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Ethnographic Film-Making for Japanese Television

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I am involved in the production of a weekly series entitled "Subarashii Sekai Ryoko" (Our Wonderful World) that has been broadcast over Japanese television networks for more than 20 years. More than half of the series is devoted to the traditional life-styles and cultures of mainly non-European ethnic groups. These are first and foremost television programmes and are not academic ethnographic films. However in the sense that they do introduce a different culture to the general audience through the mass media, they may be termed anthropological films.

This paper describes the various restrictions imposed on these works by the fact that they are television programmes, *e.g.* they must all be exactly the same length, they are required to obtain an audience rating commensurate with their prime-time slot, the director has to work in various linguistic environments, etc., and shows how these problems are managed. It also describes my own trial-and-error experiences in the field, with particular reference to several projects in the Trobriand Islands. The paper deals with problems in several aspects of production, such as obtaining permission to record the activities of the individual or group concerned (including obtaining governmental approval), deciding period and timing of the filming, selecting of interpreters and collaborators, the relationship between the film crew and the subject(s), the question of honoraria, the composition and lodgings of crew, filming and simultaneous recording, translation of subtitles, editing and feedback to the people.

Since there is little direct response from the audience to television broadcasts I intend also to try to investigate the history of responses to such programmes based on reports of those assigned to monitor television broadcasts, letters and articles in newspapers.

INTRODUCTION

I have spent more than 20 years in the production of films introducing different cultures to the Japanese audience through the medium of commercial television. Our work is, in the broadest sense, a part of the spectrum of television journalism, thus these films are not academic anthropological films of observation, nor are they scientific films attempting to support any particular theory, nor are they educational films designed for the training of anthropologists. Therefore I feel that the films our group produces, while they may be called documentary films, do not exactly fit into

the category of ethnographic films. However, in the sense that they strive to present foreign cultures, and in particular the traditional society of non-European cultures, they follow an approach similar to that of anthropological films in terms of the fieldwork, *i.e.* research and filming.

This paper outlines the basic policy and methodology of the series "Our Wonderful World" and, from my experience as one of the producers/directors, describes the various vicissitudes during the exceptionally long life of this over 20 year-old programme.

THE FORMATION AND PRODUCTION POLICY OF "OUR WONDERFUL WORLD"

Beginning in 1966, broadcast of the weekly series "Our Wonderful World" assumed the following approach to its production. Ever since the commencement of the Meiji era in the mid-19th Century, Japan has continued to try to absorb the technological and spiritual culture of advanced countries of Europe and North America and has also worked towards cultural exchange. However there are many regions in the world, apart from the West, with different living styles and value systems. Since very little information had been publicly available about this "other world", we wished to try to introduce it to the Japanese public and open up modern civilization to allow the discovery of a bud of creativity concerning a novel way of human living.

For the past 20 years we have been broadcasting nationwide, from Hokkaido to Okinawa, on Sunday night prime time, at 7:30 pm. This series hitherto consisted of three categories: "mankind", "nature" and "historical legacy", and more than half of the programmes dealt with mankind—topics of tribes living in non-Western environments and societies with traditional life-styles.

In terms of production policy, it could be said to rest on a system of area specialists. In other words, each director has an area of the world in which he or she has specialized, such as Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, the Pacific and Oceania, North America, Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, the Poles, etc., and has been involved in making films in this area for more than 20 years in some cases. I myself specialize in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, so I have worked from French Polynesia in the east to Madagascar in the west. For example, the areas in which I was involved in programme production and research field trips, according to the year, are as follows:

- 1967 Bali (filming), Viet Nam (research)
- 1969 Western Samoa, New Caledonia (filming), Tahiti (research)
- 1970 Trobriand Is. (filming), Australia, New Zealand, Truk, Yap (research)
- 1971 Trobriand Is., Milne Bay area (filming)
- 1972 Korea, Sulawesi Is. (filming), Australia (research)
- 1973 Bali (filming), Sulu Is. (research)

- 1974 North Thailand, Trobriand Is. (filming), Solomon Is. (research)
- 1975 Bulgaria, Madagascar (filming)
- 1976 Trobriand Is. (filming)
- 1977 New Ireland (filming), Tonga (research)
- 1978 Kalimantan, North Sumatra (filming)
- 1979 Mentawai Is. (filming), Irian Jaya (research)
- 1980 Irian Jaya, Yunnan Province, China (filming)
- 1981 Yunnan Province, China, Irian Jaya (filming)
- 1982 Giansu Province, China (filming)
- 1983 Hunan Province, Shanxi Province, China (filming), Lesser Sunda Is. (research)
- 1984 Argentina, Tahiti (filming), Solomon Is., Vanuatu, Papua-New Guinea (research)
- 1985 New Guinea highlands, New Britain (filming)

One of the advantages of the regional specialization system is of course a better understanding of the area, but in addition one is able to follow changes that occur with time in the region and one can also gradually expand one's circle of collaborators, colleagues and advisors.

