

## Editorial

**Len Kamerling (University of Alaska Fairbanks)**

We are very pleased to announce a new issue of the Journal of Anthropological Film (JAF), Volume 4, no. 1, our sixth publication. For this issue the editors have chosen five films that offer a diverse look at world culture and represent an even more diverse range of styles and approaches.

***Kahan Ka Raasta*** by Savyasachi Anju Prabir

An intimate observational portrait of mountain-dwelling people in rural, North-Central India, that brings us into the lives of a family in the village of Kotago. Patuli, Guddu and their twelve-year-old son, Anju, live by hard manual work, deep knowledge of the land, and specialized skills in subsistence, husbandry, and weaving. “Isn’t there a difference between the past and now?” Patul asks his wife. “In the past, you could buy a month of rations for your whole family for merely five Rupee,” he says. “Now you can’t even buy a biscuit for that.” His wife, Guddu, replies, “Still, life was good then.” *Kahan Ka Raasta* gives us a keen sense of the time a family must invest to accomplish their daily subsistence tasks in this rugged, unforgiving, mountain landscape. We see Patul and Guddu working the land, threshing wild grain and cutting wood while the children gather wild mountain plants. Life in Kotago and its ongoing round of subsistence tasks is framed against the dominating Himalayan landscape, which is almost like a character in the film.

***Payiba Salma – Women’s Gold*** by Eza Doortmont

This short film focuses on the production of shea butter by women in Tamale, Northern Ghana. We see the process of producing shea butter in beautifully photographed detail - from the first step of washing the shea nuts to the final phase of shipping the highly valued processed product. A title informs us that this work is done exclusively by women. A worker tells us that, “It has brought us some benefits... now there is peace at home. If you ask for something from your husband and he says he cannot afford it, now you can afford to buy things too. So my work here makes me happy and gives me peace.” Later another worker adds, “We support one another... it gives us courage to do what we are doing.” The filmmaker is most focused on the shea butter making process, which is documented in magnificent detail. The film celebrates women’s success and perseverance in Northern Ghana and the indigenous shea butter industry that they dominate. We are left with indelible images of this small industry and the women who run it, but also with unanswered questions about the wider economy and culture of Tamale.

***Passager*** by Arjang Omrani and Asef Rezaei

This unique personal film was shot with Afghani refugee Asef Rezaie’s cell phone camera. It documents the struggle of his repeated attempts to leave Greece for asylum in Europe. He began filming his story of fleeing Afghanistan and ending up in a migrant camp in Greece out of despair and frustration. Unlike other films about migration, *Passager* is a self-

reflective portrait of one part of Asef's long journey - getting out of Greece. We are given a window into the real dangers of living in a migrant tent camp built in the middle of a sports stadium, and the daily emotional rollercoaster as Asef negotiates with smugglers and attempts to escape from the Greek authorities by hiding in the under-carriage of long-distant trucks headed to Europe. After many failed attempts, arrests, and beatings, Asef finally makes it to France where he is granted asylum. This self-narrated film is moving and informative and reveals the emotional cost of leaving one's home country and culture - even in the best of circumstances. The film succeeds in re-framing issues of Middle-East migration from master narrative to deeply personal portrait.

***Les Mairuuwas - The Masters of Water*** by Trond Waage

This observational film confronts the inter-border migration of refugees from the civil war in the Central African Republic (CAR) to neighboring Cameroon. *Les Mairuuwas - The Masters of Water* provides a rare and deeply humanistic look at the lives of young exiles from the CAR who earn money by transporting water in handcarts to local residents in Ngaoundere. Their existence in Cameroon is defined by poverty and insecurity and further complicated by the wide abuse of Tramadol, a powerful and easily available opiate pain killer. We are introduced to the grueling work of the Mairuuwas through Koko, a young man around seventeen years old. Koko moves through a range of emotions, from collaboration with other water carriers, to aggression, and finally resignation when he learns that a friend stole his water container and traded it for Tramadol tablets. Later we are introduced to others; Brio, the oldest of the group, Able, who has lived in Ngaoundere since childhood, and Bashirou, whose arrest for assaulting a motorbike taxi driver brings unexpected consequences to the entire community of water carriers. Throughout these encounters the camera remains reflexive and emotionally engaged bringing us closer into the daily reality, struggles and hopes of these young refugees.

***Now I Am Dead*** by Philipp Bergmann and Isabel Bredenbröker

Anthropologist Isabel Bredenbröker and filmmaker Philipp Bergmann originally planned a video installation to explore the nature of "the ethnographic encounter" as seen through the lens of Bredenbröker's research on death and commemoration in the Volta region of Ghana. Shortly after the start of filming, her 98-year-old grandfather died in Germany. Suddenly, the perspective shifts. Their film on the ethnographic encounter experienced in researching death in Ghana, must confront the question of how one processes a distant family death - while making a film about death in West Africa. *Now I Am Dead* is distinguished from other films about anthropologists at work by this unexpected personal event and the second narrative that it creates. We observe Isabel engaged in her fieldwork - assisting an undertaker, visiting the morgue, attending funerals, and inspecting cemeteries. She also seeks the advice of her collaborators on how to deal with a family death so far away. The town responds to her confusion by publicly commemorating her grandfather alongside other death related events, such as preparing bodies for burial and commemorating the soul of a young man killed in a traffic accident. As the anthropologist's personal need to address her grandfather's death is incorporated into community ritual, the foreign outsider becomes an insider and the boundary line separating two cultures become less and less distinct.

*As the first peer-reviewed journal exclusively for anthropological film, JAF is dedicated to providing a wider viewership for films that make a significant contribution to anthropology and ethnographic film. We seek submissions of both new and older productions that represent a wide range approaches and genres - from traditional ethnographic works to experimental. We invite your submissions for future issues.*