
GRASS
A NATION'S BATTLE FOR LIFE
MILESTONE FILMS

CREDITS:

Produced and Directed by ..... Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack and Marguerite Harrison
Presented by ..... Adolph Zukor and Jesse L. Lasky
Photographed by ..... Ernest B. Schoedsack and Merian C. Cooper
Titled and Edited by..... Terry Ramsaye and Richard P. Carver

United States. 1925. Silent. Black and White.Shot on location in Asia Minor including Angora and Persia (Iran)
35mm. 1:33. Suggested running speed: 22fps. 70 minutes. Theatrical Premiere on June 21, 1926.

CAST:

Merian C. Cooper
Ernest B. Schoedsack
Marguerite Harrison
Haidar Khan (chief of the Bakhtiari tribe)
Lufta (son of Haidar Khan)
and the 50,000 people and 500,000 animals of the Bakhtiari tribe.

1992 score composed and performed by
Gholam Hossain Janati-Ataie, Kavous Shirzadian and Amir Ali Vhabzadegan.
Produced by Richard Einhorn

2021 Original music composed by Patrick Holcomb

Commissioned by Indiana University Cinema
through the Jon Vickers Scoring Award

Performed by Malcolm Dalglish and students of the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music:

Malcolm Dalglish, solo hammered dulcimer
Tyler Readinger, music director
Erina Buchholz, violin I
Delia Li, violin II
Ursula Steela, viola
Christopher Santos, cello
Zach McMillan, bass
Lilah Senibaldi, flute/piccolo/alto flute
Stina Hawkinson, oboe/English horn
Simon Plum, clarinet/Eb clarinet/bass clarinet
Lauren Hallonquist, bassoon
Jenna Montes, horn
Richard Stinson, trumpet/flugelhorn
Kari Novilla, harp
Bethany Brinson, piano/celesta
Cameron Henry, percussion

Tom Weiligman, music contractor

Recorded, edited, and mixed by Kellie M. McGrew
Assistant Engineers: Jacob Dubey, Jack Fahey
Engineering and production supervision: Chandler Bridges
Score and Pro Tools session preparation: Steve Thomas
Recording Project Manager: Jessica Davis Tagg
Music Producer: Larry Groupé
Produced by Konrad Strauss

Recorded in the Georgina Joshi Recording Studio at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music

2024 RESTORATION

This, the fourth restoration Milestone has undertaken for Cooper, Schoedsack, and Harrison's GRASS was entirely thanks to the cooperation of Katie Trainor and the Museum of Modern Art, and the staff of the Library of Congress. 4K scans of the lone surviving but incomplete 35mm tinted and toned 35mm nitrate print were provided by the Library of Congress.4K scans of Cooper's internegative taken off of Paramount's nitrate print in 1955 were done at the Museum of Modern Art. Using the LoC material as the main source, missing sections were sourced from the MoMA scans. Because the Patrick Holcomb score and the 1992 Iranian scores were produced off of the original Milestone restorations (using a print from the MoMA negative), it turned out that the sync was off for the two scores. As it turns out, the length of the intertitles were different in the LoC nitrate and MoMA negative so they had to be carefully matched with the 1992 analog restoration for the scores to sync properly. We are thankful to Patrick Holcomb for traveling to Harrington Park to spend a day on this process. Finally, the staff of Kino Lorber worked to stabilize and time the new scans for best results.

HIPPODROME SILENT FILM FESTIVAL NOTES BY BY PROFESSOR NACIM PAK-SHIRAZ

Portraying an epic battle between man and nature, Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life (1925) traces the annual migration of the Bakhtiaris, one of the major tribes of Iran. Until the enforced modernising project in Iran they lived a nomadic lifestyle going back to antiquity. This migration, and the Bakhtiaris' very

survival, was inextricably linked to the search for food for their 500,000-strong flock of cows, sheep, goats and even chickens. Fifty thousand Bakhtiaris would migrate twice a year between the highlands in the summer and the lowlands in the winter. The distance between the two seasonal quarters could extend to more than 400km with differences of altitude varying from 1,000-2,000m.

Grass depicted the hardship and uncertainty of nomadic life – from crossing torrential rivers with nothing more than inflated goat skins, to climbing rock-face mountains and pick-axing through ice and snow. To a lesser extent, it also illustrated the complexity of Bakhtiari social organisation and their internal solidarity. But it was already an endangered lifestyle.
The Bakhtiari tribes were a social, political and economic force to reckon with, not least for the role they played in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-1909). But for the British, it was the oil in the Bakhtiari's winter grounds that highlighted their importance. In this regard, Sir Arnold T. Wilson, the British Commissioner in Baghdad (1918-1920) who had travelled to Iran a number of times noted in 1926 that the Bakhtiaris had 'a greater title to our gratitude and fame…The greatest oil-field in the world…is situated in their territory, and has been worked under the protection of guards supplied by their chiefs and by labour drawn to a great extent from their tribes for the best part of twenty years in a spirit of entire amity and goodwill.'

Shortly after the film was produced, Reza Shah (r. 1925-1941) crowned himself as the first monarch of the Pahlavi dynasty. Keen on modernising Iran, unifying the country and centralising power, Reza Shah soon set out to disarm the Bakhtiari tribes and settle them, going so far as to destroy their tents and ban the men's tribal dress. His successor, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (r. 1941-1979), took a more moderate approach allowing the nomads to continue their migratory lifestyle. By the 1960s, however, the nomads had been pushed to the margins and were almost invisible in the public discourse, in a trend which continued into and after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, such that any references to the Bakhtiari tribal chiefs were omitted in official documents.

One of the most famous early documentaries, very much in the style of Robert Flaherty's Nanook of the North (1922), Grass was made by three Americans, Merian Cooper, Ernest Schoedsack, and Marguerite Harrison. Harrison, an adventurer, journalist, spy and author, raised the funds for the film and all three of them collaborated on the cinematography. Cooper and Schoedsack went on to have extremely successful careers most notably with King Kong (1933), which they made together.

Grass was filmed over the 48 days it took the Bakhtiari to complete their migration. Despite knowing little about the region and culture they were filming, Cooper, Schoedsack and Harrison nonetheless provided a moving and magnificent testament to the spirit and resilience of the Bakhtiari by the simple act of pointing a camera to the drama unfolding before them. In doing so, the humour and wit of the filmmakers themselves come through in their framings, and the in-title cards. For Iranians especially, and despite its limited availability, Grass reflected and represented a heroism and pride in their peoples.
Grass went on to inspire a number of other documentary films, which also attempted to capture the nomadic way of life before its disappearance, not least The Flaming Poppies (Hushang Shafti, 1962), People of the Wind (Anthony Howarth, 1978), and The Shahsavan Nomads of Iran (Fereydoun Safizadeh, 1983). Iranian cinema has also produced a number of films on the lives of Iranian tribes, with Mohsen Makhmalbaf's fictionalised account, Gabbeh (1995), garnering international acclaim.

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SYNOPSIS:

Marguerite Harrison, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack travel through Asia Minor to reach a tribe of nomads in Iran known as the Bakhtiari. They follow the tribesmen on their 48-day trek across deserts, rivers and mountains to reach summer pasture for their flocks. There are hardships and conquests for the 50,000 tribesmen leading their 500,000 animals across the treacherous land. First is fording the raging waters of the Karun River by floating on rafts buoyed by inflated goatskins. Back and forth they go in the frigid waters as some animals drown. Hardest of all is the ascending in bare feet of an almost perpendicular mountain only to face the even more towering Zardeh Kuh, pathless and covered with deep snow. Finally they descend to their goal — a fertile and grassy valley.

BACKGROUND:

In 1901, Theodore Roosevelt became the 26th president of the United States, extolling the love of the wilderness and man's desire to discover its mysteries. He ushered in the 20th century with a wanderlust and bravura that prophesized an age of exploration that began with epic struggles to the far reaches of the world, then to its highest mountains and deepest oceans, and finally, to the moon in just 70 years. And the century's fastest growing art, the moving camera, was there every step of the way. It took the pairing of cinema's greatest odd couple — the short, fast-talking dynamo Merian C. Cooper with the tall, taciturn Ernest B. Schoedsack — to best embody the Roosevelt spirit of adventure. Their first documentary masterpiece, however, wouldn't have happened without the resources and bravery of another of America's greatest voyagers. The two men had met after World War I. The newsreel cameraman Schoedsack described his first meeting with pilot Cooper in 1918 Vienna: "I was at the Franz Josef Railroad Station. Down a platform came this Yank in a dirty uniform, wearing one French boot and one German one. It was Coop. He was just out of German prison and he wanted to get to Warsaw. He had once been kicked out of the Naval Academy and had sold his sword. Now he'd found the guy who had it and he'd bought it back." After a disastrous expedition with Captain Edward Salisbury as the camera crew on the failed aroundthe-world tour of the Wisdom II, Cooper and Schoedsack decided they could do better. "Nanook of the North" had just opened and they believed they could do the same for the nomadic Asian tribes. Research at the National Geographic led them to the Kurds who had the reputation for magnificent costumes and local scenery. While searching for funds, Cooper came across his old friend he had met during the war, Marguerite Harrison. A beautiful, exdebutante, she became a journalist for the "Baltimore Sun" after the death of her husband. Seeking adventure and danger, she became a spy for the OSS during the war and then afterwards was twice captured and imprisoned by the Soviets as a spy during their nascent beginnings. All three were missing the action they had found in war and were looking for new adventure. Together, they raised $10,000 and with Schoedsack's lightweight Debrie camera and 20,000 feet of film, they Poster used to promote the original release of the picture. Courtesy Milestone Film & Video. went off to make a movie following their motto they chose later in life, "The Three Ds: Keep it Distant, Difficult and Dangerous." After planning and much travel they arrived in Turkey but soon discovered that the Kurdish tribes were less cinematic than they hoped. They moved on to Iraq with dwindling funds and film stock. Luckily, Harrison had previous interviewed the legendary Middle East kingmaker Gertrude Bell who guided the trio to the Bakhtiari of then-Persia (now Iran). Found in the southeastern part of the country,

the Bakhtiari played a large part in the politics of 20th century Iran. Yet it is in their annual migration — and the many films of this event — that they are known. It took many months and a great deal of negotiations to finally gain permission to travel on the 42-day migration of the Baba Ahmedi tribe led by Haidar Khan. As the tribe's valley grasses dried up in the summer heat, fifty thousand people and half a million animals annually would traverse over an impossible terrain up the mountains to their winter pasture. It was an astonishing migration never captured on film before. Each day, Cooper and Harrison worked with the Bakhtiari tribe to gain their confidence while Schoedsack would film their travels. Near the end of each day, Schoedsack would often travel ahead to figure out the best way to film the tribe that next day. It proved to be a journey far more arduous — and cinematic — than the filmmakers ever could have planned. The Bakhtiari men swam the raging waters of the Karun River for three days while guiding the animals that could swim and those that had to travel across on rafts buoyed by inflated goatskins. They ascended in bare feet an almost perpendicular mountain only to face the even more towering Zardeh Kuh, creating paths covered in the deep snow with pick axes. Finally the tribe descended to their goal — as Schoedsack risked his life from another towering mountain to create one of the great long shots in documentary history — a fertile and grassy valley. It has been said that Cooper and Schoedsack's greatest film, "King Kong," moves forward as if in a dream. Each scene is followed by an even more incredible event. "Grass" shares this exact quality — the achievements of the Bakhtiari migration grow more astonishing as they and their animals face greater and greater struggles. The film's magnitude is that unlike the "King Kong" story, this one is amazingly true. Since 1925, there have been many films following the Bakhtiari journey; their annual migrations have been well documented. Yet none of those films show a journey nearly as hard nor faced it with such primitive gear. None of them faced the same danger to make a film as Cooper, Schoedsack and Harrison when they made "Grass." Though there are some Bakhtiari still practicing a nomadic life in Iran, many of the three million people have been scattered around the world after the revolution. Many took other jobs even before then — in Bernardo Bertolucci's 1967 documentary "The Path of Oil," many of them worked on the oil fields that are on their land. Cooper traveled with the film on the college lecture circuit to limited response before Paramount executive Jesse Lasky saw it at a private dinner party and acquired the rights for his studio. Early film critic/ historian Terry Ramsaye was hired to write the intertitles. Harrison never liked those titles — she thought they were old-fashioned and hokey. Yet, when "Grass" was released and it opened to large audiences, the intertitles really worked — as they still do today. The film stands out as an early masterpiece of the documentary form and a tribute to the early days of filmmaking when those involved, kept it distant, difficult and dangerous.

Today, GRASS has influenced a new generation of filmmakers. Eric Valli and Diane Summers' HIMALAYA were acknowledged homages to the 1925 documentary. Filmmakers Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Verena Paravel were so influenced by the film that their first feature was entitled SWEETGRASS.

LURED BY THE EAST

ETHNOGRAPHIC AND EXPEDITION FILMS ABOUT NOMADIC TRIBES—The Case of Grass (1925)

By HAMID NAFICY

Expedition and ethnographic films encode the nations' ideologies and collective longings for form—expressed in socially acceptable, aesthetically pleasing, and commercially successful generic and narrative schemas —and the psychology and desires of individual filmmakers. As a result, it is important to deal not only with overarching ideologies, such as colonialism, Orientalism, nationalism, and imperialism that shape the thinking and imagination of nations but also with filmmakers' personal histories, politics, and imperatives that help to form both them and their films. One topic in which early traveling filmmakers from the West showed great interest was the Eastern nomads. United States explorers and filmmakers were attracted to such nomadic tribes for personal and national reasons, among them wanderlust; manifest destiny, consisting of national expansionism, exceptionalism, and triumphalism that characterized both American pioneers of past centuries and global explorers of the twentieth century; a desire for authentic experiences and modernist primitivism found in the struggle against harsh nature; and a racialist nostalgia for origins.

As a case study of this complex attraction, this essay examines the seminal film Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life, about the semiannual migration of the Baba Ahmadi tribe in Iran.[1] It examines both the film's text and its context—the personal, political, ideological, and cultural forces that informed its genealogy, filming, intertitling, publicity, theatrical exhibition, nontheatrical touring, and reception by diverse audiences and critics both in the United States and in Iran. Recognized as a classic of documentary, ethnographic, and expedition films, it was made by three Americans, Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack, and Marguerite

E. Harrison— intrepid explorers, anti-Soviet adventurers, members of the U.S. military or intelligence services, journalists, and filmmakers.

By the early 1920s, interest in the East and the Orient was keen and Orientalist conceptions were circulating widely in fiction films such as in Cecil B. DeMille's The Arab (1915), Louis Gasnier's Kismet (1920), and Rex Ingram's The Arab (1924). Iran, a subject of many documentaries by Western travelers (Naficy 1984, 1995), is not Arab but a non-Semitic and overwhelmingly Muslim country, located in the Middle East where most of the Arabs and a high percentage of the world's Muslims live. As a result, its cinematic representations have conformed to many of the Orientalist discourses about Arabs and Muslims and posed problems for them. In many ways, Grass played into these discourses and problematized them.

The Filmmakers and Their Triumphalist Wanderlust

Grass is a silent, 35mm, black-and-white, seventy-minute film that deals with the trio of American explorers traveling through Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran in search of a ''forgotten'' Asiatic tribe. Having ''found'' them in Iran and identified them, the explorers follow their transhumance migration from hot, dry regions to cool, green pastures. Cooper is the film's producer, Schoedsack the cameraman, and Harrison the on-camera personality.

Ernest Beaumont Schoedsack (1893–1979) had been a cameraman for the Mack Sennett Studio and for the United States Signal Corps; and he was perhaps the first airborne combat photographer. He devised a way of filming through the machine-gun openings that synchronized the camera shutter's motion with the airplane's propeller (Wiley 1981). After World War I, he joined the Red Cross relief mission, driving ambulances, helping Polish refugees to escape from Soviet-occupied lands, and filming ''unparalleled'' newsreel footage of the Polish fighters' incursion into Russia (Goldner and Turner 1975: 25). At least two Red Cross films about these events, To the Aid of Poland (1919) and The Fall of Kiev (1919), contain Schoedsack's footage. He also made at least two films for the Red Cross Travel Film series: 'Neath Poland's Harvest Skies (1920) and Shepherds of Tatra (1921). These were upbeat in tone, emphasizing the quaint and exotic life of the peasants in a devastated Europe (Veeder 1990: 61). As a freelance cameraman, Schoedsack also filmed newsreels for the U.S. government as well as for commercial newsreel companies. Among these were scenes of the Versailles Treaty deliberations in Paris and the brutal Greek-Turkish war of 1921–22 that resulted in an independent Turkey under Mustapha Kemal Pasha (Ataturk), which sparked Schoedsack's interest in the Near East.[2]

Merian Coldwell Cooper (1895–1973) worked as a journalist in several U.S. cities and served in General Pershing's army in Mexico, chasing Pancho Villa. In 1917 he was flying low over the western front as a tactical aerial observer when he was shot down over the Argonne. Badly burned, he became for a time a prisoner of the Germans. Like Schoedsack, he viewed the Bolsheviks as a potential enemy, and at the outbreak of the Polish-Russian War, he formed with Major Cedric E. Fauntleroy the Kosciusko Aerial Squadron to fight the Bolsheviks. Again, he was shot down and this time he became a prisoner of the Red Army in Wladykino Prison, near Moscow. For months he assumed the identity of Corporal Frank R. Mosher, the name that was stenciled on the secondhand underwear that the Red Cross had given him. He was certain that if the Soviets discovered his true identity, he would be executed. During this time, Marguerite Harrison, who was spying for the U.S. military in the Soviet Union, smuggled food, blankets,

tobacco, books, and money to him. Because of this, Cooper acknowledged that he owed his life to her (Brownlow 1979: 516; Goldner and Turner 1975: 24). Subsequently, in a daring and successful attempt, he escaped to freedom.

In 1922 Schoedsack, who had met Cooper earlier in Warsaw, joined him on a filmic expedition with Captain Edward A. Salisbury, an explorer and conservationist, on his ship Wisdom II. This collaboration resulted in a short film, Golden Prince, about Ras Tafari—then prince regent of the Abyssinian Empire, later crowned Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia— and some newsreel footage of Muslims on their hajj pilgrimage in Jedda, Saudi Arabia. However, an accidental fire by a crew man that burned much of their footage caused Cooper and Schoedsack to adopt an idea they had abandoned earlier: making an epic film about a nomadic tribe's struggle against nature.

As a precocious child who began talking at eight months, Marguerite Harrison (born Marguerite Elton Baker, 1879–1967) had traveled to Europe extensively, thanks to her father, a wealthy transatlantic shipping magnate (Harrison 1935: 8; Olds 1985: 158–59). As an adult, she satisfied her insatiable urge for travel and adventure by becoming a reporter for various papers, including the Baltimore Sun, and by contacting the U.S. Army Military Intelligence Division (mid), offering to become a spy. After preliminary interviews, mid signed her on and sent her to Europe to report on the social climate and psychological conditions of the Germans in the wake of their defeat in the Great War. She worked hard and in a disciplined fashion, chasing leads and regularly filing interesting and accurate reports with her military superiors about the Germans' postwar attitudes, including reactions to the cost of the severe terms of the peace treaty and the emergence of anti-Semitism (Olds 1985: 170). Some of these reports were also printed in the Baltimore Sun. Although the Versailles peace treaty brought an end to Harrison's spying in Europe, she soon obtained another intelligence assignment, spying in the Soviet Union. After some success there she was caught and spent ten nightmarish months in the notorious Lubianka Prison and, later, in Novinsky Prison—the first American woman to become a prisoner of the Bolsheviks. It was from Novinsky that a grateful Cooper had planned to rescue Harrison. That became unnecessary, however, as she was released through the intervention of the American Relief Administration, which offered food for famine-starved Russians in exchange for freedom for all American prisoners (Olds 1985: 181–83).
Cooper and Harrison had first met years earlier in Warsaw at a Red Cross ball, an acquaintance that grew once Harrison returned to the United States in the early 1920s. However, she was restless and her powerful wanderlust uncontainable. Her autobiography testifies:

> I knew that I should have been content to live with my boy in New York where I had made hosts of friends, but I could not settle down. During the late spring nights I lay awake listening to the sirens of the ocean liners that were leaving for distant ports. They were truly sirens to me, urging, enticing, irresistible. Finally, I could stand it no longer. I made up my mind that I would have to go somewhere before the summer was over. (1935: 565)

That ''somewhere'' was nowhere else but the Middle East and Iran, where she went to make Grass.
The wanderlust of all three was driven not only by their personal desires for elsewhere and for other times but also by the Great War, which had shaken many people out of their routines, leaving them at a loss, dissatisfied with their own societies, and curious about other places. Modernity and improvements in communication and transportation had made literal travel and virtual travel (by means of film and photography) possible and within reach of ordinary people. The trio's sense of exceptionalism, expansionism, and triumphalism was fueled not only by thev ictoryof the Americans and their European allies over their Western and Eastern foes but also by the emergence of the United States from the Great

War as a new global power. It was perhaps also driven by the exceptionalism, expansionism, and triumphalism of the U.S. film industry, emblematized by Hollywood's dominance of the world's screens since that war. Political and cinematic supremacy facilitated the emergence of an American travel cinema.

The film's budget was small at ten thousand dollars, at least half of which was supplied by Harrison (Harrison 1935: 566) and the rest by Cooper and Schoedsack (Brownlow 1979: 516, Wiley 1981: 1), with the latter also contributing his lightweight, hand-cranked French Debrie camera, mounted on a tripod and equipped with a 400-foot film magazine. Although Schoedsack was opposed to taking a woman on a dangerous expedition, he agreed to an equal partnership, according to which all three would share the film's profit in equal parts.

Struggle against Nature and Filmic Conditions

Grass contains two overarching plots of struggles: the filmmakers' search for the ''Forgotten People'' and the tribes' migration with thousands of animals over rough terrain. The first plot opens the film and lasts the first third of its length, while the latter plot takes up the rest of the film. Schoedsack and Cooper had originally planned to film the migration of Kurdish tribes in Turkey because they had the "most interesting costumes and customs" and lived in a "wildly photogenic country" (Schoedsack 1983: 43).
Indeed, the film begins like an early theatrical feature by introducing the intrepid travelers, much like cast members: in close-up portrait shots, filmed behind Paramount's Astoria Studios, looking at each other or at the camera (Figure 1). After this opening, Harrison is the only expedition member on camera. Such self-referentiality enhanced the film's
Documentary claims at the same time that, through the artifice of the search for the tribe and Harrison's on-camera presence, it provided Western audiences with a pleasurable narrative world and a figure of identification.

