A Tricky Start. The First Decade of Ethnographic Cinema.

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Abstract

The earliest encounters between cinema and anthropology occurred while the former was taking its first steps and the latter was trying to better define its disciplinary profile. Among the first to be involved was the Frenchman Félix Regnault, an investigator of many topics and a lifelong supporter of the importance of ethnographic cinema. Racial differences were at the center of his interests, although attempts to highlight them yielded contradictory results. Some years later, the Britain Alfred C. Haddon brought a camera with him on the legendary Cambridge expedition to the Torres Strait (1898) and recorded a few films. The third example discussed here is that of Baldwin Spencer, who, together with Francis Gillen, included the filming of native ceremonies in his studies on the indigenous populations of Central Australia. Not only did technical and logistical problems trouble the start of ethnographic cinema. The theoretical framework of social evolutionism was weakening and anthropology was turning more and more to the study of language, kinship and belief systems. Here the contribution that cinema could make seemed temporarily to be in question.

Keywords

Fieldwork anthropology, cinema, race.

1. Chronophotography: "*documents d'une certitude absolue*"

In 1912 the anthropologist and polymath Félix Regnault reminisced about having drawn attention, as early as 1895, to the potential role of chronophotography in the study of man. He

believed that as part of one's fieldwork it was urgent to record ethnographic films for research and teaching purposes, but unfortunately this recent invention was still considered to be only a form of popular amusement, which no scientific society was inclined to take seriously. Therefore no effort was made to document in moving pictures remote and still little studied cultures. Yet travelers were carrying still and cinematic cameras with them more and more frequently and advantage could have been taken of this to request that they deposit in a "musée de l'État" a copy of films containing ethnographic scenes. Pending the creation of such a museum, the Société d'anthropologie de Paris should have started to gather their own collection of chronophotographs.[1] Indeed, as Regnault recalled, in 1900 the International Congress of Ethnography, which had just met in Paris, issued the following recommendation: "Ethnography museums should include chronophotographs in their collections. It is not enough to show a loom, a lathe, javelins, etc., it is also necessary to see how to use them. But one can only know this in a precise way by means of chronophotography."[2]

As Regnault wrote in 1922, when it first appeared chronophotography was regarded as little more than a fascinating but imperfect toy, but by now cinema had become a powerful instrument and an art form whose results were universally admired, although its true inventor was still under dispute. Recent attempts to reconstruct its short history seemed erroneous or insufficient to the French ethnographer, so he tried in a few succinct pages to impose order on the sequence of developments, drawing on various sources: documents, notes and other handwritten articles, patents etc. As with all great innovations, cinema did not owe its existence to a single stroke of genius, but to a series of progressive discoveries. Creative individuals working in no less than seven different areas contributed to the perfection of the techniques required to produce a film: *inspirateurs*,

[1] Félix Regnault, "Un musée de films," *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris* VI[e] série, 3 (1912): 95-96. Two substantial chapters – which I recommend for a more detailed analysis – are dedicated to Regnault by Fatimah Tobing Rony in *The Third Eye. Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle* (Durham-London: Duke University Press, 1996), 21-73.

[2] "Les musées d'ethnographie devraient annexer à leurs collections des chronophotographies. Il ne suffit pas de posséder un métier à tisser, un tour, des javelots, etc., il faut encore savoir la manière de s'en servir. Or on ne peut le connaître d'une manière précise qu'au moyen de la chronophotographie," Id., "La chronophotographie dans l'Ethnographie," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris* V[e] Série, 1 (1900): 422. Together with the "phonogrammes" made by Léon Azoulay, chronophotographs would offer "documents d'une certitude absolue […] permettant de rendre l'ethnographie une science précise."

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précurseurs, *initiateurs*, *l'inventeur*, *perfectionneurs*, *les metteurs en point*, *finisseurs*, *directeurs ou animateurs*.

Moreover, to avoid confusion Regnault distinguished between *cinéma 1* (d'analyse or cinématographe), which recorded a sequence of movements by breaking them down into still photographic images, and *cinéma 2* (de synthèse or cinématoscope), which recomposed movement to create an animated show. Examples of *cinéma 2* were already being produced in the first half of the 19th century using optical devices designed to produce the illusion of movement. For *cinéma* 1 to be realized, the *initiateurs chimistes* had to discover reagents sensitive enough to allow rapid photography. Thanks to their work, in 1878 Eadweard Muybridge was able to capture the phases of a galloping horse by placing a battery of cameras along a straight path. He then turned his analytical eye to human movement. A few years later Étienne-Jules Marey began to experiment with his *fusil photographique* and presented the great news of the technique he had developed for *chronophotographie* to the Académie des sciences.

