"Friends/Drugs" Producer: Zagreb Film. Distributor: IFB
Cameraman: Zeljko Guberović

Reviewed by Richard March.

"Friends," a film by the Zagreb Documentary Film Studio, is an example of a film made by non-folklorists for non-folklorists which nevertheless is very effective as an ethnographic film.

The fifteen-minute film takes place in the abode of an elderly village woman in the Obravac district of the Dalmation hinterlands, not far from the city of Zadar. The woman shares her quarters with her goat. Her home is an example of one of the oldest house types in the Balkans. The floor plan comprises one room, normally including an internal fence to keep livestock penned up on one side of the packed-earth floor. The woman in the film seems to have dispensed with the fence—but then it's hard to keep a goat penned up anyway.

The woman is shown as she milks the goat and prepares a meal for herself. As is typical in this culture area, her hearth stones are at ground level in the center of the house. There is no chimney; an opening in the roof usually called bedža provides an outlet for the smoke. She bakes a loaf of bread directly upon the hearth stones under an unglazed ceramic half-globe-shaped oven known as pokva which is placed over the dough and covered with coals.

She also prepares a pot of beans, suspending the pot on the chain above the hearth. The narrow-linked chain, the coal shovel and the poker are all typical elements of the Dinaric (from Dinara Mountains) cultural inventory. Cooking techniques, such as swaying the pot above the fire to lessen its exposure to heat when it threatens to boil over are illustrated.

Thus a good deal of Dinaric material culture is presented in the film although the film makers are not really concerned with folk foodways. They are primarily interested in presenting artistically the close relationship of the woman to her goat. In their own way, they share a meal. The goat is fed corn mash, but also manages to snatch a bit of beans and bread, only to be rewarded with a whack from the woman's cane. The main point of the film is the symbiosis of herder and herd. There is no shot of the house's exterior though the cries of hogs and cattle are often heard from without. It seems that the film makers intended the "friends" to represent an enclosed microcosm.

"Friends" is a very useful film in that it not only illustrates the foodways of a Balkan region, but also makes a significant statement about the relation of humans to domestic animals in a traditional stock-herding economy. The significant statement, which ethnographic film so often completely lacks, renders the film meaningful and interesting to an audience which need not include only Balkan or folklore specialists.