The newly independent Turkey, formed out of the rubble of the Ottoman Empire, suspicious of foreigners, made the explorers' forays into Kurdish region unsafe. During the weeks of waiting for travel and film- ing permits, Schoedsack filmed some newsreel and travelogue footage to support

1 Ernest Schoedsack (left) and Merian Cooper being introduced to the audience (Paramount back lot, Astoria, NY) in Grass (1925).

the team financially. A few of these sequences made it into Grass, such as the scene of the dancing bear and village children. As they became convinced that permits were not forthcoming, they evaded police surveillance and, following ancient caravan routes, trekked southwest from Istanbul to Angora (Ankara) in search of a new Forgotten People. They spent a memorable night in an old caravansary, sharing a hot meal cooked over an open fire with Turkoman travelers. Using flares, Schoedsack filmed this scene dramatically, which was cut into the film. Weeks later they entered the Anatolian desert during a bitter winter, but this did not deter them from fulfilling one of the requirements of desert travelogues—a sandstorm. They re-created it by having porters shovel bran out of bags just outside Schoedsack's camera frame while Harrison and her carriage driver drove straight into the wind. The result on film was highly realistic, as waves of bran came at them, covering them from head to foot, entering their hair, noses, and teeth—Harrison having to remove bran from her long hair for days.

Continuing their search, the trio headed into the Taurus Mountains toward Syria (Figure 2). In the midst of a blinding snowstorm, with snow coming up to the bellies of their horses, they encountered hospitable

2 Marguerite Harrison and local attendants in a snowstorm in the Taurus Mountains (Turkey) in Grass.

natives, among them a local hunter named Halil Effendi, who provided them with another re-created episode. Using a specially built portable canvas screen as camouflage, with three holes in it for eyes and the gun muzzle, Effendi stalked wild mountain goats, shooting and killing one. However, since the shooting occurred off camera, they re-created it by propping the carcass high on a cliff. When Schoedsack was ready, Halil took a shot and someone pulled a cord that caused the carcass to tumble over the mountainside for the filming. Harrison justified the fakery in the way many documentarists have justified re-creations: ''It was merely a repetition before the camera of what had actually happened'' (1935: 586).

Disappointed in not finding their picturesque and heroic Forgotten People in Turkey, Syria, or Iraq, the filmmakers finally chose the Bakhtiari tribes in Iran. In this choice they were advised by the British politician Sir Arnold Wilson, chairman of the board of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, and by the chief of British intelligence for Iraq, Gertrude Bell. The Bakhtiaris' semiannual migration in search of pasturage was massive and dramatic, and their route highly picturesque; it was to begin in April 1924, a schedule the filmmakers could readily accommodate; and their area of migration was within the jurisdiction of the giant oil company's operation, where the filmmakers could benefit from its influence and protection. Sir Arnold's introductory letter, urging local and tribal officials' cooperation, opened many doors to them, including their audience with the Il-Khani, the chief of all the Bakhtiari tribes, and with his cousin and second in command, the Il-Begi, Amir Jang.[3] The older IlKhani was puzzled by the idea of foreigners accompanying tribal migration for filming, but he was won over by the younger Il-Begi, who had been to the movies in Tehran and had liked them. The filmmakers' desire to follow a tribe whose route was through the wild

mountains, not on the gravel road that the British had built, resulted in their joining the Baba Ahmadi subtribe, headed by Haidar Khan.

At this juncture, the filmmakers were justifiably delighted about finally locating the site of the Forgotten People—a delight that is enacted in Grass in the drama of discovery, a characteristic of the expedition genre— which is marked on a map of Asia Minor and Persia (now Iran) on which a large caption identifies the Forgotten People's location and the trio's route to find them. As part of this drama of discovery, viewers are treated to the only scenes of nonmigratory aspects of the tribes' life in the film: the tribal black tents in the valleys and women who are spinning cotton, dancing with a handkerchief, feeding a baby, and milking a goat while men perform the stick dance.

From this point on, the film's first plot—the filmmakers' struggle to find their subjects—joins its second plot—the struggle of the Baba Ahmadi tribe numbering some five thousand people and fifty thousand animals to migrate from their southwest winter region near the Persian Gulf to the cooler summer pastures near Isfahan. This massive movement began on 17 April 1924, and lasted forty-eight days, during which Schoedsack and Cooper generally slept on the ground, while Harrison slept in a small tent. As Schoedsack explains in a tape letter, ''We ate the food they gave us—we had no supplies of our own—and it was very good. They'd bring us their food every night. We'd stretch out on our bedroll, and they'd give us barley, which they stored in goatskin sacks, and every few days they'd have a shish Kebab—and always plenty of yogurt'' (Schoedsack 1971). Cooper, too, loved the outdoors life with the Bakhtiari, considering it, according to his wife Dorothy Cooper, as ''one of the happiest periods in his life'' (D. Cooper 1984).

Schoedsack filmed by hand-cranking his Debrie camera at the silent speed of 16 fps, exposing some 20,000 feet of black-and-white negative. Tribespeople did not have a problem with being filmed, perhaps because they had developed a good rapport with Schoedsack and trusted him and because they were too busy with their migration to pay attention to the camera. Harrison often slept with the precious film cans and the trio's money bags in her tent to safeguard them. As the only Westerner with sustained on-camera presence, she stands out among the tribespeople with her white horse, her light-colored Western safari suit, her pith helmet held on her head with a scarf, and her fashionably made-up face. She took care to apply makeup for each shot and she washed her clothes regularly to make herself "presentable" (Harrison1935:626–27). Schoedsack's shot compositions, which centered her, also contributed to her visibility.

The filmmakers turned the two massive and dramatic obstacles of the migration into the film's narrative complications. One involved thousands of tribespeople and animals crossing the torrential and icy rapids of the Karun River, which was a half-mile wide and without a bridge in the vicinity. In this process, human lives and livestock were inevitably lost annually. Schoedsack, who had gone ahead to secure a position to film the tribes' arrival at the river, sent a note to Cooper, saying: ''Coop! I hate to say it before we start shooting, but this is what we have been traveling months to see. Better be here before sunrise tomorrow. This is it!'' (M. Cooper 1925: 218–19). The lengthy sequence he filmed shows in graphic detail the way tribesmen inflate goatskins and tie them together to form rafts, which carry their wives, children, small animals, and belongings, while the men swim across the turbulent waters simultaneously herding thousands of sheep, donkeys, cows, and horses. Later, when he had confronted the river and witnessed the BabaAhmadi's efforts to cross it, Cooper wrote: ''It was a show, all right. For five days Schoedsack and I, rushing about with the cameras, watched the greatest piece of continuous action I have ever seen'' (1925:

233). The documentary historian Erik Barnouw offered a similar assessment of Schoedsack's filming: ''One of the most spectacular sequences ever put on film'' (1993: 48).

The other obstacle and narrative complication involved the barefoot tribespeople, dressed in light clothing, carving a narrow zigzag trail into the snow-covered side of Zardeh Kuh up to its vertical 15,000-foot summit. Filming such a massive and moving target posed major logistical and aesthetic problems, one of which was the impossibility of rehearsals or retakes. Another was that, to avoid the intense daytime heat, the tribe generally broke camp in complete darkness, depriving the crew of any nighttime scenes or ethnographic footage of tribal socializing. The blinding early morning sun, and the often bright background, also made it impossible to film the lightly dressed tribespeople. However,

3 5,000 tribespeople and 50,000 animals on the zigzag trail up the Zadeh Kuh (Iran) in Grass.

Schoedsack learned to cope with these problems admirably. His cinematography is crisp, dramatic, and breathtaking, particularly where humans are framed against massive mountains, vast valleys, or torrential waters. Kevin Brownlow calls one of these scenes ''the most unforgettably epic shot of documentary history'' (1979: 526). Apparently based on a painting of Napoleon crossing the Alps, which Cooper had seen in Paris, it pictures the zigzagging multitude of tribespeople flattened against the far valley like thousands of flies (Figure 3). Schoedsack's intimate shots are also dramatic, showing women carrying babies in wooden cradles on their backs, a young girl climbing the rocky path with a lamb on her shoulders, and pack animals creating a traffic jam on the zigzag trail.

The filming of Grass itself was also a heroic struggle and achievement, given the weight and bulkiness of the 35mm equipment and film stock and the exigencies of tribal migration, which demanded mobility, spontaneity, and great stamina. In such circumstances, planning was nearly impossible. Schoedsack did well on that account as well, for by the end of the seven-week migration, he had exactly eighty feet of film left with which to record the tribes' triumphal arrival in what the film intertitles call ''the land of milk and honey—the land of Grass'' (Schoedsack 1971).

This is why that scene is so brief and contrived.

The U.S. travelers' search for the Forgotten People and the two key river and mountain crossings are driven not only by wanderlust and desire to escape to elsewhere but also by the theme of the tribes' nomadic life as an elemental struggle for survival against violent nature. Robert Flaherty's Nanook of the North (1922) had memorably depicted this theme in the Inuit's efforts to survive in the Canadian tundra. Cooper wanted to

achieve a similar effect, for he hypothesized that ''when man fights for his life, all the world looks on. And where does man have to fight harder than when he finds his opponent the unrelenting and stern forces of Nature?...We decided to attempt to throw on the screen the actual struggle for life of a migratory people'' (1925).

By the time filming was over, however, Cooper and Schoedsack had grown to regard their film as ''half a picture'' and a ''great missed chance'' (Brownlow1979:528–29). While their footage was impressive in scale and grandeur, it lacked human intimacy and personality. Their plan to complete the film by raising funds to film the tribes' autumn return migration and Haidar's family life with his two wives and son did not materialize. In their preparation to leave Iran, all three stayed in Tehran for a while, where they had two fateful engagements, with significant impact both on their film's fate in Iran and on the politics of Iran-U.S. relations. Cooper and Schoedsack stayed at the home of U.S. Vice Consul Robert Imbrie, who notarized a testimonial letter for them, written by tribal chiefs, that offered proof of their expedition. Within months, Imbrie would be murdered by a fanatical mob in Tehran. In the meantime, Harrison gained an audience with Reza Khan, minister of war and prime minister, who used Imbrie's murder to consolidate his hold on power and become the shah (see below).

Editing and Intertitling the Film

Cooper and Schoedsack took the exposed footage to Paris for development and, later, edited it into a 7-reel film in New York City (about seventy minutes). It was during a private screening of this version that Jesse Lasky (of Famous Players-Lasky Corporation) liked what he saw and decided to complete the film for theatrical distribution—not wanting to repeat his mistake of passing up the opportunity to distribute Nanook of the North seven months earlier.

To that end the studio made several major changes and additions to the film, copyrighting it on 21 June 1924.The portraits of the three explorers were added to the start of the film. The tribal chiefs' testimonial letter was inserted at the film's end. Dated 28 June 1924, written in Persian and English by Haidar Khan and Amir Jang, and notarized by Major Robert W. Imbrie, it confirms that Cooper, Schoedsack, and Harrison were ''the first foreigners who have crossed the Zardeh Kuh pass and the first to have made the forty-eight day migration with the tribes'' (in the Persian version, it is forty-six days).[4] In addition, the film was turned into feature-length (ten reels) by padding it with outtakes, which angered Schoedsack in particular (Brownlow 1981: 2). Finally, innumerable intertitles were inserted (some 174 in the version that Milestone is currently distributing). The final ignominy was that the credit for editing the film did not go to Cooper and Schoedsack, but to Terry Ramsey and Richard P. Carver,who also had a major hand in writing the intertitles.

Famous Players-Lasky may have felt they needed dramatic and snappy titles to make what they feared would be a dreary documentary entertaining. In the late silent era, all films employed title writers, whose job was ''to make subtitles entertaining,'' and by 1925 some of them had succeeded too well, eliciting ''howls of laughter from delighted audiences'' (Brownlow 1981: 1). Of the filmmaking trio, Harrison disliked the

intertitles the most. After viewing Grass once on the public screens, she could not ''bear to see it'' again because she ''loathed'' the artificiality and theatricality of the intertitles (1935: 648).
Taken together, the film's visuals and intertitles create a dichotomous, ''split'' text. While the visuals by and large document, authenticate, and celebrate the reality, bravery, stamina, and resourcefulness of the tribe, the intertitles are often ethnocentric, Orientalist, narratively manipulative, and overly dramatic. This textual split may be a result of the division of labor, with the filmmakers, experienced about the migration and sympathetic to the tribe, in charge of the visuals, and the studio writers, ignorant of the tribes' way of life, supplying the intertitles.[5] However, this division was not that hard, for Cooper admitted to having written some of the titles himself (Brownlow 1981: 1). That the intertitles in the next Cooper-Schoedsack documentary, Chang (1927), and the captions for the numerous stills of the migration in Cooper's book about Grass suffer from similar problems underscores Cooper's ethnocentric view of non-Western people.

The film is also a ''hybrid'' text in the way it borrows from fiction cinema and contributes to an emerging nonfiction cinema. It borrows from the silent fiction films the scenario of search, the filmmakers' ''discovery,'' and the way the intertitles dramatize, narrativize, entertain, characterize, stereotype, and visualize. On the other hand, the documentary footage of the expedition and migration, the film's self-reflexivity, and the way the intertitles and maps provide context, diegetic and extradiegetic information, and framing give evidence of the codes of the as yet unnamed documentary form.

Racialist Nostalgia for Origins

Another theme that attracted the early Western travelers to the tribes was that focusing on tribes allowed them to establish continuity and hierarchy in the chain of human evolution, with non-Western tribes residing in the earlier stages and Western societies occupying the pinnacle of evolutionary developments. There is a marked difference, however, between the manner in which traveling filmmakers, such as Martin and Osa Johnson, represented African blacks around the same time in such films as Simba (1928), Congorilla (1932), and Baboona (1935) and the way that the makers of Grass represented the Iranian nomads. In representing the African blacks, and sometimes Arabs, the traveling filmmakers imbued the social Darwinism paradigm with latent and manifest racism, both of which posited the Africans as inherently different, separate, unequal, and inferior to the whites. They were stereotyped, ridiculed, infantilized, and reduced to the level of subhuman. However, the use of this racialist paradigm was more complicated and more favorable to the Iranian tribes. It was more complicated because the representation of the Baba Ahmadi by Harrison and Cooper in their memoirs differs markedly from that in the film, undermining a unified ideological vision of the tribe. Harrison writes that there was ''nothing particularly glamorous about their struggle for existence,'' as the tribe was terribly poor and existed on a totally inadequate diet (1935: 617). Cooper, too, speaks of the Bakhtiari often in uncomplimentary fashion as ''wild nomads'' (1925: 9) and ''barbarian hordes'' (3), and he quotes past observers of Iran who describe the tribes as ''a race of robbers'' and ''bloodthirsty'' people (151). Both Harrison and Cooper note that their chief, Haidar Khan, was gorilla-like, brutal, a wife beater, an opium smoker, and a horse thief, who loafed about while his people did the work. Despite these very negative appraisals, both also praise the Baba Ahmadi tribe and its chief for their valor, endurance, and ingenuity.

The film does not visualize the team's negative private observations and prejudices, perhaps because it would have countered the projection of the tribespeople as noble savages, which was its overarching theme. Instead, Grass emphasizes the positive public display of tribal bravery and stamina, in support of which it marshals ample documentary evidence. This ideological split between the private and public views of the tribe can be detected in the film's other textual split discussed earlier, between complimentary visuals and condescending intertitles. The racialist depiction of Iranian tribes was more favorable compared to that of Arabs and Africans, because these tribes were construed to be white, non-Semitic, and Aryan, a fact that both the film's intertitles and the filmmakers' writings point up. Like Harrison, Cooper invokes the common racial bond between the tribes and white Americans, musing that ''it may well be that the migratory life which we are going to live with them is that of our own Aryan forefathers of many thousands of years ago'' (1925: 143). Grass's opening intertitles also reiterate this theme.

Such a racialist differentiation between Iranian ''primitives'' and African ''primitives'' is also evident in an unpublished exchange between Brownlow and Schoedsack. At one point, Schoedsack states that he took still portrait shots of the Baba Ahmadi, which they liked very much in general; their only complaint was that they were only head-and-shoulder shots. Brownlow then reminds Schoedsack of Martin and Osa Johnson's expeditions in Africa during which they showed the natives still pictures of themselves and discovered that the natives could not make sense of them. Brownlow asks Schoedsack if he encountered the same problem with the Iranian tribe. This is Schoedsack's response: ''These aren't low down stupid thick old coloured, you know. These are very intelligent white folk. They knew what pictures were, and they had a lot of old stone carvings on graves and things like that'' (Brownlow 1969–70: 9).

Because of these racial and hierarchical conceptions, the Bakhtiari tribes are included in the line of human progress but are kept safely sealed in their time capsule in the earlier evolutionary stages. They came to represent a bygone era of simplicity and authenticity, and their way of life a prelapsarian world of before—before civilization and modernity separated humans from their Edenic origin. Thus a return to and recovery of such a world, in the form of the search and discovery of the Forgotten People, became alluring prospects. Of course, the tribespeople were neither forgotten nor unknown to themselves or to the Iranians, a great percentage of whom were then—and are still—tribal or have tribal roots. But it was necessary to create this fiction of loss and amnesia in order to feed the fiction of the documentary: the discovery of the forgotten tribe by Western filmmakers.

The film's play of the gazes replicates a series of binary power relations: between East and West, ethnographer and subject, and male and female. It contains only one instance of diegetic eye contact and eye-line cutting; significantly, that is in the film's opening between the two male filmmakers, who form a small exclusive club among equals. Harrison, on the other hand, is shown in the opening in a single shot by herself, looking at the camera without any exchange of looks between her and them. And in the rest of the film, where she is on camera, her personal point of view is rarely shown. As a result, both Harrison and the tribespeople are excluded from the process of signification; they are objectified and looked at. However, they are objectified differently. As a white mediator, even though a woman, Harrison has a higher status than the tribes, since she is also a diegetic subject from whose narrative perspective the audience sees the migrating tribe and the trio's expedition. The natives, on the other hand, are objectified thrice: first as the subject of Harrison's regard, then as the subject of the camera's gaze, and finally with their muteness, since the intertitles rarely quote any actual native dialogue.

The film's self-congratulatory attitude also bolsters the Western filmmakers' power position.[6] The tribal leader's letter at the film's end must be seen in this light, for it testifies to, and dramatizes, their accomplishment in braving the tribes' primitive world. Barnouw thought the film's final emphasis was not on the endurance of the tribe but on ''the brash display of egoism—on the heroic accomplishment of the film makers'' (1993: 48).

On the Lecture Circuit: Commercial Exhibition and Reception in the United States

After the film's completion, Cooper and Harrison went on the lecture circuit, extensively screening Grass while providing live narration about their experiences of traveling and filming. Cooper acquired an agent who booked his film tours at clubs, scientific societies, and colleges, particularly in the Midwest. The National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C., invited him to lecture with the film, and among the distinguished audience was the president of the United States. His average net profit from each lecture was about two hundred dollars, which he split equally with his two partners. He also wrote a series of illustrated articles about the filming for Asia Magazine and published a book about that experience, containing Schoedsack's dramatic photographs (M. Cooper 1925), which was subsequently serialized in newspapers and translated into Persian (M. Cooper [1934] 1955). His publisher also arranged for a one-hour radio appearance sponsored by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, for which Cooper received the high sum of one thousand dollars.

Harrison, too, traveled widely with the film, talked on the radio, and lectured with it, particularly to women's clubs and societies. One example of her public lecturing is her presentation on 13 December 1938, at UCLA's giant Royce Hall Auditorium for the university's ''lifelong learning'' program. The printed flyer boasts that she was lecturing with ''the only complete copy of Grass available for public presentation.'' An organist, Harry Q. Mills, was on hand to provide live musical accompaniment. That the event was scheduled in a hall that could seat over one thousand spectators indicates the size of the expected audience. Although, as she admits, she had ''acquired a reputation for unreliability'' because of her ''incurable habit of going off on trips'' and missing her appointments, she secured enough speaking engagements with the film to remain financially afloat (Harrison 1935: 648). Like Cooper, she also wrote a book—narratively more engaging than Cooper's—in which, among her other life stories, she recounts the threesome's experience of the filming of Grass (1935).

In those days, women travelers, explorers, and filmmakers were not taken seriously, and the mass media were often more interested in their love affairs with exotic foreigners than in their explorations and accomplishments. Harrison complained that all the reporters wanted to know was ''if I had become enamored of a sheik!'' (1935: 650). Cooper and Schoedsack, too, did not sufficiently acknowledge her contribution to the film—although Cooper in his memoir applauded her linguistic facility and her paramedical abilities. Schoedsack was downright hostile, calling her involvement in the film "a sore spot" and "a bad idea." Nonetheless, he acquiesced, since having a "white woman" on camera was a "cute" idea, and he felt "honor bound" to "make a shot" of her every so often. He also asserted that there was nothing romantic between the men and Harrison and that Cooper brought her along to repay her for saving him from starvation in the Soviet prisons (Brownlow 1969–70: 9; Brownlow 1979: 528). His antagonism may have stemmed not only from his sexism but also from his professional jealousy of a woman who considered

herself the film's heroine and co-producer. Power was also a factor (see below). Although this hitherto unpublished account of the hostile undercurrent of the relationship among the expedition members was kept private, soon after Grass's first theatrical run, the partnership dissolved. Cooper and Schoedsack, however, joined forces on several subsequent productions, which in some ways replayed, echoed, and signified on Grass, notably Chang and King Kong (1933).

These diverse forms of publishing, publicizing, lecturing, touring, broadcasting, and film screening before general and specialized audiences were part of the cross-fertilizing culture industry infrastructures that were coming together for both fiction films and documentary films. The wide dissemination of such ideologically loaded projections of non-Western people would ensure that these ideologies would become part of the political unconscious of Westerners, helping, in the words of Edward Said, to ideologically "produce" the "East," or the "Orient" (1979).

Famous Players-Lasky produced Grass, while Paramount released it commercially. A variety of film archives, independent film libraries, university film libraries, and independent distributors handled its nontheatrical distribution. In 1991 Milestone Films and Video acquired the rights to the film from the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and re-released the most complete version of it on videocassette, laser disk, and DVD, with an added Persian musical score.[7]

Grass performed well at the box office, particularly in major cities. It remained on the screen at the Criterion Theater in New York City for three months (April-June 1926), earning $85,346, and it earned in its first run in Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles a total of $37,400 (Dannenberg 1927: 253). It did not do as well in smaller cities, perhaps because it was so remote from the lives of ordinary Americans and because there were ''no pretty girls in it, no love scenes'' (Harrison 1935: 648–49). With this income, the three partners paid their expenses, recouped their investment, and earned several thousand dollars each in royalties.

