TEACHING ANTHROPOLOGY WITH FILM

By Nancy J. Schmidt
African Studies Program
Indiana University

Teaching anthropology with film was even more difficult in the 1960s than it is today. When I began full-time teaching in 1965 not even the preliminary edition of Heider's Films for Anthropological Teaching (1966) had been prepared, there were no published guides to anthropological films except those for Encyclopaedia Cinematographica films, which are inappropriate for undergraduate teaching in the U.S., there was no journal devoted to anthropological films, and reviews of films in the American Anthropologist were few and far between. However, there was background material available in widely scattered sources for anyone who was willing to take the time to locate it and put it to use.

Teaching anthropology with film to undergraduates in a small liberal arts college where there is no anthropology major is quite different from teaching in colleges or universities with anthropology departments and even film programs. Most students who study anthropology in small liberal arts colleges take only one anthropology course. The college does not own any films and has a very limited budget for film rental. The library is small, subscribes to several anthropology journals at most, and is reluctant to acquire specialized materials which will not be used in the future. Usually the instructor must both order and show films because there is no audio-visual department to provide these services. Such constraints on teaching with film continue.

continued on p. 10

1 .......... Teaching Anthropology With Film
2-3 ................. Calendar
3 .............. New Film Releases
4 .................. SVA Update
5 .Annenberg Conference Review
6-7..Preloran: A Retrospective
8-9 ............... Fieldnotes
15 ............... New Publications
16 ................ Staff Box
WASHINGTON, D.C. - On December 4 to 8, 1985, the American Anthropological Association meetings will have more ethnographic films screenings and symposia concerning visual anthropology than ever before. There will be 4 days of 16mm film screenings:

Thursday 12 to 7 pm
Friday 12 to 7 pm
Saturday 12 to 7 pm
Sunday 10 to 3 pm

There will also be video showings on Thursday and Friday from 2:30 to 7 pm. The entire schedule, including several symposia involving visual anthropology, will be published in the November issue of this newsletter.

PARIS, Centre Georges Pompidou - On March 8-16, 1986, the 8th International Film Festival of Visual Anthropology and Social Documentation/Cinema Du Reel Festival will be presented by the Bibliotheque Publique D'Information. This will be followed by an Overview of Ethnographic Film at the Musee de l'Homme from the 17th to the 21st of March.

Full-length films and shorts are eligible for presentation in their original format. Films must be completed between January 6, 1984 and December 31, 1985. Entries should be registered before December 15, 1986 and films before January 6. For a complete list of rules and restrictions contact: Bibliotheque Publique D'Information Cinema du Reel, Centre Georges Pompidou, 75191 Paris CEDEX 04, Tel: 277.12.33, Poste 44-23-//-45-16, Telex: 212 726f.

LONDON - On September 24-26, 1985 The Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) will hold an International Festival of Ethnographic Film at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London. The festival, to be opened by Sir Denis Forman, Chairman of Granada TV, will focus on three general themes: "Life Crisis," "Change and Development," and "Cultural Self-Expression." Discussion around these themes will be held respectively by Colin Young, director of the National Film and Television School, David MacDougall, director of the Film Unit of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and Jean Rouch, a distinguished French filmmaker.

The purpose of the festival is to encourage greater international awareness of the achievements to date and future potential of documentary ethnographic filmmaking. UNESCO has sponsored a $10,000 grant to encourage participation from Third World countries. Award winning films from around the world will be screened. For more details contact: Royal Anthropological Institute, 56 Queen Anne Street, London, W1M 9LA or Tel. 01-486-6832.

ALEXANDRIA, Egypt - On January 4-9, 1986, The I.U.A.E.S. Egypt Intercongress Commission on Visual Anthropology is holding a meeting organized by Professor Mohamed Mahgoub of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alexandria. Screening facilities for 16mm film and multiformat video will be provided.
Kranj, Yugoslavia - On September 30 to October 4, 1985, The Interfilm Festival will present its 2nd INTERNATIONAL WEEK OF ETHNOLOGICAL AND ECOLOGICAL FILMS. The Festival aims to demonstrate the close relationship between these two fields in terms of the problems these sciences illustrate and the social responsibility for their development. For further information, please contact: INTERFILM FESTIVAL, 61000 Ljubljana, Zrinjska 9, Yugoslavia 061/317-340.

