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## ETHNOGRAPHIC FILMS IN THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA CINEMATOGRAPHICA

PETER FUCHS\*

The *ENCYCLOPAEDIA CINEMATOGRAPHICA* (EC) is a scientific encyclopaedia in the form of 16 mm films and videos. The EC was founded in 1952 by Gotthard Wolf in collaboration with Konrad Lorenz and other comparative ethologists. These facts are reflected in the EC's brief, which Wolf expressed in the following way: "The task of the scientific film encyclopaedia is the description and setting down in permanent form of the types of behaviour of animals, plants, materials and also humans, in other words the production of non-stationary illustrations designed to promote the physiology of motion or ethological research in their broadest possible sense" (Wolf 1967: 23). At the present time the EC covers the disciplines of Biology (Zoology, Botany, Human Ethology, Physiology, Microbiology), Anthropology (Ethnology) and Technical Sciences (including the History of Technology). The basic element of the EC is the EC film unit, whose contents comprise one theme, one single phenomenon. These film units in the EC are arranged according to both a vertical and a horizontal principle. In Anthropology it is the ethnic groups (and local groups) that represent the vertical principle, while the horizontal principle is made up of the activities. The encyclopaedia scheme means that comparisons can be made between a number of different ethnic groups and how they handle the same activity, or on the other hand a study can be made of all the activities filmed within one single ethnic group. The ultimate objective of the EC is to record all activities from all cultures that lend themselves to film documentation. It is probable that this objective will never be reached in its entirety. But it would be sufficient to have a representative sample of world cultures one day.

It has become clear that the concept of the monothematic EC unit fits in well with the intentions of many ethnographers. This is proved by the large number of films that are offered to the EC for publication every year. Not many ethnographers are ambitious enough to produce high-prestige films for showing to a broad public. Most use film as a medium for visual documentation as part of a research project. Ethnographers usually select individual, specific themes for shooting. The research methods of modern Ethnography require the scientist to deal with only a small number of subjects, and to make a large number of detailed shots of these.

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\* PETER FUCHS

Institut für Volkerkunde, University of Göttingen, Theaterplatz 15, D-3400 Göttingen, FR Germany

Such films mostly remain unknown to the scientific public. After the author has used them for his written publications, he may perhaps show them occasionally in a lecture, if he is lucky they may be accepted by an institute or a museum, but their usual fate is to moulder away in the ethnographer's own office cupboard. The EC gives research films of this sort the chance to be published and disseminated worldwide, provided of course they fulfill the requirements as to contents and form. Most EC films are composed of shots that ethnographers have made in the course of their field-work. The decisive criterion for the acceptance of a film by the EC is its scientific importance: the aesthetic quality of the shots is not taken into account. Where the content of a film is exceptional, even amateurish and technically inadequate shots are accepted. This does not however mean that the films in the EC are of a low technical and aesthetic level. The opposite is the case, and a large number of the EC films are up to the highest professional standards.

The EC is a collection of research films, of scientific ethnographic films, or, let us better say, of scientific ethnographic film documentations. Thus it must have clear criterions for this kind of films.

The main criterion is, that a scientific ethnographic film documentation must satisfy the following requirements: unity of place, time, group and action or event, together with strict obedience to the chronology of the event in the final version of the film. Artificial manipulation in either shooting or cutting is not permitted. A scientific film also rules out the use of staged scenes.

Unity of place and group means that all shots in the film have to be made at the same location and with the same group. Unity of action means that all takes were actually made in the course of one single event. The requirement of strict chronology in film sequences means that the sequence of events as they actually occurred must also be kept to the film. A scientific film documentation has to avoid the use of rapid cuts to build up excitement in the viewer, and must also avoid so-called "dynamic" camera work. A camera that is always in motion, or rapid jumps from take to take, considerably reduce the scientific worth of a film. There are quite a number of very popular ethnographic films whose scientific potential is for this reason extremely small.

A good scientific ethnographic film should not consist of a sequence of unconnected takes. There are films that are nothing better than "animated slides", because the author has not taken the trouble to learn the special "scientific language" of film. The essential feature of the "scientific language" of the ethnographic film is a complete capturing of the creative visual moments of an event. It is through these that the characteristic content of this event finds expression for the culture in question.

