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WOMEN IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL FILM

Abstract: Visual anthropology has never been fully incorporated into the anthropological mainstream. For a long period, anthropological films have been considered only as an objective recording of reality to be used in further analysis and then stored in film archives – as it is also considered to be an audio-visual aid in the teaching process. My field experience supports the ever-dominant thesis that visual anthropology, the same as written texts, is a narrative means to impart anthropological knowledge. In this case, the focus is on the anthropology of women – a topic, which in social sciences and in films was ”invisible“ until the 1970.

Key words: visual anthropology, film, women, traditional culture, Macedonia.

Visual Anthropology

Visual anthropology centres on the belief that culture is expressed through visual symbols shown by gestures, ceremonies, rituals and artefacts placed in a constructed or natural environment. Culture is seen as a reflection of oneself in scripts with plots involving actors and actresses with dialogues, costumes, props and a designed set. Culture itself is a collection of scenarios in which one participates. If culture can be seen, then researchers should be able to employ audiovisual technologies in order to record culture in a data format, accessible for analysis and presentation. (Ruby 1996: 1345).

From the positivist viewpoint, reality can be captured on film without the limits of human consciences. Images ensure an impartial witness and a source of highly reliable data. Despite the fact that the roots of visual anthropology historically go back to the positivist assumption that objective reality can be observed, most contemporary culture theoreticians focus on the socially constructed environment of cultural reality and the provisional nature of our understanding of any culture. In a post-positivist and post-modern world, the camera is limited by the culture of the person behind it. Anthropologists should use technology in a reflexive manner, deterring viewers from any false presumptions about the reliability of images they see, while visual ethnographers should look for ways of sharing their authority with people they research (Ruby, 1996: 1354).

According to Jay Ruby (Ruby 1989: 13-16) there are three cultural normative approaches to films and their relevance to education and cultural anthropologists:

1. There is an unavoidable conflict between art of film and the science of anthropology

It is considered that film is art constructed according to aesthetic principles and is designed to invoke emotions. To deny the cinematic art implies adulterating the essence

of the film. Considering its creative, impressionistic and emotional attributes, it is considered that art is in direct collision with objective science. The consequences of this approach are far-reaching. The creation of images becomes an additional activity that anthropologists occasionally employ in the same way as narratives, plays or poems are written. It is a secondary activity, which, in addition to scientific requirements, should also satisfy the creative needs of more receptive anthropologists.

The idea that film is art, while science is the objective chronicler of reality – owing to which they are juxtaposed – prevails in the public opinion and is based on outdated positivist approaches. According to the new alternative approach, if film is a communication medium, then it is potentially capable of offering many voices and intentions: scientific, artistic and other.

Speaking about the unavoidable conflict between art and science, there is an analogous situation between written ethnography and literature. There is no requirement that ethnography is written using a high writing style. However, if bad writing calls into question the ethnographic goal, there are objections and rightfully so. Similarly, if there is no requirement that ethnographic films fulfil the highest cinematographic standards, there is still the requirement that minimum cinematographic competence is satisfied so that the film can still communicate a message (Heider 1976: 4-5).

2. Films are an objective recording of reality

The presumption that films mirror the world is an element of the widely accepted opinion that the camera does not lie. One of the motives for inventing the motion picture was the need to find a medium that would capture information inaccessible to the naked eye. Under the positivist approach, the camera is a means for the scientific recording of data concerning human behaviour, which is more objective than other types of information, precisely due to the mechanical features of the means.

It is considered that such unedited research recordings represent scientific data that anthropologists can use to study, especially taking in account their unedited pure nature. The manipulation of recordings, i.e. editing, destroys the scientific value of recordings. Thus, the science of film is to be found in the raw unedited material, while the art of film is to be found in its construct as a film. Recordings made to meet the needs of scientific research are rarely seen as a film, while recordings used to be later edited are not received with enthusiasms by scientists. Such an understanding is a great obstacle for the development of visual anthropology. Students should understand film not as an impeccable witness, but as yet another narrative tool that can communicate anthropological knowledge in a scientifically acceptable manner.

3. Film is a form of mass communication

The third widely accepted idea is that film is a form of mass communication. If it is, then film must be comprehensible to the wider audience so that the funds spent on its production can be justified. This approach to film as a mass medium denies the possibility that special purpose films could be made. Such an understanding does not take on board home videos, military recordings, surgical procedure films, and the entire category of avant-garde films. According to statistical data, most films have never been intended for the wider audience.

