commentary recorded on magnetic stripe) in the appropriate language rather than with a recorded English sound-track. Some of the films have captions either in English or the local language or both but these were of limited use because of widespread illiteracy. An English sound-track was added to some CFU films which were used for propaganda and educational purposes outside Africa. The CFU directors believed that a special, simplified technique was necessary when making films for illiterate people unaccustomed to film viewing. CFU films are slow in pace, avoid sophisticated camera work and emphasise continuity.

Select Bibliography

When the CFU was disbanded in 1955 some of its former staff set up a commercial organization, the Overseas Film and Television Centre, in London which continues to offer many of the facilities formerly provided by the CFU including the training of film makers from developing countries. Many of the CFU films have perished. Apart from the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra known locations are: the National Film Archive in London which holds about 20 and the Overseas Film and Television Centre which has about 50. Some CFU films are also to be found in the former colonies.

The films in this filmography originated from three sources:

1. films produced by the CFU
2. films made by another production unit and re-edited and released by the CFU
3. films produced by units in Africa and the West Indies which succeeded the CFU.

National Film and Sound Archive

BETTER LIVING

c.1950, Barbados. Produced by the Barbados Government Film Unit with the co-operation of the Social Welfare Department and the Carver United Club (Women's Branch).

Ed. by CFU, dir. by I. Carmichael. 20 mins, black & white, sound.

NFA # NB 785

The homes and the housekeeping of Mrs Wise and Mrs Foolish are contrasted; their husbands bring home the same weekly salary, £10, but the quality of life in the two households differs markedly. Mrs Foolish is an untidy slattern who does not know how to budget, to shop wisely, or to provide nutritious meals for her family. She relies on tins buying such products as Heinz Vegetable Soup, Letona Tinned Peaches and Swift Luncheon Beef. Mrs Wise tries in vain to help her. Despite the rather ponderous moralising of the commentator the film has its humorous moments and the messages about budgeting and general household organization come over very well.

BETTER POTTERY

c.1946?, Gold Coast (Ghana). CFU #128. 10 mins, black & white, sound.

NFA # NA 2525

The message is that better pottery can be made by more advanced technology. The film begins with a woman making pottery by hand, 'a method as old as the craft itself', and then goes on to show how an enterprising man, Awasu, grows rich and prosperous by introducing the factory method. He has a moulding shed and a kiln and employs the villagers, men and women, to work for him. The narrator stresses that the workers are 'well rewarded for their labour'.

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## National Film Lending Collection

AMENU'S CHILD

1950, Gold Coast. Gold Coast Film Unit  
 Written and produced by Sean Graham  
 Adapted from a story told by G. Adali-Mortty  
 Associate producer: Yvonne Fletcher  
 Photography: George Noble, Editor: Cyril Randell  
 Music composed by Kenneth D. Morrison  
 'Our thanks to A. Opuku, Dr K.A. Busia, G. Adali-Mortty, members of the staff at the Achimota College and the people of Anfoega Akukome for their help.'  
 37 mins, black and white, sound.  
 NFLC # A10037489

Set in Togoland the film was made to demonstrate why so many babies died after they had been weaned and to show mothers how to prepare more nutritious meals for their children. Amenu's sister-in-law has lost three children, she is determined not to lose the fourth so she takes it to the hospital in town before the child gets ill and there learns about nutrition. She returns to the village and her attempts to persuade the villagers to change their methods of feeding their children generate the film's dramatic conflict. In an attempt to get away from the much criticised patronising commentaries of CFU films, Amenu's Child uses the traditional story telling idiom which was a popular art form in the Gold Coast. The film was criticised by J. Koyinde Vaughan for using the familiar theme of conflict between the bad old ways of traditional Africa, as represented by the witchdoctor, and the more modern methods introduced by the colonial power. (L. Hughes, ed., An African Treasury, New York, 1960, 92)

THE BOY KUMASENU

1952, Gold Coast, Gold Coast Film Unit  
 Produced and directed by Sean Graham  
 Associate producer: Basil Wright  
 Script by John Wylie and Sean Graham  
 Music composed by Elizabeth Lutyens & directed by John Hollingsworth  
 Director of photography: George Noble.  
 67 minutes, black & white, sound.  
 NFLC # A10026304

The Boy Kumaseanu was the first full length feature film to be made by a government film unit in west Africa. It tells the story of a boy fisherman who abandons his ancestral village for the bright lights of Accra; the ignorant country boy has many adventures as he experiences the seamy side of city life and narrowly escapes becoming a juvenile delinquent.