The first principle of production is long-term filming by a small film crew. In the case of *Kula—Argonauts of the Western Pacific* which I will discuss later, the research and groundwork phase, including reaching the destination, took one month the first year, the first year's filming required two and a half months, and the second year's filming took three and a half months; so a total of seven months was necessary. My colleagues involved in the filming of the pygmies of Zaire spent 80 days moving around with one band in the Ituri Forest, while the filming in Mustang required four months of living in the same village from summer to winter. For academic fieldworkers, this may seem to be only a matter of course, but for a television crew it is extraordinarily difficult.

Another characteristic feature is that generally co-operation is obtained from the local inhabitants and they are included in the filming process. This includes not only local interpreters but also locals who are trained over the years in various projects as cameramen, soundmen, researchers and co-ordinators, some of whom are if necessary invited to Japan. One of these, Ms Dea Sudarman of Indonesia,¹⁾ worked from 1978 to 1980 as my field assistant, taking part in the filming and production of *The Kalimantan Dayaks*, *Sumatra Orang Utan Rehabilitation Project*, *The Mentawaians* and *The Dani of Irian Jaya*. Subsequently in 1981 she worked with me in a film on the Asmat of Irian Jaya, which received the Golden Marzocco Prize in 1982 at the Festival dei Popoli. Now she is one of the foreign directors of "Our Wonder-

1) Dea Sudarman: Born in 1956 in Bandung. Joined NAV film crew in Indonesia as a field assistant, later becoming programme director. Major works include *The Asmat*, *Trapping a Sumatran Tiger* (1985), *The Tree Dwellers of the Irian Forest* (1986), all of which were produced for "Our Wonderful World".

ful World" and as such is busy making one film after another in her native Indonesia. After undergoing training in Japan, Jiang Xiao Song²⁾ returned to China and made the film *Small Wooden Cottage* which received a Bronze Award at the International Film and TV Festival of New York.

LIMITATIONS IMPOSED BY THE NATURE OF TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

While this type of production begins at a point where normal TV programme coverage ends and common sense is all but abandoned, the aim of production is first and foremost for a television broadcast (recently video films have become increasingly common), and there is therefore an inherent difference from films produced for academic or educational purposes.

First of all, the stratum and quality of the audience are different. The audience of this series is large and contains a wide range of elements, and any single programme is estimated to be viewed by 8-15 million people from the general population; more than 90% of these have no prior information concerning the ethnic group shown. In other words, there is little in common between the producer and the audience.

Secondly, each episode has to be exactly the same length. Under ideal circumstances, the length would be decided according to the topic and the content filmed, but in the case of television programmes, the demands of the time slot are paramount. Even when making a series of films about one ethnic group or area, in principle one must cut each episode into the same self-contained length. Programmes having a continuing story or theme are not desirable because successive weekly programmes are not necessarily seen by the same people.

The third problem is that of language. An academic fieldworker would probably divide his or her field into two or three areas and begin work only after getting considerable mastery of the languages involved. However the producers of this series are involved with areas containing dozens of different languages. In the two and a half months I spent in Kalimantan I somehow had to work with Benoa, Tunjung, Kenya and Kayan, four languages—yet this is by no means an unusual situation. From the very beginning, we have had no time to set about learning the languages involved.

The fourth point is that of the strict exigencies imposed by prime time competition for viewing ratings. Most of the programmes in the same time slots on the five or six other channels are aimed at entertainment, with pop-star song shows, quizzes, cartoons, etc., and in the five-month period centred on the summer we have to compete with live professional baseball broadcasts (which have the largest and

2) Jian Xiao Song: Born in Shanghai in 1952. Studied programme-making in Japan from 1981 to 1983. Joined China TV Production Centre (CTPC) in Beijing in 1983. Major works include *Small Wooden Cottage and Once Upon a Time in Yunnan* (documentary drama, 1985).

most steadily maintained viewing rating in Japanese television).

In other words, what I wish to stress is that the series is first and foremost a television programme and is not in the strict sense a series of ethnographic films. Here, apropos of these same films, I would like to quote two or three people on how they think things ought to be.

