

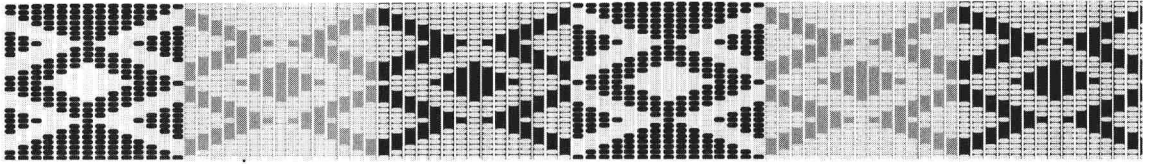


SEEING ANTHROPOLOGY

Cultural Anthropology through Film

Third Edition

Karl G. Heider



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Third
Edition

Karl G. Heider
University of South Carolina



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Heider, Karl G.

Seeing anthropology : cultural anthropology through film / Karl G. Heider.—3rd ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-205-38912-0

1. Motion pictures in ethnology. 2. Ethnology. 3. Indigenous peoples in motion pictures.

I. Title.

GN347.H46 2004

306—dc21

2003045208

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 RRD-IN 07 06 05 04

PREFACE

This textbook has several specific goals. My first goal, announced in both title and subtitle, is to integrate ethnographic films into the introductory cultural anthropology course. Achieving this goal involves three operations: (1) building each chapter around one film that illustrates the subject of the chapter; (2) making each film suitable for study by introducing the culture that it presents and the particulars of the film and by suggesting setup questions that can be thought about while viewing the film; and (3) giving some overall suggestions in this preface on how to think about ethnographic films as ethnographies, complementary to but different from the usual written ethnographies.

My second goal is to concentrate on a limited number of ideas, illustrated by examples from a few representative cultures, rather than to produce a data dump that includes every fact and every culture in the anthropological literature. I attempt to be inclusive but not exhaustive. Thus there are fourteen focus cultures shown in the films and used as ethnographic examples in the text.

A third, more theoretical goal, is to develop the ideas of eclectic holism, using a biocultural model where appropriate. That is, by drawing out the relationships between cultural features as much as possible and showing interrelationships, interconnections, and cross-influences where they can be found, the book tries to avoid the compartmentalization of factoids, which can turn the study of anthropology into a sort of pursuit of exotic trivia.

A fourth goal, especially toward the end of the book, is to discuss ways in which anthropological approaches and ideas can contribute to public discourse on particular issues and to the solutions of problems in the world.

The book springs out of a deep conviction that anthropology is the most exciting and important social science for our increasingly multicultural lives, and it is my hope that this book will help instructors convey this excitement to their students.

The films are meant to be taken as seriously as the text itself. Just as you read a text differently from the way you read a light novel, so you will need to study these films with a care you would never use for a feature film or a TV sitcom. The words and the images will constantly complement and reinforce each other. For example, in Chapter 1 you read about frogs and ducks in Balinese rice fields, and on film you actually see them. The words intellectualize the creatures, but when the American professor pulls a frog out of the water, you have an image that you will not easily forget.

THE FILMS

The fourteen films that I have matched with the fourteen chapters of this third edition were selected after months of deliberation from a list of several thousand films.

Since 1966, I have been compiling a catalog, *Films for Anthropological Teaching*, published by the American Anthropological Association, and now in its eighth edition (Heider and Hermer, 1995). It includes some 3,000 titles. I have not seen all of these films, but over the years I have seen hundreds of them and have used many in classes of all sorts, experimenting with different ways of presentation. The fourteen presented here are not “the best ethnographic films of all time,” whatever that might mean, but I believe they make the best fit for this textbook.

Choosing the Films

I used several criteria in choosing the films: (1) they should be relatively short and relatively didactic, and they should represent a wide range of culture types and world areas; (2) they should be ethnographically accurate and have solid written ethnographic backup; (3) they should be well made and fun to watch; (4) each should contribute to the subject of a particular chapter; and (5) the films should represent, so far as possible, the whole range of human culture types and world areas.

To be sure, many splendid ethnographic films were made in the 1990s, as viewers at the annual Margaret Mead Film Festival and the American Anthropological Association meetings can attest. But it has turned out, somewhat to my surprise, that in many cases the older films spoke better to the subjects of particular chapters. Needless to say, for other sorts of anthropology courses, one would want a different set of films. But here is my reasoning for choosing these particular ones:

The Goddess and the Computer is a particularly dramatic view of anthropological research, which is at once theoretical and applied. J. Stephen Lansing has written two books and several articles on the same subject, and the culture, Bali, is an especially interesting one for a focus culture.