Regnault's aim in 1922 was to designate Marey, who had been pursuing the progressive improvement of the *chronophotographe* in the 1880s and succeeded in obtaining a patent in 1893, as the true "père du cinéma":

> He has broadened the vision of man across the arc of time, just as the microscope had enlarged it in space. His device increases the visibility of movements, just as the microscope had increased the visibility of shapes. It allows one to see the infinitely small in time, just as the microscope allows one to see the infinitely small in space. It will become the instrument of the physiologist, as the microscope is the instrument of the histologist.[3]

Nevertheless, Marey's ingenious apparatus still had shortcomings that were finally overcome with the introduction of the eccentric cam by Georges Demenÿ, an assistant who had been dismissed by

[3] "Il agrandit la vision humaine dans le temps, comme le microscope l'avait agrandi dans l'espace. Son appareil augmente la visibilité des mouvements comme le microscope avait augmenté la visibilité des formes. Il permet de voir l'infiniment petit dans le temps, comme le microscope a permit de voir l'infinement petit dans l'espace. Il deviendra l'instrument du physiologiste comme le microscope est l'instrument de l'hystologiste." Id., "L'évolution du cinéma," *Revue scientifique* 60 (1922), 79-85, p. 81. A few months after the Lumière brothers' first public screening, Regnault had already drawn up a significant genealogical list; see his "Le cinématographe," *L'Illustration*, n° 2779, 30 mai 1896, 446-47. According to Frank Kessler and Sabine Lenk, that list became "par la suite le canon des «précurseurs» et «inventeurs» du cinema": "L'écriture de l'histoire au present. Débuts de l'historiographie du cinema," *Cinémas. Revue d'histoire cinématographique*, 21/2-3 (2011): 27-47, p. 29.

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Marey on the charge of having appropriated one of his own ideas that had not yet become operational. Despite his devotion to his mentor, Regnault attributed the authorship of one decisive improvement to Demenÿ, who had found a way to capture intermittent movement on film. But this innovation still concerned only *cinéma 1* – the technique of recording moving pictures – while the transition to *cinéma 2* took place when other protagonists entered the scene, namely Thomas Alva Edison and the Lumière brothers, who developed their own ideas and patents for the projection of films.

In parallel, as early as September 1894, Edison's assistants William Dickson and William Heise had filmed a group of Sioux Indians (brought by Buffalo Bill) at the Black Maria Studio (West Orange, New Jersey) performing a ghost dance and a buffalo dance on a small wooden stage. Dissatisfaction with the recording in such an artificial location of two traditional dances led the Manufacturing Company, a few years later, to shoot three short silent films of snake dances in an authentic Arizona context, and again in 1901 other dances in a Hopi community at Walpi. Edison's somewhat racist interest in exoticism transpires from these rudimentary products, which had a decidedly commercial objective.[4] While Marey the scientist – "ce bourguignon, vif, gai, bienveillant et fin" – may have invented the technique of cinema, it was entrepreneurs like Edison who successfully applied it to create a form of popular entertainment. The French physiologist had no need for complex and expensive equipment to put his invention to practical use: Regnault remembered having worked in his atelier, where he had the assistance of two simple mechanics and the occasional student.[5] And in his view the Institut Marey, established in 1901 next to the Station physiologique at the Bois de Boulogne to standardize Marey's cinematic equipment and methods, should have become a pilgrimage site for cinema's many fans.

[4] See Daniel Bernardi and Michael Green, *Race in American Film. Voices and Visions that Shaped a Nation,* Volume 1: A-F (Santa Barbara – Denver: Greenwood, 2017), 148-50, 451-452.

[5] Ibid., p. 84. Of course the story Regnault told in few pages was decidedly partial, in the double meaning of both incomplete and biased. Regnault mentioned Edison's kinetoscope whose workings had been demonstrated at a private preview in London, in October 1894, but he failed to discuss its developments in Britain and elsewhere; see Richard Brown and Barry Anthony, *The Kinetoscope. A British History* (East Barnet: John Libbey, 2017).

