# Films around the Clock

## 4th International Anthropologist Film-Maker Seminar in Budapest. Regards sur les sociétés européennes – 4ème rencontre de cinéma anthropologique, July 5–12 1987

Film seminars and festivals are held every year in all Western countries but they are not all of interest to folklorists, ethnologists and anthropologists. Some film festivals do not take documentary films at all, some do not take videos, some concentrate on special themes, and only by chance do they have a theme for film people studying people; and some never even inform the people or institutions in question that they can come and show their products. Although some ethnology and folklore journals do carry film reviews, the review sections are usually national or even regional in scope and of limited interest to outsiders who cannot see the films anyway. On a national scale boundaries exist even among ethno-scientists that prevent the exchange of information about film making. On a local scale a surprising number of universities do not have a visual media centre that collects, distributes and makes films and film information.

Together with the many practical and economic difficulties involved in film-making, these limits have often resulted in only slight interest in the media and a lack of consciousness about the film's potential both as a tool in collecting and in publishing, subsequently leading to a lack of know-how. The idea of establishing an international seminar for anthropologist film makers (in the broadest sense of the concept) was therefore most welcome. The initiative was taken in 1982 by Colette Piault, director of research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Nanterre, when she got together a group of colleagues for the first meeting in Cannes. The title of the seminar was "Regards sur les sociétés européennes" but practically speaking all subjects comparable in some way or another with European themes could be included in the programme.

The purpose of the seminar was to give ethnologists, anthropologists and folklorists with film making experience, as well as film makers (documentarists) with anthropological interests a chance to meet, show their films to one another, discuss them and learn from each other; this would eventually lead to better films in the field and greater awareness in the media. To achieve these goals the number of participants is limited to approximately 30, the seminar has a one-stringed programme so that films may be seen by all participants, and all films on the official programme are discussed. One of the main criteria for participation is that film maker experience and film making involvement must be documented, added to which participants must be present during the whole seminar. Outside the official programme there is a self service video bar (with both U-MATIC and VHS) to which participants contribute by bringing along other productions or work in progress. The video bar is open almost 24 hours a day and those interested in special subjects or special film makers can turn on the TV and watch the video round the clock. The video bar was a meeting point particularly after the evening session had ended around midnight.

In Budapest this year the seminar was divided into two parts. The first part was concerned with anthropological films in general, the second focused on the theme "How to film a ritual". In the circulars sent out beforehand participants were asked to think of suggestions for solving the problem of when in the research process one should start filming. The films provided different solutions to this problem and the discussions brought out the advantages and disadvantages of the various approaches.

The meeting this year was jointly arranged by many official institutions and it was held at the Ministry of Culture, which also provided delegates with very inexpensive accommodation in the same building, the old Parliament of

Hungary. The local coorganizers were Mihály Hoppál and János Tari. The former was in charge of the practical arrangements and relations with the Soviet participants, and it was thanks to his persistent diplomacy that Soviet films could be shown at all. The latter was most skilful at handling all the technical preparations and difficulties arising in connection with the screenings. There were 35 films shown on the official programme in at least 6 different systems. During the 6 workdays there were 25 hours of screening, introductions and discussions took up another 25 hours, whereas 2 excursions, receptions, meals and social get-together occupied around 50 hours.

Among the international crowd of approximately 30 film-makers Scandinavia and Finland were represented by 8 participants *[2, 4, 6, 7, 16, 17, 29]*, mainly from anthropology (cf. the list of participants below, to which numbers in brackets refer). There were moreover representatives from Australia, Austria, the BRD, Belgium, the DDR, England, France, Hungary, Italy, the Soviet Union and Switzerland, showing films from these places and from Algeria, Greece, Niger, Siberia, the Sudan, Spain, the USA and Venezuela.

