Chapter 2: A History of Ethnographic Film.

“The history of ethnographic film is one part of the history of cinematography itself, and more particularly of documentary, or nonfiction film.” (Heider 1976: page number). This chapter focuses on the different aspects of ethnography and film: equipment, costs, leading individuals, background information, and various ethnographic films and documentaries. The concepts of film and ethnography first arose in “the nineteenth century” no need for quotation marks here, but they became full grown in the 1920s. Film and ethnography never truly came together until the 1960s where they “systematically began to join in effective collaboration,” (Heider 1976: page number) this is due mostly to the advent of “synchronous sound-film equipment” (Heider 1976: page number) that was now more convenient in most all areas. The chapter discusses in detail how the costs of film make it hard to use because it is expensive in all aspects: filming, completing, distributing, renting or buying does this ring true now? . Ethnographic film is said to have been “conceived in 1901 when Baldwin Spear shot his first footage of Australian aborigines,” (Heider 1976: page number) and was born when Flaherty released Nanook of the North. “Although Flaherty was no ethnographer and did not pretend to approach cultures with an ethnographic research plan he did spend an extended time in the field for each film, observing and absorbing the native culture.” (Heider 1976: page number) Flaherty comprehended the differences of film in contrast to printed word. He often would follow around an individual and from this made assumptions about the people as a whole. Most ethnographies are completed by a single individual, but if two ethnographers do work together the conclusions are reported together. One key point that is focused on Heider raises is, “The best of the ethnographic fiction films, those which are true to the culture, bring to focus the question…Can fiction create truth?” (Heider 1976: page number)