The impact of such an understanding on the training of anthropologists/filmmakers is significant. If films are to be understood by the masses at large, students should be taught how to make a good documentary film. This means that they should abide by aesthetic conventions of documentary realism. Good documentaries are made by documentarists, while the role of cultural anthropologists is limited by the contents (exact nature of ethnographic details, translation of dialogues, research guides) – due to which it could be difficult to support the idea that visual anthropology is important.

To produce anthropological cinema implies that students are to be trained to work with image media in an anthropological manner. The cultural predisposition to see the film only as art and as a mass communication means and to see recordings only as scientifically privileged data must be overcome. The knowledge about culture must be applied to film as a means of communication. Once this is accomplished, students can be taught to see film as a narrative tool, which has the potential of communicating anthropological stories about culture. (Ruby 1989: 17)

“Women’s Stories” Film

Literature about anthropological film faces a lack of conceptual structure. Consequently, authors are focused on prohibitions, program advice and telling “war stories” about filmmaking. “Women’s Stories“ is my “war story“ about how the film was made and how its can impart anthropological meaning.

The starting point of the film is the traditional image of women as described in folktales. Folktales picture women as stubborn, hectors, shrewd, envious, treacherous, more cunning than the devil, adulterous, who talk a lot and who are not able to keep a secret. Such women are faced with a punishment. On the other hand, good and meek women, innocent but wrongly accused by the mother-in-law or by the husband whom she rejected, ultimately is rewarded after many ordeals. She is saved by a miracle from the cruel punishment of the husband. The husband becomes aware of his mistake and they live happily ever after.

This image of is an ideal model under the traditional culture of Macedonians and other Balkan nations, which is shown as proclaimed norms of unwritten law and system of moral values. My primary idea was to show in “Women’s Stories“ the picture of the realistic model of traditional culture painted by life itself, which is by far richer in colours, i.e. nuances, than initially indented by the author. Without claiming to give definitive answers, I have selected six women from several villages in Macedonia to present their personal stories – a genre and a method used increasingly in folklore studies and in anthropology.

Previously, I had established good communication with all women, having talked to them about various issues. Even more, I have built with them a friendly relationship of trust and mutual respect. I spent hours and hours chatting with them, most often helping them do some of their chores, such as threading tobacco, or making bread, for example. My field experiences show that this is one of the best ways of establishing good cooperation with your sources. In my talks with them, I did not hesitate to tell them about events in my own life. In return, I was always rewarded with a telling of a story about their lives. Often the fate of other women was the key opening the door to the world of my sources.

In other words, before the start of filming, I had a close relationship with my interlocutors and a significant insight into their lives, although there were moments when during the filming I was surprised by some details that I was not aware of and which they told for the first time during the filming. My surprise can be seen in the film and has not been cut out during the editing on purpose, since it reflects the spontaneous nature of the conversation.

Transposing the spontaneous nature of the conversation between the woman anthropologist and her interlocutors was one of my goals. Therefore, in consultation with the director, it was decided that the conversation would be recorded with two cameras. One camera was on the source and the second camera was on the anthropologist. Thus, the camera observed both individuals. Despite the fact that the anthropologist asks the questions and thus guides the conversation, the camera records the anthropologist's spontaneous reactions to the replies to questions, as it records the reactions of the source when asked questions. Based on their observational character, "Women's Stories" are closer to direct cinema. They are also closer to cinema-verité, based on the role of the anthropologist, who provokes by asking questions and appearing in the film, trying to establish a relationship of closeness and empathy with the source. The camera, in the words of Walter Benjamin, has the role of a surgeon's knife, which cuts optically the unconsciousness of the source and of the anthropologist. The pen-camera releases the psychological unconsciousness, i.e. the soul, giving the filmmaker has much more control over it than the surgeon has over the body. Such moments should not be avoided. They ensure unreachable moments of intimacy, emotional intensity, and self-consciousness. In any case, the camera should always look for psychological repercussion, being an instrument both of the trauma and of the therapy (Barbash, Taylor 1999: 56, 57).

In "Women's Stories" the actors set out their life stories before us, presenting us with a myriad of frustrations, desires, sorrows and powers. They are at an age at which they are ready to confess, and they do not hide this. One of the sources says in the film itself, *"Maybe I should not say thus, but I will!"* In another case, one of my potential sources with a long and winding life path, whose closest relatives did not allow her to tell her story in the film, is deeply unhappy about this. All my sources, both recorded ones and those who were not allowed to be recorded, felt the therapeutic effect of the camera. Consequently, the film "Women's Stories" is closer to cinema-verité.