Guelph, Ontario - On November 7-10, 1985, The Guelph International Film Festival (GIFF) will continue its dedication to Third Cinema, a unique style of filmmaking where Third World filmmakers focus on the socio-economic and political concerns of their own cultures. At this year's GIFF, themes and issues will be presented by juxtaposing films produced in the Third World and in North America. One issue - two perspectives. Films from Senegal, Nicaragua, India and the Philippines will be shown. For information call: (519) 822-3110 or (519) 824-4120 or write to: Guelph International Resource Centre, 21 King St. N., Guelph, Ontario N1E 4P5.

Beaconsfield, England - "European Minorities" was the theme of the "Second International Meeting of Anthropological, Sociological and Documentary Film on Europe", held at the National Film and Television School last July. For more information, contact: Dr. Colette Piault, 5 rue des Saint-Pe're's, 75006 Paris, FRANCE.

NEW RELEASE

'AMRA DUJON'

"AMRA DUJON." (TOGETHER.) Bangladesh 1983. Director Alamgir Kabir, producer John Ribner. Color, 30 minutes. Bengali, with/without English subtitles. Purchase $450 plus postage from DSR, Inc., Box 281, Columbia, MD 21045 or contact Steve Smith 301-596-0794/301-964-1647. Video (1/2" Beta or VHS, and 3/4" U-matic) also available.

This film is produced in the populist and popular melodramatic morality-tale style so beloved of audiences in the subcontinent. In this case, the message underlying the drama promotes birth control policies. The hero and heroine realize the physical and economic strain of having a large family and eventually decide that they should "wait a while before starting their family." This decision is made at the suggestion of the local radio family planning question and answer programme, at which point the couple breaks into a love song sequence emphasizing that they must make decisions and build their lives together.
SVA UPDATE

The Society for Visual Anthropology is a new constituent unit of the AAA. The current board members of what was previously SAVICOM (Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication) voted to join the AAA at the 1984 meetings in Denver, to take immediate steps to reorganize and revitalize the Society, and simultaneously to change the name of the organization.

The new name indicates a broader approach to visual symbols, phenomena, and media (film, video, photography) in anthropological research, teaching, theory, methodology, and practice. The Society for Visual Anthropology aims to encourage and support those who are using visual means of description and analysis to study and interpret human (or humanly relevant) perception, behavior, interaction, or communication in context, and those who are interested in such topics as: the analysis of visual symbolic forms; visual theories; relationships among different channels and modes of communication; the visible expression of emotion; proxemic and other analyses of space and territory; kinesic or other systematic study of body motion communication, gesture, or dance; the structuring of reality as denoted by visual productions and artifacts; the study of art, artifacts, or performance from social, cultural, historical, folkloristic, semiotic, or aesthetic points of view; forms of social organization involved in planning, producing, and using visual signs and systems of signs; writing systems and other visible forms of language; visual contexts of speech or verbal art; visual approaches to the ethnology of human and other life forms; film/video/photo archiving; anthropological teaching with visual media; visual analyses and methods in the professional practice of anthropology; using media in cultural feedback; and the study, production, and use of ethnographic, archaeological, or other anthropological film, photography, or video. All members of the AAA are eligible and welcome to join the SVA and become voting members for a fee of $10.00 a year. People interested in just receiving SVA newsletter may become subscribers for the same fee. The newsletter plans to gradually expand its size with substantial articles in each issue and will be mailed four times a year at the end of September, the beginning of November, the middle of February and the middle of April. The newsletter is published by the Center for Visual Anthropology at the Department of Anthropology, the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, 90089-0661.

