Caught-in-Between
— Documentary Film Screening —

Richard Werbner (Manchester University)

Caught-in-Between
A film by Richard Werbner
Duration roughly 55 minutes.

Shot in Botswana’s Moremi village with its awesome landscapes in 2016, this film is mainly about a leading village elder, John Lelatlhego and his entanglement in the troubles of a young quarrelsome couple.

John was an illiterate teenager in the 1970’s, when he first went to work underground in the South African mines.

Now computer literate, and retired, since 2014, as a Human Resources Administrator, John is the Little Chief or head of his part of Moremi, a minister of the African Baptist Full Gospel Church, the patriarch of an extended family, a big farmer, and a much sought after go-between in family and marital negotiations.

The public roles John now plays, with his fine, trained sense of hierarchy in administration, entangle him in murky yet scandalous affairs. He gets caught in conflicting loyalties, bitterly dividing families, his bishop’s and his cousin’s. The film follows the testing of botsadi parenthood and the give-and-take between generations on very different occasions from the great and national patriotic celebration for Botswana’s 50th anniversary, to intimate moments of gossip, church preaching and court hearings.

Richard Werbner is Professor Emeritus in African Anthropology, Honorary Research Professor in Visual Anthropology, the University of Manchester, sometime Senior Post-Doctoral Fellow, Smithsonian Institution, Senior Fellow (National Humanities Center), Overseas Professor (National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka). He has recently given the Elliot P. Skinner Memorial Lecture, Association for Africanist Anthropology and the Royal African Society Lecture.

His first fieldwork was among Winnebago in Nebraska, and he has carried out extensive fieldwork in Zimbabwe and Botswana. Tears of the Dead, his social biography of an African family, won the Amaury Talbot Prize. His most recent books are Holy Hustlers, Schism and Prophecy (2011) and Divination’s Grasp (2015); and his most recent films are Burying Hallelujah (2014) and Caught-in-Between (2016).

The Royal Anthropological Institute distributes his films, which are also available from Ethnographic Video Online. In 1999 on the fiftieth anniversary of the Manchester Department of Social Anthropology, he curated, Barotseland in the Forties: Max Gluckman, a Retrospective, a major exhibition from the thousands of Gluckman’s photos now in the RAI collection.