

## ON FILMIC AND WRITTEN MUSICAL ETHNOGRAPHY: PERSPECTIVES FROM VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND THEIR POSSIBLE APPLICATION TO ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

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Izvorni znanstveni rad/Research Paper  
Primljeno/Received: 25. 8. 2015.  
Prihvaćeno/Accepted: 30. 10. 2015.

### *Abstract*

Following introductory remarks on visual anthropology and ethnographic film, the qualities of written versus filmic ethnography for application in music and dance research will be discussed. This involves an examination of key issues brought forward in visual anthropologist David MacDougall's milestone *Transcultural Cinema*, such as the sensory experience embodied in a person's body, or the identification with persons in films through the senses, and their critical reflection from the viewpoint of research mainly focused on the auditory sense. The second section dedicated to filmic musical ethnography includes the presentation of examples created by ethnomusicologists as well as of ethnomusicological research subjects which might benefit especially from a filmic ethnography: the

sensorial mediation of musical experience, of a musical »Third Space«, and the communication of culturally coded meanings. As a last point, I will look into possibilities enhancing the multivocality of a filmic ethnography which arise during the process of editing.

**Keywords:** ethnomusicology, the »unsaid«, crisis of representation, visual anthropology, reflexive turn, sensory turn, the senses, written ethnography, filmic ethnography, musical ethnography

**Ključne riječi:** etnomuzikologija, »neizrecivo«, kriza predstavljanja, vizualna antropologija, refleksivni zaokret, osjetilni zaokret, osjetila, pisana etnografija, filmska etnografija, glazbena etnografija

In this article, major points concerning »filmic ethnography« as well as its differences from and complementary qualities to »written ethnography« will be discussed. Taking into account, amongst others, David MacDougall's milestone

*Transcultural Cinema*,<sup>1</sup> the issues brought forward from the field of (visual) anthropology will be examined in terms of their possible application to the research of music and dance performance. For this, I will present examples of filmic musical ethnographies created by ethnomusicologists. This will also include drawing from my own experience of making a video film (*The Alphorn*) as filmic ethnography,<sup>2</sup> additionally to my ethnographic representation in written text.<sup>3</sup> Considering anthropology, it appears that the recent »sensory turn« asks for a specific approach to field research that has already been used in ethnomusicology for years. Seen from the other side, ethnomusicologists working with audiovisual media, especially when intended for musical ethnography, will benefit from the issues discussed in visual anthropology, which I will also briefly present in the article.

### Visual Anthropology and Ethnographic Film: Introductory Remarks

Very briefly outlined, visual anthropology is explained by Matthew Durington and Jay Ruby as »an umbrella concept that encompasses all aspects of visible and pictorial culture, with ethnographic film as merely one part of a larger whole.«<sup>4</sup> Other authors see »visual anthropology« interchangeable with »ethnographic film«, for example Fadwa El Guindi.<sup>5</sup> In both views, ethnographic film plays at least a crucial part, which is therefore the subject I would like to submit to further examination in this article.

In anthropology, (silent) films, wax cylinders for recording sound, and photographs have been used as documenting methods in field research already at the end of the 19th century — for example on the Torres Strait Expedition in 1898 — and have therefore been familiar to anthropologists and the anthropological discourse since that time. About eighty years later, in the 1980s, George Marcus and Michael Fischer stated a »crisis of representation« in anthropology. With it, writing, written ethnographies and the limitations of written text for conveying ethnographic knowledge were criticized, and other possibilities of representation were moved more into focus. However, visual anthropologist Jay Ruby insists that some of the issues had been raised already before the 1980s. About Jean Rouch, engineer, anthropologist and filmmaker from France, who is best known for his

<sup>1</sup> David MACDOUGALL: *Transcultural Cinema*, Princeton University Press, Princeton (New Jersey) 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte VIGNAU: *The Alphorn* (video, 52 min.), <http://www.alphornworldwide.net/#!video/cy65>, 2008 (accessed June 30, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Charlotte VIGNAU: *Modernity, Complex Societies, and the Alphorn*, Lexington, Lanham 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew DURINGTON and Jay RUBY: Ethnographic Film, in: Marcus BANKS and Jay RUBY (eds.): *Made to Be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago — London 2011, 190.

<sup>5</sup> Fadwa EL GUINDI: *Visual Anthropology: Essential Method and Theory*, AltaMira Press, New York 2004; see also Matthew DURINGTON and Jay RUBY: Ethnographic Film, 190.

many films recorded in Africa as well as for his participatory, interactive film style called *cinéma vérité*, Ruby points out: »His work in multivocality and reflexivity has been ignored by the so-called crisis of representation and writing culture folks.«<sup>6</sup> Jean Rouch was very innovative and influential in ethnographic film already around 1960, and continuing from that time onwards, for example with the film *Chronique d'un été*, which he made with Edgar Morin.<sup>7</sup> In sum, by the 1980s, the usage of visual media for conveying ethnographic knowledge has received increased interest within the field of anthropology and moved more into the general discourse of the field, together with the issues concerning reflexivity, whereas the ideas contributing to them might have originated from a time earlier than that.

