



BARAKA

Autumn
Season
2013

Release: 1992
Cert (UK): PG
Language: non-narrative
Runtime: 97 mins
Director: Ron Fricke
Cast: the world



Baraka is a 1992 documentary film directed by Ron Fricke. The title *Baraka* means blessing in a multitude of languages, deriving from the Arabic with a common Semitic ancestor and cognate to the Hebrew *Berakhah*.

Baraka is a film with no narrative or voice-over. It explores themes via a kaleidoscopic compilation of natural events, life, human activities and technological phenomena. It was shot in 24 countries on six continents over a 14-month period.

The film is Ron Fricke's follow-up to Godfrey Reggio's similar non-verbal documentary film *Koyaanisqatsi*. Fricke was cinematographer and collaborator on Reggio's film, and for *Baraka* he struck out on his own to polish and expand the photographic techniques used on *Koyaanisqatsi*. The first film in over twenty years to be shot in 70mm, and the first film ever to be restored and scanned at 8K resolution, it includes a mixture of photographic styles including slow motion and time-lapse. To execute the film's time-lapse sequences, Fricke had a special camera built that combined time-lapse photography with perfectly controlled movements.

The movie was filmed at 152 locations, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Ryoan-Ji temple in Kyoto, Lake Natron in Tanzania, burning oil fields in Kuwait, the smouldering precipice of an active volcano, a busy subway terminal, tribal celebrations of the Masai in Kenya, and chanting monks in the Dip Tse Chok Ling monastery.

The film features a number of long tracking shots through various settings, including Auschwitz and Tuol Sleng, over photos of the people involved, past skulls stacked in a room, to a spread of bones. It suggests a universal cultural perspective: a shot of an elaborate tattoo on a bathing Japanese yakuza precedes a view of tribal paint.

The score by Michael Stearns and featuring music by Dead Can Dance, L. Subramaniam, Ciro Hurtado, Inkuyo, Brother and David Hykes, is noticeably different from the minimalist one provided by Philip Glass for *Koyaanisqatsi*.