

Jack Harris in wartime

A British Academy grant is enabling the exploration of ethnography and intelligence through the wartime career of American anthropologist Jack Harris.



Jack Harris (1912-2008) carried out fieldwork among the Ozuitem Igbo of eastern Nigeria in 1938-39 and, when the US entered the Second World War, joined the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) – a wartime overseas intelligence and special operations agency and forerunner of the CIA – and did tours of duty in West and Southern Africa. Harris later criticised Britain's administration of Tanganyika and worked with the radical cleric Michael Scott in condemning South African rule in Namibia. Unfairly dismissed from the UN for having alleged communist leanings, he took refuge in Costa Rica where he became a successful businessman.

In collaboration with Kevin A. Yelvington of the University of South Florida, [Dr Keith Shear](/staff/profiles/dasa/shear-keith.aspx) and [Dr Insa Nolte](/staff/profiles/dasa/nolte-insa.aspx) will explore the relationship between ethnography and intelligence by accessing OSS files in the US National Archives and interviewing Harris's family and acquaintances.