### *Written vs. Filmic Ethnography*

While written and filmic ethnography are subject to comparison in this section, in practice both modes of ethnography are often combined. It is also possible to add further modes, such as web-based media.<sup>8</sup> In visual anthropology, the suggested way of procedure is to present an ethnographic film along with a written, accompanying study guide, which is complementary.<sup>9</sup> In this way, both media can be utilized to the utmost. Concerning the discussion of reflexivity mentioned above, an issue is constituted by the very place of reflexivity in the complementary combination of written and filmic ethnography. In ethnomusicology, the study guides *The Making of Amir: An Afghan Refugee Musician's Life in Peshawar, Pakistan: A Study Guide to the Film*<sup>10</sup> and *The Making of Lessons from Gulam: Asian Music in Bradford: A Study Guide to the Film*<sup>11</sup> add to John Baily's films of 1985 and 1986 respectively<sup>12</sup> and set standard examples for the suitable treatment of reflexive

<sup>6</sup> Jay RUBY: *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2000, 13.

<sup>7</sup> Jean ROUCH and Edgar MORIN: *Chronique d'un été* (35 mm, 85 min.), Agros Films, France 1960.

<sup>8</sup> See Sarah PINK: *Doing Visual Ethnography*, Sage, Los Angeles — London 2013.

<sup>9</sup> See Erhard SCHLESIER: *Ethnologisches Filmen und ethnologische Feldforschung: Überlegungen zur theoretischen und methodischen Begründung ethnologischer Filmarbeit*, Institut für Völkerkunde der Universität Göttingen, Göttingen 1972; Peter LOIZOS: *Admissible Evidence? Film in Anthropology*, in: Peter Ian CRAWFORD and David TURTON (eds.): *Film as Ethnography*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1992, 50-65.

<sup>10</sup> John BAILY: *The Making of Amir: An Afghan Refugee Musician's Life in Peshawar, Pakistan: A Study Guide to the Film*, Documentary Educational Resources, Boston 1990.

<sup>11</sup> John BAILY: *The Making of Lessons from Gulam: Asian Music in Bradford: A Study Guide to the Film*, Documentary Educational Resources, Boston 1990.

<sup>12</sup> John BAILY: *Amir: An Afghan Refugee Musician's Life in Peshawar, Pakistan* (16 mm, 52 min.), National Film and Television School in association with the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Documentary Educational Resources, Watertown MA, United Kingdom 1985; John BAILY: *Lessons from Gulam: Asian Music in Bradford* (16 mm, 52 min.), National Film and Television

statements concerning musical ethnographic films. However, visual anthropologist Jay Ruby makes the general criticism that the reflexive statements — which make a film »anthropological or scientific« and should shed light on the »producer, process and product of filmmaking, as well as the audience« — have most commonly been »tucked away«, for example in the introduction or in appendices, leaving the film itself mostly »unreflexive« as it was before, and integrating the reflexive information into the »paratext« instead of the main text.<sup>13</sup> Ruby advocates that reflexive statements should be featured in the film itself, but in visual anthropology he is criticized for not indicating how this might be done.<sup>14</sup> This discussion equally applies to ethnomusicological films on music and dance, where reflexive statements could enhance the film's value for the discipline.

Turning back to the discussion held in the field of visual anthropology, MacDougall recognizes very subtly that reflexive statements in written form can only express limited aspects of reflexivity:

»But what form might this kind of reflexivity take? (...) [I]t might include information on language competence, length of fieldwork, filming techniques, and so on. It could of course say little about intelligence, perspicacity, originality of thought, or empathy — all this would have to be determined in other ways.«<sup>15</sup>

A way to enhance reflexivity in the film itself is to reveal that a filmmaker is present, by showing her or him on film, or including her or his voice in the film. For example, in his films *Polka* and *Dor: Low is Better* the Dutch visual anthropologist, filmmaker, and musician Robert Boonzajer-Flaes can be seen interacting with the film's (other) subjects in front of the camera, actively asking questions and discussing the topics, thereby being perceived by the audience as a film subject himself.<sup>16</sup> As another example, in my film *The Alphorn* I chose the option of including my voice only. Other ways of featuring reflexivity in film, and therefore reminding the audience that they are watching a film, are for example inter-titles or video stills (which are used in the *The Alphorn*, too), as well as evidences of camera-consciousness by the filmed subjects or their comments addressing the camera and the person behind it. The latter, for example, is the case in my film when I have an entire conversation in the kitchen of a Swiss vacation

School in association with the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Documentary Educational Resources, Watertown MA, United Kingdom 1986.

<sup>13</sup> Jay RUBY: *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film and Anthropology*, 154.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Paul FOLMER: *Het postmodernisme en de etnografische film*; unpublished MS, Department of Cultural Anthropology and Developmental Sociology, Leiden University 1992.

<sup>15</sup> David MACDOUGALL: *Transcultural Cinema*, 87.