An ideal toward which we might set our sights would be a combination of films made by ethnographic filmmakers from different modern cultures—e.g. Japanese, French, American—combined with sequences photographed and edited by those who dance or enact the ceremonies or sequences of everyday life that are being filmed [MEAD 1975: 8].

Personally—unless forced into a special situation—I am violently opposed to film crews. My reasons are several. The sound engineer must fully understand the language of the people he is recording. It is thus indispensable that he belong to the ethnic group being filmed and that he also be trained in the minutiae of his job. Besides, with present technique used in direct cinema (synchronous sound), the filmmaker must be the cameraman. And the ethnologist alone, in my mind, is the one who knows when, where, and how to film, i.e. to do the production [ROUCH 1975: 91].

An ethnographic work must be informed by an implicit or explicit theory of culture which causes the statements within the work to be organized in a particular way... The application of this feature of ethnography to film assumes that the theory of culture held by the ethnographic filmmaker would lead him to select certain events for filming, to film them in a certain way and then to edit those images in a manner which not only reflects the theory but articulates the theory intentionally in a form possible for an audience to interpret [RUBY 1975: 107].

The “Our Wonderful World” series does not fulfill a single one of the above demands. This is only natural as its purpose is not to teach anthropology on television, but rather to attempt to introduce various ethnic groups and their ways of life, as well as their emotional and spiritual culture. If anything, these films come closest to the definition of Goldschmidt—“Ethnographic film is film which endeavors to interpret the behavior of people of one culture to persons of another culture by using shots of people doing precisely what they would have been if the cameras were not present” [GOLDSCHMIDT 1972: 1].

Be that as it may, the process of producing a film introducing a different culture resembles in certain points the fieldwork performed by anthropologists, and, whether we are conscious of the fact or not, I think that we learn from anthropologists. Now I would like to discuss two or three methods from my own field experience.

IN THE FIELD

(a) **The relationship between the subjects of the films and the film crew**

The question of the effect of the presence of the film crew and camera on the subjects being filmed is one that is frequently discussed. I believe that it is generally recognized that it is a mere pretence for the film crew to try to act as if they don't exist. There is a spectrum of opinion ranging from the attitude of trying to make the presence of the camera as close to zero as possible, to that of Rouch, according to whom the idea is that the very presence of the camera elicits the truth and who therefore positively emphasizes the presence of the camera.

My own point of view is the former. I believe in living in a given village with a small number of persons (such as the director, cameraman and assistant) and with the help of a local interpreter obtaining the local news, while we keep ourselves always ready to film what occurs as it develops. Therefore it is extremely important to acquire news of what is going to occur, and it is also essential to be right on the spot at the time events are occurring. From this point of view there is a similarity with news reporting, for news cameramen have to capture what is happening as it develops: so it is impossible for us to give directions to the people involved or to ask them to do a retake. We thus try to avoid interrupting the natural flow of events.

Concerning the role played by the director in the film, there is first of all the choice of which event to follow, then there is the question of which persons to follow or what interpersonal relationships to focus on. Then, when the event is over, it is also important to interview the most suitable people in order to find out what they think about it. It is also important, when appropriate, to follow up for several days or weeks, and in certain cases deepen comprehension of the event by interviewing persons afterwards.

The next point is whether the subjects being filmed would act differently from when the camera was not present. Perhaps I am being too optimistic, but from what I have seen, this is not the case. No matter where we go, the film crew lives there and we first obtain permission to film. The first day we bring out the camera and tell the people "The photographs taken by this camera are not like the ones you know about, so please don't strike poses or act strangely in front of it. Please act normally and go about your daily life as usual." But by the same token I seldom give requests about how to act or about doing the same thing again as this would contradict the spirit of what I had asked; therefore it is essential to collect as much data as possible beforehand, in order to be able to go along to shoot the scene without having to ask many questions and to be able to judge which shots to take. The judgement for this must depend on prior knowledge, research on the group, experience as a documentary film-maker, and perhaps instinct.

When an outside group visits the village, or when the camera is taken out of the village, it means that people who have not listened to our explanation about the camera are then being filmed, but it seems that they are little influenced by it. At first they are impressed by the newness and play around, but soon their attention returns

to their own concern and activities. On occasion the people of the village in which we are living give some advice to newcomers.

It is also possible to say that when people are trying to attract attention to themselves they more or less forget about the camera. In the film on *Women in China Today* filmed in Wuxi city in Jiangsu province in China, we showed the major events in the life of women in China, including "modern ceremonies" entailing different events according to the age of the individual. While this was filmed completely at a small-group level, I was also worried that the presence of the crew might interfere. This programme covered the pains of birth-labour and a first delivery, the nervousness at first meeting a prospective matrimonial partner, giving testimony in a divorce court, and later meeting the long separated husband who had been sent to a remote area. In many of these cases, the significance of the meetings was of such import to the individuals involved that were unable to pay any attention to the camera.