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After Marey's death, *cinéma 1* was no longer systematically used in scientific research, and attention focused on *cinéma 2*, mainly as a toy to entertain the public. Nevertheless the former did offer significant advantages, first of all by providing an exact and permanent visual record for those engaged in the study of movement, material that could be broken down into a series of images to be examined at will. Regnault suggested that *cinema 1* could eliminate the "facteur personnel" represented by memory, which was notoriously unreliable, and most sciences could have benefited from such an efficient instrument, as he had himself had done in Marey's laboratory more than a quarter of century earlier. At the time he applied chronophotography to the "Physiologie ethnique comparée", by which he meant the study of the movements proper to different races: "To climb trees, walk, run, carry things, take hold hold and manipulate objects with one's feet, etc.". As a research tool, cinema could also give the ethnographer a precise picture of the evolution of human crafts, as in the case of the manufacture of pottery, which Regnault had been able to film.[6]

During an address delivered the following year at a conference of the Association française pour l'avancement des sciences (1923) Regnault lamented the state of abandonment suffered by ethnographic museums in France, which were being endowed with fewer and fewer resources. This was the situation just when these institutions, thanks to the new instruments of cinematic photography and the phonograph, were in a position to gain fresh importance and become the indispensable laboratory for the elaboration of a new science of man. Material artifacts already existed, for instance various kinds of utensils, but simply to view them (or photographs of them) was not enough, if how they were used remained unclear and films provided the solution to this problem. The anthropologist had the opportunity to film feasts, fights, religious and civil

[6] "Grimper aux arbres, marcher, courir, porter, saisir et manier les objets avec les pieds, etc." Félix Regnault, "L'histoire du cinéma. Son rôle en anthropologie," *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie*, VII série, 3 1922: 61-5, p. 64. Many decades earlier, in his medical thesis Regnault had duly stressed the need to eliminate "le facteur personnel" from science by means of objective measurements, which positivistic epistemology claimed to be a guarantee of scientific impartiality. In that circumstance he was referring to the morphological examination of heads or skulls, declaring a debt of gratitude to the methods introduced by Paul Broca: "Autant d'individus autant d'impressions différentes, tel trouvera gros ce qu'un autre trouvera moyen, tel long ce qui à un autre semblera court, car ici il n'y a pas de point de repère fixe, de commune mesure; au contraire, du moment où un observateur saura mesurer, ses différentes mesures auront une valeur rigoreuse, seront comparables entre elles et comparable à celles de tout autre observateur." in Id., *Des altérations cranienne dans le rachitisme* (Paris: Steinheil, 1988), 12.

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ceremonies, daily activities such as trading, cooking, eating, resting etc., and these records could be easily studied. In fact, no detail escaped the camera, while a single observer, however conscientious, could not have grasped them all. The phonograph offered similar advantages for those studying languages, music and songs. More than twenty years earlier Léon Azoulay had collected recorded valuable phonograms that unfortunately were destined to languish forgotten in the attics of the Société d'anthropologie.[7]

In 1923 Regnault still clung to Auguste Comte's optimistic dream that sociology might be elected queen of the sciences with a view to the creation of a genuine "politique scientifique". Born in 1863, Regnault's cultural grounding took place at a time when the "philosophie positive" laid out by Comte in the 1830s still had a strong hold in France. The following year he visited the ethnographic museum of Tervuren, near Brussels, which was dedicated to the Belgian Congo. He praised the excellence of its set-up, the richness of the collections and the effectiveness of the guided tours which, in a reflection of the times, patriotically disseminated a colonialist world view. Nevertheless, Regnault could not resist the temptation to complain about the paucity of filmed material and phonograms in the museum's collection:

> There are those who have complained to me regarding the difficulty of getting them in these distant countries, and I recognize that without the help of a specialist, or if he has not done a short apprenticeship himself, it is difficult for an ethnographer to produce them. I persist in my conviction of the need for such a collection, if only to clarify the use of the objects that one is collecting. […] It would be interesting to have museums in Paris like those in Belgium, devoted to each of our great colonies. It would be somewhat like a colonial exhibition, but permanent.[8]

[7] Félix Regnault, "Films et musées d'ethnographie," *Association française pour l'avancement des sciences. Conférences. Compte rendu de la 47e-session. Bordeaux 1923* (Paris: Masson et Cie, 1924), 680-1. See Léon Azoulay, "Sur la constitution d'un Musée phonographique," *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie* Ve série, 1 (1900), 222-6; Id., "Le Musée phonographique de la Société d'anthropologie," *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'Anthropologie* Ve série, 2 (1901), 327-30.

