

English Summary

This dissertation primarily aims to synoptically place the theme of audiovisual representations of indigenous cultures within the context of cultural studies. With its interdisciplinary overlapping, the cultural studies approach is well suited to understanding the complex significance of visual representations of culture, which are both cultural artefacts and cultural interpretations and have an impact that is as artistic as it is scientific and political.

The first part of the work describes the manner in which native cultures are audio-visually represented, especially in ethnographic photographs and films which emerged in the North American and European context. The mapping of “exotic others” intensified with the first modern overseas discoveries, first by means of exhibitions of living natives, illustrations and figurines, later through photographs, films and videos. These representations were significantly influenced by the socio-cultural conditions in which they arose. As late as the turn of the 20th century, there was a dominating conviction about the capability of photographs to present an objective record of reality. This technology was therefore used as an instrument for recording and classifying physical and cultural differences. The widespread acceptance of the doctrine of cultural relativism and the tragedy of the First and Second World War, however, cast doubt on evolutionary schemes, which was reflected in a much broader range of illustrating the “other”. A major breakthrough was seen in the 1960’s, during which ethnographic filmmakers and photographers (and social scientists) started to endeavour towards the participation of their subjects in the resultant image. Social sciences and motion picture depictions of native nations were further influenced by the reflective approach to surveying cultures. Thus, at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries, audiovisual projects openly confronting the subjectivity of the filmmaker with the reality of “the other” are ever more frequent.

The second part of the text describes the growing phenomenon of native media, focusing mainly on film and video creation. Since the 1970’s, influenced by decolonisation and changes in the political setting, native nations have started to become more politically involved. Among others, they have tried to communicate their own view of their cultures. Native media has thus played a significant role in the shaping and communication of cultural identity and the cultural-political demands of indigenous nations. The work presents an overview of key themes which connect native production especially in North and South America and Australia: a record of tradition, loss of cultural memory, relationship to language and traditional territory, and social problems. The chapter with an in-depth focus on the audiovisual creations of Alaskan natives clearly shows that the themes and aesthetic form of native documentary films and videos are in several cases highly similar to the ethnographic films mentioned in this work. Also mentioned are specific methods of using films and videos for preserving traditions and renewing solidarity with the past. Despite limited financial and distributional possibilities, more than four decades of the existence and development of native cinematography, television, and numbers

of festivals, conferences and internet portals bear witness to the active approach of native cultures to their audiovisual representations. These autonomic cultural images cast doubt on the assumption that cultural traditions must necessarily give way to global civilisation and technological development.