

# Secrets of Shangri-la

*National Geographic-Funded Explorer Shares Cave Discoveries in the High Himalaya*

Best-selling author Broughton Coburn is a premier authority on the culture and environment of the Himalaya, where he has lived and worked for 2 of the past 3 decades. In the exciting and thought-provoking illustrated presentation, *Secrets of Shangri-la: The Ancient Caves of Mustang*, he shares images from the recent National Geographic-funded film and research expedition that yielded discoveries of international significance.

The formerly forbidden, medieval kingdom of Mustang shines as a pristine relict of Tibetan culture, history and art —sequestered in a remote watershed north of the Himalaya. More than a hundred mysterious, human-excavated cave systems punctuate the cliffs of the remote valleys of this haunting, desiccated landscape. In 2007 and again in 2008, Coburn and seven-times Mt. Everest summiter Pete Athans co-led a reconnaissance expedition that found rare, abandoned text folios, and an exquisite, 14th Century mural depicting a lineage of mystical yogis. Via the wire services, the news echoed around the world.

These human-excavated cave cities date to 2,000 B.C., and earlier. Who created these sacred and historic sites, and what do they tell us about human and world history? And what will happen to these masterpieces and the secrets they contain?

Coburn recently returned to Mustang with Athans and a world class team of scholars, elite climbers and restoration experts to launch research and conservation work —sometimes while dangling from ropes beside these cliffside cities.