<sup>16</sup> Robert M. BOONZAJER-FLAES and Maarten RENS: *Polka* (video U-matic, 50 min.), Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, United Kingdom 1986; Robert M. BOONZAJER-FLAES and Maarten RENS: *Dor: Low is Better* (video U-matic, 47 min.), University of Amsterdam, Department of Visual Anthropology — Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, The Netherlands — United Kingdom 1988.

home owned by a Dutch alphorn-player in Switzerland, he in front of the camera, and me behind it. In addition to being heard speaking, I used the camera participatory in terms of directing it towards the objects we discussed, for instance a tray with coffee and cups, or cans of Dutch beer in the fridge, while at the same time continuing the conversation.<sup>17</sup>

About filmic and written ethnography, MacDougall states more explicitly: »It has been said that writing makes the unseen person or custom more strange by isolating it from its surroundings, thereby giving free rein to the reader's imagination.«<sup>18</sup> He then weakens this statement by adding that »[a]t the same time, written descriptions inevitably strip even the strangest objects of some of their detail, rendering them in a more generic and culturally assimilable form.«<sup>19</sup> For film, he mentions in a footnote: »Admittedly, however, films may reinforce for some viewers more cultural boundaries than they challenge, through an emphasis on exotic elements that remain insufficiently contextualized in other aspects of daily life.«<sup>20</sup> As a self-critical example for this last quote, I can mention the screening of my film *The Alphorn* to students of Cultural Musicology at the University of Amsterdam. Afterwards, the students were assigned by their professor the writing of a short report about the film. In *The Alphorn*, Japanese alphorn-practice is featured in several aspects. One student wrote that »it seems that the whole of Japan is playing the alphorn. (...) It gives a wrong impression of the integration of the alphorn in foreign countries.«<sup>21</sup> Here, since the film focused on alphorn-practices in different regions and countries, following the concepts of a »multi-sited ethnography«, due to the film's length it was impossible to do much contextualization. Having edited into the film mainly Japanese persons who are playing the alphorn, the context and fact that only a small number of the Japanese population on the whole plays the alphorn could not be shown at the same time. This problematic feature of the film medium, which can lead to the »wrong impression«, can however be compensated by information in the accompanying written documentation.

A further point of discussion that links written texts and films lies in the use of words. They also occur in films, usually spoken by the subjects, the filmmaker, or as a commentary, but even more, they can serve as a structural device. MacDougall states that there are ethnographic films which »make use of images either as data to be elucidated by means of a spoken commentary or as visual support for verbal statements.«<sup>22</sup> This means that in those films, the verbal is again

<sup>17</sup> In contrast, in an observational film style the filmmaker would try to refrain from interfering with the situation and would, for example, avoid opening doors, i.e. of a fridge, for filming the inside.

<sup>18</sup> David MACDOUGALL: *Transcultural Cinema*, 246.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>21</sup> Joost JANSEN: *Doc-repo*; unpublished MS, Department of Musicology, University of Amsterdam 2007, 2; translation by the present author.

<sup>22</sup> David MACDOUGALL: *Transcultural Cinema*, 184.

the predominant factor when compared to the image, and responsible for the film's structure. In other ethnographic films, however, »the images (in the sound film including spoken dialogue) must carry the burden of revealing a coherent line of development.«<sup>23</sup> Taking into account the critique put forward by the »crisis of representation«, this appears the better route to follow, and would concurrently bring out the specific advantages of the film medium. Even more, for the specific case of ethnographic films about music, MacDougall's statement might be extended: here, not only the images and the spoken dialogue could indicate a »line of development«, but also the featured music and sound.

### *Ethnographic Film and the Senses: Sensory Experience Embodied in a Person's Body*

In comparison to the »reflexive turn« related to the »crisis of representation«, Sarah Pink states that »[t]he twenty-first century turn to the senses and the nonrepresentational is, for visual ethnography practice and scholarship, an equally welcome move as was the reflexive turn of the late twentieth century.«<sup>24</sup> A »sensory turn« has taken place in different fields of study more recently, which will be examined in the following.

Already by its name, visual anthropology seems to imply a focus on the visual sense. Film as a medium, and consequently ethnographic film, appears to aim at the visual sense in particular, too. Intrinsic to film, the dimension of depth of the recorded events has to be constructed by the viewer of the film (except for films in 3D, which enhance the illusion of depth perception). Here MacDougall points out:

»In Berkeley's view, seeing in depth was only possible because of the accompanying sense of touch, a crossing of the axes of optics and haptics (...). This is borne out by descriptions of certain blind people who, upon recovering their sight in adulthood, are unable to recognize objects until they can touch them, or feel models of them.«<sup>25</sup>

This implies that film might involve not only the visual sense, but also the sense of touch. On these two senses MacDougall further elaborates: »A film can thus be said to look and to touch. The association between sight and touch has a long history. It appears in early Egyptian and Renaissance emblems and is a feature of Descartes's and Berkeley's models of the senses.«<sup>26</sup> Even more, when considering sound film, which is of particular interest for ethnomusicologists of course, the auditory sense is

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>24</sup> Sarah PINK: *Doing Visual Ethnography*, 47.

<sup>25</sup> David MACDOUGALL: *Transcultural Cinema*, 50.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

irreplaceable for the perception of spoken dialogues, sounds, and music included in the film. In context with this, MacDougall makes a similar point as above: »In listening to voices, our differentiation of the senses begin to blur. Voices have textures, as though perceived tactilely and visually.«<sup>27</sup> Again, concerning voices, three senses are apparently at play. In my opinion, a sound other than a voice can also have a visual/haptic component, even when associated indirectly. For instance, a sound can be located in space — in front, or behind, to the left, or to the right — and can therefore be attributed a spatial quality. As MacDougall states in his book, the senses are interconnected: »Recently, the senses have been reconceived not simply as separate faculties capable of some form of synaesthetic translation, but as *already* interconnected — in fact, as the entire perceptive field of the body.«<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the predominant concept related to the senses in anthropology has shifted, regarding them as a sensory experience embodied in a person's body instead of, for the visual sense for example, an abstract »way of looking«. MacDougall writes that Csordas »is explicit that vision is not 'a disembodied, beam-like »gaze«' (...) but a form of active bodily engagement with the world.«<sup>29</sup> Consequently, in the same way, this might also apply to the other senses.

