Technological and ethical aspects of anthropological film

TECHNOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL FILM

A Thesis by

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Bachelors of Arts, Wichita State University, 2005

Submitted to the Department of Anthropology
and the faculty of the Graduate School of
Wichita State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

May 2010

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OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL FILM

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Anthropology.

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To my parents Shirley and Willie, my wife Mackenzie,
Jerry Martin,
The Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology,
Paula and Barry Downing
and the Asmat and Korowai people who made this possible

ABSTRACT

This thesis demonstrates how factors of technological innovation in filmmaking and anthropological ethical considerations will have an influence over how a particular film will be theorized, created and distributed. The definitions of ethnographic and anthropological film are examined as well as the methods of presenting anthropological information in a film. Technological advances and how they apply to filming, editing and distribution possibilities are also described.

The process of creating my own anthropological films about the Asmat and Korowai developed my thesis argument that technology and ethical sensitivities will have a developmental aspect in creating an anthropological film not only in the shooting of footage but the editing of that footage for audience viewing. The proposed goal of the film will also define what will be filmed and how the filmmaker will adapt to the challenges of the field and the construction of the culture.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis examines at how technology establishes parameters for the creation of an ethnographic film. It will look at the definitions of anthropological and ethnographic film, the disagreements over what constitutes these films and how they are distributed to their respective audiences. This writing shows that the format and content of anthropological film is guided by the technology available to the filmmaker in terms of production and distribution, as well as the teaching needs of the academic community.

This thesis also uses original films and research that I produced with Jerry Martin, the director of the Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology at Wichita State University. These films are *Lives of Our Ancestors: An Asmat Bis Ceremony* (Belford and Martin 2009), *An Asmat Drum* (Belford and Martin 2009), *A Korowai Shield* (Belford and Martin 2009) and *Omu: An Asmat Tradition* (Belford and Martin 2009).

The productions of these films was a process which resulted in final products that were influenced by the technology used to produce and edit the films, the internet distribution used to make the films available and the ethical considerations that were applied to the process of filming and presentation.

Chapter 2

Ethnographic and Anthropological Film Definitions, Presentations and Ethics

The definition of an ethnographic film is obviously a contentious matter. As with a definition of documentary, there is an issue of what the person using the definition is trying to use ethnographic film for (Hampe 1997, Nichols 2001). Utilitarian definitions follow two main trends, *inclusive* and *exclusive*.

Inclusive definitions seek to expand the understanding of ethnographic film to include films made by non-anthropologists about subjects that are meant to be cross-culturally meaningful. One of the more visible proponents of such a definition is Karl Heider (1978) who takes the view that any film will contain contextual information about the culture which it seeks to represent.

Exclusive definitions seek to draw distinctions between what can be viewed as ethnographic films based on what is ethnographically presented in the film. Definitions following this viewpoint would delimit the categories by separating narrative from reflexive positions of relativity (Ruby 1975).

Bill Nichols is a major scholar of documentary film. In *Blurred Boundaries: Questions of Meaning in Contemporary Culture* (1994:66) the author notes "As used here, ethnographic film will refer to films that are extra-institutional, that address an audience larger than anthropologists per se, that may be made by individuals more trained in filmmaking than in anthropology, and that accept as a primary task the representation, or self-representation, of one culture for another." This definition follows a more inclusive formation which develops such landmarks of documentary film such as

Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (1922) as the beginning of an established tradition of the non-fiction and ethnographic film.

In other writings (2001:150), Nichols has pointed out "Constructing consensus along the lines of national identity, be it in affirmation of or in opposition to established governments, played a defining role in the first few decades of documentary. Many early ethnographic filmmaking efforts partook of a similar perspective in relation to other cultures. Individual actions became subordinated to commentaries that identified such behavior as representative or typical and thereby turned our attention to the characteristics of the culture as a whole."

Nichols is one of the foundational authors in the filmmaking side of documentary films. His most widely read book is called, easily enough, *Introduction to Documentary* (2001) and is widely read by the beginning student in filmmaking. What Nichols is drawing attention to in the above passage is the difference between documentaries about *people* that represent cultures and the documentaries about *characters* that exist in cultures. The source of representation has shifted from a framing of national and cultural identity to one of a more individual basis of understanding of culture.

It should be noted that film can be used for observational purposes without any necessary outcomes based in the production of a finished film. The use of video for the study of cultural interactions (Keating 1994) has been proven to be very useful when understanding embodied dynamics of social interaction. The study of dance is also greatly aided by research footage. Film has also been used for the purposes of continuous monitoring in order to gather behavioral information from human subjects (Bernard 2006:423-425). Such studies necessarily overlap with psychological studies, but

maintain their unique anthropological value due to the researcher‟s background and the nature of the questions being asked. These studies also are problematic because they treat the monitoring of human behavior through video as an aspect of ethology that is couched in behaviorialist observations (Bernard 2006:413-414).

Such qualitative and quantitative studies can gather data about human activity, but the social context of that activity is often beyond the scope of the data gathering process. The deeper interpretative research of the ethnographer is needed in order to move the data to an expository model that goes beyond the qualitative and quantitative observations of hypothesis testing to develop descriptive depictions of the human activities being investigated.

The differences between ethnographic film and anthropological film might best be thought of as an outcome of who creates the film and what definitive epistemology is used in the presentation. If we follow the Nichols definition of ethnographic film (2001) we are faced with the task of teasing the anthropological film from the larger category of ethnographic film by using inclusions of the anthropologist as a contributing member as a part of the process. An anthropological film is an intended praxis of anthropological knowledge as a product of ethnographic data recorded by the visual anthropologist. These methods of analyzing the raw ethnographic data must be constructed into a communicative product (Collier 1988:91), and it is this process which moves the footage from a recording into an arranged interpretation of reality. It might be more valuable to think of the communicative product as an analog, something which makes no promise of being a total reality but is a model of the situation being filmed (Young 2005).

Anthropological filmmaking is bound to a similar set of qualifiers as that of ethnographic film. Asen Balikci (1988:40) has noted that "in Boasian terms, the anthropological message consists of a descriptive approach to culture together with the basic postulate of cultural relativism." I am in agreement that this is the basic goal of anthropological film and that this is a fairly sober and controversy-free definition of what anthropological film seeks to provide for its audience.

Franz Boas himself used photographic methods and early sound recording technology in his studies of the Kwaikutal Native Americans of the Northwest Coast (Boas 1927, Ruby 1980). The use of visual and audio recording has had an application in the study of chronicling of "exotic" or remote cultures in colonial expansion and exploration (Bloom 2008, Nugent 2007). The drive was mostly seen as a form of data gathering. Recordings of native performance were made in order to provide data for the study of that culture as well as providing for the preservation of elements of the culture being recorded. Only in the applications of these recordings into informative and entertaining content for non-specialist audiences does the application of theoretical interpretations come into being.

The documentation through audio and visual recordings of cultural behavior and the interpretative process involved in experiencing the materials are different things. Given the opportunity, most researchers would look towards the benefits of the ability to record a cultural behavior so that they could view and review the behavior after the fact. The problem enters into the process when we extend a visual or audio representation as "proof" to be equated with an outcome of scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge is not the outcome of a measurement of what can be physically viewed or heard but an

objective process involving a production (one among many) that can result in "progressively objective knowledge" (Kuzner 2008:128).

The "Boasian" reference is probably the most controversial element of the definition. Trends towards the devaluation of field data to the privileging of the text have become an increasing position that academic anthropologists take towards both the history of anthropology and the production of anthropological knowledge. Much of this critique follows the general climate of academic training since the 1980s. This movement, though far from totalizing, has embraced post-modern literary theory to deconstruct ethnography and cultural behaviors in the way that one would a text, devalued concepts of empirical reality and become more interested in the power constructions in the relationship of the anthropologist to their subject than any necessary data that is gathered in the field (Kuzner 2008:92).

Using the Boasian roots of North American anthropology, Balikici has provided a idealized aspiration of ethnographic and anthropological film: "Ethnographic film demystifies exotic forms and allows the viewer to perceive a strangely foreign culture from inside and encode it (so to speak) in its own terms with the help of printed texts." (Balikici 1988:42). The "printed texts" in this statement is an important consideration.

Visual anthropologists who tie their analysis of visual information to the "printed text" are taking the idea that the anthropological film is contextually tied to ethnographic monographs. An anthropological film is considered to be anthropologically incomplete without the attendant ethnographic writings. Conversely, the ethnographic text is not seen as incomplete without being attended by a film. But we must begin to ask if the

writing of an ethnographic text is really required for an ethnographic film to have anthropological value.

The Society for Visual Anthropology has issued a document entitled "Guidelines for the Evaluation of Ethnographic Visual Media" (2001). The document advocates the role of visual anthropology in the academic programs of the discipline and "urges committees to evaluate ethnographic visuals as appropriate media for the production and dissemination of anthropological knowledge." To continue: "Film and video, photography, and digital multimedia play increasing roles in research; they are crucial as teaching tools in the discipline"s course offerings; and they are often used in applied contexts. Visual representations offer viewers a means to experience and understand ethnographic complexity, richness and depth, which are distinguishing features of anthropological knowledge. Visual media can convey forms of knowledge that writing cannot." The guidelines also note that "the impact of theory maybe less overt in some visual media than it is in print, but works such as ethnographic films are informed by and provide opportunities for theoretical analysis, interpretation, and understanding."

These guidelines were produced with the intention of advocating the practice of visual anthropology in the academic world and influencing the evaluation of visual anthropological work as a form of publication by the administrative apparatuses of universities who have access to hiring, tenure and funding. The anthropologist who is involved in the tenure track of the academic world needs to provide publications for evaluations and there is still the issue of whether an ethnographic film is of commensurable merit as a book or scholarly journal article. The evaluation of the worth

of a website or internet contribution is more variable and subject to being devalued as less than scholarly.

The guidelines also make some general recommendations as to what qualities a particular work should be evaluated by in the process of academic evaluation to find their scholarly value. "1) research footage and documentation that adds to the historical and/or ethnographic record, or is used for further analysis (such as linguistics, dance and art); 2) ethnographic media that contributes to theoretical debate and development; 3) innovations in new media forms; 4) media designed to enhance teaching; 5) media produced for television broadcast and other forms of mass communication; 6) applied media made with and/or for the benefit of a particular community, government or business" (2001). Texts can be produced that perform these duties as well, but we must ask if such are appropriate for faculty review as well.

These evaluative criteria are necessarily by committee and themselves subject to the evaluator"s predispositions and experience regarding the experience of media. As an example, "media designed to enhance teaching" could be seen to refer to a Microsoft Powerpoint presentations that are ubiquitous in most university classes and more unique in their absence. Does this mean that the quality of a Powerpoint presentation should be of consideration to and administrative evaluator? Can a Powerpoint presentation be argued as a publication through visual anthropology standards? Is it an extension of the text that facilitates the delivery of a lecture or paper? Such questions necessarily engage a major relevance of the visual in the teaching of almost all university disciplines, even if the Powerpoint is just an outlining of textual data in a way that better facilitates the learning and lecturing process.

We usually associate a written work with an individual author. Despite the problems with such an arrangement of authorship (Clifford 1986), such approaches are the norm. We recognize a text of anthropological knowledge as being authored by a particular anthropologist who arranges their research into a piece of text.

In the film world this can be a bit more troublesome. For many documentary films it was often the subject of the film that is the central consideration, not who the film was made by. Films (even non-fiction pieces) are often made by ensemble groups: the director of the film, the technologists operating the machinery and the cast that is filmed. These recognitions of films unique position of being a creation of a director and the cast whose bodies and voices are filmed demonstrate film as a collaborative process. In ethnographic films this creates situations where both the filmmaker and the filmed are co-authors of the experienced.

Trends in anthropological film are subject to following theoretical paradigm shifts within anthropology. Since, in many cases, the anthropological film is an extension of an anthropologist‟s field research the dominant paradigms influencing that anthropologist‟s ethnographic work will be applied as a framing motive in the creation of the anthropological product of knowledge. Just as the end of the compilation of field notes is the ethnographic monograph and research article (Clifford 1986), so too is the assemblage of unedited footage into a packaged product necessary for the translation of the raw footage into a publication. In terms of anthropological film, this is the creation of the anthropological documentary or ethnographic film.

The role of the anthropologist outside their own productions can be somewhat limited and subject to the controls of outside forces. In order to adapt to a role as a

visually applied anthropologist is a requirement to recognize and fulfill the demands of television media and the attendant applications of commercial television media models in other media (Henley 2006). Television and ethnographic anthropologists find themselves in a situation where they have to adapt and negotiate to the particular national and cultural models of television if they are to contribute content into the greater market.

