

## A Case Study of the Film of "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling"

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### Abstract

*This paper discusses some details should be paid attention to in the process of anthropological film production, which can be more or less constituted of the preparation phase, the filming phase and the assembly phase, and analyzing the film-making process of a case "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling" from the perspective of film-making idea, the composition of the film and the brief introduction of the scenes.*

**Keywords:** details, anthropological film, case study, pastoral children, schooling

"I am an eye. I am a mechanical eye. I, a machine, I am showing you a world, the likes of which only I can see"(Dziga, 1922) Dziga was quoted as saying. "Kino-Eye" refers to shoot the world of the videographed object in depth with a "spirit" (referring to a good state of the exchange between the videographer and the videographed object), and shooting the fragments of a real life candidly from varying perspectives and camera positions with the use of fast, slow, and mobile methods. Emphasis on the authenticity of the film is to minimize the state of the shooting field, paying attention to all the relevant details, to create best domain of shooting. In accordance with whole production of "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling", the video part of author's doctoral dissertation, this article introduces some of details that must be noted in the process of anthropological film production. A peep hole views, for reference only.

### 1. The Preparation Phase

Shooting anthropological film is a part of scientific research, preparation work is very trivial, but it is of necessity to avoid interference from physical factors in keeping records of cultural heritage of images.

#### 1.1 Equipment Maintenance and Debugging

Before field work, the long-dormant film equipment needs to be carefully examined to ensure it is in good condition, such as whether there is a firm tripod? Shoulder belt and handheld belt are installed with a solid? Camcorder shot, lens and eyepiece need cleaning? If camcorder has an external microphone, you should check its battery consumption, a camcorder should be prepared at least two batteries for alternate use in case the battery can't get charged in time. As for the number of videotape, the more, the better, it is extremely frustrating if there is no spare videotape to be used in the half-way shooting. In addition, we should also prepare a special package or a separate space for batteries and videotapes storage to avoid damp and extrusion. Last but not least, all the equipment needs to be debugged again, well-prepared as possible in order to avoid unforeseen circumstances.

#### 1.2 Creating a Shooting Plan

Anthropological film produced in service to anthropological research which shows the mass images of Ethnography obtained by anthropologists in the field. Before shooting, videographer must clear what specific question of anthropology is to be solved in this video project, so it is of necessity to create a shooting plan in advance, the really ambitious thing can go all the way to a full-fledge script in which the purpose of filming, spots, targets and the main scenes etc., are described detail along with notes. "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling" expresses the audience that the pastoral children's process of transformation from weariness to fondness for schooling, aiming at saving the national traditional culture, construction of school-based curriculum provides a possible solution to bottleneck problem in the development of education in pastoral areas, and realizing harmonious interaction of school education, family education and community culture. The location of shooting is in the Imperial Town, Sunan Yugur Autonomous County, Zhangye City, Gansu Province. The videographed objects include two pastoral children, called Qieer Qiancuo and Au Jiao, their family members, and the teachers in Sunan No.2 Junior High School etc.,. The main scenes consists of the scene I of learning Yugur language by Qieer Qiancuo and Au Jiao, the scene II of school gate, describing little Au Jiao is recalcitrant to go to school at school gate, the scene III of interviewing with the protagonists, the scene IV of teachers' training in the course of school-based curriculum research and development,etc.

### 2. The Shooting Phase

In the course of shooting, subtle relations of videographer, the videographed object and camcorder need to be build gradually, videographer and the object achieve cultural interaction through the camcorder. C

In order to shoot the true state of the object, "candid shooting" is of necessity, it is a realistic effective means of short-term shooting, but anthropological research need protect the physical and mental rights of the object from being infringed, and safeguard their dignity and privacy. The object has the right to refuse the researcher who tends to gather information by using camcorders, recording pens etc., to avoid this, some work is needed to be done by the videographer:

## **2.1 Matters relating to the videographed object**

### **2.1.1 Making Friends with the Object**

Anthropological field work takes long term and stable, in order to ensure the smooth progress of research work, it is of necessity to establish mutually beneficial cooperation of emotional relations, working relations between the researcher and the local culture load, so videographer needs to learn some local dialect, vernacular and cultural matters, including a number of taboos, so do as the Romans do, in good faith to make friends with the object. For nearly three years (note: from the year of 2006 to 2009, author, as a group leader, participated in the project, "Economic & Cultural Patterns and Construction of Local School-based Curriculum for Junior High Schools in Ethnic Minority Regions of West China", chaired by the instructor, funded by Ford Foundation) author had been commuting between the Central University for Nationalities and Imperial Town, the pastoral fieldwork spot. Boarding with the local herdsmen and pastoral school teachers, experiencing unsophisticated folk customs, listening to unique Euphemistic grassland folk songs of all ethnic groups, being immersed totally in a strong atmosphere of Lamaism, Islam, Taoism and other religious beliefs, and a touch of voluminous books of protagonists' epics, songs, proverbs and fairy tales in Archives, author had an extensive and in-depth understanding of the spiritual world of those ethnic minorities, who have been living in the broad pasture at the foot of Qilian Mountain, as well as their livestock and daily life practice and contextual situation of the pastoral school. Herdsman's personality traits, such as honest, hospitable, sincere yet slightly restrained, had left an impression on author most, with a very deep emotional experience.

### **2.1.2 Necessity for the Videographed Object to Familiarize Himself with Camcorder Equipment**

A camcorder is cold, stiff, no feelings, which puts initially visual and psychological pressure on the object, and strengthen energy in the shooting field, so the object's language and behavior will be in an unnatural situation. Only is the object familiar with the camcorder's appearance and performance, and regarding it as a part of everyday life, he will forget the existence of the camcorder, to perform in an original natural ecological state. In the previous month of author's field work, the camcorder work was basically at a standstill, occasionally a few shots of the students "making faces" or of the words and actions which were inconsistent with their actual performance in reality. After author and the objects were in a sincere and full exchange, including an explanation of the purpose of filming research, an invitation of two students to help move equipment as the assistants, and an introduction of the camcorder's appearance and performance and so on, gradually author achieved the trust of local people and eliminated their strangeness of the camcorder equipment, in June 2006, when author's field work came to an end, many pastoral children came over and asked author to take photos or shoot videos for them, among whom even a Hui mosque imam.

### **2.1.3 To Watch Shooting Materials with the videographed objects**

The cameraman and the objects are co-participants in the study of shooting, the objects have the rights to know of the film content, and have the rights to appreciate and preserve the filming results. The cameraman should play back the film materials, watching them and sharing ideas with the objects, whose views on the shots should be called adequate attention. The full integration of etic perspective and emic perspective ensure that the shooting is objective, barrier-free as well. After each scene of film "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling" was shot completely, author played back materials, and watched the video with the objects together, on the one hand, doing this for fun during break-time; on the other hand, promoting the object to cooperate enthusiastically, at the same time, author can get some useful source of inspiration, for a researcher, the perspective of problems from the cultural load is precious.

## **2.2 To Select Shooting Locations and Technical Treatments for the Light**

If the objects are familiar with the shooting locations, they would relax easily and behave naturally, familiar environment also provides a lot of shooting clues avoid omissions in the content. Video is filmed in natural light as much as possible, if the light in the room is too dark, a number of light bulbs of large power should be added to, but not too prominent, otherwise it will create tension in the objects, and impact on the effect of filming. When author shot the film "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling", according to the shooting plan, the scene of Au Jiao's mother's interview should be shot at night, from outside in the dark, the author shot a room with the lights on, then entered the room, to film the interviews, so author prepared a number of filament lamps in advance, in case that interior light couldn't meet the requirements for sensitivity. It was disheartening that the power was cut at that day, and the following night author would leave the field spot by bus, so the shooting had to be arranged on the next morning.

The full preparation is of necessity for the field work, but the details need to be highly concerned, a prerequisite for the concrete analysis of concrete things, flexible arrangements.

### **2.3 The Authenticity of Content and Integrity of Information**

Authenticity of anthropological films includes the real characters, real events, real surroundings and genuine cultural connotations. The true figure is the protagonist's identity and images exist in the real world. The incident filmed also exists in reality instead of being fabricated. The true meaning of the environment and rich cultural connotations complement each other, which need to be established on the basis of solid field work.