[8] "On m'a objecté la difficulté qu'il y a à les obtenir dans ces pays lointains, et je reconnais que sans l'aide d'un spécialiste, ou s'il n'a point fait lui-même un court apprentissage, il est difficile à un ethnographe de s'en procurer. Je persiste dans ma conviction de la nécessité d'une pareille collection, ne serait-ce que pour préciser l'usage des objets que l'on collectionne. […] Il serait intéressant qu'à Paris nous ayons comme en Belgique des musées coloniaux, distincts pour chacune de nos grandes colonies. Ce serait un peu comme une exposition coloniale, mais permanente." Félix Regnault, "Une visite au Musée du Congo belge," *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie* VII série, 5 (1924), 65-7.

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For 6 months in 1931 Paris hosted the Exposition coloniale internationale, which exalted the colonial conquests overseas of France and other nations, and attracted eight million visitors. The ethnographer – Regnault commented – became “l’homme du jour” thanks to the general public’s thirst to learnabout the customs, behaviors and ways of thinking of different human races. And once again he seized the opportunity to praise “le phonographe et le cinéma” for their unique value as objective research tools; the handful of films which he made in 1895 and placed for safekeeping at the Institut Marey were described and some frames were even placed on display.

As he noted, even the Parisian Exposition was lacking in visual and sound recordings, presenting only a plethora of dioramas “qui amusent le public mais sont insignifiants pour l’ethnographe.” Although the success of the Lumière brothers' shows had overshadowed the importance of cinema for scientific research, Regnault continued to predict optimistically that in the near future films and phonograms would become essential working materials for all those *savants* dealing with "les sciences noologiques", to use the term coined by André-Marie Ampère in 1834:

> […] thanks to them the psychologist, the ethnographer, the sociologist, the linguist, the folklorist, will collect all the behaviors of many ethnic groups in their laboratories and be able to recreate their lives at will for us to see. By analyzing, by measuring these *objective documents*, by comparing them, by classifying them, they will arrive at a determination of the methods which are most appropriate to their science and gain knowledge of the laws governing the human mentality. The ethnography museum with its collections of objects, films and phonograms will become their laboratory and their teaching center.[9]

Comte and Ampère were invoked almost as tutelary gods, Regnault remaining true to the 19th-century vision of anthropology throughout his life and apparently untouched by developments occurring in the first decades of the new century. Suffice it to recall that between 1918 and 1922 the American mineralogist Robert J. Flaherty shot two silent documentaries in Alaska on the life of the Eskimos, only the second of which enjoyed some success. Regnault probably would not have

[9] “[…] grâce a eux, le psychologue, l’ethnographe, le sociologue, le linguiste, le folkloriste, collectionneront dans leur laboratoires tous les comportements des nombreuses ethnies et pourront en évoquer à leur gré la vie. En analysant, en mesurant ces *documents objectifs*, en les comparant, en les sériant, ils arriveront à fixer les méthodes qui conviennent à leur science et à connaître les lois de la mentalité humaine. Le musée d’ethnographie avec ses collections d’objets, de films et de phonogrammes deviendra leur laboratoire et leur centre d’enseignement.” Félix Regnault, “Le rôle du cinema en ethnographie,” *La Nature*, 59 (1931): 304-6, p. 306.

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judged the filmmaker's approach to be sufficiently 'scientific', but he must have known that others at the turn of the century had been following in his own footsteps. Oddly enough, in order to assert the absolute necessity of cinema in ethnography, he had to revive the memory of his handful of experiments with cinematography dating back to 1895, as if haunted by a sort of 'pioneer' complex. Even more surprising is the fact that, despite his repeatedly proclaimed belief in the importance of filming as a research tool, he never reiterated or extended the practice, instead – as an inveterate eclectic – turning to other occupations .