It is equally important to underline that by using two cameras, one that observes the source and the other recording the anthropologist, as equal as possible positioning of the two participants in the film was achieved, which comes close the concept of "shared anthropology" promoted by Jean Rouch.

The result was conditioned by the culture of those who were filmed and by the culture of those filming. The questions I asked were a reflection of my positions on the topic I was elaborating, as the replies of my sources reflected their opinions. Even more, my sources did not experience me as someone asking questions, but as their interlocutor, which was my intention after all. Therefore, during the filming they were focused on me and not on the camera, which, as the conversation went along, they forgot about. This does not mean that they did not know they were going to be filmed. They were all told that the film was made for the TV and they all agreed. Regretfully, one of my sources had problems with her family following the broadcast of the film, because her family objected to her presenting intimate details of her and her husband's life. The woman herself could not see the film. When I invited her to watch the film with me, she repeated word by word

everything she had said when the film was made. She even wondered why her family objected, when other women in the film did not hide their bad marriage experiences.

At this point, it should be underlined that after the film had been shown several times on several TV stations in various towns across Macedonia, women came to me telling me that they had recognized their own lives in some parts of the film. This means that the film has managed to touch their emotions, which is one of the important features of film as art. This resolved the dilemma whether there is an unavoidable conflict between film as art and the science of anthropology. At the same time, this showed that the film could at the same time communicate anthropological knowledge and serve as a mass communication means, which contributes to wider popularization of the ethnological cultural heritage.

When it comes to the filmmaking itself, it should be said that the decision that I conduct the interviews and appear in the film resulted in the fact I would not be able to be behind the camera. I left that role to a professional team of a director, camera operators, and a sound recording professional. I took upon myself to integrate parts of conversations in a single unit, i.e. I had a role in editing the film. There are often discussions about the question as to whether anthropologists should make films by themselves or engage a professional team to this end. Arguments in favour of anthropologists filmmaking themselves are that anthropologists know best what should be recorded, because they know the sequence of events, i.e. the scenario of the film, along with all the details about the events and personalities, regardless of the fact whether the personalities experience the events themselves or are loosely connected with them. Such information is of decisive importance in making priorities of what should be recorded on one hand and on the other hand such information enables that all important moments of the events, without which the picture would be incomplete, are recorded (Бочеv 2005: 167). These arguments, though evidently strong in other cases, are irrelevant in my case, since both cameras, similar as in direct cinema, were like a fly in the room covering the entire course of conversations, as of their turning on until they were turned off. Every spoken word was of equal importance. The priority and the importance of words came to full light when integrating the conversation into a one whole.

At this stage, the recorded material of six individual conversations was edited in a way to make the impression that it was matter of one conversation during which women openly exchanging their experiences, even more, such "fine lace work" (as one of my colleagues from Belgrade says) enabled viewers to witness not only six individual stories, but to get a clear picture of the status of women in traditional culture in general.

This was made possible since women replied to more or less the same questions, which helped us enter the world of their childhood, love, marriage, motherhood, friendship, dreams and rituals. The conversation gave us an insight into the most intimate parts of their lives – as of the death of a mother when the child was young, their first love and their first night as husband and wife, as well as the complexities of married life, including psychological and physical ill-treatment. Having different characters, the women in the film gave different opinions and reactions. Some of them simply accepted their fate, while others fought for their personal freedom, putting aside traditional norms governing the behaviour of women. It is admiring how these heroes, despite all their ordeals, succeeding in not losing their spirit, keeping their souls open to others. They tell us about

their life stories in a peaceful, sometimes funny way, not allowing us to treat them as poor victims, as it would be expected.

Thus, we come to the most important questions that the film "Women's Stories" tries to answer. What anthropological knowledge does the film impart? Are women in traditional culture really poor victims? What was expected from them and what happened in real life?