In places such as Europe there is a far different and greater application of anthropology into media content than in the United States (Henley 2006:181-183). The *Disappearing World* series produced in the United Kingdom had massive success and has provided a professional training service through the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology at the University of Manchester. The degree program was begun in 1988. This program follows the model of fusing anthropological/sociological training with the more technological aspects of computer editing, camera work and other aspects of filmmaking. Many of the graduates of this program have found work as freelancers in the production of "docu-soaps" – "series constructed narratively around the day-to-day experiences of a limited number of protagonists, often with some given institutional context such as hospitals, hotels, cruise ships, airports, Mediterranean holiday resorts, even certain urban environments such as Soho or Manchester" (Henley 2006:179-180). These are not anthropological documentaries but primarily examples of location based ensemble narratives, usually taking the documentary approach to scripted or semi-scripted events. It begs the question whether such productions are ethnographic and whether they might have anthropological value.

The role of a visual anthropologist in the creation of content for a general television/film audience is a limited role at best according to Henley. "The general

conclusion that one must draw from these recent developments in the television industry is that there is no point in preparing anthropology graduates for any very specific niche in the world of television. It is possible that in the general ebb and flow of television fashion and circumstance, there may be moments in the future when either expert anthropological knowledge or some specifically anthropological approach to understanding the affairs of the world may be much sought after" (Henley 2006:186).

To continue, "But whatever the immediate possibilities, one can be certain that there will be prolonged periods when anthropology is certainly not in vogue. An anthropology graduate going into television for the long term therefore needs to develop ideas and skills to offer when anthropology is out of fashion just as for when it is in. In particular, this means keeping an open mind about the formats through which anthropological subject-matters and approaches might be pursued" (Henley 2006:187).

The role of an anthropologist as a filmmaker beyond the academic system of anthropology as a discipline requires certain negotiations of anthropological theory and methods in order to effectively produce content. This may not be what an anthropologist wishes to do with their work, but to achieve a use function for an audience there needs to be a recognition that visual media such as films need to *show* more than they *tell*.

There are two markets for visual anthropologists to contribute their films for distribution. The first is the academic market where the film takes on the pedagogical role of providing instructional content to the student. The other is the television market where their role as anthropologists is subservient to the production companies that create television content.

A film designed for the academic model will find distribution in whole or as an excerpt in the market that is designed for college text books. This market is subject to controls that use the film for teaching purposes that can vary from pure instruction (as seen in the telecourse designed for distance learning) to center pieces designed to facilitate learning by presenting visual information allied with or in service to other course materials. An example of this can be seen in Karl Heider‟s *Seeing Anthropology: Cultural Anthropology Through Film* (2003) textbook.

Films intend for general audiences will necessarily require anthropological input only so far as the production company is willing to listen to their knowledge of the culture, as well as any necessary proficiency they have with the local language. Though it may be cynical to say so, we cannot rely on television productions to convey anything but the most exotic, sensational and divergent elements of an anthropological subject without any insertion of a necessary anthropological frame of reference to understand the subject holistically or in an ethnological frame of reference.

There are options for the ethnographic filmmaker who is seeking to produce anthropological film for the general audience outside of the academic or television audience. The first is for the anthropologist to pursue funding to provide the film for free over the internet through a specific website or a video streaming site such as youtube.com. The other option is for the anthropologist to become an entrepreneur, seeking private funding from investors to produce an anthropological film and then either distributing the film themselves or seeking a sale to a distributor who can take the film into the general market for documentaries outside of the academic or broadcast television markets (Barbash and Taylor 1997:470-483). Such outlets include cable television

specialty channels such as Sundance or The Independent Film Channel and public educational broadcasting outlets and film festivals. Success through these outlets can lead to academic use or possible commercial broadcast distribution.

The progress of social science paradigms creates new demands to what must be presented in an anthropological film for it to be deemed useful in the epistemology of a given time (Kuhn 1962). An anthropologist may approach a culture from a holistic and descriptive sense in the publication of a written ethnography, but in the creation of a film it is often necessary (due to time restraints) to create a film which focuses on a particular aspect of the culture, the performance of a ritual or religious activity, or, more recently, to develop the problems of negotiated cultural identity in the greater aspects of national and global membership.

The variations which may be taken to the anthropological film‟s presentation of the ethnographic subject are highly varied. This process is not isolated to anthropology. It is representative to the greater expansion in documentary film to the different approaches to representation that are considered legitimate by both audiences and scholars (Nichols 2001). There is also the problem of a particular anthropological film falling into disfavor due to paradigm shift (Kuhn 1962), but still having ethnographic value ascribed to the historical value of the images. The argument about which films are anthropological among the larger pool of ethnographic films involves recognition of the changing values of anthropological theory and individual anthropologists who are subject to promoting the legitimacy of certain films over others due to their allegiances to, or opposition against, certain larger philosophical currents of anthropological theory.

I propose that we might be better served by recognizing that all ethnographic films have some *anthropological value* (Heider 1978). That anthropological value is contextually derived, but the explication of the anthropological in qualitative terms is the criteria which we develop in our appreciation of these films. Theory and method serve a certain portion of the criteria, but it is ultimately the process of presentation through the visual which will decide if the film ultimately displays anthropological qualities.

The inclusive and exclusive definitions of anthropological film are subject to an appreciation by the anthropologist. It is inevitable that disagreements will arise as to a particular film‟s anthropological value. This is part of the dialog that keeps the anthropologist thinking critically about the films they see. To draw a parallel to written ethnographies: inclusive definitions of ethnography would include Hunter S. Thompson‟s *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs* (1966) while exclusive definitions would not.

Hunter S. Thompson was a journalist who would later go on to produce a style of journalism known as “gonzo” due to his inclusion of himself in the narrative and the often outspoken approach he took to his subjects. While *Hell's Angels* took an approach that showed how Thompson could establish participant observation, the book ended with a rather brutal beating by the author by the Hell‟s Angels he was reporting on after they demanded a share of the profits from the books publication. He would later go on to publish several other books about mostly political subjects. His arguably most well known work is *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1972).

If not made explicit, theoretical positions of the reader are subject to being applied to the text and not drawn from it. The anthropological theory a filmmaker can present is

limited by the omnipresence of the visual image in addition to this need for making the theoretical content explicit. If it can not be shown, it can only be told, and a film which tells the story of the anthropological subject at the cost of the visual image is often subject to criticisms ranging from poor or improper narration composition, misapplied images, or just plain poor filmmaking. Such aspects of cultural matters of cognition, philosophy or other features non-visual in effect are either un-filmable or require special approaches that can be considered distortions when considered by the naturalism (showing visible and realistic objects in natural settings) tropes of art often adhered to by many anthropological filmmakers and anthropology film consumers. The use of imagery outside of filmed events presented in reality or manipulation of the visual to present text events are not a norm for anthropological film.

A classic ethnographic text, Michael Harner"s *The Jivaro: People of the Sacred Waterfalls* (1972) presents textual information which describes the spirit world a shaman accesses under the influence of a hallucinogenic trance. Harner is a good writer, with an appropriate command of the written language to descriptively sketch such a scene, and is able to create in words images, which can be effectively imagined by the reader.

Visual anthropology"s appeal to naturalism is a limiting effect in how an anthropological production is able to translate cognitive reality into a visual product to be consumed. In historical documentaries without the ability to present archival footage, since it simply does not exist, re-enactments are necessary. Anthropological films tend to avoid re-enactments due to distortive effects of such methods. Events might be enacted on film and subject to the distortions needed to create verisimilitude, but they are not

displaced in the way in which historical re-enactments are in subject to in the display of events which pre-date film technology (Hampe 1997:67).

The shamanistic performances in *Magical Death* (Asch and Chagnon 1973) are presented in their visible reality, as an observer would see them, but they are not altered in any that might allow the cognitive reality of spirit communication or visions to be presented to the viewer. It would be possible with the use of special effects, animation or camera effects to create such effects. How we might go about creating these effects is a serious issue. The fact that effects such as these are not used is representative of the greater theoretical importance to presenting observable realism than the filmmaker‟s ability to translate/transcribe non-visible reality that exists cognitively beyond the appearances the camera can capture.

We are left with many of the cognitive aspects of the shamanistic process of spirit possession relying upon the narration to deliver it, or on indigenous knowledge presented through the incorporation of filmed informant interviews. These can act as a way to frame and explain the situation, but cannot visually impart aspects of non-natural informant visual reality. The camera cannot capture the supernatural directly, and is hard pressed to translate the cultural effects of the supernatural when it is experienced.

Here lies the ultimate problem of reaching knowledge about a belief system that is not observationally visible. The possession sequences in *Magical Death* (Asch and Chagnon 1973) can be so visually overwhelming and difficult for Western audiences to grasp that the behaviors exhibited would be read as signs of madness without an appropriate background in Yanomami society and shamanistic behavior.

This commitment to naturalism is part of a teleological aspect which anthropological film has been considered subject to (Klima 1988) but might be better understood as an outcome of visual anthropology‟s commitment to the documentary ideal of verisimilitude (Hampe 1997:71-74). The goal of visual anthropology to present the visible in the service of anthropological knowledge commits the manipulation of photographic evidence to coincide with visual storytelling. The approach to storytelling is subservient to the anthropological paradigm which commands the development of a particular anthropological film, and it is in the realm of the editing room that realism can be subverted (Loizos 1993:139-168) and replaced with other presentational models of verisimilitude such as symbolism (Loizos 1993:141) and subjective reflexivity (Loizos 1993:180-184). The teleological outcomes lie in assemblage. Anthropological theory will be applied to what situations will be filmed, but the true application of that theory lies in how the film is edited to show this information. The effects of theoretical bias can become apparent at this stage, but application of theory is not necessarily a bad thing. A film, by necessity is a construction of reality and as such the model will be a part of the construction (Balikci 2003). A visual anthropologist‟s role in the editing room could be considered as important as their role in the field but far too often is not ascribed such status (Husmann and Krüger 2009).

Filmmaking is a different skill than ethnography, although there are overlapping aspects. The filmmaking skills of many anthropologists are often secondary to their skills as anthropologists. Anthropological theory will conceptualize and frame the subject, and as such the filmmaker‟s theoretical position to the filmed subject will form the film to a

degree that may not be readily apparent to a researcher who does not have background into the other research an anthropologist has done on a subject.

Anthropological Issues: Position, Reflexivity and Reality Television

As the rise of social problem documentaries has become more and more apparent (Nichols 2001) it becomes increasingly necessary to recognize the positioning and framing that are part of the presentation of the subject. The goal of a social problem documentary usually offers a solution or particular viewpoint which is meant to be conveyed as part of the information. This positional intent may be implicit or explicit, covert or overt, but it will have impact on how the viewer receives the information as either a representation of a culture or a representation of events.

Films which follow such a method are often funded by public and private institutions in order to effect changes in public policy or to be used to disseminate information in matters related to social engineering (Hampe 1997, Nichols 2001, Bloom 2008:95-124). The position that they represent need not represent any interest of the target audience, and often are subject to positional issues that can be questionable (Ellis and McLane 2005) and subject to propagandist tendencies (Harding 2001).

Cultural representation, as it is edited in anthropological films, tends towards agreements of social facts and not disagreement. Such disagreement is often glossed over to avoid the complexity of informant opinions. It might benefit a film to include such a view of informants as variable embodiments of their culture living in constant negotiation of their identity (and relation) to their culture. The disagreements between informants which Penelope Spheers presents in her documentary about heavy metal culture, *The Decline of Western Civilization II: The Metal Years* (1988), are exactly the levels of

complexity that visual anthropologist encounter in the process of editing diverse statements into agreement.

Such disagreement in an individual culture about the content and construction of that culture creates problems for the audience who looks to anthropological films for expert authority in that particular ethnographic subject. When the disagreement is not couched in differences that will be readily apparent (such as "progressive" versus "traditionalist", regional differences, class conflicts, gender role specifics, etc.) then the authority of the anthropological film, although expressing reflexivity, multi-vocality and de-emphasizing the command of ethnographic authority, is still tied to naturalist representations despite how verisimilitude will be applied in editing (Balikci 2003:181-191). A film is still a construction, through the application of the camera and assemblage of footage.

The position of the filmmaker in reference to the culture that they are presenting is going to have some influence on the film itself. The call for reflexivity, which has been influential in the creation of ethnographic texts (Clifford 1986, Marcus and Fisher 1999), has led to some complications in how anthropological film is to be constructed. The call for *explicit* reflexivity can at times be at odds with the need for *relevant* reflexivity. In anthropological film this can create presentational differences in how verisimilitude is achieved.

The Granada film *The Mursi: Nitha* (Turton 1993), produced as part of *The Disappearing World* Series with the anthropologist David Turton depicts the performance of a ritual by the Mursi group of North Africa. David Turton also collaborated in two

other installments of *The Disappearing World* series, *The Mursi* (Turton 1974) and *In Search of Cool Ground: The Migrants* (Turton 1991).