The film did surprisingly well in terms of critical response, as well (Gerhard 1925; Hall 1925; Lawrence 1925; Johnson 1982). In the United States, nationwide film reviewers voted Grass one of the best pictures of 1925. Many reviewers ranked it among the ten best films, and overall they ranked it number twelve, a high ranking given that it was a documentary in the company of luminary feature films such as F. W. Murnau's The Last Laugh (ranked number two), John Ford's The Iron Horse (number four), Erich von Stroheim's Greed (number five), Charles Chaplin's The Gold Rush (number seventeen), and Raoul Walsh's Thief of Baghdad (number twenty-two). In addition, the National Board of Review ranked it fifteen in a list of forty best pictures of 1925 (Dannenberg 1927: 417– 26). In 1926 Grass was selected among four hundred films ''suitable for children'' (Kann 1927: 471–73). Geographers and ethnologists ''hailed it as a substantial contribution to human knowledge'' (Harrison 1935: 648), and historians recognized it as a ''classic'' of documentary cinema, rating it second only to Nanook of the North (Brownlow 1979: 529).

Sociopolitical Reception in Iran

Apparently, Grass was not screened in Iranian public cinemas for about two decades, for several reasons. For one, it showed armed nomadic tribesmen freely moving about at the time that the government was forcibly pacifying all tribes. Showing the film publicly would have countered that national policy, spearheaded by the

autocratic prime minister Reza Khan, with grave consequences. Its depiction of Iran as a ''primitive'' and pastoral country would also have falsified his modernist projection of Persia (whose name he changed to Iran in 1935). That he was aware of the film is almost certain, for Harrison met with him in Tehran after filming in 1924. However, there is no evidence that he had viewed and banned the film.

The film's screening may also have been hampered by a foreign-policy crisis that occurred immediately after filming. This was the tragic murder of the signer of the testimonial letter for Grass, U.S. Vice Consul Robert Imbrie, by a Tehran mob angry at his photographing a religious shrine and procession, which became the first of several major rifts in Iran-U.S. relations in modern times. The Iranian government apologized for the incident, paid for the indemnity of Imbrie's widow, underwrote the cost of the warship Trenton to repatriate the body, and hanged three culprits. Significantly, Reza Khan used Imbrie's brutal murder to consolidate his power by declaring martial law, arresting his political opponents, muzzling the opposition press, and curbing the clergy. A year later, he dissolved the Qajar dynasty and declared himself the shah of the new Pahlavi dynasty. The United States government, which had publicly taken a hardline approach with the Iranian government to save face, implicitly encouraged his assumption of dictatorial power as a ''price that had to be paid for satisfactory settlement of the Imbrie dispute.'' For the Americans, the lesson from this incident reverberated for decades, for as late as the 1950s, the U.S. embassy in Tehran routinely warned Americans against photographing religious events in Iran by invoking Imbrie's unfortunate fate (Zirinsky 1986: 283–88).

When Grass was eventually shown after the Allied Powers had occupied Iran and forced Reza Shah into exile in 1941, it was not the feature length, silent American film. Rather, it was a forty-minute sound version (perhaps produced by the BBC), with Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade (1888) as the soundtrack and a Persian-language voiceover narration. The well-known scholar Mojtaba Minovi wrote and read the narration himself, which provided a sympathetic and nationalistic counter-discourse to the original ethnocentric intertitles. The British Council distributed the film nationally to movie theaters and to cultural and educational institutions as late as the mid-1970s.

According to the filmmaker Mohammad Ali Issari, this version was highly popular with Iranians because seeing themselves on the screen for the first time and in a generally positive light ''satisfied their sense of national pride'' (1982). The French sociologist Edgar Morin also noted that many grown Bakhtiari men, who on seeing the film recognized themselves as children, were delighted about what they saw. The Persian-language narration must have indigenized the film, increased its attractiveness, and enhanced what Morin calls the ''pleasure of auto identification'' of cinema (1977:109). Issari's auto-identification by means of Grass had a lasting effect on him, initiating his lifelong commitment to documentary filmmaking.

At the same time, however, like a Lacanian mirror, the film's wider circulation produced contradictory reactions, causing not only self identification but also self-alienation. The writer Ali Javaherkalam, who viewed the film in 1931 in a cinema in Abadan operated by the Anglo Persian Oil Company, relates that during the screening, some oil workers became so agitated by the perceived negative depiction of Iran that they loudly objected to the film and walked out of the theater. The next day, however, a high-ranking Iranian official of the company admonished them for their defensive anger at a film that he thought had honestly documented Iranian reality (Rahimian 1988: 61). Bakhtiari tribal leaders also expressed mixed reactions about it to me. Amir Bahman Samsam confirmed that he had seen both versions, that the

migration was depicted ''realistically and without errors,'' and that the Baba Ahmadi's route was their normal route (Samsam 1984). This latter statement, coupled with similar comments below, dispenses once and for all with the notion put forward by some scholars (Sadoul 1965: 105; Barsam 1992: 55) that the tribe had taken an unusually picturesque and difficult route to accommodate the desire of the filmmakers for dramatic footage. Hamid Khan Bakhtiari, the son of the Il-Khani who had facilitated the filmmakers' migration with the tribe, had also viewed the British Council's version as a young governor of the region. He corroborated the accuracy and truthfulness of the film. However, his emotional reaction was mixed: ''I was made proud of the defiance of the men and women of the tribe but very saddened by their poverty, ignorance, and illiteracy'' (Bakhtiari 1984).

Grass captured the imagination of not only Issari but also other filmmakers, inside and outside Iran, some of whom attempted to reproduce and update that primordial vision of humankind by examining tribal life—with mixed results. Grass continues to be screened in documentary film, Middle Eastern history, and visual anthropology courses in the United States and elsewhere. One barometer of its longevity is the statistic from the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, which reported some fifty ''circulations'' a year as late as the 1980s, about 80 percent of which went to colleges and the remainder to cultural institutions (Sloan 1982). The availability of the film on video in the 1990s bolstered its circulation enormously, as Milestone Films and Video reports sales of over five thousand videocassettes and DVDs in one decade since it began distributing the film (Doros 2003). This sudden surge may owe partly to the presence of over half a million Iranians in the United States, the largest population outside Iran, who are interested in their cultural heritage.

Attempted Color and Sound Remake in 1956

Aware of some of Grass's shortcomings, Cooper attempted another version in Technicolor and sound, but against Schoedsack's advice (Schoedsack 1983: 114). He assembled a large fifteen-person, Hollywood-style crew consisting of technical personnel, guards, and actors along with half a dozen muleteers and some forty-three mules, who carried their gear, tents, cameras, vodka, orange juice (imported from the United States), canned food (corned beef and hash), and sleeping bags. Most would not eat the tribes' food (Sadeqi 1984). Lowell Farrell was to direct the film for C. V. Whitney Productions, with Cooper as executive producer and Winton Hock as director of photography. This was a far cry from the nimble, three-member crew of Grass, who slept in the open or in a pup tent and ate what the tribespeople ate.

Their filming approach, guided by first-time director Farrell, was also Hollywood inspired in that it was based on scripted narrative films, unsuitable for spontaneous filming of a massive migratory tribe. Under government supervision, they managed to film scenes of Bakhtiari daily life, migration, river crossing, and city life, but they ran out of time, money, and steam. This footage was edited into a forty-minute ''demo'' film that was accompanied by a musical track and a verbose voice-over narration designed to raise funds to finance yet another trip to complete the film (which did not happen). This footage, which I have viewed, lacks the scale and drama of the original, a lack that is particularly noticeable in its mundane river- and mountain-crossing sequences. Having been filmed like a scripted documentary, it also lacks curiosity and the sense of wonder and discovery about the profilmic world that distinguished Grass, which remains an unsurpassed expedition documentary of one of humanity's vanishing ways of life.

Notes

1. I would like to thank the following people who over the many years of my research on Grass agreed to be interviewed; corresponded with me; and put at my disposal documents, photographs, reviews, and other personal items related to the works of the Cooper-Schoedsack-Harrison team. They are Jalal Asghar (Schoedsack's friend), Kevin Brownlow (film historian),Dorothy Cooper (Cooper's wife), Robert Dickson (filmmaker), Dennis Doros (Milestone Films and Video), Dr. John Gilmore (Schoedsack's optometrist), Shusha Guppy (writer and folksinger), Khosrow Zolqadr Sadeghi (Schoedsack's friend), Peter Schoedsack (Schoedsack's son), Maxine Swanson (former Maxine Logan, Maxine Howard, and Maxine Butcher, nurse and caretaker of Schoedsack in his last years), Gerry Veeder (film scholar), and Ken Wiley (Schoedsack's friend). Not all of these sources are cited here. Jeff Fegley helped with scanning the stills. This research was partially funded by a National Endowment for Humanities Travel to Collections grant.

2. By the mid-1960s, Schoedsack had lost his sight due to a detached retina, glaucoma, and bullous keratitis (Gilmore 1983). He became a bitter, cantankerous, and paranoid man who demanded narcotics for his pain and sometimes hallucinated about fighting the Iranian tribes (Swanson1984). He communicated with distant friends by audiotapes. I have a copy of his tape letter narrating the complete story of the making of Grass (Schoedsack 1971).

3. At the time, the Il-Khani was Gholamhosain Khan Sardar Mohtashamand the Il-Begi was Mohammad Taqi Khan Amir Jang. There were two Baba Ahmadi tribes, Baba Ahmadi-ye Kashki andBaba Ahmadi-yeSarajeddin.The U.S. filmmakers were attached to the Kashki branch (Samsam 1984).

4. The version of this letter reproduced in Cooper's book (1925: 13) is markedly different, supplying more information about the route taken. Dated 5 June 1924, it states that Cooper, Schoedsack, and Harrison are "the first foreigners who have made the 46-day migration with the Baba Ahmadi tribe of the Bakhtyari, over the Zardeh Kuh trail from the Jungari district in Arabistan to the Chahar Mahal valley in Ehleck."

5. The low regard of the title writer, Terry Ramsey, for the tribes and his instrumentalist view of intertitles come through in his letter in Atlantic Monthly in response to a review of Grass that the periodical had published. He states: "The fact is that the Bakhtyari are shown merely driving their cows over a mountain to pastures. They do it twice a year. It is a chore, not an epic, even if I did utter considerable typographical excitement on the screen about it." Reacting to the reviewer's admission of enjoying the "wealth of details," he notes that "she may have enjoyed it, but she did not see it. It was not in the pictorial negative. That beautiful detail was Barnumed into words calculated to speed the spectator past the camera's omissions" (1926: 142–43).

6. Even the catalogue of Kodascope Library, which circulated Grass, bore such an attitude: "In all the world, only three white people have ever seen this marvelous depiction of elemental life and mighty courage" (Descriptive Catalogue of Kodascope Library 1932: 193).

7. Milestone has the rights to Grass. The musical score is by Gholamhosain Janati-Ataie, Kavous Shirzadian, and Amirali Vahabzadegan.

MERIAN COLDWELL COOPER
(October 24, 1893 - April 21, 1973)

Born in Florida and educated at Annapolis and the school of hard knocks, Merian C. Cooper's life was the stuff of the adventure books he loved as a child. By the age of six he had determined to become an explorer. After leaving the Naval Academy, at the school's request, Cooper joined the Merchant Marine and later worked as a journalist. Eager to fight in Europe, he enlisted in the National Guard, finally making it to Europe in the final months of the war as a fighter pilot. Shot down in a dogfight and severely burned, he celebrated the Armistice in a German POW camp. After the war he was assigned to a US relief mission in Poland, where he met refugees of the Russian civil war. His future collaborator, Ernest B. Schoedsack, described their first meeting in 1918 Vienna: "I was at the Franz Josef Railroad Station. Down a platform came this Yank in a dirty uniform, wearing one French boot and one German one. It was Coop. He was just out of German prison and he wanted to get to Warsaw. He had once been kicked out of the Naval Academy and had sold his sword. Now he'd found the guy who had it and he'd bought it back." Cooper helped form the Kosciusko division of the Polish air force and fought against the Red Army. Shot down, he was sent to Siberia where he managed to escape from prison camp and traveled 26 days on foot to Latvia. Imprisoned there as a suspected Communist, he was rescued by a US relief mission and sent home.

Back in New York, Cooper wrote about his adventures for the daily newspapers and spent his evenings studying at the American Geographical Society. In 1922, he joined Captain Edward Salisbury's voyage around the world. When the expedition's cameraman jumped ship after a bad storm, Cooper suggested Schoedsack as his replacement. In North Africa, the team worked on a documentary about Ethiopian leader Ras Tafari (later Haile Selassie), which was later released by Salisbury as two documentaries GOW THE HUNTER and RAMU, KING OF THE SUN. After leaving Salisbury's ill-fated expedition, Cooper and Schoedsack decided to work together on a film about the migration of the Bakhtiari tribe of Persia. The film was GRASS, a tremendous hit. They followed this success with the even more popular CHANG. Their next film, THE FOUR FEATHERS (1929) was set in North Africa. Cooper then turned his attention to his other passion, aviation. He helped found Western and Pan American Airways. Cooper and Schoedsack joined forces again (along with Schoedsack's wife, screenwriter Ruth Rose) to produce the spectacular KING KONG (1933). The character of Denham (played by Robert Armstrong) in KING KONG is modeled after its creator, Merian Cooper. In 1933 Cooper married actress Dorothy Jordan and succeeded David O. Selznick as vice-president in charge of production at RKO. There he supervised or produced LITTLE WOMEN, FLYING DOWN TO RIO and Ernest Schoedsack's THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME, SON OF KONG and THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII. He was one of the first to see the potential of Technicolor and later convinced Selznick to use the process for GONE WITH THE WIND. During World War II, Cooper served as chief of staff of General Chennault in China, rising to the rank of brigadier general in the air force reserve. In 1946, Cooper formed an independent production company with John Ford and supervised the production of Ford's THE FUGITIVE (1947), FORT APACHE (1948), SHE WORE A YELLOW RIBBON (1949), WAGONMASTER (1950), and THE SEARCHERS (1956). He also produced Schoedsack's MIGHTY JOE YOUNG (1949). In 1952 he coproduced and codirected (with Lowell Thomas) THIS IS CINERAMA, which grossed over $30 million in the US alone. That same year the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences honored him for "his many innovations and contributions to the art of the motion picture."

Cooper died of cancer at age 79, only hours after the death of Robert Armstrong, the man who portrayed the explorer-filmmaker in his most famous creation.

ERNEST BEAUMONT SCHOEDSACK
(June 8, 1893 - December 23, 1979)

The self-described, "strong, silent type," Ernest B. Schoedsack was the perfect complement and foil for his long-time collaborator and friend, Merian C. Cooper. They were a Mutt and Jeff pairing, with Schoedsack a thin, quiet 6'5" and Cooper a short, outgoing and fast-talking dynamo. Where Cooper was interested in the business and publicity end of film production, Schoedsack was the master technician, whose spectacular camera work and daring set-ups made their films critical as well as financial successes. At the same time they had much in common—sharing a wanderlust and a fascination with the way people lived around the world and the courage and determination to record it on film.

Born in Council Bluffs, Iowa, Schoedsack ran away from home at twelve and headed for California. By the time he was seventeen he was working as a cameraman for Mack Sennett. When World War I began, Schoedsack enlisted in the Photographic Department of the Signal Corps and was sent to France. He filmed many major battles and became a captain in a Red Cross photographic unit. At the end of the war, he stayed

on in Europe as a freelance newsreel cameraman. Schoedsack met Cooper in Vienna in 1918 (see Schoedsack's quote in Cooper bio). In Poland, he filmed the Polish-Russian campaign and generally "did everything from convoying supplies across a rather hostile Germany to driving ambulances ... even going down to the Black Sea to bring Polish refugees back from the Russian oil fields." For Schoedsack, the high point of his "adventure" was during the Polish retreat from Kiev: "I was the last to get across the great Dnieper bridge and the excited Poles blew it up on my heels, but I did get a chance to turn around and get the thing coming down — with a motion picture camera." Reunited with Cooper when he joined Edward Salisbury's journalistic crew, Schoedsack filmed the future Haile Selassie in Addis Abbaba and left the expedition with Cooper when the ship lost its keel. The two traveled together from Ethiopia to Paris and had "plenty of time to talk things over about our future plans."

They decided to record the migration of the Bakhtiari tribe of Persia. After filming GRASS, Cooper went to Hollywood to negotiate the distribution for the film while Schoedsack raised money for the team as a cameraman for the New York Zoological Society's trip to the Galapagos Islands, headed by William Beebe. Another expedition member, Ruth Rose, later became Schoedsack's wife and author of the screenplay for KING KONG. GRASS was the first of Schoedsack and Cooper's collaborations – they joined forces again to make CHANG, THE FOUR FEATHERS, KING KONG, THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME, SON OF KONG, THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII and MIGHTY JOE YOUNG. On his own, Schoedsack directed RANGO, BLIND ADVENTURE, LONG LOST FATHER, TROUBLE IN MOROCCO, OUTLAWS OF THE ORIENT, DR. CYCLOPS and an uncredited prologue to Cooper's THIS IS CINERAMA.

During World War II Schoedsack served in the Air Force. While testing equipment in a tank at Edwards Air Force Base, a shell exploded nearby and his head hit the bottom of the tank turret, detaching the eye retina. Subsequent operations couldn't repair the damage and Schoedsack was virtually blind for the last 35 years of his life.

A footnote to movie history: Schoedsack and Cooper's most famous screen appearance was as the chief observer and flight commander of the plane that finally downs King Kong from atop the Empire State Building, under Schoedsack's direction. This bit of casting was inspired by Cooper's comment: "We should kill the sonofabitch ourselves!"

MARGUERITE ELTON BAKER HARRISON
(October 1879 – July 16, 1967)

Marguerite Elton Baker Harrison was born into a wealthy and respected Baltimore family. Her father, Bernard N. Baker, founded the famed Atlantic Transport Lines for transatlantic travelling. Her childhood was like a fairy tale — the best schools, meetings with the world's most famous people, and even a presentation at the English court. But even then, she felt stifled by society's strict conventions. While still very young, she disappointed her family by becoming engaged to Thomas Bullitt Harrison — a young man of exceptional quality but lacking the influential and powerful ancestors the Bakers had hoped for. Still, the wedding in 1901 was one of the most lavish ever seen in Baltimore, including two reverends, a bishop, ten bridesmaids and ten groomsmen. By the next year, she had given birth to a son, and there was fourteen years of happy married life that followed. But in 1915, Thomas Bullitt Harrison died, leaving her in debt of nearly $70,000. She made

two vows that year. First, to repay her husband's debt which at the time she was not legally bound. And second, never to be so attached to anyone again.

On what must of been a whim, but accompanied by references from some of the most notable citizens of the city, Marguerite applied for a job at the almost entirely male enclave, The Baltimore Sun. She became an accomplished journalist, but a desire for adventure soon overtook her. With America's entry into World War I, Marguerite chose to apply to the Military Intelligence Department (MID) and asked to serve her country. It was an astonishing decision that would lead her to international notoriety. She was thirty nine years old at the time.

At a salary of $250 a month (and the same for expenses), Marguerite Harrison became a spy for the United States. Only her family and her managing editor at the Sun knew this. When Armistice was declared, the government decided to send her to unoccupied Germany, under cover as the Sun's special correspondent. After the peace treaty was signed in 1919, she went back to Baltimore, once again writing for the newspaper. But her boredom soon made her think of more adventures and with Russia in the midst of Civil War, she volunteered to MID.

Once again, Marguerite went as a reporter for the Baltimore Sun and found herself waiting in Poland for further orders. It was there at a Red Cross dance where she first met Captain Merian C. Cooper, then a member of the famed Polish Kosciusko Squadron — a unit of American flyers there to help the Poles against the Russians. They shared a few dances and casual conversation, and the next day, Cooper returned to his squadron. Little did either one knew how their lives would intertwine those next few years.

With no official orders to enter Russia and time wasting away, Marguerite decided to take the obvious route. She, and a Russian Jew by the name of Dr. Anna Karlin as her companion, simply walked across the barbed-wire entanglements into Russian territory. Picked up by Soviet patrols, she ended up a few weeks later in Moscow. In spite of her illegal entrance, the authorities decided she could remain in Moscow for two weeks, and then after that, a month. She quickly fell in love with Russian culture and social events. During this time, she worked with the Red Cross to supply packages of food and clothing to American prisoners. One, she discovered, was Cooper, who had been shot down near Kiev. Cooper claimed later on that her assistance saved his life.

Then, one day, even though she had not actively written any reports or made contact with MID, she was arrested as a spy. She spent ten months in a Bolshevik prison where conditions were horrendous. Back home, however, her imprisonment had become an international incident. Through the efforts of the Sun and some personal friends, she was released from prison and soon found herself on a train to Berlin. At the station, Cooper was waiting to greet her — he had escaped a Soviet prison and walked back, through Latvia into Poland. On her return to the States, she quit MID and devoted herself to writing about her experiences. *Marooned in Moscow* became a big hit and this started her career as an author and speaker.

But her wanderlust continued and she soon was exploring mainland China. On a trip to this country's Far Eastern Republic, she found it had been taken over by Soviet soldiers the night before. She was arrested again and taken to Moscow. There was put in prison for ten weeks while awaiting trail. Luck, however, was on her side. An American Relief Administration officer happened to spot her one day and knew who she was. Due

to America's current relief efforts for the Soviet population, her release was quickly arranged. Marguerite arrived home in March of 1923. Her book on her Chinese and Soviet exploits, entitled *Red Bear or Yellow Dragon* came out the following year.

Only a few months later, however, her desire for still *more* adventure took over. It was in New York where she once again met up with Cooper. Having a common interest in foreign exploration, they decided to make a travel film that would show *real* danger and courage. They invited Ernest B. Schoedsack to be their cameramen and the partnership for GRASS was formed.

Details of their remarkable journey can be found in her autobiography, *There's Always Tomorrow* (1935). On her return from Persia, she found herself completely annoyed at the newspaper reporters' trivial and insulting questions about her life such as what kind of lipstick she used in the Gobi Desert and did she fall in love with a sheik. There was little interest in what she had actually experienced and learned. So in 1925, Marguerite Harrison helped form with three other female explorers, the Society of Woman Geographers. It is still an influential and important organization that has spread worldwide, and has included some of the most distinguished women of this century.

In 1926, Marguerite married an English actor by the name of Arthur Middleton Blake and moved to Hollywood to help his career. Her marriage seemed to stall her interest in wandering the earth, and she settled down to continue her writing and lectures. After Blake's death in 1949, she returned to Baltimore. At the age of seventy-eight, she still found herself traveling by freight boat to South America and later covered Africa, Australia and post-World War II Berlin. There, she even enjoyed a last daring adventure using a ploy she had used years before. Marguerite traveled through forbidden Communist East Berlin by simply walking through the lines. She died at the age of eighty-eight, on July 16, 1967. Her ashes were scattered out to sea.