Some of the subjects shown during the seminar came under rite of passage, for instance: Conscription traditions (Alsace *[5 part III]*, France *[23b]*, German speaking Italy *[21]*), which were closely related to carnivalesque traditions (Austria *[30a]*, Belgium *[14a]*, Denmark *[2, 7]*, Finland *[2]*, France *[8]*, Hungary *[1, 30b]*, Norway *[2]*, Spain *[15]*, Sweden *[2]* and Venezuela *[10]*). Love spells and weddings were the subjects of 2 films from Hungary *[9, 20]*, a Niger crowning ceremony and its background was the subject of one presentation *[25]*, death and burial were in focus in two productions (USSR/Ngansan *[28b]* and Australia *[18]*) and religious rites such as prayer, pilgrimage, sacrifice and shamanism were documented in 4 films (Belgium *[14b]*, Hungary *[11]*, USSR/Caucasus *[26b]* and Siberia *[22]*). Other subjects were hunting (England and France *[3]*), family life (Greece and Switzerland *[24]*), the preparation of leather (Austria *[32]*), the women's liberation movement (USA *[31a–n]*), irregation and economy (Sudan *[12b]*), night life in London (England *[12a]*), anthropologist-ethnic group relationship (Algeria and France *[23a]*), allotment gardeners and town planning (Sweden *[6]*), sex roles and gender relations (Greece *[19]*), ethnochoreography (USSR/Siberia *[26a]*), traditional culture and reindeer breeding (USSR/Kasym *[27]*), and daily life on the Taymir Peninsula (USSR *[28a]*). Two films were biographical documents *[5, parts I–II]* and more films had biographical-historical sequenses *[6, 9, 12a, 14b, 18, 23a, 24, 27, 31a–b]*. In general the seminar contained subjects that any European ethnologist could have dealt with in books or articles and that were as such familiar fields of research.

The films shown revealed of many different approaches to anthropology and ethnology. The Soviet films *[22, 26a–b, 28a–b]* formed a group of their own. First of all they were (with one exception *[22]*) made on 35 mm film. This turns field work into heavy film expeditions. Secondly (and partly due to the film equipment) the general interest in these films was objects, forms and types (often called documentation in discussions) and they revealed little concern for meanings, relations or ethno-values. The film pictures were sometimes very good and much of the subject matter was of the utmost interest to Western scholars (for instance the material on shamanism). Simultaneous translation was provided during the screenings but even so it seemed as if many aspects of the commentary got left out, concerning both subject and methodology. The style of film narration did, however, seem undeveloped and was sometimes reminiscent of the old weekly film journals with a very clear purpose.

In marked contrast to these films were the more experimental productions inspired by the *cinema direct* or *observational cinema* movement. Three films (by Arthur Howes, Colette Piault and Knud Fischer-Møller respectively) set out to show "real life" (often including interaction with the camera). The West End outing by Arthur Howes was dominated by extrovert, almost exhibitionistic London types and presented summaries of people or film snap shots composed from only two days' shooting. The

Greek double portrait by Colette Piault of a village grandfather and his grandson had many sympathetic moments but never succeeded convincingly in creating a red line, in finding a mode of narration and in sticking to its anthropological objectives. Maybe the main title, *My Family and Me,* simply evoked the wrong associations from the start. As a visual anthropological notebook Knud Fischer-Møller's film material on the Twelfth Night mumming on the island of Ærø was the most convincing in this group of films. He concentrated his camera work on the interaction and dialogue between mummers and host group to reveal the real content of the custom. The material presented was a work in progress and it raised many practical questions and problems that must be solved before he has made a document that will catch the attention of people other than specialists. One item of interest was the rapid repartee in which the masked speakers distort their voices and both mummers and host group speak dialect; subtitles will be needed even in a Danish version of the end product.

A number of films were made by professional film-makers and documentarists, such as Toni de Bromhead, Georges Drion, Knut Ekström, Livia Gyarmathy, Arthur Howes, Alexandre Keresztessy, Jean Dominique Lajoux, Barrie Machin, Renato Morelli, D. Moldovan, Daniel Pelligra, Jürgen Rudow, Erik Strömdahl, János Tari and Jacqueline Veuve. Their works were characterized by a full command of the film medium and a clear narrative structure often founded on the chronological development of events. In style they varied a lot but the general scientific scope was the case study, though the film on hunting (by Toni de Bromhead) attempted an interesting comparative approach. They also varied in analytic depth but were mostly descriptive (as is natural in a film).

Many of these films could provide the substance for university lectures in the ethno-sciences, and they could be analysed from many different angles. A few of them are given special mention here because of their contribution to ethnology and folklore. Three films *[5 part III, 21, 23b]* were about the rites of passage to which young men (conscripts) are submitted before they join the armed forces. The rites as such consist of generally known elements from, for instance, carnival traditions. But as conscription is an old means of recruiting soldiers for armed enterprises, the evidence shown and the analysis made in these films also raise the old question of the former existence of the "Männerbünde". Especially the film from the relict area of Trento (Italy *[21]*) demonstrated that the young men (the future warriors) did make masked house visits and moreover filled many ritual functions during the annual circle. When one looks at a certain tradition in one country, any unusual traits aquire the function of the irregular (statistically marginal), but in a crosscultural perspective analysis may prove that these traits belong to a pattern. As the British film-maker Paul Henley mentioned during one of the discussions: "It is like looking into a kaleidoscope – it is the same elements all the time but every time you move you get a different configuration".

