

Film & Video Reviews

Crossing over the Arirang Pass. 2018. Directed by Ko Jeongja and Terada Yoshitaka. DVD. The National Museum of Ethnology.

Crossing over the Arirang Pass, directed by Ko Jeongja and Terada Yoshitaka, unveils a culturally complex post-colonial existence of Koreans in Japan known as “Zainichi Koreans.” Zainichi Koreans, sometimes simply referred to as “Zainichi” (“residing in Japan”), are ethnic Koreans who migrated or were forcefully brought to Japan during the colonial period (1910–1945) as well as their descendants. While the exact number is unknown, over 322,000 Zainichi Koreans with special permanent resident status live in Japan today. They are one of the largest ethnic minority groups in Japan.

Throughout their history, Zainichi Koreans have suffered systemic discrimination and social marginalisation. To name a few examples, they are excluded from certain civil service positions, disenfranchised from the right to vote, and face harsh racial prejudice. Furthermore, the division of their homeland after WWII has fissured the Zainichi Korean community into a pro-North Korea group (Chongryon) and a pro-South Korea group (Mindan), obstructing the path toward Zainichi Korean coalition and advocacy. Across the generations, the lives and identities of Zainichi Koreans have been greatly affected by the constant interstate frictions between Japan, South Korea, and North Korea.

Focusing on their personal narratives and music-making, *Crossing over the Arirang Pass* sheds light on the plight of this little-known community and uncovers the lived experiences and identity struggles of second and third generation Zainichi Korean performers who are caught between their birthland and divided homeland. The artists featured in the film showcase the diversity of the Zainichi Korean community and its musical significance: *pansori* (an indigenous form of Korean musical storytelling) vocalist Ahn Sungmin trained in South Korea, singer-songwriter Lee Jeongmi trained in Japan, and singer Song Myonghwa along with three instrumentalists from the Kumgangsan Opera Troupe trained in North Korea. Their music and experiences are distinct, as are their sources of influence, yet the common thread that binds them is the spirit of *Arirang*, a beloved Korean folk song that symbolises all the joys, sorrows, struggles, and hopes of the Korean people. For Zainichi Koreans, the “Arirang Pass” (referred to in the song and the title of the film) stands for the hardships they have had to overcome and the earnest hope for a better tomorrow.

Aptly, the 76-minute film opens and closes with a joint performance of *Arirang* by all of the featured artists. Watching this performance is a moving experience for those familiar with the symbolic meaning of the song and the history of the Zainichi

community. This musical coalescing of the divided community is not only rare but also significant as it offers a glimpse into what a unified community and homeland could be like. The celebratory energy of the closing performance exudes optimism and a possibility for unity, however fleeting and undeniably difficult to achieve in reality. Punctuated by a wide range of performances of traditional and modern music, the rest of the film delves into the personal experiences of three female singers (Ahn, Lee, and Song) and several supporting performers coming to terms with their own identity, what it means to be Zainichi Korean artists, and creating music that is not only Korean, but uniquely Zainichi.

The film consists of seven sections. The first section (“Who am I?”) features the three singers’ childhood memories of growing up as a Zainichi Korean. Their stories about never feeling completely Korean or Japanese, learning their real (Korean) name in kindergarten, concealing their Korean roots until an accidental “coming out” in high school, or wanting to run away from the Korean community and to become Japanese illustrate their struggles with identity and the taboo nature of being a Zainichi in Japan. In the following section (“Discovering music”) each singer reflects on their musical origins. While Ahn and Song’s careers started with their fascination for the distinct sound of their homeland (Korean language and *pansori*, respectively), it was the dire political situation in her homeland that forged Lee’s path. Lee recounts her experience of singing at support rallies for young Zainichi Korean political prisoners who were accused of being spies for the North and awaiting their execution date in the South, illuminating the tragic history of fraternal hostilities in their divided homeland and its reverberation on the Zainichi community.

The next three sections take turns to spotlight the journey of individual performers’ experiences in music-making. “Pansori for Zainichi Koreans” focuses on *pansori* vocalist Ahn Sungmin. Ahn became the first Zainichi Korean to master the art designated as an Intangible Cultural Property of South Korea. Considered an outsider in both Japan and South Korea, it is through *pansori* that Ahn finds her voice and reclaims her place and identity. The juxtaposition between her arduous journey and the struggles of Zainichi Koreans in regaining their language and culture that were taken from them during the colonial period is one of the most poignant parts of the film. Her expressive vocal performance and stories underpinning it will remain with viewers long after the film’s conclusion.

“This town, too, is home” presents singer-song writer Lee Jeongmi’s journey of coming to terms with and eventually embracing her Zainichi Korean roots. The featured song *The Keisei Line* is a heartfelt tribute to her ancestors and the hometown she once despised. The original tune and lyrics, filled with a sense of longing and attachment to her home both near and far, epitomises the diasporic experience of Zainichi Koreans. In “Learning in the Republic”, performers from the Kumgangsan Opera Troupe, which was originally established in 1955 with support from North Korea, share their experiences of training in Pyongyang and their struggle to emulate the sounds and methods in which traditional songs and instruments are played in their homeland. On display in this section is an exquisite assortment of music played with traditional Korean instruments, including the *geomungo zither*, *gayageum zither*, and *choktae* (Korean flute), and the enchanting voice of Song Myonghwa.

