

Editorial

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This issue of JAF offers seven films presenting people and events from Ethiopia, Mozambique, Cameroon, Germany, Italy, Brazil, and the South Pacific diaspora. Widely diverse in their subjects and approaches, the films are linked through a broad consideration of the relationship between traditional practices and the preservation of cultural memory. Cameroonian filmmaker Mohamadou Saliou expresses this relationship in his film, *Juarke: Boys Made Men in Mboum Society*, as he seeks out a village elder to teach him about the tradition of male initiation - the circumcision ritual that he himself, as an urban Mboum, has never experienced. In *Making Rain*, filmmakers Liivo Niglas and Frode Storaas bring us to the confluence of tradition and memory as we follow two rival leaders in Central Mozambique as they prepare and perform the annual rituals to bring rain to their dry land. Far to the North in Ethiopia, a camel caravan carries its cargo of salt across the Afar Depression in filmmaker Till Jakob Frederik Trojer's film, *Arbo - The Afar Salt Trade of Northeastern Ethiopia*, observing a centuries-old and disappearing tradition that brought this vital commodity to nomadic communities along the caravan's route. In his film, *The Village Resists*, filmmaker David Bert Joris Dhert reveals a tense situation in Rio de Janeiro where indigenous Gurani people occupy an urban area slated to be demolished and rebuilt for the World Cup football tournament. In claiming their rights to traditional indigenous land they collide head-on with the will of city authorities. In *Kava Roots*, filmmaker Arcia Tecun considers the preservation of tradition and cultural memory in the Pacific Island diaspora through the processing and sharing of Kava, a traditional drink known to soothe, bring mental clarity and take participants into the powerful realm of Pacific Island identity. In *Memory is Not About the Past*, filmmaker Anne Chahine walks the streets of Berlin with people who remember and recount their sensory memories of childhood in former East Berlin along with the lingering trauma of tumultuous change. And finally, *Some Kind of Bond*, filmmaker Chiara Cavarzan's mediation on the traditions of loss, death and the tenacity of memory in a small Italian town where visitors to a local cemetery reveal their grief, loyalties and the paths they have chosen forward.

Juarke: Boys Made Men in Mboum Society, a film by Mohamadou Saliou, 52 minutes

Mohamadou Saliou, who is himself a Mboum who grew up in urban Cameroon, has never been 'made man' in the traditional way - through ritual circumcision. The filmmaker uses this fact as a reflexive twist as he approaches an elder in a rural village to learn about the origins and meaning of the rituals that boys must undergo to become full-fledged

members of Mboum society. The film follows five young boys as they are taken far out in the bush, isolated from women and the uninitiated and instructed in the essential myths and codes that will help them mentally prepare for the ordeal ahead. Just before the circumcision the king of the Mboum appears on horseback to give an allegorical lesson on the responsibilities and expectations of boys becoming men. The film continually refers back to the exchange between Saliou, the filmmaker, and the village elder where we learn about the myths, realities and politics of maintaining the ancient initiation rites in an increasingly complex world. The combination of close observation, the elder's teaching and the filmmaker's reflectivity make this a rich ethnographic experience that reveals both Mboum traditions and the struggle to make them relevant in modern Cameroon.

Making Rain, a film by Liivo Niglas and Frode Storaas, 56 minutes

In *Making Rain*, gender issues and local politics are brought to the surface as we follow two leaders of the Shona people in Central Mozambique as they prepare to conduct the annual rituals to bring rain to their dry lands. In the Vumba Hills the same rainmaking ritual is practiced by two powerful leaders - the Mambo (chief) Chiara, the acknowledged leader and regional magistrate, and Mbuya Gondo, a spiritual medium in her seventies who practices her craft at a well-known site of ancient cave drawings. Together the two rivals represent a vast repertoire of knowledge and skills in local politics, social organization and spirit negotiation. Viewers interested in the anthropology of law and the opposing dynamics of Christian practices and ancestor worship in southern Africa will find much to learn from this ambitious observational film.