The Mursi, in present day Ethiopia, have suffered significant depopulation from territorial skirmishes with neighboring groups armed with automatic weapons. Lacking equivalent weapons has led to a disparity in local power, as expressed in terms of access to seasonal territory to use in their traditional pastoral lifestyle. The society is an age grade society, but due to the disruption coming from violence, dislocation from traditional lands and the leaving of men from the Mursi villages for purposes of wage labor has meant that the group has not performed the age grade graduation ceremony, called *nitha*, in over 30 years.

David Turton is very visible in his role as an anthropologist in the film. His aid in helping to make the *nitha* ceremony happen is important and portrayed as such. The context in which this ritual is taking place and the role of the anthropologist, as helper, is made quite explicit. The level of reflexivity is quite appropriate to the subject, as the problems of the group as well as personal loses due to raids are manifested through Turton‟s home video sequences made not long after an attack, which resulted in the death of one of the elder‟s family. Turton becomes a character in the film, and in the end is told that he is an elder now. He has graduated as part of the age set.

Such a level of reflexivity as this is appropriate to the context and the film itself. Although Turton becomes a personality in the film, he is the bridge between the film crew and the informants. He does not stand as a mere translator or guide, but an active part of the group. His considerable work, amounting to several years, with this particular

group and connection to the individuals in the film makes his presence natural and at ease.

Another example of reflexive inclusion of the anthropologist into the filmed aspects of a society is Les Hiatt‟s role in *Waiting For Harry* (McKenzie and Hiatt 1980). Here we see the various preparations and performance of an aboriginal death ritual, notably a secondary burial. The actual ritual is a small part of the film. The bulk of the films running time involves the preparations involved in appropriately painting designs on the funerary container, the visiting men from Cape Stewart and Hiatt‟s frustrations in trying to coordinate all of these elements to allow the ritual to begin. The only thing lacking is Harry Diama, an important kin member the assembled group are waiting on to arrive (hence the films title). Hiatt ultimately ends up interceding on behalf of the assembled kin by picking up Harry by jeep and transporting him to the ritual‟s location after Harry has been absent the space of almost one month.

The participation of Hiatt in the film is a natural process, not at odds with the ritual but in fact making it possible. Several moments in the film feature references to Hiatt‟s adoptive status in the group and the obligations that accompany his adoption, such as the need for Hiatt to take on the role of organizing such funerary rites for Harry when he dies (Loizos 1993:180-184).

Both *The Mursi: Nitha* (Turton 1993) and *Waiting For Harry* (McKenzie and Hiatt 1980) demonstrate reflexive aspects of anthropological film by showing the unique singularity of the ritual being documented and providing a context for that singularity as a representation of a performance rather than a generalized example of that ritual. Both films are also interesting in that they draw on the participation of the anthropologists and

make explicit the adoptive status that the anthropologist develops in the culture. The anthropologists in both films are also identifiable persona that audiences can draw their attention to, making the experience of the culture by the anthropologist a way in which the viewer can interpret the film without specific knowledge of the culture being depicted.

This is not to say that a reflexive representation of an anthropologist in an ethnographic film must involve the visual inclusion of the anthropologist. *The Ax Fight* (Asch and Chagnon 1975) contains a highly reflexive analysis of an event that includes the voices of the filmmakers as they roll audio tape and camera on an event *in medias res*, a fight which has broken out between two Yanomami men regarding a matter that is unknown to the filmmakers at the beginning of the film. Determining the cause is an element of the film itself and demonstrates the anthropologist‟s need to not be satisfied with superficial answers. In the latter levels of analysis applied to this event, the aspects of conflict which lead to the event are noted in detail so that the anthropological fieldwork that Chagnon has done is used to explain the complex kinship ties, jealousies and allegiances that are demonstrated in the ax fight event.

Conversely, there is a level of reflexivity that can be at odds to the anthropological subject. This is the incorporation of an identifiable persona who acts more as a presenter of the anthropologist‟s process of self-discovery through the experiencing of another culture. Anthropological film often avoids such a position, and there is an explicit problem that can occur when an inappropriate use of reflexivity is applied to a film. It is found, however, in much television that is intended to be "anthropological" in subject, though not necessarily labeled as such. Television

programs such as *Living With The Kombai* (Anstice and Steeds 2007), *Living With The Mek* (Anstice and Steeds 2008) and the BBC production *Going Tribal* (Parry 2005) show the problem with such programming. Taking an anthropological subject and using a template of reality television production by introducing a central character who must live in this ethnographic setting, creates a spectacle of self-discovery on the part of the outsider and not the indigenous. This imported persona is less involved in the research aspects of anthropology than being able to demonstrate a masculine survivalism through the extreme camping aspects of living in an exotic and remote culture.

As an example of this self-discovery through the ethnographic I will present an analysis of the television show *Going Tribal*, in specific the episode featuring the Kombai of New Guinea Island (Parry 2005). During the summer of 2007, while I was filming documentary footage in the Asmat and Korowai areas of New Guinea I had a chance to show some informants a copy of the *Going Tribal* episode. The most notable informant who watched the film was a native of New Guinea that spoke English and was a tour leader of several groups across the Indonesian territories of Papua. He had traveled to the Kombai region before and had some contacts in the area with local people who he hired for tourist expeditions. Our informants watched a digital copy of the episode on the laptop we traveled with to New Guinea Island.

This particular episode begins with the adventurer meeting a group of Asmat men traveling in ceremonial paint, down the river towards him. This is a very common portrayal of the Asmat, in their canoes, singing their traditional songs and rowing while standing up. The adventurer notes how the Asmat are fierce cannibals and headhunters.

Already we have the first problem. In order to have a group of Asmat men in full dress meet a fellow traveler there must be a good reason, namely money in advance. These events, a very iconic and visual image of the Asmat, must necessarily be staged to be filmed. The reception of a traveler has to be arranged in advance and timed in order to provide a proper spectacle.

While such ritual receptions have basis in reality, they have contributed to the Asmat process of providing cultural experiences to tourists as part of the tourism industry, which moves travelers through the Asmat territory and other areas of New Guinea. While we were in the village of Omandecep filming footage that would ultimately become *Lives of Our Ancestors: An Asmat Bis Ceremony* (Belford and Martin 2009) we met a group of tourists from France who had come to see the bis ceremony as well. They arrived to the village by motorized long boat in late morning 2 days before the bis ceremony. A few hours after they arrived they proceeded to board their boat and travel just far enough down the river so that they could no longer be seen from the river bank in front of the village. Several men, having painted themselves in the traditional way and wearing ritually festive clothing boarded canoes and went out to meet this group of tourists as they made their way down the river again, providing a traditional greeting that is often found in the visual representations of the Asmat.

To be true, the anthropological filmmaker often has some agency in making any particular performance occur, or will modify the performance to maximize the ability to film the event. The explication of how the ritual has been modified in order to facilitate the filming process is often a part of the creation of the ethnographic film and explanation

noting how the performance has been altered in order to make possible filming is a main feature of a particular film‟s anthropological value.

To continue with the analysis, once Parry arrives at the Kombai area we witness the aftermath of a fight, where one Kombai has a bleeding head wound. A fight had broken out among the local Kombai as to who would act as porter (and earn money) for Parry and his film crew. Our informant seemed very disturbed and saddened by this turn of events, having witnessed it before in other situations and noting how it could be a problem. This is an accurate realization of the care that Parry must demonstrate.

The episode continues with Parry traveling out into the jungle, away from the safer village confines and comes face to face with a traditional Kombai, wearing the traditional Kombai dress (mostly naked by Western standards, with scrotum exposed but penis covered) and challenging him with a bow and arrow. Our informant laughed at this sequence since the man was known to the informant and had been hired by him on more than one occasion. Our informant then commented on the Kombai man‟s role in the film, noting that he was “dressing up and playing a jungle person.”

As the show continued, our informant noted how Parry also behaved in irresponsible ways. In one sequence he made a big deal of going shoeless in the jungle to be more like the Kombai. That brought questions from our informant about Parry‟s intelligence. The highlight of the film featured Parry attempting to don native dress, which involves inverting the penis into his body and holding it in place with a leaf or shell. This is obviously painful and Parry reacts to it as such in the episode, generating sympathy pain in the viewer (and our informant). There was visible reaction to the pain in our informant‟s face to witnessing Parry perform this sensational act, but there was

also laughter at the *bule* (an Indonesian term for a white person) who was also "dressing up and playing a jungle person."

Our informant commented after watching the video that he did not know what Parry "was getting up to", but he thought it wasn't too bad. Our informant spoke of his need to speak to his Kombai friend who was featured in the episode next time he was in the area and possible tease him for it. He did not reject the television show as a false portrayal of Kombai culture, as our informant was aware of it, but did feel it was a rather silly one.

In terms of marketability, these representations seek to make the subject the outsider experiencing their reactions to a culture (and environment) instead of depicting the research experience of a culture can be quite popular since it provides reality television drama. This increases their profitability and makes their incorporation into an academic classroom setting seemingly positive for a portrayal of a culture using reality television tropes that a modern college audience would be receptive to. The problem is that the anthropological aspects are props in the performance of a study of the television performer's experience of themselves experiencing the culture.

High Context vs. Low Context Communication: Interviews, Subtitles and Intertitles

There is a division between high context and low context communication (Hall 1976) in how a communicative process, such as watching a film, might be thought of. While these formulations are couched in a reductionist conception of individualistic and collectivist cultures, we might better serve the theoretical constructions by

operationalizing and modeling this dichotomy as the difference between individual and collectivist "experiences" of an individual.

Low context language assumes that no inside or pre-existing knowledge exists on the part of the viewer. Everything is explained in a logical order. This kind of language might be thought of not just as an expositional documentary, but the process of watching an ethnographic film that has not been set up by formal instruction by way of a class lecture or assigned reading of an appropriate ethnographic text.

High context language, in Hall"s formulation, refers to an assumption of inside knowledge. This will be a background that is often unspoken and relies on a pool of details left out of the communicative statements. Context becomes very important for the understanding of such communications. Previous knowledge is being drawn upon and it is assumed that a background in the subject is part of an individual"s experience.

For the undergraduate student the ethnographic film becomes a presentation of ethnographic reality in an anthropological setting (the anthropology classroom). Low context language is necessary to provide instruction in incomplete or non-existent backgrounds in the subject. The more intense debates of anthropological theory are often taught late in the undergraduate schooling of the anthropology student. Those who go on to graduate education in anthropology often find their energies and time channeled into the study of their research interests. Anthropological film tends towards a superficial form of knowledge when applied to the more complex coursework that is expected of the graduate student. Films are rarely used as citation worthy references when writing theses, dissertations or taking comprehensive exams.

For the graduate student, as a neophyte researcher, the scientism that is often expressed through the agency of non-fiction film is made subject to epistemological questions that are informed by anthropological theory. This difference, combined with the concentration on the cultural anthropology graduate students need to apply anthropological theory, grasp of human geography and knowledge of ethnographic writings usually results in the overlooking of ethnographic film in the search for more academically "useful" knowledge of a high context nature.

The divisions between filmmaking and anthropology, on the academic level, has resulted in a separate mode of filmmaking for the anthropologist that often seems at odds with the more variable practices of other documentary filmmakers. While a non-fiction documentary in an academic setting has a necessary dimension of verisimilitude (Hampe 1997:77-89), it recognizes a wider expression of verisimilitude in filming, presentation and editing. This is due to the acceptance of general documentaries and the allowance for greater creative interpretation of "reality" (Nichols 2001).

As I have argued, verisimilitude is a central issue in anthropological films just as it is in other forms of documentary film. The acceptance of staging events is an issue that is at core for any anthropologist committing ethnographic representation to film. Verisimilitude for an anthropological film requires an approach that both engages the anthropological content (the anthropologist and their fieldwork) yet also edits the presentation so that it can be an acceptable and agreeable presentation to the audience. In almost all cases this results in the application of low context communication so that the film finds utility in an audience with less education in anthropological theory.

Informant interviews can provide ethnographic knowledge, but it is the voice of the narrator that must present the picture of the culture as a whole when it is necessary to tell things that are not part of an individual‟s participation in the culture. This could be due to matter of time, unwillingness to be filmed, social stratifications or gender issues that do not allow for the interview of some informants or any general need to voice the unvoiced information that maybe covert, impolite or such common knowledge that it is not commented on by the informant. What is not spoken by the informant will have to be seen. When both are not possible it becomes necessary to comment through a narration track.

