

Ethnographic Film-Making and Ethnography in Irian Jaya (Papua)

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Abstract

This paper summarizes some current issues in ethnographic film-making, relating them to the author's experiences doing five anthropological films about Indonesia, including three award-winning films in Irian Jaya (Papua), one in Mentawai, and one edited film about Indonesian art objects. Film media can encode ethnographic and linguistic evidence not easily recorded in any other medium. In addition, the production of commercial documentaries can provide substantial resources for ethnographic fieldwork, while both footage and sound-track present many opportunities for follow-up analyses. Though many classic and important ethnographic films have been made in Central and Eastern Indonesia, the potential for substantive follow-up studies is rarely built into documentary film design, nor was it expected by Indonesia's Ministry of Information. This paper suggests means of encouraging such film-supported research, especially in Maluku Utara and Irian Jaya, and suggests better integration of this medium in future co-sponsored scientific endeavors.