#### *Identification with Persons in Films through the Senses: Drawing from Human Pre-linguistic Experience?*

This »active bodily engagement with the world« is also a significant aspect of conveying filmic ethnography, which might have to do with our »pre-linguistic« life. MacDougall states:

»In films, we achieve identification with others through a synchrony with their bodies made possible in large part by vision, a phenomenon discussed in some detail by Merleau-Ponty (...) and by film theorists such as Vivian Sobchack.«<sup>30</sup>

This »synchrony with their bodies« seems to originate and have to do with the human life period before using verbal language; as babies. David MacDougall explains:

»Film seeks to retrieve certain abandoned habits of our prelinguistic life, the perception which as children were part of our bodily awareness of others and the physical world. It thus regenerates a form of thinking through the body, often affecting us most forcefully at those junctures of experience that lie between our accustomed categories of thought.«<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 265.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

Although much research has been done concerning perception and cognition since the publication of his book, MacDougall's statement shows that considering times in life where verbal language plays no, or only a minor, role might contribute to indicating other ways of how an orientation in the world, a »being in the world«, can take place other than through words. Additionally, the »form of thinking through the body« revived in film makes it a very suitable medium for representing bodily knowledge and what is characterized by Bourdieu as »habitus«, to which I will return below. More specifically, MacDougall writes that the identification with others taking place when watching a film »derives partly from complex responses to the human face. (...) Responses to the face begin in early infancy and may even result from an innate mechanism of recognition in the brain.«<sup>32</sup> What might be of interest to ethnomusicologists, but is not mentioned by MacDougall, is also the aspect of the voice. Babies respond to the sound of voices, especially when it is the mother's voice, with a similar force with which they react to faces, for which there might be a »mechanism of recognition« in the brain as well. Furthermore, a baby's auditory sense already exists before birth and becomes fully developed in the months after birth, which is earlier than the full development of the baby's visual sense. This might suggest that the auditory sense has an important role in human, pre-linguistic life, too. Returning to and complementing MacDougall's argumentation on watching films, the audience's identification with the persons in the film might then primarily be established by the features of »voice« and »face«, involving a visual as well as an auditive aspect in the »active bodily engagement with the world«. Here it emerges that auditive elements are crucial, too, which might be a point of departure for further examination outside the field of »visual« anthropology.

### Filmic Musical Ethnography

#### *Sensorial Mediation of Musical Experience and of the Musical »Third Space«*

The sensorial mediation of filmic ethnography beats written ethnography when the language used for writing lacks the terms and words for certain phenomena, which then cannot be expressed in that specific language and therefore cannot be conveyed. This is especially the case for music and dance. In a written text, the auditive has to be »translated« verbally in order to be represented. The question is, however, whether this is a good thing. Representing the musical ethnography in a way that can be perceived by the same senses as on field research might be a better solution — which is the case in a filmic ethnography, due to the auditive component of film. Moreover, MacDougall writes that »[a]mong signs of

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

resemblance, music is the analogue *par excellence* for emotion»,<sup>33</sup> and John Blacking firmly states:

»Why try to 'say' in dance and music what can equally or better be said in words? Music (...) is a metaphorical expression of feeling. (...) It is precisely because dance and music are special, non-verbal modes of communication that they have value in human society.«<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, it seems very reasonable to leave music »untranslated«, refraining from the almost doomed-to-fail undertaking to transpose music into words, even more since music and dance have a value in their own right. Further, to leave music »untranslated« especially makes sense when conveying experiences. For example, with the film *Les Maîtres du balafon: Ami, bonne arrivée!*<sup>35</sup> Hugo Zemp intends to revive »this unforgettable experience«<sup>36</sup> of a balafon performance, presented through an uncut plan-séquence of eighteen minutes, which can then be experienced by the film's audience, too. A film's »performative aspects« come in here handily. In a similar sense, David MacDougall states that »films, at least, are a form of performance.«<sup>37</sup> While he then continues with arguing that everyday social interaction features performative aspects, too, for ethnomusicologists the most significant point is to consider how well film is suited to representing the performances of music and dance.

Another reason that speaks for filmic ethnography, especially when it concerns music (and dance), is that it becomes possible to represent a musical »third space«. Homi Bhabha's notion of a »third space«<sup>38</sup> indicates a postcolonial concept of hybridity, which refers to »the slow undoing of binary oppositions«<sup>39</sup> and is more, and something specific and different, than the mix of its elements. Or, put differently, »[t]he ontological spaces of musical hybridity are, to some degree, related to Homi Bhabha's concept of a 'third space' (1994), which depends on the opposition of binary spaces and then forms an alternative to them.«<sup>40</sup>

The practice of alphorn-playing in Japan might be regarded as an example for a musical »third space«; it involves Japanese as well as Swiss aspects, but is a

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>34</sup> John BLACKING: *Towards an Anthropology of the Body*, in: John BLACKING (ed.): *The Anthropology of the Body*, Academic Press, London 1977, 19.