The traditional culture of Macedonians, as of other Balkan nations, is usually characterized as patriarchal. Its main features are patrilocality (following marriage, the wife and husband live in the family house of the husband), patrilineality (belonging only to the husband's lineage), male children are much more valued because they will continue the family lineage and inherit the property, there is the cult and absolute authority of the father. These are the bases for the male-female relationships. It is considered that their main characteristic is the domination of men and subordination of women. Written sources and field material offer a series of examples in support of the presented opinion that when they get married, women lose their name and everybody addresses them with the name of their husband (Sime's wife, Trajan's wife and similar); The birth of a baby girl is grieved and accepted with sorrow ("When a baby girl is born even the house's eaves cry" – folk saying); female children are considered "fleeing offspring", "somebody else's home"; women only, and not men, must enter marriage as virgins ("women must be chaste"), and if they are not they will be punished with abashing; men take on wives with the sole purpose that they give birth to male children (if she is not "capable" of doing that, the husband can expel her from the home, and the same goes for barren women) and to work in the house and in the fields (no one believes women that they are tired because women have nine lives as cats); women have no right to eat seated at the same table as their husbands, especially when there are guests – in that case she should be standing, serve them and then leave the room; women have no right to their desires and to hold opinions – they must obey the will and needs of the husband, to read his mind even before he speaks; the wife must be silent when the husband speaks and she must never oppose him; women are prohibited from going out of the house unless she has her husband's permission and has no right to ask where her husband goes when he leaves the house; husbands have the right to be unfaithful to their wives, while women are prohibited to even think about being unfaithful – the unwritten rules do not envisage any punishment for unfaithful husbands, setting out many cruel punishments for unfaithful women; women have no right to have at her disposal the family property or money – they can manage only their dowry and property inherited from their mothers ("mother's property"); female children are expected to renounce their inheritance in favour of their male siblings; women are lucky if they get a husband that does not beat them without a reason; husbands have the right to punish their wives as they see fit and no one has the right to interfere; women's blood is not worth as much as men's blood – therefore women can never be part of a blood feud; women are "impure" and dangerous (especially pregnant women, women during their menstruation cycle, and parturient women) and therefore they should avoid any contacts with men; the wife cannot be the head of the household or the village elder; women have no right to participate in village assemblies, at which important decisions for the community are made (Ђорђевић 1984: 12-32; Хаџи-Васиљев, Вардарски 2000: 119-243).

This rather sad picture of the Balkan's not-so-distant past is yet only a set of rules that life sometimes reaffirms, but sometimes fails. This is clearly shown in the film

”Women’s Stories“ as regards the aspects of the behaviour and role of women in traditional culture.

1. Women’s chastity

Women’s physiology is the key to understanding the moral code, which traditional culture has developed regarding women. The perception of women’s honour is often reduced to her biological features. There is not better argument confirming such a perception than the fact the evidence that the woman is a virgin is considered as evidence of honour. Only women who have preserved their virginity until they enter into marriage can be said to be honourable or chaste. Following marriage, her sexuality is used to procreate male inheritors to continue the family name of the husband. It would not be exaggerated to say that women’s chastity in the physiological sense was considered one the greatest, if not the greatest women’s virtue (Цветањовска 2012: 133).

Parents, especially the mother of the girl, have the task of overseeing and making sure that the girl remains a virgin. As social roles are distributed, the mother in the family has the task of bringing up well-socialized community members that will abide by established values. The best alternative would be if the result of the learning to assume the role of a woman results with the adoption of positions that women’s chastity is the greatest virtue, greater than life itself, as attested by folk poems or by the saying *”If I bring shame to my family, I would rather be dead; I would rather poison myself!”*. However, since the results of the upbringing are not always certain, preventive measures are very often undertaken. Girls are allowed to go out of the house alone only when they go to work (to get water, to get milk), while when girls go to places where there could be temptations (for example, village assemblies), she must have a chaperone. The movement of engaged girls was especially limited. In some villages, the status of an engaged girl was equalized with the status of parturient women since they were not allowed to go outside the house. Even if the girl eloped her chastity must not be called into question. In such cases, the mother-in-law had the task of overseeing that the eloped girl preserved her virginity by making sure that the girl and her son sleep separately until their wedding (Цветањовска 2012: 133-134).

These rules were told to all women in the film. Some of them blindly abided by those rules, blaming the other girls that they were ”crafty devils“. According to their statements, they never socialized with boys. If they saw boys on the road they would go off the other way (like cats and dogs). They did not even greet them or make small talk; they just passed by as if they did not know them.

Girls had to be home by sunset. One of the women in the film told me that her father threatened her with a cane if she did not obey the set time. It is interesting that it was exactly this woman that eloped to get married. None of the women in the film were allowed to stand next to a boy on the street or when dancing in a circle. If this should happen, girls would be beaten up. Yet, girls took advantage of village assemblies and weddings in this respect. They managed to see their loved boyfriends on other occasions. The arranged meetings in secret, through letters, or through close friends or relatives. They met in their friends’ or relatives’ houses, where they could be alone and talk. Friends and relatives also helped with presenting small gifts (an apple, walnuts, a mirror). All in all, it was not like in backward times, as one of the women in the film said, since there were ways to bypass strict rules.