Anthropological films which avoid the voice of a narrator can be made. Anthropologists Judith and David MacDougall produced a film titled *To Live With Herds* (1974), featuring no voice over narration. All ethnographic information in the film came from informant interviews and visual representation. Despite lacking any voice over narration the film did make use of subtitled information. An executive producer of the Granada *Disappearing World* series commented that the film "could never be shown on British TV" (Loizos 1980:585). Such a reaction is an unfortunate example of television executives furthering mass media expectations over anthropological expressions.

The use of subtitles comes with its own unique problems in presentation (Barbash and Taylor 1997:421-424). The subtitles can be distracting by their placement in the visual plane, obscuring action in some cases. An element of concision is needed in the translation, a problem that narration dubbing of interpreted speech has, but here with the added dimension of making the audience read text as opposed to listening to the spoken expression. If the person being subtitled does not have natural pauses and/or speaks too

fast then subtitles will be challenged to interpret the speech act so as to convey meaning above literal translation. There is also the problem whether to use literal translations, which are likely to carry grammatical currents not found in the language the film is translated to (English in the case of many films). The filmmaker is also troubled with the conveying of nuance through written word.

Another additional problem with subtitles is the blending of the words with visual information that is the same color. *Malagan Labadama: A Tribute to Buk-Buk* (Owen 1982) is an example of how subtitles can be problematic in presentation. This film uses yellow subtitles that become obscured in some shots of the film as things with the same tone of yellow appear behind them and create a bleeding effect. The particular color of yellow is also highly distracting and can become difficult to look at over a long period of time. The use of white subtitles is also common, with the same problems of white background in the footage interrupting the presentation of the subtitles. This effect can often be seen in the subtitling of black and white films of non-English productions for an English speaking audience.

Technological improvement has also been able to aid the filmmaker‟s use of subtitles. Subtitling before the advent of digital editing was based on a system which allowed an operator to overlay subtitles onto a source recording designed to provide captions for hearing impaired audiences. The system allowed for very few options in the title effects. Digital editing programs are able to apply a large variety of effects to the textual overlay (which is itself a separate element in the final film). The subtitles can be manipulated as to font, timed as a composite layer overlay in the film and most importantly utilize effects such as drop shadow placement.

The subtitles I added to the Asmat and Korowai films utilized drop shadow effects in order to create an illusion of depth at the subtitle level. The white text had a small black outline that made the text stand out from any underlying shots on the screen. The choice to use white instead of yellow came from the subtitling I needed to do for *Lives of Our Ancestors: An Asmat Bis Ceremony* (Belford and Martin 2009), which featured a long sequence of an Asmat man discussing how the bis poles were carved. The man we were filming was wearing a yellow shirt in the performance, so yellow titles created visual confusion. I used white for this film and then white on all the other film subtitles in order to create uniformity among the films.

The use of intertitles (Barbash and Taylor 1997:426-429) is a static framing device that relies on the written word. It is a use of text in the visual field in the way that subtitles are, but it is often used as a trope of textual insertion of information that can just as easily be spoken, but by being written commands attention in ways that spoken information is not. Originally it was a way to depict dialog or frame action in silent films. Since sound in film is now standard, the intertitle has taken on new and specific contexts that are usually reserved for moments which the filmmaker is attempting to carry a point beyond the speech act or present information such as a map (Barbash and Taylor 1997:428, Conley 2007).

Usually an intertitle will be white text on a black background, displayed on the screen for an appropriate amount of time to allow the audience to read it. It can be used for translational effect, such as some of the intertitles that spoke for the informants in *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty 1922). They can also be used to comment or create a framing of material which appears directly after the intertitle, such as in *The Feast* (Asch

and Chagnon 1970). The intertitles in this film are expository, but also aid the audiences who lack sound projectors for their films by providing on screen information as opposed to narration.

The Burden of Anthropological Proof, Value of Ethics and the Anthropological Film

The ethics of anthropological film require some special attention. In written form names can be with held and changed, as well as locations. This is especially necessary in a work that contains information about a subject that includes illegal acts such as Philippe Bourgois"s *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack In El Barrio* (2003), which chronicled the sale of crack cocaine in an inner city area of New York. Informant identity required very careful obscuring due to the fact that the whole research study covered activity that was deemed illegal. It is necessary to hide identities from law enforcement since it could lead to incarceration or used in criminal court as an admission of guilt.

Bourgois writes an account of an anthropological subject, yet his burden of proof is minimal since both the behavior and the consequences of the subject (urban drug sales and use) are well documented by the general media, government and criminal justice system. We can believe that these informants and this situation exists. A reader raised in the United States has been exposed to more than enough journalism about the subject of urban drug use to accept such materials. Documentary films have been funded on the subject due to the recognition of this as a social issue and the role of drug use in social engineering projects (Nichols 2001).

An example of an ethnographic research which requires special attention to ethics is *Guardian of the Flutes* (1981) by anthropologist Gilbert Herdt, which describes the

ritualized initiation of young boys through very difficult initiation processes. One of the features is homosexual activity centered in the act of fellatio. The tribe is described as the "Sambia", which corresponds to no known tribe in New Guinea precisely because such a cultural practice would be read as homosexual molestation and rape by most other cultures. The identity of the culture itself requires special care in order to prevent intervention from outside civil authorities. Though the identity of the culture is not made obvious by Herdt, there is always a danger that one might figure out the identity of the culture based on clues in the text. The monograph is a very important reference among anthropologists and social scientists because it demonstrates the fluidity of human sexuality and the enculturation of sexual norms (Herdt 1981, 1990, 2003).

A film resulted from Herdt‟s work with the Sambia, titled *Guardians of The Flutes: The Secrets of Male Initiation* (Reddish and Herdt 1996). The film shows some of the harsher physical aspects of the male initiation, but the sexual activities could not be show for the obvious reasons that they would be interpreted as child pornography. The sexual aspects of initiation are described by initiates through interviews. This is a challenging film both in terms of its questioning of received knowledge about gender roles and deep rooted concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality as bounded binary categories in Western society. Despite the visual images of the physical hardships of the initiation, the sexual elements are relegated to textual description through the ethnographic interview. The film is an important piece of anthropological work, but it does demonstrate that there are limitations as to what can be ethically shown. Indeed it would be unthinkable to show the sexual elements of the Sambia initiation on film, since no matter how deep an anthropologist‟s connection to cultural relativism there is still

recognition of how such footage would be misused by audiences and would probably amount to career suicide.

As observers, we are constantly measuring hear-say reports, historical texts of variable quality and first hand experience in the process of constructing a series of social facts that can be communicated as knowledge to others. But as the publication of William Arens‟ book *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (1979) has shown, there will always be a desire for objective material evidence of any social fact, if for nothing else than to provide validation and documentation for contested knowledge.

William Arens‟ construction of cannibalism as a form of cultural libel (1979) is also based on a view which takes the description as cannibalism as a sensational or colonial process and places the burden of proof on the anthropologist to provide documentation of the actual activity of cannibalism. The problem with the burden of proof which Arens‟ demands of other anthropologists is that such activities require photographic evidence of the commission of a crime under the jurisdiction of most national governments. The filmic depiction of cannibalism would first require an anthropologist to expose informants to possible intervention and prosecution from national governments. Any self respecting anthropologist today would not film a murder, and to expect them to generate such material evidence is a deep misunderstanding of the ethics of anthropological research advocated by the America Anthropological Association.

Even the strongest of ethical considerations cannot prevent anthropological knowledge from being misapplied in ways that endorse colonial, racist or national

marginalization of those they represent. Visual anthropology is particularly subject to such problems as it can be manipulated away from the attendant anthropological views of cultural relativism and non-judgment (Nugent 2007).

Chapter 3

Technological Innovations in Film

The technological innovations which have shaped film production and distribution have also had an impact on how film itself has been made for audiences. The changes to the production technology allowed filmmakers to document events with greater ease and in more remote locations. The changes in viewing technology allowed films to move from public view to private view, as well as making more material available to individuals.

In the early days of film the media was subject to the limitations of the medium when it came to actually filming different events. The technological advancement of film was driven by a series of improvements that were often a result of feedback from those using film in the field and the manufacturers of the cameras and equipment that the filmmakers were using (Ellis and McLane 2005).

Since the first cameras were hand cranked it was important that the camera operator turn the mechanical crank to expose the film smoothly. Film stock did not have great running length per reel. This meant that individual takes could not be very long.

The exposure of film required facilities for exposure. Filmmakers such as Robert Flaherty and Martin Johnson were able to meet the challenges of remote locations by setting up film development facilities in improvised locations (Ellis and McLane 2005:20-25). Indeed, Flaherty was very inventive in the development of footage that would be used in *Nanook of the North* (1922) by using melted snow as a water source for chemical exposure. By developing the footage in the field he was able to construct his

films with a degree of care that meant he did not have to wait several months for the exposed film to be shipped to a developer and then return to him in the field. This allowed him to re-shoot sequences or film new footage as needed if he felt there were weaknesses in the takes. He also showed the footage to the participants, which allowed him to receive feedback from the people the film was about. This, in combination with the fact that Flaherty had a commitment to living with the culture and learning about the culture extensively before filming, made his work an early example of ethnographic filmmaking though he was not anthropologically trained.

Many historians of documentary film (Ellis and McLane 2005, Nichols 2001) discuss the early history of documentary as a comparison between contributions by Flaherty and a British documentarian John Grierson. Flaherty"s contributions to documentary film were ethnographic in nature by showing different cultures to North American and European audiences. Grierson had a more sociological approach, creating films based on the institutional aspects of Great Britian, made possible through his position at the Empire Marketing Board (Ellis and McLane 2005:57-65). The Empire Marketing Board was created in 1926 "to promote the marketing of products of the British Empire" (Ellis and McLane 2005:59).

While both of these men produced documentaries that have lasting historical significance, their approaches to their subjects and choices for subjects were quite different. Grierson"s funding ties with the Empire Marketing Board meant that his films were approved based on the value that the films had to the British Empire, and consequently dealt with subjects that were of British in nature. They were often based on industry issues, *Drifters* (1929) – about commercial fishing in the North Sea, and

elements of social development such as *Night Mail* (1936) – about the British postal system.

The remote locations and "exotic" subjects which Flaherty presented required some significant difference in technology and approach. It also meant some differences in how the subjects were presented. The presentations made in *Nanook of the North* (1922) might be considered to lack cultural sensitivity, but they were kinder than the more sensational presentations made by Martin and Osa Johnson"s film *Headhunters of the South Seas* (1922).

Nanook of the North (1922) does have some features that would be subject to intense criticisms by anthropologists if filmed today. The staging of events by Flaherty was necessary in order to film the events. The manipulation of events was necessary for the recording of footage since the limitations were so strict in terms of shot length. The camera required numerous re-loadings due to the short reels. There was no sound so intertitles had to carry any narration or translated information. The end result is a film that is a product of its times and the limits of the medium, not an exposition of any theoretical bias that was at work in Flaherty, who had to adjust events to the limitations of his recording technology. His presentation was intended for a popular audience typical in the 1920s which sought entertainment above intellectualization.

The next major contribution to ethnographic film would be the production of *Dead Birds* (1964). Timothy Asch acted as camera operator and editor, with Karl Heider acting as sound operator. Both Asch and Heider had training in anthropology, so their approach to filming was based in a different position which was more concerned with

interpreting Dani culture on its own terms than presenting Inuit culture to a North American and European audience as Flaherty was doing in *Nanook of the North* (1922).

Dead Birds (1964) is a foundational film in ethnographic film. It differs from *Nanook of the North* (1922) in many ways. They include: being in color, having access to better and more mobile film equipment, etc. The film is also a constructed narrative where footage was assembled to produce a sequence of events that did not really happen but were presented as occurring (Heider 1978).

The editing process that resulted in the print of *Dead Birds* (1964) we are all familiar with was not a simple or easy process. Recounts of the manipulation of footage in order to create a narrative involving principle characters have been recounted by Karl Heider (1978). Synchronized sound was not available for filming, so dialog had to be overdubbed onto the film as well as sound effects of people, animals and environment.

The ability to use synchronous sound was a foundational change in anthropological film. The most significant difference is that it allowed the informants to speak for themselves, through interviews and speaking during activities. This addition of usable location sound in synch with the footage led to a process that became known as *cinéma vérité.*

This style of presentation dates back to 1920s Russian documentary filmmaker Dziga Vertov and his applications of *Kino-Pravda*, often translated as "film as truth" (Ellis and McLane 2005:30). This conception of filmic truth through objective presentation was later modified and adopted Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin (Morin 1960) to refer to their work.

The ability to film in the ways proscribed by the term *cinéma vérité* required quiet and portable cameras and synch sound. Location film shooting without the needs of a continuous electrical supply was aided by the use of lower energy consuming transistors instead of energy intensive vacuum tubes. The change from vacuum tube technology made the sound recorders much lighter and able to operate from a battery power supply. The development of synched sound was furthered by quieter camera operation, resulting in more usable location sound. Higher speed film stock could be used in situations without artificial light (Ellis and McLane 2005:210). These developments in camera technology had a tremendous influence on filming style by camera operators who, because of these lessened restrictions, started to seek methods of filmmaking that were less tied to static camera placement and directed activities.