<sup>35</sup> Hugo ZEMP: *Les Maîtres du balafon: Ami, bonne arrivée!* (video, 27 min.), Sélénium Films, Paris — Süpor XAO, Villebon sur Yvette, France 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Hugo ZEMP: *Les Maîtres du balafon: Série documentaire de Hugo Zemp*; Abstracts of the four films, unpublished, Paris 2003; translation by the author.

<sup>37</sup> David MACDOUGALL: *Transcultural Cinema*, 262.

<sup>38</sup> Homi K. BHABHA: *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London 1994.

<sup>39</sup> Isabel HOVING: *Hybridity: A Slippery Trail*, in: Joyce GOGGIN and Sonja NEEF (eds.): *Travelling Concepts I: Text, Subjectivity, Hybridity*, Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis, Theory and Interpretation — ASCA Press, Amsterdam 2001, 197.

<sup>40</sup> Philip V. BOHLMAN: *The Music of European Nationalism: Cultural Identity and Modern History*, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara (California) 2004, 285.

phenomenon which is more than, and different from, a mix of the two elements put together. A »third space« comes into being, particularly with regard to the cultures in question, and is at the same time in a constant state of flux. One reaches a limit in being able to represent this situation in written text. When described, one would probably split up the »third space« into elements of the one side and of the other side, although they cannot express the features of the »blend«. However, this phenomenon might be represented audiovisually, where the shortcomings of written text can be avoided. Besides alphorn-practice in Japan that is featured in *The Alphorn*, another example for a musical third space might be the practice of Andean music, again in Japan, presented in *Intimate Distance: Andean Music in Japan* by Michelle Bigenho.<sup>41</sup>

Yet another example of the »third space«, here touching on the musical topic only indirectly, emerged on my field research in Japan when I asked whether a specific Japanese religious ceremony was Shinto, Buddhist or Christian. The Japanese person replied that this question was only posed by foreigners, and that the people in Japan would not bother about it and would celebrate it anyway. This might indicate that the analytical split into pieces (»this is Shinto, this is Buddhist«) might sometimes not be an issue, and furthermore might be an offspring of a research orientation toward Western theoretical thinking. Here it is noteworthy that along this »Western-oriented« research, constructs could be created that are not relevant for the phenomenon as perceived by the practitioners. This might, however, be avoided by representing mainly audiovisually, rather than mainly by written text.

### *Communicating Culturally Coded Meanings*

It is generally considered that filming should take place at an advanced stage of field research due to the medium-inherent approach of documentation. Representing on film, i.e., the editing takes place after the event, but the film's only material, the documental footage, is filmed during the performance, thereby synchronically with experiencing the performance. Therefore, when using film, the material is »fixed« at a much earlier stage than when writing, which is done subsequently, even though field notes might have been taken during the performance. As Karl Heider states: »cinematography makes irreversible choices at the very beginning.«<sup>42</sup>

Consequently, recording for ethnographic film should take place when the actions to be filmed have become familiar to the researcher-filmmaker, and the subjects of the film have had time to build up rapport with him or her, optionally

<sup>41</sup> Michelle BIGENHO: *Intimate Distance: Andean Music in Japan*, Duke University Press, Durham — London 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Karl G. HEIDER: *Ethnographic Film: Revised Edition*, University of Texas Press, Austin 2006, 8.

also without the presence of a camera. As Heider states, »an ethnographic film can only be as good as the understanding which precedes the filmmaking.«<sup>43</sup> This is because it becomes apparent to the film's audience how well the filmmaker understood the event at the time of filming, exemplified by the use of a correct or incorrect camera-angle, or the proper direction of filming; an action might take place on the left side, whereas the filmmaker records towards the right side and misses the event. The quality of the relationship between the filmed subjects and the filmmaker can also be perceived by the audience. When there is a lot of trust, a person filmed might look and talk directly from a close distance to the filmmaker holding the camera and recording. The film's viewers perceive this as a person directly looking at them, therefore creating an open, almost intimate moment between the person and the film's viewers. Various shots of this type are presented in *La danse des Wodaabe* by Sandrine Loncke,<sup>44</sup> a film about a significant ceremony of the Wodaabe, nomadic cattle-herders of Sahel, Africa. As Loncke mentioned, ten years of research were involved in the making of her film,<sup>45</sup> which is mirrored both in the conveyed quality of the relationships between filmed subjects and filmmaker as well as in the thorough representation of the ceremony.

Contrary to the suggestion of filming at a late stage of field research, there are scholars involved in ethnographic film who do recommend filming at an early stage. Claudine de France mentions *cinéma d'exploration*, filmed when one still knows little about the subject.<sup>46</sup> Further, Richard Sorenson and Allison Jablonko propose a way of filming they call »digressive search«, which »penetrate[s] areas and situations peripheral to our attention, beyond our range of awareness or comprehension«,<sup>47</sup> although this might apply to field research in an early and also in a later phase. The »filming beyond understanding« of actions unknown to the field researcher might later be presented to the filmed subjects, who could then point out relevant aspects of the actions in feedback sessions. As another option, the actions might disclose meanings to the field researcher herself or himself at a later stage. In this context, MacDougall states that a film »is both coded and analogical«,<sup>48</sup> and Paul Folmer further elaborates that in film »an entire range of culturally coded meanings is also often documented of which the researcher is not yet aware.«<sup>49</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Karl G. HEIDER: *Ethnographic Film: Revised Edition*, 9.