The SVA is currently gathering names and information for a Directory of Visual Anthropology. AAA members and others with interests or achievements in visual anthropology as sketched out above, including current or past research, publications, films or other productions, teaching experience, professional work or applications, etc., are encouraged to submit information for the Directory. —AJ

Contact: Thomas D. Blakely, Department of Anthropology, 700 Kimball Tower, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah 84602.
Professor Ruby of Temple University's Anthropology Department has often threatened that the latest conference on Visual Communication will be the last. However, this year's International Conference on Visual Communication held at the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communications took place as scheduled May 30th through June 1st of this year.

The conference provides a forum for the contemporary work of people making contributions to the visual media. It is a showplace for producers to present their products which are often accompanied by discussion and presentations of scholarly papers. As it has always done, the conference allows and stimulates a dialogue within an otherwise disparate group of scholars, and in so doing, consolidates the field of visual communications.

There are over 100 film and video presentations documenting aspects of both our own culture and others around the world. An excellent exhibit presented the work of three European photographers in a show entitled "Images of the USA: 1920-1940." A catalogue of the exhibit was published in the Spring issue of "Studies in Visual Communication." Other sessions of particular interest included those dealing with ethical issues. Most notably, the one entitled "Parrebique and Biquefarre: The scholarly and ethical implications of Ethnographic fiction, and a new film "A Country Action: The Paul V Leitzel Estate Sale" by Jay Ruby, Robert Aibel, Ben Levin and Chris Musello. For many of us, though, the most valuable aspect of the conference was the opportunity for informal dialogue with specialists in a wide variety of visual communication issues.

The conference was directed by Jay Ruby. Steven Feld, Elvira Fitzgerald, George Gerbner, Larry Gross and Amos Vogel were on the planning committee.

Those who would like more information might read Victor J. Caldarola’s excellent review of the conference in Professor Asen Balikci's new journal "Anthropologia Visualis" Vol 1 No. 1, Spring and Summer 1985. To receive a copy, write to the Commission on Visual Anthropology, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Montreal C.P. 6128 Succursdale A, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3C 3J7. In addition, a xeroxed programme of the conference may be obtained from Professor Jay Ruby, Dept. of Anthropology, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA 191122.—TA
A retrospective of Jorge Preloran's films were shown at UCLA in May of this year. Jorge's contributions to documentary filmmaking - his success in raising our consciousness about life in South America, particularly Argentina, and the humanistic perspective he brings to ethnographic filming - are reinforced when a range of his films are seen within a few weeks. Insights derived from the films were enhanced as Jorge introduced each film and thoughtfully answered questions from the audience.

Argentinian-born Jorge Preloran received a B.A. in film production from UCLA in 1960 and has been a member of the faculty there for the past nine years. In the early sixties Jorge began travelling throughout Argentina seeking people to film. He evolved a unique style that reflects both his desire to create gentle documents of people who need help and the paucity of his funding. First he would find a sympathetic character and from time to time throughout at least a year Jorge would return to observe their lives. As his knowledge and sensitivity increased a film would begin to take shape that showed a range of seasonal activities and revealed the concerns of his humble but usually philosophical heroes. Jorge begins by taping lengthy discussions with his protagonists. He constructs the text for his films from these hours of recordings, allowing the voices of those he films to be heard. This dedication to the stories people construct about their own lives is, perhaps, Jorge's greatest contribution to ethnographic filmmaking.

The paucity of his funding necessitates that he buy out-of-date film and wait weeks for development. He uses an inexpensive, wind-up Bolex camera that restricts the length of each shot and he must film cautiously because he can only afford to buy twice as much footage as he uses in his final film (most documentary filmmakers shoot 15 to 20 times more film than they use). After selecting narrative passages, Preloran tries to film images that complement and enrich the narrative. As Jorge put it at one of the showings: the images are the body, which I think he would define as the physical life of the people; while the voice, the narration, represents the soul. The films are 'human documents', which by-and-large lack narration beyond the words of those depicted and are devoid of ideological rhetoric. But collectively they become political statements, cries from people who live on the boundaries between economic regions or between interest groups.

