

THE ETHNOGRAPHIC USE OF FILM: A REVIEW

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(Excerpts of manuscript, original available through Trotter. Citations of selections from article follow text.)

The purpose of this article is to review the few articles by anthropologists that run counter to the trend of shunning all devices except fieldwork in ethnology.

It began as an attempt to delineate anthropological literature available on the method and theory of ethnographic film, but the overall scarcity of literature in this area has made it possible to present the literature on still photography as well.

The articles are placed in categories: history of documentary film; general information on ethnographic photography; theoretical considerations; uses of ethnographic film; discussions of filming experiences; technical information; other bibliographies and miscellaneous.

The history of documentary film is closely linked to the exploration of other cultures. Robert Flaherty's work and position as the father of documentary film is presented in "Robert J. Flaherty, 1884-1951". ODDYSSEY OF A FILM MAKER and "Prospects of the Ethnographic Film" provide additional insights. A more complete treatment of the development of documentary filming can be found in GRIERSON ON DOCUMENTARY.

One of the most important functions of the ethnographic film is dealt with in DOCUMENTARY FILM. It is seen as a vehicle for interpreting the lives of others. Research films receive treatment in RESEARCH FILMS IN BIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY AND MEDICINE. The wholly ethnographic treatment is provided by, "Research Film Program in the Study of Changing Man".

General information on still photography is more common in anthropological literature than information on film. The most comprehensive statement on still photo-

graphy is provided in VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY. The photographer-subject relationship and sensitive use of the camera are treated in "Still Photography in the Systematic Recording and Analysis of Behavioral Data", and works of Margaret Mead.

Nearly all contemporary work in film is based on the theories of Sergei Eisenstein. These theories are summarized in FILM FORM. This book is highly recommended for anthropologists interested in film. It provides one of the major bridges to understanding the orientation and conventions of filmmakers. Two other articles that delve into film as a means of communication and an information carrier are written by Sol Worth. The actual conventions of filmmaking which are used as "linguistic" devices are discussed in greater detail in THE LANGUAGE OF FILM. This book is also recommended as a bridge between anthropologist and filmmaker, when they are not one and the same person.

The most common reason for the use of photographic equipment is that it is a means of preserving non-recurring or changing events for future analysis or comparison. A second reason used to urge on ethnographic photographers is the idea that film provides an impartial medium for recording events.

Some other uses of photography for ethnological studies are treated by Collier, Vogt and Egli as they study demographic patterns by means of aerial photography. Specific investigations of the effects of culture on growth patterns in children have utilized photography extensively.

The uses of motion picture photography have not been nearly as well researched. The overall importance of film as a research tool is discussed by Sorenson. One of the more obvious uses of film is for the study of the utilization of time, motion, and space in a dynamic situation. Film has been used by Lomax to analyze dance movements and Gesell for the study of children.

The most extensive single investigation of film utilization for experiencing a cultural milieu is a study done by Worth and Adair with Navaho photography students. This particular

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work was conducted in such a manner that some of the cross cultural implications of filmmaking become evident. Moviemaking in other culture is also covered by Balikei and Brown.

The analytical aspect of motion pictures is equally important. A landmark investigation of the motion picture industry was undertaken by Hortense Powdermaker which presents the historical and functional perspective of the movie business. The effects of movies on the audience is approached from a sociological standpoint by Bell, but seems to be missing in anthropological literature.

There are several articles on film production available. Hitchcock's gives cost estimates and limitations of film types. Eibl-Eibesfeldt and Hass discuss the use of rapid and slow motion photography for analytical purposes. Sorenson suggests certain procedures for training and later identification and analysis of film. All these assume previous knowledge of photography.

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