PATRICK HOLCOMB, COMPOSER (NOTES ON THE 2021 SCORE)

for dulcimer or cimbalom, sinfonietta, and electronics

Original film score commissioned by Indiana University Cinema as a part of the Jon Vickers Film Scoring Award

Premiered live to picture by Lilah Senibaldi, flutes; Stina Hawkinson, oboe and English horn; Simon Plum, clarinets; Lauren Hallonquist, bassoon and contrabassoon; Jenna Montes, horn; Richard Stinson, trumpet and flugelhorn; Cameron Henry, percussion; Kari Novilla, harp; Bethany Brinson, piano and celesta; Erina Buccholz and Delia Li, violins; Ursula Steele, viola; Christopher Santos, cello; Zach McMillan, bass; and Tyler Readinger, conductor with a prerecorded dulcimer track by Malcolm Dalglish on April 17, 2021 in cyber-space from room MC066 of the Musical Arts Center at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music in Bloomington, IN

INSTRUMENTATION:

1(+picc,afl).1(+ca,triangle).1(+Eb,bcl).1(+cbsn,sleigh bells,tambourine) - 1(+triangle,tambourine).1(+flhn,sleigh bells,tambourine).0.0 - 1perc - harp - piano(+cel,tambourine) - 2.1.1.1 + dulcimer or cimbalom, electronics

Despite my childhood dreams of becoming a film score composer, I got into composing for film by chance. During my first semester as a master's student at the Indiana University Jacobs School of

Music, I registered on a whim for a film scoring course with Professor Larry Groupé. I enjoyed the class enough to take another course with Professor Groupé the following semester. As my final project for this class, I scored a short excerpt of the 1925 documentary Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life. Through the Jon Vickers Film Scoring Award, the Indiana University Cinema commissions a student composer each year to score a pre-existing silent film for a live premiere; that year, Grass had been selected for the project. Although the application excerpt was brief, I developed a connection with the film as I wrote my score; somehow, I felt that the film communicated to me that I would be chosen for the commission before I even submitted my application.

Grass, the second ever ethnographic documentary, chronicles a tribe of fifty thousand Bakhtiari as they embark on their seasonal odyssey in search of grass to sustain their livestock. Above all, Grass is a film about resilience. When faced with the Karun River's miles of icy rapids, the Bakhtiari can only swim for their lives. When Zardeh Kuh looms thousands of feet above them, the barefoot tribe must forge a path up the icy mountain. Regardless of the obstacles, the Bakthiari soldier on; for the tribe, grass is life, so they must persist or die. The film is notable not only for its powerfully emotional framing of the journey, but also for its extraordinary footage of the landscapes and the people who inhabit them. Because of these landscapes, I augmented the sinfonietta with an electronics track in specific instances in order to reflect the expansiveness of the panoramic shots. At Professor Groupé's suggestion, I also added a cimbalom to the ensemble; along the way, the instrument came to represent the tribe, and its wild flurries of activity emblematize the Bakhtiari's battle against the elements throughout the score.

In writing this piece, I started a journey of my own: I started a second master's degree in scoring for visual media with Grass as my thesis. Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life (2020–21) is my first full-length film score, but I hope it will not be my last. To all those who will watch, thank you for taking this journey with me.

Reorienting *Grass*: How a Musical Score Transforms an Orientalist Documentary

By Babak Elahi, Dean of the College of Sciences and Liberal Arts
Kettering University. Courtesy of Afterimage

Introduction

In 1992 Milestone Films released *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life* on DVD with an original score composed and performed by Amir-Ali Vahabzadegan (who now exclusively goes by Amir Vahab), Gholamhosain Janati-Ataie, and Kavous Shirzadian. The film, originally released in 1925 with a score by Hugo Riesenfeld, is a remarkable 71-minute account of a Bakhtiari subtribe's seasonal migration, including dramatic scenes of thousands of men, women, children, pets, and livestock crossing the Karun River and scaling Zardeh Kuh Mountain. The Bakhtari comprise what Gene Garthwaite describes, in *Khans and Shahs: A Documentary Analysis of the Bakhtiyari in Iran*, as a confederation of both pastoral-nomadic and agriculturalist tribes in Iran's central Zagros mountain region. Linguistically, they are part of Iran's Lur language group, and sociopolitically, they began to gain increasing influence in Iran's central government after the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–11. By the time of the Iranian Revolution of 1978–79, figures like Prime Minister

Shapour Bakhtiar, whose name reflects his tribal affiliation, had risen to national prominence. According to Garthwaite, the Bakhtiari were the subject of romantic representations dating back to the Victorian era. The film, directed by Merian C. Cooper with cinematography by Ernest B. Schoedsack, focuses on the Baba Ahmadi sub-tribe, and *Grass's* representation of this group's migration was in keeping with the longer history of Orientalist representations of the Bakhtiari noted by Garthwaite. *Grass* also documents the journey of the filmmakers themselves. Cooper and Schoedsack had enlisted Marguerite Harrison as their star—the woman explorer who leads us on this journey. She had also helped fund the film, after having worked in the United States military and intelligence services with Cooper. These three are introduced in the opening of the film, and then Harrison takes on the role of female adventurer as we follow her through Turkey, Kurdistan, Iraq, and Syria and, eventually, to the Bakhtiari region of Iran.

Scholars have read this film as classic early documentary cinema[1] or as a masterpiece created by artist adventurers.[2] Others have examined *Grass* in light of American cultural history,[3] or as a "race" film in the context of Orientalist representations of the Middle East.[4] Amy Malek compares a later documentary about the Bakhtiari, *People of the Wind* (1976, directed by Anthony Howarth), to *Grass*, arguing that both have similarly problematic racial politics.[5] Anthropologist David MacDougall notes that despite the film's racializing ethnographic ideology, Schoedsack's footage is "a document of great power and detail."[6] Similarly, Hamid Naficy states that the film is a split text between Orientalist intertitles, and visuals that "document, authenticate, and celebrate the reality, bravery, stamina, and resourcefulness of the [Bakhtiari] tribe."[7] Naficy's point, in particular, about a film that is split between the ideologies of text and image invites an analysis of a third element: music. Since 1992, scholars have had the opportunity to examine the musical score created for the Milestone release, but none has addressed this innovation in detail. In addition, scholars have focused mostly on the representation of the Bakhtiari, saying little about the Kurdish, Turkish, and Arab subjects who are also represented on screen. As I discuss below, the 1992 score brings out some of these cultural and ethnic crosscurrents in the film. Though the original 1925 score for the film has been lost, other scores have been created or performed since, and yet none of these has been explored. In 2009, for example, *Grass* was screened at the Killruddery Film Festival in Ireland with a live piano score that, according to one attendee, "carried the drama through."[8] In 2021, Indiana University held a virtual screening of *Grass* with a new score composed by Patrick Holcomb. A Jon Vickers Film Scoring Award allowed Holcomb to produce the composition, which will be part of a future Milestone release of *Grass*. However, the 1992 score was composed long before these later attempts, and that score deserves more sustained critical attention than it has thus far received.

A new score can "change the way the audience interacts with a silent film," and has "the potential to add new meaning to" it, as Laurence Carr writes.[9] Because the 1992 score consists of Iranian classical music and Kurdish, Turkish, and Arab musical practices, it offers a particularly rich example of how music can affect reception. The 1992 score changes the meaning of the film by challenging the ideological influence of the intertitles over the images. It is precisely because the film is a "split text" between intertitles and visuals that the music can make such an important difference. As a third element, music intervenes in the rhetorical struggle between image and text.

From left to right: Amir Vahab, Gholam Hosein Janati-Ataie, and Kavous Shirzadian performing at Duke University (early 1980s); courtesy Amir Vahab.

This essay fills the scholarly gap in critical studies of the film by contextualizing and analyzing the 1992 score. Before analyzing the film in detail, the first half of this essay will set the context for that analysis in four ways. First, I summarize the state of silent film music when *Grass* was released in 1925, and speculate about Hugo Riesenfeld's methods and reputation, and offer an assessment of his work. Second, I build on existing analyses of the film's racist ideology. As other scholars have shown, Cooper was guided by Aryan race theory, which expressed a white supremacist view of history and geography. Third, I contextualize the 1992 score by discussing how the composers approached their task, a discussion based on interviews I conducted with Amir Vahab, who played most of the instruments and performed the sung poetry for the score. I situate this discussion within a framework of Iranian classical music's relationship to a broader set of regional musical traditions. Finally, I set up a theoretical framework that contrasts the white supremacist implications of the intertitles with the cosmopolitanism of the musical score. Having set this context, I take the second half of this essay to conduct a close textual analysis of the 1992 score. I show how regional music (including Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, and Persian elements) challenges the racial politics of the film's intertitles. It does so by providing an alternative, musical narrative agency, one that leads the viewer through a cosmopolitan musical journey, and away from the intertitles' narrative of a return to the source of whiteness.

Forgotten Music: Oriental and Western

By the early 1920s, silent film music had come of age. Musicians were being trained more extensively, cue sheets were more widely available, orchestras were bigger, and the source of music was concealed, creating the illusion of natural sound.[10] By the late 1920s, synchronized soundtracks eclipsed these practices, and

much silent film music would be lost. In this late stage of silent film music, the popular Hollywood music director and composer Hugo Riesenfeld created the original score for *Grass*. Although neither musical recordings nor cue sheets remain for the film,[11] we can make an educated guess about the conceptual nature of Riesenfeld's score. Based on Riesenfeld's own methods and his contemporary work, it is safe to say that his musical choices had "Oriental" elements, while, at the same time, some of the motifs may have echoed music then associated with the Western. A film's music director must, Riesenfeld recommended, "have at his disposal a limitless supply of music"[12] catalogued and labeled by "type of emotion or kind of action." He explained that such musical building blocks should be sought in "France, Germany, England, Italy and even the Orient."[13] The rhetorical implications of the statement are clear: Riesenfeld equates specific nations like France and Italy with the amorphous geographical category of "the Orient," which he further qualifies with the word "even," suggesting either distance or lower status. A later BBC edited version of *Grass* distributed in Iran after World War II, likely in service of Cold War aims, used Nikolai Rimsky Korsakov's *Scheherazade* as the soundtrack, not without a little irony, perhaps.[14]

In addition to knowing about Riesenfeld's methods, we also know the type of work he created for other films at around the same time. Most recently, he had scored the 1923 film *The Covered Wagon*, a Western based on a novel that "reinforced the notion of Manifest Destiny"[15] and was dedicated to the memory of Teddy Roosevelt.[16] We know that Cooper, too, would go on to produce Westerns.[17] A few hints in the intertitles suggest that Riesenfeld may have had occasion to include Western themes to align with Western conventions used in those intertitles. For example, the long sequence showing the Bakhtiari crossing the Karun River includes a scene in which a kid (baby goat) is perched on top of a mule swimming across the river. The intertitle reads, "Ride 'em kid,"[18] a pun alluding to the language of Westerns whether on screen, in dime novels, or at Wild West shows. More to the point, in a scene showing a tribesman blowing up a sheepskin to be used for the rafts that ferry the tribe across the river, the intertitle reads: "Even the pioneers of the covered wagon days never thought of this. . . ."[19] This reference to pioneers and covered wagons was, undoubtedly, in keeping with the ideology of the white man's conquest of the world, and would have given Riesenfeld an opening to introduce Western themes in the music. Whether he did so or not, we cannot know. However, we can be sure that the Bakhtiari are framed as a strong and resourceful early branch of the Western pioneers' Aryan family tree. Thus, the possible presence of Western musical themes combined paradoxically (or logically, perhaps) with Orientalist music would have bolstered the racial implications of the intertitles: the white race that won the West comes from the same stock as this determined, though forgotten and unevolved, tribe that survives in the East.

Aryan Race Theory and Intertitles in *Grass*

Other scholars have observed how these intertitles paint the Bakhtiari as the childlike remnants of the white race whose racially mature descendants conquered the West.[20] Although Terry Ramsaye and Richard P. Carver are credited with editing the film and writing the intertitles, Cooper must have had some influence on these intertitles, something Harrison acknowledged and bemoaned in her autobiography years later, complaining that the text was "melodramatic, artificial, and of the theatre," reflecting Cooper and Schoedsack's desire to appeal to lowbrow appetites.[21] According to Kamran Rastegar, the film was Cooper's expression of the white supremacist Aryan race theory that had influenced him.[22] In the first third of the film, as Cooper, Shoedsack, and Harrison travel from Anatolia to the Zagros mountains, they depict themselves as going back in time to earlier stages of white racial development.[23] The Bakhtiari migration

becomes a microhistory of the white man's great march Westward, a metaphor for the great Aryan conquest of the globe.[24] The first intertitle after the opening credits establishes this narrative of the conquerors of the West traveling back in space and time to their own humble origins among a "Forgotten People": "The way of the world is west. Long the sages have told us how our forefathers, the Aryans of old, rose remote in Asia and began conquest of earth, moving ever in the path of the sun." The intertitles continue to spotlight the filmmakers themselves: "We are part of that great migration. We are the travelers who still face westward." The "we" of the adventurous white filmmakers is simultaneously linked to and distanced from the backward Bakhtiari: "Back in the East behind us are the secrets of our own past, and a tradition of our brothers still living in the cradle of the race—a long since Forgotten People."[25] Any admirable qualities in the Bakhtiari are really *our* Aryan qualities.

It may be useful to provide some further context for this framing by connecting the intertitles more directly to the Aryan race theory that had influenced Cooper. Cooper was influenced by the same set of concepts that, according to Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, influenced Iranian nationalism as well. Zia-Ebrahimi argues that "dislocative nationalism" has been a dominant way of imagining Iranian national identity since the early twentieth century. More to my point, he traces dislocative nationalism to the racializing rhetoric of nineteenth-century race "science," the same Aryan race theory that guided Cooper's thinking, and his vision for *Grass*. According to dislocative nationalism, racial identities from one region are imaginatively "dislocated" from their geography and history, and repurposed in a universalizing racial grand narrative to serve nationalist ends. Specifically, some version of an "Aryan" identity from Central Asia and the Middle East is made to represent the origins of European whiteness. In the case of Iran, this form of nationalism is dislocative in two ways—by downplaying or even denying the role of Islam in national culture, and by associating with European civilization (through the myth of Aryan origins). Iranian nationalists were able to develop this approach largely due to the influence of nineteenth-century race theory developed by Orientalists like Lord George Curzon, whom Cooper seems to have read extensively. The logic of dislocative nationalism is useful here because it is precisely the language that allows Cooper to simultaneously romanticize and other the Bakhtiari, and that allows Iranian nationalists to marginalize tribal identities in constructing a homogeneous and hegemonic national identity. Zia-Ebrahimi shows how Iranian national discourse, even under the Islamic Republic, continues to be attracted to this ideology, often forgetting that "European theorists of Aryanism mostly stopped short of considering Iranians as full-fledged members of the Aryan race."[26] This attitude toward Iranians—as not fully fledged members of the Aryan race—is precisely how *Grass* presents the Bakhtiari as little more than racial fledglings, a racial origin that was left behind, intriguing partly because of their arrested social evolutionary development. As Fatimah Tobing Rony has pointed out, the filmmakers not only move Eastward, from Ankara in Turkey, to the Zagros Mountains, they also move back in time, to the origins of whiteness.[27] The question I would like to pursue here is how the 1992 score challenges the Aryan race theory expressed in the intertitles.

A New Score: Cosmopolitan Loops

Before examining exactly how Vahab, Shirzadian, and Janati-Ataie faced the challenge of rescoring a film like *Grass,* with all its ideological implications, it will be helpful to think about silent film scoring more generally, and the implications of rescoring for viewers of the film. One useful way to think about music for restored mute films is to see the work of composition and performance as what composer and musicologist Gillian Anderson calls translation. As with any translation, Anderson argues, "the artistry and creativity of

the translator is important" in re-scoring an old silent film. In this process of translation, she suggests, composers often combine "subjective" response with "intellectual judgment" when composing for silent film.[28] Her view echoes Philip Carli's concept of "scholarly emotionalism,"[29] by which he means, to oversimplify, that fidelity to the original music—or what we can piece together about it—must be balanced with the composer's emotional response to the film. When faced, for instance, with "overdrawn ethnic and racial stereotypes depicted on the screen," composers have often "answered simply and directly with equally overdrawn stereotypes portrayed in the music." In fact, he even points to other Riesenfeld scores that still remain as examples of this racist musical stereotyping.[30] While emphasizing the importance of fidelity to historical context, Carli ultimately argues that contemporary composers for mute film must "come up with a mode of interpretation that makes these distant emotional appeals relevant to modern audiences."[31] This "interpretation" of emotional appeals for modern audiences is similar to Anderson's notion of translation. Anderson concludes that the composer for mute film might fall short of reconstructing or restoring music for a silent film, but can still "translate" the film musically for a contemporary audience. Quoting music historian Charles Rosen, Anderson concludes, "Whatever the drawbacks to creating and performing these translations our knowledge has been increased and our musical life enriched.'"[32] I would argue that Vahab, Janatie-Ataie, and Shirzadian perform this type of translation or interpretation that combines the subjective and scholarly, or the emotional and intellectual. In their case, the scholarly awareness is more relevant not to any original score that Riesenfeld might have created, to say nothing of the intertitles, but to the cultural lifeways depicted in the images on screen.

As practitioners, both Carli and Anderson emphasize responding to the film itself, as do other composers. For example, the three-musician ensemble the Alloy Orchestra describe their approach to composing and performing music for *Metropolis* (1927, directed by Fritz Lang) and *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929, directed by Dziga Vertov) as taking direction from the film itself. As Terry Donahue, a founding member of Alloy Orchestra, puts it, "[Y]ou need to play what the film asks you to play . . . The film is our director."[33] Similarly, Holcomb, who composed a new score for *Grass* in 2021, told me that he based his score for the film on his emotional response to the climactic moment in which the Bakhtiari reach the peak of Zardeh Kuh mountain. In an interview in 2022, Holcomb told me that this narrative arc of "resilience" influenced his composition, and he consciously avoided any specific "cultural" reference in his score, because he didn't trust himself to know much about it, focusing instead on the drama of the film. Thus, composers for silent film must balance the desire to be faithful to the film itself with a desire to convey their own emotional response to it. The implications of a new composition for an old film can be profound for viewers as well. According to Emilio Audissino, musical choices in rescoring silent films can have "a significant impact on how the film will be experienced by viewers, as music is capable of transforming our perception of the visuals powerfully."[34] Music "guides us and influences how the images and the narrative are perceived and interpreted," he writes, and composers for silent film may "add and reinterpret the film against the grain, by adding music in a style and mood completely distant from the original."[35]

Given this dialectic between the translational task of the composer and its transformative potential for the audience of a silent film score, anyone composing a new score for a film like *Grass* is left with an unenviable dilemma: either ignore the politics of the intertitles (as Holcomb aims to do), or reinterpret the film "against the grain" of those intertitles. As Vahab explained to me, he and his colleagues did, in fact, for the most part simply ignore some aspects of the film (including the intertitles and the prominent role played by the filmmakers in the early scenes). Similarly, Holcomb told me that he tried to ignore the content of the intertitles, using them only structurally as points of transition rather than in any thematic or semantic way.

However, given Vahab and his colleagues' familiarity with much of the culture they saw on screen, and Vahab's appreciation for Kurdish music in particular, it was inevitable that these musicians would respond to the cultural implications of Schoedsack's footage as they created music for the film.

Dotar player in still from Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life (1925) by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack.

Like other composers for silent cinema, Vahab, Janati-Ataie, and Shirzadian approached their task more as performance than composition. Vahab describes the early process of scoring the film as simply viewing the video repeatedly, and seeing what inspired the trio. The process involved hours of improvising while viewing the film, rehearsing based on those initial improvisations, and performing again, sometimes with many takes—as was the case for the highly staged scene in which a hunter shoots a mountain goat from a miraculous distance. In this process, they focused primarily on their emotional responses to the film. Nevertheless, the trio also made musical allusions to specific cultural practices represented on screen, especially dance. However, they did so selectively, using music to weave aspects of the ethnic lifeways represented in the film, and to trace their possible connections to each other. They used the music itself to show how the journey from Anatolia through Syria and Iraq to Iran could be traced along musical routes, making musical connections between Kurdish, Arab, and Iranian music. For example, in terms of specificity, Vahab plays a *dotār* (a three-stringed lute) when one appears on screen in a scene in a Kurdish village, but he does not reproduce the sound of the *sornā* (a Bakhtiari reed instrument with a raspy clarinet-like sound) when we see one in a later scene. The absence of the *sornā* is, on one level, simply a function of available resources. Nonetheless, the lack of specificity is also in keeping with Vahab's vision for the score. Instrumentation is not meant to achieve a reductive ethnomusicological verisimilitude; rather, the choices of instruments and modes broadly convey a complex musical sense of cultural place. In another scene—which

shows a dancing bear in what appears to be a Kurdish village—we see two frame drums and a Turkish G clarinet on screen, but there's no attempt to reproduce the clarinet sound. On the other hand, as I will discuss below, the musicians take special care to provide ethnically appropriate music for regional dances depicted in the film. Many of these decisions were, of course, dictated by limited time and resources. Nevertheless, while Vahab, Janati-Ataie, and Shirzadian avoided imitating or reproducing every piece of cultural or ethnic detail on screen, they did achieve what I call "locative cosmopolitanism" through musical choices that connected with Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, and Iranian music and cultures.

By "locative cosmopolitanism" I mean what some scholars have characterized as "local cosmopolitanism" or "partial cosmopolitanism." Kwame Anthony Appiah broadly defines partial cosmopolitanism as concordance "between local partialities and universal morality."[36] According to Appiah, "there are some values that are, and should be, universal, just as there are lots of values that are, and must be, local."[37] Other scholars speak of "local cosmopolitanism" as "a matter of changing images of the whole in the part, of changing functions of those images locally, and of actually changing relations between parts and whole."[38] Scholars have applied partial, tactical, or local cosmopolitanism to a wide range of subjects including critical analysis of fiction, sociological study of refugees and migration, and Lebanese music performance in the United States, to name a few.[39]

In the context of global music, Thomas Turino draws on key theorists of cosmopolitanism to define what he calls "cosmopolitan loops" in his study of Zimbabwean music practices. Turino applies to music the broader formulation that "[c]osmopolitan cultural formations are . . . always simultaneously local and translocal." Within this framework, "lifeways, ideas, and technologies are not specific to a single or a few neighboring locales, but are situated in many sites which are not necessarily in geographical proximity; rather, they are connected by different forms of media, contact, and interchanges," or cosmopolitan loops.[40] As I analyze the score that Vahab and his colleagues created, and the influence of their music on our experience of viewing *Grass*, I ask the reader to keep this concept of locative, local, or partial cosmopolitanism in mind, particularly Turino's useful notion of cosmopolitan loops. While being "locative" in its reference to specific places of cultural history and geography (through instrumentation, musical modes, links to dance and poetry, and connections to ethnic history), the 1992 score for *Grass* remains cosmopolitan in showing the cultural complexity of those locations, and linking them both to one another and to broader cultural contexts such as Sufism, popular Iranian song, and diasporic cultures. The mix of Turkish, Kurdish, Arab, and Persian musical and poetic traditions are at once specific to place and cosmopolitan in their mobility. The 1992 score achieves this locative cosmopolitanism by connecting specific musical and poetic practices to the cultural and ethnic complexity that Schoedsack captured on film, thereby challenging the one-dimensional ideological overlay of the intertitles. According to Vahab, he and his colleagues responded primarily to the "sentiments and feelings" they saw on screen,[41] but at the same time, as musicians trained in Iranian classical music and aware of the links between Iranian music and Arab, Turkish, and Kurdish musical traditions, they produced a soundscape that resonates through cosmopolitan loops. Ultimately, the score Vahab and his colleagues created for *Grass* reframes the film's visual elements, and displaces the semiotic authority of the intertitles, particularly their belittling of the subjects either as comic relief or as part of an Aryan racial narrative glorifying the white filmmakers for white audiences.