Cinéma vérité would lead to a general acceptance of handheld camera work in the production of film. This is important, since the use of a camera by an anthropologist in the field can often be limited if the use of a tripod is necessary. Most filmmakers relied on the tripod to stabilize the camera before the advent of the hand held camera. Rouch and Morin, following the examples of Vertov, were able to make the camera mobile, and establish a new methodology of filmmaking in which the camera was viewed as an active participant and expanded beyond passive observation roles.

As an aesthetic, *cinéma vérité* may not be as important as the practical considerations of the filming of events in new ways and in new situations with a spontaneity that were not possible before. The draw back with a very organic hand held style of recording is that it lessens the ability of the filmmaker to utilize conventions of coverage and blocking. Indeed, this is a basic element of training that is necessary to the

contextual construction of an edited sequence. Unfortunately, films from the single camera *cinéma vérité* style often suffer from this lack of articulated shot construction.

High speed and low light sensitive film stock greatly aided the process of portable camera use. The technological advances were based on the improvement of photochemical exposure processes (Gibson 1960). Lens, focal length, aperture, film exposure design; all of these elements are combined to create the visible film footage that is then edited into a final film and benefited from improvements made in the 1950s (Churchill 1972).

The process of taking film stock footage in the field and creating a film that can be showed to an audience of people is an involved and costly task. Until the advent of video tape most of the advances in celluloid filmmaking were made in the technology of film stock: increasing its durability, better exposure in low light and better color, making its production and development cheaper, etc. (Barbash and Taylor 1997:218).

The first magnetic video recorder with practical applications was developed in 1956 (Luther 1998:147). Prior to this film stock was the only available medium for the archiving, programming or transporting footage. The use of magnetic videotape furthered the mobility of the filmmaker and additionally allowed the recording of audio directly onto the videotape in synch. The majority of television broadcasts were live, and if a record was made of a live broadcast it was done by using a kinescope recorder. This is a device that utilizes a motion picture camera that is pointed at a video monitor, creating a film of the televised image (Luther 1998:147-148). The migration of production from kinescope recording to magnetic video recording for television would take some time to become standard as economic constraints would limit some television

stations from being able to afford new equipment until it was less expensive or an alternative investment to the repair or replacement cost of older production equipment.

The development of magnetic video tape, as a way to capture footage, was important for the creation of footage in the field that might be used in television productions. It was still not used much in movie or higher budgeted television productions due to the lower quality of video. While early video equipment was originally very cumbersome and required large amounts of electrical power, advances in the electronics industry allowed the equipment to be made lighter, smaller and able to operate with the lower voltages and amperages provided by battery power (Luther 1998:169).

Film was still more mobile and a better choice for remote shooting situations that are found in most anthropological field locations until the issue of size and portability was solved by technological innovation. Video cameras are also more fragile than their mechanical film counterparts and subject to mechanical failures beyond the ability of a filmmaker to fix (Barbash and Taylor 1997:218).

The use of video was driven by the role it took in television news, which required immediacy in the filming of events and their broadcast. Video is also easier to use in a production setting due to the self contained medium of the video cassette. It is more reliable for multiple playbacks than film and requires no specialized skills involving feeding projectors (Luther 1998:148).

Using magnetic video tape to record footage in the field changed the limitations of field recording, allowing the filmmaker to avoid the often difficult process of exposing celluloid film stock under remote conditions. Video is also cheaper, making it available

to those without access to resources that are required for film stock based projects. The footage could also be shown to informants without an interceding period to expose it, sometimes minutes after the event was filmed. In fact, using a video camera and a commercial video cassette recorder a filmmaker can perform linear editing without specialized equipment (Harding 2001:163-166).

The transition from analog video camera to digital video camera did not begin with a significant difference in camera technology. The advantage of digital video tape, and the main reason it was developed as an alternative to analog video, is the ability to transfer the footage at high quality onto hard disc storage locations on a computer (Luther 1998:175-176) so that it may be accessed and used by a computer editing interface such as Final Cut Pro or Avid. This process is called non-linear editing, since it allows video editing where footage is not reproduced in a work print assembled from linear shots but utilizes the computer interface to create a series of programming commands to play the footage in a sequence designed by the user. This sequence can be reorganized at will, without resorting to the creation of a new linear edit, and has had a tremendous impact on the process of postproduction. All of the editing processes are facilitate by the use of the computer, allowing the creation and inclusion of titles, audio effects and overdubs, and even special effects. Digital editing allows for the increased sophistication of editing by allowing footage to be treated as composite layers which are manipulated with greater ease (Barbash and Taylor 1997:442-445).

Another aspect of the adoption of digital video tape is that the lower cost of personal computers combined with an increase in personal computer hard drive storage space and the introduction of inexpensive consumer grade mini-DV cassettes and

camcorders has reduced the cost of production (Barbash and Taylor 1997:229). The problem with analog video production (and digital video before the increases in personal computing power and lowering of cost that began around 2001) is that it requires large, expensive and specialized technology in order to effectively create a product of broadcast quality. It is possible, using an analog video camera, to produce an entire film "editing in the camera" or recording individual shots into a sequence using only the order in which the shots were taken. Such films lack the advantages that editing in the studio provides and will most likely be considered sophomoric at best in terms of timing, technical skill and performance. Films recorded in such ways will also require production facilities for the addition of title sequences, credits and subtitles.

The introduction of the Windows XP personal computing system in 2001 provided a free program called Windows Movie Maker. The program was included in the Windows ME software released in 2000, but Windows ME was not widely used and quickly replaced. This program is part of any valid Windows operating software issued since, and although the program is problematic it does provide the basic tools for the nonlinear editing of digital footage from consumer digital cameras. For 100 USD higher quality video editing software, such as the Pinnacle Suites is available for consumers and for 1000 USD a filmmaker can purchase software such as Final Cut Pro that is professionally acceptable for industry standards.

Digital distribution also allows for much cheaper models of getting the film into a classroom. Traditional film prints can be costly to produce, as well as requiring them to be moved from location to location, stored and otherwise requiring both the costs of transportation and replacements. Digital projectors, already becoming a standard in

many classrooms, will allow for a movie to be transmitted over the internet as a large video file and displayed without the requirement of a physical medium such as a film print or videocassette.

This model of the film as software as opposed to technological artifact will result in the lowered costs involved in the production and distribution of the film. The revolutionary results of this model will not so much change consumption habits as alter economic profiles involved in the process of distribution and consumption of media (Harding 2001).

An inevitable change which will be necessary is the creation of a micropayment scheme for access to data. Charges of a few cents to a few dollars need to be made possible for a small scale industrial tracking of media to exist with a producer and a consumer outside the costly academic rental scheme. Questions of value will have to be addressed as the payment for content is engaged on different levels, be it the payment for the viewing of a video file or the downloading of a video file with unrestricted usages (McCloud 2000).

The paradigm shift from a material medium containing the media to a computer file which has no existence but as a space on a hard drive will cause some changes. One which distributors find rewarding is that essentially all digital content not stored on a long term medium (such as disc or cassette) is disposable and subject to replacement at a cost. The inevitable obsolescence of technology is a given for any audio or video technology, but the alterations in technology are coming at a faster and faster pace. Some of this is driven by consumer demands for better technology, but it can also be attributed producer demands for new packaging paradigms and a new series of sales for pre-existing material.

Such movements, as the shift from VHS to DVD, resulted in an inadvertent archiving of the history of film as new prints of many films were made and the market needs of the new format resulted in and incredible releasing of pre-existing content between 1998 and 2008.

Film technology has been a matter of innovation in creation and delivery of film. The technological advances in how films are consumed drives new concepts for the use of film. The development of internet technology, tying higher speed delivery with more articulated development of website design has developed many possibilities for film to be included as a part of textual/audio-visual hypermedia where the film can be a utilized with other presentations and applications of anthropological information (Biella 1993a, 1993b, 1996).

DVD technology has also provided chances to expand the informational package of the technological artifact of the film to include different narration tracks, different language subtitles, deleted scenes, user controlled still photo slideshows, alternate cuts and other features that are unfortunately both highly specialized roles and often not within the budgets of most anthropological films. The *Dead Birds* (1964) DVD re-release features many of these applications to an ethnographic film, but such examples are rare.

Chapter 4

Workflow

The creation of a film, be it a documentary or fictional film, will almost always follow a standard of "work flow" (Barbash and Taylor 1997:380-483). The work flow of a film is the industry term for the steps that are involved in the creation of a film, beginning with the decision to make a film and ending with the film being shown to an audience. While documentary film does differ in some senses from fiction film in terms of what is necessary to complete the film, many of the same procedures are part of the process.

The process can be divided into five steps: development, pre-production, production, post-production and distribution.

Development

The first step in the creation of a film is the decision of what the film will be about. An idea of the film will be developed. This step varies among individual projects. If a film script is to be written it will be composed at this point. Anthropological films tend not to use shooting scripts or shot layouts. Storyboarding is often not used, in the same way that documentary film tends to not use such aids (Hampe 1997).

The development phase of an anthropological film is usually part of the greater ethnographic project. Developmental aspects include: the preparation of field work, research and other aspects that are generally part of the ethnographic project. Funding

for the film is also sought at this stage, though the funding might be included as part of the field work expenses.

Some filmmakers decide what the film is going to be about in the development period. This is where the anthropologist‟s role as filmmaker begins to enter into the process. How the subject will be approached, who and what is available for filming and other aspects of what is available will be decided at this phase.

Anthropological film is a special subject in the field of non-fiction film because, in many senses, there can be little prediction about how an event will actually turn out. Filming in an anthropological mode removes most of the controls of the activities that are found in fiction film and some non-fiction documentary. The performance of activities can be requested, but anthropologists who are requesting that an activity be performed as a matter of staging will be subject to criticism about the legitimacy of their footage (Ruby 2000). To avoid these criticisms visual anthropologists try to avoid the deliberate staging of events except where absolutely necessary.

Pre-production

The process of pre-production is the gathering of equipment that will be used in the field and making the necessary arrangements to do the filming. What can be planned is often variable due to the particulars of the field situation and the nature of the film project. This often overlaps with the developmental stage when we refer to ethnographic films since the limits of time in the field often mean an anthropologist will have to combine development and pre-production phases.

It is during this stage that the anthropologist transitions from what is possible to what will be done. This is often going to be a matter of adaptation by the filmmaker to the field conditions and the attempt is made to make sure that the anthropologist will be present during the cultural activities that are intended to be filmed (Flores 2007, Faris 1988, Hockings 1988, Jell-Bahlsen 1988, Olson 1988, Singer 1988).

The gaining of permission for filming the individuals and the development of cultural knowledge is often done at this point, before the camera is brought into play. Limitations to the anthropologist‟s access and ethical constraints on filming will have to be addressed at this stage as well.

Production

The production stage is the part most people think of when you mention making a film. This is the gathering of footage and audio that will be edited at a later date. Any cultural activities that are to be filmed have to be negotiated by the camera operator. The theoretical approaches of the anthropological filmmaker will frame what footage is collected and how the camera is used if the anthropologist is also the camera operator. If the anthropologist is participating in the film and the camera operator is more versed in cinematography than anthropological process (such as the films produced as part of the *Disappearing Worlds* series by Granada) then the anthropologist can advise about what might be important to film.

In cases where the camera operator is not conversant in the local language it becomes very important for the anthropologist to work closely with the camera operator in order to signal what is going to happen, and where possible guide the operator‟s

attention to more significant aspects of activities. A camera operator who does not speak the native language also needs to be instructed if the indigenous people being filmed make specific requests or demands during the process of shooting footage.

Showing recorded footage to informants so that their feedback can be gathered is also done at this stage. The importance of this cannot be denied, as the showing of such raw footage can provide the anthropologist with information that would not be considered otherwise (Bernard 2006, Keating 1998, Rouch 1995b). Showing the material is also a matter of reflection by the filmed informants and can result in entire films themselves, such as *Jero on Jero: A Balinese Trance Seance Observed* (Connor and Asch 1981).

Additional considerations of a filmmaker is to shoot "B-roll" material, cut away shots and other cohesive material that can be used in order to create montage and continuity features (Barbash and Taylor 1997:390-402). Landscape, environment, plants, animals, weather; these are all things that are outside of the human activities of the anthropological film but which a filmmaker must be aware of in order to construct elements of setting.

Post-production

The phase known as post-production refers to the period after filming that is often the most intensive and time consuming aspect of filmmaking in an anthropological situation. Raw footage is cataloged and notated so that the images can be assembled in the editing process (Barbash and Taylor 1997:430-432).