Jorge's films could provide a valuable model for anthropologists. Most anthropologists go to the field with a tape recorder. Many collect life histories or philosophical conversations. Excerpts from these recordings could be combined with slides, film or video tape to create portraits or to present events. It takes the skill of an artist like Jorge to make great films, but anthropologists could learn to make useful documents by applying his style.
Jorge has been criticized by anthropologists who feel his films are too romantic. At times, some of his images are overly romantic but they represent his desire to show whatever beauty he can find in an environment; they do not detract from his underlying statements about the importance of all human life. Technical criticisms of his work also have some validity. Take, for example, the narration in the English version of Zerda's Children. The narrative is derived from recordings of several people. At times it is difficult to identify the speaker because Jorge reads all the voices. This economizing strategy reduces the impact of the film. Also, a number of the films, Zerda's Children among them, would have been more powerful had they been shorter.

Jorge acts as cinematographer, sound recordist, editor and director of most of his 60 or more films. They include portraits of artists such as Imaginero (released in 1969) about the Andean 'image-maker'; Medardo Pantoja (1968), about a successful Argentine painter; and Hector di Mauro, Puppeteer (1980) to stories of people living in isolated areas such as Cochengo Miranda (1975), about the life of a man and his family who live on the edge of the Western Pampas; and Zerda's Children (1978), about the dreams and philosophy of a wood cutter whose family live lives of poverty and unending work. Other films focus on isolated social groups such as Araucanians of Roca Choroy (1971), about survivors of a military campaign that forced them into a harsh border region of Argentina; The Warao People (1975), about a group that lives on the delta of the Orinoco River in Venezuela; and Chucalenza (1968), about the relationship between the paintings and the environment of shepherds' children who attend a unique art school in a remote canyon in northeastern Argentina.

Two years ago Jorge produced his first feature film, My Aunt Nora (1983), based on a script by his wife, Mabel Preloran. The construction of a complex dramatic film is certainly a departure from his shorter documentaries. However, the economy of filming, his ability to draw fine performances from his actors (most non-professionals) and the combination of documentary filming, such as the live scenes at the mental hospital, with carefully crafted dramatic scenes, shows both Jorge's ingenuity as a filmmaker and the continuity in his vision. Whether documentary or dramatic, Jorge's films artistically express the serious dreams and poignant realities that occupy peoples lives.

Patsy Asch
The Australian National University

ANNOUNCEMENT

Call for Papers — Qualitative Sociology seeks submissions for a special issue on "The Sociology of Film", summer, 1987. The deadline is February 1986. For additional information, please contact: Professor Andrea Walsh, Department of Anthropology, Clark University, 950 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01610.
FIELDNOTES

AFRICAN FOLKLIFE

Geri Zantzinger, Ben Levin, and Lynne Gulezian are finishing the post-production phase of two films concerning African folk-life and music. The first film, based upon David Coplan's 8 month sabbatical research concerning the song/poems of Lesotho's migrant miners, examines music as a strategy used to deal with the lack of individual control over their lives. The second, partially funded by the Amilcar Cabral African Youth Movement of Cape Verde, looks at traditional music after ten years of independence from Portugal.

Notes from filmmakers at USC's Center for Visual Anthropology:

BUFFALO FEASTS

Laura Scheerer and anthropologist Dr. Janet A. Hoskins began their ethnographic film collaboration this summer in Sumba, Indonesia. Filmed in Super 8 single-system sound, this initial footage will be transferred to videotape and videoedited to produce a short tape primarily aimed at raising funds for future work. Scheerer and Hoskins, on their return trip in 1986, will do more extensive filming of Sumbanese ceremonial life, particularly the dragging of megalithic gravestones, curing songs and pig and buffalo feasts.

SPANISH GYPSIES

Southern Spain's Granada, with its Alhambra and its Sacromonte, still evokes mysterious images of its rich history. Romans, Moors, Christians, Jews and Gypsies have all left their mark. This summer, Luis Perez, collaborated with Spanish anthropologist Elisenda Ardevol to document Ardevol's research in the Granada Gypsy community. The film will capture aspects of daily life seen through the eyes of a young Gypsy schoolteacher, Loli Fernandez, and her family.