"The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling" is filmed on the basis of author's nearly three-year field research in the Imperial Town, as author mentioned above, from the year of 2006 to 2009, author, as a group leader, participated in the project, "Economic & Cultural Patterns and Construction of Local School-based Curriculum for Junior High Schools in Ethnic Minority Regions of West China" funded by Ford Foundation, chaired by the instructor. This project aims to enhance the accessibility of education for children in western minority regions, improve students' adaptability to local society, and push the sustainable development of education, economy and social in western region.

In broader sense, the project will develop an innovative, usable and expendable general method of local school-based curriculum construction and practice which can be used in western minority regions. Based on this project, author compiled the dissertation of "Theoretical Construction of Freedom and Pluralism Education from a Perspective of School-based Curriculum Research and Development in Pastoral Areas and produced a anthropological video of "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling", the authenticity of it is beyond doubt. Integrity of information refers to no matter whether the crux of shooting is a figure or an event, either of them should have a panoramic view on its surroundings; close-up as well, to show its face in detail. For example, in the shooting of the film of "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling", when two pastoral children, Qieer Qiancuo and Au Jiao appeared, author conducted a complete shooting process of Au Jiao, who dressed in national costumes, walked into the kitchen from outside; a close-up of Qieer Qiancuo's facial features in the interview. Complete language information acquired by the lens is also embodied in the common interviews of the two.

## **3. The Assembly Phase**

### **3.1A Comprehensive Browse of the Materials and Multi-levels Classification of the Materials**

After finishing field work, there will be a lot of shooting materials on hand to be fully browsed, the following work is of greatest importance, all the materials need to be sorted out, if they are video tape-recorded, they must be taken in chronological order, first of all, according to the date of the order of the labels on videotapes, the materials will be entered into the computer, then in accordance with the content, and divided into groups of interviews materials and questionnaires materials, the meetings materials and day-to-day activities, etc., finally, materials are re-arranged according to the themes, the materials retained are those most close to the themes of the film, in preparation for editing. Taking the Classification of the materials of "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling" as an example: author collected plenty of video materials from field work from April 2009 to June 2009, added to theme-related materials obtained in the previous field work for the film, a total of it more than 60 hours and more than 3000 minutes.

**3.1.1** A preliminary classification based on the content of all the materials after entering them into the computer. The Materials of Shooting on Locations of Imperial Town and Sunan No.2 Junior High School: Including Buddhist Pagoda Tower in the North, a panorama view of snow-caped mountains and Imperial Town; Eastern Reservoir and flocks of sheep etc.; Southern Bridge and the scenery spot of special tents; western farmland, villages, etc.; Imperial Town streets and restaurants, shops, hotels, etc.; classroom building, dormitory, cafeteria, playground etc., in SunanNo.2 Junior High School. The Interviews Materials Related: first, categorize according to figures: interviews with Qieer Qiancuo and Au Jiao; interviews with Qieer Qiancuo and Au Jiao's parents, interviews with herdsmen, interviews with teachers, school administrators and the national elite etc.; Second, classify according to ethnic groups: interviews with Tibetan representatives, Yugur representatives, Hui representatives, Mongolian representatives, Han representatives, Manchu representatives and Tu; third, sort out according to interviews' content: the protection of traditional culture, the use of the national language, religious ritual of the sacrificial Er-Bo and the construction of school-based curriculum, etc. The Forum Materials: the forums held at different stages of school-based curriculum research and development, such as the forum at the stage of understanding process of curriculum construction, the forum at the stage of setting up research and development team, the curriculum standard-setting stage, parents and teachers training seminars etc. The Materials of Family Daily Life: the fragment of preparing and eating dinner, the fragment of learning national language, the fragment of sending the kid to go to school and the fragment of pasturing sheep and other fragments.

**3.1.2** Re-arranging materials according to the theme of the film "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling": The materials of shooting the pastoral children, including fragments of daily life and schooling; materials related to school-based curriculum research and development; materials related to the protection of traditional culture; materials related to the use of national language and other materials.

**3.1.3** Finally sorting out materials according to the main scenes planned

Scene I: Self-Introduction of the pastoral children; Scene II: the pastoral child' grazing sheep in the prairie; Scene III: national language learned by the pastoral children at dinner; Scene IV: the kid' being stubborn not to go to school at the school gate; Scene V interviews with the mother after the child's performance improved; Scene VI: the school teachers training for school-based research and development. After finishing sorting out materials, the next step is to conduct a reasonable clip.

