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Folly, Anne Laure (1954-)

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Drijvers, Jan Willem. "Ammianus on the Revolt of Firmus." In *Ammianus after Julian: The Reign of Valentinian and Valens in Books 26–31 of the "Res Gestae"*, edited by Jan den Boeft et al., pp. 129–155. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2007.

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ERIC FOURNIER

Folly, Anne Laure (1954–), Togolese filmmaker and international legal adviser for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, was born Ayele Folly-Reimann on 31 March 1954 in Lomé, Togo, to Amah Folly (a producer at the French world-music recording company OCORA and then at Radio France International) and Juliette Reimann. She has one sister. Folly studied law in Paris at the Université de Paris II–Panthéon-Assas. She began her career as an international legal adviser for UNESCO in 1981.

In the early 1990s, Folly began making films. Inspired by Sarah Maldoror (a French-Guadeloupean filmmaker) and Safi Faye (a Senegalese filmmaker and ethnologist), whom she has called "des militantes dont le travail cinématographique est inspirant car il interroge l'essence des problématiques des Africaines" (militants whose cinematographic work is inspiring because it interrogates the heart of the problems confronting African women), Folly turned to film because she considers it similar to law as a means of advocating for the defense of women, but with images for support.

Folly's filmmaking career was short, but significant. In the eight years between 1992 and 2000, Folly directed eleven films, many of which are highly acclaimed. Folly's films are documentaries, a genre she considers important because it allows filmmakers to be close to their topics, to investigate real problems of real people. Asserting that documentaries are socially engaged and effective tools for bringing difficult issues to light and for provoking global discussion and political action, she states that "chaque vision d'un documentaire suscite une réflexion sur ses choix, ses parti pris" (every documentarist's vision gives rise to a reflection about his or her choices, his or her stances).

Folly's choice is to focus on the lives of African women, and her stance is to fight against obstacles to their physical and material welfare. Her films investigate witchcraft, family politics, reproductive health, genital mutilation, political activism, economic opportunities, and war's effects on women and their families (especially in Angola). Folly uses

interviews so that the African women she films may speak for themselves, verbalizing their personal ideas, political positions, and concerns. Folly believes that film is important for African women in the sense that it provides "la porte vers l'extérieur, parfois la seule qui leur est offerte, ainsi qu'un outil de réflexion sur la condition humaine" (the door to the outside, sometimes the only one that is offered to them, as well as a tool of reflection about the human condition).

Folly's first film, *Le gardien des forces* (1992), tackles the subject of Togolese voodoo, using interviews to elucidate its practices and tenets. In 1993 Folly shot two films, *L'or du Liptako* and *Femmes du Niger entre l'intégrisme et démocratie*. In the latter, Folly showcases the tension in Niger between Islamic fundamentalism and democracy. Using interviews extensively, Folly shows how Nigerien women can vote, but only through the proxy of their husbands or fathers. Yet these women have become the strongest advocates for democracy, despite risking physical attack and excommunication if they speak out.

Folly's most acclaimed film is *Femmes aux yeux ouverts* (1994), which examines the struggles and successes of women in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal. This film opens with a poem by a Burkinabè woman: "Une femme comme il faut doit tenir toute instruction de son mari. Une femme comme il faut ne doit pas savoir lire. Une femme comme il faut ne doit pas avoir les yeux ouverts" (A respectable woman must listen to everything her husband tells her. A respectable woman mustn't know how to read. A respectable woman must not have her eyes open.) Divided into sections focusing on marital rights, birth control and AIDS prevention, excision, and business and political opportunities, *Femmes aux yeux ouverts* is a powerful testimony to the strength of West African women, to their ongoing struggle to improve their living conditions, and to their self-awareness.

In 1996 Folly made four films: *Les Amazones se sont reconverties*, *Entre l'arbre et la pirogue*, *Femmes d'Angola: Rêver la paix*, and *Les oubliées*. The latter two films focus on the repercussions of the war in Angola on women. In *Les oubliées* Folly develops her documentary style and womanist stance to a new degree: not only does she use interviews to hear the women talk about the war and its fallout in their own words, but she also shares with them the power over their own images. The Angolan women in *Les oubliées* shot the final scenes, expressing their own personal visions about how the war affected their lives.