The Granada Gypsy Film Project has been made possible in part by the Del Amo Foundation in Los Angeles, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Madrid, The Granada City Hall, the Provincial Deputy of Granada, and the Center for Visual Anthropology, U.S.C.

Chinese embroidery representing ban.

RURAL CHINA

Post-Mao economic changes in rural China is the subject of a film produced this summer by CVA's Thomas Luehhsen and Dr. Jack Potter of the University of California, Berkeley. The film is based on Drs. Jack and Sulamith Potter's 6-year-long study of Zengbu Township in Guandung Province of the People's Republic of China. The film will complement the Potters' upcoming ethnography.
FIELDNOTES (Continued)

BUGIS SAILORS

Luehrsen also filmed a two week sailing voyage of a Bugis perahu (schooner) between Jakarta and Kalimantan, Indonesia with Dr. Mary Judd, also from U.C. Berkeley. Judd was recently awarded a Fulbright Senior Research Grant to conduct a year long study of the Bugis shipping economy. Luehrsen and Judd plan to film longer, round trip voyages and Bugis village life in Sulawesi next summer.

RETURN TO THE RESERVATION

Thomas Fleming and the principal investigator of the University of Southern California's "Ethnicity, Cultural Continuity and Successful Aging Project", Dr. Weibel-Orlando, began a collaboration this summer to video tape the move of retirement age urban American Indians back to their homelands. The summer was spent shooting on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota and in communities near Broken Bow, Oklahoma.

The project aims to document the re-entry process and both the traditional and/or innovative activities/roles which the returnees take as their own upon their return to the communities of origin. These activities/roles will be contrasted with those available to aging Indians who choose to remain in Los Angeles.

HEALTH CARE IN ALASKA

Andrew Millstein and University of Pennsylvania Folklorist, Joanne Mulcahy recently completed their first season of collaborative fieldwork on Kodiak Island, Alaska. They will produce a monograph and ethnographic film focusing on the synthesis of native and western health care practices on Kodiak island.

Weather conditions on Kodiak Island make it imperative to have excellent homemade rain gear for people and film equipment. Homemade camera-covers manufactured from heavy duty zip lock freezer bags enabled foul weather filming. They are transparent, inexpensive, lightweight and expendable.

NICARAGUAN WOMEN

Ellen Frankenstein went to Nicaragua to study Spanish and to photograph and film women. With the footage from this summer, she hopes to raise funds to return to do a documentary on women's roles in the revolution and their perceptions of change.
films in small liberal arts colleges are rarely acknowledged by anthropologists affiliated with large universities, who are the primary authors of materials about films and proponents of ideals for using films in teaching anthropology.

In the eight years that I taught full-time at small liberal arts colleges I assumed that I should try to provide students with lifelong learning skills as well as teaching them about anthropology. Therefore, critical evaluation of resources, both written and visual, was a part of every course. As a teacher of junior and senior high school I had learned to integrate audio-visual materials into social studies classes. Therefore, doing this in college classes in the 1960s and early 1970s did not seem to be innovative, although apparently it was. As a student of anthropology in three universities (London, Minnesota and Northwestern), I had learned how important visual material was for understanding anthropology and empathizing with people. Because little money was available for renting films, I would often use other visuals such as slides and books with photographs in teaching anthropology.1

In teaching anthropology I would utilize a variety of materials, including writings by professional anthropologists, anthropological fiction, popularly written material on anthropology, films and other visual resources. One facet of every course was to try to teach students to critically evaluate these materials by examining the background of the producers, the purpose for which the materials were produced, and the content and style of the materials. I felt that such critical skills would be useful to students in evaluating cultural data presented in the mass media later in their lives. Obviously students would also learn about anthropology while developing critical skills.