Produced with an eye on the overseas market, it was shown at the Edinburgh Festival in 1952 and was awarded a place on the British Film Academy's short list of selected films. The film is conceived through European eyes and its Eurocentric air is only enhanced by the use of a narrator. It was, however, praised by Jean Rouch for not presenting the intrusive western culture as 'synonymous with progress' to the detriment of Africa's traditions. ('The Awakening African Cinema', UNESCO Courier, 15 March, 1962, 14).

CATTLE THIEVES

1950, Tanganyika (Tanzania). CFU #167. Written and directed by Rollo Gamble, photographed by Hamish Lawrie, edited by Geoffrey Baines. 20 mins, black and white, sound.  
 NFA # NB 785

Of the 'crime does not pay' genre, this is the story of how Anatoli, a typical inspector in the Tanganyika Police Force' succeeds in capturing some Masai cattle thieves. Most of the film is taken up with the crime and the chase. The film is fascinating for the glimpses it gives of aspects of the lives of the Masai in colonial Tanganyika: their dress and dancing, the management of cattle, the market, the beer hall, and the cattle auction.

A CHALLENGE TO IGNORANCE

1950, Uganda. CFU #173. Dir. by Norman F. Spurr.  
 10 mins. black and white, sound.

NFA # 2527

This is a report on the work of a demonstration team in Mangalo in Uganda. Demonstration teams were used in community development projects which were a feature of Britain's post war colonial development and welfare policy. In Mangalo the team, which had originally been recruited from the region, put on a sketch to encourage better methods of cotton-growing, use a display model to explain soil erosion, demonstrate the right and the wrong way to ride a bicycle and discuss with locals ways of improving the water supply. After the demonstration the team stay in the district for some time doing follow-up work.

CHILD BIRTH TODAY

1949, Tanganyika (Tanzania). CFU #142. 30 mins, black and white, silent (with captions in Swahili and English).

NFA # NC 556

Set on the Tanzania coast the objective of the film is to encourage village women to use the pre-natal and maternity services at the district hospital. One scene shows a young woman having her blood pressure taken and then being given urine and blood tests. Another episode is concerned with the birth of her baby and the after-care. In the final scene the chief has assembled his village to congratulate a local girl who has completed her nursing training. The celebrations are interrupted when the newly-qualified nurse is summoned to assist at the birth of a new baby in the village.

CLEAN MILK

1950, Kenya. CFU #174. 10 mins, black & white, silent (with captions in English and a local language).

NFA # NA 2537

This documentary film records how the introduction of modern methods of spinning and weaving brought 'happiness and prosperity' to a village in the Avatime district of Togoland. Weaving had been a part-time occupation in the village for a long time with the people using the old fashioned methods of their forefathers: some women spun cotton by hand, others dyed it; men did the weaving on looms which could only weave narrow cloth. At the invitation of the 'wise' chief several students from Achimoto College come to the village and introduce more sophisticated methods: a box device enables the women to accelerate the spinning process and the men are taught to use wider looms. As a result spinning and weaving become a full time industry, more cotton is grown and there is more work for dyers, the local market expands giving people a better and more varied diet, the village school is extended and better stone houses are built.

WHY NOT YOU

1950, Uganda, CFU #155. Directed by Norman F. Spurr. 9 mins, black and white, silent with captions.  
NFA # NA 2565

This is a sequel to Murrum Block-Making (CFU #156) and is designed to demonstrate how a family unit can be organised to build a house from murrum blocks. All the family have tasks in the construction as it proceeds, slowly, step by step. One caption points out that lime makes a stronger block than dung but a block made with cement is even stronger. A murrum-block is shown to be six times the size of an ordinary brick.