The following section (“Life in-between”) elucidates the frustration and pain that accompany the in-between existence of Zainichi Koreans. Viewers get a glimpse of the everyday strife of Zainichi Korean artists and the inescapable impact of the political tensions surrounding Japan and two Koreas on their lives and music-making. Lee Jeongmi’s encounter with censorship and eventual self-censorship of songs alluding to comfort women illustrate the pressure and constraints Zainichi Koreans live with every day. In the final segment (“Zainichi Korean music”), the performers grapple with their sense of purpose, meaning of their trajectory, and responsibility as Zainichi Korean musicians. Caught between Japan and the Korean peninsula and living with the ramifications of colonialism and continuing discrimination in Japan, some feel a sense of responsibility to serve as a voice to bridge the gulf between Japan and Korea. Others feel crushed under the sheer weight of this responsibility and what it means to be a Zainichi musician. Still others consider their role as creating what is uniquely theirs, a “Zainichi” music.

The musical interludes scattered throughout the film are beautiful and wide-ranging, reflecting the distinct musical influence of each artist. Some are well-known music and sung narratives from the homeland (*Toraji*, *Chulgán*, *Sugungga*, etc.), while others are distinctly Zainichi (*Hana*, *The Keisei Line*). Also included, albeit briefly, is a segment of *Arirang and Akatonbo*, a piece that seamlessly combines two beloved songs from their homeland and birthland. Most songs are performed in Korean, some in Japanese, and a few in a mixture of both, all of which is symptomatic of the cultural versatility of Zainichi Korean artists and their in-between existence. The careful selection of music and meticulous placement and sequencing of each piece within the film works to amplify the emotional journey of the viewer, reaching into an emotional terrain that transcends language.

In conclusion, this film does an excellent job of illuminating the diasporic experiences of Zainichi Korean artists and their efforts to preserve and articulate their history and culture through music. Its nuanced representation of the multiplicity of experiences and musical influences within the Zainichi Korean community is particularly valuable in providing a richer understanding of a people who are little-known and often considered homogeneous. The thoughtful treatment of the material throughout the film reveals the dedication to and deep knowledge of the history and culture of the Zainichi Korean community on the part of the filmmakers themselves (Ko is herself a second generation Zainichi Korean with expertise in Korean folk entertainment while Terada is an ethnomusicologist and specialist in the performing arts of Asia). One can only hope that this one-of-a-kind film will reach a wide audience, both domestically and internationally, and raise awareness of the struggles and resilience of a people who, after many generations, continue to fight discrimination, resist cultural assimilation, and echo the indefatigable spirit of *Arirang*.

SOO-HYE HAN

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Polyphonic Lullabies of Kakheti. 2019. Directed by Hugo Zemp and Nona Lomidze. In Georgian, with English subtitles. 60 minutes. Colour. Available from Documentary Educational Resources: der.org

Polyphonic Lullabies of Kakheti is the latest addition to Hugo Zemp's collection of ethnographic films shot in Georgia (Caucasus), joining *The Feast-Day of Tamar and Lashari* (1998), *Funeral Chants from the Georgian Caucasus* (2007), *Duduki of Tbilisi* (2012) and *Table Songs of Kakheti* (2016). Focusing primarily on the region of Kakheti in eastern Georgia, the film offers valuable insights into the ways in which songs traditionally sung by women in domestic and ritual settings continue to hold meaning in contemporary Georgian society. We also see how their performance has been recontextualised by a new generation of singers in a way that reflects the different performance aesthetics that co-exist in today's Georgia.

The film is structured around a sequence of loosely related scenes featuring performances by, and conversations with, different groups of singers. Additional commentary, as well as translation, is provided by means of English text overlaid on the footage, while Zemp's trademark slow-moving style allows the viewer ample time to reflect on what is not made explicit. Effective use is also made of cutaways featuring a combination of archival images and shots of present-day landscapes and cityscapes to provide broader context.

The opening sequence of a young grandmother singing to her baby grandson while feeding him milk from a bottle cuts to an all-male ensemble on stage, its members sporting the traditional costume typically worn by professional and semi-professional male ensembles: a black chokha (tailored woollen coat) with rows of fake bullets across the chest and a dagger hanging from the belt. This juxtaposition neatly points to a series of shifts: from female to male, from monody to polyphony, from home to stage, from maternal nurture to a more heroic mode of protection, and from the baby as an intimate audience-of-one to an often international concert audience.

The practice of mothers singing lullabies to their children may have declined in modern times. As the film reveals, however, multipart lullabies have been part of the choral tradition since at least the end of the nineteenth century, when the lullaby was one of the first genres to be performed on the concert stage by Georgian male-voice choirs. As Anzor Erkomaishvili (founder and artistic director of the state academic ensemble Rustavi) explains: "People started adapting it [the lullaby], and the song started a new life on the concert stage." Among the most popular today is the lullaby known simply as "Kakhuri Nana," or "Kakhetian Lullaby." "This Nana now has a beautiful stage version," says Erkomaishvili. "Whoever first adapted it for several parts, did it very well." That the polyphonic versions of these songs came into being only in connection with organised choirs may be open to debate – some Georgian ethnologists (as mentioned in the film) believe that multipart ritual songs sung by women have more ancient roots—but whatever their origins, these polyphonic arrangements now form a staple of the concert repertoire of male, female, and mixed ensembles committed to safeguarding the country's musical heritage.

