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Babatu, the three
warnings

After the Odyssey (JAGUAR), after Hesiod and Herodotus
(THE LION CHASE WITH BOW AND ARROW, LITTLE BY LITTLE),
Jean Rouch has filmed the Iliad -- quite spontaneously.
His impact lies in this very spontaneity but his work
also reminds us that before Socrates came to evangelise
the Greeks, they were Negroes just like the others.

Jacques Rivette

I. R. S. H. NIAMEY

presents

BABATU, THE THREE WARNINGS

BABATU, LES TROIS CONSEILS

a film by JEAN ROUCH

from an original screenplay by BOUBOU HAMA

Executive Producer	INOUSSA USSEINI
Camera	JEAN ROUCH et MOUSTAPHA ALASSANE
Assistant cameraman	DJINGAREYE MEIGA
Sound	MOUSSA HAMIDOU
Sets, costumes, administration	IDRISSA MEIGA
Editing	CHRISTINE LEFORT
Assistant editors	MARIAMA HIMA, MONA FILLIERES

with

DAMOURE ZIKA	LAM IBRAHIMA DIA
TALLOU MOUZOURANE	DAOUDA DIARRA
DYAMA DJINGAREYE	MARYAMA LOMPO
BABA NORE	ILLO GAODEL
DYELIBA BADYE	ABDOU NANI
MOUSSA ILLO	ZOMO DAMOURE
ALBORA MEIGA	ADOUROU
EL HADJI NOMA	SEYDOU DYEDE

The horses, ~~horsesmen~~, villagers of Firgoun, Koné beri, Kirkissoy, Kobadye, Garbey kourou, Dosso.

AND

DUMAROU GANDA MOUSTAPHA ALASSANE DIOULDE LAYA

music by DYELIBA BADYE et DAOUDA KANTE

This film has been produced with the technical assistance of :

- Section audiovisuelle de l'I.R.S.H. NIAMEY
- Comité du Film Ethnographique (Musée de l'homme)
- S.E.R.D.A.V. - . PARIS CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE
- S.C.C. PARIS
- Elizabeth and Vincent

Laboratory VITFER - Color - Sound processes Kudelski, Michel Picot

92 minutes.

BABATU THE THREE WARNINGS

Synopsis

One hundred years ago that weren't to day.

Damouré and Lam, two friends who live on the island of Firgoun, on the Niger, are hunter and shepherd. Damouré wants to train the young men to be warriors by teaching them to hunt on horseback. A pacifist by nature, Lam thinks only of his bulls until the day his wife insults him because he has not left for war. His son, Moussa, seven, also pressures his father : "My friends make fun of me !". Lam decides to go South towards Gurunsi, to Babatu. Covered with magic charms, armed with lances, arrows, and sabers, and accompanied by their two servants, Tallou and Tête, Lam and Damouré leave Niger. At the border, they are followed joined by the border guard, a hunter who has never seen war either.

Arriving at Babatu's camp, they volunteer for the next expedition led by the warrior Gazari. A village is conquered, Tallou is wounded, the chief of the village is killed, Gazari is struck by an arrow in the eye and dies. Damouré, who has fought against the chief's daughter, has the village burned and leads away his captives. At Babatu's camp, the joy of victory and the sorrow of Gazari's death. The more courageous captives are enlisted in Babatu's army, the others are sent away or sold. Dyama, the chief's daughter, becomes Damouré's concubine. And, after Gazari's ritual funeral, Damouré becomes the War Chief.

After three years, Lam, in turn, is drawn into this cruel game and takes a captive woman, Maryama for himself. Dyama bears a son to Damouré. Maryama is ready to do the same, when an old ~~south~~sayer, at the return of the campaign of the seventh year, asks for a captive in return for three warnings. Mocked.

by the other warriors, Lam, nevertheless, gives Maryama to the soothsayer. In exchange, he gets these words of wisdom :

- Never go further than a village at sunset.
- Never cross a rising river.
- If you are angry at night, wait until morning to take action.

At the very moment Maryama tries to kill herself for Lam, it is learned that the old soothsayer has liberated her. Maryama is free, but Lam has lost her forever. Lam decides to return to his country without anything.

On the road, he meets Moustapha, the merchant, with his caravan of donkeys and captives. Moustapha who does not want to stop in a village at sunset is devoured by a lion during the night. Lam inherits his valuables and his captives. Damouré meets up with Lam along with his warriors and captives. But, crossing a river rising, he drowns in spite of the warnings of Lam. Lam has lost his friend, but he inherits all his possessions and gives Dyama to Tallou. When Lam takes leave of the hunter at the border, he decides not to tell the truth about Damouré's death : "we are all liars and cowards". - "Yes, that's our secret." One evening, the caravan arrives at the Island Firgoun. Troubled by the calm of the village, Lam and Tallou camp on the riverbank and go in the night to get news. They find a man sleeping next to Lam's wife. Lam is ready to kill him when he remembers the third warning. He returns to camp and waits until morning for action.

The next day, it is a triumphant return to the village in spite of the tears of Damouré's widow. Lam goes to his house where his wife greets him as if nothing were amiss. But a man comes out of the hut. Lam is ready to kill him, when his wife says : "You don't recognize your son. You 've been gone for eight years." Lam says "God be praised, that's the third warning". Then he leads his son to the village square to recount the death of Damouré to the local dignitaries. Already, Lam encourages his son to follow his example.