In the final analysis, in order to limit the effects of the camera to the minimum it is important to limit the crew to the minimum, to arrive on the scene at the moment when people are beginning to become oblivious to their surroundings, and to allow events to proceed naturally while acting in a polite and considerate manner. In other words, the presence of camera etc. appears not to have the same influence on the people being filmed as it does amongst film-makers. I feel that, unless the people doing the filming act in a very blatant way, those being filmed will not act unnaturally.

(b) Handling secret ceremonies or activities that the subjects do not wish filmed

Various peoples have secret ceremonies or ceremonies which, even if not secret, the local people do not want to have filmed. Sometimes the crew is initiated into a secret society and must pledge not to break the pledge of secrecy, on pain of some penalty. Filming may still become possible by thinking out various strategies that are acceptable.

It is well known that the topic of portraying the secret ceremonies of Australian Aborigines attracted much debate. I myself have only had one experience of filming such a secret ceremony. This was the Mandas Mask dance of the Baining tribe of New Britain, in Papua-New Guinea. There is a public part of the dance that is open to anyone, but the part of the dance occurring behind the fence is only open to one who has entered the society of men of the Baining tribe. As a woman, I was refused permission until the very end to enter behind the fence, although the male Japanese members of the film crew were allowed to enter in order to film. Also, concerning the material being made public, *i.e.* its being broadcast, I had to swear that I was a hundred percent sure there were no Baining women living in Japan before receiving their permission. Of course in addition broadcasts in Papua-New Guinea were forbidden. Furthermore, on the occasion of giving copies to the Provincial Government and to the Institute of Papua-New Guinea Studies they had to be accompanied by the strictest warning that the prints were to be used only for preservation and

research. In comparison with secret ceremonies, however, it is actually more difficult to film scenes that the local people just do not wish to have filmed. In many of the societies with which we deal there is nothing like the Western tradition of distinct "yes" or "no" answers, and often we are not told "Don't film such-and-such". As a result the crew may continue to film until they reach a point where they are not only prevented from continuing, but also are forbidden to use the previously filmed portion. I have experienced such disconcerting situations myself, such as in the ceremony inducing a trance in a high purah of Bali, the Bilo ceremony of the Sakalava tribe of southwest Madagascar, and a Lahu funeral in northern Thailand. In such circumstances one must simply leave with as good a grace as possible. While we can beg or try to persuade or compensate them financially, those who decide whether the filming is to be done or not are those to whom the ceremony or custom belongs. We must never forget that we are being allowed to film at our request.

(c) The language barrier—interpreting, translating and presentation for broadcast
Local language interpretation

As previously mentioned, it is usually the case that we are filming people whose language we are quite unable to understand. Therefore, whether the project succeeds or ends in failure depends on whether we are able to find a good interpreter. First I will present my criteria in selecting an interpreter, and then give my reasons in detail.

1. The interpreter must belong to the same language group as the subjects being filmed;
2. The interpreter must be able to communicate in an intermediate language, English, French, Indonesian or Japanese, etc. (I find that I use English the most);
3. The interpreter must be a person who is respected by the people being filmed, or at least not a problematic, marginal person;
4. Not a fickle person but a steady worker with stamina;
5. Not a person who makes individual interpretations;
6. A person who has not worked with another film crew or investigating group.

The following are my reasons for these preferences.

1. While this condition may appear as only natural, it can be difficult where there is a mixture of different languages in a given area. When I was filming among the Akha of Northern Thailand the only Akha person who spoke English well enough to be able to interpret was an opium addict and lacked the physical strength required for moving around while filming in the mountains, and he was also not respected by the people. Then, when I was at my wits' end, a Yao man who said he had interpreted for another Japanese investigational group offered to help. He was also said to be able to communicate with the Akha. He appeared good-natured and very intelligent, but eventually I requested help from an Akha man who went round the villages as a pig dealer. His linguistic ability in Northern Thai was poorer than that of the Yao man, but I placed more weight on the fact that he was of the same

tribe as the Akha. The reason for this was that in Northern Thailand, which has a mosaic-like distribution of ethnic groups, there can be hidden discord between such groups that is not readily apparent to outsiders. If one were to bring a Yao interpreter among the Akha it might well be that imperceptibly barriers might arise. In addition, even though a person may claim to understand another language, it is difficult to be sure exactly how much the foreign interpreter understands of innuendos or circumlocutions inherent in the other culture's manner of expression.