Turkish G clarinet player and two frame drum players in still from Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life (1925) by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack.

A Musical Journey

All three musicians brought a sense of musical cosmopolitanism to their creation of the score. Vahab brought to the task a familiarity with a wide range of musical traditions from the regions depicted in the film, and active involvement in the diasporic music scene in New York City. Janati-Ataie and Shirzadian were active musicians in New York as well, and Janati-Ataie is also a scholar of Persian literature and music. Shirzadian contributed to the score by improvising on the oud (the fretless Arabic curved-bout lute, or *barbat* as it is known in Persian), as well as playing the *tār* (Persian plucked lute) and the *tombak*. Janati-Ataie played the Persian hammer dulcimer and the *santūr,* as well as the *daf*, a large frame drum "associated with Kurdish Sufi rituals."[42] Vahab played the *tanbūr*, *setār*, *dohol*, and *daf*, and performed the vocals. These musicians' virtuosity, their diasporic experience, and their familiarity with a range of musical traditions gave them the insight necessary to immerse themselves in the images in *Grass* as they worked to reorient those images around the complex and diverse cultural experience that Schoedsack originally captured.

A brief discussion of Vahab's career can further help situate my reading of the score. Vahab began playing the *setār* at age four, a moment he now recalls as the beginning of "vital training" in Iranian music and culture.[43] Growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, Vahab witnessed the impact of Western popular music on Iranian culture. In fact, he felt the impact directly when some of his peers derided the "backwardness" of traditional music, preferring the emerging sounds of electric guitars and rock & roll.[44] At the age of twelve he entered a traditional music contest, selecting as his instrument the *tanbūr*, a Kurdish relative of the lute whose roots go back to the Sassanid period. Vahab recalls that during this competition, a Kurdish man "from a mystical order" asked him about the instrument, which led to their discussion of this "sacred lute."[45]

After going to engineering school in England, where he also studied classical and flamenco guitar, Vahab moved to New York City in 1981, where he became "a one-man clearinghouse for Iranian-Americans who want to learn about their culture."[46] He was not only giving private lessons, but also guest lecturing and performing in Peter Chelkowski's courses at New York University.[47] Vahab describes his relationship with his students among the Iranian diaspora as a "responsibility to connect them to their roots."[48] He is critical of the ways in which aspects of culture in Iran have been "hijacked" in the West. He specifically assails Coleman Barks's translations of Rumi, for example, noting that while they may be good poems on their own terms, they are not faithful to Rumi's verse or ideas.[49] His distance from Iran and his reaction to witnessing such cultural appropriations led him to work to sustain Iranian cultural practices all the more actively, not merely as a form of nostalgia but as a living practice. In 2000, Vahab returned to Iran "to find that during the decades he had dedicated to preserving traditional Iranian music and culture, those who remained in Iran had ever more eagerly embraced music of the West." In 2003, he told *The New York Times,* "I realized I was more Persian than anybody else . . . They were fascinated by how Iranian I was."[50]

As traditions of *performance*, Turkish, Kurdish, Persian, and Arab music have transformative potential for those who experience them as listeners and performers. Ethnomusicologists Jean During, Laudan Nooshin, and Ann Lucas all emphasize the importance of *bedāheh navāzi*, or improvisational performative practices, within Iranian classical music. The tension between a pedagogical knowledge of a particular repertoire (*radif*), and the performative ability to generate variations on conventional phrasings (*gūshehs*) mark musical virtuosity among performers of classical Iranian music. Moreover, the various modes or systems (Iranian *dastgāh*, Arab *maqām*, and Turkish *makām*) out of which these repertoires were codified have distinct characteristics based on regional traditions. Musical performances are based on the rendering of a single piece often derived from an original vocal melody or from *āvāz*. *Āvāz* melodies are widely familiar to musically inclined Iranian listeners, and such familiar phrases are frequently played as introductions, or *darāmad*, to longer pieces. The performance of an *āvāz* will then diverge based on a specific performer's knowledge of the song and the repertoire of other musicians' variations, including renditions by masters (*ostād*). Improvisational breaks can be extensive in a single performance. Finally, much of the phrasing of Iranian classical music is informed by prosody in classical Persian poetry. These aspects of Iranian classical music inform my analysis of the score not as composition, but rather as performance, one sensitive to the regional, poetic, and improvisational aspects of that music.

Thus, Iranian music is informed by and continues to overlap with modal musical traditions of the region, including Arab, Azerbaijani, Kurdish, and Turkish crosscurrents. Indeed, what we now call Iranian classical (or traditional) music was formally codified and institutionalized beginning only in the late nineteenth century. Ann Lucas argues that Iranians have been "active participants in a *cosmopolitan* music culture, first in the company of Arabs and later in the company of Turkic and even Mongol peoples."[51] Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the Iranian modal system known as *dastgāh* began to be separated from the Arab *maqām* modal system. Through this process, Iranian music was codified into a set of *radif* that served "a modern sense of Iranian nationalism" at a time when the Middle East was being fully integrated "into the global economic system and the global system of nation states."[52] Interestingly, then, the emergence of Iranian classical music—sometimes referred to as *mūsiqi-e asil* (authentic music) or *mūsiqi-e sonati* (traditional music)—was part of a broader emergence of Iranian nationalism at around the same time that *Grass* was made. [53] Even some ethnomusicology about Iranian music falls into the trap of Aryanism.[54] This is why the project of creating music for the film poses such great challenges, calling on the musicians either to ignore or complicate a Western or even an Iranian nationalist representation of the Bakhtiari. I argue that Vahab, Janati-Ataie, and Shirzadian transform *Grass* precisely by employing this culturally

complex and performatively transformative set of musical traditions, thereby displacing the intertitles' narrative of a voyage to the origins of whiteness, and replacing it with a musical journey through cosmopolitan loops.

The music for the first third of the film, during which the filmmakers travel through Anatolia to Kurdish and Arab territories, includes modes and melodies from Kurdish, Turkish, and Arab performance practices, thus drawing attention to the ethnic plurality and complexity of the region.[55] The intertitles outline a voyage to the origins of whiteness (just as Schoedsack and Cooper's later film, 1933's *King Kong*, was to be a fictional voyage into the heart of a racialized darkness). By contrast, the 1992 score resonates with the cosmopolitan nature of the visual journey as it moves through Kurdish, Arab, and Bakhtiari cultural spaces. Vahab, Janati-Ataie, and Shirzadian take opportunities to link music to other practices, especially dance and poetry. The theme of the journey is an important part of themes in poetry and in music, and this comes across in these musical choices early in the film. The score opens with a rhythmic pattern played on the *dohol*—a wide-diameter frame drum that places the music within a Kurdish cultural context. By contrast, the opening musical phrases use the *abu-atā dastgāh*, also known as the *āvāz-e dāstān-e arab,* or the melody of the Arab tale, a theme related to the *hejāz* modulation. *Hejāz* comes out of the Turko-Arab *maqāmāt* system used throughout Anatolia and into North Africa.[56] In the opening sequence, the rhythm builds on the 6/8 beat common to popular and regional music across Iran and many Arab countries. An undulating drumbeat accompanies the first series of intertitles describing how the "sages" speculate that the Aryans rose in the East, and how the explorer-filmmakers are the Westward-facing racial inheritors of the Aryans, returning to find the "Forgotten People." The unusual rhythm, however, challenges and re-contextualizes these racializing elements of the intertitles by blending different regional motifs, thereby underscoring the cosmopolitan complexity rather than the racial purity of the journey. The *tār* (a double-bout, long-necked lute with wrapped frets) and *santūr* (Persian hammer dulcimer) pick up the rhythmic motif of the opening scene, giving the composition as a whole the cultural complexity of the region itself. The musical choices point to the continuity and cross-pollination between the regional musical traditions rather than their distinctness or purity.

A recurring *āvāz* in the *čāhārgāh* mode provides a melodic motif reprised throughout the rest of the film, a meaningful choice given this mode's importance in the region's diverse cultural traditions. According to During and Zia Mirabdolbaghi, *čāhārgāh* has "very old origins," and "is hardly present in the folk music of Iran, but is very current in Azerbaijan."[57] The *dastgāh* is similar to its cognate Arabic *maqām* and Turkish makam, Çargah.[58] In addition to this cultural interpenetration, this early and repeated motif also introduces a mood of triumph and joy. *Čāhārgāh* can feel epic or heroic, but it is also "considered one of the two more joyous *dastgāhs* (the other being *Māhūr*)."[59] One of the most familiar *āvāz* in this *dastgāh* is a wedding song called *mobārak bādā*. Musicians can interpret this *āvāz* in an upbeat and celebratory mood, but may also use it to signal departure and travel. Once again, this choice points to movement through different cultural places rather than a voyage back to the source of whiteness as the intertitles insist. Thus, from the very opening of the score, the music signals the cultural diversity and complexity we are about to witness, and establishes a joyous attitude, humanizing the subjects of the film.

An early stop in the film's regional journey brings the filmmakers to a Kurdish village and caravanserai. The sequence includes a vignette featuring a puppy's antics, and scenes of Harrison and her driver sharing a meal with local men. Two intertitles reduce the scene with the puppy to comic relief. As the puppy crawls out of a saddlebag, the intertitle ventriloquizes the dog's voice with, "Gosh—it's another day!" Once the puppy has climbed out of the bag, a camel turns to sniff him. The next intertitle reads, "Morning, pup." At best, the intertitles perform a kind of Kiplingesque anthropomorphism, giving more agency to

these animals than to the people. Once Harrison and her driver sit down with the men at the camp, the intertitles perform a different kind of Orientalist rhetoric by linking the *ekmek* flat bread they share to biblical origins: "Breakfast offers *ekmek*, unleavened bread that was old when Scripture was writ."[60] Like Aryan race theory, ideas about Biblical origins often served to establish a narrative of European civilization's ancient origins for Orientalists like Cooper. Although the visuals include compelling images of an Anatolian village and caravanserai, the intertitles are emotionally and historically reductive. However, the score challenges this Orientalist rhetoric by providing a vocal performance of a poem by Pir Sultan Abdal, whose work includes themes from Kurdish Alevism and Sufi conceptions of love. I will discuss this vocal performance later when I focus on the sung poetry of the score. For now, I simply note that the music gives voice, as it were, to subjects who are silenced by the intertitles—reduced to comic relief or romanticized as part of the origins of whiteness.

The music that accompanies these scenes of the puppy and the breaking of bread is in the *šur* mode, which includes *bayāt-e kord* melodies. As During and Mirabdolbaghi describe it, *bayāt-e kord*, "is inspired from the music of the Kurds, some typical traits of which it has persevered."[61] More specifically, the melody appears in the popular Kurdish folk song "Kabuki-Leili," situating it even more squarely within Kurdish cultural practices. The *šur* mode has a minor quality, and may at times be characterized as dark, somber, and even mysterious. However, with its "sweet and clear" melody, *bayāt-e kord* can also set a mood of playfulness.[62] Visually, this sequence includes a brief characterization of the droshky driver who in one shot confidently touches his dagger as if to tell Harrison that she is safe under his care. The sequence also shows the droshky pulling into a village where we see children entertained by a dancing bear cub. In this scene, we get a glimpse of two traditional frame drums next to a modern-looking Turkish G clarinet. While the intertitles move between Orientalist framing (as in the biblical origins of *ekmek*) and circus sideshow comic relief, the music and poetry (to be discussed below) work on different levels for different viewers—appealing emotionally to all listeners, while including regional, linguistic, and cultural references for those who can pick up on them musically and linguistically.

Ghaychack player in still from Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life (1925) by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack.

Dance: Stomps, Sticks, and Scarves

As the film's journey moves from Anatolia into what is probably present-day Iraq, the music provides cues that place us within an Arab context. The music helps capture the jubilation of a communal dance, creating a kinetic response for the viewer as we witness Arab soldiers moving to the rhythm of the music—or, as it were, the music beating to the rhythm of their dance. After some establishing shots placing us within an Arab fortification, the scene shows the soldiers moving frenetically both singly and in groups. At one point, the scene shows the men dancing. As the men move in unison, Schoedsack's camera follows them faithfully, focusing sometimes on their feet, and then cutting and pulling back to pan across their faces. The intertitles attempt to reduce the communal dance to the butt of a joke as an intertitle describes the scene as "the policemen's ball, referring to the Arab soldiers as the policemen of the desert. Despite the comedy (even ridicule?) of the intertitles, Schoedsack's camera work is compelling, with dynamic images of musical instruments flashing across the screen to punctuate the images of the men dancing.

The men are in fact dancing the *dabke,* a line dance prevalent throughout Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria, as well as in places like Dearborn, Michigan with its large and active Arab-American community. *Dabke* dancers hold hands, place their arms on each other's shoulders or interlock arms, to form a circle that moves in unison with feet stomping back and forth to the beat of a drum. Vahab, Janati-Ataie, and Shirzadian use the dance as a visual prompt to locate these images within a specific region and a cultural practice. The score recognizes and accompanies the *dabke* faithfully, bringing out some of the culturally specific aspects of the dance, and thereby challenges the dehumanizing rhetoric of Cooper's intertitles. In terms of instrumentation, Shirzadian introduces the oud into the score, giving the music a distinctly Arabic sound. Vahab improvises and innovates, using the *rabab*, an Arabic bowed instrument that resembles what we see on screen in this section—a *ghaychack*—a similar instrument found across the Arab world. Vahab also plays the *dohol* for parts of this scene. Despite being a Kurdish instrument, the *dohol* provides rhythmic accompaniment reminiscent of Bandari or Khaliji music from southern Iran with its Arab and North African influences. Most importantly, Vahab and Shirzadian synchronize the music to fit the *dabke* dance. There is also a political element to the *dabke* in that the dance has been used both to cement Syrian nationalism and to challenge the Syrian state through performance during demonstrations.[63] Although this political element might not be directly applicable here, it does highlight the fact that we are not witnessing a culture in ethnographic isolation. The music helps to highlight a historically cosmopolitan context marked by a local-translocal dialectic.

Dabke Dance in still from Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life (1925) by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack.

At the Bakhtiari camp, the score once again includes a musical accompaniment to dance. Throughout the two-thirds of the film set in the Bakhtiari region, the tonal motif moves through several *dastgāh* including the *homāyūn*, another mode that cuts across Turkish, Persian, and Azeri musical practices, and the *navā*, which some contemporary musicians associate with the *šur* mode. As the Bakhtiari prepare for their journey, we hear melodies relevant to the setting and scene, such as one made famous by Mohammad Reza Shajarian and Kayhan Kalhor in the song "Desert Night," which is widely known among lovers of Iranian classical and popular music alike.[64] Once again this diasporic link weaves Vahab's choice into the cosmopolitan loops of Iranian musical practice. Vahab, Janati-Ataie, and Shirzadian draw on the same body of melodies, both the art-musical *āvāz* and the more popular *tarāneh,* from which other diasporic musicians such as Shajarian and Kalhor draw their inspiration and repertoire.[65]

The melody from this tune and variations on it accompany the scenes in which we are formally introduced to Bakhtiari cultural practices, including Schoedsack's footage of two traditional Bakhtiari dances: the scarf dance (*dastmāl bāzi*) performed by Bakhtiari women, and the stick dance (*čūb bāzī*) performed by men, including Haider Khan, the tribal chief. The intertitles say almost nothing about the dance itself, emphasizing character and narrative instead. The only intertitle that mentions dance serves to move the narrative forward with the exhortation to "Dance now, for tomorrow we go!," highlighting Haidar Khan's momentous decision to begin the migration. Moreover, another intertitle interrupts the stick dance: "Haidar can out-do them all—be it shooting, fighting, swimming, or—."[66] This redirects our attention toward the heroic identity of these subjects, once again advancing an element of Aryan race theory that shows the admirable traits of the Bakhtiari as ingredients in the film's construction of whiteness. Music offers a different narrative agency, to borrow Jerrold Levinson's terminology.[67] The closely synchronized musical rhythm and dance restore the dignity and humanity of these practices, rather than hijacking them to

tell a heroic story that fits into Cooper's vision of Aryan race theory. The music gives the sequence a more specific cultural meaning presenting multiple cultures on their own terms rather than as part of a fantasy of racial origins.

Scarf Dance in still from Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life (1925) by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack.

It is important to note, briefly, that the instrumentation is not exact in this scene, but this does not take away from the cultural relevance of the music. As Laurence Carr has argued, if silent film music enters diegetic space too forcefully—using musical instruments to make sound effects, for example—it can diminish the "implied sound" of the film, thus foreclosing or limiting the audience's "creative engagement" and aesthetic "autonomy."[68] In this case, the composers chose not to produce the sound of the *sornā* in a shot in which a man is playing that traditional reed instrument. Partly this was simply a matter of resources and logistics. Given time and budgetary constraints, Vahab and his colleagues had to be inventive and improvise not just the music, but how they made the music. Nonetheless, they did not see their task as a mechanical imitation of sound on screen. Instead of using the *sornā*, Vahab plays a stringed instrument, accompanied by Janati-Ataie on a frame drum to emphasize the rhythmic elements of the scene. Despite the absence of exact instrumentation, the music provides another way of advancing the musical journey that challenges the narrative of a return to Aryan roots. The specific instrumentation is less important than the combination of emotional appeal and cultural affinity. Vahab, Janati-Ataie, and Shirzadian did not aim to provide ethnomusicological exactitude, but, rather, to offer an emotional connection with the audience, one grounded in culturally and musically relevant performance practices from the region.

Stick Dance in still from Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life (1925) by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack.

Giving Voice: Pir Sultan Abdal and Baba Taher

Perhaps the most striking part of the 1992 score is the presence of the human voice in the form of sung poetry from the work of two key figures in Turkish and Persian poetry, respectively. These vocal performances add another level of meaning, and further challenge the intertitles' Orientalist narrative of the return to white racial origins. A human voice seems out of place in a silent film, especially when we recall that many scholars of the silent era prefer the term "mute," or even "deaf," as Michel Chion notes. Before sound was affixed as a track on the film itself, cinema was far from a silent medium. In fact, even "mute" may limit our understanding of the fact that many silent films were lecture films with the human voice serving as an epistemological guide through the images. More specifically, Cooper's own voice framed the images in *Grass* orally for many early audiences who saw the film. Even though the heyday of the lecture film had been some twenty years earlier, Cooper toured extensively with the film at clubs and scientific societies.[69] Thus, within the broader exhibition context, the film not only had a sound component, but a living voice-over. Nevertheless, the very experience of viewing silent film, even (or, perhaps, especially) in its "mute" form, opens the possibility of imagining, or as Chion puts it, *dreaming* sound. According to Chion, the advent of talking film in 1927 marks "not so much the *absence of voices* . . . as the [absence of the] spectator's freedom to imagine them in her own way . . . We're no longer allowed to *dream the voices.*"[70]

Interestingly, the voice singing poetry in *Grass* is neither a diegetic voice in the story world of the film, nor the authoritative voiceover of traditional documentaries or nature films. Instead, it is closer to something like the dreamed voice that Chion argues film spectators could imagine only in the silent era. In a sense, Vahab dreams this voice for us. For those who do not understand Turkish or Persian, it may be even more dreamlike to hear the human voice as part of the soundtrack, particularly since, as Amanda Weidman observes, the timbre of the singing voice can be an "extremely socially meaningful aspect of vocal sound and performance."[71]

For those who do understand the poetry, or even have a sense of its association with Sufi or Alevi mysticism, the spiritual implications of the sung poetry become even more profound. The sung poetry serves Vahab's vision for the score—to touch the audience emotionally while bringing out the dignity and humanity of the subjects depicted on screen. Moreover, the fact that the vocal performances are in two different languages (Turkish and Persian) adds further interconnectivity to the local/translocal cosmopolitan loops of the score, and acknowledges the different regional cultures through which the film moves. These sung words challenge the written words of the intertitles as well. In fact, the written words are not limited to the intertitles alone, but include shots of a letter from US Consul Imbrie "authenticating" the "fact" that Harrison, Schoedsack, and Cooper were the first white people to make this journey with the Bakhtiari. This written text attempts to wield authority over the images—to claim them for the white filmmakers who "discover" the Bakhtiari. First presented in Persian and then in English translation, the diegetic text of the letter represents the centralizing discourse of the Iranian state and the colonial discourse of the white US presence in the region. By contrast, the sung poetry challenges this "authenticating" text by interjecting the oral poetic voice, a voice that bears the cosmopolitan characteristics of a traveling cultural practice. Moreover, this cosmopolitan voice is situated locally, connecting with Kurdish local practice in the Turkish poetry, and directly with Bakhtiari cultural practice in the Persian poetry. The poetry gives voice to the subjects on screen rather than the authors behind the camera, or the authorities of the metropole or the nation.

By reciting and singing in languages of the region, and expressing the mystical and political concepts associated with local histories, the sung poetry invites us to engage with the regional culture in ways that the intertitles and the Imbrie letter close off. I am not arguing that the voice authenticates the cultures on screen. Authenticity cannot be restored, for even in 1925 when the film was made, neither the Kurds nor the Arabs nor the Bakhtiari were hermetically sealed in their separate identities. In fact, that kind of primordial identity is part of the racist ideology at the heart of the intertitles. To claim that Persian or Turkish or Arabic music or language restores the subjects to some ethnic authenticity would be simply to argue in reverse and validate the ideological premise of the intertitles and the official letter. Rather, the inclusion of sung Persian and Turkish poetry, especially that of the figures of Baba Taher and Pir Sultan Abdal, shows that there are multiple strands of history, and multiple forms of local and translocal identity represented in the documentary.

