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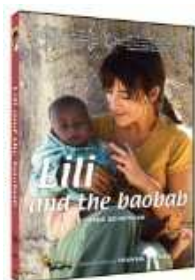
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## Lili And The Baobab DVD Review

March 21, 2010 by [Christina](#)

Filed under [2009 DVD Reviews](#)

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Can two people who have nothing in common culturally or in terms of what we call “freedom” help each other move forward in life? What director and writer Chantal Richard calls an “alliance” forms between two women in the MVD/Casque D’or February 29, 2009 [DVD release](#) of **Lili And The Baobab**, a foreign language film in French with English subtitles. Lili (Romane Bohringer), a young Frenchwoman who lives with her mother, travels to Agnam, Senegal to take photos of the village, and finds it unusual in that most of the men, except the village elders, have emigrated to Eastern Africa and then later to European cities (leaving their wives and children behind) to make money to send back home to their families so that they can all survive. Locusts and grasshoppers eat up all the vegetables in the gardens of Agnam (on which they rely for food) and there is not as much cattle and goat raising as there was in the past. Some of the men leave for as long as twelve years, and some never return at all! The men’s lives in Europe, in cramped quarters with others of their kind, are torturous too, as they work long hours and strange shifts in factories in order to somehow be able to feed everyone.

Lili notices that she is very different from the other women, who do not at all have a frivolous lifestyle: they do everything, sew, market, raise the children, tend the gardens (shifting sands keep the land from being well-cultivated) and anything else that’s required! When Lili falls asleep under a baobab tree, many women and children come and stare at her, marvelling at her, to them, unusual skin and hair. In the Bonus Feature, The Making Of Lili (by Valerie Megard), the French [actress](#) Romane Bohringer says that she coped by playing music for the children, who came to her room and danced and helped her acclimate. In the film one woman, Aminata (Aminata Zaaria), gives Lili the gift of a ring, and she tries to give back by offering her clothes and a flashlight with dead batteries! Yet this exchange is the beginning of a friendship which not only ends up helping Aminata but the entire village as well!

Director Chantal Richard says that each of her movies is different because she likes to depict people who are willing to change when faced with unexpected life circumstances. This film is shot in semi-[documentary](#) style with visuals of the villagers going about their daily routines. The actors are villagers who were paid for being filmed by having the money given to the tribal chief, who then gave each person their due. The film’s situation is that of the village itself. Thus Lili And The Baobab has the ring of truth to it, much more so than any [reality TV](#) that we see in America.

Lili And The Baobab also raises the question of multiple wives who live in separate homes with their children surrounding communal courtyards and what happens to them when all the younger men leave (as is typical of much of western Africa today). It also deals with the ostracism that occurs when women don’t follow tribal rules (although to state this more specifically would be to betray the plot of the [movie](#)). Can people of different races and backgrounds help each other and become “families”?

The making of this film actually helped unite emigrees and families in Agnam, Senegal with their household heads in Cherbourg, France, as the film brought the villagers money and pride and photos and films of the people in both places to

show to each other! (As did the Making Of Lili Bonus Feature, which focused on the emigrees at an ETAMPS center in Cherbourg.) In the film itself the villagers are amazed at a television set that Lili brings them when trying to strike a deal with the village elders of Agnam.

Those who have been raised on action films and split-second edits will find Lili And The Baobab slow-moving, but I highly recommend it as a true slice-of-life feature informing us of real problems in the world today. The visuals are beautiful and the two main protagonists do a great (and very natural) acting job of depicting women from two very different civilizations. A unique experience, also, for foreign film buffs. See it, and learn!



**MPAA Rating:** Not Rated  
**Running Time:** 90 Minutes  
**DVD Release Date:** February 24, 2010

#### Grade: A

Foreign Film, Unrated, French with English subtitles

With Romane Bohringer, Aminata Zaaria, Saidou Abatcha, Francois Delaive, Marie Pillet, Albert Delphy, Jean Luisi and the villagers of Agnam in Senegal and in France

With Bonus Feature: The Making Of Lili by Valerie Megard, 52 minutes

*Lili and the Baobab DVD Review by Christina of Movie Room Reviews*

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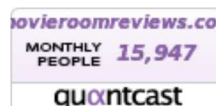
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