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Curare: Poison Preparation by the Samena

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the end, the unthinkable act is carried out.

Some students in the class where I have used this film were profoundly disturbed by the outcome. The viewer is nudged by the carefully developed characterization of the society, its setting, and the relations between the story's principals to accept as probable the eating of one human by others given the specifics of the situation. I have used these ethnographic specifics to discuss with students models of distinctive, self-contained world views at some variance from their own. As is true in most classroom use of films, some student preparation is required so that themes of anthropological interest are evident during the viewing. This is particularly true here since the film was intended for commercial showing to serious and sophisticated film audiences, not for illustration of professorial lectures.

Several critical comments ought to be noted about this impressive and useful film. It is marred at one point by a spirit possession sequence in a cave, seemingly pasted onto the narrative as an afterthought, and appealing to the current wave of adolescent-minded fascination with the occult. Second, the film is quite expensive to rent and the understandable reluctance of departmental heads to part with \$90.00 for a film showing will probably limit its use before classroom audiences. This is unfortunate.

The film is a pleasure just to view. But it can be used also as dramatic source material for many of the topics usually covered in introductory anthropology classes.

Curare: Poison Preparation by the Samena. 16mm, color, sound, 11 minutes. Rental \$15.00, purchase \$150.00. Distributed by Media Production, Latin American Center, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

Reviewed by
RICHARD EVANS SCHULTES
Harvard University

This film is an interesting anthropological study of an important activity of a very primitive and isolated group of South American Indians. It is well photographed and well narrated, and significant bits of native belief are woven into the narration.

These Indians have a rich ethnobotanical knowledge. It is clear that their method of preparing this kind of curare differs markedly from that of other tribes of tropical South American forest areas. Consequently, the

ethnobotanist can only be disappointed that the basic ingredient—a vine—and the several other ingredients of the poison are not botanically identified beyond the use of native names. But this deficiency, however grievous to the botanist, does not detract from the usefulness of the film which can be strongly recommended in teaching.

Xinguana: Aborigines of South America. Produced by VISION ASSOCIATES. 16mm, color, optical sound, 25 minutes. Rental \$30.00, purchase \$370.00 from Contemporary McGraw Hill Films, Princeton Road, Hightstown, NJ 08520.

Reviewed by JEAN E. JACKSON
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Visually speaking, this film is a pleasure to watch. The people, action, and landscape it portrays are beautiful. It deals with some of the inhabitants of the Xingu River, in the Parque Nacional do Xingu in Central Brazil. The film generally limits itself to those activities and their associated artifacts which are public and observable. For example, a major section of the film is concerned with the *Kwarup* ancestral ceremony, and the portrayal of the skillful preparation of the ancestral logs, the body ornamentation, and the wrestling is quite good, with careful photography and lavish attention to detail.

The film gives an understanding of some of the fundamental rhythms of daily life, such as fishing, manioc preparation, and child care. We acquire a sense of the nobility of these people, in appearance and behavior. This is particularly the case in the scene of children swimming in the river, the narration and photography conveying what makes everyday life secure and worthwhile. In general, *Xinguana* achieves many of the goals of filmmaking—flawless technique, good editing, and a conscientious portrayal of some crucial aspects of central Brazilian indigenous life.

However, I have reservations on its being the most successful document for teaching about the aboriginal populations of the Amazon basin. For example, in a scene of men fishing, the modern floats on the fishnet indicate that these people hardly live "untouched by civilization" (see Heider 1972:58). In fact, one point I would want to stress in a classroom situation is that *no* groups exist in South America untouched by civilization. We are also somewhat surprised to hear, during a ritual where all the participants are naked, about "naked virgins," as if