2. This is self-explanatory.

3. This is an extremely important point. If the film crew uses someone who is a "problem child" then the local people may refuse to co-operate totally. However if one can find a person who is respected he will be able to be even more effective than merely interpreting. The best interpreter I have worked with was Chief Pulitala³⁾ of the Trobriand Islands, who helped me film *Kula—Argonauts of the Western Pacific* in Kiriwina, Fergusson, Dobu and Normanby. He was of the same Tabal subclan as the Paramount Chief and was one of the five or six most respected chiefs. However, as he had worked for a long time with the United Church on Dobu Island, he was not caught up in the power structure that involves all high-level chiefs in his native Kiriwina. He had a very warm personality and was considered by both islanders and expatriates to be fair and honest. He was fluent in Dobu, the lingua franca of the *kula*, and as his wife was from Dobu he had many in-laws on Dobu and Fergusson. What we were filming at that time was the canoe group of Sinaketa village, in the southern part of Kiriwina Island, and the leader of the canoe group was from the Tabal subclan and a very close friend of the chief.

Chief Pulitala's English was far from fluent, yet I feel that the reason that this particular project ended successfully was largely thanks to him. Although it was necessary to be able to understand the background to what was being said, to an outsider like myself this was extremely difficult. Sometimes Chief Pulitala was too optimistic in his interpretations, but he was able to make interpretations going beyond language translation. He was also able to give advice on the protocol of making greetings, the timing and method of giving presents, and co-operated as an organizer. When he found that the shell necklaces that are the object of *kula* exchange had not arrived at Fergusson or Dobu he brought the *kula* leaders of those areas together and arranged for them to set up a schedule for the *kula*. Chief Pulitala took the initiative in this way, while we were merely walking around with him and listening to the results.

As he was such an excellent interpreter, assistant, organizer and adviser, when I went back to Kiriwina three years later it was only natural that I would think of engaging him again. However it was not possible: he had then become one of the leaders of the Kabisawali movement which divided the island politically in half. The Assistant District Commissioner of the island, who was from another province, said

3) Chief Pulitala: High-ranking chief of Kiriwina in the Trobriand group, based in Gumilababa village. Died in 1985.

to me directly, "I can't stand having your crew take Chief Pulitala all over the island". If we had done that, it would have meant being involved with one side of the political conflict. In actual fact, many of my old friends belonged to the Kabisawali movement, but I adopted a neutral stance and tried hard not to become involved in this local question. In other words, while maintaining a good relationship at a personal level with old friends, we filmed mostly in a village belonging to the opposite faction. I of course selected as an interpreter someone from a village of the opposing faction and someone who was not of the rank of chief, so as not to stir up trouble.

4. This is a feature that is especially required in an interpreter.

5. This criterion may appear to be contradictory to my comments about Chief Pulitala, but the main point is that it is desirable to have a person who can distinguish between direct translation and his own interpretation. When the two become confused the information one receives becomes questionable.

6. It is better to have someone who is a *tabula rasa* rather than someone who has been "contaminated" by the methods of other groups, since every crew or investigative group has its own ways of thinking and doing things. When a person has once been trained according to one method it may become quite difficult to adapt to another method. When balanced against the merit of having had experience with another filming or research project, the difficulty of changing methods already learnt is a greater demerit. Of course, by the same token people who work with our crew are no doubt influenced in the same fashion.

Translation

Next is the question of the translation of conversation, discussion, incantations or songs. My basic policy is to have all such materials translated while we are on location by the person in charge of interpreting. The reason for this is that when we move off somewhere it is difficult to find someone who can speak the language of the former region; it is even more difficult when we return to Japan, where it is very difficult to find people who understand languages other than the most common ones, English, French, German, Spanish and Chinese. In 20 years of experience I have only received help in three languages in Japan: Korean, Balinese and Huli, a language of the New Guinea highlands. The all-important principle of on-site translation is not merely one of understanding the language. Words are not always spoken coherently and, unless the translation is done by someone who was actually at the scene and is aware of what has happened and the relationship between the various filmed subjects, the words can lose their meaning.

Usually I record what needs to be translated on a cassette tape, and, taking note of the tape counter, for each sentence I write the meaning in English, relying on this when the time comes for editing. When a direct translation does not make sense, I ask the interpreter or the person who actually spoke concerning the meaning, and write down this additional interpretation. Although only a little remains by the time of the final editing, by going through this translation process one is able to

reach some understanding of the psychology, thinking and the meaning behind the actions of the subjects being filmed, which is extremely important for a director.