YAMS

1945, Gold Coast, CFU #63, 10 mins, black and white, silent.  
NFA # NA 2567

The objective is to show how the Gold Coast medical service solved the problem of the treatment of yaws amongst a widely scattered population. The film opens with some close-ups of yaws victims which are not for the squeamish. A van brings a vaccination team to a village, the equipment is unpacked and the vaccination process shown in considerable detail. The co-operation in the campaign between the chief, the African medical assistants and European officials is emphasised.

YOU CAN HELP YOUR CHILD

195?, Jamaica, Jamaican Film Unit (edited by CFU). Story and Script: M.A. Renallis and T.A. Wilson. Photography: T.A. Welsh. Produced by the Jamaican Film Unit in collaboration with the Education Department, the Jamaican Federation of Women and the community of Bath. Director: M.A. Renallis. 15 mins, black and white, sound.  
NFA # NB 815

A self-help documentary which shows how the village of Bath in Jamaica co-operated to build an infant school. Some scenes show the school being constructed, others show the school in action. The film ends with an appeal from the narrator for other villages in Jamaica to follow the example of Bath.

The centre of the action is a 'Primary Centre' where Mr Wise and Mr Foolish bring their milk to be graded and sold. Mr Foolish brings his milk in a gourd, the grader is dissatisfied with its smell and Mr Foolish is extremely annoyed when he gets a poor price. Mr Wise has his clean milk in a pail and gets a good price; he then takes Mr Foolish in hand and teaches him more hygienic methods of milking. The next time Mr Foolish gets a good price for his milk.

COCOA REHABILITATION

1951, Trinidad and Tobago. CFU #194.  
Made in co-operation with the Department of Agriculture, Trinidad and Tobago. Produced by Wilfred A. Lee. Commentator: E. Eytel.  
Edited by the CFU. 13 Mins, black & white, sound.  
NFA # NA 2528

The cocoa industry in Trinidad and Tobago had been devastated by witches' broom. The film is about 'wise' John who takes advantage of a government scheme to rehabilitate the industry. The department of agriculture supplies John with new plants free of charge; in the harvesting John uses an ass to take the beans to the sweat boxes. He has a good harvest and as a result is able to replace the ass with a mule and to buy new clothes for himself and his wife. John's 'foolish' friend, Thomas, is now convinced of the wisdom of the government scheme and decides to co-operate.

COPRA

1949-1950, Tanga and Zanzibar. CFU #163. Directed by Rollo Gamble and Eric White. 15 mins, black and white, silent - with English and Swahili captions.  
NFA # NB 787

Omari flies from Tanga on the East African coast to Zanzibar to study the copra industry then returns to Tanga where he is shown putting the new methods into practice.

DELAY MEANS DEATH

1951, West Indies. CFU #193.  
Third film made by West Indian students at the CFU's West Indies Training School. 15 mins, black and white, sound.  
NFA # NB 788

The film aims to educate West Indians about TB which was rife in urban areas. Taylor, a country boy, comes to the city looking for work; all he can find after weeks of searching is a job as a labourer for which, physically, he is unsuited. Too ashamed to go back to his village, he skimps on food and lives in lodgings which are dirty, crowded and inadequately ventilated. His fortunes improve when he finds a more suitable job as a clerk and makes new friends. But his health deteriorates as he develops a chronic cough.

Taylor refuses to take a friend's advice that he see a doctor and instead relies on patent medicine. His world begins to fall apart; the cough gets worse, he loses his job and is thrown out of his lodgings. Finally, he seeks help from a doctor but it is too late. Delay has meant death.

NIGERIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN AHOADA DIVISION

1950, Nigeria, CFU #172. 20 mins, black & white, silent with captions.  
NFA # NB 801

The film is an illustrated lecture punctuated by numerous captions which prevent the film from having any flow. It is a chronicle of improvements that have been made through co-operative effort in Ahoada Division. It was made with the objective of inspiring others to emulate the industry of this district. Community development activities include: road building, homecraft and maternity and child care, and village improvement.

PIG FARMING

c. 1950, Gold Coast, CFU #133. 30 mins, black & white, sound.

