

# ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM PRACTICES IN SILENT GERMAN CINEMA

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At the conference of the German Anthropological Society in Hamburg in August 1928, the director of the Leipzig Museum for Ethnology, Fritz Krause, called for the establishment of an ethnological and anthropological film archive:

Films, which were made among foreign people, like *Nanook the Eskimo*; *Moana, the son of the South Seas*; several films from the New Hebrides and the New Guinea films; Zabel's Tarahumare films and others are most outstanding cultural documents. They do not only show us the physical habits of those peoples, their movements and behaviours, but also scenes from their cultural life, so that they are as valuable for ethnology as for anthropology. . . . We are convinced that films contain inestimable scientific values, and demand that these scientific treasures be continuously available. Temporary and occasional demonstrations are not sufficient for it . . . we must therefore demand that these films become continuously secured for science. (Thilenius, 1929:67) [Author's translation]

Krause's statement refers to a period of ethnographic filmmaking that is usually underplayed in ethnographic film historiography. Silent cinema usually does not enjoy the same attention as later periods in visual anthropology. The range of references in the quote, however, from commercial films such as Flaherty's *Nanook* to Rudolf Zabel's amateur footage, indicates that the relationship between ethnography and film was more than experimental during the early decades of the twentieth century than conventional historiographical approaches might suggest (Böhl, 1985). Moreover, although research films from German speaking anthropologists "are among the most extensive, as well as the best documented and preserved, ethnographic film of that era" (Oksiloff, 2001:4), neither the films nor their production context have been analyzed in detail.

This chapter focuses on the relationship between early film practice and ethnographic expeditions in Germany roughly from 1903 to 1924. Based on primary sources that consider aspects such as marketing, distributing, and selling strategies of early ethnographic expedition films, the chapter argues for a recontextualization of early ethnographic films that considers their appeal

and significance not only with regard to the academic discipline but also to the early film industry. Contrary to the popular assumption that shooting film was not the rule on ethnographic expeditions, I argue that filmmaking was, in fact, extremely popular among German ethnographers during the first decades of twentieth century (Fuhrmann, 2007). Chief witness to this early film practice was the ethnographer Theodor Koch-Grünberg (1872–1924) (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> Koch-Grünberg started his career as a school teacher but quit his job in 1901 in favor of the ethnographic study of South America. After first working as a volunteer and then as an assistant for the Berlin Museum for Ethnology, he became the academic director of the Linden Museum in Stuttgart in 1915. He belongs to a group of German ethnographers that Andre Gingrich calls the “moderate positivists” (2005:91). In contrast to adherents of historical diffusionism, many of the group went “through a solid and extensive fieldwork experience” and were much closer to the legacy of Adolf Bastian (Gingrich, 2005:91). What makes Koch-Grünberg’s academic interest in South America important for a historiography of German ethnography is the fact that he stands for German ethnography’s heterogeneity and diversity at a time when many of his colleagues were concentrating on Germany’s colonial territories and supporting national colonial interests. Koch-Grünberg is still considered to be one of the most important ethnographers for the South American continent, but though his photographs from his expeditions have recently been acknowledged within anthropological literature, less is known about his filmmaking experience (Hempel, 2009). The very sparse information on early ethnographic filmmaking in general makes his film legacy particularly important for the study of early cinema as well as for the history of visual anthropology. His films must be considered among the very first cinematographic recordings of Indian life in the interior of South America.

Koch-Grünberg’s first contact with cinematography occurred in the transition from early non-fiction to the classical documentary genre, as it became known, with Robert Flaherty’s films in the 1920s. He was shooting films on his second independent expedition to Brazil in 1911–1913 and planned to shoot a nonfiction feature film on his last expedition to the Amazon with American anthropologist Alexander Hamilton Rice in 1924.<sup>2</sup> The examination of Koch-Grünberg’s interrelation with the new medium shows how ethnographers often were situated at the intersection of academic respectability and popular demand to promote their academic careers.