Since showing films was always related to critical evaluation, different kinds of films were shown (e.g., related to different filmmaking philosophies), including commercial as well as anthropological documentaries, and fiction films. A film need not be "good" by anthropological or technical criteria to be included in the course, since in my view something can be learned even from the "worst" films if they are critically evaluated and discussed.2 After all, during a person's lifetime he or she probably sees more "bad" than "good" films, but learns something from every one of them. The purpose of critical evaluation is to make students conscious of what they see in films, what they learn from films, and how filmmaking techniques affect what they learn.

To teach anthropology with films in small liberal arts colleges I developed film guides and film lectures. The purpose of both was to provide students with background for evaluating the visual data and the method of presenting the visual data, and for relating the film to written materials (anthropological, popular and occasionally fictional). Film guides were distributed to the class before a film was shown.
There was always a discussion of the film in class after the film was shown or at the next class, depending on the length of the film. Short papers discussing and evaluating some films were required.

The first film for which I wrote a guide was "Dead Birds." Like most other film guides I have written, it was two pages long, typed single spaced. It provided general background on the Dani, a concise summary of aspects of Dani culture upon which the film focused, comments on the circumstances under which the film was made, and a bibliography of related resources about the Dani. I also made the film available at the college where I was teaching. I no longer have a copy of the first film guide I wrote because I revised my guides frequently. However, a sample film guide for "Bitter Melons" is included at the end of this essay.

In my opinion no film should be shown to a class without an introduction unless the film is being shown to immerse students in a situation on which their reactions will be solicited. Therefore, I usually introduced a film by distributing a film guide or giving a film lecture. Whether I wrote a guide or gave a lecture depended on a combination of factors. Of primary importance was the availability of related reading material that undergraduates could consult in their library. The length of the film was another factor. Film guides had to be written for "Dead Birds" and other long films which took a class period to show whereas when showing shorter films such as "Gelede Masquerade" and "Autumn River Camp" of the Netsilik series, background material could easily be introduced and discussed during the class period.

Anthropological filmmakers and instructors of anthropology majors and graduate students probably would not use the kind of film guides I wrote if more detailed film guides were available. However, there are still relatively few anthropological films for which film guides are available, thus either limiting instructors to showing films for which there are written materials or forcing instructors to develop their own guides. Of the written guides that have been published, those produced by the American Universities Field Staff for the "Faces of Change" series and by Documentary Educational Resources for their Bushmen and Yanomamo films are most appropriate for teaching undergraduates who are not majoring in anthropology. Although guides like Heider's for "Dead Birds" (1972) are useful for instructors to obtain background, they include more technical background on filmmaking than is needed for teaching undergraduates who are neither anthropology majors nor enrolled in a film course. Guides like Connors and Asch's on the Jero films (1983) go way beyond anything that most undergraduates would want to know or need to read, or that most small liberal arts college libraries would buy. (Soon available through Cambridge University Press)

Although films are used to teach anthropology or for
illustrative purposes in anthropology courses in many small liberal arts courses in the U.S., the persons who prepare written guides for anthropological films are usually filmmakers or film specialists affiliated with large university research-oriented (as opposed to teaching-oriented) graduate anthropology departments. There has been relatively little dialogue between those who teach anthropology with films (as distinct from those who show anthropology films in their classes) and those who make anthropological films and write guides to anthropological films. If more film guides appropriate for undergraduate teaching are to be developed, there needs to be two groups. To date much of the general literature on teaching with films has been concerned with utopian ideals, whereas most film reviews are too short and provide inadequate background information about the making of films to serve as useful film guides. What is needed are film guides concerned with the practical realities of teaching anthropology with the films that have been made. An excellent source for developing guides to anthropological films appropriate for undergraduate teaching would be the combined efforts of anthropologists who are experienced teachers and anthropologists who are experienced filmmakers.

**SAMPLE FILM GUIDE**

Bitter Melons was made by the well-known ethnographic filmmaker JOHN MARSHALL. In 1955, before he was trained as an anthropologist, Marshall shot over 500,000 feet of film on Bushmen lifeways, while he was a member of a research project sponsored by the Peabody Museum at Harvard University and at the Smithsonian Institution. Marshall began editing the film on the Bushmen after receiving anthropological training, making documentary films of life in American urban settings and participating in curriculum development projects at the Center for Documentary Anthropology. So far, Marshall has made over ten films about the Bushmen more dialogue between these from the film he shot in the 1950s, and he plans to make more.

