



– Institute’s Colloquium –

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Violence and ethnographic film

Violence is both a performative act and an act of communication. Ethnographic film shows and interprets conflicts in groups visited by ethnographers. At the same time ethnographic film challenges the history of ideas in anthropology as well as the political (colonial) background of the fieldwork situation.

Ethnographic film only rarely shows acts of violence. But two early ethnographic films make violence explicit: “Dead Birds” by Robert Gardner (1963) and “The Ax Fight” by Napoleon Chagnon and Timothy Asch (1975). Both films and the history of discourses about them will be remembered. The films have been used widely in anthropological introductory courses throughout the world. A long battle has been fought out in general and visual anthropology concerning the content and the narrative of the films and the interpretation of “ethnographic facts”.

The question remains if violence should be shown in the context of anthropological higher education. Can violence be represented? Ethnographic films offer various opportunities to consider the construction of authenticity, authority and the character of documentary ethnographic film. Facts and fiction are set into motion, presenting and representing histories of violence.

Tuesday, January 30th 2018
4-6 p.m.
Institute of Ethnology
Stuttstraße 21, Raum STU 105 (2.10)

Everybody is welcome!