

## DUNLOP REPLIES TO ROUCH

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I am puzzled by Jean Rouch's references to my films in "Man and the Camera" (SAVICOM 1:37-44, 1974). I know that Rouch does not much care for *Towards Baruya Manhood*. He has told me so in his frank, honest and constructive manner. However, in this article he makes a serious and unsubstantiated moral judgment, when he says, "the Eskimo films of Asen Balikci, and Ian Dunlop's recent series on the New Guinea Baruya are for me *examples of what should never happen again*—the intrusion of a group of first rate technicians into a difficult field situation, even with the aid of an anthropologist" (my italics).

Rouch is arguing for the one man anthropologist/filmmaker concept. I agree that for many field situations this is the ideal; but it is certainly not the only way to make ethnographic films as Rouch himself concedes. He states his approval of *Hadza*, *Emu Ritual at Ruguri*, and *The Feast*. What he does not explain is why in one case intrusion is acceptable and in another reprehensible.

We all know, as Rouch says, that filmmaking causes cultural disruption, but this applies to any anthropological study, not just film. The degree of that disruption depends not only upon the quantity, but also the quality of the intruders, and on the field situation. Why does Rouch stand in moral judgment on the intruders into Netsilik and Baruya life in particular?

The Netsilik Eskimo films are a recreation of a bygone way of life. Their makers did not intrude into an actual situation at all. It is inconceivable that such films could have been made without the willing, and, judging by the pictures, happy cooperation of the actors. Rouch gives no evidence at all to support his contention that morally these films should not have been made.

The Baruya films portray an actual situation. There was

an intrusion of three film technicians into a valley community of about eight hundred tough, proud, resilient Baruya. Anthropologist Maurice Godelier had been living with the Baruya for three years. In consultation with them he invited me to work with him. Godelier took responsibility for our introduction into Baruya life. Thereafter the Baruya judged us for themselves. Rouch implies that this intrusion was so gross that the awkwardness of the film crew's presence comes through. As evidence he cites only one sequence, where a lecture to initiates turns into an address to the anthropologist. During this the Baruya say that the films may be shown in Australia but not in New Guinea. Rouch claims this is an *a posteriori* rejection of the films by the Baruya. I think he has misinterpreted this scene. The Baruya are publicly accepting the presence of the anthropologist and the film crew among them, and the film documents this.

Furthermore, when we screened the series back to the ceremonial leaders of the Baruya there was no rejection. They wholeheartedly approved of the films. Their only regret was that we had not managed to film *all* the ceremonial activity (it was physically impossible to do this). They still maintained that the films could be screened in Australia, but not, at the present time, publicly in New Guinea because of their secret nature. They have given me an open invitation to return to their valley for further film work in collaboration with Maurice Godelier.

My confusion is compounded when Rouch goes on to say "This ambiguity [what ambiguity?] doesn't appear in Dunlop's earlier *Desert People* series, owing no doubt to the 'piece of trail' shared by the filmmakers and the aboriginal family they met." This sounds like wishful thinking. To descend upon a single, fragile, isolated, nomadic family with two landrovers and a ton of gear is going to cause a monumental cultural disruption however sensitively you may try to do it. I am still haunted by fears and doubts about whether I had any right to do what I did then or not. Walking into a large New Guinea village was less traumatic . . . for everyone.