### **ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM HISTORY: LOST AND FOUND**

The recent interest in global issues in film studies emphasizes the cultural dynamics of international and transnational relations (Halle, 2008). What is true for contemporary cinema also puts national film historiographies into perspective. Film has always been an international medium but has rarely been discussed as such. The beginning of ethnographic filmmaking in the sciences of anthropology and ethnology is a case in point. Ethnographic filmmaking in Germany cannot be understood without observing that the international scientific community noted, studied, and commented upon each others’ work. Paul Spindler, for instance, points out that the Austrian anthropologist Rudolf Pöch’s decision to take a film camera on his expedition to the northern part of

New Guinea in 1904–1906 was due to his personal contact with ethnographic scholars (Spindler, 1974). Pöch met Alfred C. Haddon in 1903 and was shown the films Haddon and his colleagues had made on the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Strait in 1898–1899 (Piault, 2001:9).<sup>3</sup> Shortly after, Pöch expressed his interest in purchasing a film camera in a letter to Felix von Luschan, director of the Berlin Museum for Ethnology, the institution that financially supported his expedition (Pöch, 1903, in Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz: Zentralarchiv).<sup>4</sup> The camera he was thinking of acquiring, sold for £26.00 by its manufacturer, the Warwick Trading Company, the same company that Haddon had recommended to his colleague, Baldwin Spencer, for his expedition to Central Australia (Edwards, 1998:127, n. 82). The Berlin Museum for Ethnology management did not want to cover the expenses for a cinematographic apparatus but indicated that if Pöch used a film camera on his expedition, the museum would “affluently pay” him for moving pictures (Pöch, 1903, in Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz: Zentralarchiv). Pöch finally started his expedition without a film camera but purchased one later on his trip during a stop in Australia, as he realized that a still camera could not produce sufficiently satisfying results of dances and movements of walking, carrying or tattooing (Pöch, 1907:395).

Pöch’s encounter with Haddon in Cambridge seemed to be the prelude for the establishment of film as a new research tool in German ethnographic practice. Also in the summer of 1903, von Luschan raised the issue of the film camera’s significance on research expeditions during a lecture on phonographic recordings in ethnography to the Berlin branch of the German Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Prehistory (von Luschan, 1904). As this branch was the most important in the country, any novelty had a signaling effect to the whole discipline.

In this lecture von Luschan spoke of the need for moving images to meet the demands of modern ethnology museums.<sup>5</sup> To put the continuous acquisition of film on solid ground, he recommended the use of a film camera on expeditions in his 1904 edition of a handbook for ethnographers, *Anleitung für ethnographische Beobachtungen und Sammlungen in Afrika und Oceanien* [Guide for ethnographic observations and collections in Africa and Oceania] (von Luschan, 1904).<sup>6</sup> This manual became compulsory reading for every professional and amateur ethnographer in Germany.<sup>7</sup> Von Luschan’s concern for film recordings did not remain unheard and was shared by his colleagues in German museums. In 1905 Georg Thilenius, director of the Hamburg Museum for Ethnology, emphasized the special role of film in a memorandum on the goals of ethnographic research (Fischer, 1981:94). The director of the Leipzig Museum for Ethnology, Karl Weule, put von Luschan’s recommendation into practice by returning from his 1906 expedition to East Africa with film recordings (Fuhrmann, 2009). It is impossible to say if Weule’s successful film expedition was the reason for the revision of the Imperial Colonial Office’s contract policy, but the Office included a new paragraph in its research permits that obliged every expedition to the German colonies to deliver all film material to the Colonial Office.<sup>8</sup>

The integration of film as a new tool in ethnographic fieldwork and the contract obligation left ethnographers little choice but to use film on their research expeditions. In the years that followed,

filmmaking on ethnographic expeditions was no longer an exceptional and exclusive issue for some ethnographers, but the rule. Unfortunately, though, untrained ethnographers had considerable problems with the handling of cameras and often returned from their expeditions with film material of low quality or no material at all. Ethnographic film historiography does not report on their cinematographic accidents and failures and ethnographers had no interest in promoting their expeditions by mentioning nonprofessional handling or technical drawbacks that could not be overcome.

The example of two early expeditions that were organized under the same conditions shows how successful film recordings influenced academic prestige after a scholar's return from an expedition. The Commission for the Geographic Exploration of the German Protectorates (*Kommission für die landeskundliche Erforschung der deutschen Schutzgebiete*) coordinated expeditions into the German colonial territories. The Commission saw its major goal in the thorough and comprehensive exploration of the colonies as a scientific contribution to practical colonization (Meyer, 1910; Fuhrmann, 2003). Karl Weule's expedition to the south of the East African Colony in 1906–1907 was the Commission's second expedition, followed by the third expedition to Cameroon by Kurt Hassert and Franz Thorbecke in 1907.<sup>9</sup> Karl Weule returned from the expedition with about 40 films and handed over the camera, which belonged to the Colonial Office, to Hassert and Thorbecke. In contrast to Weule, who successfully toured with his films through Germany and gave well-received presentations in which he reflected on the future of moving pictures in ethnology at museums and universities, Hassert and Thorbecke had no luck at all with the movie camera. The casings of early film cameras were primarily made of wood and often became warped and cracked from heat and humidity. Hassert and Thorbecke paid little attention to the careful packaging of the apparatus and eventually destroyed the camera. Their film experience was only briefly mentioned in a preliminary report (Hassert, 1908).