Earlier I noted that Vahab used the *bayāt-e kord* in a scene in which a droshky driver accompanies Harrison into a Kurdish village. It is precisely here that Vahab first introduces the human voice, as if to challenge the intertitles' reduction of the scene to anthropomorphic comic relief or Biblical Orientalism. In singing the poetry of Pir Sultan Abdal, Vahab builds on the Kurdish musical references in *bayāt-e kord*, and provides a deeply affecting performance of "Don't Sing, Nightingale, Don't Sing," one of Pir Sultan's best-known verses. Alevi Kurds revere Pir Sultan as a heroic figure, and his poetry, like that of Baba Taher, is both mystical and animistic in its use of motifs from the natural world both for its own beauty and as a manifestation of spirituality. Today, statues of Pir Sultan—or of anonymous figures taken to be Pir Sultan—show him holding a *tanbūr* aloft in a triumphant pose, almost like a weapon used to vanquish his foes. As Paul Koerbin puts it, Pir Sultan's poetry can "be understood in a performance context in which the performer, audience, and the poet's persona are engaged. . . . The foundational and referential context of the performance of Pir Sultan's [poems] is the Alevi *cem* congregation in which ritual song and dance form a central act of worship."[72] Koerbin goes on to say that,

Pir Sultan's verse is robust and expresses the esoteric and heterodox beliefs emanating from the time when

Alevi-Bektaşi identity was coalescing out of antinomian Anatolian dervish groups of the sixteenth century. . . . One of the most engaging aspects of Pir Sultan's verse is the manner in which he imbues these themes with references that evoke a sense of the Anatolian landscape, the real world of places, and the resonances of the seasons—a factor that plays a part in connecting his verse intimately with the people.[73]

Thomas Parker's translation renders the first quatrain—the only one sung in the film—as follows:

Don't sing, nightingale, don't sing. My garden's cast down
My friend, from your suffering, I burn and burn.
My oil is used up and the wick has run down
My friend, from your suffering, I burn and burn.[74]

The verse includes one of the most important tropes in mystical poetry across Anatolia and Iran—the nightingale and the rose, or, in this case, the garden as a whole, expressing longing for the beloved. To burn from the suffering of another can be read as suffering empathetically with the plight of others, and in that burning, to serve as a light for them, as a candle or oil lamp gives light by burning. Here, Vahab prompts the viewer to empathize with the subjects on screen, doing so not just in the meaning of the words, which many viewers will not understand, but in the tone and timbre of the vocal performance, which comes across as a plaintive entreaty.

Statue of Pir Sultan Abdal at a Pir Sultan festival in Banaz, Sivas, central Turkey, near Yıldız Dağ Mountain, July 2007; courtesy Paul Koerbin.

As the narrative moves on to the Bakhtiari context, Vahab continues to link poetic performance to both cultural specificity and universal emotion. The long, dramatic Karun River sequence opens and closes with Vahab singing verses from Baba Taher's poetry. These verses not only provide a deeply affecting mood for the images on screen, they also gesture toward the Bakhtiaris's claims on Baba Taher. Baba Taher is a central poet in the Iranian tradition—eclipsed in Europe and North America by translations of Rumi, Hafez, and Omar Khayyam, but widely read and beloved in Iran and the Persian-speaking world. Indeed, Baba Taher has been claimed by many different ethnic groups across Iran and beyond, not only as a national poet, but also as a particular regional or tribal poet. The Bakhtiari, according to Fereydun Vahman, have embraced Baba Taher as their own, claiming that he composed at least a dozen of his quatrains (or, technically, double couplets) in the Bakhtiari dialect.[75]

To accompany the verse at the beginning of the Karun River sequence, Shirzadian and Janati-Ataie employ the very conventional combination of *santūr* and *tār*. The verse Vahab sings here is widely known across Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the Iranian diaspora. Once again, this is a musical artifact that is part of a cosmopolitan loop of Persianate and Iranian cultures. The Iranian pop singer Dariush, for example, used the same lines in the 1960s hit "Daad Az In Del" ("Cry from this Heart"). Vahab, Janati-Ataie, and Shirzadian, like many from their generation, grew up knowing these verses by heart. When I quoted the first

line from this quatrain to Vahab in one of our interviews, he spontaneously recited the rest. These lines are both deeply resonant for those in the diaspora like Vahab and myself, and claimed by different local cultural groups within Iran, including the Bakhtiari. This quatrain is, in fact, one of the twelve that the Orientalist philologist David L. Lorimer identified in 1948 as among those "spoken by Baba Tahir, a Bakhtiari Lur from the Kohistan Region."[76] Lorimer's transliteration and translation run as follows:

Ze dast i dida wo dil hed faryad
Ki her-ce dida binad dil kune yad.
Bisazum xanjere, nistis ze pulad
Zanum ba dida ta dil garde azad[77]

(I have a) grievance against the eye and the heart,
For all that the eye sees, the heart remembers.
I shall forge a dagger with a blade of steel
And plunge it into the eye, that the heart may be set free.[78]

The combination of emotional appeal and ethno-linguistic specificity gives Vahab's performance a sense of what I have called locative cosmopolitanism, and what Turino might describe as a cosmopolitan loop. Vahab's singing retains much of the phonetics of the Bakhtiari rendering, but also offers a distinctly Sufi expression of longing, love, and loss associated with the spiritual sense of separation from the beloved, whether sacred or profane.

Toward the end of the Karun river sequence, Vahab sings another Baba Taher *do bayti*:

I gaze upon the desert, it's you in that desert I see
I gaze upon the sea, it's you in the waters I see
Everywhere I look, hill and valley and plain,
Your beautiful frame I see

Performers often sing such verses accompanied by the *tār*, *setār*, *kamāncheh*, or *santūr*. In the Zagros region, the separation of word and music was not complete until well into the twentieth century.[79] Vahab and his colleagues created a combination of music and poetry that reflects this continued connection between lyric and music. Because these verses and their musical accompaniment align with folk practices of the region, Vahab's performance implies agency on the part of the subjects because the poetry is something they would have performed. We can imagine the subjects on screen singing and playing these songs.

Sorna and drum in still from Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life (1925) by Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack.

Vahab told me that he selected this particular poem because of its focus on nature, and his sense that for the Bakhtiari, the journey they take is both a physical one and a spiritual one, leading them through rivers, deserts, valleys, plains, and mountains as embodiments of the spiritual world. This view of the human journey as aligned with nature stands in stark contrast to the man vs. nature theme that permeated the original release of *Grass* in the context of both Westerns and colonial adventure films. The presence of poems in two distinct languages and from two different cultural traditions is another instance of what I have been calling the score's locative cosmopolitanism. By linking the scenes of Kurdish Anatolia to Pir Sultan's poetry and the scenes of the Bakhtiari's pastoral life to Baba Taher, the score points to the cultural complexity of the film's visual journey. The music does so not by positing any sense of primordial authenticity, but by seeing these traditions as living within both historical and contemporary contexts, part of a locative cosmopolitanism that acknowledges culture as local and traveling at the same time.

Conclusion

Much of the existing analyses of *Grass* clearly show the Orientalist ideology of the filmmakers' approach to the Bakhtiari. Since the release of the 1992 Milestone DVD of the film, the musical score has received no sustained critical attention. In this article, I have argued that the 1992 score acknowledges the dignity and humanity of the Bakhtiari, and of Kurdish, Turkish, and Arab subjects represented in the film. The composers' choices of instrumentation, modes, rhythms, and sung poetry align with the ethnic identities represented on screen, especially in the connections made between music and other practices such as dance and poetry. However, a key motivation for creating the music, according to Vahab, was not ethnomusicological "accuracy." Rather, the traditional and regional musical score resonates with the cultural

complexity of the ethnic and tribal groups represented on screen, but also resonates with cross-cultural, diasporic, and cosmopolitan musical audiences and themes. Although the intertitles reduced the Bakhtiari to a racial fantasy of Aryan origins, and depicted Arab and Kurdish subjects as sideshow attractions, the music situates the film's visual elements in local cultural places while drawing from intercultural cosmopolitan spaces. The local connections include ethnic music and dance, while the cosmopolitan allusions include poems like "Daad Az In Del" or the *āvāz* "Desert Night," both of which reference regional identities while appealing to diasporic audiences. Finally, the score achieves a universal emotional appeal, especially because of the ways in which all audiences respond to the affective timbre of the human voice that is incorporated.[80]

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NOTES

1. Erik Barnouw, *Documentary: A History of Nonfiction Film* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1974).
2. Bahman Maghsoudlou, *Grass: Untold Stories* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2008).
3. Kevin Brownlow, *The War, the West, and the Wilderness* (New York: Knopf, 1979).
4. Kamran Rastegar, *Surviving Images: Cinema, War, and Cultural Memory in the Middle East* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015); Hamid Naficy, "Lured by the East: Ethnographic Expedition Films about Nomadic Tribes—The Case of *Grass* (1925)," in *Virtual Voyages: Cinema and Travel*, ed. Jeffrey Ruoff (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Fatimah Tobing Rony, *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).
5. Amy Malek, "'If you're going to educate 'em, you've got to entertain 'em too': An Examination of Representation and Ethnography in *Grass* and *People of the Wind*," *International Society of Iranian Studies* 44, no. 3 (2011): 313–25.
6. David MacDougall, *The Looking Machine: Essays on Cinema, Anthropology and Documentary Filmmaking* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2019), 162.
7. Naficy, "Lured by the East," 128.
8. "Grass–A Nation's Battle for Life (1925): Audience comments: Dave Comerford," Documentavi, September 7, 2009, https://vimeo.com/6475148.
9. Laurence Carr, "The Audience as Creative Contributor: Examining the Effects of Implied Sound and Music in Two Versions of *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (1922)," *Studies in European Cinema* 18, no. 3 (July 2021): 222–34, 226.
10. Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). See especially Chapters 13–18.
11. According to Mariana Whitmer, "little is known of [Riesenfeld's] original music." See Whitmer, "Silent Westerns: Hugo Riesenfeld's Compiled Score for *The Covered Wagon* (1923)," *American Music* 36, no. 1 (2018): 70–101, 73. Composer and historian Gillian Anderson agreed that no cue sheets or music for *Grass* remains (e-mail with the author, August 3, 2020).
12. Riesenfeld qtd. in James E. Wierzbicki, *Film Music: A History* (New York: Routledge, 2008) 67.
13. Wierzbicki, *Film Music,* 67. According to Philip C. Carli, Riesenfeld's score for Alan Crosland's "bizarre racist melodrama" *Old San Francisco* (1927) included "some extremely seedy fake Orientalia in the

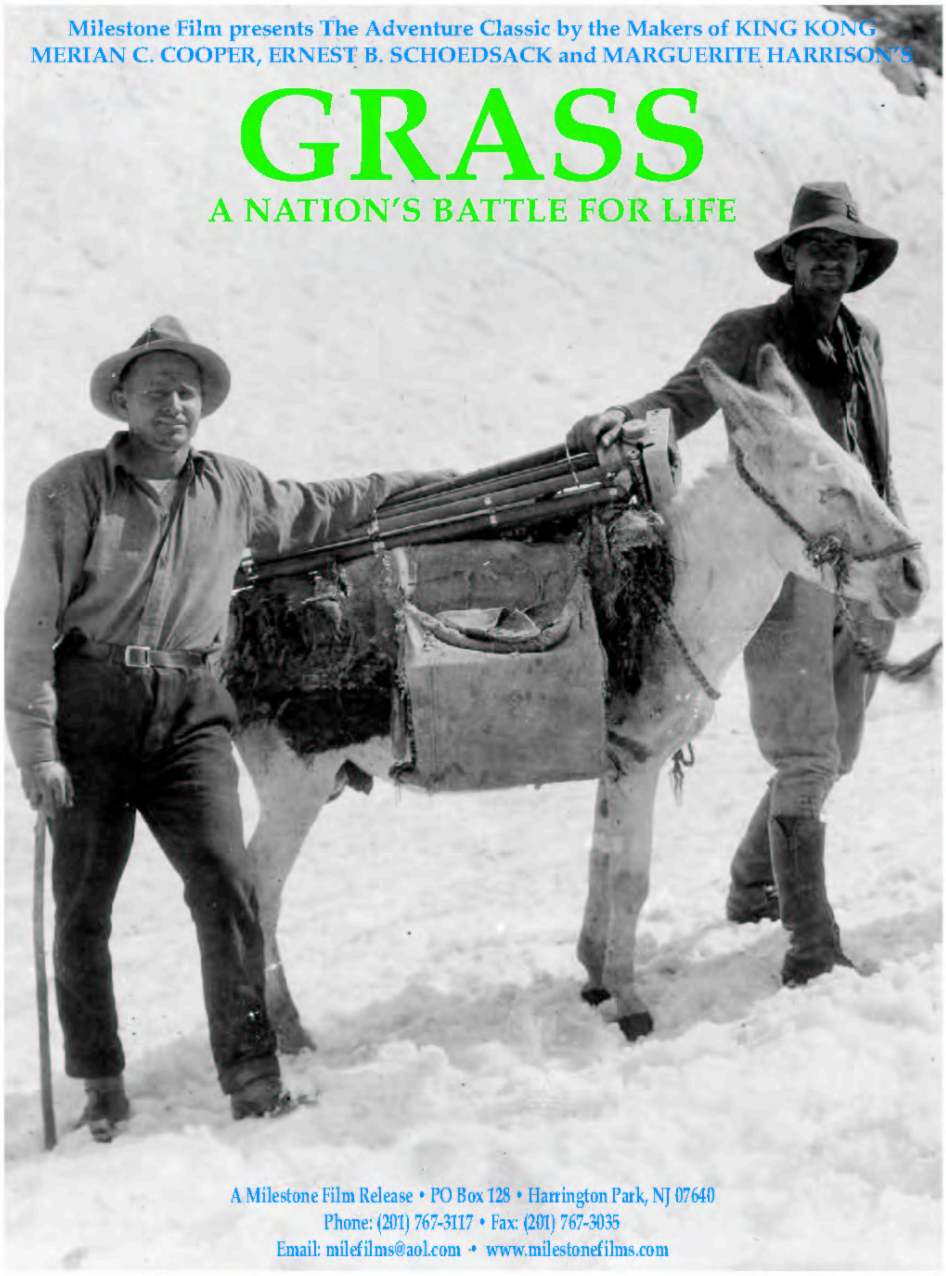
Chinatown sequences." See Carli, "Musicology and the Presentation of Silent Film," *Film History* 7 (Autumn 1995): 298–321, 314.
14. Naficy, "Lured by the East," 135.
15. Whitmer, "Silent Westerns," 72.
16. Whitmer, "Silent Westerns," 80.
17. Cooper "applied his racism equally between colonial settings and those of the colonial American West." See Rastegar, *Surviving Images*, 49.
18. Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, *Grass: A Nation's Battle for Life* (Paramount Pictures, 1925).
19. Cooper and Schoedsack, *Grass.*
20. As Naficy puts it, in *Grass*, "the Bakhtiari tribes are included in the line of human progress but are kept safely sealed in their time capsule in the earlier evolutionary stages." "Lured by the East," 130.
21. Marguerite Harrison, *There's Always Tomorrow: The Story of a Checkered Life* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1935), 648–49.
22. Rastegar writes, "Schoedsack was the technical wizard who conjured Cooper's visionary stories and ideological commitments in moving picture form," and that vision was marked by Cooper's "embrace of white supremacy." Cooper's films "represent the fuller elaboration [than did his words] of the power of white supremacy in his thought." See Rastegar, *Surviving Images,* 48–49.
23. See Tobing Rony, *Third Eye,* 135.
24. Cooper was familiar with Aryan race theory through his association with Isaiah Bowman, the first director of the American Geographical Society and a staunch social Darwinist and anti-Semite, and the work of Lord George Curzon. In his film diary for *Grass*, Cooper quotes extensively from Curzon's 1892 *Persia and the Persian Question*, which turned Aryan race theory into a political strategy. Merian C. Cooper, *Grass* (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1925), 108, 143, and 158.
25. Cooper and Schoedsack, *Grass.*
26. Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 5.
27. See Tobing Rony, *Third Eye,* 135.
28. Gillian Anderson, "The Shock of the Old: The Restoration, Reconstruction, and Creation of 'Mute'-Film Accompaniments," in *The Routledge Companion to Screen Music*, edited by Miguel Mera, Ronald Sadoff, and Ben Winters (New York: Routledge, 2017), 201–12, 202.
29. Carli, "Musicology and the Presentation," 298.
30. Carli, "Musicology and the Presentation," 314.
31. Carli, "Musicology and the Presentation," 319.
32. Anderson, "The Shock of the Old," 210.
33. Scott MacDonald, "'The Film is Our Director': Interview with Ken Winokur, Terry Donahue, and Roger Miller—The Alloy Orchestra," *Film History: An International Journal* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 121–43, 128.
34. Emilio Audissino, "Rediscovering a Film, Revisiting a Film, Damaging a Film: A Musical Comparison of Three DVD Editions of *Nosferatu*" in *Music and Sound in Silent Film: From Nickelodeon to* The Artist, eds. Ruth Barton and Simon Trezise (New York: Routledge, 2018), 175.
35. Audissino, "Rediscovering a Film," 184.
36. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006), xviii.

37. Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, xxi.
38. Kristof Van Assche and Petruța Teampău, *Local Cosmopolitanism: Imagining and (Re-)Making Privileged Places* (New York: Springer, 2015), 4.
39. Tina Steiner, "Translating between India and Tanzania: Sophia Mustafa's Partial Cosmopolitanism," *Research in African Literatures* 42, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 132–46; Loren B. Landau and Iriann Freemantle, "Tactical Cosmopolitanism and Idioms of Belonging: Insertion and Self-Exclusion in Johannesburg," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 3 (2010): 375–90; Marina Peterson, "Sonic Cosmopolitanism: Experimental Improvised Music and a Lebanese-American Cultural Exchange" in *The Arab Avant-Garde: Music, Politics, Modernity*, ed. Thomas Burkhalter, Kay Dickinson, & Benjamin J. Herbert (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 185–208.
40. Thomas Turino, *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 7–8.
41. Amir Vahab, phone interview with the author, December 19, 2019. Amir Vahab has these instruments listed on his website, tanbour.org, where he includes brief descriptions of these instruments, including this explanation of the importance of the *daf* in Kurdish rituals. See http://tanbour.org/gallery/instruments.php.
42. Vahab, phone interview with the author, December 19, 2019.
43. Vahab, phone interview with the author, December 19, 2019.
44. Vahab, phone interview with the author, December 19, 2019.
45. Vahab, phone interview with the author, December 26, 2021. According to Ozan Ekram Aksoy, the *tanbūr* "holds special symbolic significance for the Kurdish Alevi people." "The Music and Multiple Identities of Kurdish Alevis from Turkey in Germany," Unpublished PhD diss. (New York: City University of New York, 2014), 3.
46. Meline Toumani, "Ambassador for a Silenced Music," *The New York Times*, May 25, 2003, www.nytimes.com/2003/05/25/arts/music-ambassador-for-a-silenced-music.html?searchResultPosition=1.
47. Toumani, "Ambassador for a Silenced Music."
48. Toumani, "Ambassador for a Silenced Music."
49. Vahab, phone interview with the author, December 19, 2019.
50. Toumani, "Ambassador for a Silenced Music."
51. See Ann E. Lucas, *Music of a Thousand Years: A New History of Persian Musical Traditions* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2010), emphasis added; Laudan Nooshin, *Iranian Classical Music: The Discourses and Practice of Creativity* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Jean During and Zia Mirabdolbaghi, *The Art of Persian Music* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 1991).
52. Lucas, *Music of a Thousand Years*, 1, emphasis added.
53. I use "Iranian classical music" based on Laudan Nooshin's persuasive arguments for this terminology in *Iranian Classical Music*, 34–37.
54. Orientalist ethnomusicology on Iran has been susceptible to chauvinistic nationalism. See for example Laudan Nooshin's review of Lloyd Miller's *Music and Song in Persia: The Art of Āvāz* (1999) in which she underscores Miller's "Eurocentric arrogance" in conveying "the idea that the only valid approach to Iranian music is that which strives to preserve the music as a historical monument rather than allow it to find a contemporary voice which is still rooted in tradition." "*Music and Song in Persia: The Art of Āvāz* by Lloyd Clifton Miller," *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 8 (1999): 125–28. Miller even seems to suggest that the development of Persian and European music can be traced back to the prelapsarian Aryans. See Miller, *Music and Song in Persia: The Art of Āvāz* (Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 1999), 3. Even within Iran, the emergence of academic anthropology during the Reza Pahlavi era was marked by a centralized nationalist

effort to represent tribal peoples as the Other of the state. See Farzin Vejdani, "Appropriating the Masses: Folklore Studies, Ethnography, and Interwar Iranian Nationalism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 3 (August 2012): 507–26.
55. I am deeply indebted to Farhad Bahrami for helping read the musical motifs of the score. We viewed and discussed the film together. Bahrami is himself a musician and impresario of Iranian classical and fusion music in San Diego, CA.
56. Hormoz Farhat, *The Dastgāh Concept in Persian Music* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 36.
57. See During and Mirabdolbaghi, *The Art of Persian Music*, 73.
58. Bruno Nettl, "*Čāhārgāh*," *Encyclopædia Iranica*, IV/6, 629–30, https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cahargah.
59. Nettl, "*Čāhārgāh.*"
60. Cooper and Schoedsack, *Grass*, 1925.
61. During and Mirabdolbaghi, *The Art of Persian Music,* 73.
62. *Encyclopædia Iranica Online*, s.v. "*bayāt-e-kord-dastgah*" by M. Canton, www.iranicaonline.org/articles/bayat-e-kord-dastgah.
63. Shayna Silverstein, "Syria's Radical Dabka," *Middle East Report* 263 (Summer 2012): 33–37.
64. Shajarian is revered within Iran and in the diaspora. His death in October of 2020 prompted a global outpouring of remembrance. Kalhor is an internationally renowned *kamāncheh* player who was part of the Silk Road Ensemble with cellist Yo-Yo Ma.
65. See Nahid Siamdoust's *Soundtrack of the Revolution: The Politics of Music in Iran* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2017) for a discussion of Shajarian's use of both *tarāneh* (or *tasnif*), also known as *kuche-bāzari* (or, street bazaar songs), and *āvāz*, which is often accorded "a sort of ancient, more 'authentic' status" (43).
66. Cooper and Schoedsack, *Grass*, 1925.
67. Jerrold Levinson's argues that there are several loci of narrative agency in fiction film, and music is often ignored or underrated in these narrative relationships. Jerrold Levinson, "Film Music and Narrative Agency," in *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies* ed. David Bordwell and Noel Carroll (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 248–82.
68. Carr, "The Audience as Creative Contributor," 223–24.
69. Harrison, *There's Always Tomorrow*, 694.
70. Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. and ed. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 9.
71. Amanda Weidman, "Voice," in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham, NC: Duke, 2015), 235.
72. Paul Koerbin, "Pir Sultan Abdal: Encounters with Persona in Alevi Lyric Song," *Oral Tradition* 26, no. 1 (2011): 191–220, 206.
73. Koerbin, "Pir Sultan Abdal," 205.
74. Thomas Parker, *Bosphorus Review of Books*, https://bosphorusreview.com/dont-sing-nightingale.
75. Fereydun Vahman, "Twelve Ruba'is Ascribed to Baba Taher in the Bakhtiari Dialect from the Collection of D.L. Lorimer," *Iran and the Caucasus* 3 (1999): 289–92.
76. Vahman, "Twelve Ruba'is," 291.
77. Vahman, "Twelve Ruba'is," 291.