<sup>44</sup> Sandrine LONCKE: *La danse des Wodaabe* (video, 90 min.), Avec le soutien du CNRS, du Ministère de la Culture, de la Société française d'ethnomusicologie et de l'Institut Angenius, France 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Personal communication with Sandrine Loncke, July 18th, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Claudine DE FRANCE: *Cinéma et anthropologie*, Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris 1982.

<sup>47</sup> E. Richard SORENSON and Allison JABLONKO: Research Filming of Naturally Occurring Phenomena: Basic Strategies, in: Paul HOCKINGS (ed.): *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin — New York 1995, 151.

<sup>48</sup> David MACDOUGALL: *Transcultural Cinema*, 158.

<sup>49</sup> Paul FOLMER: *Het postmodernisme en de etnografische film*, 9; translation by the present author.

The »culturally coded« aspects that might at times be beyond the awareness of the filmmaker can be the ones (but do not have to be) that are »unsaid« in the particular culture. A filmic ethnography might contribute to revealing them. For example, as is presented by visual anthropologist Metje Postma, an action in general, and therefore also a musical action, features three components, among which is the »bodily component«, that is, the »action as a form of knowledge.«<sup>50</sup> As Postma states in the context of the work of French visual anthropologist Claudine de France and her way of thinking, for the bodily component the use of video and film is the only possibility of representation:

»In the end, the only way in which 'action as a form of knowledge' can manifest itself is by the very action. From this point of view, audiovisual media are the only media through which action as a form of knowledge can be represented.«<sup>51</sup>

The representation of the »bodily component« becomes especially significant to ethnomusicologists when applied to dance, or dance-related movements of the body. An example of the »bodily component« as a point of departure for further study is the film *Body Games: Capoeira and Ancestry* by Richard Pakleppa, Matthias Röhrig Assunção, Cinézio Peçanha (Mestre Cobra Mansa) and Christine Dettmann.<sup>52</sup> Here, body movements of Brazilian Capoeira are set in comparison to movements of combat games and dances filmed in Angola, Africa, from where a significant part of the roots of Capoeira are said to come. As another example, the interactive CD supplement to Saskia Kersenboom's book *Word, Sound, Image: The Life of the Tamil Text*<sup>53</sup> includes video fragments of *Bharata Natyam* temple dances. As Kersenboom states, the Tamil people perform their cultural texts rather than reading them; while brief notations in written form exist, these are only the basis for elaboration and interpretation presented in the form of danced performance. Since performers are trained for years to carry out dance performance

<sup>50</sup> Metje POSTMA: Het handelen als kennisvorm, geïllustreerd aan de praktijk van Japans boogschieten (kyudo), in: Henri CLAESSEN and Han VERMEULEN (eds.): *Veertig jaren Onderweg. Lezingen gehouden op de eerste alumnidag van de Vakgroep Culturele Antropologie en Sociologie der Niet-Westerse Samenlevingen te Leiden*, DSWO, Leiden 1997, 216-227. The other two components of an action are, according to Postma, a component featuring the »set of rules« necessary to carry out an action, and a »component of meaning«, which is present in an action in most cases. For the »set of rules« of a musical action, an example would be that in order to play the piano, you need to press the keys, usually with your fingers. Concerning the »component of meaning«, a meaning of a musical action is, e.g., when musical performance takes place as a national or regional symbol.

<sup>51</sup> Metje POSTMA: Het handelen als kennisvorm, geïllustreerd aan de praktijk van Japans boogschieten (kyudo), 232; translation by the present author.

<sup>52</sup> Richard PAKLEPPA, Matthias RÖHRIG ASSUNÇÃO, Cinézio PEÇANHA (Mestre Cobra Mansa) and Christine DETTMANN: *Body Games: Capoeira and Ancestry* (87 min.), University of Essex, United Kingdom 2013.

<sup>53</sup> Saskia KERSENBOOM: *Word, Sound, Image: The Life of the Tamil Text*, Berg, Oxford — Washington D.C. 1995.

with the suitable »habitus« (as coined by Bourdieu) of the region, this additionally indicates the extraordinary value of sophisticated dance performance in Tamil culture, and with it, the high appreciation of these »unsaid« coded meanings. Both research themes mentioned concern issues that cannot be represented in written text and would be hard or actually impossible to study without a filmic musical ethnography.

Since film can communicate ambiguities present in societies, further research themes centering on »the unsaid« might evolve through using filmic representation. This also applies to research on (the contexts of) music. In the following, David MacDougall explains:

»Film is capable of presenting complex networks of images within which a variety of ambiguous cultural constructions and resonances are understood (sexual, ideological, hierarchic) but which are never explicitly acknowledged, or which recur in different combinations. Objects of symbolic consequence in one context often appear in another with only a lingering shading of their own meanings. This coexistence of the said and the unsaid is a powerful force in every society.«<sup>54</sup>