Another film that especially made the spectator aware of the elements of a ritual was *Au feu Mardi Gras* from Vierves in Belgium *[14a]*. The film-maker, Alexandre Keresztessy, succeeded in showing all the simultaneous preparations and actions that make a carnival into a festival for the whole population. And he also demonstrated that fun is a lot of hard work. By contrast, the Hungarian–Austrian co-production *Masks in Karinthia [30a]* had a quite different teaching. Well shot and edited as it was, it showed the spectacular emptiness of revival.

Partly belonging to this category of film and partly to the following was an early work by the French psychologist and ethnologist Yannick Geffroy dealing with village life in Provence.

The last group of anthropological films consists of film-makers who combine their subject with a special awareness of an anthropological message. Their products are sometimes called "observational films". For example, they do not study objects such as a wedding, but the involved participants' perception of the wedding and marriage. Their films do not transmit ready made knowledge from the ethnologist to

the spectator. They regard knowledge as something the spectator (as well as the scientist) achieves when confronted with uncertainty. They try to transfer the sensation of discovery from the anthropologist to the spectator. The foremost representative of this school is the American anthropologist now working in Australia, David MacDougall. Although most of his films are relatively recent, they are already classics in visual anthropology. He showed a film on aboriginal death rites that he and his wife, Judith MacDougall, made 1977. In this film the "footage" or raw material was edited together with the widow of the deceased, and she was also responsible for some of the commentary, which was a recording of her spontaneous reactions to seeing the unedited reels in the editing monitor. Throughout the film an important element is decision-making, indicating that although all funeral participants may have a picture of the ideal "House Opening"[1], each actual realization is a product of decisions. As such any ritual is a renewed ritual and tradition is a chain of unintentionally made or accepted changes. The outdoor ritual was here interrupted by rain and the filmmakers followed the new situation.

Other films belonging to this category of anthropological films were the works by Paul Henley and Marc Piault. Henley centered his film on the devil dancers in a small village of Venezuela, Piault describes the installment of a minor king in Niger. Both Henley and Piault establish a connection between oral traditions (legends or narratives) and both are concerned with the unexpected turn of events in rituals. Both films leave the spectator wondering why "disturbances" happen in ceremonies. In Marc Piault's film the enthronement is the first in 40 years and Niger society has changed; in Paul Henley's film the disturbance is caused by a single person and is locally explained as possession, but the spectator wonders all the same. The subject was very well contextualized and rightfully won a prize at the 6ème Bilan du Film Ethnographique in Paris, March 1987. A disturbance also takes place in Yannick Geffroy's film, and although it is predictable, the banquet and speech by a local top politician cause the spectator to speculate who is exploiting whom in the triangle: village, politician, film group.

When material such as this is compared to "ordinary" ethnological or folkloristic recordings and field notes, one has to admit that the eye witness camera (and the sensitive and alert film group) catches reality in a way that cannot be paralleled in any other way.

Whereas the ethnological film gives the scientist new insight into the subject under study film work also has its limits. It is an interesting fact that 30 of the 35 films presented here dealt with rural districts, villages or small towns and only 5 dealt with city matters *[6, 12a, 29, 31a–b]*. Of the 30 films, 3 included city life in contrast to rural or tribal life *[20, 23a, 24]*. Of the film projects 12 dealt with what may be called traditional ethnographic cultures, 11 dealt with peripheral European areas, islands or mountain regions. To ethnologist film-makers too city life and conditions and industrialized societies still seem to be a difficult or less interesting subject for some reason or another, and the simple life in the country seems easier to view.

Unlike books, which are easily and relatively cheaply distributed all over the world within a well-established infrastructure of libraries and book shops, films are costly both to make and to distribute in larger quantities. Therefore it is important to follow up the initiative by Colette Piault, either by getting ethno-scientists join the newly-built film organisations[2] or by institutionalizing a film-maker seminar in connection with the ethnologist and folklorist conferences and thus to graft new branches onto the old stems of the ethnographic and ethnological film. We could certainly do with more enthusiastic ethno-folkloristic groups ready to watch films round the clock.