Latah: A Culture-Specific Elaboration of the Startle Reflex, about the startle reflex in Malaysia, is the best illustration I know of what a biocultural model entails, and Ronald Simons’s book (1996) expands on his film.

Dead Birds, an early film by Robert Gardner, depicts many aspects of Dani life, including extraordinary scenes of intergroup warfare with bows and arrows and with spears.

Box of Treasures shows the Kwa Kwaka’ Wakw (Kwakiutl) of British Columbia as they struggle to preserve their culture—especially language, rituals, and art—in the face of North American consumer culture and its televised spokespersons.

How to Behave (Chuyen Tute) is a completely different sort of film, made by a Vietnamese film crew—not anthropologists at all—who in a way reinvent anthropology as they explore values and personality concepts.

Dani Sweet Potatoes is another short subsistence film. Although it tells mainly of the Dani’s sweet potato horticulture, there is a subtext on childrearing.

Appeals to Santiago focuses on the cargo ritual of the Chiapas Maya as it existed in the 1960s, when it was a famous example of how religion and economics were interrelated.

Farm Song was not actually made by an anthropologist, but it shows most effectively the way an extended family functions in rural northern Japan.

The Nuer is a beautiful evocation of some Nuer people and their cattle. It alludes at various points to their social organization, made famous through E. E. Evans-Pritchard's ethnographic writings.

N!ai: The Story of a !Kung Woman is a film by John Marshall that incorporates footage he shot of N!ai, a Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari Desert, over the years as she matured from a girl to a married woman. It incorporates N!ai's frank accounts of her own sexuality.

The Cows of Dolo Ken Paye builds on the ethnographic research of James L. Gibbs, Jr., as it follows a judicial procedure in a Kpelle village in Liberia.

Eduardo the Healer is about an exuberant cosmopolitan shaman, or curer, on the North Coast of Peru.

Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism is Jerry Leach's film of the people studied by Malinowski long ago, showing how they have ingeniously reacted to colonialism by adapting the staid English game of cricket to their own cultural needs.

House of the Spirit: Perspectives on Cambodian Health Care was made by the American Friends Service Committee to explain Cambodian ideas of health and sickness and to show how important it is to understand the culture when working with Cambodian refugees in the United States.

Using the Short Film Clips

We have provided a videotape or CD-ROM with short clips taken from the ethnographic films. Students can watch and analyze the clips as homework, and instructors can show them in class, leaving plenty of time for discussion. Needless to say, the short clip cannot substitute for seeing the entire film, but it can serve important pedagogical purposes. At first glance this approach may seem like a violation of the integrity of the film. As a filmmaker myself, I am very aware of how much thought goes into editing a film, and how painful it is to discard each precious foot of film. As a teacher, however, I have tested the use of short clips in many class situations (this effort is now greatly facilitated with films on videotape) and I have been converted. Using both clips and complete films allows more flexibility, permits viewers to focus on particularly important sequences, and also lets them see the whole film as intended by the filmmaker. In the future, I think, we will be using clips from films as easily as we take quotations from books. Today, it is still a new idea for many, and I am very interested to hear how people react.

Acquiring the Films

This book is built around films, so it is important to be able to see some or all of them. Most schools already have many films and will want to rent or buy others, whether

Summary of Focus Cultures and Films

<i>Religion</i>	<i>Sociopolitical Organization</i>	<i>Main Ethnographic Information In</i>	<i>Films</i>
Hinduism	Nation (Bali, Indonesia)	Chapter 1	<i>The Goddess and the Computer</i>
Islam	Nation (Malaysia)	Chapter 2	<i>Latah: A Culture-Specific Elaboration of the Startle Reflex</i>
Animism	Band (Ju/'hoansi)	Chapter 10	<i>Nlai: The Story of a !Kung Woman</i>
Animism	Tribe (Dani)	Chapter 3	<i>Dani Sweet Potatoes (Chap. 6)</i> <i>Dead Birds</i>
Animism, Christianity	Tribe (Kwa KwaKa' Wakw)	Chapter 4	<i>Box of Treasures</i>
Mahayana Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism	Nation (Vietnam)	Chapter 8	<i>How to Behave (Chuyen Tute)</i>
Roman Catholic	Nation (Mexico)	Chapter 7	<i>Appeals to Santiago</i>
Shinto, Mahayana Buddhism	Nation (Japan)	Chapter 8	<i>Farm Song</i>
Animism, Christianity	Tribe (Nuer)	Chapter 9	<i>The Nuer</i>
Animism, Christianity	Chiefdom (Kpelle)	Chapter 11	<i>The Cows of Dolo Ken Paye</i>
Christianity	Nation (Peru)	Chapter 12	<i>Eduardo the Healer</i>
Animism, Christianity	Chiefdom (Trobriands)	Chapter 13	<i>Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism</i>
Therevada Buddhism	Nation (Cambodia)	Chapter 14	<i>House of the Spirit: Perspectives on Cambodian Health Care</i>