It is particularly difficult to translate the words of songs, including incantations. On many occasions the singers have merely memorized the sounds and they themselves cannot translate them. When making the film on the *kula*, I recorded the eight following incantations used during the steps from making preparations to actual sailing.

- 1) *Yena am.* (Where is the fish?): This is an incantation made over the black paint when painting the canoe. It is to make the canoe fast like a black fish.
- 2) *Kaymomwa'u:* This is an incantation to make the canoe light.
- 3) *Lilava:* This spell is intoned over the bundles of *lilava* as they are loaded.
- 4) *Kaegau* (Invisible): This is a spell to make the canoe invisible and protect it from the flying witches.
- 5) *Kelisila Koya* (Kicking the mountain): Performed when the famed peak of Koyatabu on Fergusson Island comes into sight during the sailing.
- 6) *Tauya* (Conch shell): Incantation performed over the conch shell which is blown as they land on the island of their *kula* partner.
- 7) *Migaula Luya:* Incantation over coconut used to wash the body when dressing up before landing.
- 8) *Leya* (Ginger): Performed over ginger which is then chewed and spat out.

In the final stage of filming we asked our interpreting assistant, Chief Pulitala, to ask and write down the incantation from its owner and performer, the elder Tokovatarya. Then we asked the lady who was recommended by the Assistant District Commissioner as the best English speaker to translate it: after looking at the 40-word script for a while, she said that she only recognized three words. Nevertheless she tried, with the help of an elderly man to whom she was related and who was familiar with old customs, to translate it. In addition the translation was attempted by another two elderly men. In the three completed versions there were similar points but there were also totally different points and I did not know which version to rely on.

Finally I went back to the owner of the incantation, Tokovatarya⁴⁾, and asked him the meaning of each individual word. The translators were Chief Pulitala and the son of Tokovatarya, who understood some English. It was then that I understood that throughout the incantation were scattered proper nouns from the seas south of Kiriwina island naming the straits, currents, mountains, uninhabited islands, places to land and the villages of the *kula* partners. The incantation also contained vocabulary from the languages of other islands in the *kula* area and old words of Trobriand that were now only used in incantations. Even for a person well

4) Tokovatarya: One of the leading figures in the *kula* circle based in Sinaketa village. He was considered the leader of expeditions for shell necklaces organized in 1971 in memory of his dead brother. He acted as sorcerer during the whole trip. Died around 1975.

versed in old customs, were he to be from the interior and not cognizant of the *kula* of the south, an accurate translation would be out of the question.

Presentation of Translated Content

The final problem is how to present such conversations or incantations to the viewer: the alternatives are a voice-over or subtitles. In this series I tried basically to deliver factual explanation in voice-overs and use subtitles when emotion was being expressed. In the case of incantations or songs, it is not just the content but also the expression of the voice that is important; therefore for these I like to use subtitles. However, subtitles can usually only transmit one-third of what is being said. Furthermore, if in a single 6- or 7-second shot a direct translation is thrown at the viewer, it would only cause misunderstanding. At the very least it is necessary for the viewer to be able to follow the thread of the story.

In addition, when there is a lot of repetition it is not transmitted accurately unless all of it is shown. However, as I have previously noted, we are faced by the restrictions of a television programme and frequently some parts are cut out of the final edition. Thus, if only the part of the song that is being shown were to be translated it would be unintelligible to the audience, therefore sometimes a translation of the part that is not being shown is also included in the translation.

In terms of a strictly scientific approach this method may seem to be somewhat erratic, but I feel that it is unreasonable to demand more from the average television viewer. In fact it might be more important to have the viewer obtain an overall grasp of the subject. It is only natural that the form of any audiovisual work will change according to its purpose.

DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THIS SERIES

Given the rapidly changing world of television, responding to varying tastes and fashions, it is almost unheard of for one series to have stayed in a prime-time slot on commercial television for twenty years. Moreover during that long period there have been changes not only in the traditional cultures portrayed in the programmes but also in the lifestyle and approach to living of the Japanese audience.

(a) The deluge of information from abroad

Twenty years ago there was very little information given about countries outside Japan, apart from the international section of news programmes. There was only one weekly programme on public television (NHK) and one on commercial television. At that time, those going abroad were only allowed to take \$500 with them. The Japanese audience then had a strong desire "to know the world".