### *Editing and Multivocality*

A feature of ethnographic film that deserves closer attention is the process of editing. Concerning ethnomusicology, due to the availability of video cameras (or even the cameras of mobile telephones), many music and dance researchers have begun to film the performances as they experience them. In this way, they have found the merits and demerits of video filming for music and dance research, and the most important points to consider. However, as was mentioned at the 2011 Conference of the British Forum for Ethnomusicology in Falmouth entitled »Mediation, Writing and Performance«, while music and dance researchers have started to film, most of them do not (yet) know how to edit. Besides a pure technical factor, some conventions of »film grammar« have to be understood when editing. But more importantly, as MacDougall states, »[i]n filmic discourse, explanatory knowledge (theory) resides primarily in the structures of editing.«<sup>55</sup> This means that editing is the time and place for reflection, and for application of theoretical knowledge, which will then be conveyed in the finished film: the filmmaker's authorial voice comes to the forefront through the selection of the fragments to include, the length of them, and the order of them. As an example for this process, Dirk Nijland states that one leaves »the direct relation with the presented

<sup>54</sup> David MACDOUGALL: *Transcultural Cinema*, 80.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

phenomenon« as it was experienced by the field researcher and »starts model-building.«<sup>56</sup> The material recorded by the filmmaker becomes the subject of analysis and interpretation, which asks for skilful, knowledgeable and considerate editing, and this is where »filmic ethnography« is about to evolve.

Because of the inherent interpretative and analytic aspects of film, it is particularly interesting to show the film to (some of) the subjects who are featured in the film. This is also a merit of filmic musical ethnography: it would be harder for the subjects to understand or to pay attention to a written musical ethnography, either because the language might be other than their native one, or since academic writings might be difficult or uninteresting to read, even when written in their mother tongue. After screening the film, informants can comment on and approve in a »feedback session« whether the filmmaker represented the phenomena correctly, or misrepresented them due to interpretative errors or unclearness. Further knowledge might be elicited from the subjects, which is also known as the method of »feedback« or »elicitation«.<sup>57</sup> An example of a feedback screening documented on film is *Jero on Jero: »A Balinese Trance Séance« Observed* by Timothy Asch, Linda Connor and Patsy Asch.<sup>58</sup> This film shows the Balinese Jero Tapakan and her reactions when watching the film *A Balinese Trance Séance* by the same filmmakers,<sup>59</sup> which is about her and her activities as a healer. Besides, reactions to the film elicited in a feedback session with a film's subjects can be documented by audio recording, video recording, or with written text. For example, the four films of *A Swiss Yodelling Series: »Jüüzli« of the Muotatal*<sup>60</sup> were screened to the local people of the Muothatal valley in Central Switzerland, as reported by Hugo Zemp, who made them, in his article on filming music and music films.<sup>61</sup>

The meaning of »multivocal editing«, however, departs from such cases. By re-editing, it incorporates the feedback on the screened film of the filmed subjects. The same can hold for audiences other than the subjects of the film, e.g. students, academics, or film and TV professionals. Unlike the »feedback« method, which in addition usually only concerns the film's subjects, the film's version can be re-edited, including the »voices« and opinions of the audiences in question. For

<sup>56</sup> Dirk NIJLAND: *Schaduwen en werkelijkheid: cultureel bepaald kennen, waarnemen, nonverbaal communiceren en onderzoek daarvan via de terugvertoning van de etnografische film »Tobelo marriage«*; Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology, Leiden University 1989, 133; translation by the present author.

<sup>57</sup> See Fadwa EL GUINDI: *Visual Anthropology: Essential Method and Theory*.

<sup>58</sup> Timothy ASCH, Linda Connor and Patsy ASCH: *Jero on Jero: »A Balinese Trance Séance« Observed* (16 mm, 16 min.), Documentary Educational Resources, Watertown MA, United States 1980.

<sup>59</sup> Timothy ASCH, Linda CONNOR and Patsy ASCH: *A Balinese Trance Séance* (16 mm, 30 min.), Documentary Educational Resources, Watertown MA, United States 1979.

<sup>60</sup> Hugo ZEMP: *A Swiss Yodelling Series: »Jüüzli« of the Muotatal* (16 mm, 50 min./23 min./ 27 min./30 min.), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris — Ateliers d'ethnomusicologie, Geneva, France'— Switzerland 1986/87.

<sup>61</sup> Hugo ZEMP: *Filming Music and Looking at Music Films*, *Ethnomusicology*, 32 (1988) 3, 422.

example, this can be done by including new film material, excluding, shortening or lengthening shots as well as changing their order, thus often affecting core statements of the film, moving toward »multivocal« editing of the filmic ethnography. »Multivocal editing« is derived from Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of »multivocality«, a work »constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other.«<sup>62</sup> For filmic musical ethnography, I have »applied« Bakhtin's term to coin an expression indicating a new perspective on editing — the reflections on the feedback-, selection- and editing-processes being documented in the complementary written materials.