Zemp uses “Kakhuri Nana” to thread together several scenes featuring renditions of the same song by different singers. This allows the alert listener to appreciate some of the variations from one performance to the next, while also opening windows onto the different lives of this one song across time and space. Erkomaishvili tells of how, when he formed Rustavi, he asked soloist Hamlet Gonaishvili (“the voice of Georgia”) to sing the variant that used to be sung by the revered Vano Mchedlishvili. Rustavi’s rendition—exquisitely harmonised in Kakhetian style, with two melismatic solo voices moving in thirds over a drone, but with a notably refined, blended sound—then served as a point of reference for numerous other ensembles, with the result that this is the variant most often sung today. At the same time, as Erkomaishvili goes on to explain, many young singers now learn from studying the variants of songs preserved in old field recordings but make their own interpretations. “If a Georgian man is a good singer,” he insists, “he won’t sing a tune without changing it; he will definitely improvise,” such that no performance will ever be “the exact copy of the previous versions.” In a later scene, we encounter the younger men who make up the ensemble Shavnabada. Director Dato Tsintsadze explains that the singers each learned songs like “Kakhuri Nana” independently and at different times, often as members of children’s choirs such as Martve, the state-supported boys choir that served as an important training ground for many of today’s performers. They also heard different versions sung by different singers, says Tsintsadze: “we’ve picked different features from them, and have put our own interpretation on them.” Being witness to these conversations enriches the viewer’s understanding of the craft of the singer and of the process by which different song variants come into being with an equal claim to being “authentic.”

Interestingly, members of the female ensemble Iliani say that they do not have any lullabies in their repertoire but, “to please the filmmakers,” some of the women offer songs they used to sing to their own children, with some of their fellow-singers spontaneously providing a supporting drone. We learn that the *nana* repertoire does not consist of cradle songs alone, however. There is a parallel repertoire of healing songs, also traditionally sung by women and believed to have originated in pre-Christian times. The texts of these songs, too, include frequent invocations to Nana, thought to refer to the ancient goddess of that name who was venerated across the ancient Near East. Sung for children with infectious illnesses such as measles or chickenpox, the function of the song in this case was to appease the celestial spirits thought to have brought the disease. The broader genre of *nana* songs also encompasses other ritual songs sung by women at sacred places, such as pagan mountain shrines or the gates to village churches, as a form of supplication to the gods to ensure health and prosperity. Meanwhile, conversations with some of singers reveal the complex symbolism (and potential confusion) attached to a song like “Mze Shina,” a hymn to the sun, which is thought to have accompanied a devotional round-dance at ancient childbirth celebrations but might also (we are told) be sung to lull a baby to sleep, at the bedside of a new mother, for someone with an infectious disease or at a religious feast. Pressed to categorise “Mze Shina,” the members of Nelqarisi settle on the explanation that it isn’t sung as a lullaby as such: it’s a ritual song, sung at the birth of a boy.

Most importantly, the interrelatedness of these various *nana* songs underscores the profundity of women's ritual roles and of lullabies themselves as far more than just a song to send a baby to sleep.

A valuable aspect of the film is the inclusion of extracts from older recordings and film footage, alongside clips from other sources. An audio clip featuring a female choir from Telavi's Music High School singing in Alaverdi monastery with accompanying birdsong that was recorded by Minoru Morita in 1983 for the Victor Company of Japan, for example, makes for some nice connections when juxtaposed with footage shot in and around Alaverdi by Zemp himself. Similarly, a scene in which the female singers of the group Nelqarisi recall a *nana* composed by Salome Aghniashvili and traditionally sung at the church gate is startlingly juxtaposed to a 1963 recording made by Mindia Jordania featuring Salome herself delivering what ethnomusicologist Nino Tsitsishvili describes (via a textual overlay) as "an emotionally charged prophetic incantation." These and other scenes offer a salutary reminder of how recently some of these rituals were still performed and how quickly the old traditions can be lost, especially when they are dependent on an individual culture-bearer. Zemp includes an extract from his 1998 film *The Feast-Day of Tamar and Lashari*, shot in 1991, which shows elderly Pshav women singing *iavnana* songs at a shrine in Zemo Artani. Footage of the same festivities in 2004 shows a much-reduced group of singers making their way to the shrine but is testimony to the way in which the texts of these seemingly ancient songs are updated with topical detail. Here, lead singer Lamara Khakhatashvili intones: "Look down, blessed one, upon our tormented Georgia. ...Keep away the threat of war. May Georgia be reunited by the coming to power of Mikheil Saakashvili. Glory to his coming." Lamara passed away in 2011, we are told, without a successor to keep her role alive.

Polyphonic Lullabies of Kakheti makes a natural partner for *Table Songs of Kakheti* (2016)—a connection that is underlined by the inclusion of a scene featuring a *supra* (feast) held to celebrate the première of the earlier film and featuring some of the same singers: Leila Legashvili and her women's ensemble Megobrebi and revered songmaster Andro Simashvili (affectionately known as Andro Papa). In this new film, Leila sings a lesser-known *nana* taught to her by Andro—one that also featured in the 1983 Japanese collection referred to above, sung on that occasion by Andro's male ensemble. The presence, at several points in the film, of tables laden with food and drink reflects the ubiquity of collective singing in the context of the legendary Georgian feast. These scenes also show that traditional singing continues to have a place in community and family life and not only in the concert hall and recording studio.

A four-minute preview of the film is available on der.org.

CAROLINE BITHELL
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Music in the Life of a Balbalasang Village, Northern Philippines. 2015. Production supervised by Terada Yoshitaka and Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes. 26 minutes. Colour. DVD. Distributed by National Museum of Ethnology, Japan.

Sounds of Bliss, Echoes of Victory: A Kalinga Wedding in the Northern Philippines. 2014. Production supervised by Terada Yoshitaka and Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes. 26 minutes. Colour. DVD. Distributed by National Museum of Ethnology, Japan.

Kulintang Gong Music from Mindanao in the Southern Philippines. 2012. Production supervised by Terada Yoshitaka and Usopay Hamdag Cadar. 23 minutes. Colour. DVD. Distributed by National Museum of Ethnology, Japan.