As previously mentioned, raw footage is often shown to informants in the field so that informants can point out specific moments found in the film. The feedback provided

by informants is important in how to present cultural information through the process of editing (Rouch 1995b, 2003:47-86). The showing of the footage can be done while the footage is still being produced. The visual anthropologist should view these moments of informant viewings as a time to gauge their reactions, clarify translations, ask questions about confusing aspects and notate all of this information for use later in the editing process. The line between production and post-production is not an impermeable membrane. In the process of producing film footage, many anthropologists opt to show footage to informants on a regular basis (if not daily) so that what is filmed will have influence on what will be filmed.

An important aspect of the creation of an anthropological film is the editing of the film into a useable product. While raw footage can be useful for research purposes, there is an essential necessity to edit the footage for an audience. Editing usually takes place when the filmmaker is no longer in the field and has access to video editing equipment often not available in the typical rural or remote ethnographic location.

The use of editing to show naturalistic, non-fiction footage is considered a basic aspect of a documentary, which will be viewed by an audience (Wahlberg 2008). The intended audience will shape the editing process, as it shapes the intentional elements of the filming process as well.

Another important element of the post-production process is the translation of native dialogue. A filmmaker must decide whether to use subtitles to translate the native language, overdub in a different language or to leave the native language un-translated.

The use of subtitles is the current choice for presenting native language in a film. This provides the original language as part of the soundtrack, allowing the audience to

hear the sound of the language, inflections and other aspects of the informant‟s native tongue. There are obvious problems with subtitles both in visual application and translation, as I have previously presented (Barbash and Taylor 1997:436-438).

The filmmaker needs to decide what high context linguistic data present in the footage will be explained and what will be glossed over. Abstract conceptual terms suffer from the added problem that they cannot be translated faithfully without the accompanying cultural information which operates around them. For the purpose of the subtitle or narration, a gloss to a similar concept in another language might be used, but it can only describe superficially the meaning of a particular statement.

Another aspect of anthropological film that is done as part of post-production is the creation of voice-over narration. This is different than narration overdubbing, which is the process when the narrator acts as a translator and dubs their voice over an informant‟s voice so that the statement they made will be in the audience‟s language.

Narration can be a difficult situation. Narration is often perceived to have an authoritative property that can even supersede the visible film footage. In terms of acceptance of validity by the audience, the authority of the narration might be at odds with the statements made by filmed informants. The usual choice in such statements is either to create ambiguity in the narration or remove such informant statements. The authority of narration can also point out that a cultural performance that is presented (through the structure of the film) as a typical example is in fact atypical in its occurrence. Some sequences of *The Red Bowmen* (Owen and Gell 1981) feature the narrator noting that parts of the ritual that were normally performed at night were done during the day so that they might be filmed. Without such narration admissions, the

viewer might accept this derivation from normal procedure to be representative of the cultural norm, when in fact it is not.

The use of narration is an accepted convention of anthropological film, but it is often a matter of contention when the use of narration takes on too much of the duty in the overall presentation of a subject. The argument mainly applies to how the film becomes more "textual" through the application of such information (Biella 1988). There have been examples of films that avoid the use of any narration commentary, such as the previously mentioned Judith and David MacDougall produced a film titled *To Live With Herds* (MacDougall and MacDougall 1974). Films such as these can achieve a cultural presentation entirely through the native voice.

The process of editing individual takes into sequences is also important to how the filmmaker approaches and frames the informants in the film. While there are different theoretical positions about how the filmmaker approaches the filming of a cultural subject, just as there are different theoretical framings of the informant interview, the approach to the interview will be part of the editing process. The interview will either be shown visually, or be used as the narration commentary that is voiced over visual information.

Two main theoretical schools prescribe how anthropological film should be filmed and assembled (Biella 1988). The reductive materialist position, mostly attributed to the publication of Karl Heider (1978), takes the view that the events which are recorded by the camera operator contain the elements of cultural reality. The narration is intended to exposit on what is filmed, explain to the viewer what they are seeing and

otherwise contextualize the sequence so that the viewer can gain as understanding of the culture.

A second position, called idealism, has been expounded by Jay Ruby (1975). This position follows the idea that the application of reflexive filming will make the filming methodology a visible inclusion of the film. This will provide the viewer with a film that they can interpret and from which they can develop meaning. This position often takes into account the fallacy of the "ethnographic present" as a kind of timeless image of the culture as it has always been. Thus, idealistic presentations will be tied to very specific times of production and become historical documents as well. This historical background of any ethnographic research and program is very important in the process of understanding a culture as an expression of individuals at a particular time.

These two theoretical positions are synthesized in anthropological film process since the visual image is representing material reality as well as developing specific historical and individual activities. The ethnographic process applied to film recognizes how both the materialist and idealist approaches will yield appropriate results depending on how the proposed outcome of the film is intended. The construction of the culture through film will also be dependent on the editorial input of concision, omission and presentation of subject from available filmed materials.

Distribution

The distribution of film is the step in the process that is probably one of the most important factors in the success (in terms of utility, not monetary) of a documentary film. It is also the step that the filmmaker will have the most limitations and the least control.

Distribution of anthropological films is reliant on the same model as textbooks. Anthropological films are used by the academic community as part of the instructional curriculum. Many films are funded specifically for this purpose, such as Asen Balikci‟s *Netsilik Eskimo Series* (1967). The films that are adopted are necessarily limited by budget constraints at the department level, the university library level and other aspects of funding.

There is also the problem of availability. Certain film distribution companies can provide copies of films which they have the right to distribute under contract with the copyright holders. Situations where legal ownership is not easily established, or is contested can result in the film being unavailable. Companies such as Documentary Educational Resources have began to distribute many classic films and have provided distribution, and in some cases production assistance, for many new films. Their selection criteria are based on the appeal of the movie to a target audience of teaching anthropology academics and the funding of their departments. The pricing structure of their film sales demonstrates this, often being priced two to three times the market price of other documentary films that are commercially available.

Even under ideal conditions where high quality ethnographic film is intended for general audiences, the primary distribution relies on the agency of broadcast television as a form of distribution. Broadcasting will decide when, to what audiences and how anthropological content will be shown to their national and local markets. One only has to look at the difficulties of representing indigenous nudity to different regional markets in the United States to see how anthological prospects can run into barriers when expected to conform to mass media practices.

Interactions of Theory and Distribution

The distribution of film began the moment when the technology first began to be shown to audiences. The models of distribution followed those of production, being closely tied to the factors influencing their creation. For a film to be produced for any other reason than the indulgence of wealth there had to be an investment based on a return of some form. The return could be in the form of educational value, such as Grierson‟s role in the Empire Marketing Board which I have mentioned earlier (Ellis and McLane 2005:60-70)

In cases where colonialism has led to an administrative desire to present the colonies to the empire, there has been the investment in documentary as part of a national program to present the colonies to the administration and national citizens as well as the administrative culture to the colonies (Bloom 2008).

An example is the film mediums early creation and adoption by the French (Ellis and McLane 2005). This led to a subsidizing of non-fiction film by the French government for the purposes of presenting images and information about the colonies to French citizens, as well as presenting French life to the colonies. The creation of films for use in French colonies in Africa and Southeast Asia also became the impetus for the collection and archiving of stock footage from administrative areas (Bloom 2008:183-198). Administrative authorities also used film as a way to approach colonial public health (Bloom 2008:95-124).

In the case of many of the African colonies there was also the assistance by the colonial administrators to create infrastructure for newsreel services and local film news

(Rouch 2003:47-86). After many of these colonies became independent, former colonial governing nations were helpful in establishing film service infrastructure and providing aid to former colonies in the film projects. These early colonially based filmmaking initiatives had some basis in ethnographic subjects, but were not influenced by anthropological research so much as colonial goals of administration and "progress".

The more research oriented, as opposed to the colonially administrative, productions of anthropological film were more apparent and successful in the creation of film archives and collections with the explicit intent of using ethnographic footage in anthropological research. To this end, the Smithsonian‟s Museum of Man sought to create a film repository in 1975 for the purpose of cataloging, preserving and archiving film images of indigenous cultures (Ruby 2001).

The preservationist influence of such projects requires institutional commitment, which is subject to the same administrative politicking of any museum or institution. The creation of the film repository at the Smithsonian‟s Museum of Man was a commendable and appreciable mission, but it was not able to maintain the commitments which brought it into being when the reorganization of the institution, an almost constant process, brought into question the utility of such a collection when if was absorbed by the Smithsonian‟s department of anthropology, as part of the National Museum of Natural History, in 1981 (Ruby 2001).

We would well note that the distribution model and intentions of an institution are often of considerable influence in the creation of ethnographic films. The archiving commitment by museums are subject to institutional processes that often do not fully insure that film footage will be provided the same protections of physical artifacts of

material culture, with which such footage is often considered "associated." In the case of museums such footage is documentation of the physical objects in the museum"s collections and relegated to storage as opposed to preservations. The collecting practices of an institution will also shape the nature of anthropological footage in cases where the equipment or recording medium is obsolete. Individual directors have to weigh the mission statement of their museum against the ability of their institution to provide the protective measures necessary for the footage.

In cases where the funding is private there can be many different aspects as to how the funding process will influence the production of ethnographic film. In cases of public funding, especially the granting process, there needs to be the justification that the film will further anthropological and/or scientific knowledge. In a sense this can often be seen as the need for a documentary to describe a social problem as a matter of proving it has significance appropriate to justify public funds for its production. In cases where private funds are subject to institutional oversight such production motives are likely to be in place as well.

The limits to the amount of time which can be spent in the field gathering footage, as well as the limits of the films productions length for distribution, limit the process of using film as an ethnographic research tool. While it is almost universally acknowledged that 10 to 100 times more footage is shot than what is actually used in a final distributed production (Barbash and Taylor 1997:429-430), it is very rare that this excess footage is made available to researchers.

In reality such footage is usually placed into storage at the institution the filmmaker is allied with until such time as the filmmaker donates their research materials

to an archive or museum (where they are often absorbed as materials tangential to their material culture collections, in the case of anthropology museums). The preservation of such materials requires the migration of the film footage into a medium that is readily accessible by the technology that is in use. When institutions cannot financially commit to such preservation of footage it often goes into storage. In some cases the materials are absorbed, but since such items do not generally fit into an institution‟s mission statement they are placed in a more or less permanent storage area. In the worst, and saddest, cases the footage might simply be deaccessioned and destroyed since it does not fit an institution‟s mission statement and the director or board of such an institution can see no value in migrating the equipment onto a new media standard.

Weeks (1991:216-219) in his *Introduction to Library Research* notes the value of filmed anthropological information, such as public rituals, but points out the lack of truly useful comprehensive texts beyond the regional specialty guides. Access to films has always been an issue, even more so when we consider that despite how small a print run a specialized book has, a film can be edited by an anthropologist and only one actual film print might have been made of the final product due to cost considerations.

How libraries decide to catalog ethnographic films says more about the utility of the film than any necessary applications of content. Part of the aspect of creating "visual anthropology" as discipline, subject of study or field of inquiry requires the creation and maintenance of an archive of material that is relevant (Ruby 2001). A comprehensive cataloging of visual anthropology materials from the past one hundred years is a necessary project. These materials need to be digitized, made available from a central location and be attended by the relevant data about date, production, background, etc.

Without contextual information this raw research data has little use unless one can "decode" the information presented in the footage enough to place the location and performance.

Such a project sounds promising, and has in fact been attempted before in the previously mentioned Museum of Man archive (Ruby 2001). The problem is providing access to such materials. When visual materials require creating and distributing physical artifacts at a cost there is the burden on the researcher and institution to bear the market price. Even now, when DVDs are incredibly inexpensive to produce there is still a very high market price for the DVD itself. A new model of users accessing data remotely over the Internet will be the next step of the process, but will likely be limited by a distributor"s ability to control distribution so that use without revenue will not occur. This intensification of private property, particularly intellectual property, will be a major feature of post-industrial media distribution. Ownership will no longer be a matter of possessing a physical copy, but having the legal right and permission to view the materials.

A wealth of public domain and free material is available on the Internet through sites such as the Internet Archive (www.archive.org). This site provides a variety of written, audio and visual content for viewing and downloading with a minimum of use restrictions. The status of these materials is public domain or limited copyright which allows for free use but requires that proper citation be used in derivative works.

Materials which retain copyright as published works require payments for the licensing of audience viewings. These are often paid to filmmakers in the form of

royalties, but such payments to individuals involved in the production and creation of a film are contingent on the nature of the individual contracts.