The examples referred to above point to a peculiarity in film historiography. Semiotician Jurij M. Lotman notes that history does not follow strict lines and that it is possible to write the history of humanity as the history of untaken paths and missed chances (Lotman, 1994:146). Following from this, one could argue that ethnographic film history is written on the basis of surviving film prints. We know only about those expedition films that were considered to be of acceptable quality. The example of Hassert and Thorbecke's expedition, for instance, is indicative of early film expeditions that

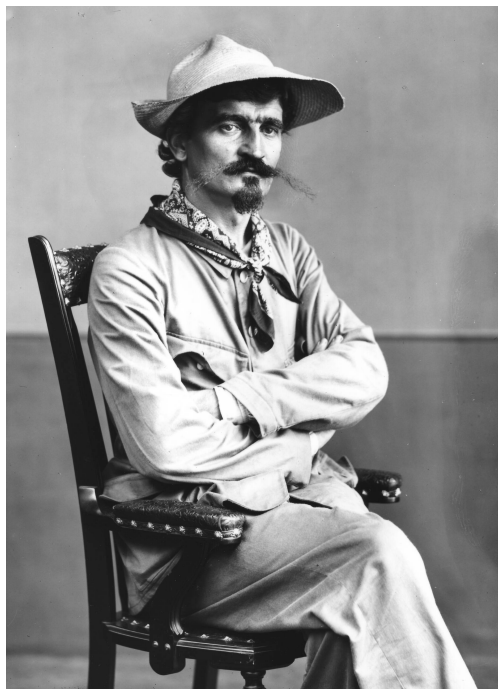


FIGURE 1

Theodor Koch-Grünberg (1872–1924). Reproduced courtesy of Völkerkundliche Sammlung. "Legacy Theodor Koch Grünberg." VK KG-H-III, 169. Philipps-Universität Marburg.

never found an entry in ethnographic film historiography but can contribute to a more profound insight into early film practice.<sup>10</sup> Theodor Koch-Grünberg's continuous examination of film in his academic work is another blind spot in the history of visual anthropology and requires detailed discussion.

### **THEODOR KOCH-GRÜNBERG'S FIRST FILM EXPEDITION**

Theodor Koch-Grünberg started his career as an ethnographer as the photographer on Hermann Meyer's second Xingu Expedition to Brazil from 1898 to 1899 (Koch-Grünberg and Kraus, 2003).<sup>11</sup> Koch-Grünberg used the experience he gained while working for Meyer on his first expedition to the Rio Negro, from 1903 to 1905, and from which he returned with more than 1,000 photographs (Hempel, 2009:198). There is no indication that Koch-Grünberg planned to use a film camera on his second expedition to the Brazilian Amazon region in 1911 until the Freiburg film company Express Films GmbH contacted him in November 1910, five months before his departure (Express Films to T. Koch-Grünberg, 22 November 1910, VK Mr, A10).

Express Films was founded by Bernhard Gotthart in April 1910 and specialized in nonfiction film production (Jung, 2005:193; Dittrich, 2009). The company offered Koch-Grünberg a film camera, 3000 m of film stock and introductory practical training (Express Films to T. Koch-Grünberg, 22 November 1910, VK Mr, A10). In the following months, Express Films maintained a close correspondence with Koch-Grünberg to organize the expedition. Only days before his departure to South America, the company dismissed the notion of letting Koch-Grünberg shoot the films himself, possibly to avoid films of low quality, and suggested Bernhard Gotthart as the expedition's new camera operator. Contractually Gotthart was supposed to follow Koch-Grünberg's orders, but Koch-Grünberg had no say about which films the company would release onto the market (Express Films to T. Koch-Grünberg, 31 March 1911, VK Mr, A10).