Bitter Melons is only a very small part of an extensive visual record of Bushmen lifeways. It is the most general film about the Bushmen which Marshall has made so far, but it focuses on only three kinds of activities: gaining subsistence, recreation and music, thus providing only a partial introduction to Bushmen lifeways. It should be understood that Bitter Melons depicts the lifeways of only a small percentage of the Bushmen who live in Southern Africa, in particular, it depicts those Bushmen who gain their subsistence from hunting
and gathering. The majority of the Bushmen today, including some of those shown in the film, are settled near farming communities and obtain only a small part of their subsistence from hunting and gathering. It is also important to note that Bushmen lifeways of the 1950s do not represent a long, unchanging tradition. Some behavior in the film represents responses to recent contacts with agricultural peoples and policies promulgated by the South African government.

The Bushmen, although a relatively small ethnic group of approximately 55,000 in the 1950s, are divided into four sub-groups which differ in language and customs. Bitter Melons depicts the Gwi Bushmen who live in the Central Kalahari Desert, one of the harshest environments in which Bushmen live. Bushmen have not always lived in such a harsh environment. Several centuries ago Bushmen lived in the fertile areas near the southern coast of South Africa, but encroachment by European settlers and African farming peoples forced Bushmen who valued their independence to move to less favorable natural surroundings.

While the Bushmen depicted in Bitter Melons use some subsistence techniques similar to those of other Bushmen hunter-gatherers, their need to find water substitutes is greater than that of most other Bushmen. Therefore, they plant melons to insure access to liquid and need to drink body fluids from the animals which they kill. Since local environments vary within the Kalahari Desert, so do the animals which Bushmen hunt and the plant foods which Bushmen gather. Small animals such as antelope, hares and porcupines and birds such as guinea fowl, partridge and ostriches are most frequently hunted and killed. Only rarely do some Bushmen hunt animals as large as giraffe, as depicted in another of Marshall's films, The Hunters. There is even more variety in the vegetable resources which Bushmen exploit than in the animals which they hunt. While the Gwi lack access to plants with high protein content, some other Bushmen have access to highly nutritious mangetti nuts. The distribution of wild melon patches is quite uneven, so even in the Central Kalahari region, not all local groups consume similar amounts of tsama melons. In addition, plant foods vary seasonally. A film made at one season cannot depict the great variety of plant foods which a Bushmen group gathers over a year. Variety in Bushmen diet occurs seasonally, not within a period of a few weeks. In the course of a year Bushmen will eat such plant foods as melons, cucumbers, berries, green leaves, tree gums, grass seeds and over a dozen kinds of roots.

The number of people who live in a Bushman community is related in part to the availability of plant and animal resources which can be used for subsistence. Bushmen communities are always relatively small, usually less than one hundred people, but in the Central Kalahari region, local communities often have twenty members or less. The composition of Bushmen communities also is related to kinship
ties and personal preferences. Women usually join their husband’s community at marriage, and the adult men who live in a community usually have a direct or indirect patrilineal kin tie. The size of Bushmen communities varies seasonally in relation to the availability of plant and animal resources and the personal preferences of families about those with whom they wish to reside.

**Bitter Melons** illustrates the most common Bushmen musical form, the song, and their most widely used musical instrument, the musical bow, as well as the close relationship between Bushmen music and economic and social life. Although **Bitter Melons** focuses on one musician, most Bushmen play a musical instrument, sing songs while they work and enjoy musical games. That Uxone, the blind musician in **Bitter Melons**, is a man reflects the fact that Bushmen men play musical instruments more frequently than do Bushmen women. Uxone is an atypical Bushmen musician in having developed a unique style of playing the musical bow and in being widely known for the originality of his songs, but his musicianship suggests the range which is found among the Bushmen of the Central Kalahari Desert.

