

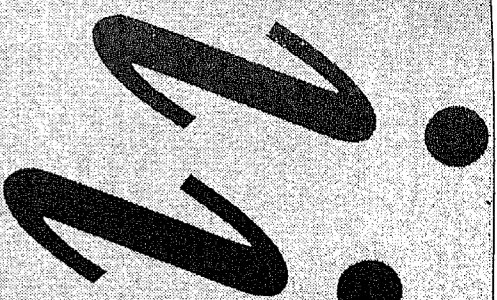
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CAAS Africa project

To re-examine the assumptions inherited by the field of African studies from its colonial and anti-colonial past, the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies (CAAS) has launched a teaching, research, and training project on "Transformations of Power and Culture in Africa."

The project, headed by CAAS director Sharon F. Patton, links scholars in the humanities and the social sciences and provides new opportunities to engage African and U.S. colleagues in collaborative work.

The Africa project is funded by the Ford Foundation, the Office of the Vice President for Research, the Vice Provost for Academic and Multicultural Affairs, the International Institute, and CAAS.

African culture has often been set against the supposedly universal characteristics of modernity, as the world's most striking representation of what used to be called "primitive" or more recently "traditional." Deep assumptions about African culture that derive from late 19th and early 20th century European interpretations and representations of Africans and Africa, have been reproduced by nationalists, patriarchs, and others within Africa, and by experts in such fields as population and development.

CAAS is concentrating its program activities for the Fall 1996 Term on an international workshop, outreach to teachers, a film series, and an array of courses listed in departments across the entire campus, all related to the project theme. Undergraduate offerings range from two first-year seminars on African politics and literature to advanced classes in music, politics, film, and education, along with courses that compare Africa with the African diaspora.

The film series presents a variety of films that critically examine the interplay of power and culture under colonialism and since independence. Ousmane Sembene's *Kola* (1974) and Jean-Marie Teno's *Afrique, Je Te Plannert* (1992), illustrate the continuing contests within Africa over European cultural and political hegemony. The series also presents a pair of films that explore new themes and narrative styles for an indigenous African cinema—Cheick Oumar Sissoko's *Finnzan* (1990) and Souleymane Cissé's *Yelen* (1991). *Yelen* adapts the oral traditions of the Mali's Bambara people to create what one critic calls an "African vision of science fiction," in which, "the future lies inevitably in the past." *Finnzan* calls for the emancipation of African women from the "traditions" of male supremacy and female circumcision.