NFA # NC 554

An ex-servicemen uses his gratuity wisely by investing in pig-farming. He first takes a course at Pokoase farm which is arranged for him by a re-settlement officer in Accra. The various aspects of the course are shown in considerable detail. When the ex-serviceman graduates he starts his own pigery and is pleased with the profit he makes. His success encourages his friend to also embark on pig-farming.

SMALLPOX

1950, Nigeria, CFU # 168. Nigerian Film Unit and the CFU.

Photography: S.W. Samuelson

Assistants: J.A. Otigbah and Mallam Yakuba Auna

Story: D. Souter

Script and Direction: Lionel Snaezell

Made with the co-operation of the village of Agege and the Nigerian Medical Department. 22 mins, black and white, sound.

NFA # NB 804

The narrative's message is the importance of vaccination against smallpox. A sanitary inspector arrives in a Nigerian village to vaccinate people against the disease. The vaccination procedures are shown in detail. 'Foolish' Alabi refuses to be vaccinated, then goes to visit his friend Tijani in another village where he discovers that there is an outbreak of smallpox. Tijani is very ill but Alabi does not report the outbreak to the health authorities. Soon after he returns home Alabi himself falls ill and smallpox is diagnosed; he then tells the doctor about the outbreak in Tijani's village and a vaccination team is sent in; some of the villagers including Tijani hide. 'This ignorant concealment is one of the main reasons why this disease is given a big chance to spread'. Alabi recovers in hospital but his friend Tijani is left blind.

WEAVING IN TOGOLAND

1946, Togoland, CFU #93. 22 mins, black and white, sound.

NFA # NB 813

DYSENTERY

c. 1950, Uganda. CFU #157

Production and photography: Norman F. Spurr.  
Supervisor: F.G. Sembejuya, Assistant: M.D.H. Mengo.  
10 mins, black and white, silent - with captions.

NFA # NA 2531

The first part of the film shows how Yusuf gets dysentery through lack of hygiene; he and his family have bread and tea on the ground outside the family hut where flies are well in evidence. Yusuf nurses a bare-bottomed baby and does not wash his hands before eating. The second part of the film shows Yusuf being treated for dysentery in Mulago hospital.

FIGHT TUBERCULOSIS IN THE HOME

1946, Gold Coast (Ghana) CFU #94. Producer-in-charge: M. Sellers

Director-camera man: P. Sergeant, 30 mins, black & white.

NFA # NC 551

The film demonstrates how crowded and unhygienic living conditions can produce TB. In an urban compound too many people are crowded into two rooms which have no ventilation because rags and papers have been stuffed in the louvers. There is a lot of coughing during the night and in the morning people spit in the courtyard whilst the cooking utensils are being washed nearby. Two people get TB and the scene shifts to the hospital where the diagnostic procedures are shown in detail. The remainder of the film is concerned with showing how the living quarters are cleaned up, alternate accommodation found for some to stop the overcrowding, and the patients nursed back to health.

A KENYA VILLAGE BUILDS A DAM

1945, Kenya. CFU #76. Directed and photographed by the Kenya Information Office and released there under the title of JONATHAN BUILDS A DAM. It was later re-edited and released by the CFU under a new title. 12 mins, colour, silent - with captions.

NFA # NB 794

The film is set in rural Kenya in the early 1940s; it is the dry season, the grass is brown and the ribs of the cattle protruding. Jonathan's wife and the other village women have to go half a day's journey for water. When Jonathan hears that another village has built a dam he starts to campaign for a similar dam in his village. He first convinces his chief and then together they approach the district commissioner who gives his approval and sends a European surveyor to select a site. The chief explains the plan to the village elders and a self-help sequence follows where villagers work together to complete the project. A Kenya Village Builds a Dam proved to be something of a prototype for many of the instructional films made by the CFU after the war, films with a simple story line showing how the development of a community could be achieved through local initiative and the cooperation of villagers with the colonial administration.



LAND AND WATER

1944, England. CFU #37. 11 mins, black & white, silent.  
NFA # NB 795

Designed to explain the evolution of the modern liner by moving from the known to the unknown. The first scene shows ducks swimming on a pond and then boys throwing twigs into the river; the twigs are seen floating away. From ducks and twigs the film moves to canoes, and sailing boats, to launches and finally to large ships. The film was later revised and sound added.