However today the television screen is flooded with international information. Looking at the programmes of the seven Tokyo VHF channels, there are 26 weekly programmes related to international information. More than a third of these are quiz

or magazine-type programmes; thus it can be seen that this kind of programme presenting fragments of information, rather than one that seeks to follow a single theme, is popular. It is my worry that many of those who are reached by these fragments of information may end up feeling that they know all there is to know about the world. This is exacerbated by the fact that certain producers or media critics do claim that these quiz entertainment shows are related to knowledge and are a new kind of documentary. It is most difficult to believe that short clips of foreign subjects (sometimes making those in other cultures the subject of derision) are the most desirable way to introduce other cultures.

(b) Changes in Japanese living attitudes

I think that the range of the lifestyle of those born after 1965 in Japan has become narrower, resulting in their having different responses to the same stimulus than older people have. It is now unusual to experience births or deaths—two of the most important events in life—in one's own home, and few even have the experience of cutting up a chicken or large fish. All the roads are asphalted, and it is now almost unthinkable to live life without electricity. While it is desirable at least through the television screen to share in the actions and emotions of those in other cultures who are living a much more basic life, relying on their five senses, it seems that people tend to react only within the range of their own living experiences. The following is an example of what I mean.

In the burning bone-dry desert a Bushman fires an arrow at a giraffe. It takes an arduous chase of six days before the poison takes effect and the giraffe finally succumbs. When cutting up the giraffe the stomach is opened, the half digested gastric contents are squeezed and the Bushman sucks the few drops of water so obtained.

From the viewpoint of the average Japanese, this is a disgusting event. However when it was shown on television nine years ago many of the audience responded with the feeling that some people live in a very difficult, deprived environment, and that the Japanese are lucky to live in a country blessed with plentiful water. However today I feel that the response would more likely be "Disgusting! Please don't show something like that around meal-time."

There are other examples of such scenes that could have been shown ten years ago, but which one would now think twice about broadcasting. Things like the Bushman scene, in which blood appears, are one example and scenes of ceremonies that involve the sacrifice of livestock are also frowned upon. Another such example is the scarification ceremony of the tribes that live along the mid-stretch of the Sepik River in Papua-New Guinea. Because motifs are carved on the back and arms the scene is rather gory and this is not aided by the fact that a certain mud is daubed on to stop the bleeding. The Ifugau funeral ceremony might be difficult to show also: several days after death, with the rotting corpse stinking (fortunately there is no smell from the screen!), it is carried on the shoulders of local people from one relative's house to another and people come to make their last farewell to it.

These kinds of scene, which from the point of view of Japanese common sense

are disturbing, are actually manifestations of the adaptability of a people to their environment, showing a feeling of unity with their ancestors or an intense feeling of attachment to the dead person, and I think it is an extreme pity that they should be disregarded with the common epithet "disgusting".

John Marshall⁵⁾, who has previewed many films of this series, wrote the following: "... I said that I thought the main difference, and the power, of your films in contrast to the films about other peoples on American T.V. was that in your films we meet people. You ask them what they think. You see and hear what they do. People speak for themselves in your films". In the same letter he added, "I do not know if the American audience actually does want to meet real people around the world...I think your films are too real, too direct, too profound..." (for them).

Over the past twenty years the level of the general Japanese audience has, I feel, become close to the American audience that Marshall described.

CHALLENGING DIFFICULTIES

In order to meet changing tendencies among the audience there has to be some change in the production policy of the programme. I would like to end this paper by mentioning the method we are attempting at present.

(a) The producer is the medium connecting those being filmed and the audience.

Previously the producer always followed behind the camera and the only people who appeared on the screen were those members of the society being filmed; and the films showed only discussions, conversations, songs or incantations of those persons, with their contents being displayed by subtitles. Additional information was supplied in the third person where necessary by a narrator. It was hoped that the audience would take in and respond to a certain event or ceremony (often of no direct relevance to a Japanese audience) taking place just as it was supposed to. However, this asked much of the audience both intellectually and emotionally: there is a risk that the lives of people living in the tropical rain forest of New Guinea or the Indian reserves of the Amazon are now more like the lives of beings from outer space to the Japanese, especially the young Japanese.

Beginning three years ago, therefore, we dropped the third person narration and adopted a format whereby the director who actually went to the location made a report. The interaction between the director and the subjects being filmed was also shown on the screen. By recording the direct reactions of a Japanese director, this method was effective in reducing the distance between the subjects being filmed and the Japanese audience.

5) John Marshall: Veteran American anthropological film-maker, born in 1932. Best-known for his series of films on the Bushmen of Namibia, which includes *The Hunters* (1958) and *N!ai, the Story of a !Kung Woman* (1980). He also shot *Titticut Follies* (with Frederick Wiseman, 1967).

(b) Describing the process

Recently some television viewers have tended to express a greater interest in the process by which a result is arrived at, rather than just in the result itself. Even some news or current affairs programmes are trying to show the process by which a given item reached a newsworthy status.