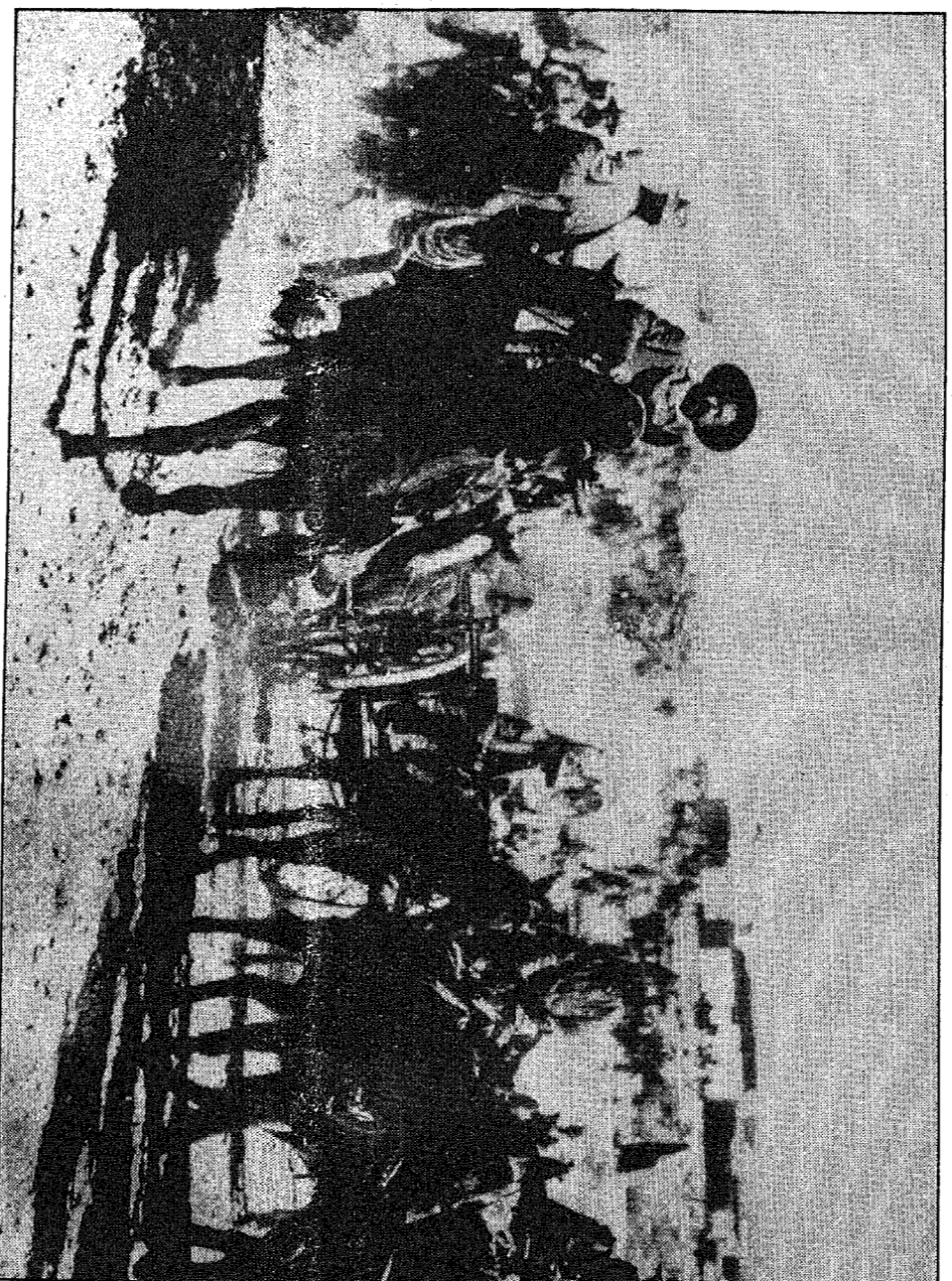
The culmination of the semester's activities is an international workshop on Transformations of Culture and Power in Africa, November 11 to 20, 1996. Workshop programs include panel discussions and an outreach training session on "World Cities," part of the International Institute's series of "Global Education Workshops for Teachers." In addition, CAAS will organize tours of related museum exhibits—"The Common Ground: African Art and Its Affinities" at the University Museum of Art, and "African Form and Imagery" at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

For further information about the Fall Term theme activities, please contact: CAAS, 200 West Hall, tel. 313.764.5513, <caasinformation@umich.edu>. ■

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*i*social movements Staging Revolution: ritual, myth, and memory in Mexico



Revolution as theater: Pancho Villa leads his troops in an attack on Ojinaga, in a battle delayed for the benefit of the Mutual Film Corporation of New York, a newsreel studio that had signed an exclusive \$25,000 contract with the rebel leader.

Theodore Kaczynski, the Unabomber suspect, was driven by the loneliness of his Montana cabin to seek friendship from a Mexican pen pal. In his letters, Kaczynski asked Chihuahua day laborer Juan Sánchez Arreola for his memories of Pancho Villa.

Villa's leadership during the Mexican revolution may not seem to fit with the Unabomber's hatred of industrialism and its fruits, at least if you are familiar with Villa's reliance on the machinery of modern warfare. Villa was a great lover of film and publicity, the great art forms of the industrial age. Photographs of the rebel general on horseback, leading his troops on massed cavalry attacks carefully staged after the actual battles, turned him into an icon of revolutionary romance and an appealing figure for an isolated would-be revolutionary.¹

Villa died four years before I was born, Sánchez Arreola remembers answering Kaczynski, come here and I will give you a history lesson. Kaczynski never took up the offer, but perhaps we should.

The first lesson is that, for Juan Sánchez Arreola and for millions of others who have sweated and worked in the fields of Mexico and of Texas, the Mexican Revolution is history. It is not the stuff of romanticized dreams, hopeful images of the people in arms, breaking their shackles. It is real places, things you can see: battlefields where someone died and street corners where people, real people, someone's grandfather, somebody's uncle, were cut down by a bullet or a machete; perhaps over land or politics, perhaps over a border or a "question of skirts." The Mexican Revolution is a generation of young people destroyed, and a generation of

by David Frye

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survivors, young men whose children are now grown old, given a chance for a minimal education and perhaps a life in politics. It is haciendas ransacked, churches burnt, the opulent monuments of a departed regime put to the torch; and it is land ceded, with strings attached, to Sánchez Arreola's neighbors by a new regime with Revolutionary in its title. It is memories of demands made and hopes raised, and it is promises fulfilled, promises broken, promises twisted with the passing of time.