### **3.2 Rough cut and fine cut**

Rough cut generally refers to select, remove, re-arrange and string shots together in the original materials in accordance with the main scenes, so as to take a preliminary shape of the film. Fine cut is a detailed and accurate editing and amending on the basis of the rough cut, which makes language, action of the figures and structure, rhythm of the film close to a fixed shape and make a overall adjustment. Attention should be paid to hide the joint points and should enhance suture effect of vision in the process of video-editing, that is to say, to make harmonious cuts, and avoiding visual disjunction, at the same time to repeatedly watch the preview screen whether the action of figures are consistent, whether the transition of the scenes is natural, whether or not the sound quality reach the technical standards required, and whether the sound can synchronize with the action in the screen. Some of camcorder clips, which have not been taken, should be retained for later use. After editing, preview first, if the result is poor, it is of necessity to re-edit. Listed below are the visual effects of a combination of the shot and reverse-shot in the scene that interviews with Au Jiao of the film "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling".

Author: Did you have fun in the school when in the first year of the elementary school?

Au Jiao: Did love to, and could play with the classmates in the school; did not love to, always beaten by the teacher, because I couldn't catch up with others.

Author: Did the teachers speak Yugur language in class?

Au Jiao: In Chinese, Mandarin.

Author: Was there Yugur culture included in the textbooks then?

Au Jiao: Not at all.

Author: What do you think of the text books?

Au Jiao: Too difficult for me to learn.

Author: If you didn't go to school, was it allowed?

Au Jiao: No way.

Author: Who forced you to?

Au Jiao: Mummy.

At this point, the film uses a reverse-shot to deconstruct the scene, the audience could see the mother riding motorcycle with Au Jiao to school, at the school gate, Au Jiao wants to get rid of mother and ran away, as soon as she is held off the motorcycle. "I do not want to go in, the teacher is leaving me always in the dark, the classmates laugh at me!" shouts Au Jiao. Mother's scolding, spanking, in addition, Au Jiao's crying make cultural clash escalate to the climax in the film.

### **3.3 Music, Narration and Captions**

When selecting background music, attention should be paid to cultural information transmitted, anthropological film production aims at the protection of traditional folk culture, so it is best to choose the originally ecological music or local folk music, also intersperse a number of folk songs performed by local people and so on, but bear in mind that background music not to interfere with expression of cultural message on the screen. The role of narration is to complement the information which can't be expressed clearly by the picture, a general rule applicable to all the narrations is that less is better. Narration can be abridged if original sound can made everything possible. Sometimes, dialects or ethnic language dialogue in the anthropological film is hard to understand, subtitling natural sounds not only can maintain true objective records, but also can make the audience understand clearly, meanwhile avoiding the loss of anthropological information caused by dubbing.

## **4. A case of anthropological film of "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling"**

### **4.1 The Creative Idea**

In August 2006, author went to the Imperial Town, Sunan Yugur Autonomous County, Zhangye city, Gansu Province for the field research.

For nearly three years author had been commuting between the university (the Central University for Nationalities) and the pastoral fieldwork spot (Imperial Town), and boarding with the local herdsmen and pastoral school teachers. Seven ethnic groups, Tibetan, Mongolian, Hui, Yugur, Tu, Manchu and Han, have mix-inhabited in Imperial Town pastoral areas from generation to generation and clung to the traditional lifestyle, occasionally disputed because of the pasture border, but there were no large-scale conflicts all long. In recent years, with the further development of the economy, a clash has become increasingly violent over school education, family education and pastoral community culture. Minority children accept ethnic traditional culture at home, grow older, experiencing diverse culture of all ethnic groups in the community, and to receive a single mainstream Han culture in school after school age. The marked cultural differences among three backgrounds of family, school and community, have become the source of contradictions.

School-based curriculum construction in pastoral areas, on the one hand, protects traditional cultural heritage of all ethnic groups, creating employment opportunities for minority children, to strengthen the hometown-building skills; on the other hand, can arouse enthusiasm for equal participation and cooperation in the masses and teachers and students of all ethnic groups, promoting the integration of ethnic relations, and to solve bottleneck problems of educational development. As a driving role being played, education development can push economic, social and cultural development forward and seek for the thought-line of inner dynamism development in western pastoral areas.