78. Those interested in Lorimer's transliteration may consult Major D. L. R. Lorimer, *The phonology of the Bakhtiari, Badakhshani, and Madaglashti dialects of modern Persian with vocabularies* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1922). The 1948 collection of twelve quatrains follows the phonology and vocabulary Lorimer developed here. Fereydun Vahman and G.S. Astarian collect more of Lorimer's work, including a glossary with brief etymological notes in their *West Iranian Dialect Materials II from the Collection of D.L. Lorimer: Volume II Short-Stories of the Baxtiārīs: Texts, Translation, Notes & Glossary* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1991).
79. Erika Friedl, *Folksongs from the Mountains of Iran: Culture, Poetics and Everyday Philosophies* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 6.
80. I would like to express my gratitude to Amir Vahab for his generosity with his time and insights.

THE ORIGINAL 1925 PRESS KIT



"Grass Is Great"

Say People Who Have Seen This

Paramount Picture

" 'Grass' is the grandest picture I have ever seen. It has amazing authenticity. To my mind this certainly will be remembered as one of the greatest pictures ever produced."

—William Beebe, *famous explorer.*

"The pictured story of the primitive 'trek' for grass in the 20th century is an amazing one. It is a story that has an epic quality and a memory of the nomadic period in our own civilization."

—John Finley, *Associate Editor, New York Times and President American Geographical Society.*

"An extraordinary story of one of the greatest natural dramas is the struggle for existence, told by a dramatist of reality."

—Louis D. Froelick, *Editor of ASIA magazine.*

"An amazingly interesting picture portraying a unique experience on a trip that could only be undertaken by real adventurers possessed of courage and initiative."

—Kermit Roosevelt.

"I have told Mr. Heye (President, Explorers Club) that your film is the best thing I have ever seen and I think I will stand by that statement hereafter. It made a tremendously deep impression on me."

—Isaiah Bowman, *Director, American Geographical Society.*

"From the point of view of our society's fundamental objects, a diffusion of geographical knowledge, this picture has extraordinary value, while from the view-point of entertainment it also possesses striking qualities."

—Gilbert Grosvenor, *President, National Geographical Society.*

FOREWORD

AND the Grass dried up. And without grass their flocks and herds must die. And upon these animals depended both the shelter and food of the race —life itself.

So, seeking grass, this barbarian horde, carrying all its worldly goods, swept up out of the sun-baked plains of Arabistan, swam a broad and swift and icy river, struggled week after week higher and higher across the grim and forbidding mountain ranges, and thus came face to face with old Zardeh Kuh, that snow-clad giant of the South Persian mountains.

Then up and up its almost perpendicular snow surface went men and women and children, battling barefoot in the snow, until at last from the mountain peak the leading khan looked down and saw the first of the wondrous valleys of Charar Mahal—green and soft and rich and lovely with grass—the grass that meant life to this migratory people.

That is our epic—the story of Grass.

GRASS

A Nation's Battle for Life

Recorded for the Screen by

MERIAN C. COOPER AND ERNEST B. SCHOEDSACK

with

MARGUERITE HARRISON

A Paramount Picture

Presented by Adolph Zukor and Jesse L. Lasky

THE way of the world is West. Long the sagas have told us how our forefathers of old rose remote in Asia and, ever following the path of the sun, migrated westward. You who read this are part of that great migration.

Now, men said, that far in the East, whence ages ago came our forefathers, lived a remnant of the great Aryan race—an almost Forgotten People—dwelling today as did our ancestors thousands of years ago.

Three American explorers left New York to record the life of this strange people. There were a woman and two men: Mrs. Marguerite Harrison, author and traveler in far places, Ernest B. Schoedsack, a noted camera war correspondent, and Merian C. Cooper, aviator, sailor and writer. They travelled for ten months from Constantinople across the deserts and forests of Anatolia, and, in midwinter, passed over the blizzard-swept Taurus Mountains; then on once more across the Desert of Arabia, ever seeking the Forgotten People. Their trip was an Iliad, alive with colorful, romantic nights and days spent in ruined caravanserais, crowded with the camel trains of the East. Yes, nights and days in the palaces of princes and in peasant huts, among wild mountain hunters and wilder nomads of the desert. All this became ordinary routine of their daily life as they pressed on seeking that lost remnant of our race.

And then, one day, snow, sand-storms, and desert and hardship—all were forgotten; for there before them lay the first little group of black tents on the frontiers of the Forgotten People.

These people were called the Baktyari. They lived along one part of that gigantic mountain range which stretches a thousand miles from the Black Sea to the Persian Gulf. There were at least 50,000 of them, with 500,000 animals. They had no tilled fields, none of the adjuncts of civilization which make the business of living so easy for us. They made their tents out of goat hair, the staples of their food were sour milk and mutton. Thus life itself, both food and shelter, depended upon their animals. And the animals depended upon Grass for life. If there was no Grass, why, the animals would die, and if the animals died the men, women and children would die also.

And the Grass died!

And when this happened, and because it happened, the three Americans witnessed, and took part in, and have brought back to you, the story of a fight of a nation for life which has scarcely been equalled in the history of the world. For when the Grass died, the Baktyari had to find new grazing grounds. Their lives depended on it. And the only grass available was far away, across desert and forest and swift icy rivers, and range after range of mountains rising higher and higher until the last was covered with perpetual snow. Beyond all this lay Grass, and to that Grass the people had to go if they would live.

It was spring, and the camps were full of baby life—baby donkeys, baby goats, colts, calves, lambs, and thousands of human babies. And these people were warm-climate people. They had no heavy coats, and their shoes were what we would call cotton slippers. No bridges stretched across that great river before them; they had no boats. There were no built roads on which they could travel across the wilderness and over the mountains. But they *had* to go. Behind lay Barren Plains and Death! Ahead lay Grass and Life!

And so, go they did! And with them went the three Americans.

During the early part of the migration, in the lowlands where it was hot, they travelled by night to protect the laden animals from the sun's burning rays, and camped by the day. Finally, they came to the mighty River Karun, a swirling torrent of racing milk-white, icy water. They swam that river with their flocks and herds, the men using goatskin water-wings to protect their stomachs from the icy water as they fought with the swimming, struggling animals; and the women and children and old people crossed on goatskin rafts. And then they plunged on higher and higher into the wild mountain country, camping and resting where they could find a little grass for grazing; then pressing on over unbelievably rough trails, climbing precipices, up over mountains so steep that to our softer civilization they would seem impossible of passage to this mass of women and children and heavily loaded animals and men.

On they went!

And as they came higher and still higher into greater mountain ranges, icy rivers poured down across their path. But they forded these and went on.

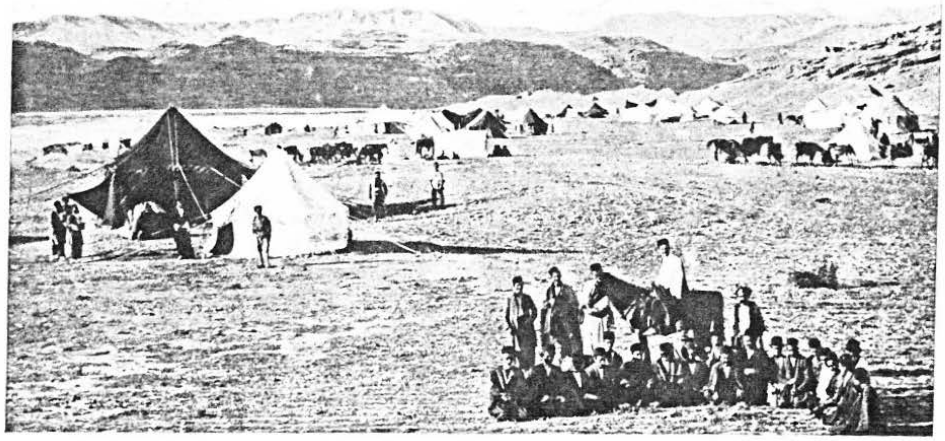
At last, one day before them stood a giant mountain range covered with glacial snow. There was no pass over the snow-mountain. The only way was up and over. Taking off their useless cotton shoes, which would be ruined in a few minutes in the soft snow, the tribes began to climb. Before them, Haidar, the khan of one of the tribes, with his volunteers dug a zigzag snow lane. Encased within these snow walls, protecting them from a fall to certain death, on up the mountain plodded the thousands upon thousands of desperate people and animals—*barefoot in the snow!*

They had to reach the top, and reach the top they did. The old and the young, the weak and the sick, women and babies, climbed on, because they had to go, or die. When at last they came to that wind-swept summit, thirteen thousand feet above the level of the sea, there below them lay deep gorges filled with far deeper snow than on the upward climb; and down through this the endless horde swept on. *On and on to Grass!*

And now the leaders plunged out through the last snow gorge, and there before them lay the Land of Grass—a smiling land of green, green fields, watered by a hundred silver streams. They had come at last to the promised land. Grass! Grass and Life!

And the wonder of it all was that not once only must thus the people cross, but year in and year out, through the centuries, as the hot suns of summer kill the grass in the lowlands or the cold in winter kills the grass in the high plateau, twice a year, these people go back and forth across the wilderness following the tides of Grass.

A mighty struggle for existence! An unparalleled battle for life!



The tents of the Baktyari are scattered in family units at intervals for miles down the valley, since the life of the people is determined by the requirements of the herds, which need immense grazing-grounds. Here, in the camp of the Ilkhani, khan of the tribes, the tents are white and orange. Rahim Khan, his young nephew, is on horseback, surrounded by his men

Who Are The Forgotten People?

LORD CURZON, WHO HAS WRITTEN THE AUTHORITATIVE BOOK ON PERSIA, HAS THIS TO SAY ABOUT THE BAKTYARI:

"Who the Lurs" [*this division includes both the Baktyari and the Feili Lurs*] "are and whence they came is one of the unsolved and insoluble riddles of history. A people without a history, a literature or even a tradition, presents a phenomenon in face of which science stands abashed.

"Fifty years ago Rawlinson described them as an 'unknown and interesting people'; and although in these pages will be presented more aids to knowledge than can elsewhere be found, yet I cannot profess to lift the curtain of an inscrutable past. Are they Turks? Are they Persians? Are they Semites? All three hypotheses have been urged. They appear to belong to the same ethnical group as the Kurds, their neighbors on the north; nor does their language, which is a dialect of Persian, differ materially from the Kurdish tongue. On the other hand, they themselves consider it an insult to be confounded with the Kurds, whom they call Leks; and the majority of writers have agreed in regarding them as the veritable relics of the old

Aryan or Iranian stock, who preceded Arabs, Turks and Tartars in the land. Rawlinson says that their language is descended from the old Farsi, which was coeval with, but distinct from, the Pehlevi tongue in the days of the Sassanian kings. Whilst, however, we may accept this as the most probable hypothesis, and may even be led thereby to regard with heightened interest this last survival of an illustrious stock, we are not compelled to endorse the conjectural connection of Baktyari with Bactria, which has been propounded by some writers, or to localize their ancestral home. *It is sufficient to believe that they are Aryans by descent, and to know that they have lived for centuries in their present mountains.*" [The italics are mine.]

And later Curzon adds:

"What has been the history of this interesting country and people? Of the mystery of their origin I have previously spoken. From the earliest days we read of this mountain country as a wild and inaccessible region, inhabited by uncouth and formidable tribes. They set at naught the authority of the Medes and Persians; they defied Alexander and provoked Antiochus. The invading Turks found them a hard nut to crack. . . ."

He describes their temperament after this fashion:

"Their character presents a strange combination of dignity and license. For, on the one hand, they are modest, though self-contained, in deportment, obedient and hospitable, loyal to family and tribal ties, and wholly free from the abominable vices of the Persians. On the other hand, they are savage when excited, particularly in the pursuit of blood feuds, which are perpetuated from generation to generation, until sometimes entire families have been extinguished; and they are adroit and incurable thieves."

SIR AUSTEN HENRY LAYARD, A GREAT EXPLORER WHO TRAVELLED AMONG THEM MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, SAID:

". . . But the Baktyari bear the very worst reputation in Persia. They are denounced as a race of robbers, treacherous, cruel and bloodthirsty. Their very name is held in fear and detestation by the timid inhabitants of the districts which are exposed to their depredations. I had been repeatedly warned that I ran the greatest peril in placing myself in their hands, and that although I might possibly succeed in entering their mountains, the chances of getting out of them again were but few."

Ali Akbar, Haidar's son-in-law, smokes the "kalian" with his father, "The Old Rat." The head of the water-pipe is filled with tobacco. A wooden stem passes into the bottle, where the smoke is cooled and washed before being drawn up by the smoker. The pointed base, which can be thrust into the ground, is a convenience for a traveler. Usually one pipe suffices for a group

The Princes Say, "Go, Live Among the Tribes"

The American explorers had come to the edge of the Baktyari country. They were living in a town called Shushtar, in Arabistan. They had sent down a messenger to the princes of the Baktyari, who then had their camp in the foothills, twenty miles away, asking permission to visit them. One of the younger members of the ruling family, Rahim Khan, rode in and took the Americans to this camp. Merian C. Cooper here recounts the life of that camp, and tells how the explorers obtained permission to live among the tribes:

Two hours before sunset we mounted and rode on. The sun was almost at its setting as we drew near the mountains. Still no sign of a camp.

Then suddenly we swung around an elbow in the foothills and before us lay a lovely picture: A swift-flowing river torrent, now tinted with the gold of the setting sun, rushed and roared down out of a deep gorge in the purple craggy cliffs. Below the cliffs, where the river's bank was smooth and golden-green, was pitched a camp of fifty many-colored tents.

As darkness fell, we rode down into the camp.

We halted before a group of three tents placed facing out on the river. The one we entered was large and square; its flaps on one side thrown back. Candles burning in long shining holders showed soft carpets half covering the grass; and the light flickered up against tent walls of flowered satin.

Rahim's servants surrounded us with attention. Half an hour later Rahim came to say his uncle, Il Khani (the Khan of the Tribes) and his cousin, Il Begi (the master of the Tribes) were coming to call on us.

We waited in our reception tent. There came the soft patter of many feet on the grass, the rustle of gowns, and two old *Vekilan* (major domos) bearing huge silver-topped staffs of office, entered and stood one on each side, waiting.

Then in walked the Il Khani, a hale old man, a huge walrus mustache showing white against the brown of a face tanned and lined by a life spent in the open. He was in full Baktyari costume. The man who followed him looked the new generation —more the city Persian than the chief of wild nomads. He, Amir Jang, the Il Begi, was short and stout. His face was round as a moon. Little intelligent black eyes snapped from behind gold-rimmed glasses. He wore a huge solitaire diamond ring and a gold watch.

Like a true Baktyari, the son and heir of Haidar Khan is taught by his father how to hold a gun. He learns also to ride fearlessly and to swim; for in these three accomplishments he must be expert at an early age

"Salam aleikum" —"Peace be with you!" said the two tribal princes. This is the greeting of all this part of the East —of Turkey, Arabia, Persia.

"Aleikum, salam" —"With you peace!" we returned.

Through Rahim, after a long exchange of courtesies, in which the simple dignity of bearing of both the tribal chiefs was impressive, we told the princes the reason for our visit. We had come to beg permission to migrate over the mountains with one of their tribes. We wanted to tell that story on the screen. We should like to travel with one tribe, eat what they ate, sleep as they slept, really live their life.

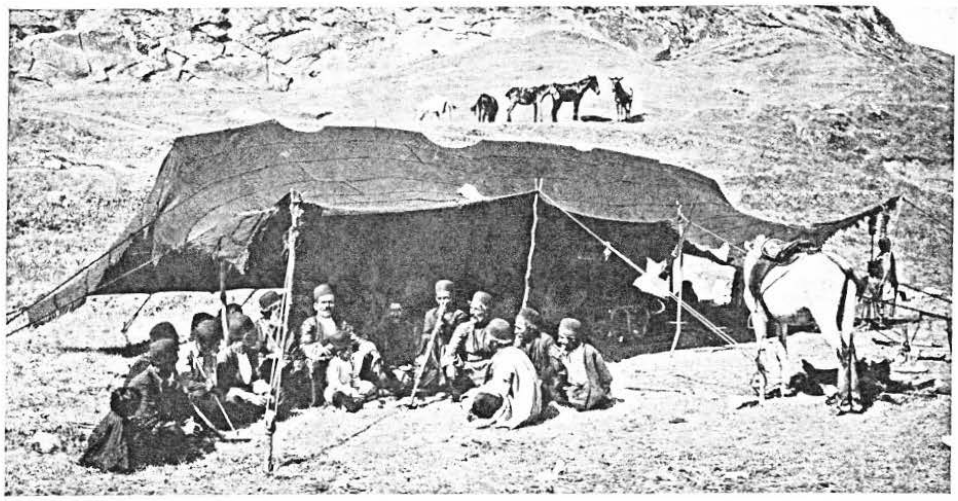
We wanted to go into the wild country to the north of this, in many parts unexplored. Certainly, so far as we have been able to find out, no foreigners have ever made a migration up through this country with the tribes. This was the way we would like to live and travel, we said.

At this, Amir Jang broke into hearty laughter. "All right," he chuckled, in broken English, as his little black mustache waggled above glistening white teeth. "You go with one my tribes. They

go ver-y, ver-y hard road—so hard not any my family now living ever been that way. No foreigners ever been. Big mountains, wood, a big river, then big, big mountain with plenty snow. And my people there men call bears, they live so wild and hard. They drink sour milk, eat nothing but acorns and little mutton. Ver-y, ver-y bad road."

And so it is decided that we are to go with one of Amir Jang's tribes. What it will be like, who knows? That is the salt and tang of it. Nobody does know.

And now, long since, the princes have gone. The camp has become still, and only here and there are burning the campfires of the guards. The river ripples at my feet; and everywhere the tribesmen are sleeping around the tents of their rulers.



Before a migration, Haidar Khan, leader of the Baba Ahmedi, summons the elders of the tribe to his black tent to weigh important matters in council. With him the three Americans ate bread and salt for many weeks; with him and his people they wandered through the roadless wilderness of Arabistan into the shadowy mountains beyond in search of grass for the hungry herds

A Day on the Baktyari Trail

BY MARGUERITE E. HARRISON.

"Khanum, Khanum!"

I turned sleepily on my camp bed and opened one eye. It seemed as if I had just gone to bed. It was bitterly cold, still almost dark. I shivered and cuddled down deeper under the blankets. But Niaz Ali was insistent.

"Bor mi-kunim. We're breaking camp," he said emphatically.

I came to life with a start. If the Baba Ahmedi were breaking camp it meant that I would have to hustle. In spite of the fact that there were about twenty people in our camp, there were only two tents to come down, Haidar Khan's and mine. The rest of the tribespeople slept on the ground rolled in their blankets in the shelter of their pack bags. Nobody went through the formality of dressing. They all slept in their clothes; simply got up and shook themselves at daylight, brewed a cup of sweet strong Persian tea and they were ready for the trail. I had to bathe and dress, snatch a hasty breakfast and supervise the loading of our packtrain for Merian and Shorty had left long before daylight with our interpreter to pick out a location on the trail so that they would be ready to shoot the scenes we had planned for the day's work.

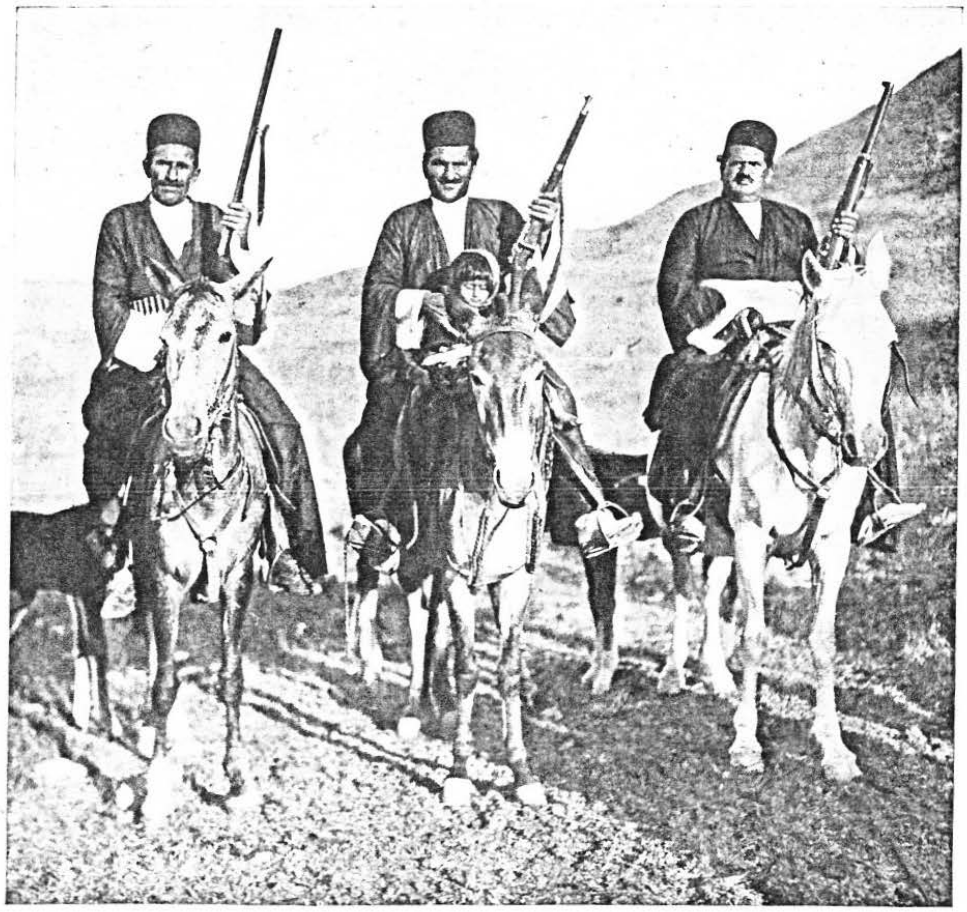
A hasty sponge bath in a collapsible rubber basin followed by a bowl of hot milk was the first step in my preparations for the day. Meanwhile outside there was pandemonium. Haidar was shouting orders here, there and everywhere, donkeys and pack mules were braying, horses whinneying, women screaming, babies crying, and the whole camp resounded with the patter of thousands of tiny feet as the shepherds who had been camped on the hills behind us over night drove their sheep and goats down to the trail.