Maranao Culture at Home and in Diaspora. 2012. Production supervised by Terada Yoshitaka and Usopay Hamdag Cadar. 33 minutes. Colour. DVD. Distributed by National Museum of Ethnology, Japan.

Produced and distributed by the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan, these four films of around thirty minutes each can be grouped into two sets. *Music in the Life of a Balbalasang Village, Northern Philippines* and *Sounds of Bliss, Echoes of Victory: A Kalinga Wedding in Northern Philippines* feature the musical culture of the *Kalinga*, a diverse and large ethnolinguistic group from the Cordillera Central mountain range in northern Philippines. The second set, *Kulintang Gong Music from Mindanao in the Southern Philippines* and *Maranao Culture at Home and in Diaspora* highlights Muslim Mindanao's music, particularly the *kulintang* gong music ensemble.

By documenting the everyday, "commonplace" sound and music of the *Banao*, one of at least twenty ethnolinguistic groups comprising the *Kalinga* cultural community, *Music in the Life of a Balbalasang Village, Northern Philippines* provides an overview of the life and music of a relatively remote community in Kalinga province. Characterised by the beautiful, terraced agricultural lands the region is known for, the film sets a clear picture of the Banaoan rural life. It shows viewers a plethora of domestic and musical artifacts as residents carry out their daily tasks while the film lingers in fascination on the "traditional" and the "old" (as opposed to the modern, technology-driven life prevalent in urban centres). The second half of the film leads to a demonstration of *gangsá* flat gongs played in the church sitting alongside the use of non-ritualistic musical instruments played in the village. A noteworthy contribution of this film is an informative presentation of instrument makers and players in Balbalasang. These are among the very few individuals who practise and carry the torch of a dwindling musical tradition. As such, they are precious living sources, particularly at a time when there is neither enough documentation available nor easily accessible sound and audiovisual archives for both academic and public use.

Sounds of Bliss, Echoes of Victory: A Kalinga Wedding in Northern Philippines further elaborates on the significance of *gangsá* playing in Kalinga music. The film also

emphasises the ever-increasing economic migration trend across the country (particularly among young Filipinos). Featuring the wedding between a Filipina nurse working in the United States and a seafarer, the film demonstrates the desire of those overseas to go back the country to learn and experience their own traditional practices again (in this case, a combination of Kalinga and Catholic wedding ceremonies). Although mostly associated to ritual, the *gangsá* ensemble features widely even in modern weddings in the region. A recording of such performance featuring the *torayan* or the hawk-like dance that accompanies the gongs is a significant point of reference in understanding local variations and how tradition changes over time and, notably, how it is accommodated into the lives and modern sensibility of the younger generation.

Kulintang Gong Music from Mindanao in the Southern Philippines and *Maranao Culture at Home and in Diaspora* present a succinct survey of Maranao music and culture. The films offer a laudably comprehensive description of Maranao culture and document both traditional and modern performances of the *kulintang*, a set of eight stratified bossed gongs laid out in a row accompanied by a pair of large *agongs* and a smaller *babandir*. A goblet-shaped drum called *dabakan* completes the *kulintang* ensemble. Maranao music and culture is specifically covered in three cities in Lanao del Sur (Taraka, Tugaya, and Marawi, the capital city of the province). Additionally, the film follows *kulintang* music as it travels with the Muslim communities settling outside the region, specifically in Baguio City located in the northern Luzon highlands.

The insightful commentaries clearly indicate an authoritative and a keen local knowledge of the areas covered. For many years now, many parts of Mindanao are virtually inaccessible by non-local researchers due to the continuing armed conflict between radical Islamist groups and the military. In fact, at certain junctures, the film unwittingly includes a heavily armed man in military uniform who perhaps serves as a bodyguard for the documentary team. Security in this part of the country is indeed a major consideration in performing any kind of research.

As the film points out, musical knowledge of the area is naturally curtailed as villages have been radically reduced or abandoned and have literally turned into ghost towns. Thus, the importance of documenting these traditional musical practices cannot be stressed enough. This is particularly relevant in Marawi City, which recently suffered a catastrophic destruction of lives and properties due to a serious five-month insurgency by one of the long-established Muslim extremists in Mindanao—the Maute Group—which allegedly pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in 2015. It should be noted that the films were recorded before the utter destruction of Marawi and this point in itself makes them valuable above and beyond their status as a record of musical practices.

In conclusion, this set of four short films is well written and the editing singles out crisp images of Filipino musical life. The result is more appealing and vivid than is the case in the more detached, sterile video ethnographies of yesteryear. The selection of footage follows a clear narrative underpinned by everyday life and exhibits a harmonious balance of visual and aural components. Well-presented films such as these extend life to age-old traditions on the brink of disappearance. Because of their diverse musical cultures,

Cordillera and Mindanao are among the most important areas calling for just such a treatment. For this reason, these films make excellent supplementary teaching aids. As stand-alone materials for the lay audience, on the other and, they are somewhat less suitable in that the authors opted for taking background information for granted. Their archival value, finally, could have been more substantial if subjects were given the opportunity to narrate their own stories and expand on to the dialectics that underpin their role as torch-bearers of old traditions in a fast-changing environment.