Arho - The Afar Salt Trade of Northeastern Ethiopia, a film by Till Jakob Frederik Trojer, 30 minutes

In Northeastern Ethiopia a caravan of camels slowly makes its way across the parched Afar Depression, a centuries old trade that distributes salt to the nomadic communities along the caravan's route and traditionally to other parts of Ethiopia and the coastal regions of modern-day Eritrea and Djibouti. The caravan we accompany is one of the last to make this journey as the trade is declining and trucks have slowly replaced the traditional camel caravans. The film examines how the decline of this trade effects the daily lives of individuals and communities in the Berahle district of Northeastern Ethiopia. It creates a strong sense of presence with striking visual imagery punctuated by local Afar music that takes viewers into the harsh environment of the Afar Depression, one of the year-round hottest, driest places on earth.

The Village Resists, a film by David Bert Joris Dhert, 53 minutes

At a derelict building in Rio de Janeiro, indigenous Gurani people have occupied the site in defiance of city authorities who call for their eviction by the police. The Gurani insist on their historical rights to remain. "They claim we don't have a right to be here," a Gurani voice proclaims. "Our ancestors wrote history here. This has always been an indigenous place. We just want to keep it that way." The city intends to build a press center on the site for the coming World Cup football tournament. Tension grows as the eviction starts with police dismantling the encampment and removing the Gurani protesters. The situation turns from bad to worse as Caterpillar tractors approach and uproot trees around the reserve. The media advertises safety for visitors during the World Cup, but for the

Gurani that safety is a mirage. While the film explores the nature of protest, authority and power, it also reveals intimate moments of conversation, preparing meals, and performing the essential rituals that unite present day activities with Gurani culture of the past.

Kava Rootz, a film by Arcia Tecun, 56 minutes

The ancient origins of Kava drinking among Pacific Island cultures can be traced back thousands of years and has played a key role in both social and ceremonial functions. In *Kava Rootz*, Arcia Tecun explores cultural identity, gender, and spirituality within the vast Pacific Island diaspora through their contemporary kava practices - the processing and communal sharing of a traditional drink with deep cultural roots. The kava gatherings we observe are spaces that help to bring clarity to the pressures of daily life, to nurture social cohesion, transmit cultural knowledge and strengthen one's sense of belonging and continuity with an ancestral past. The film is rich in situated knowledge of the kava experience, its cultural power and how it acts as a metonym for home.

Memory Is Not About the Past, a film by Anne Chahine, 18 minutes

As they walk along the streets of Berlin, people who were children when the Wall fell in 1989, recount their memories of childhood in the former East Berlin and the lingering trauma of that tumultuous time of change. The film focuses on members of the "Third Generation East", people born in the GDR who experienced the fall of the Berlin Wall as children or adolescents. The intent of the film, explains filmmaker Anne Chahine, is to stage encounters with participants in order to access different layers of memory and perception. In this evocation of "the ethnography of walking", people who speak are always moving through the urban landscape. The walks evoke memories of places and events and reveal how these sensory perceptions of the past have shaped present-day lives.

Some Kind of Bond, a film by Chiara Cavarzan, 20 minutes

"I believe that people go to the cemetery because of a bond", says a visitor to the local cemetery in Fanzolo, Italy. "Even though there isn't a physical bond, there's still a bond of the heart, a spiritual bond, let's say. So you come to visit people that are still alive to you, somehow." Filmmaker Chiara Cavarzan's beautifully rendered meditation on the culture and traditions of loss, death and the tenacity of memory, follows several individuals visiting the local cemetery. We observe both casual and diligent visitors and hear their thoughts on loss and grief. Some decide to invite the filmmaker into their homes to share their journeys through the experience of losing a child, a grandparent, a mother. In the cemetery an elderly man touches the gravestone of a cousin who hid him from falling bombs when he was a child during the war. "Every time I come here, I do this because I remember him well," he explains.