It is history. It is the past. It is real, and it is over. Yet the Mexican Revolution lives on, in often misguided images, for many who never participated in it and whose lives were never touched by its aftermath.

The neo-Zapatista uprising in Chiapas has brought a mini-resurgence of "the enormous vogue of things Mexican"—that swept U.S. intellectual and artistic circles in the 1920s and 1930s—and it has brought a resurgent vogue of the glamour of revolution.²

Today as in the 1920s, revolution in Mexico is greeted in the U.S. as theater and as spectacle, as a real fulfillment in an unreal country of dreams that recede when we wake, as an epic battle against economic forces and world orders which, here, only someone as mad and misguided as a Unabomber would take up arms to fight. Readers in the U.S. can ignore the part of revolution that is all too real for those who have gone through it: not only the solidarity and

continued STAGING REVOLUTION page 12

Cleaning up Ok Tedi: settlement favors Yonggom people

THIS ARTICLE IS A FOLLOW-UP TO "ACTING GLOBALLY: ECO-POLITICS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA," STUART KIRSCH'S COVER STORY FOR THE SPRING/SUMMER 1996 ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL

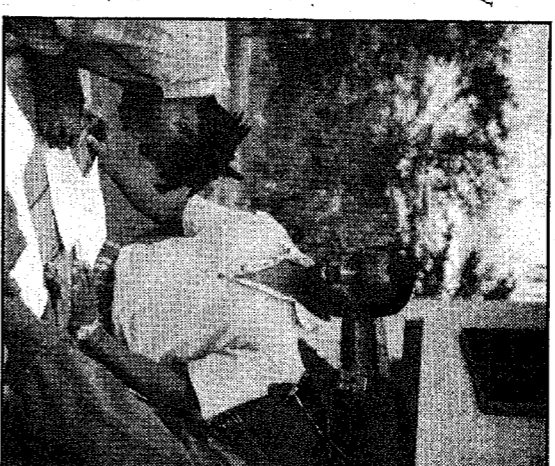
by Stuart Kirsch

Stuart Kirsch is Assistant Research Scientist in Anthropology and Fellow in Urgent Anthropology of the Royal Anthropological Institute. His current research is supported in part by U-M's Institute for Research on Women and Gender.

When I first began research in Dome ten years ago,

local histories were mapped onto the landscape, with places metonymically representing important experiences in a person's life. Today, however, when walking through the rain forest with a friend, it is difficult to locate the places we once shared a meal or went swimming, because where towering trees once stood,

there are only gray, ghostly tree trunks, and the creeks have all been buried by tall sand banks. Memories once anchored by the landscape have lost their mooring.



Now, Kawok villagers approve settlement with BHP.

people in the village talk about how the mine has changed their lives, they often present their stories in chronological form. Some of these chronologies were whispered furtively—the date the first missionaries arrived, the year that production began at the mine and all the fish died, or the year the trees began to die—much like magic spells were once told to me in confidence.

This shift from space to time in how experience is represented is one of the conceptual consequences of the massive environmental degradation wrought by the mine. It implies a fundamental shift in how the Yonggom view their relationship with the natural world. Once human memories and nature overlapped in their shared use of the landscape. With references to the past now commonly organized by abstract chronologies, Yonggom experience is increasingly detached from the natural world. This separation of time from space puts new emphasis on ontological differences between people and nature.

Much has changed for the Yonggom. They hope that the benefits provided by the settlement will ease them into what they call "modern life." Nonetheless, as I was told by Kewo, a former policeman who retired to the village after 27 years of government service, only to find that his land had been destroyed in the interim, the Yonggom will never lose their feelings of remorse for the damage to their environment. ■

lean up Ok Tedi BHP. It's not O.K." The yellow and black bumper stickers are plastered on buildings and cars throughout the Fly River port town of Kiunga in Papua New Guinea.

The stickers show local support for the hard-fought campaign against Broken Hill Proprietary Company, Ltd. (BHP), owner and operator of the Ok Tedi copper and gold mine in the Star Mountains north of Kiunga. Each day, the mine releases 80,000 tons of tailings directly into the Ok Tedi River, a tributary of the Fly.

The heart of the struggle against BHP, Australia's largest corporation, was a billion-dollar lawsuit filed two years ago in the Victorian Supreme court in Melbourne, where BHP is incorporated.