Then suddenly Lam remembers his former tranquility, he thinks about his nature that has become mean, of all his riches he doesn't know what to do with, of his son to whom he was unable to tell the truth, of Damouré, his best friend, who is dead.

FOR A CINE-HISTORY

...the oral, the written, and the filmed...

The written language followed the oral, but the cinematographic language has not yet taken its place. Spoken words are forgotten, what is written remains, films burn themselves up or do they simply burn ?

African history still has the good fortune to survive both in the oral tradition and in the domain of transcribed and printed chronicles. But it is already moving towards the ballad of the animated sound image.

Already Barbey d'Aurevilly evokes this lost historical tradition, but still held by village women in Cotentin :

"...poetesses with small feet, who love stories, uncovered secrets, false exaggerations, eternal source of all poetry; these are the matrons of human invention who knead, in their own fashion the realities of history...As far as I am concerned, the real history is born not from records and archives, but from oral History, the stories, the living tradition. Received by the eyes and ears of a generation, kept warm by the breast that carries it and the books which tell it for the heart and in the memory of the following generation..."

Jules Barbey D'Aurevilly -"The Bewitched".

This is how Babatu came to be, from the "THREE WARNINGS" of the old Nigerian oral tradition, recorded by Boubou Hama, which we have tried to tell on the screen : the story, the dialogues and the acting were created spontaneously in time and space, in the course of a story which follows only the whims of the journey on horseback probably imaginary but that through repetition, have become History.

JEAN ROUCH

HISTORIC NOTES ON BABATU AND THE WARS OF GURUNSI

In the middle of the last century, a group of Nigerian horsemen, originally from the region of Dunga, put themselves at the service of the Dagombas in the North of what is now Ghana, in the fight against the Ashanti Kingdom of Kumassi.

Dagomba finally won the war, and these horsemen stayed on in this country, taking captives for themselves. Led by legendary chiefs, Alpha Bana, Gazari and Babatu, they soon became the masters of the Gurunsi country, at the border of the Upper Volta, of the Ivory Coast and of Ghana.

The braver prisoners were made part of their army, women prisoners were married, and the young people were sent to the banks of the Niger to help in the fields and to do domestic work. The rest of the prisoners were sent to Salaga, on the Volta river, which was still an important slave market.

So, for fifty years, the adventurous young men of the Niger left home to "join Babatu" and the excitement of his cavalry.

The colonial conquest brought this warrior tradition abruptly to an end: Babatu was defeated for the first time by the French near Sati; he headed South with his partisans and was defeated a second time near Gambaga; the survivors followed him towards the East, where he was defeated for a third time by the Germans near Yendi. He was ordered to live there until his death.

The survivors of the Babatu epic went down to the Ashanti country and the coast, where they led the massive seasonal migrations of Nigerian workers.

At Kumassi in 1951, one of these old warriors told us for the first time about the epic of Babatu. Damouré, Lam, and myself followed Babatu's traces all the way to Yendi, where one of his sons proudly showed us the magic ben-net of his father.

THE NIGERIAN CINEMA

The Nigerian Cinema, one of the very first in Africa, certainly owes its birth to Rouch's films.

From 1947, Jean Rouch started to interest the Nigerian audience by presenting them with filmed images of themselves. Little by little, local actors became used to the camera and the audience could see their own faces in the films; in Niamey, people already talked about a Nigerian cinema that would soon be heard from.

In 1957, Nigerians who had immigrated to Abidjan asked Jean Rouch to make a film on the conditions of their life: the shooting started for *MOI UN NOIR* (I AM BLACK). Later on, the actors of this film went to work behind the camera. Among these were Oumarou Ganda, the author of *CABASCABO*, and Baba Noré, the actor in *BABATU, THE 3 WARNINGS*.

In 1960, Jean Rouch, at that time Head of the National Center for Scientific Research of Niamey, founded a Department of Ethnographic Cinema in the structure of this institution. There, from 1962, Moustapha Alassane, in the manner of Georges Méliès, rediscovered film by drawing directly on celluloid. That same year, he shot a short film of ethnographic fiction, *ADURE*. With that, the Nigerian cinema was born -- Niger had its own filmmaker.

Since there were no adequate cinematographic structures, the Institute of Research on Human Sciences - ex- C.N.R.S. - very naturally became the Nigerian center of film teaching and film production.

In 1972 the Association of Nigerian Filmmakers was founded. Under the impulse of its filmmakers, the Niger Republic decided to financially support Nigerian cinema. First venture: *BABATU, LES 3 CONSEILS*, from an original screenplay by Boubou Hama. The film has been directed by all the Nigerian technicians and actors supervised by Jean Rouch.

We made it! The Nigerian Cinema is born. Moustapha Alassane will be followed by Oumarou Ganda, Djingareye Meiga and Moussa Hamidou, and they will all participate - along with Diouldé Laya, Director of the Research Institute - in the adventure of *BABATU, LES 3 CONSEILS*, the first Nigerian Cine-History. Authors, actors and technicians have given up half of their salaries to contribute to the promotion of Nigerian cinema.

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