## List of participants and films

1. *Boglar, Lajos,* Anthropologist film-maker, Women's Carnival in Northern Hungary, Carnival and Mock Wedding; Sasadi ut. 143, H-1112 Budapest, Hungary.
2. *Bregenhøj, Carsten,* Folklorist film-maker, Masks and mummers of Scandinavia, Guising tradition of the Nordic countries; Pohjolankatu 4–6, SF-20300 Turku, Finland.

Participants in the 4th International Anthropologist Film-Maker Seminar in Budapest, July 5–12 1987. Photo: J. D. Lajoux, C.N.R.S.

3. *de Bromhead, Toni,* Film-maker, Caught in a Web (part 1), Comparison between hunting traditions in an English and French village; 189 Chiltern Court, Baker St., London NW1, England.
4. *Cabo, Jette & Skielboe, Thomas,* Anthropologist film-team, (work in progress); Larsbjörnsträde 17, 2., DK-1454 København K, Denmark.
5. *Drion, Georges,* Film-maker, Life in Alsace I–III (Vive la classe), War Memoires and Conscripts; 29 Tabley Road, G.B.-London, N7 0NA, England.
6. *Ekström, Knut,* Anthropologist film-maker, The Colony, Allotment gardeners in Stockholm; Assessorsgatan 18B, S-116 58 Stockholm, Sweden.
7. *Fischer-Møller, Knud,* Anthropologist film-maker, Twelfth Night, Mumming and controlled transgression in Denmark; Nannasgade 17, 3.tv, DK-2200 København N, Denmark.
8. *Geffroy, Yannick,* Anthropologist film-maker, Rites and Memory – the Time of one Feast, popular traditions in a French mountain village; 29, rue Masséna, F-06000 Nice, France.
9. *Gyarmathy, Livia,* Film-maker, Coexistence, Relationship between two ethnic minorities in Hungary.
10. *Henley, Paul,* Anthropologist film-maker, Cuyagua 1, Devil Dancers in Venezuela; Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology, Univ. of Manchester, Roscoe Building, Brunswick Street, Manchester M13 9PL, England.
11. *Hoppál, Mihály,* (with *Tari, János* – see below) Anthropologist film-maker, Pilgrimages in Hungary; Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Ethnographic Inst., P.O. Box 29, H-1250 Budapest, Hungary.

12a. *Howes, Arthur,* Documentarist, Part 1 (of 3 London Films), Night life in the West End; NFTS, Beaconsfield, Bucks, England.

12b. Kurgo, Water supply in West Sudan.

13. *Jordan, Pierre,* Anthropologist film-maker, (work in progress); Hospice de la Vieille-Charité, F-13002 Marseilles, France.

14a. *Keresztessy, Alexandre,* Ethnographic film-maker, Au feu Mardi Gras, A Belgian Carnival; 66, Rue de la Réforme, B-1060 Bruxelles, Belgique.

14b. Tree Cult in Belgium.

15. *Lajoux, Jean Dominique,* Anthropologist film-maker, Les diablos, Pagan-Christian Blasius ritual from Central Spain; 25, Rue Fresnel, F-75116 Paris, France.
16. *Lappalainen, Heimo,* Anthropologist film-maker, (work in progress); Institute for Development Studies, University of Helsinki, Annankatu 42 D, SF-00100 Helsinki, Finland.
17. *Liden, Hilde,* Anthropologist film-maker, (work in progress); Grensestien 52, N-1251 Oslo 12, Norway.
18. *MacDougall, David,* Ethnographic film-maker, The House Opening, Aboriginal death ritual in Australia; 12 Meehan Gardens, Griffith A.C.T. 2603, Australia.
19. *Machin, Barrie,* Anthropologist film-maker, Warriors and maidens, Gender relations in a Greek village; 9 Anstie way, Bullcreek, 6155 Perth, W.A., Australia.
20. *Moldovan, D.,* Film-maker, Examples of syncretism between Christian and pagan belief.
21. *Morelli, Renato,* Ethnographic film-maker, Conscripts, Ritual of passage in the high valley of Mocheni – Italy; Via Rosmini 102, I-38057 Pergine (T.N.), Italy.
22. *Novik, Elena,* Dr., On Shamanism.