A scientific ethnographic film must also contain a written description of the cultural context in which the filmed event took place, together with precise details of how the shots were made. Film is a source whose importance and usefulness depends upon how thoroughly its method of production is described. Ethnographic films without any accompanying text are of little use to research, the formation of theories or as historical documents.

There is a controversial discussion on the "objectivity" and the "content of reality" of ethnographic films. Anthropologists have argued that it is nonsense to talk of film as an objective medium.

The picture in the frame does not show the whole of the event, but only that section of it that the ethnographer in charge of filming (or his cameraman) has decided to shoot. The cutting of the film brings into existence a new time dimension, which is not the same as the real time of the event. Colours and sounds can usually be only incompletely recorded by film, and smell is not recorded at all. The full significance of the event that has been filmed, the way the persons being filmed think and feel about the event and many other things are largely beyond the powers of visual reception.

One cannot therefore state that film gives an "objective" and "true" picture of reality (Schlesier 1972, Dauer 1980, Koloss 1983, Taureg 1983). To draw the conclusion from this that a film shot has nothing to do with reality whatsoever seems to me however to be too hasty. To achieve an approximation to reality with the help of film is a worthwhile and practical objective. Film is only limited in its scope, like all other scientific methods. It gives the ethnographer the opportunity to supplement and broaden his own powers of perception with its help. The essential feature of scientific ethnographic film documentation is the precise and systematic recording of events. Systematic means that the shooting is conducted in a logical and consistent manner, so that the final composite version after cutting produces a unitary whole out of the individual pieces of action that have been shot. The relationship of the individual parts to one another and their relationship in turn to the whole of the filmed event must be clearly recognizable. The action in a systematically shot film must therefore be provided with the fullest chronological details. A film of this sort is a help for the researcher, lending written ethnographical records (which it cannot of course replace) additional supplementary visual documentation.

The ethnographic monographs of today are the historical sources of tomorrow, and it is from this historical aspect that ethnographic films should be seen and preserved.

The organization of the EC is comparable to that of the editorial board of a scientific journal. The editor is assisted by two co-editors.

The working guidelines of the EC and the acceptance of films offered to it are decided by the Editorial Board composed of scientists from the disciplines represented in the EC. All persons whose films are accepted by the EC become members of it. The EC is international. It was founded in the Federal Republic of Germany, but institutions and scientists from other countries soon started to play a part. 215 anthropologists from 22 countries have collaborated with the EC to date. The great majority of films offered to the EC come from national film institutes that have themselves financed the films in question; it is however also possible for individuals to offer their films to the EC. The EC itself neither produces nor finances films. The EC's collection amounts to about 1,500 film units in the Anthropological Section. The General Archives of the EC are in Göttingen (in West Germany). EC archives (complete and

partial) can also be found in Austria, Brazil, Canada, France, Holland, Hungary, Japan, Portugal, Switzerland, Turkey and USA.

Apart from research, a wide variety of EC films are also used for university teaching purposes. The monothematic EC film unit, with its limitation of subject, is very suitable for the presentation of a particular problem in a university lecture. On average 4.000 loans of ethnographic EC films are made to universities per year. About 13.000 copies have been sold. Ethnographic museums also use EC films for their exhibitions more and more. For example the ethnographic museum in Osaka (Japan) possesses comprehensive archives of ethnographic EC films and uses for the most part EC films in its well known "Ethnographic Videothek". A new development is the use of EC films in so called "adapted technical projects" in the Third World. In this context EC films are used that deal with irrigation techniques, methods of catching fish etc., that is hoped can be transferred from one region, where they have for a long time been successfully used, to another: in other words, transfer of technology from one ethnic group to another. The EC film with its lengthy uninterrupted shots, its undramatic cutting sequences and its detailed presentation of one subject at a time is ideally suited to give an indigenous population a visual display of new technology and to arouse interest.

EC films can be bought and borrowed from all national EC archives. Access to them is however confined to noncommercial users. In cases where commercial film producers are interested in EC films, which is an increasingly common occurrence, these are asked to apply to the individual copyright holder.