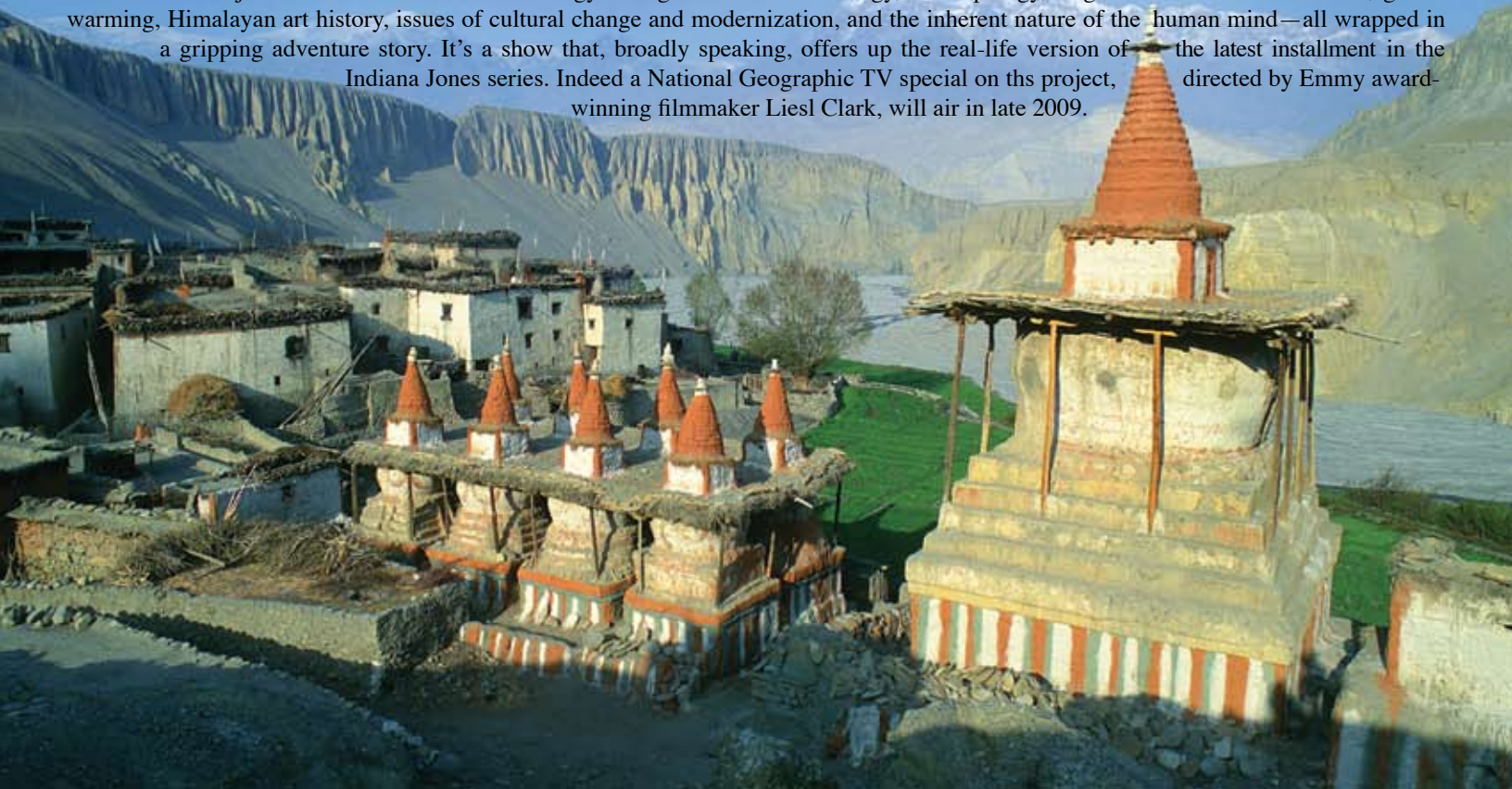


## THE PRESENTATION

In an illustrated program, Coburn follows the team as it overcomes countless obstacles to protect these sites, including the remarkable “snow leopard” mural— while unraveling the pre-historic, religious, cultural and artistic legacy of this enchanted landscape. Coburn traverses such diverse subjects as the science and technology of high altitude archaeology, anthropology, fragile mountain environments, global warming, Himalayan art history, issues of cultural change and modernization, and the inherent nature of the human mind—all wrapped in a gripping adventure story. It’s a show that, broadly speaking, offers up the real-life version of the latest installment in the Indiana Jones series. Indeed a National Geographic TV special on this project, directed by Emmy award-winning filmmaker Liesl Clark, will air in late 2009.

## KEY THEMES

- ▶ **Leadership and Planning**  
The logistics of putting an international, Multi-disciplinary team together, half way around the world.
- ▶ **The values of History and Art**  
And the technical challenges of protecting, preserving and restoring ancient treasures.
- ▶ **Respect for the environment**  
Facing global warming and population growth —and gratitude for all that we have.
- ▶ **Distant cultures and basic human values**  
Missing in our harried, hurried society are the roles of family, generosity, devotion, dedication and hope. We are on the verge of losing the spiritual foundation of our ancestors.





Broughton Coburn

# Broughton Coburn

Broughton Coburn, Harvard graduate and author and editor of seven books (including two national bestsellers), is a premier authority on the culture and environment of the Himalaya, where he has lived and worked for two of the past three decades. In *Secrets of Shangri-la: The Ancient Caves of Mustang*, he shares images from the recent National Geographic-funded expedition that yielded discoveries of international significance.

## CLIENT COMMENTS

I cannot recall a presentation that elicited so many questions (I was beginning to wonder if they would ever let you go.) And, judging by the brisk trade at the book counter afterwards, I suspect that you have gained quite a few readers....

— Ted Ferrand,

Dir. Of Public Programming, The Vanderbilt Museum

“Your program precipitated the most conversation of any of the Winter Speakers Series talks. The staff dining room was buzzing with conversation about the program the morning after. Your program was narratively and visually fascinating. Thanks for a very provocative and entertaining evening....”

— Diane Carillo, Teton Science School

## SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Harvard College  
Whitman College  
University of Colorado, Boulder  
Principia College  
Elon University  
University of Washington  
Illinois College  
12 other colleges  
California Academy of Sciences,  
San Francisco  
The Asia Society, New York City  
and Los Angeles  
The Denver Museum of Natural History  
The Rubin Museum of Art  
(Annual Keynote Address)  
The National Museum of Natural  
History, New York City  
More than 80 other corporate and  
association venues

## OTHER APPEARANCES

National Geographic Magazine  
CBS Evening News  
BBC Science Television  
Life Magazine  
Guest expert, NPR’s *Talk of the Nation*

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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Wilson, Wyoming 83014

## CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Advisor on natural resources, protected areas and development for the World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO, World Wildlife Fund and American Himalayan Foundation, for more than 20 years.

Key co-founder of the Annapurna Conservation Area (Nepal) and the Quomolangma Nature Preserve (Tibet)

Author or editor of seven books, including two national bestsellers

American Alpine Club Literary Achievement Award, 1997.  
Publishers’ Weekly “Pick” of 1996.

## PHOTOS, TOP TO BOTTOM:

A narrow stretch of the Kal Gandaki River; The Raja departs the walled city during a procession; Tibetan goats compete with snow leopard for fodder; Luigi Fieni in the Snow Leopard Cave; local trainees clean and restore a mural, alongside Italian experts.

## PHOTOS, FRONT PAGE:

Bottom: The village of Tanggye. Inset: One of many ancient, unexplored cave cities of upper Mustang’s high valleys.