2. Married life

Under the traditional culture of Macedonia, the social position and room for women was limited to the house. But she was not the absolute ruler there too. On the contrary, it was the husband who decided everything in the world of women. He had the last word on all major family matters. The main task of the wife in the house was to clean and maintain the house and raise the children. Thus, women's role in society was reduced to a housewife and a mother who had the duty of properly raising children, especially daughters. In the process of socialization, girls were taught and asked to accept their mothers' model of a subordinated woman in the relations with the girl's future husband and his family. The wife was required to produce an ideal woman – chaste (virgin before marriage), fertile and hard working, tolerant and one who knows how to keep her mouth shut as expected and who does not meddle in men's affairs.

Real folk culture offers examples of women heads of a family cooperative, although the established norm of organizing the wider family life was a cooperative headed by the father or the oldest brother. Such women led cooperatives were established following the death of the head of the family (the husband) or when the head of the family (husband) went abroad to work, in which cases the management of family matters was taken over by the wife. In a family cooperative led by the father or the brother and at the level of ideal folk culture, the wife of the head of the household or another woman who managed women's affairs had significant number of rights: she had the right to have her own concept of things, she had the right to distribute tasks to the other women in the family; to give her opinion; if her husband died she had the right to part of the property the husband left behind for them (death pledged inheritance) and she had the right to the family house. At the level of real culture, we can notice that housewives had control over and often managed the family budget and that the head of the household consulted his wife on all matters of interest to the family (Светиева 2000).

The best example of this is given by one of the women in the film, for whom I could say that she was equal in everything, even dominant in her married life. Not only did she express her opinion on all issues of relevance for her marriage, but she also quarrelled, i.e. opposed her husband and she most often prevailed. Such status she had was impacted by the fact that she was economically independent, since while her husband was out of the village for the entire working week, she raised sheep and produced cheese and contributed to the family budget with money she earned from selling the cheese. She tells us in the film that there were even women who conducted themselves as men (they cursed as men), not allowing to be placed in a subordinate position.

As different from them, the film also portrays two women who had a subordinate role in their marriage, and who respected rules imposed by the ideal model defined under traditional culture. They never opposed their husbands, choosing silence to defend themselves from abuse even violence by their husbands. One of them was even beaten up just because she asked a question. Therefore, she decided, "not to tempt her fate", in order that she preserve her physical integrity. She resigned to her fate and turned away her brothers who came to take her back to her parent's home.

The other woman was not allowed to go out of the house unless she had permission from her husband. She could only go from the house to the village store to buy brandy for her husband. Those were the only occasions when she went out. If she went any-

where else she would end up on the "butcher's table". She could not even think of speaking to another man because "her throat would be slit" in a minute. Yet, her husband saw no problem in taking the village priest's wife to another village before the eyes of his own wife. She did not have peace at home as well. When her husband had guests, she was not allowed to sit at the table with them. She was expected to serve them and then leave the room. Despite all her ordeals, she kept her dignity and never cried a tear in front of her husband, just to avoid giving him the satisfaction of seeing her suffer and cry. Other women on the other hand, vented out their frustrations caused by their difficult marriages exactly by crying or talking to their close female friends.

3. Eloping Girls

According to the traditional culture of Macedonians, marriage is the fundamental duty and need of every person. Marriage is the logical sequence of events following childhood and young age and practically is the only "normal" way of life for adult persons. Not being married was considered a great misfortune and was seen as one of the greatest ill fates that could occur. Hence, it is easy to imagine the efforts made to find a husband/wife. The main actors in this process were parents who had the undisputed right to choose the wife or husband, following criteria of the traditional community. According to the unwritten rules, men always made the decision. In reality, the decision was made by both parents, but it "was understood" that the man was the one to say the last word and announce the decision to everybody else (Цветањовска 2012: 150-151).

In the past, there were often cases in which the couple would see each other for the first time on the day of the wedding or in which parents agreed the engagement when the bride and groom were still children. A close relative or friends whom the father would send out to find a proper wife or who would find a proper wife upon their own initiative could also make the choice. However, there was cases in which sometimes a boy and a girl would fall in love and they would get married if they got the blessing from their parents. The blessing for the marriage would be given if the fundamental criteria for choosing a wife or a husband were met: that the girl/boy comes from a good family and that the family has property. The concept of a good husband and of a good wife differed. A good wife was expected to be chaste, to give birth to children and to do housework. The duty of the husband was to provide for the family, but he was active in the public sphere mostly, not in the home. A good head of household was supposed to be honourable, smart and hardworking. Being a good provider was even more important than being a valorous hero, who was associated with a short life "Great hero - short life" (Цветањовска 2012: 151-153).