Concerning my film *The Alphorn*, a problem with which »voices« to include was the specific character of my film, a multi-sited ethnography involving alphorn-practice in Japan, Bavaria, The Netherlands and Switzerland, as well as the different kinds of viewers and audiences. In a feedback session, the Swiss alphorn-players, for example, asked me why so much time in the film was dedicated to Japan, and suggested including more material and related cultural practices that can be found in Switzerland. During the screening of the film in The Netherlands, the Dutch students identified with the Dutch alphorn-players in the film, who delivered quite an average performance when compared to the Swiss alphorn-players featured, which aroused irritation amongst some of the students. They would have preferred to see the representatives of their country making a superb impression; however, as the Swiss alphorn-composer Hans-Jürg Sommer remarked after a screening of the film, there are maybe forty players in The Netherlands in comparison to two thousand in Switzerland, and therefore it might be easier to find a handful of excellent alphorn-players in Switzerland than in The Netherlands. Whereas the alphorn-players of one region were especially interested in the representation of their region (or country), my intention with the film was to show a transnational phenomenon taking place in several regions and countries synchronically. This asked for a more distanced view of the subject, naturally still involving a correct representation of all details. Summing up, »multivocal editing« can be seen as a possibility for including more »voices«, and thereby facets, in a film. However, it remains problematic that it is the filmmaker, who in the end decides whose »voice« is »heard« and therefore which edited shot might be altered. Moreover, as I found out through practice, when applying multivocal editing, a film with a multi-sited content will evoke difficulties.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Mikhail BAKHTIN: *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1984, 18.

<sup>63</sup> For a more extensive documentation of *The Alphorn's* editing process see Charlotte VIGNAU: *Modernity, Complex Societies, and the Alphorn*, 135-142.

### Outlook

In sum, using film as musical ethnography in ethnomusicology complementary to written text is an exciting approach opening up new modes of experiencing and understanding music and dance performance, which will again lead to further exploration of new topics and methods of research in ethnomusicology. In her book *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, visual anthropologist Sarah Pink mentions an apparently *innovative* method for doing ethnography: »the ethnographer as a sensory apprentice«<sup>64</sup> »actually engaging in activities and environments we wish to learn about.«<sup>65</sup> As an ethnomusicologist, I found this concept of sensory apprentices, actually engaging in activities, taking music lessons as pupils and playing along with subjects of the musical practice we study — to be just what we ethnomusicologists do, and have always done. It seems that while the issues discussed in visual anthropology could serve as a valuable contribution to ethnomusicologists working with and interested in filmic musical ethnography, (visual) anthropologists might profit from ethnomusicologists' research practices and experiences, contributing thereby to mutual benefit. Who knows what the future holds; maybe a shift in anthropology named the »musical turn«?

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<sup>64</sup> Sarah PINK: *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, Sage, London 2009, 69.

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### Sažetak

#### O FILMSKOJ I PISANOJ GLAZBENOJ ETNOGRAFIJI: PERSPEKTIVE IZ VIZUALNE ANTROPOLOGIJE I NJIHOVA MOGUĆA PRIMJENA U ETNOMUZIKOLOGIJI

Od »krize predstavljanja« u 1980-ima, u antropologiji raste interes za vizualne medije i etnografski film. U ovome se članku, uvodeći u film općenito, predstavlja njegovo djelovanje na publiku. Percepcija filma uključuje vizualni, zvučni, ali i taktilni opažaj;

oni su međusobno povezani i tjelesni. Kako se nadalje objašnjava, identifikacija publike s ljudima prikazanima na filmu odvija se mahom polazeći od njihovih lica i glasova; percepcija je povezana sa životom prije uporabe verbalnog jezika, dok smo bebe. Nadalje, fenomen koji se ne može »izreći« u pisanom predstavljanju jest ono što Homi Bhabha u svojoj knjizi *The Location of Culture* (1994) naznačuje kao »treći prostor«. Taj prostor, međutim, može biti predstavljen videom i filmom. Isto vrijedi i za emocionalnu supstancu glazbe. Kako navodi John Blacking u svojem članku iz 1977, glazba i ples imaju »vrijednost u ljudskom društvu« upravo zato jer su »posebnim, neverbalnim načinima komunikacije« (obj. u zborniku *The Anthropology of the Body* koji je Blacking i uredio, str. 19), pa ih stoga može biti prilično kontraproduktivno predstavljati riječima. »Tjelesno znanje« je daljnjim predmetom rasprave. Za razliku od »sklopa pravila« o tome kako izvesti određenu akciju i njezinih simboličkih značenja, koje je moguće verbalno opisati, samu akciju kao »oblik znanja«, kao »tjelesno znanje« nije moguće predstaviti riječima. No, kako razlaže Metje Postma u svojem članku iz 1997. (str. 216-227), predstavljanje videom ili filmom može u tome ponuditi rješenje. U montaži filma, filmašev glas dolazi u prvi plan odlukama o tome koje će kadrove uključiti, u kojem trajanju, kojim redoslijedom, čime produbljuje analizu i interpretaciju koje su ionako već inherentne filmu. Dakako, i u fazi snimanja filmašev je glas utjecajan u smislu njezinih/njegovih odluka o tome što će se snimiti i na koji način. Tijekom razgovora uz projekcije, o filmu se mogu očitovati i drugi »glasovi« vezani uz film, kao što su to ljudi prikazani u filmu, ali i primjerice studenti, profesori ili filmski i TV profesionalci, a filmaš ih može razmotriti te iznova montirati film, što vodi zaključnoj »višeglasnoj« verziji filma. Naposljetku, u kontekstu »osjetilnog zaokreta« u antropologiji vizualna antropologinja Sarah Pink u svojoj knjizi *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (2009) predlaže »stvarno se angažirati u aktivnostima i okružju koje se želi upoznati« (str. 70) i biti »etnografom u smislu osjetilnog šegrta« (str. 69). Time opisuje metode terenskog rada etnomuzikologa, čije ideje i koncepcije mogu biti dobrom inspiracijom antropologiji.