#### 4.2 Composition of the Film

"The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling" video content, consists of four categories of materials: records of daily life, interviews with the pastoral children and some other related characters, grandparents' oral statement and one of Au Jiao's memory fragments, these four categories of materials are organically linked together according to the content expressed. Records of everyday life include the scene of learning Yugur language by the pastoral children at Family Dinner, the scene of the children's running a race with their classmates at school sports-meeting, the scene of dancing Guo Zhuang, a Tibetan dance, by school teachers and students; the scene of interviewing with the pastoral children and other characters related: interview with representatives of pastoral children, Qieer Qiancuo and Au Jiao, interview with Au Jiao's mother, interview with the teachers from Sunan No.2 Junior High School; in addition, grandparents' oral statements of the process for Qieer Qiancuo to learn Yugur language and some difficulties encountered, during the progress of statement, some of memory fragments are added, for instance, Jiao Au's memory of being stubborn not to go to school at the school gate.

**Insert Table (1) about here**

#### 4.3 Brief Introduction of the Main Scenes

The Scene of the Pastoral Children's Self-Introduction

Brief Introduction: Five pastoral children from Tibetan, Yugur, Hui, Han etc., make self-introduction all round in Chinese freely.



The Scene of Learning Yugur Language by Qieer Qiancuo Brief Introduction: Qieer Qiancuo arrives home after school, greeting grandma in Chinese, who is preparing supper, grandma asks a question in reply "what are you talking about? I can't understand you" in Yugur, Qieer Qiancuo realizes the mistake immediately, answering in Yugur, Grandma smiles with satisfaction. (note: Grandma told the videographer that Yugur language was not taught intentionally, but followed adults in daily life to learn naturally, in the past, young child liked to listen and to speak, but after schooling, she was unwilling to learn, because teachers in school gave lectures in Chinese, not Yugur. All show that it is a need to protect traditional national culture.



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The scene of interviewing with Qieer Qiancuo and Au Jiao

Brief Introduction: A conversation begins from common topic of "Horse riding", which Qieer Qiancuo and Au Jiao are both interested in, to the topic of the reformings of the textbooks, school-based curriculum research and development, Qieer Qiancuo and Au Jiao say with one voice: the traditional culture of Yugur is added to the content of the textbooks, familiar to us, welcomed by all the Yugur children.



The Scene That Au Jiao Recalls Her Stubborn Resistance to Go in School at the Gate

Brief Introduction: Au Jiao's mother sends little Au Jiao to school by motorcycle, at the school gate, Au Jiao tries to get rid of mother and ran away, after failing in coaxing, mother spansks her, and as a result, Au Jiao cries.



The Scene of the Teachers' Being Trained in the Process of School-Based Curriculum Development in Sunan No.2 Junior High School.

Brief Introduction: Teachers' training focuses on exploring possible solutions to the teachers' misconception of school-based curriculum development and difficulties encountered in the process. Teachers' training strengthens capacity of Teacher and professional skills and making them fully realize the importance of equal participation with aim of capacity building.



The Scene of Interviewing with Au Jiao's Mother after Au Jiao's Performance has Improved a lot.

Brief Introduction: Au Jiao's mother, a teacher of Sunan No.2 Junior High School, analyzes the reasons why Au Jiao has had a markable improvement in her performance recently, "school-based curriculum development has brought fresh air to the dead campus, the teachers' concept of teaching has changed, and the textbooks content written from varying perspectives has become localized, basically, pastoral students are the key direct beneficiaries."



The Scene of Interviewing with Zhang Xiaoyan, a Teacher of Sunan No. 2 Junior High School

Brief Introduction: Through interviewing with Zhang Xiaoyan, a head teacher of multi-ethnic class composed of Tibetan, Han, Yugur, Hui, etc., we learn: construction of school-based curriculum in the multicultural context is an interpretation of the value of school-based curriculum from multidisciplinary perspective; a full understanding of the value of indigenous knowledge, an inheritance of local culture and facilitate intellectual development of students; a handling of a dialectical relationship between a single culture and diverse culture, and a high concern for the development of education, culture and human.



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**Table 1:** The Composition of the Film of "The Pastoral Children Keen on Schooling"