An historic settlement

On June 12, 1996, BHP and leaders of a group of 30,000 indigenous plaintiffs from the Ok Tedi and Fly Rivers reached an out-of-court settlement.

The key component of that agreement is a binding commitment that BHP and their subsidiary Ok Tedi Mining Ltd. construct appropriate tailings containment facilities, expected to cost approximately 350 million dollars. This will be the first time that any mine in Papua New Guinea will not release tailings directly into the river and sea. The island is home to a number of the world's largest copper and gold mines.

The impact of the mine has been catastrophic along the 100 kilometer Ok Tedi. Mine tailings have robbed the river of life. After heavy rainfall, the tailings are swept into the surrounding rain forest, swamps and creeks, and have left behind 30 square kilometers of dead forest. Thick gray sludge from the mine is visible throughout the Fly River system, although its effects downriver are not as severe.



Yonggom activist Rex Dogi.

The settlement followed extensive media criticism of BHP, chided as the "Big Australian Bully" for its role in helping the Papua New Guinean government draft legislation that criminalized participation in the lawsuit.

Plaintiffs Rex Dagi and Alex Maun, both from indigenous Yonggom villages along the Ok Tedi River, traveled to the Netherlands, Germany, Brazil, the United States and the United Kingdom to protest the mine's impact and to meet with international conservation organizations. Dagi and Maun succeeded in convincing German and American partners in the Ok Tedi Mine to divest their shares in the company. Earlier this year, Maun's visit to Canada's Northwest Territories jeopardized a BHP bid for the concession to a large diamond mine. Activists and lawyers had also challenged the constitutionality of the law designed to intimidate potential plaintiffs.

The combination of legal action and public opposition proved effective. With the challenge pending in the Papua New Guinea Supreme Court, BHP agreed to settle the suit. It took a global alliance of indigenous leaders, environmental activists, lawyers, and anthropologists to force BHP to consent to clean up the Ok Tedi River.

The settlement does not establish a clear precedent regarding so-called "alien-tort" claims in which corporations are held accountable at home for their operations overseas. Still, several similar cases have been filed in U.S. courts, including a suit against Freport-McMoran, which operates the world's largest copper and gold mine in Irian Jaya, Indonesia. The suit cites Freport-McMoran for both its harsh environmental impact and its collusion with Indonesia's brutal military forces.

The Ok Tedi settlement package established a 90 million dollar trust fund for the people of the Fly River and another 35 million dollars for the communities in the most heavily impacted area of the lower Ok Tedi River. The benefits from a ten percent equity share in the mines will also be given to the province in which the mine operates. The provisions of the accord are backed by a powerful sanction—BHP has agreed that any disputes arising during the course of its implementation will be heard by the courts in Melbourne, rather than in Papua New Guinea.

Changing times

The lead plaintiffs, their lawyers, and I were warmly welcomed as we traveled through the villages along the Ok Tedi and Fly Rivers explaining the terms of the settlement. People felt that their stubborn resolve had paid off and were relieved that the settlement had been achieved without violence. They applauded plans to stop the release of tailings into their river and the promise of fair compensation for their losses.

Despite the settlement, the Ok Tedi will never be the same. Women in Dome village talked to me about how their lives have changed. Andok Yang explained that "First, the fish disappeared, then all the animals that lived along the river banks. We don't know where they are living now—they have all gone away."

Yang is worried about the community's future. "It will be good to receive the compensation payments," she says, "but their distribution may create conflict in the village." She hopes that her grandchildren will be able to adapt to the "modern world," because many of their traditional ways are dying out. "I am an old woman," she told me, "and I don't have the strength to garden or make sago any more, so I want them to distribute the money quickly, so that I can taste some sugar before I die."

Before the mine's construction, the land along the Ok Tedi was so fertile that one woman called the river *enna*, or "mother." "Life was easy then," she told me. "There was more than enough food in the gardens and an abundance of wild game, but now it is all gone—the land has completely changed." Nonetheless, she wants her children to stay in the village, because it is their home. One woman, Aromgot Debeyok, remembers when her late husband Nandun went to work for the mining company during the construction phase of the mine. When Nandun came back from the mountains, he told them that the Ok Tedi would change in the future. "All the water would dry up, the fish would die, and the riverbed would look like a road." Aromgot recalls that initially she did not understand what he was saying, although later when the trees began to die and river filled with sand, she knew the story her husband told her was true.



The Ok Tedi River basin in Papua New Guinea, devastated by years of run-off from a mine owned by Australia's largest corporation.