The expedition was profitable in more than one way for Express Films. On the way to South America, Gotthart was supposed to shoot films in Ecuador and on his return he planned to shoot in Panama, on Mount Chimborazo in Ecuador, Colombia, and Cuba (Express Films to T. Koch-Grünberg, 2 May 1911, VK Mr, A10). However, Gotthart had to return to Germany after only two months in South America due to the internal reorganization of Express Films. Though this meant that he could not shoot films on Koch-Grünberg's expedition, he shot at least five films on his way to Brazil: *Brasilianische Tierwelt* [Brazilian wildlife], *Auf dem Amazonasstrom, dem gewaltigsten Strom der Erde* [On the Amazon River, the largest river on earth], *Eine Äquatortaufe* [Crossing the line baptism], *Brasilianisches Militär* [Brazilian military], and *Leben & Treiben in Manaus* [Hustle and bustle in Manaus]. Except for *Brasilianisches Militär*, Gotthart's films were advertised in the German film trade press and were released by Express Films' associated film company, the Paris-based and internationally renowned Raleigh and Roberts, in 1911 (Birett, 1991). At this stage, Express Films could not count on Koch Grünberg's positive film results from his expedition, but the release of popular travelogues show that even without ethnographic films from the actual expedition, the expedition had already yielded profit for the company.



FIGURE 2

Parischerá Dance. Snapshot from DVD: *Aus dem Leben der Taulipang in Guyana—Filmdokumente aus dem Jahre 1911* [Life among the Taulipang of Guiana—Film Documents from the Year 1911] (Signatur: D 856). IWF Wissen und Medien gGmbH, Göttingen.

Even without Gotthart as operator, Koch-Grünberg managed to shoot several films on his own and with his assistant Hermann Schmidt (Koch-Grünberg, 1917:66). *Der Parischerátanz der Taulipang* [The Parischerá dance of the Taulipang], *Leben in einem Indianerdorf (Südamerika)* [Life in an Indian village (South America)], and *Sitten und Gebräuche der Taulipang* [Manners and customs of the Taulipang] were listed in the ethnographic section of Express Films' film catalogue and by Raleigh and Roberts in 1913 (Figure 2).

In his study of German expeditions to South America, Michael Kraus emphasizes the significance of financing and fund raising (Kraus, 2004:109). Ethnographers often invested personal money into their expeditions that they hoped to recoup by collecting and selling ethnographic materials to museums. Though selling artifacts was an important source of income, film recordings offered an alternative. In its solicitory letter, Express Films offered Koch-Grünberg a share from the profits from the sale of his films and free-of-charge use of the films for his lectures after his return (Express Films to T. Koch-Grünberg, 31 March 1911, VK Mr, A10). In addition, Express Films emphasized that its association with Raleigh and Roberts guaranteed Koch-Grünberg a distribution network that could sell his films to all "cultured nations" (*Kulturstaaten*) (Express Films to T. Koch-Grünberg, 22 November 1910, VK Mr, A10). To emphasize the company's reputation in the distribution of expedition films, Express Films referred to two expeditions in which the company was involved: the German-Arctic-Airship Expedition of Prince Heinrich of Prussia (1910) and the second Freiburg expedition by Odo. D. Tauern and Karl Deninger to the Molucca Islands (1911–1912). Koch-Grünberg could hardly refuse if he did not want to lag behind his colleagues or be considered old-fashioned.

For ethnographic museums and film companies ethnographic film recordings were no less attractive. Ethnographers usually worked for museums that were continuously concerned with new strategies to attract the public to their displays and exhibitions (Penny, 2002). To attract the broad

public, German museum policy at the turn of the century put much emphasis on didactic displays (*Schausammlungen*) rather than scientific displays (*Lehrsammlungen*) that addressed the interests of the academic or specialized visitor. In this didactic context, the production and exhibition of films made by one of the museum's employees or associates improved a museum's public image and supported its position in the competitive museum landscape (Fuhrmann, 2008).

For film companies, nonfiction films, such as ethnographic footage, were especially important. As Martin Taureg (1983) has observed, a major influence on German ethnographic filmmaking was the cinema reform movement and its emphasis on film as a didactic medium. Reformers emphasized cinema's educational and informational value, warning that watching *Schundfilme* (trash films) was leading to the moral and ethical decay of German society, and especially of German youth. Therefore, reformers favored nonfiction films, such as technical, geographic, folklorist, and ethnographic films (Hake, 1993:27–42). There is no direct evidence of intellectual exchanges between reformers and ethnographers but due to ethnography's academic reputation, a close collaboration between film companies and ethnographers conferred prestige on production companies. New spectacular films depicting unknown regions of the world added to the companies' academic and educational image in the public imagination, which consequently improved the companies' market position. To guarantee the future supply of ethnographic films, Express Films included a paragraph in Koch-Grünberg's contract that obligated him to the company for five years after his return if he undertook other expeditions (Express Films to T. Koch-Grünberg, 31 March 1911, VK Mr, A10).