The traditional method of the series has been to show the result and to discard the remainder of the process. In *Kula—Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, filming required a total of three years, and on the first filming expedition no agreement could be reached among the chiefs who would take part in the *kula* expedition, resulting in endless postponement of the departure: then when departure was finally made the boats were driven back by strong southeasterly trade winds, two canoes capsized and two cameras became pickled in sea water: all in all it was a very dramatic experience for the crew. However it is hard, looking only at the finished product, to imagine such difficulties arose. If I were making the film now I might depict the process, and so the finished product might be quite different. Recently I made a film on the Duku Duku Secret Society of the Tolai people of East New Britain Province, in Papua-New Guinea. In this film I paid much attention to the process. The initiation is divided into four stages and only males who have gone through all of them are allowed to walk on the sacred ground of Tareiu. By showing repeated scenes of the Japanese film crew being refused entry into Tareiu we were I think able to portray the emotion of the strong preservation of their traditions by the Tolai people. However from the point of view of analyzing the ceremony it ended up as a rather frustrating programme.

A television programme is a living organism and at the same time a mirror of its times. Therefore if, as a director, one forces one's own concept of what is the one right method of production or presentation, the result will be meaningless. Without altering one's basic philosophy one has continually to try, if necessary by trial and error, to develop new methods while feeling out audience response.

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N.B. 1: Production and distribution rights of all titles not indicated otherwise belong to Nippon A-V Productions (NAV). Distribution outside Japan is not being done however except for televised broadcasts.

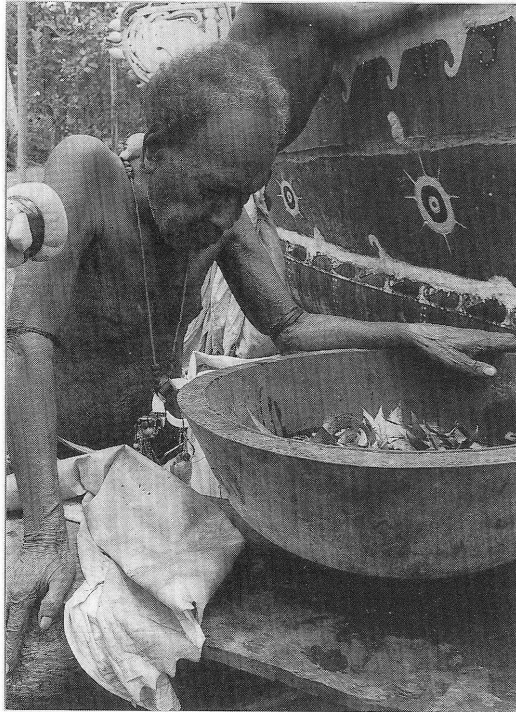
N.B. 2: Titles of films for which there is no English-language edition are given in the original language, Japanese.



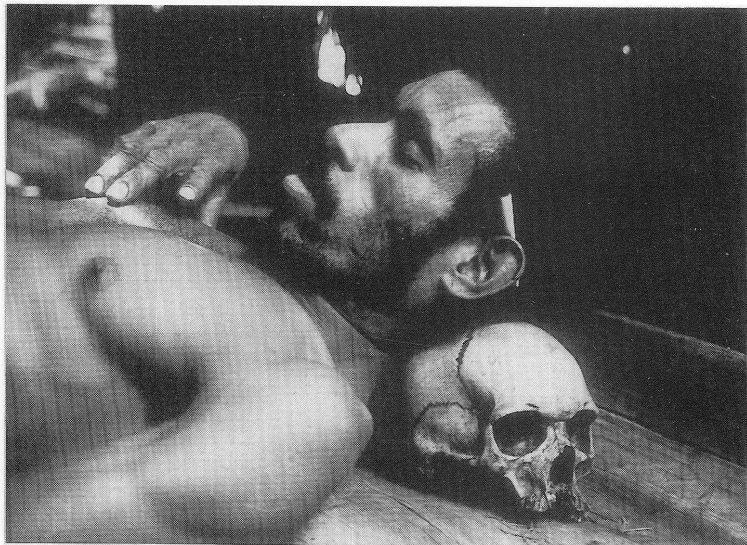
“Hateshinaki Yama no Horosha”–An Akha girl



“Women in China Today”–Shooting the reunion of a long separated family at Wuxi station



“Yena Am”–Old Tokovatarya says the “Yena Am” spell over the black paint for a canoe



The Asmat-people rest their heads on skulls of close kinsmen to show their affection