FREDELIZA CAMPOS

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Griot. 2012. Directed by Volker Goetze, video, colour, 82 minutes. Distributed by Volker Goetze on www.volkergoetze.com

The Voice of the Kora. 2010. Directed by Claudine Pommier, video, colour, 45 minutes. Distributed by Claudine Pommier, steinpom@shaw.ca

In 1967, the African-American writer Alex Haley arrived in Juffure, a village in Gambia where he met a *griot* who tells him about his family tree going back to the ancestor Kunta Kinte. The story of his family, reported in narrative form in his book *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (1976) was then transposed for the small screen in two television series: *Roots* (1977) and *Roots: The New Generations* (1979). In one of the final scenes of the latter, the protagonist Alex Haley (played by actor James Earl Jones) goes to a Gambian village where he interviews an elderly Mandinka *griot* to learn the genealogical tree going back to his ancestor Kunta Kinte. Playing the *jali* (Mandinka name for “griot”) is Alhaji Bai Konte, a renowned *griot* and *kora* virtuoso. Konte had the merit of being the first to introduce the *kora* and the *griot* repertoire to the American public in the 1970s by participating in festivals—such as the Newport Jazz Festival in 1973—alongside his son Dembo. Konte also paved the way for Gambian *kora* master Foday Musa Suso, who moved to the United States in the late 1970s and founded The Mandingo Griot Society. Since then, the figure of “griot” has become very popular in the West in the wake of the World Music “vogue” of the 1980s and 1990s. In 1987, the Guinean *griot* Mory Kante released the song *Yéké Yéké*, which was one of Africa’s best-ever selling hits as well as being a European number-one in 1988, making it the first ever African single to sell over one million copies.

But who is the *griot*? The term is often translated simply as “storyteller”; in fact, he is a keeper of West Africa’s oral history. Scholars like Sory Camara (1976), Thomas A. Hale (1998), and Eric Charry (2000) have investigated in-depth the subject but, ethnomusicological literature apart, the *audiovisual* representations of *griot* in documentary films are still quite scarce. The documentary *Griot*, directed by the German jazz-trumpeter-cum-

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filmmaker Volker Goetze, is a lyrical but languid attempt to depict the figure of the West-African storyteller of the former Mande Empire and his role in both traditional and contemporary society. Central to Goetze's documentary is the portrait of the Senegalese *griot* and *kora* player Ablaye Cissoko. Kimintang Mahamadou Cissoko (alias Ablaye Cissoko), is a *kora* virtuoso from a family of *griots* but formed at the Conservatoire de Musique in Dakar. He is a "traditional" *griot* in that he belongs to one of the four *griots'* families who preserve unchanged the *kora* playing technique and style. At the same time, what makes him a "modern" *griot* is the abandonment of the traditional *griot's* repertoire—epic songs and praise songs—in favour of original compositions inspired by his life experience. In the documentary, the intimist harp-like serenity of Cissoko's *kora*-plucking is masterfully blended with the muted-trumpet tone of the filmmaker.

The film opens with Ablaye singing a song, accompanied by the *kora*. His performances are intercut with images of the astonishing landscape of Sahel. The latter prefigure a naturalistic documentary. The graphic animations by Joshue Ott, which the director relies on to a fault across the whole film, offer a sort of dreamlike or even hypnotic counterpart. In the following scene we see some children dancing to the rhythm of a *sabar* ensemble. Their drums, played with a stick and a hand, are characteristic of Wolof musical culture (the largest ethnic group in Senegal) rather than the Mandingo tradition (the ethno-linguistic group Ablaye belongs to). In the interview, we are informed by one of the *sabar* players, the *griot* (*gewel* in Wolof) Abdou Khadre Diop—his name does not appear in the caption—that there are two kinds of *griots*, those who play and sing (*jeli*), and those who tell stories but do not play any musical instrument (*fina*). He also claims that "we did not learn the music. It is in our blood." *Griots* often reiterate the concept that they are born musicians and claim that they owe their musical abilities to genetics. In so doing, they risk reinforcing the Western equivocal stereotype of the African musician having "music in the blood." A *griot* is a hereditary musician, belonging to a caste, i.e., an endogamic social structure characterised by an occupational specialisation inherited via the paternal line. Accordingly, *griots* are recognisable by their family name: Kouyaté, Diabaté, Kanouté, and Cissoko (or Sissoko).

Interviewed by the filmmaker, Ablaye argues that *griot* is an invaluable resource for the preservation of a vital cultural heritage and explains his social role: he takes part in the ceremonies of the cycle of life (baptisms, circumcisions, weddings, and funerals). On these occasions he recounts the ancient family stories which establish and reaffirm the family's location in society. The *griot* also acts as a social mediator, since his status is committed to the life of his community and its social conflicts (as, for example, when there are disputes between two families). In the precolonial era, the *griot* also had the role of messenger and spokesman of the king (*mansa*). Historian Mamadou Diouf points out the relevant role of *griot* as depositary of the collective memory in a society underpinned by oral traditions as well as the important role he plays as a "matchmaker" between two families for the purpose of marriage: "Each family is attached to a family of a *griot*. So, when two young people are ready to marry, the parents will go and check, who wants to marry their daughter, or who their son wants to marry. That marriage is not a result of two people loving each other is the

result of an alliance contracted by two families. And, again the *griot* will be there to tell, to say who is who and why this marriage is an important marriage.”

At the end of the documentary, the film director and jazz trumpeter Volker Goetze tells us about his first meeting with Ablaye in his hometown Saint Louis in 2001, during the Saint Louis Jazz Festival (the most important of its kind in West Africa). This musical encounter was the starting point of a deep friendship and a long artistic collaboration that led to the release of two CDs (*Sira*, 2009; *Amanke Dionti*, 2012).