on celluloid or in video form. Instructors will perhaps have their own favorites, which they will substitute for some suggested here. The following is a list of the primary North American distributors for each film in this text.

American Friends Service Committee
15 Rutherford Place
New York, NY 10003
212-598-0950 Fax: 212-529-4603

*House of the Spirit: Perspectives
on Cambodian Health Care*

University of California Extension
 Center for Media and Independent
 Learning
 2000 Center Street, Fourth Floor
 Berkeley, CA 94704
 510-642-1340 Fax: 510-643-9271
 E-mail: dbickley@uclink.berkeley.edu

CRM Films
 2215 Farraday Avenue
 Carlsbad, CA 92008
 800-421-0833

Documentary Educational Resources
 101 Morse Street
 Watertown, MA 02172
 800-569-6621 Fax: 617-926-9519
 E-mail: docued@der.org
 www.der.org/docued

First Run/Icarus Films
 153 Waverly Place, Sixth Floor
 New York, NY 10014
 800-876-1710 Fax: 212-989-7649
 E-mail: frif@echonyc.com

Instructional Support Services
 Indiana University
 Bloomington, IN 47405-5901
 800-552-8620 Fax: 812-855-8404
 E-mail: issmedia@indiana.edu

Asian Educational Media Service
 University of Illinois
 at Urbana-Champaign
 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue
 Urbana, IL 61801
 217-265-0642 or 888-828-AEMS
 Fax: 217-265-0641
 E-mail: sibarbou@uiuc.edu

Penn State Media Sales
 118 Wagner Building
 University Park, PA 16802
 800-770-2111
 www.mediasales.psu.edu
 E-mail: lxm49@psu.edu

Appeals to Santiago
Dani Sweet Potatoes
Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious
Response to Colonialism

The Nuer

Box of Treasures
N!ai: The Story of a !Kung Woman
The Goddess and the Computer

How to Behave (Chuyen Tute)

Latah: A Culture-Specific Elaboration of
the Startle Reflex

Farm Song

Eduardo the Healer

Phoenix Films
2349 Chaffee Drive
St. Louis, MO 63146
800-221-1274 Fax: 314-569-2834
E-mail: rdphoenix@aol.com

The Cows of Dolo Ken Paye
Dead Birds

ETHNOGRAPHY IN STONE

At the head of each chapter is a photograph of a bas-relief, carved in stone, from one of the great monuments of Southeast Asia: Borobudur, erected by Buddhists in Central Java around the 9th century C.E. (see Miksic, 1990), and the Angkor complex, built by the Hindu Khmer Kingdom in present-day Cambodia, dating from around the 12th century C.E. (see Giteau, 1976). Most of the images carved on both monuments represent theological, mythological, or dynastic events and accounts. But in the backgrounds of these reliefs one can see a remarkable wealth of everyday life, giving us ethnographic bits of long-gone cultures.

PRESS WATCH: HEADLINE ANTHROPOLOGY

You will find cultural anthropology and its concerns in the daily news, not just tucked away in textbooks like this one. Each chapter begins with newspaper items that reflect the topics of that chapter. As you get into the book, you will catch on to the idea of Headline Anthropology and will recognize anthropological stories in your own reading.

HOLLYWOOD-STYLE ANTHROPOLOGY

This book is built around ethnographic, documentary, nonfiction films, but many fictional feature films grapple with anthropological concepts and problems. At the end of each chapter is a brief introduction to a fiction film (or television episode) that deals with some concept in the chapter. If you are a typical moviegoer or television watcher, you should be able to suggest other titles that also help you in “seeing anthropology.”

THE INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

The Instructor's Manual and Test Bank should be particularly useful for integrating the films into the chapters. The manual has the usual chapter objectives, chapter overviews, lecture topics, discussion topics and research projects, key terms, and test items. It also includes a general section on using films in teaching, a detailed description of each film, how to use it in class, and additional discussion questions.