When I was about half dressed Hadji, our charvadar, struck his head inside the tent flap. Hadji was eternally in hard luck. I knew by his expression that something terrible had happened. It seemed that two of our pack mules had wandered off during the night. Hadji as usual was sure they had been stolen. I sent him to look for them, ordered Niaz Ali to stay behind and super-

vise the loading of our pack train; then I hastily completed my toilet with the aid of an unbreakable mirror in the dim morning light and dashed out, grabbing my makeup box, because I would probably have to be in a scene on the trail that day. Haidar and his two wives were waiting. Mrs. Haidar the first, was perched on her mount, sitting astride the enormous cushion that served as a pack saddle. In front of her was the baby swathed in innumerable wrappings of colored calico. Mrs. Haidar number two, who went on foot, was strapping a big copper pot to the back of the family cow and shouting directions to Davud, Haidar's servant, who was loading the last donkey with a pair of enormous saddle-bags. Haidar and Lufta, his son and heir, carried no baggage on their beautiful Arab horses.

As usual, Haidar, Lufta and I started off first. We always rode ahead of the others for it was Haidar's job to pick out a suitable site for our next camp. While the Baba Ahmedi had their regular camping grounds at each stopping place or manzel, it was first come, first served, and some sites were more desirable than others of course. Off we went, Haidar and Lufta on their Arab horses at an easy trot, while I followed behind, kicking and beating my old white mule who always deeply resented leaving his companions behind him.

It was barely light and the swarming mass of men and beasts in front and behind was only a blurred gray silhouette against a background of jumbled rocks. Straight in front of us at the foot of a ravine was a solid wall several hundred feet high, apparently without an opening. But we turned and followed it up the bed of a mountain stream for about half a mile. My mule, who hated the water, balked, and I had to beat him till my arms ached to make him go through. By this time,



Ali Agha (left) is the oldest of the nine brothers of Haidar Khan and is himself chief, though he leaves the title and the work to Haidar. Two of the brothers are also khans, Iskandar (center) and Baran (right). "Aye," says Haidar proudly, "we ten are the strongest of all our people." And their hard faces, their great size, reveal that his words are not an idle boast

A dozen yards from shore floated a queer barge: a hundred goatskins blown up and fastened to the bottom of a light raft; this covered with rich rugs; over the rugs, on four posts, a satin-and-velvet canopy; silk-covered pillows strewn underneath. The raft had been built overnight to float Amir Jang down the swift Karun River to Shushtar. Magically it sped along the surface of the torrent without dip or roll or turn

the sun was beginning to appear over the tops of the mountains in front of us, and just ahead I saw a narrow cleft in the rock wall to the left into which a steady stream of men and beasts was disappearing. In a few minutes we had turned into a narrow defile where the cliffs almost met overhead, and we began a scramble up and up over rocks, boulders and beds of shale. Every now and then there was a traffic jam. Once a cow that was being driven by an old woman laid down in the middle of the trail and refused to move, completely blocking the road. It was half an hour before she could be induced to go on. Meanwhile, the women perched on the rocks and nursed their babies or took out their distaffs and spun the woolen thread they used for making pack bags. The men squatted down, took out their water pipes and had their morning smoke.

In about three hours we had emerged from the ravine and were zigzagging up the almost precipitous slopes of a rugged mountain on the other side of which was the valley in which we were to camp for the night. Haidar and Lufta led their horses; I rode my mule until he had fallen on his knees three times and then I took to scrambling with the rest. By this time the sun was well up and it had begun to get very hot. I shed my top coat, then my riding coat. Beads of perspiration stood on my forehead and drops began to trickle down the bridge of my nose. At this extremely critical juncture, I heard a shout.

"Hey, there, Marguerite! I'm going to shoot when you ride past with Lufta and Haidar."

It was Shorty with the camera, standing on a rock ledge not three hundred feet away. I grabbed my make-up box, took out my mirror and desperately applied powder, cream and lip stick while half a dozen donkeys, a flock of sheep and a hundred or so Baktyari looked on at the proceedings. Then we all filed past the camera.

By the time we had reached the top of the pass it was after noon. The thermometer was well over a hundred, the animals were hungry and thirsty and everybody was anxious to make camp as soon as possible. I followed Haidar at breakneck speed down a treacherous trail covered with loose shale and broken rocks to the grassy valley where we were to spend the night. There were no trees, no shade in sight, except here and there a few scrubby konar trees covered with little golden berries.

Hadji with our baggage was at least two hours behind us, so I stretched myself out under one of the konars to wait while Haidar's wife made a fire and prepared the inevitable glass of tea. All this while the tribespeople were pouring down the hill, camps were springing up all around us. Haidar's wives were busy unpacking their pots and kettles, unloading saddle bags and driving the pack animals out to graze. I was ravenously hungry, but I knew that I must resign myself to waiting many hours for any substantial grub. The Baktyari only have one meal a day and that late in the evening. Meanwhile all I could expect was a bowl of

sour goat's milk and a flap of bread. It was the middle of the afternoon before Hadji appeared with the baggage and tent. Merian and Shorty straggled in toward sunset, when we had more tea, and that evening at about eight o'clock we walked over to a neighboring camp to have dinner with Ali Awa, elder brother of Haidar Khan. When we arrived, ten swarthy Bakhtiari chiefs were already seated around the flat rock that was to serve as our dinner table, smoking their pipes and playing the Baktyari game of poker which is called As. I sat beside Ali Awa who was playing in bad luck and lost ten sheep before supper was brought in. A white cloth was laid out on the rock, in the middle of which was a huge copper bowl of pilau, boiled rice, topped by a sheep's head boiled whole. Two other bowls contained *duh* and *mast,* the two forms of sour milk which are one of the staples of Baktyari diet. There was also another dish of rice boiled in sour milk and a plate containing a syrupy substance resembling honey, made of dates and ghee, clarified sheep fat. In front of each of us was a huge flap of bread thin as paper and folded like a napkin. This, the more fastidious used to scoop out handfuls of rice; the others plunged in with their fingers. The bowls of sour milk were passed from hand to hand. Everybody ate as much and as fast as possible, for this is considered good manners among the Baktyari. Ali Awa, with a lordly gesture, picked out the sheep's eye and other choice tid-bits from the main dish and presented them to me with his fingers.

When the remains of the feast had been taken away, a servant passed around a brass ewer and basin. We all rinsed out our mouths and washed our hands and dried them on a common towel. Then tea was brought in, after which we immediately took our leave, for among the Baktyari the social part of a dinner party comes first, not last. It is good manners to arrive an hour before dinner time and leave as soon as you've finished.

When I got back to my tent I made short work of crawling into my camp bed. The men spread their sleeping bags just outside the door and we were soon all immersed in slumber, but not for long. About an hour later I had a nightmare. I dreamed that the rocky gorge through which we had passed that morning, had collapsed and fallen on me, and I waked up to find myself struggling under a mountain of canvas. A stray mule had tangled himself up in the guy ropes of my tent and pulled it down over my head. Merian and Shorty and Niaz Ali rushed to my assistance. I was extricated and the tent set up once more. But even then I was not destined to pass an undisturbed night. Soon after midnight, we had a terrible thunder storm and Merian, Shorty, Niaz Ali and Mohammed, our interpreter, dragged their sleeping bags into the tent.

Next morning we were up and away again at sunrise.

Forward go Haidar Khan and his volunteers to test the hard snow-crust with poles and sticks. Shovel men following, dig a deep path. Knowing that her child's life depends on keeping a footing, a young mother scrambles up, hour after hour, balancing a cradle on her back. Another woman, tugging at a rope, urges on a mule

Nature Stages a Drama for the American Visitors

Along the route the American explorers travelled they met people as glowing as any in fiction. Mr. Cooper here tells of one of the many people along the way who played their natural parts in this great natural drama:

We had come to the last outpost of the Camel Corp of Iraq, where a garrison of sixty men and half as many horsemen keep the law among the Bedouins of the desert, of a district as big as England and Scotland together. Among these camel riders of the Corps, hung over with cartridge belts, daggers and pistols, was a man who seemed to be pure Caucasian. And I fell to imagining some beautiful Circassian slave sold into the black tent of an Arab Sheik. And this, their son.

But I was wrong. Half an hour later we saw this white man wearing the dress of an Arab come galloping down the slope, riding bareback with magnificent grace a fine, spotless-white Arab horse. He pulled up in front of us, and said in French:

"The Commandant says you wish a photograph of us on horseback. I am at your service."

I asked in astonishment, "Are you French?"

"No, Russian." Then, with pride, "I am a Cossack."

A Russian Cossack, living as a soldier of the Arab Desert Force! It brought back a torrent of memories. These Russian exiles scattered over the world! I recalled an old Russian Cavalry General whom I had met in Abyssinia, where he was in charge of the dairy of the Prince of that country; a little Aviation Colonel, who was commanding the Air Forces of the King of the Hejaz, at Jiddah, the walled town which is the port of Mecca; and women of the old Russian aristocracy dancing for the men of the East in the cafes of Constantinople.

I'm going to write a story about these Russian exiles some day. Why, our literature is full of the tales of the emigres of the French Revolution—marquis dancing-masters in the villages of Old England and the like. Well, here is the same thing happening in our own day, only with twice the romantic coloring. If you don't believe me, put an advertisement in any New York paper saying you want an ex-member of the Russian aristocracy to shine shoes, play the violin, fly your aeroplane, sing at your wife's concerts, or wash the dishes—and see how many answers you will receive.

This young Cossack with the wrinkle of suffering down his forehead had been given the name of "The Eagle" by his Arab fellows. And he had made an eagle flight in his day. Called at seventeen from his village down near the Caspian Sea, he had served in the army of the Czar against the Germans; then, after the revolution, had fought with Kolchak in Siberia. After that Admiral-General had died with eyes unbound as he faced a firing squad, The Eagle had made his way clear across Siberia to the Ukraine, where he had joined Dennekin. After the rout of this army he had become one of the famous Cossack guard of the Last of the White Russians—Wrangel.

And then, "We were beaten. And what was there left for me? Me, I am a Cossack, a soldier. That is all I know. So I joined the French Foreign Legion. And I was sent to serve in Syria. But the Cossack is a free soldier, and the soldier of the Foreign Legion is only a dog. So one day I ran away."

He had fled during the night out into the desert, where he had been captured by wandering Bedouins, stripped stark naked, and then turned loose to tramp three days without food or water until he had reached El Giam, where he had enlisted in the Desert Police. (The law now, however, requires that all deserters from the Legion should be sent back!) That was his story, and the officer confirmed it. I could well believe it, anyhow. I have seen Cossacks in action, and they are hardy fellows.

"Now," finished The Eagle, "every six months, when I have saved ten or fifteen gold pounds, I take my horse and I ride to Baghdad. When I have spent my money, I come back to the desert again. There are other Russians in Baghdad; they tell me to stay with them, and not to go back to the Arabs. But I am a Cossack, and it is the life of a Cossack to ride and to fight. And so I stay. I am happy."

Across from us was a room with a locked door. A guard stood outside. We had thought it probably contained some desert robber lately taken, until The Eagle whispered, "There is a German sergeant there. He has just deserted from the Foreign Legion."

And that night, when we had dined off chicken and rice, eating mostly with our fingers, which to my mind is one of the finest things about Eastern life, the Commandant suddenly asked did we speak German. Mrs. Harrison spoke it fluently, Schoedsack and I somewhat. We told him this. Five minutes later a stout little chap in the uniform of a sergeant of the Foreign Legion but with typical bullet-head of the Prussian was led in. He brought his heels together with a resounding click and saluted. Then, he, too, told his tale. He was nervous, evidently, for there was hanging over him the chance that he might be sent back on the morrow to the French patrol over the border, and there, death or a long sentence in prison awaited him. And the life of a prisoner who has deserted from the Legion is not a pretty one, from all accounts. But he held up his head and spoke:

"You think it strange, no doubt, that I, a Prussian officer, I, who have flown in the squadron of

Von Richtoven, should be in this uniform." He gesticulated stiffly at his French regimentals. "It was chance. I was in the Kapp push, and when that failed I was proscribed, and so tried to flee with another officer to America. In Dusseldorf I was arrested by the French. I accepted service in the Foreign Legion.

"For two years I served in Morocco, then I was sent here. Twice I have been wounded in the cause of the French, and last week I had completed four years of the five of my enlistment, when I was accused of helping some Germans of my company to desert north over the Turkish frontier. I deserted and escaped over the frontier, and now I wait to hear what they will do with me here. But this I know, I will never go back to the Legion!"

All of us went below into the big barrack-room, and were received with grave courtesy by the men of the Camel Corps. We reclined on the floor, resting our elbows on embroidered camel saddles, and drank of the bitter coffee, a few drops in the bottom of each cup, served by a huge black, who juggled the half dozen little cups in one hand like a vaudeville performer. The German drank with us. We sat silent, and listened to the wailing of a single-stringed instrument in a tent outside, where some man of the waste place of the great interior sang one of the melancholy chants of his land.

"One must have courage, yes," said the German, thinking aloud. We said nothing.

They took the prisoner up to his room above, and I walked out from the low-ceilinged lantern-lighted room, out from the little fort, out into the blackness beyond. There was no moon, and the night was full of stars. The desert stretched away on three sides, and disappeared into the night. Far below my feet I could dimly see the great river. A shadowy shape like that of a wolf, suddenly and as silently as a wraith, appeared against the sky line, then slipped into the blackness beyond. Came another—then another; there was a dozen in all. Then there arose a long half-scream, half-cry, something almost human, something which held in its rising crescendo the touch of the mystery and loneliness of the desert. It was the night call of the jackals.

I peered out into the darkness, but could see nothing now but the velvet sky and the white stars. I turned toward the fort. As I did, there began there once more the barbaric rhythm of the song of the Central Arabian, and out in the darkness the wild cries of the jackals mingled with this eerie music. I looked up and saw a dim light filtering through the crack in the wooden shutter of the locked room. The young German deserted from the Foreign Legion was there, I knew, and I thought of him, sitting alone with his face in his hands, listening to these weird and wild sounds of the desert night and visioning himself, perhaps, with his back against a wall, a handkerchief bound over his eyes, and the rifles of a firing squad pointing at his breast....

Zardeh Kuh is conquered! Here is the promised land of grass and plenty. Here are rippling streams, sunshine, warmth. Dotting the long stretches are delicate purple flowers tossed by the hand of a pagan god. Dreary days of cold and hardship are over. The herds and flocks are grazing. Zardeh Kuh, "The Yellow Mountain," lies behind. Zardeh Kuh is conquered—for another half-year

The Pilgrims Reach the Mountain Top —And Grass Just Below!

Something of the emotions experienced by these travelers from America is indicated in this extract from the diary kept by Merian C. Cooper, who wrote as follows on the 27th day of their migration:

We were off at dawn. We thought the show would be over by the time we reached the mountain top; but when, at last, we arrived there, we found it in full swing.

Down the mountain-side steeply and yet more steeply swept a natural winding road of deep glacial snow. And upon the stern rock walls that loomed above it thousands of delicate purple flowers had been scattered by some old pagan god. Down this sheer snow lane, with its flower-decked walls, as far as the eye could see, moved a continuous line of black dots.

We rode down among the crowd. Here, there, animals lay dead in the snow. The old, the young and the weak were strapped backward on donkeys and cows. And whooping and laughing,, crying and weeping, stumbling and falling, with frost-bitten legs and feet, with pain-racked bodies, the cotton-clad horde swept on down . . . down . . . down the mountainside.

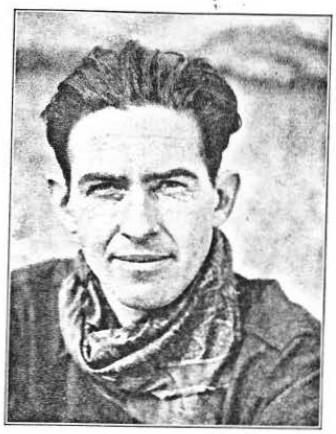
We went with them, went downward mile after mile, almost knee-deep in the soft snow. We plunged, finally, out of the last snow gorge, and there, out to the horizon stretched green valleys, through which, in the gold sunshine, rippled silver streams feeding the luxuriant young grass. Here was the prize of the gallant fight. Here was the land of plenty. Grass! Grass and Life!

With his young son, Haidar Khan, chief of the Baba Ahmedi, with which the three Americans made the migration over the Zardeh Kuh Pass, inspects Ernest B. Schoedsack's motion-picture camera. The mechanical contrivances of the West neither surprise nor overawe the independent, high-spirited people of the Orient, who view machinery as somewhat akin to children's playthings

PERSONALITIES

Mrs. Marguerite E. Harrison is a member of a distinguished southern family from Baltimore, Md. Her father, the late Bernard N. Baker, was founder and owner of the Atlantic Transport Line. But Mrs. Harrison was not content with a society existence. She won her spurs as a writer on the Baltimore Sun, then as a war correspondent in Germany and Russia. She was imprisoned in Russia. Later she travelled alone in a daring journey across China, Manchuria and Siberia. She is the author of several well-known books, including "Marooned in Moscow," "Unfinished Tales from a Russian Prison" and "Red Bear or Yellow Dragon."

Ernest Beaumont Schoedsack hales from San Francisco and Los Angeles. Mr. Schoedsack, long an experienced camera man in the studios of Hollywood, first made his reputation for daring work during the World War. Time after time he went forward with the front line of the



infantry under heavy shell fire or far into the German territory by airplane, making his camera records of our fighting men. After the completion of the World War, he served as captain of the Red Cross Photographic Department in Poland, during the Russian-Polish war. The story of how he risked his life to get the blowing up of the great Kief bridge and escaped with the last of the retreating Polish troops, is one that is known wherever war correspondents gather. And after this he became known as a "camera war correspondent." He was for a year on the Turkish-Grecian front and then wandered far into Abyssinia, Arabia and all over the Near East. His last adventure is the filming of this epic picture "Grass."

Merian C. Cooper was born in Jacksonville, Florida. He was educated at the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. He served as a Captain of aviation in France in the World War, then as a Lieutenant Colonel on the Polish-Russian front. He was Director of the American Relief Administration in East Galicia. He was one of the officers of the little sailing vessel "Wisdom," which gypsied around the waters of the Far East. He has been at various times an aviator, soldier, sailor, writer and explorer. He is one of the authors of "The Sea Gypsy" and "Grass."

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Milestone Film & Video

Over the last 35 years in film distribution and restoration, Milestone has built a reputation for releasing classic cinema masterpieces, groundbreaking documentaries, and American independent features. Thanks to the company's work in rediscovering and releasing important films such as Charles Burnett's ***Killer of Sheep***, Kent Mackenzie's, *The Exiles*, Mikhail Kalatozov's *I Am Cuba*, Marcel Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity*, the Mariposa Film Group's *Word is Out*, Ayoka Chenzira's *Alma's Rainbow*, and Alfred Hitchcock's *Bon Voyage* and *Aventure Malgache,* Milestone has long occupied a position as one of the country's most influential independent distributors. Milestone also produced Ross Lipman's acclaimed essay film *Notfilm*.

In 1995, Milestone received the first Special Archival Award from the National Society of Film Critics for the restoration and release of *I Am Cuba.* Manohla Dargis at *LA Weekly* chose Milestone as the 1999 "Indie Distributor of the Year." In 2004, the National Society of Film Critics awarded Milestone with a Film Heritage award. That same year the International Film Seminars presented the company its prestigious Leo Award and the New York Film Critics Circle voted the company a Special Award "in honor of 15 years of restoring classic films." In November 2007, Milestone was awarded the Fort Lee Film Commission's first Lewis Selznick Award for contributions to film history. In January 2008, the Los Angeles Film Critics Association chose to give its first Legacy of Cinema Award "to Dennis Doros and Amy Heller of Milestone Film & Video for their tireless efforts on behalf of film restoration and preservation." And in March 2008, Milestone was honored by Anthology Film Archive for its work in preservation.

The company won Best Rediscovery in the Il Cinema Ritrovato Awards for its DVD releases of *Winter Soldier* in 2006 and for *The Exiles* in 2010 and for best blu-ray, for the Project Shirley series in 2015. In 2011, Milestone was the first distributor ever honored with two Film Heritage Awards in the same year by the National Society of Film Critics for *On the Bowery* and *Word is Out*.

In December 2012, Milestone became the first two-time winner of the prestigious New York Film Critics' Circle's "Special Award" and received a National Society of Film Critics Film Heritage Award, for the company's work restoring, preserving and distributing the films of Shirley Clarke. In 2019, Doros and Heller were honored with the Art House Convergence's Spotlight Lifetime Achievement Award and the Denver Silent Film Festival's David Shepard Career Achievement Award. In 2023, Milestone received the Ambler Cinematic Arts Award.

In 2009, Dennis Doros was elected to the Board of Director of the Association of the Moving Image Archivists (AMIA) and established the organization's press. He served three terms on the board. In 2016, he was honored with AMIA's William O'Farrell Award in recognition for services to the field. From 2017–2021, Doros served as President of AMIA, and on the board of Co-ordinating Council of Audio-Visual Archives Associations. From 2018–2021, Doros was a member of the National Film Preservation Board, which helps select the Library of Congress's yearly additions to the National Film Registry.

Heller and Doros have lectured internationally on the importance of saving and screening films outside the mainstream. In recent years, Milestone premiered pristine restorations of Nancy Savoca's *Household Saints*, David Schickele's *Bushman*, Bridgett Davis' *Naked Acts*, Kalatozov's *I Am Cuba*; Lois Weber's *Shoes* and *The Dumb Girl of Portici*; Kathleen Collins's *Losing Ground*; George T. Nierenberg's *Say Amen, Somebody* and *No Maps on My Taps*; the films of Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, including the Oscar®-winning *Common Threads*, Chenzira's *Alma's Rainbow*, and a new restoration of a film that the company had premiered thirty years earlier, Eleanor Antin's *The Man without a World*. In 2025, Milestone is releasing a new 4K restoration

of a 1999 Charles Burnett film that was never distributed — after a 19-year quest, *The Annihilation of Fish* will be premiering and then screening nationally and worldwide.

In 2021, Milestone entered into a distribution agreement with Kino Lorber, which has allowed co-founders Doros and Heller more time to focus on the rediscovery and restoration of films that challenge the cinematic canon. The pair — along with filmmakers Nancy Savoca, Rich Guay, Ira Deutchman, Mary Harron, Geoffrey Fletcher, and attorney Susan Bodine — have also been actively involved in the founding of the non-profit organization, Missing Movies, dedicated to addressing the current cinephile's dilemma — thousands of films that are no longer available to the public.

"They care and they love movies." — Martin Scorsese

"Among the distributors dedicated to the preservation and circulation of classic cinema, none deserves more commendation and affection than Milestone Film & Video, founded by Dennis Doros and Amy Heller in 1990." — David Sterritt, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*

Visit our website at www.milestonefilms.com for more details on the Milestone collection

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Film Notes by Amy Heller & Dennis Doros