In 1998 Folly made *Sarah Maldoror; ou, La nostalgie de l'utopie*. In this film Folly again uses interviews to show how Maldoror is a militant whose life work is devoted to revealing inequalities and the deplorable living conditions in the developing world.

Folly's last two films, *Déposez les lames* (1998) and *L'une l'est, l'autre pas* (2000), return to the theme of excision, first discussed in *Femmes aux yeux ouverts*. In these films, Folly focuses on the battle against excision in Senegal, illustrating how campaigns against this practice have had successful outcomes through a combination of legal action and aggressive educational programs designed to teach local populations why excision is dangerous.

Folly's cinematographic work is highly acclaimed, and her films have won prizes at film festivals all over the world, including from the most important African film festival, FESPACO; the Vues d'Afrique Pan Africa International Festival in Montreal; the Cinema Della Donne International Festival in Turin, Italy; the Festival North-South Medias of Geneva, Switzerland; and several smaller festivals across Europe, the United States, and Canada. Although her films suffer from the problems of distribution facing all African films (meaning that her films are not widely available, especially in African countries), she is internationally recognized as one of the foremost women film directors from Africa. Folly's films are considered central to the canon of African cinema by specialists in and out of Africa.

Despite the importance Folly ascribes to her documentary activism, she finds it difficult to balance her careers as a film director and legal adviser. Having worked for UNESCO for thirty years on various projects relating to Africa's development (she is currently a legal adviser and program specialist for the African Regional Desk in the Bureau for Field Coordination), she is not currently making films.

[See also Faye, Safi; and Maldoror, Sarah.]

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SARAH B. BUCHANAN

Foncha, John Ngu (1916–1999), Cameroonian politician, educator, and farmer, was born Ngu Foncha in the *fondom* (similar to the concepts of kingdom or chiefdom) of Nkwen, of the colonial Southern Cameroons, to Foncha, a prince of the *fondom*, and his fourth wife, Ngebi. Though his father never became the *fon* (king or chief) of Nkwen, the boy Ngu grew up in the Nkwen palace precincts. He attended a Christian mission at Big Babanki, where he was baptized in 1924 and took the name John. In 1926 he went to the Bamenda Government School, where he impressed a Nigerian teacher, who enrolled him in Calabar's St. Michael's School. In 1934, Foncha returned to Cameroon to serve as a teacher but headed back to Nigeria in 1936 to seek further training at the Saint Charles' Teachers Training College at Onitsha. From 1939 to 1947, Foncha taught in Njinikom, Cameroon, a stint that was punctuated by training at the Moore Plantation, Ibadan, to study agricultural education. While residing in Njinikom, Foncha met his future wife, Anna Nangah Atang, the educated daughter of Martin Kushi Atang and Martina Awah from Mbatu. After Foncha paid the bride price, the two were married in a Catholic wedding on 15 January 1945 in Bamenda. They would have eight children over the course of their fifty-four-year marriage.

During his time in Njinikom, Foncha became an organizer of teachers' groups and branch secretary of the Cameroon Youth League (CYL), which was created by P. M. Kale and Dr. E. M. L. Endeley in 1939–1940. In 1944, when the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) was formed, the major political activists of the Southern Cameroons, including Foncha, joined its ranks and learned how to organize at the grassroots level. By 1946 Foncha was branch secretary for the NCNC in Bamenda. In 1948 Foncha was appointed Headmaster of St. Joseph's School in Mankon, Bamenda, where he remained formally employed until 1956.

During these years, a number of political changes occurred that had a profound effect on Foncha's career. In 1951, as a result of the Ibadan Constitutional Conference, the Southern Cameroons, which were governed as part of Nigeria under a United Nations trusteeship, were promised increased representation in Nigeria's governing bodies. Foncha campaigned in