The film makes it clear that *griots* are among the most respected members of their community but at the same time lets us understand their low status in the Mandingo caste society. From the interview with Ablaye’s wife, who belongs to a noble family (Coulibaly), it emerges that intermarriage between a man and a woman belonging to different castes is not widely accepted yet. The late-coming drama about the country’s history of slavery and the troubles of its restless youths is tacked on somewhat awkwardly. Nevertheless, as reported in the Director’s Statement, “the film is neither a traditional Western documentary, as it does not settle for a conceptual understanding of our subject; nor is it simply a performance piece, as it does not settle for collecting powerful songs. This piece celebrates the art of the Griot.” In fact, although Diouf’s interview provides useful context information, the film does not go into sufficient depth to answer many of the ethnomusicological questions suggested by the material at hand. How and to what extent are *griots* being influenced by fast-changing sociocultural patterns and values? What is their position in relation to the “mediascape?” Are they agents in the process of hybridisation and the dialectic local-global new media entail? What is their stance vis-à-vis showbiz and the commercial promotion of World Music?

Griot exhibits high production values, is visually rich and artfully constructed. The interviewees’ voiceover lends coherence to the narration. The soundtrack, skilfully recorded, is particularly effective in that it binds together the narrative and emotional content of the film by returning frequently to Cissoko’s performances. Variety in camera angles, frame construction, and the use of frequent cuts from one scene to another, has produced a technically clean and visually appealing video capturing *images of* rather than merely documenting *griot* and his music culture. In spite of the aforementioned distracting graphics animations, picturesque cutaways, absence of subtitles indicating the names of the musicians and titles of the songs, and last but not least some naïve vignettes, the strength of Goetze’s *Griot* lies in the musical performances we witness and in the canny way in which these performances have been edited. All these aspects make the film suitable for a general viewer as well as the music specialist.

Ablaye Cissoko also features in Claudine Pommier’s *The Voice of the Kora*, a 45-minute documentary that retraces the history and evolution of the *kora*, a 21-string lute-bridge-*harp* or *harp-lute* with a calabash resonator and a long hardwood neck. The film follows the instrument’s transformations as well as its appropriation and reinterpretation by Western musicians, and its placement in the world music context. Traditionally, *kora* players (*korafola*) come from *griot* families, as explained by the undisputed master of the *kora*, Toumani Diabaté, member of the 71st generation of *kora* players in his family. However, since the latter half of the twentieth century, *kora* playing has extended beyond

this framework. Some *kora* players do not belong to a *griot* lineage, and they often perform in new contexts and for a broader range of audiences.

The camera brings us into the Keur Moussa Abbey, some 50 kilometers from Dakar (Senegal), where, in the 1960s, the founding monks were trained on *kora* by two *griots*. Over time the monks adapted both the style of playing and the instrument itself for liturgical use. Brother Dominique Catta—one of the nine monks who came from the Monastery of Solesmes (France) and founded the Monastery of Keur Moussa—explains how the traditional diatonic *kora* was modified by the Benedictine monks into a Western-style chromatic *kora*. To allow for easier tuning they replaced leather rings bound around the neck (called *konso*) with metal ones and adopted mechanism of the guitar by adding levers that allow for easy switching between major and minor keys.

French filmmaker Claudine Pommier privileges a synchronic and comparative approach so as to be able to observe and examine the transformations the *kora* has undergone. The viewers are catapulted from Senegal to France and then to the USA where we find some musicians using the Keur Moussa-style *kora* (Jacques Burtin in Brittany) or traditional *kora* (John Hughes in Vermont) to create their own compositions as well as *kora* makers and luthiers. The film also shows the *electric kora* made by Kaelig and the *gravikora*, a *kora*-like electric double bridge-harp invented by Bob Gravi, designed to employ a separated double tonal array structure that makes it possible to play polyrhythmic structures easily. Notably absent from *The Voice of the Kora* is a discussion of the acceptance or rejection of these (Western) innovations by the African *griot kora* players.

The film draws attention to the dissolution of not only the caste barriers between *griot* and non-*griot* in contemporary society but also the gender barriers between male and female competences in musical activity. This change is mainly due to Toumani Diabaté, who has allowed women to learn this instrument, once reserved only for *jelikelu* (*griot* men). I have particularly appreciated the filmmaker's decision to include an interview with Sona Jobarteh and a short excerpt of her performance with her father Sanjally Jobarteh. Given Sona Jobarteh's calibre, this section of the film could have been longer. She is a Gambian *griotte* (female *griot*), the cousin of Toumani Diabaté (Jobarteh in Gambia, as per the English spelling of Diabaté), both of them members of a renowned family of *kora* players (her grandfather was the great Gambian master Amadu "Bansang" Jobarteh). Sona broke the traditionally male domain of *korafolas* (*kora* players) to become the first *griotte* *kora* player. In fact, as she explains in the interview, in Manding traditional society, female members of *griot* families are not allowed to play any instrument. Their role is singing. She grew up in the UK and studied at the Royal College of Music and SOAS University of London. Her being a musician in-between two worlds is well expressed by her statement: "the real challenge is to have the ability to be innovative while still preserving the tradition."

Considering that the primary focus of the video is the *kora*, the film is somewhat deficient in historical background. Missing are references to the first written record of the instrument, reported with the name of *korro*, by the Scottish explorer Mungo Park in *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799) or the first visual representation of the *kora* in *Travels in Timannee, Kooranko and Soolima Countries, in Western Africa* (1825) by the Scottish explorer Alexander Gordon Laing or, again, the earliest recordings issued in the

1970s of the greatest *kora* masters: Sidiki Diabaté and Djelimadi Sissoko (*Cordes anciennes / Ancient Strings*) (D'Amico 2014). Another issue not addressed in the documentary is the origins of the *kora*, be it the “myth” recounted by Ablaye Cissoko in Goetze’s *Griot*, where he claims it was invented nine hundred years ago by his ancestor, Kimintang Cissoko, or “organological” origin, as a derivation or a further evolution of the harps of the hunters’ societies of southern Mali and northern Guinea (the *simbingo* and the *donso ngoni*; D’Amico 2014). For the general viewer this may not be an issue worth raising but for ethnomusicologists and others who study African music, and in particular the figure of the *griot* and his main instrument, the *kora*, this data is valuable.

