

educational screening kit

Theme #history

Jaisalmer Ayo! Gateway of the Gypsies

Directors: Pepe Ozan, Melitta Tchaicovsky Greene

Production country & year: USA - 2004

Length: 54 min

Producer: Pepe Ozan, Melitta Tchaicovsky Greene

Narrated by: Vidhu Singh

Camera: Pepe Ozan, Melitta Tchaicovsky

Editor: Kevin Pina

Sound design: Jerry Basserman

Official Website: <http://www.artnetwork.com/JaisalmerAyo>

Buy DVD: <http://artnetwork.com/videos/jaisalmer-ayo-gateway-fo-the-gypsies/>

Synopsis

The film captures the lives and journeys of vanishing nomadic communities of the Thar Desert in Rajasthan, India. From the open roads of the desert to their temporary encampments, the camera follows snake-charmers, storytellers, musicians, metalworkers, salt traders and dancers, travelling from village to village in their struggle for survival. A minimal narration carries the viewer through the intricacies of the Hindu caste system and marrying within their own tribe. Many of their customs have a common lineage with European Gypsies (Roma) and the migration of the Gypsies out of India. The film is scored with a remarkable soundtrack of emotional Rajasthani music.

Biography of directors

Melitta Tchaicovsky

Producer and director Melitta Tchaicovsky was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She earned her BA in Visual Communication at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. Her photographs have been exhibited internationally and published in newspapers, magazines and book covers in the US, Spain, Switzerland, Israel and Brazil. In 2001, she established ArtNetwork Productions, an independent media production studio based in the San Francisco Bay Area. She dedicates her work to media projects that promote the understanding of people's traditions, art and culture, and engage the audience in issues of human rights and social justice.

Pepe Ozan

Pepe Ozan is a producer of operas and a filmmaker. Starting in 1994, he created a series of operas which through the years have grown to host 200 participants and 30 musicians

performing for an audience of 5000 people, at the famous Burning Man Festival in the Nevada desert in the USA.

In 2001, Pepe spent 7 months in India to capture the images of "Ganga Ma: A Pilgrimage to the Source", a 58-minute art-documentary released in December 2001, and co-produced with Melitta Tchaicovsky. Together they established ArtNetwork Productions in 2001, an award winning independent film production company. ArtNetwork's focus is the visual documentation of ancient, indigenous, and nomadic cultures and the development of projects alerting audiences of the need for preservation of the planet's environment and vanishing cultures.

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What to read to get some useful background information?

★ To learn about Roma history and origins

For a quick introduction, you can read the PDF publication “The Council of Europe: Protecting the rights of Roma” (2013).

<https://edoc.coe.int/en/roma-and-travellers/5976-pdf-the-council-of-europe-protecting-the-rights-of-roma-.html>

Sections we recommend in particular:

- Persecution and migration: a long history, pages 5-6
- Identity, pages 7-8

You can watch the educational animation video produced by Open Society institute “Gypsies, Roma, Travellers: An Animated History” (2013).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q6wSLfGBVGY>

You can check the “History Roma Fact Sheet” co-produced by the Council of Europe and Romani project/ University of Graz

http://romafacts.uni-graz.at/?l_history=fr#history

★ To go further

You can read the research paper by Professor Ian Hancock of the University of Texas (USA) “On Romani Origins and Identity” (2006).

http://www.ooocities.org/romani_life_society/indexpics/HistoryOrigins.pdf

Questions for discussion after the screening

- Why have many names been applied to the Roma community? (Manush, Sinti, Kale, Travelers, etc.)
- What are the meanings and origins of words such as Roma, Gypsy, etc.?
- What did/do you learn in school about the history of Roma people?
- How has the implementation of law played a part in the forced settling of Roma communities?
- How prevalent are traveling Roma communities in the present day?

Workshop outline ideas:

1. Discovering Roma history

Objectives of the workshop:

- Learn about the history of Roma people
- Share knowledge about migration of Roma people from India

1.1 Roma history

<http://phirenamenca.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/The-European-Boogie-Man-Complex-An-Educational-Toolkit1.pdf> - pages 64-79

1.2 Roma history timeline and discovering Roma biographies throughout history

<http://phirenamenca.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Publication-Fall-Seminar-2014.pdf>
- pages 9-15

1.3 Imagine the history

Split participants into small groups of 3-4 people. Give a map to each group that shows how Roma people migrated from India over centuries. Use maps from here:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/histoCulture_en.asp

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/Source/FS2/1.0_india-europe_english.pdf

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/roma/Source/FS2/2.0_arrival-europe_english.pdf

Tell the groups to invent one family story together about how they got from India to Europe.

Questions for the participants: Who are the family members? How do you imagine their lives? Why did they leave India? How? Where did they go and why? What is their final destination - where do they live today?

2. Invent your own history

Objective:

- Reflect on how the history of our family and community shape our identity

Participants can work individually or in small groups. Their task is to invent their own family tree and draw the imaginary migration route of their family throughout centuries. They can invent any story from their imagination about the past of their family. After everyone is finished drawing, participants can share their own family tree if they want in small groups or in the full group.

Questions for discussion:

- Why did you choose to have this specific family background?
- What is your connection to the history of your family/people?
- How is your identity shaped by where your ancestors come from?
- What do you know about the history of your nation?

3. What is the connection?

Objective:

- Reflect on what makes a national or ethnic identity

Ask participants to think about the national or ethnic group they feel they are a part of and draw or paint an image about the group. You can raise some questions while they are drawing and discuss afterwards:

- What is the connection between members of the group?
- How is it defined who is part of the group?
- What do you think keeps a nation or an ethnic group together?