As far as ethnographic films are concerned, it is not the case that a film unit's entry in the EC register implies a permanent position that cannot be modified or changed. On the contrary it is much to be desired, in the case of a single ethnic group, that the same themes should be shot a second time after a longer or shorter passage of time, for example in the course of a re-study. In this way a comparative study can be made of the extent and direction of cultural change. The EC supports all proposals of this kind. In this connection, it is also the case that old ethnographic films can be registered in the EC, particularly when they represent the very first film documents of the culture in question. The Bushmen and the Ainu have been for example the subjects of historical film documentation of this kind to be published in the EC.

Ethnomedical films occupy an increasingly important position in the EC. EC film units that document a certain illness or form of treatment in a precise and detailed manner, or which concentrate on the methods of treatment used by a particular medicineman, have proved to be of a great value in ethnomedicine.

The standard of scientific ethnographic film documentation has greatly risen in the recent years, a happy development that has however brought some unfortunate consequences with it. The success of certain ethnographers, whose films have received great acclaim at congresses, has discouraged many others from even thinking of making a film. Critical voices also warn against the damage that

can be done to scientific ethnographic film documentation through the placing of exaggerated hopes on the results achieved by film in fieldwork. The EC tries to correct the balance here by setting the scientific content of the film as the decisive criterion. There is room for many different approaches to cultural phenomena by the way of film, and the EC is one of these, no more and no less.

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Peter Fuchs

#### ETNOGRAFSKI FILMI V ENCYCLOPAEDIJI CINEMATOGRAFICI

Encyclopaedia Cinematographica (EC) je znanstvena enciklopedija v obliki 16 mm filmov in video posnetkov. Ustanovila sta jo Gotthard Wolf in Konrad Lorenz s sodelavci leta 1952.

Najprej je bila namenjena analizi pri fizioloških in etoloških raziskavah v najširšem smislu. Zdaj EC vključuje biološke, antropološke in tehnične discipline. Osnovni element EC je filmska enota, ki vsebuje eno temo, en posamičen pojav. Enote so urejene vertikalno, kar v etnologiji odgovarja etničnim skupinam, in horizontalno, kar odgovarja posameznim aktivnostim oziroma kulturnim elementom. Na ta način je mogoče primerjati iste aktivnosti, ki jih izvajajo različne etnične skupine ali vse aktivnosti znotraj ene etnične skupine. Glavni cilj EC je posneti vse aktivnosti vseh kultur, ki jih je mogoče posneti na film.

Sistem EC odgovarja številnim etnografom, ki nimajo želje, da bi izdelovali visoko ambiciozne filme za širšo publiko. Največkrat uporabljajo film kot sredstvo vizualne dokumentacije, kot del njihovega raziskovalnega projekta. Takim raziskovalnim filmom daje EC možnost, da postanejo dostopni tudi drugim po svetu.

Organizacijo EC lahko primerjamo z uredniškim odborom znanstvenega časopisa. Sestavljajo ga predstavniki vseh znanosti, ki so zastopane v EC. Čeprav je EC nemška ustanova, deluje mednarodno. 215 antropologov iz 22 držav je doslej sodelovalo z EC. Antropološka sekcija šteje okoli 1500 enot. Glavni arhiv je v Göttingenu, podružnice pa so v Avstriji, Braziliji, Franciji, Holandiji, Kanadi, na Madžarskem, na Japonskem, na Portugalskem, v Švici, Turčiji in v ZDA.

Filmi EC se precej uporabljajo pri univerzitetnem poučevanju. V ta namen je vsako leto izposojeno okoli 4.000 enot. 13.000 kopij je bilo že prodanih.

V zadnjih letih se je močno povečala kvalitetna raven znanstvenega filma. To je sprožilo dva skrajnostna pojava. Velik uspeh nekaterih etnografov z oddličnimi dokumentarnimi filmi je številnim drugim vzel pogum, da bi sploh še razmišljali o filmu. Po drugi strani pa kritični glasovi svarijo, da se etnografskemu filmu lahko napravi medvedja usluga, če od njega pričakujemo prevelike koristi pri znanstvenem delu. EC skuša obe skrajnosti uravnotežiti na ta način, da za glavno merilo postavlja znanstveno vsebino filmske enote.