MACHI GABA

1944, Nigeria, CFU #35. Dir. by William Sellers. 7 mins, black & white, silent. (Re-edited by the CFU.)  
NFA # NA 2563

Machi Gaba (The Town that Crept Ahead) was made in Northern Nigeria in the late 1930's to encourage tribal chiefs to take a greater interest in their people's welfare by enforcing simple health measures in the villages. In the opening scenes the people of the village appear lethargic and sick; after the clean-up they display more vigour.

MARANGU

c. 1950, Tanganyika (Tanzania). CFU #118. 12 mins, black & white, sound.  
NFA # NB 799

The film extolls the virtues of cash crop production for export. The people of the Chagga chieftainship of Marangu near Mt Kilimanjaro are happy and prosperous and their chief wise. The village has a store and a primary school and craftsmen such as wood carvers and tailors. The villagers (mainly women) grow maize, beans, oranges and bananas, but the backbone of their economy is coffee which they produce for export and market through the Kilimanjaro Native Co-operative Association. It is largely because of the quality of their exports, says the narrator, that 'the people are happy and content'.

MR ENGLISH AT HOME

1940, England. CFU #1. Devised by William Sellers, directed by Gordon Hales, photographed by Faulder Gamage. 25 mins, black & white, silent.  
NFA # NC 550

A day in the life of an ordinary English family. Mr English, his wife and three children are shown going about the daily routine. Mr English, a carpenter, goes to work at a local housing site, his wife is occupied with the housekeeping and the care of the children, two of whom go to a nearby primary school. Points such as Mr English's interest in his early morning paper, Mrs English's marketing activities in the high street, the care of the sitting room kept for holidays and visitors, and the detailed arrangements and preparation of the family meals are all made in turn, but the main theme centres on the care of the children.

MR WISE AND MR FOOLISH GO TO TOWN

1944, South Africa, CFU #53. 20 mins, black & white, silent. This film is based on The Two Brothers made in South Africa, with African actors, for the South African Red Cross by the African Film Production Company. The CFU shortened, simplified and edited the original version, reducing it from six reels to two.

NFA # NB 800

The opening scenes are of a village in South Africa. Two men want to get married. Mr Wise is shown making arrangements with customary courtesies, Mr Foolish in a flirtatious manner. The headman of the village tells them they must go to town to earn money before marriage. Mr Wise gets a job scrubbing floors in a block of flats; Mr Foolish washes cars at a garage. Mr Wise is seduced by a maid; Mr Foolish gets drunk and pays money to sleep with a prostitute. Both get syphilis. Mr Wise takes the advice of a friend and goes to a hospital. Mr Foolish rejects the advice and pays money to a traditional African doctor for a bottle of medicine. At the hospital Mr Wise is impressed by the horrible sores of hereditary syphilis. Mr Foolish's symptoms clear up and he goes home. Mr Wise stays to finish his injections. The European doctor refuses payment from Mr Wise. Back in the village ten years later, Mr Wise has a healthy family and good herds and crops. He goes with his family to take gifts to Mr Foolish who has become a permanent invalid; his only child is deformed.

MURRAM BLOCK-MAKING

1950, Uganda, CFU #156. Production and photography, Norman F. Spurr. 11 mins, black and white silent with captions.  
NFA # NA 2547

The film demonstrates the way in which murram, dung and water can be mixed together and moulded to form a building block equivalent in size to six bricks. One man is shown making the blocks; there are long, lingering shots of each step in the process. The caption explains that if one man works for five hours a day, he can make twenty-five blocks a day. To illustrate the point twenty-five blocks are displayed with the murram blocks and then the completed house is shown with the caption: 'This is the kind of house you can build with murram blocks'.

NGANDA COFFEE REGENERATION

1950, Uganda, CFU #154. Produced by Norman F. Spurr. 7 mins, black and white, silent - with captions in an African language.  
NFA # NA 2549

It was made specifically for the agricultural department in Uganda and shows the advantages of the correct pruning of coffee trees, the removal of suckers, the spreading out of leaders in the form of an umbrella and so on. The film was intended to be used in extension work as part of an illustrated lecture, the captions are only in the local language.