23a. *Pelligra, Daniel,* Anthropologist film-maker, The Arch, Anthropologist-ethnic group relationship; 38, Rue J. P. Sartre, F-38000 Villefontaine, France.

23b. The 14th will not die, French Conscripts.

24. *Piault, Colette,* Anthropologist film-maker, My Family and Me, Aspects of family life through Greek migration; 5, Rue des Sts Pères, F-75006 Paris, France.
25. *Piault, Marc* H., Anthropologist film-maker, Akazama, Enthronement of a local Niger king; 18, rue Mouton Duvernet, F-75014 Paris, France.

26a. *Oskin, Alexandre,* Anthropologist film-maker, Choreographical Art of the North Siberian Peoples; Inst. of Ethnology, 19 ul. Dm. Uljanova, 117036 Moskva, USSR.

26b. Ritual Feast in the Caucasus.

27. *Rudow, Jürgen,* Film-maker, Five Days in Kasym, Among reindeer breeders in Siberia; Blümenstrasse 35, DDR-1540 Falkensee, DDR.

28a. *Simchenko, Youri,* Anthropologist film-maker, On the Taymir Peninsular, North Siberia; Inst. of Ethnology, 19 ul. Dm. Uljanova, 117036 Moskva, USSR.

28b. Nganasan Burials, North Siberia.

29. *Strömdahl, Erik,* Film-maker, A Hell of a Row, Fiction-documental satire about town planning; Solvägen 18, S-13800 Älta, Sweden.

30a. *Tari, János* (Co-production with *J. Pap, T. Hoffmann & L. Lehel*), Anthropologist film-maker, Masks in Karinthia, St. Nicolaus masquerade in Austria; Csango u. 3/A.1.23, H-1134 Budapest, Hungary.

30b. Edition of work by Raffay & Szöts: Busója'ra's in Moha'cs, carnivalesque traditions.

31a. *Veuve, Jacqueline,* Film-maker, Susan, A portrait of a Karate teacher in the Women's Liberation Movement in the USA; Avenue Tissot 16, CH-1006 Lausanne, Switzerland.

31b. No more Fun and Games, Self-defense and the Women's Liberation Movement.

32. *Waltner, Lisl,* Anthropologist film-maker, Leather preparation in Austria; Salesianergasse 3, 5, 18, A-1030 Wien, Austria.

## Notes

1. The "House Opening" is in a sense a new ritual built upon old elements. The tribe in question used to burn the house and belongings of the deceased, but as they have moved into permanent houses this element of the funeral cannot be maintained. So instead the house is abandoned for a shorter period of time and re-opened. – Another of the films screened during the seminar (*[28b]*, from the Nanzuks in Siberia) showed the destroying of the deceased's belongings as part of the burial ritual.
2. *European Association for the Visual Studies of Man (EAVSoM).* Contact Knut Ekström, see above. Application form can be copied from Antropologiska Studier, 40–41, 1986 – temanummer om Visuell antropologi. The coordinators in Scandinavia are, Denmark: Knud Fischer-Møller, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, Frederiksholms Kanal 4, DK-1220 Copenhagen K; Finland: Heimo Lappalainen, see above; and Sweden: Solveig Freudenthal, Långa Gatan 10, S-115 21 Stockholm.

   *Nordic Anthropological Film Association (NAFA) – Nordisk Antropologisk Filmklub (NAF),* Dept. of Ethnology, Moesgaard, DK-8370 Højbjerg, Denmark, telephone internat. +45 6 27 24 33. NAFA also has a film archive. NAFA will hold its 10th Nordic Anthropological Film Festival in Stockholm, May 8–15, 1988.

   *Forum for Visuel Antropologi i Danmark* [the Danish Forum for Visual Anthropology], contact e.g. Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, Frederiksholms Kanal 4, DK-1220 Copenhagen K.

   *Commission on Visual Anthropology.* Université de Montréal, Dept. d'anthropologie, C.P. 6128, succursale A, Montréal (Quebec), Canada, H3C 3J7 – contact person Deborah Lee Murin. Publishes CVA Newsletter – cooperates in publishing *Visual Anthropology,* edited by Jay Ruby, P.O. Box 4998, Philadelphia, PA 19119, USA – see CVA Newsletter, May 1987.

   *Society for Visual Anthropology.* Contact person: Joan Williams, 1626 Canyion Road, Santa Fe, NM 87501, USA.

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