The film is well-made from a technical standpoint but suffers from an uneven and “jumpy” narrative. In spite of moving back and forth between France, Mali, Senegal, USA, and Gambia, the musically sensitive camera work, sustained close-ups of the musicians during the performances, and first-rate audio recording provide a clear documentation both of construction technique and performance practice (the lone exception is the sound recording in the scene with Sona Jobarteh). Close-up shots clarify the method of playing the *kora* (two thumbs and two index fingers). English translation in easily-read subtitles, moreover, allows for an effective comprehension of song lyrics and interviews in place of scripted narration. The documentary is made up mainly of interviews: speakers address the camera directly or speak over appropriate illustrative imagery. While this cinematic method works well in providing information and insight about the *kora* and its development, it may detract from the aesthetic pleasure of the performances. The film footage is competently linked together, interspersing interviews about the instrument’s making and short music excerpts. Well suited to classroom use— though it should be supplemented with other materials to better contextualise the history behind the *kora*—appropriate for both scholarly and general audiences, *The Voice of the Kora* should be informative and compelling for anyone interested in the *kora*, the *griot* and African music in general.

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Ballad on the Shore (岸上漁歌). 2017. Directed by Ma Chi-hang. Produced by May-Fung and Eno Yim. In Cantonese and Tanka with Chinese and English subtitles. 98 minutes. Colour, DVD forthcoming. Distributed by ACO (hello@aco.hk).

A heartfelt ethnography of remembering, Hong Kong-based filmmaker Ma Chi-hang's reflexive documentary *Ballad on the Shore* (2017) exemplifies what Benjamin J. Harbert calls "ciné-ethnomusicology": film work that inflects ethnomusicology by "relating music to cinematic experiences" in an epistemological circuit of documentation and film exhibition (Harbert 2018:245). The film rediscovers Hong Kong's forgotten past as a fishing village by listening critically to the disappearing sounds of the Tanka boat-dwellers, a discriminated ethnic minority group living on boats in south China long before the establishment of Hong Kong as a British colony in 1842. Quintessentially an expression of local culture, these sounds have become foreign and, worse, forgotten even to the younger generation within the indigenous community. The film's title is telling: as the fishermen's ballads become disconnected from their original marine environment, like fish out of water, they end up languishing on the shore and facing extinction. The shore is figured not as a landing site, let alone the point of departure for a journey, but rather as the last station of a dying tradition. Lai Lin-sau, a senior villager on the island of Tap Mun (Grass Island), is one of the few Tanka people who can still sing the Tanka songs. The shot before the title appears shows him not only singing but also forgetting the lyrics due to old age. Forgetfulness is included precisely to fight against forgetting.

The film poses questions about the preservation and revival of disappearing music as mediated by visual ethnography. The orally transmitted Tanka ballads are endangered because the Tanka language, or the fishermen's dialect, is itself an endangered language in Cantonese- and English-dominant Hong Kong (it was listed in the domain of oral traditions and expressions in the first Intangible Cultural Heritage inventory of Hong Kong in 2014). Moreover, the very seafaring life that has been shaping the lyrics for generations has radically changed. Chan Wai-ye, after conversion to Christianity, has set the lament songs of the boat people to the words of Bible. She is a good improviser who appears to be infusing new life into the old genre. Can one say that the Tanka songs are still a living tradition even though they are no longer sung in traditional contexts?

As a foil to this, the film draws our attention to the value but also limitations of the work of ethnomusicologist Kenneth Chee-kwong Yip (see Yip 1989), who is especially concerned with the correctness of each song's text. We follow his footsteps in the Tai O fishing village soliciting songs from senior informants of his acquaintance. He double-checks with them to fix his transcription of the lyrics. The illiterate informants demonstrate specialist nautical knowledge circulated through the lyrics and point out where it's been misheard and mistranscribed. For example, opium is referred to as "foreign tobacco" in a ballad and the ethnomusicologist does not understand its Tanka pronunciation. As the scholar documents all the Tanka songs with his camera, and the film goes on documenting

Yip's documentation, the director muses in voiceover that for all his efforts Yip cannot preserve the boat people's disappearing marine life, which is key to understanding the meaning of the ballads.

To counter the impossibility of preservation and highlight a shared female experience of suffering, the interview with Chan Wai-ye from Grass Island is brought to life through cinematic reenactment. The account of her fear of/escape from arranged marriage and her dear mother's devotion to her welfare segues into a wedding lament sung by Ho Sai-mui from the Hong Kong district of Aberdeen. This is played against Michael Rogge's well-known historical documentary footage of Hong Kong and followed by the director's personal reflections. Creative aims rather than clarity drive the editing choices, making viewers unsure of whether they are seeing the interviewee or the songstress. The director fleshes out Tanka ballads as a living archive of the boat people's affective history and everyday life.

This documentary's most unique contribution to ciné-ethnomusicology lies in the episodes that shed light on the bond between musical revival and human connection. In one of these, as Ho Sai-mui and her husband perform at a local primary school, the camera pans across the faces of young listeners. One boy blocks his ears refusing to listen while some girls sing along. This "lecture-recital" moderated by none other than the director shows that exhibition and performance are as important as documentation to create new audiences, albeit inattentive or even resistant ones, to music repertoires on the verge of disappearance. Cinematic experiences comfort and console the elderly informants, too. After Lai Lin-sau's wife passes away about two-thirds into the film, the director shows him the footage of their conjugal bliss accompanied by a song sung by him. As the footage cuts to his wife's close-up, Lai chokes in silence and then sings along with himself on the screen-within-the-screen. Lai passes away at a nursing home afterwards. Senior women from his family improvise funeral laments for him, attesting to the livingness of the disappearing music. The film ends in a reflexive yet hopeful vein as the footage played to Lai earlier is exhibited at a community screening in Aberdeen. The loop between documentation and film exhibition keeps endangered music alive and connects people from different places and stations in life.