While Koch-Grünberg showed his films on several occasions and was a film lecturer until the 1920s, he remained unconvinced of the value of film as a new research tool. In correspondence with Fritz Krause on the eve of the First World War, both ethnographers voiced doubts about cinematography's potential in ethnographic observation. Wrote Krause:

What you write about the Kino [movie camera] is almost identical to what I think about it. I would use one only if I got an offer from a company, but I do not know if they are still doing this kind of thing. There would be only a few useful scientific images anyway. In most cases films remain more or less a device to illustrate and embellish lectures about our journeys. We have yet to make use of them in a scientific way. (Fritz Krause to T. Koch-Grünberg, 8 February 1914, VK Mr, A14. Author's translation)

Koch-Grünberg's disappointment and dissatisfaction with film was reinforced by Express Films' communication of 14 May 1914 that his films could hardly be sold because, in contrast to sensational dramas and comedies, didactic films and scenics received little attention (Express Films to T. Koch-Grünberg, 14 May 1914, VK Mr, A16). He became quite critical of the new medium because film did not seem to fulfill the ethnographers' expectation that it could produce ethnographic knowledge. In this respect, the German situation parallels Alison Griffiths's findings concerning the emergence of ethnographic filmmaking in US early cinema. She notes that after enthusiastically embracing film as a new research tool, "[f]or most ethnographers, anthropology's

faith in the written word closed the door to exploring cinema's potential as an ethnographic tool" (Griffiths, 2002:xxv): "These paradigmatic shifts within anthropology left cinema somewhat adrift by the teens and twenties, forcing ethnographic film to continuously reinvent itself for much of the first half of twentieth century" (Griffith, 2002:xxvi). Griffiths points to early ethnographic film's ambivalent position between popular culture and nineteenth-century anthropology, between "popular appeal and scientific rigor" (Griffiths, 2002:xxiii). The titles for films that Gotthart and Koch-Grünberg shot support her observations: they indicate that Express Films could address a very broad audience with the expedition's footage. The aesthetic of the films, however, shows that ethnographers also had little chance to distinguish their films from popular nonfictions.

Nonfiction films were based on what Gunning (1997:14) calls the "view" aesthetic. The view is the *Urform* of early nonfiction film and informs, for example, all early travelogues, the most common film form in early cinema to depict foreign regions and their people. A view does not simply unfold as a landscape in front of the viewers' eyes, but "mimes the act of looking and observing" so that "[t]he camera literally acts as tourist, spectator or investigator" (Gunning, 1997:15). The audience's pleasure in watching a view on the screen also lay in the "surrogate of looking" (Gunning, 1997:15). The titles of Gotthart's films suggest that his travelogues from South America gave the audience an opportunity to enjoy this "view" aesthetic, to become virtual travelers and see unknown regions and, for example, follow daily life in the Amazon city of Manaus.

As an academic scholar, Koch-Grünberg was not interested in visual entertainment but in producing ethnographic knowledge. However, in the tradition of the "view" aesthetic his films were quite similar to Gotthart's travelogues:

"Views" tend to carry the claim that the subject filmed either pre-existed the act of filming (a landscape, a social custom, a method of work) or would have taken place even if the camera had not been there (a sporting event, a funeral, a coronation), thus claiming to capture a "view" of something that maintains a large degree of independence from the act of filming it. (Gunning, 1997:14)

In his correspondence with Krause, Koch-Grünberg considers his films an "embellishment" of a lecture. What he, like many of his colleagues, did not realize was that his films operated in the same aesthetic paradigm as popular travelogues. This significant aesthetic quality illustrates surviving footage of Koch-Grünberg's films in *Aus dem Leben der Taulipang in Guayana—Filmdokumente aus dem Jahre 1911* [Life among the Taulipang of Guiana—Film Documents from the Year 1911].<sup>12</sup> In the film one sees Koch-Grünberg sitting on a little stool smiling at the camera and apparently introducing the cinematographic apparatus to the Taulipang people. The exhibitionist gesture of Koch-Grünberg in this shot (see Figure 3) is reminiscent of a performer in an early cinematographic vaudeville act, in which the audience is acknowledged through the look into the camera that breaks down the realistic illusion of film and acknowledges the film spectators' presence.<sup>13</sup> For this kind of direct address, film historian Tom Gunning has introduced the notion of the "cinema of attractions" (Gunning, 1990:56). This dominated early cinema until 1906