Often the majority of the revenue from licensed viewings and the sale of physical copies go to a corporation, which owns the rights and controls the marketing and distributing the film. A few major companies deal with the sale of anthropological films, such as Films for the Sciences and Humanities, Documentary Educational Resources and Filmmaker‟s Library. The majority of the sales for these corporations come from institutes of higher learning and libraries (also usually university libraries as opposed to public libraries). The pricing is based on an average price for a DVD copy of a film being sold to a university being from 150 USD to 295 USD, a significant price.

The quality of these institutional copies is also suspect. I have viewed numerous films from Documentary Educational Resources by requests through inter-library loan and received films, which, although professionally packaged and labeled, were recorded on a DVD-R that can be purchased from any consumer electronics store for as little as 0.25 USD. Such DVD‟s require no industrial process and can be copied on almost any personal computer that has been available since 2005.

This differs from the sale of a book to an institution. The acquisition budget for new print publications is usually much higher than for film media, though the concerns of libraries as places to provide films to patrons are growing. The real concern about usage is the model of filmmaking, applied to ethnographic film, that requires monetary payment for any usage beyond the library to patron relationship of borrowing. Viewing of a film without the payment of licensing in a university classroom is a violation of copyright that

is viewed by the copyright holder as equivalent to the instructor making photocopies of a textbook and giving it to the class.

This intensification of the concept of private property extends to the level of the non-material distribution and use is a growing concern of the RIAA, MPAA and other advocates on behalf of the ownership of a work. The replacement of physical distribution in favor of digital distribution is a primary asset of fast and stable Internet connections and the illegal downloading of both music and film is a problem for copyright holders who seek revenue from their works. There is a great culture shift as film and music, previously considered as physical objects (in the form of a recordings) give way to non-physical software files that are infinitely reproducible and subject only to the limits of digital storage space.

These technological changes are beneficial in terms of accessibility by the user, but they also create a situation where the user is often not a paying consumer. The lowered cost of computer based editing programs and digital cameras will mean that more content will be produced by a new crop of filmmakers that do not have to rely on traditional models of distribution. There is also less investment capital that can be applied to such projects unless they can take in revenue for their use. Only those distributors that can control their products use in the digital world will be able to profit from documentary films and see a return on their investments.

Whether we will see a new economic model for Internet distribution to the market remains to be seen. Some anthropologists do not see any problem with having their work available openly in a royalty free environment, but are disadvantaged by the shrinking of

funding beyond the charitable and public funding which would see anthropological research on film will be seen as having prestige value as opposed to economic value.

Chapter 5

The Asmat Film Project

During the summer of 2007 I traveled to the Asmat region of Papua, Indonesia (on the western side of New Guinea Island) with the director of the Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology, Jerry Martin. We spent 6 weeks in the area with the intention of filming Asmat wood carving techniques for the purpose of making the films freely available on our website at http://holmes.anthropology.museum. We were also able to travel to the nearby Korowai region that is more remote and has had less contact with outsiders.

The filming was done with a Sony HDR-FX1, one of the higher level consumer models. The Sony camera is also one of the more affordable cameras that can shoot footage in high definition, 1080 interlaced lines of resolution in comparison to the 480 interlaced lines of resolution that are available with standard digital camcorders. Besides the high definition capabilities, the decision to purchase this camera for usage in the film project was due to research into the compatibility with Apple"s Final Cut Pro 5 video editing software and ability to film in low light levels. The camera also had the ability to record in 24 frames per second progressive (mimicking film stock) at 720 lines of resolution. The advantage of 24 frames per second progressive is that it gave us a more "filmic" quality to work with.

The camera"s high performance ratings in low light levels were researched on internet message boards and product review sites. We did not want to use artificial light since it would be cumbersome and require high levels of electricity. The use of a

generator to power electric lights would also cause problems with synchronous sound as the running generator would constantly intrude on the sound. For the most part we recorded outside in natural light, but the Asmat and Korowai area of New Guinea Island is subject to cloudy weather, which could cause some problems in light level fluctuations.

For the recording of *A Korowai Shield* (Belford and Martin 2009) we opted to record in the shade of the jungle a short distance from the shelter we stayed at in order to make it easier to go to the shooting location and have some stabilization in the amount of light available. The ability to film in low light also helped us tremendously in the sequences we filmed inside the Asmat men‟s houses, such as the longer speech sequence in *Lives of Our Ancestors: An Asmat Bis Ceremony* (Belford and Martin 2009).

Since we did not involve artificial lighting we were able to avoid many of the problems associated with intruding on the social field of activity by introducing lighting equipment. This did require us to adjust camera settings, especially in terms of exposure and white balance, on a manual level as opposed to an automatic level. The value of using manual balances can be seen in shots where the door or open part of the men‟s house in *Omu: An Asmat Tradition* (Belford and Martin 2009) would produce variances in the camera‟s automatic exposure settings as highly lighted areas and darker areas would occasionally be found in a single take. This became increasingly apparent where the shot featured a pan or the natural light would change due to clouds moving across the sun. This film, more than any other, required the most frequent attention to exposure levels and frequent resetting of the exposure level and white balance using a blank white notebook page from our field journals.

These experiences show the need of the filmmaker to have some experience with the particular camera they are using and technical knowledge about the environmental variables at the time and location of shooting in order to provide uniform footage. Footage with well matched lighting levels proved important in the post production process, since an event such as the carving of an object can be several hours long and is condensed to a few minutes of representative actions. For the footage to be properly edited into a sequence that achieved a level of verisimilitude the variances had to minimal in terms of lighting, color correction or visible signs of passage of time (such as sun position). Constant attention to the technical aspects of the camera became of considerable importance since there was the ability to alter the luminescence of the footage in the Final Cut Pro editing process, but usually with unintended consequences to the balance of other aspects of the footage such as skin tones or vegetable dyes used in the painting of the carvings.

We had little time to plan specifics of our filming schedule. Communication between the Asmat region and the United States is very limited. There is almost no email available and phone lines are limited to the port city of Agats, though mobile phones were becoming available at the time of filming (also confined to the cellular tower coverage range of the port city of Agats). Upon arrival we began stockpiling fuel for trips into the field as petrol for motorboats was available sporadically and having reserves became important. We also secured a generator to use in the field for recharging our video camera batteries and laptop.

We took a standard cassette recorder, but we quickly discovered that without directly speaking into an external microphone the sound was difficult to record in the

crowded spaces where we often tried to collect information. We found the video camera to be the best method of recording sound, as it had the best quality and in post-production was the easiest format for uploading. Fortunately, we had an extended life battery that allowed 6 hours of filming and a standard sized battery that allowed an additional 2.5 hours of back up power.

The footage was recorded onto mini-DV cassettes. These were small, light, durable and approximately 3 USD apiece. They were also widely available; we even purchased some in the city of Jayapura where we arrived from Bali by plane. This allowed us to film constantly without concerns about conserving film stock. We could also fit about 20 of these cassettes into a 12" by 6" by 6" Ziploc sealed bag, which helped considering the high humidity, frequent rain and travel by boat on the rivers and coastal areas.

The use of such inexpensive and small recording tape allowed us to film long continuous takes of events. It also allowed us the luxury of using the video camera as a sound recorder in many instances. Where a few minutes of footage of a repetitious sequence, such as carving, would be enough for the final purposes we were allowed to film long sequences of the event from many different angles, maximizing our coverage of events. This followed the "filming whole bodies performing whole actions" dictum of Karl Heider (1978) but also allowed us coverage for continuity editing (Barbash and Taylor 1997:390-399). It also followed more mainstream applications of documentary filmmaking such as *Metallica: Some Kind of Monster* (Berlinger and Sinofsky 2004) where performance therapy, music rehearsal and recording sessions of several hours

length were filmed in order to provide a large selection of footage to be edited in post-production (Berlinger and Milner 2004).

By using the camera as a more or less continuous filming device we were able to get the people we were filming acclimated to the process. This meant they would begin to ignore the camera and be less likely to look directly at the lens. The "mugging for the camera" shot is of use, but it proved most useful as a deliberate framing device that was inserted at some point early in the film to establish the ethnographic a self-conscious inclusion into the production, point out the existence of the camera to the viewer and provide a general "humanity" in the smiles of informants. A common trope is to flip the video screen view finder of a digital camera over so that people can see themselves, usually groups of children.

While filming *Lives of Our Ancestors: An Asmat Bis Ceremony* (Belford and Martin 2009) I became aware not only of the level that the Asmat were aware of the process of filming, but of their possible interference with the camera. While we announced our desire to film in every situation, asking for the permission of the group and explaining how the footage would be used, we provided no instructions to the people we were filming. There were no directions of activities at the location, and as the primary cameraman I did give ask any directions about where a person should stand or how they should move.

Regardless of the lack of instruction, I noticed that the Asmat maintained a distance of about 3-5 feet from the front of the camera even during very crowded scenes where bodies were pressed together in the men‟s house. More than one Asmat man, during quieter scenes in the men‟s house would pass behind my location in the men‟s

house or "duck under the camera view" (which really never works, you just see a person at the bottom of the frame ducking down and moving across the camera field) without any direction from me. The Asmat, though living in a remote area where electricity was not usually available did have some prior knowledge from tourists about how cameras work and were sensitive to *not* being filmed as well as where to stand in relation to the camera if they wanted to be filmed. The Asmat had already become aware of photographic equipment and had some concept of how it worked, so they reacted in ways that were identifiable as being media conscious (Carpenter 1974).

The filming of material objects being made did supply us with a linear activity to be filmed. This aided in that we could follow naturalistic conventions of linear experiential time and we could follow an outline of sequences without recourse to "arrangements" dictated by framing needs of the film. Such a linear depiction of events made the shot arrangement plans for editing comparatively simple compared to documentary compositions which present a wider variety of events.

Once we returned with the footage we began the process of editing the footage into short features. The distribution method of using streaming internet viewing was foremost in our decisions as to how the film would be edited for time and content. The film *Lives of Our Ancestors: An Asmat Bis Ceremony* (Belford and Martin 2009) was the longest film, coming in at over half an hour. The film *The Omu: An Asmat Tradition* (Belford and Martin 2009) was 20 minutes long. The films *An Asmat Drum* (Belford and Martin 2009) and *A Korowai Shield* (Belford and Martin 2009) were both under 10 minutes long.

The constraints applied to the length of the final edited film also had definite influence on decisions of both visual content and narration tone. The films were first edited into a visually motivated cut following a linear sequence of events. The narration was then written and timed to follow the rough cut of the footage.

Narration was recorded using an MXL 990 condenser microphone that was plugged into the XLR microphone inputs of a Line 6 Toneport UX2. The Line 6 Toneport is a recording interface that connects directly to a computer and uses the Line 6 Gearbox software to allow digital modeling of a signal. It was originally designed for musical use, so there were several effects available that were not necessary for the recording of narration overdubs. The device provided a clear signal and several adjustable parameters which allowed me access to a higher quality audio than what would have been available from a direct input of the microphone into the computer. The recording of this modeled signal was done with the free program Audacity. The recording of the narration was done in the spare bedroom of the off campus apartment I was living in at the time, during the daytime when the apartment complex had minimal activity.

False starts and dead spaces in the narration were edited out in Audacity and exported as an Mp3 file. The file was then opened in Soundtrack Pro (a program packaged with the video editing software Final Cut Pro) and then the levels were normalized and any possible environment noise from the recording room (including 60 Hz hum picked up from the microphone from electrical devices, computer monitors and fluorescent lights) was removed. I arranged the narration into short statements of one or two sentences so that the narration would not be intrusive, lecturing or distracting from

the visual information on the film. The digital audio file was then imported into the Final Cut Pro video project and then arranged to cues in the film where the narration was intended to go.

By using this non-linear method of adding spoken word narration I was able to lower the levels of the audio that attended the video footage when I was speaking over it, creating smooth cross fades between the sounds of hammers striking chisels and narration voice over. This was a very important process since the footage for *A Korowai Shield, The Omu: An Asmat Tradition* and *An Asmat Drum* featured the carving of objects with location sound that featured several chopping and chiseling sounds. This aspect of filming created a constant staccato rhythm of the carving process, which required me to include the synchronous sound in any footage I used since the sound of the hammer and chisel need to be timed to the visual depiction of the carving or the footage would look out of place.

This ability to manipulate the audio levels of the visual footage was important for a different reason during the editing of the material that would become *Lives of Our Ancestors: An Asmat Bis Ceremony*. The bis ceremony climax was a very joyous occasion with much shouting, drumming and dancing. Audio levels on the footage were very loud and had to be constantly adjusted anytime narration content was overlaid on the footage. The ability to manipulate the digital sound of both the soundtrack and the narration in a direct context with the footage was indispensable. The ability to watch and listen to any edited sequence immediately after changes were made was also very important in the process of balancing the source audio and narration levels.