2. Gait and bodily features

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In December 1895 Regnault gave a talk about the manufacture of raw pottery during a session of the Société d'Anthropologie. His colleague Joseph Lajard had taken photographs showing the practice in Egypt, while he presented a few *chronophotographies* taken using Marey's camera with the aid of Marey's assistant, Charles Comte. They portrayed a *négresse Ouolove* (Wolof of Senegal) modeling a pot *sans tour*, simply manipulating the clay with her hands, one to turn a shallow concave base and the other to shape the clay: "this practice is very unusual and has not yet, to my knowledge, been noted", illustrating the evolution from wheel-less to wheeled pottery.[10] The scene certainly deserved to be filmed and the smallest movements made by the woman studied with care. **(FIG 1)**

The *Ouolove* woman was one of four hundred *indigènes* exhibited during the Exposition Ethnographique de l'Afrique occidentale et orientale at the Champs-de-Mars, which turned out to be a golden opportunity for the young Regnault. He wrote an enthusiastic report of the event, emphasizing first of all the multiplicity and variety of the African races, which were as distinguishable from each other as an *Auvergnat* from a Sicilian. Half a dozen types – the main ones

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[10] "cette pratique est bien spéciale, et n'a pas, à ma connaissance, été noté jusqu'à present." Jacques Lajard, Félix Regnault, "Poterie crue et origine du tour," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie* IV série, 6 (1895): 734-9, p. 738.

represented in Paris – inhabited Senegal alone. He outlined some of them, firstly the Wolofs, "de beaux nègres d'un noir foncé, à la physionomie caractéristique", whose bodies and tall stature were much admired. In contrast, the Muslim *Peuls* of Sudan (Fula), already defeated by General Louis Faidherbe (later governor of Senegal) and finally forced to live in the city of Ségou in Mali, exhibited what were considered to be inferior characteristics. Further south, the population of the so-called Pays des Rivières, a prosperous region actively engaged in commerce, appeared to be more Caucasian in aspect, living on the edge of desert that the Tuareg people habitually traversed. The exhibition also included a Wolof albino, who had been mistaken for an example of *transformisme*, whereas Regnault considered him to be the simple result of a congenital pathology. He was pleased to provide a cheerful picture of everyday life in this human zoo, whose denizens engaged in the most varied of activities without any alteration from their lives in their original habitat: **(FIG 2)**

> In the village liveliness and gaiety reign. Everywhere the good-natured, character of the negro is displayed. They come to shake your hand, make friends, ask you for money in a laughing tone as if it were the most natural thing. […] Women are actively involved in the household; one cuts the meat into small pieces; others pound the grain in their large wooden mortar, a long and arduous job, and one hears the rhythmic fall of the heavy pestle at the same time as the clapping of hands to give themselves courage with each thump of the tool.[11]

All of them were dance fanatics, and among the most curious physical activities he studied was their way of climbing trees. Chronophotography had shown how a European normally climbs a tree, considered to be one of the best gymnastic exercises, because it is one in which all the muscles participate. The *grimpeur* alternately moves his upper and lower limbs in a process whose every phase Regnault carefully analyzed. The scanning of these photographs provided terms of comparison for a study of the peculiar climbing styles of savages. Instead of clinching the tree trunk

[11] "Dans le village règnent l'animation et la gaité. Partout le caractère nègre, bon enfant, s'étale. Ils vient vous serrer la main, faire camarades, vous demander des sous sur un ton rieur comme une chose naturelle. […] Les femmes s'occupent activement du ménage; celle-ci coupe la viande en petits morceaux; les autres pilent le grain dans leur grand mortier de bois, travail long et pénible, et on entend la chute cadencée du lourd pilon en même temps que le claquement des mains, à chaque descente de l'outil, pour se donner du courage." Félix Regnault, "Exposition ethnographique. L'Afrique occidentale au Champ-de-Mars à Paris. Sénégal et Soudan français," *La Nature* 23/1159 (1895): 183-6, p. 184.