FIGURE 3

Theodor Koch-Grünberg in Koimélemong (Brazil). Snapshot from DVD: *Aus dem Leben der Taulipang in Guyana—Filmdokumente aus dem Jahre 1911* [Life among the Taulipang of Guiana—Film Documents from the Year 1911] (Signatur: D 856). IWF Wissen und Medien gGmbH, Göttingen.



and was a cinema of showing and less of telling stories that “directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and surprisingly pleasure through an exciting spectacle—a unique event, whether fictional or documentary, that is of interest in itself” (Gunning, 1990:56).

What the viewer would see in Koch-Grünberg’s ethnographic film recordings were not, of course, staged attractions, though one could argue that certain scenes like *Fadenspiele* (cat’s cradle) definitely incited a visual curiosity (see also Hempel, 2009:205). Koch-Grünberg’s film offers “views” that form part of the cinema of attractions but make a “greater claim to recording an event of natural or social history” (Gunning, 1997:14). Though the succeeding shots in the film are not of the standard of a professional cinematographer the position of the camera and framing capture views of events that maintain “a large degree of independence from the act of filming it” (Gunning, 1997:14): crop or manioc processing, manufacturing of a hammock, cat’s cradles, badminton, and the Parischerá dance. The Parischerá dance is the perfect example of a view of a social event. It puts the viewer in the privileged position of putting a natural event and its location on display. Though the shot requires academic contextualization to be understood ethnographically, it visually speaks for itself: a visual spectacle that can be looked at.

How to explain the aesthetic similarity among a travelogue, an attraction, and ethnographic shots? Popular cinema was a training ground for German ethnographers, as a small handbook of ethnographic filmmaking from Rudolf Pöch shows. Pöch (n.d., Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv) apparently wrote this handbook in the 1910s, and in it he demonstrates familiarity with early film aesthetics.<sup>14</sup> His technical recommendations incorporate an aesthetic dimension, and he suggests that anthropological filmmakers, beyond thinking about how to shoot “wirksame” (effective or striking) images, take time to attend local cinemas and watch films. The films follow Gunning’s “view” aesthetic: nonfiction films like single-shot “views” and multi-shot “views” like the travelogue.

Koch-Grünberg's remark about ethnographic films: that they simply embellish a lecture, points to a second neglected topic in the discussion of early ethnographic filmmaking: the role of distribution. Ethnographic filmmaking was not only a question of production—how to shoot and produce ethnographic films that overcame their embellished character—but also one of distribution—how to distribute and sell films outside the familiar film-lecture mode. For Koch-Grünberg and Krause, ethnographic film recordings around 1914 seemed to remain incomprehensible without the ethnographers' word and could not exist without an explanatory lecture. Limited knowledge about early ethnographic film only allows a provisional answer at this stage of my research, but narrativity and dramatization became the loophole for ethnographers as Koch-Grünberg's records show. It does not come as a surprise that with his last film project, Koch-Grünberg was aiming at producing a documentary feature film that had all the ingredients of a thrilling exotic encounter.

### **IN SEARCH OF THE GERMAN NANOOK**

Before his last expedition with the American geographer Alexander Hamilton Rice to the Amazon in 1924, Koch-Grünberg corresponded extensively with his Swiss colleague Felix Speiser.<sup>15</sup> Like Koch-Grünberg and Hamilton Rice, Speiser was planning an expedition to Brazil and wanted to hire Koch-Grünberg for the expedition. Speiser had a very pragmatic idea how to cover most of the expedition's cost: the production and selling of a popular ethnographic expedition film. Speiser felt that a film expedition provided opportunities beyond pure scientific interest and ironically commented on his film plans: "First of all, the audience seems to want wildlife pictures (for ethnography they are not yet educated) and so we surely want to film some old tapir or a boa" (F. Speiser to T. Koch-Grünberg, 1 December 1923, VK Mr, A35. Author's translation).

Speiser had no doubt that well-produced films would sell. Koch-Grünberg realized that a successful feature expedition film could at least alleviate his personal financial situation as he had just resigned his secure position as director of the Stuttgart Linden Museum and had to be sure that his family would be supported during the time he was on the expedition with Hamilton Rice. A contract for a feature film would be one possible solution (T. Koch-Grünberg to F. Speiser, 12 December 1923, VK Mr, A35. Author's translation). Scientifically Koch-Grünberg's considerations came at a time in which Germany was dealing with the shrinking of its colonial possessions and rethinking its place in the world (Buschmann, 2009). A successful film project would have consolidated not only Koch-Grünberg's reputation but also would have raised the profile of German ethnography worldwide.