However, not all individuals fell in the mould, i.e. matrix of the traditional upbringing and culture as shown by examples of eloping that I encountered in the field or those described in the ethnology literature. In trying to find the common denominator for most of the cases, one could conclude that it was a matter of winning the right to free choice. Action and taking the upper hand was expected from an eloping girl. Alone or with the help of others, the girl would leave her parents' home, despite the fact that she knew that her action would be condemned since it was seen as disrespect for her parents' right to choose her husband. This demanded courage, inspired by love (Цветањовска 2012: 153).

One of my interlocutors in the film eloped to get married with her loved man, despite opposition by her father. Her father objected to the marriage because the man was

poor. The brave girl eloping had the following comment about his poverty: *"So he is poor! So what! God is rich!"* Even more, she reminded her father that he snatched her mother, while was fetching water from the village fountain. Her mother left the water jugs and he took her to his home. All these arguments were not sufficient for her father who was so angry with his daughter that he would have beaten her if he had met her. As it usually happens, his anger abated after a year.

The complete opposite of this brave woman who eloped, is another interlocutor of mine who could not oppose her father since she got accustomed to absolute obedience with the support of all in her environment. She did not took the offer of the boy she loved to elope, and auto-censored herself, suffering because of this all her life.

4. Women's Rituals

The true and real source of power of women in a traditional society comes from women's rituals. Several authors have established that women have a dominant role in rituals, especially in magic related rituals. This role is of exceptional importance, considering that traditional culture envisages a series of strictly defined rituals relating to any type of human activity, starting with most simple activities over to most complicated ones and the respect for and fulfilment of the rituals determined the success of the endeavour in question. If a rule set out under conjuration magic rituals is not fulfilled, the entire activity is called into question- there will be no crops on the fields, there will be no rain, the bride and groom will not have children.

The importance of rituals is especially evident when rituals are performed to neutralize or eliminate the negative influence of evil spirits, which are used to explain various manifestations of evil in the world (calamities, family problems, illnesses, and death). Women's rituals of various specialties (witch doctors, fortune tellers, conjurors) are used to recognize, expel and destroy the evil caused by various type of demons or subversive activities of people (black magic). These rituals are expected to break down hail clouds, to send the vampire across the water and thus liberate the village from his evildoings, to stop the epidemics, to heel illness, to discover the thief with the use of magic rituals, to counter another magic made to destroy the health, longevity, riches or the women's fertility. This type of women's rituals, which protect the existential values of the village is highly appreciated and women who perform them have a higher status in society.

This is the status one of my interlocutors in the film had. She was a healer. She was highly appreciated and respected not only in the city where she lived, but in the wider region. As a token of appreciation for all the help she gave them, people did her various favours. In reality it could be presumed that they were grateful and did her favours out of the belief that those how know how to break a spell, i.e. magic, know also how to cast a spell, i.e. magic. Her knowledge of breaking a spell is explicitly presented in the film, which is very rare considering that healers jealously keep the secret of their knowledge. Quite the contrary, my interlocutor shared with the viewers the most important elements of her healing practice - how she started conjuring based on dreams, words she used when breaking a spell. This information was greatly effective in increasing the number of her "patients". Namely, after several TV stations in Bitola broadcast the film, the popularity of my interlocutor grew significantly.

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”Women’s Stories“ is a classical example of a film, which imparts anthropological knowledge, as does a written text. As different from science, the film does not employ abstract ideas and theories, but using the camera lenses it paints a clear picture of the multi-sensory experiences of women in traditional culture.

This filmed research focuses on the position of women seen through the prism of the ideal model prescribed by norms of unwritten rules in traditional societies and the system of established values, but also seen from the perspective of the realistic model established by life itself. The film reaffirms that the traditional and realistic models sometimes coincide, showing as well that very often they differ significantly, which on its part calls into question the inferior and subordinate status of women. In traditional culture, women were not that powerless and miserable as it is usually considered. Women had at their disposal or built an entire spectrum of mechanisms, using which they tried and even succeeded in winning their space and sphere of influence in the family and in the community. The most important source of women’s power was women’s rituals.

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