We also suggest other films on each chapter topic and on each focus culture—these films are ethnographic films as well as a few especially relevant feature films—for those who wish to experiment and develop a course in a particular direction.

ORDERING OPTIONS

For the Third Edition, adopters have more flexible ordering options. They can order the *Seeing Anthropology* textbook alone using ISBN Order No. 0-205-38912-0 or they can order the package with the textbook and either the VHS tape with the ethnographic film clips or a CD-ROM with the ethnographic film clips as “mpg” files. (Please note that this is not a DVD.) To order the textbook with the VHS tape in a package, use ISBN Order No. 0-205-40486-3. To order the textbook with the CD-ROM in a package, use ISBN Order No. 0-205-40485-5. Adopters should contact their local Publisher’s Representative with questions. Desk copies of *Seeing Anthropology* for adopters will include the VHS tape.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have learned so much about teaching and about film from so many people that I can’t possibly name them all. I especially want to thank Robert Gardner, who invited me to join the Harvard Peabody Expedition to the Dani, and who introduced me to ethnographic film; and Timothy Asch, who was constantly innovating ways to use films in teaching, and whose untimely death was mourned by an extraordinarily wide range of friends. From the time that James Deetz and I were teaching fellows for William W. Howells at Harvard, to recently, when Cathryn Houghton, Curtis Renoe, Cynthia Miller, and Caroline Vinel assisted in my own introductory course at South Carolina, I have taught with dozens of people who have shaped my ideas. Among them, it was Kersten Bayt Priest who, more than anyone else, helped in reshaping this text. Whether or not they recognize their contributions, I thank them.

Those who read the manuscript at early stages, as well as the reviewers of the first edition (Donna M. Budani of the University of Delaware, William Leons of the University of Toledo, Dona C. Fletcher of Sinclair Community College, Andrei Simic of UCLA, and David Abrams of Sacramento City College), the second edition (Jill Dubisch, Northern Arizona University; Joseph Eisenlauer, Los Angeles Pierce College; Dona Fletcher, Sinclair Community College; Nicholas Freiden, Marshall University; Carol Hermer, University of Washington; Alice Horner, SUNY–New Paltz, Jon Schlenker, University of Maine at Augusta; and Susan Sutton, Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis), and the third edition (P. J. Capclotti, Penn State–Abington; Charles O. Ellenbaum, College of Dupage; Nicholas Freidan, Marshall University; James F. Hopgood, Northern Kentucky University; Michael Reinschmidt, California State University; Frances Rothstein, Towson University; and Harry Sanabria,

University of Pittsburgh) made many suggestions, some of which I accepted, some of which I resisted, but I am most grateful for their time and the thoughtfulness of their comments.

This book would not have been possible without the films and the cooperation of all who were responsible for making and distributing them. To mention just a few distributors with whom I spoke directly: Cynthia Close of Documentary Educational Resources, Daniel Bickley of the University of California Extension Media Center, and Elizabeth Enloe of the American Friends Service Committee provided invaluable advice and support. I also want to thank all of the filmmakers and anthropologists who made the films that are the centerpiece of this project. I received enthusiastic endorsement of the project from all of those I contacted directly, including J. Stephen Lansing and Andre Singer (*The Goddess and the Computer*); John Nathan (*Farm Song*); Ronald Simons and Gunther Pfaff (*Latah*); James L. Gibbs, Jr., and Marvin Silverman (*The Cows of Dolo Ken Paye*); Robert Gardner, Hilary Harris, and George Breidenbaugh (*The Nuer*); Tran van Thuy (*How to Behave*); Ellen Bruno and Ellen Kuras (*House of the Spirit*); Robert Gardner (*Dead Birds*); and Jerry Leach and Gary Kildea (*Trobriand Cricket*).

For still photographs, I thank Cynthia Close of Documentary Educational Resources, J. Stephen Lansing, Ronald Simons, Robert Gardner, Michael R. Dove, Christal Whelan, the University of South Carolina Publications Office, James L. Gibbs, Jr., Jonathan Gibson, Jerry W. Leach, and Margaret Lock.

Finally, as is customary, I take ultimate responsibility for this book. But the nice thing about a textbook is that it can always be improved in the next edition. I make this request and challenge to all who use the book, instructors as well as students: Please send me your thoughts. Praise is always welcome, but corrections and other suggestions will be even more useful.

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