In April 1924, two months before his departure, Koch-Grünberg again contacted Hamilton Rice to remind him that film was "absolutely necessary" on the expedition. If Hamilton Rice agreed, Koch-Grünberg would bring a film team to Brazil (T. Koch-Grünberg to A. Hamilton Rice, 2 April 1924, VK Mr, A37. Author's translation). To be on the safe side, Koch-Grünberg tried to revive his old connections at Express Films to obtain their assistance for the expedition. However Hamilton Rice disagreed, and wrote that he would come to Brazil with his own film team.<sup>16</sup> Koch-Grünberg countered with an alternative option and pressed Hamilton Rice for half

of the net profit of the European film sales and distribution (T. Koch-Grünberg to A. Hamilton Rice, 2 April 1924, VK Mr, A37). To Speiser, Koch-Grünberg admitted that asking for 50 percent was rather presumptuous but “one shouldn’t be too modest with these Americans and finally it would be me who ‘directs’ the film” (T. Koch-Grünberg to F. Speiser, 17 April 1924, VK Mr, A37. Author’s translation).

Speiser’s enthusiasm was an important motivation for Koch-Grünberg insisting on making film recordings on Hamilton Rice’s expedition. A second reason was the impact of Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* (1922), which had premiered in Germany in February 1924 and received overwhelmingly positive reviews. The Berlin film journal *Lichtbild-Bühne* wrote that Flaherty deserved a memorial for his film as it did not simply show things but let the audience participate in the life of its protagonist (Dr. M., 1924). Koch-Grünberg saw *Nanook* in April 1924. He was unimpressed and wrote to Felix Speiser: “Yesterday I saw Nanuk [sic]. Very Nice!—but a film like this can easily be compiled over there” (T. Koch-Grünberg to F. Speiser, 17 April 1924, VK Mr, A37. Author’s translation).

Koch-Grünberg never realized his film project of a German South American *Nanook*.<sup>17</sup> He died of malaria in the first weeks of Hamilton’s Rice’s expedition. One can only speculate on what he thought about Flaherty’s *Nanook*. Did he consider it a scholarly ethnographic film or a popular didactic film? Did he believe film was a “money-making-machine” that would relieve the ethnographer from his continuous struggle for public funding? Is it possible that he saw in *Nanook* a template for German ethnographic film in the 1920s? Could a German *Nanook* be the missing link in German museum policy on how to adequately address the public? If so, film would no longer have been just a device to illustrate and embellish a lecture as it had been previously. The film’s dramatic narrative structure was a self-contained ethnographic lecture that could be shown in museums and successfully distributed and sold to the public cinemas.

## CONCLUSION

Too little is known about the different early national ethnographic cinemas to underwrite Griffiths’s (2002) observation that the development of early ethnographic filmmaking in the United States reflects an international trend. However, Griffiths’s study challenges scholars to examine historical developments in the international and national context in a way that may offer alternative answers or important detours in early film practice and provide a more complex understanding of the history of visual anthropology.

Koch-Grünberg’s relation to ethnographic filmmaking in his career as an ethnographer shows that ethnographic film expeditions meant very different things at different times to different people. His first film expedition was the result of a close collaboration between himself and a film company that guaranteed a wide circulation of the ethnographer’s work in public while exploiting his expeditions in more than one way. A welcome side effect of the expedition was the production of films that documented the exoticness of the region and offered the company an additional income. His plans for his last film expedition must be read against the background of German

ethnography's precarious research situation after the colonial losses and the growing popularity of documentary feature films at the box offices. Koch-Grünberg imagined that having a similar success to Robert Flaherty would have offered him financial stability and would have made him, at least temporarily, independent from the academic job market. Although he could not realize his project, shooting a thrilling Amazon expedition became a popular subject for later filmmakers like Otto Schulz-Kampffhenkel (Stoecker, this volume). His Amazon expedition film *Rätsel der Urwaldhöhle* [Riddle of Hell's jungle] (1938) is an example of the blatant exploitation of the expedition subject for the promotion of fascist ideology. A nuanced study of the close contact among ethnographers, film companies, and the popular media might fill in some lacunae and provide insights into the complex development of ethnographic film in the first decades of its practice.

