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FILMS ABOUT ANTHROPOLOGY

LES MAITRES FOUS

16mm & video, color, 35 minutes, English narration

Rental \$75.00, Purchase 16mm - \$600.00, video \$200.00

LES MAITRES FOUS documents the ceremony of a West African religious movement, the Hauku, which was widespread in Niger and Ghana from the 1920s to the 1950s. In 1954, Rouch was asked by a small group in Ghana to film their annual ceremony which took place in a farm near the city of Accra. During this ritual, the participants would enter into a trance and become possessed by a variety of spirits associated with the Western Colonial Powers.

Although the roots of the Hauku lie in traditional possession cults common in the area, Hauku would seem to be a reaction to the dominance of the native peoples by the colonial powers. During the ceremony the oppressed become the possessed and the powerful. In the 1920s, the Hauku cult was quickly suppressed by the French authorities in Niger, but it continued to spread and in 1935 the British Government attempted to outlaw the ceremony in Ghana. Eventually an agreement was made to limit the ceremony to certain locations and to Saturdays and Sundays. This was still the case in 1954, at the end of the Hauku movement, when LES MAITRES FOU was filmed. After the independence of Ghana in 1957 and Niger three years later, the Hauku began to subside and become incorporated into the traditional religious practices. Today, LES MAITRES FOUS is shown in the villages of Ghana and the Niger Cultural Center.

Three films by Jean Rouch

Jean Rouch began his film career in 1946 when he was the first to make the descent of the Niger River in Africa by dugout canoe with his film camera, developing his original style when his tripod accidentally fell in the water. Since then, Rouch has produced more than seventy ethnographic films in Ghana, Niger, Mali and Upper Volta. These films range from straightforward portrayals of extraordinary ritual events, such as LES MAITRES FOUS, to "collective improvisations" such as JAGUAR, or, COCORICO! MONSIEUR POULET, based on a Niger folk tale.



JAGUAR

16mm & video, color, 93 minutes, English narration

Rental \$150.00, Purchase 16mm - \$1400.

video - \$350.00

Part fiction, part documentary and part social commentary, JAGUAR is the story of three young men from the savannah of Niger who leave their homeland to seek wealth and adventure on the coast and in the cities of Ghana. Filmed in the 1950's, when no portable synchronized sound equipment was available, Rouch had the main characters of the film improvise a narrative while they viewed the footage which was itself improvised. The resulting soundtrack consists of remembered dialogue, joking and exclamations, and of questions and explanations about the action on screen.

The three young men, a herdsman, a fisherman and their friend travel for a month to the coast of Ghana and eventually part to take jobs in the cities of Accra and Kumasi. Successful but homesick, the friends rejoin in Kumasi and decide to leave the excitement and turmoil of the city and return to Niger before the rains. Once home in their rural village, the three resume their usual daily routines but now they have become "jaguars" with a knowledge of life in the modern city.

THE LION HUNTERS

(1965) 16mm & video, color, 68 minutes, English Narration, Rental - \$125.00, Sale 16mm \$1100, Video - \$300.00

Filmed in the savannahs of northern Niger and Mali over a seven year period in the 1950s and 60s, THE LION HUNTERS follows the Gao hunters on several hunts and explores the relationships between the Songhay tribes and the Fulani herdsman. Lion-hunting is reserved by tradition to the Gao, a group of Songhay-speaking professional hunters. When lions raid the cattle of the Fulani herdsman, the Fulani

request the Songhay chiefs to send Gao hunters to their aid. The Songhay, once the dominant people of a powerful kingdom destroyed in the 16th century, today are millet farmers and are considered to own the land on which the Fulani herdsman have grazing rights.

Although lions usually kill only sick or injured cattle, they will occasionally attack a healthy cow. The Gao are able to determine which lion is responsible as they know each lion's individual characteristics and habits. The Gao hunt with handmade bows and arrows and use a poison made from the seeds of a tree found 300 miles south of their homeland. Every four years the Gao travel to this tree to collect and prepare the poison. Once trapped and shot with poison arrows, the lion is commanded to die quickly, and to forgive the hunters.

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