More details on **Bitter Melons** may be found in the film guide by Seth Reichlin, which provides a sequence by sequence analysis of the film and information about how it was made.

**NOTES:** (Bibliography available on request from the SVA Newsletter.)

1. Examples of books that I used were Gardner and Heider’s Gardens of War (1968) for teaching about the Dani, Mead and Heyman’s Family (1965) and Steichen’s The Family of Man (1955) for teaching about family life and other aspects of social organization, and Cole’s House of Bondage (1967) for teaching about South African urban life and apartheid.

2. In an extension program I ran for the African Studies Program at the University of Illinois from 1974 to 1977 we found that sixth graders could be taught to identify biased, badly narrated and technically poor films.

3. Guides were revised as I changed institutions, as more written materials on films and filmmaking became available, and as I learned more about the details of making specific films. In 1965 I introduced Dead Birds as a documentary film. In 1973 when I did a film series comparing the films of Robert Flaherty and Robert Gardner I came to appreciate the strong philosophical moulding of ethnographic data in all of Robert Gardner’s films. In a film lecture introducing Dead Birds in 1981 I introduced it as an ethnographic fiction film. I mention this personal change only to emphasize how rapidly our knowledge about anthropological films and filmmakers has changed in the last twenty years and how quickly film guides can become dated.

4. I have used the same kind of film guides and film lectures for teaching anthropology majors at a university, teaching social science professors how to teach with anthropology films, and for introducing high school teachers and general university audiences to anthropology films and documentary and fiction films on Africa.
NEW PUBLICATIONS

Studies in Visual Communication, 11(1), Winter 1985, is an entire issue devoted to Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin's film CHRONICLE OF A SUMMER. Included are essays by Morin and Rouch, a transcript of the whole film, including restored sequences, and interviews with the participants. For single copies ($6) or bulk orders (10-24 @ $5.40, 25-49 @ $4.80, 50 or more @ $4.20. Write Debra Williams, Studies in Visual Communication, P.O. Box 13358, Philadelphia, PA 19101-3358.

We would like to recommend to our readers "Anthropology Today" published by the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) in London. "Anthropology Today" has replaced the RAI newsletter RAIN and is published every two months at $12 a year. (Price includes RAI membership.) "Anthropology Today" often presents excellent ethnographic film reviews and other related articles of interest. Write to: Royal Anthropological Institute, 56 Queen Anne Street, London W1M 9LA.

The Society for Visual Anthropology wants to congratulate Asen Balikci for the publication of his first issue of "Anthropologia Visualis". It is an excellent piece of work and we wish him great success in publishing this journal for many years to come. For copies and submission of articles write to Professor Asen Balikci, Commission of Visual Anthropology, Département d'anthropologie, Université de Montréal, C.P., 6128 succursale A, Montréal, (Québec), Canada H3C 3J7.

SVA MEMBERSHIP FORM

SVA Membership Fee ...................... $10.00 (until Jan. 1, 1986) (Include SVA Newsletter)

Name ________________________________

Address ________________________________

Affiliation ________________________________

Telephone (_____ ) __________________________ (______ ) __________________________

Interests/Specialization ________________________________

To be a voting member of the SVA one must be a member of the American Anthropological Association. To join the SVA and receive its newsletter, please send this form and $10.00 to:

John Nelson
Membership Office
AAA
1703 New Hampshire Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20009
film and book reviews, short articles, and obituaries. Film reviews and announcements, book reviews, and program announcements are solicited by the editors. Review articles should be typed, double-spaced and not exceed three pages. The editors reserve the right to edit all copy for style and typing errors. Any major changes will be done in consultation with author. Program announcements should be submitted at least three months prior to the event. We wish to remind our readers that this newsletter will only be as good and as interesting as the copy that you send us.

Submit all materials to:

Craig S. Coleman
Managing Editor - SVA Newsletter
Center for Visual Anthropology
Department of Anthropology
University of Southern California
University Park
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0661

SVA Newsletter
Center for Visual Anthropology
Department of Anthropology
University of Southern California
University Park
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0661