## NOTES

1. Theodor Koch-Grünberg's papers are kept in the Ethnological Collection of the Department of Ethnology at the Philipps-Universität Marburg. I would like to thank Barbara Albert of the Ethnological Collection for giving me access to Koch-Grünberg's legacy.
2. Alexander Hamilton Rice, Jr. (1875–1956) was professor of geography at Harvard University and founder and director of the Harvard Institute of Geographical Exploration. Hamilton Rice had married a rich widow and heiress, Eleanor Widener, and was thus able to afford the latest technology for his expeditions, including shortwave radios and submachine guns. On his Amazon expedition with Koch-Grünberg, Rice used the first hydroplane to explore the upper reaches of the Branco/Uraricoera Rivers. Hamilton Rice was seen as a rival to British explorer Percy Harrison Fawcett in the search for the Amazonian Eldorado (Grann, 2009).
3. Piauxt gives no further information about this encounter. The Haddon Collection at the Cambridge University Library contains no correspondence about this meeting. I would like to thank Alison Griffiths for her assistance in this matter.
4. Rudolf Pöch was von Luschan's assistant in Berlin from 1900 to 1901.
5. The relation between phonograph and movie images is far more complex. Records suggest that ethnographers had been thinking of the simultaneous presentation of sound and image right from the beginning of cinematography's first use.
6. The manual was re-edited in 1908 and 1914.
7. The best example is Koch-Grünberg's personal copy, which includes many handwritten side remarks.
8. This suggests a comparison of the contracts of the Colonial Office of the years 1906 and 1907. The contractual nature between the Colonial Office and ethnographers can be one explanation why more ethnographic material from the German colonies has survived than commercial or amateur footage.
9. A third "film expedition" was led by Count Adolf Friedrich zu Mecklenburg to Cameroon in 1907–1908. The expedition was not directly coordinated by the Commission but received strong support from it.
10. The same goes for Richard Thurnwald's collaboration with the Berlin Internationale Kinematographen und Lichteffect-Gesellschaft for his expedition to the South Seas from 1906–1909, or Karl Weule's contact with the Ernemann film company on his East Africa Expedition 1906–1907.
11. Hermann August Heinrich Meyer (1871–1932) was the youngest son of the well-known Leipzig publisher Hermann Julius Meyer. He studied anthropology and ethnology in the German cities of Straßburg (modern Strasbourg, France), Berlin, and Jena, then started his career as an explorer with his first Xingu Expedition to Brazil in 1895. Meyer never pursued a professional career as an ethnologist but concentrated, due to his influence and wealth, on the support of private colonies in Brazil, such as Neu-Württemberg (today Panambi) in Rio Grande de Sul, which he founded in August 1898.
12. *Aus dem Leben der Taulipang in Guayana—Filmdokumente aus dem Jahre 1911* [*Life among the Taulipang of Guiana—Film documents from the Year 1911*] was edited in 1962 and is probably not completely identical with the original footage.
13. Characteristic examples are the films of French filmmaker, Georges Méliès, e.g., *Les Cartes Vivantes* (1904), in which the magician, played by Méliès himself, constantly communicates with the film audience through eye contact.
14. I would like to thank Dr. Susanne Ziegler from the Phonogram-Archive at the Museum of Ethnology in Berlin who drew my attention to this document.

15. Felix Speiser (1880–1949) is a founding figure in Swiss ethnology. He studied ethnology in Berlin under the supervision of von Luschan (1907–1908) and became Switzerland's first associate professor of ethnology in 1917. Besides his expedition to the Aparai Indians in Brazil in 1924, Speiser is mainly known for his fieldwork in the New Hebrides (1910–1912) and Melanesia (1929–1931) (Dietschy, 1949; Gosden and Knowles, 2001:101–29).

16. A total of 2,600 feet of the Hamilton Rice expedition film are archived at the Human Studies Film Archives at the Smithsonian Institution. Footage of the expedition was released in 1925 under the title *No rastro do Eldorado*. The film was shot by a key figure in Brazilian cinema history, Silvino Santos (1886–1970). Rice probably chose Santos for his lengthy cinematographic experience of filming in the Amazon region. In 1922 Santos became world famous for his documentary *No país das amazonas* (Vale da Costa, 2004:496–498).

17. In contrast to Koch-Grünberg, Speiser did realize his film project; however, his film from 1924 was only released in 1945 under the title *Yopi: Chez les Indiens du Brésil* (Speiser, CH 1924/1945).

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