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The Owners of the Land: Culture and the Spectre of Mining in The Andes. 2013. By Juan Javier Rivera Andía and Peter Snowdon. 37 minutes, DVD. Het-Vervolg, Coalface, NIAS, University of Bonn, Genk.

This DVD is an anthology of four videos selected from an installation exhibited in Belgium in 2013 and authored by anthropologist Juan Javier Rivera Andía and filmmaker Peter Snowdon. The DVD itself is presented as the record of a video installation but it does not provide enough details of the art event in either visual or print form, which makes it difficult to imagine how the installation was presented to the public. The material was extracted from Rivera Andía's anthropological archive comprising more than a hundred hours of recordings with the purpose of illustrating the ethnographic research he conducted in the northern Peruvian region of Lambayeque. It is a thoroughgoing attempt to make creative use of audiovisual material shot, albeit not as a documentary film, by Peter Snowdon.

The accompanying DVD booklet starts by positioning Rivera Andía as a Peruvian subject whose encounter with the unknown region is described in detail by highlighting his training in Europe and the USA and his unfamiliarity with the Quechua-speaking region of Lambayeque. Rivera Andía's study fills a gap in existing scholarship about this understudied northern region and illustrates how anthropologists primarily interested in the study of culture stumble upon political conflicts. The conflict in question is the result of a mine project initiated by a multinational corporation in Lambayeque with the blessing of the Peruvian central and local governments. Partly as a result of this, the ethnographic methods employed during the process of gathering data pose serious questions. While the authors draw attention to these difficulties in the booklet, it is worth rehearsing them here. In particular, the modus operandi of the research team raise doubts about the impact of ethnographic research on the society studied and the validity of the study of subtopics that appear as no more incidental illustrations for the viewers. For instance, although the main field of research of this compilation is ostensibly not Musicology or Ethnomusicology, the third segment—"Of Guitars and Men"—can be useful for the study of emic terminology on musical conventions for the courtship music played with the Andean *charanga*. The gender attributes of this instrument (primarily masculine) indeed presume a patriarchal courtship social dynamic for the Quechua male population of Lambayeque. Yet the recording only shows interactions between the (male) researchers and the subjects. This limits the usefulness of the visual material for future research. Likewise, the editing of the clips and their selection reduces the spectrum of data that would allow deeper engagement with the material (although it undoubtedly opens up the subject for further research). It is as if unsure of whether to produce an art film or a more detached piece of film ethnography the authors struck a middle ground that meets the requirements of neither genre.

The second segment ("We Are Going to Record") illustrates the ambiguities of the ethnographic methodology applied by the authors. Here, the focus is not the collection of fieldwork data but the preparations for a recording. In these poignant clips one notices

the spirit of the old-style ethnographer deciding what should be preserved of a vulnerable group of people who suffer drastic transformations during socio-political struggles. The work of Rivera evokes the iconic picture of Frances Densmore (1867–1957) with a gramophone and a Sioux Chief. The picture was taken as part of the preservation efforts by the Bureau of American Ethnology. Her research was pioneering in its use of sound recording, the use of which she justified in terms of preserving Native American groups and traditions on the verge of extinction (Myers 1992:3–18). Rivera Andía's informant, an unnamed old Quechua lady, explains that she never sang without instrumental accompaniment. At the same time, she passively accepts the strict directions of the research team in front of recording equipment. These at times perplexing fragments contrast with the segment "The Blood in The Veins," in which Snowdon mixes images of the active opposition of the Quechua community against a big Canadian copper mining corporation. In a vein reminiscent of nineteenth-century ethnography, Rivera Andía is using his work as a means to express his concern about the social situation of his informants and the urgent need to document their customs. The quality of the video and once again the editing of the material, however, make one uncertain as to whether it can effectively function as a basis for further study. Once again, the goal seems as much to preserve as to seize upon the artistic potential intrinsic in the video documentation.

A last aspect that is worth reflecting upon is the authors' attention for and approach to gender during both the ethnography and the post-production stages. "On Guitars and Men" deals explicitly with male informants and researchers and adopts an explicitly male perspective. In fact, the male gaze is dominant throughout the four-part installation. Male informants are shown as community leaders (first and fourth segments), proficient translators and organisers of recording sessions (second segment), and playful musicians discussing sexuality and women with empathetic male interviewers (third segment). In contrast, as the male player of the *charanga* explicitly points out while performing the courtship song, the women are missing. This absence contrasts with the abundance of pictures of women in the DVD booklet, which can be interpreted in line with what Ching, Buckley, and Lozano-Alonso refer to as "depicting Latin America as female" (Ching 2007:4). Furthermore, some of the women in the film speak only Quechua. Yet the DVD contains no Quechua subtitles. Featuring English and Dutch subtitles only suggests that the film is intended for English and Dutch speakers in industrialised countries rather than the communities where the film was shot.

Despite its unresolved ambiguities, this interdisciplinary collaboration is very suggestive and remains the only ethnographic study to have engaged head-on with the complexities of its subject. Likewise, the installation is symptomatic of the growing commitment of academia to contemporary environmental movements led by Native American groups.

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