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Anth 260 - Remote Summer I, 2020
12 July 2020

The role of film in anthropology

Admittedly, films have been played a significant role in human life since its birth. Many innovations and ideas come to life after they were introduced in a science fiction film: the moon landing, mobile phone, touchscreen computer, and so on. It also used as a weapon to fight civil rights and inequality and reveal social oppression. It also serves as a critical tool in various disciplines and improves efficiency.

However, as one would notice from what Margaret Mead wrote, anthropologists had reserved to consider it as an additional powerful tool of their fieldwork. She points out, " fail to include filming and insist on continuing the hopelessly inadequate note-taking of an earlier age" (Hockings, 4). Anthropologie had been hesitant and resistant to implement this technological tool and took advantage of it as a department. She detailed various reasons behind such attitudes: "Relying on words, cost and specialized skill" (Hockings, 5). These and other reasons caused not to filming the ancient ways of life that were on the verge of vanishing from the earth "disappears right in front of everybody's eyes" (Hockings, 5). This severely hurt the discipline and fail to reconstruct and preserve priceless human history and culture efficiently. Mead firmly blames anthropologists for such damage and advocates the importance of the film. Her advocacy is legitimate because films are more efficient and accurate than other methods to reconstruct and preserve human behavior and illustrate cultural distinction.

Using film as a tool while reconstructing human behavior and ancient way of life would boost efficiency and accuracy more than the traditional methods. Because its feature allows anthropologists to capture every detail of their target. So they would not miss essential cultural elements. Whereas the traditional method: note-book and questionnaires lead the anthropologist to come up with incomplete cultural reconstruction no matter how much effort they put into their work.

Either monograph or other method not strong enough to give a complete picture of cultural behavior as the film does. For example, in *Ishi: The Last Yahi* film, we heard when the narrator said, “ he makes a fire, built shelter, and chip arrowheads.” to explain Ishi’s demonstration at the Museum. All these do not make sense that much to the audience as those who visited him and saw while he demonstrates Yahi’s way of life. Because as Mead points out, “ gestures we had no means of preserving “ (Hockings, 5) Ishi’s gesture did not preserve due to lack of filming. If his demonstration had been filmed, then it would have been extraordinary documentation. Moreover, the audience might have different impressions watching the last Yahi, Ishi after a century ago while he walks, fishing, struggling to make fire, his reaction in his new world, etc. Mead points out that “ gestures we had no means of preserving “(Hockings, 5). Of course, film technology was young as an anthropology discipline and could be impossible to get access at the time. Nevertheless, this shows us how not using film for any reason leads to inefficiency and inaccuracy in the process of cultural reconstruction.

Moreover, film empowers anthropologists to document human culture efficiently and accurately. It's obvious that cultural behavior has been dramatically changed due to various factors: economic, technological, etc. Thus filming and documenting cultural behavior or ancient way of life before it vanishes or contaminants might be the only option since it is hard to overcome these factors' influences. Many would benefit from such documentation ranging from anthropologists to a general audience.

For instance, if anthropologists or researchers who wish to know how an isolated tribe in the Canadian arctic, Netsilik Eskimos manage to survive during rough winter. Then The winter Sea Ice Camp documentary film will provide them a great deal of information. Thus this film could help to analyze the difference between today's Eskimos's culture with the indigenous one after half-century ago. Because the film captured the real traditional way of Eskimos' life. It illustrates how they hunt seal, build their camp with an ice block, raise their children, labor division, etc. Each cultural element reconstructs without "distort the flow of social action" (Hockings, 183). Distorting the real cultural behavior while filming should not be tolerated, and a bold line should be drawn to avoid misinterpretation or distortion of cultural sequence. As Balikci mentioned, "The Eskimos behaved just as they would behave in any ordinary situation" (Hockings, 187). Such an approach makes reconstruction legitimate.

Today they might be victims of acculturation, and all or some of Eskimos's way of life we have seen in the film vanished or changed dramatically. However, as Mead suggests, "camera, will make it possible to preserve materials" (Hockings, 5) thanks to

film and anthropologists who had been willing to use film as a tool to reconstruct and document such incredible human culture, at least the world knows about such priceless culture and ancient knowledge. So that a general audience expands their knowledge and impressed by human history. In the meantime, understand the importance and contribution of anthropology.

The other importance of film on anthropology is its enhanced efficiency in analyzing cultural change and cross-cultural differences. If anthropologists attempt to analyze the interaction between people of different cultures, films would be a perfect instrument. As Asen Balikci explains, "record directly spontaneous social reality, unrehearsed, within the total natural setting." (Hockings, 183) just a simple recording of people's interaction could be enough to analyze and understand the cross-cultural aspect of the targeted society. Adding artistic features and techniques would be better. Black Robe film is an excellent example since it explicitly depicts cross-cultural differences between French and Algonquin. So It allows the audience to digest how people misinterpreted other cultures and go through cultural crises and conflicts.

In conclusion, films help the anthropological fieldwork to be more efficient and accurate. With the help of it, we have seen how local culture and ancient knowledge salvaged—and easily introduced such incredible human history to the world by exploiting its great accessibility advantage. Incorporating film and other technological equipment would help to advance reconstruction, preservation of cultural behavior.

Work Cited

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