During the editing process I constantly watched the sequences I edited. Jerry Martin also reviewed the footage as it was being edited and narration was being added. He frequently had insights into the footage about shots that were too long or too short, the pace of the editing and the content of the narration voice over. This demonstrated the importance of having an audience at hand to show the footage to since your experience in editing the film will often remove the objective distance you need to refine edited sequences.

I also saved all presets I used in the recording of the narration so that adding new narration content, be it rewordings of particular lines or whole new sequences (there were both), could be recorded to match the levels and sound of previously recorded narration.

For the most part I wrote the narration, outside of context dependent opening statements, as commentary on the visual materials following a low context communication which assumes no inside or prior knowledge by the viewer (Gallois and Callan 1997:44-50). The films *An Asmat Drum*, *A Korowai Shield* and *The Omu: An Asmat Tradition* were intended to utilize a primarily observational and visual representation of the process with the narration as a restatement of what was visually depicted. Jerry Martin and I tried to avoid speaking while the camera was filming so that the recording of spoken English was minimal. Our translators Agus and Andre also refrained from speaking except when necessary so that their voices, usually located closer to the camera than any of the subjects, would not intrude over the filmed sequences.

We provided no directions to the groups we were filming about speaking in accordance with our principles of minimizing our impact of the social field. The result was usually a methodical quiet if the work was solitary (such as *An Asmat Drum* or *A*

Korowai Shield). Activities such as the carving of the Omu for *The Omu: An Asmat Tradition* featured numerous conversations by the Asmat, both those doing the carving and sitting in the men‟s house watching. We did not attempt to alter the performance of these conversations or influence the behaviors of the Asmat during the carving process.

There are some limitations to such a presentational method. In the film *The Omu: An Asmat Tradition* an important social aspect of creating the Omu was the experience of existential communitas (Turner 1969:132). As a sequence the visual depiction of the activity was an excellent example of the concept of communitas. This ritualized process of carving the Omu as a group was visible through the footage, but the narration comment on the experience of communitas through the social aspects of working together was not able to be expressed verbally to an audience without the use of high context reference (Gallois and Callan 1997:44-50) that pre-supposed insider knowledge on behalf of the viewer. The only other possibility was to contextualize the narration as a framing that comments and explains the idea of existential communitas through the ethnographic example of the Asmat carving an Omu. Such narration content and subject presentation was outside the purview of the Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology‟s goals to provide the viewer with information about Asmat art and not specific interpretations of anthropological concepts.

The only film which featured footage out of linear filming sequence was *An Asmat Drum*, which we filmed sporadically between the other film projects and as a result missed certain sequences which required us to film the hollowing out of the drum by fire separately after the drum was completed. The drum being hollowed out was not in fact the drum which was being carved throughout the film but a different piece of

wood which the depicted Asmat carver Robbie was working on for the upcoming annual Asmat art auction.

The length of these films became of considerable importance since we decided to use the popular video viewing service youtube.com as our distribution source. This allowed us to do two things. First, it allowed us to use the youtube website‟s proprietary video codecs to compress the videos to a good resolution with fast stream rates that allow for the best possible viewing with slower internet connections. We were able to redirect the video content to our museum website using youtube‟s embeddable player. Second, by making our video content available on the youtube site allowed our films to be seen by an audience that might not search specifically for our website. Our videos are also available to smart phone (Apple‟s iPhone, Blackberry, etc.) users that have access to the youtube website.

There were draw backs to using the youtube method of distribution. Our videos contain banners of advertisements as part of our using youtube free of charge. We were also forced to limit the video length to under 10 minutes unless we agree to paying fees for a "Directors" account to allow longer videos. *The Omu: An Asmat Tradition* had to be divided into 2 parts and *Lives of Our Ancestors: An Asmat Bis Ceremony* had to be divided into 4 parts. We maintained higher quality versions in both Windows Media (wma) and Quicktime (Mpeg4) on our website for download if people were interested in using the films for classroom use without the impacts of youtube playing.

I had to alter the subtitles of our original films for youtube display. The subtitles had to be doubled in size in able to be viewed in the smaller space that youtube uses to display videos. Full screen view could be displayed if a user clicked on that option, but

the larger subtitles also proved useful for full screen viewing since necessary limits of resolution quality could distort the appearance of the subtitles.

By using youtube.com as a source of distribution we were fulfilling an important role of distributing the films in a standardized and global way (Lajoux 2003:177-179). While such a film might have had some international usage, being on a videotape ties it to a set of technological standards for broadcast technology that have divided the world into 3 formats based on the differing international broadcast standards of NTSC, PAL and SEACAM (Barbash and Taylor 1997:219-221,488-493).

These differences in standards apply not only to televisions, but videocassette format as well. By using the internet as a streaming delivery we were able to overcome these differences in recording format to present the films through a standardized interface available globally. There are still issues of access to computers and high speed internet in this method, but the films are able to gain a greater audience through an internet audience than we might ever hope by tying them to a physical medium be it digital video disc or videocassette.

Making the films free for viewing and classroom use was a decision based on the Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology‟s general mission of making the experience of the museum free of charge. I took absolutely no copyright ownership beyond moral ownership in the films I helped to produce and any payment I received for my services was minimal and commensurate with a role as a paid intern.

In the year of 2009 we negotiated the usage of the footage by a production staff at WNET, a public television station in New York, for the usage of some of our footage in a series about art in various cultures. We also allowed sound from our video recordings to

be used by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The audio was used in a descriptive soundscape, with credit to the Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology at the end.

This licensing of our footage brought forth many questions about the how our footage (and attendant soundtrack) could be used. We maintain tight controls over how the materials are used and in what contexts, in so much as is possible in a digital environment where such controls are not technologically protected, but ethically and legally decided. This is an ethical responsibility both to the Asmat and the greater concerns of anthropological knowledge.

The use of anthropological knowledge is a major concern for any student who moves from the passive process of study to the active application of field work and the generation of information for publication, be it journal, book, film or website. Even the process of the lecture or interview requires a certain level of ethical engagement to present anthropological knowledge as accurately as possible and in a way that is not harmful to those being studied.

Ethical considerations such as these not only applied to the licensing of our audio and video footage to outside agencies but to the production process itself. We were highly sensitive to ethical implications of our projects. Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology director Jerry Martin had previous experience with Asmat culture, having been involved in a field collecting expedition to the area in 2001.

The Asmat culture is in many ways typical of a Melanesian "Big Man" culture where leadership is an earned position and legitimacy of that leadership is negotiated by a series of complex agreements between free agents. The Indonesian administrative notion

of *adat*, roughly translated as "culture", has created a situation where the Asmat recognize themselves as distinct and unique from the other Papuan societies in the area and the Indonesian authorities.

Our reasons for filming were voiced to the assembled Asmat at the men"s house in the villages we filmed at, usually right after arriving. Curiosity meant that almost all available men in the village were in attendance. We told the assembly that our goals were to film Asmat carving and culture so that our museum could teach people more about the Asmat way of life. We presented the men"s house, as recognition of their authority, gifts of tobacco and cash. These were not purely payments for the filming, but also considered signs of respect as per Asmat custom of visiting another Asmat village. Government officials are also expected to make such gifts or else they will suffer considerable criticism for their lack of generosity. Our access to being able to film in the village was established because we were able to command respect through these gifts, which was a sign of our access to resources and willingness to distribute them to others.

We did not gather signed release forms. The Asmat are a non-literate group with a very small percentage (though growing with education) having the ability to read or write. Those who can read or write have the ability to function in Indonesian, not English, and a written contract would be less honored and legally binding than verbal agreements made in front of the assembled witnesses in the men"s house. Our filming expedition was not funded through Wichita State University, so we were not required to any institutional review boards regarding our anthropological research in the sense of signed releases. While I am not against institutional review, at Wichita State University they are based on the legal restrictions of clinical trials and are actually more likely to

create a paper trail that could lead back to informants and be used against them, rather than actually provide any protection or privacy.

This use of verbal consent as opposed to written consent did not effect our ethical considerations, which we considered of utmost importance. We avoided any criticism of Indonesian authority in our questions and film productions. Our films focused on Asmat carvings and their attendant traditions. These aspects of Asmat culture are not only accepted by Indonesian authorities, but considered to be defining and positive traits of the Asmat since they are sources of income to the area both in the form of tourism and the sale of carvings.

The agreements for the Korowai likewise followed culturally specific negotiations about the proposed film. A verbal agreement was reached, by translator, with the Korowai man named Oni who would carve the shield for us. Oni brought along his relatives Andree and Da‟rae to help him in carving. To pay him for his time and the shield that would ultimately be given to us to take to the Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology we gave him several trade goods, including steel axe heads, cigarette lighters, rope and other items.

Traveling from the village of Mabul to Oni‟s territory did cause some problems since the presence of additional support personnel resulted in over 40 people from Mabul deciding to encamp with us in the jungle territory that was part of Oni‟s land holdings. Due to Oni‟s generosity and the promises by us that the added people would only be a temporary situation we were able to avoid any frustrations caused by all these extra people on Oni‟s territory. We also avoided additional controversy by providing rice to all

the people staying with us, preventing them from over hunting or gathering in the surrounding jungle.

We did have a standoff between two armed Korowai men who worked as cooks after one discovered that the other had made more money. The payment had been made by our guide following the number of days that the individual Korowai men had worked. One man had worked fewer days, but as per Korowai concepts of equalitarianism, demanded the same pay. We were preparing to go out and give some more money to the aggrieved man in order to avoid a scene, but an older Korowai man showed up and convinced them to calm down. The money was still given to the aggrieved man, who gave it back the next day after apologizing for his behavior.

While our methods did not follow stringent models, notably signed release forms, for visual representations in terms of ethics (Wiles et al 2008) they did provide for agreements based in local cultural traditions and in avoidance of absolutely any aspects that might be used by Indonesian national authorities in the prosecution, disenfranchisement or intervention of all those who participated. Any moment where we observed illegal activity (alcohol use, prostitution, drug sale or use, gambling, etc.) was not filmed or even mentioned. We took considerable precautions in order to protect the reputation of our informants with regard to authorities.

We did not, however, hide our informant‟s identities either visually in the film or in film credits. The reason for this was our desire to provide individual informants with full credit for their contributions and allow them to benefit from inclusion in the films. For example, Robbie‟s role in *An Asmat Drum* provides increased awareness of his role as an Asmat carver of note. This makes his carvings more valuable when he brings them

to auction or sales them to visiting tourists. Disruptions caused by jealousy over his success associated with the film would be based on his visible recognition, not any necessary consequence of crediting him by name. Such jealousy is already a part of the changing Asmat culture that sets competing carvers against each other in attempting to gain acclaim as artists by selling their work to tourists.

Our translators and logistics crew were also credited by name since their livelihood is tied to taking tourists through the area. Giving them name recognition in the film was intended to aid their own endeavors to earn a living as guides. The films were intended to be about Asmat and Korowai cultural traditions, not the power relations between Indonesia nationality and local problems adapting to national authority. It was this in mind that we avoided situations which could create problems with the information we produced in the films.

The final outcomes of our films were the result of multiple goals. Not only did they serve to promote both the Lowell D. Holmes Museum of Anthropology collection of Asmat art but to promote the Asmat culture and arts to a global audience. Awareness of other conditions which the Asmat face from encroachment on their territory from logging and mining can be furthered by making wider audiences aware of the existence of the Asmat.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

This thesis has shown how the considerations of technology, both in the process of filming and editing, ultimately decide how theoretical issues will be presented in anthropological film. Proposed methods of filming require adaptation to both field conditions and the technological possibilities available at the time of a film‟s production. The limits and advantages of that technology and the proposed methods of distribution will have a shaping effect on the filming and editing process that is conducted in the film. Ethical protections for those being filmed will also have a shaping influence on the presentational aspects of the edited film.

My own experience in filming and editing in the Asmat and Korowai regions of New Guinea Island has shown how the nature of an anthropological filmmaker‟s research project will ultimately decided how an anthropological film will be presented, and that the choices that a filmmaker makes have more to do with the particulars of their field work location, ethical sensitivities to the culture and the relation of that culture to administrative agencies. In each step of filming the application of technology drives what can be shown of the culture and how the information needs to be presented so that the film acts as a benefit to the culture and not admissible evidence against the culture. The ethical needs will have to be developed and recognized due to the particular relationship of the culture to local and national governments.

To quote Sol Worth and John Adair‟s request for permission to a Navajo elder to conduct the research that would be described in *Through Navajo Eyes*:

“‟Will making movies do the sheep any harm?‟

Worth was happy to explain that as far as he knew, there was no chance that making movies would harm the sheep.

Sam thought this over and then asked „Will making movies do the sheep any good?‟ Worth was forced to reply that as far as he knew making movies would not do the sheep any good.

Sam thought this over, then, looking around at us he said, „Then why make movies?‟” (1972:4).

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