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with flexed knees, most of them used their feet and hands, curving their bodies in an arch. To facilitate the ascent, they sometimes made use of a rope which they held in their hands after fastening their body to the tree: “on dirait une marche horizontale sur un arbre vertical”, in a technique that was practiced almost everywhere in Africa, but also in India, Australia, New Caledonia and even by the Andalusians, who climbed palm trees "à la manière du nègre" to harvest their leaves. Regnault went beyond passive seeing and filmed the agile and expert movements of a “nègre de la Gambie grimpeur” and also the jumping ability of Africans.[12] **(FIG. 3 a-b)**

Nevertheless, most of the *chronophotographies* of the Africans on exhibit at the Champ-de-Mars concerned their gait. It must be said that Regnault's interest in the topic of locomotion preceded his experiences at the Exposition ethnographique: not by chance two of his mentors had addressed this question, albeit differently. Marey’s *Analyse cinématique de la marche* – carried out by means of his photographic technique – had been presented at the Académie des Sciences in 1884 and subsequently, with the collaboration of Demenÿ, he had analyzed the acts of both jumping and running in various subjects.[13] For his part, Léonce Manouvrier recalled in 1887 that Paul Broca had already pointed out the flattening of the tibia "en lame de sabre" and the retroversion of its head as the most peculiar features of the bones of Les Eyzies, which at first sight bore a resemblance to the simian form. From an ethnological point of view, and after much anatomical reasoning, Manouvrier conjectured that the *platicnémie* developed among populations of hunters – especially in the Stone Age – who had to chase after prey on uneven terrain. Understandably, it very rarely existed in women, not at all in children, and was also structurally different from the analogous bones in

[12] Félix Regnault, “Le grimper,” *Revue encyclopédique* 7 (1896): 904-5. All of Regnault’s films are deposited at the Cinémathèque Française, Paris. It must be specified that “The sequences shot by Regnault were recorded onto strips of sensitised paper and could not therefore be projected. But his aim was not to make a film to show to an audience, but rather to assemble a series of sequences that could later be minutely inspected by academics interested in modes of locomotion.” (Paul Henley, *Beyond Observation. A History of Authorship in Ethnographic Film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 31.

[13] Etienne-Jules Marey, “Analyse cinématique de la marche,” *Comptes rendu des séances de l’Académie des Sciences* 98 (1884): 1218-25; Id. and Georges Demenÿ, “Locomotion humaine, mécanisme du saut,” *Comptes rendu des séances de l’Académie des Sciences* 101 (1885): 489-94; Id., “Mesure du travail mécanique effectué dans la locomotion,” ibid., 905-10; Id., “Variations du travail mécanique dépensé dans les différentes allures de l’homme,” ibid., 910-15; Id.,“Analyse cinématique de la course de l’homme,” *Comptes rendu des séances de l’Académie des Sciences* 103 (1886): 509-13.

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gorillas. In fact this anatomical peculiarity corresponded to a uniquely human function, which made possible the increased strength and activity of the posterior muscle of the leg.[14]

In the wake of Manouvrier's observations, Regnault emphasized that the flattening of the tibia stemmed from the so-called *marche en demi-flexion*, a particular way of walking to which he continued to pay close attention for a long time. To understand what it was about, it could be compared to ordinary walking *en extension*, which was usually and mistakenly believed to be the only possible way for humans to walk:

> In the manner of walking that is universally practiced today, the foot gradually detaches itself from the ground, from heel to toe, and rises to a fairly great height, the thigh being raised sharply. An exaggerated form of this step is engaged in by Prussian soldiers on parade. In contrast, when walking in half-flexion the foot detaches itself from the ground suddenly to move forward, the tibio-tarsal joint remains half-flexed over the foot and the thigh on the leg.[15]

The second type of gait was commonly practiced by farmers, especially in the mountains, and by savages – "les nègres principalement" – as well as by runners from Ceylon and India, and by soldiers exhausted from fatigue during a long march. Regnault relied on the authority of an army captain who had posited the superiority of the "pas gymnastique progressive", which in fact allowed soldiers to march faster with less effort. Why then had the advantageous *marche en demi-flexion* been abandoned by humans? The cause was the growing availability, over time, of carriage roads and various means of transport that made it less necessary to move quickly on foot over long distances. By contrast, prehistoric humans and present-day 'savages' had neither easy roads nor pack animals.

The gait generally practiced in modern times seemed undoubtedly more "noble"; it allowed the individual to maintain an upright posture without losing an inch of stature, and the dynamics of the

[14] Léonce Manouvrier, "La platycnémie chez l'homme et chez les singes," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris* III[e] série 10 (1887): 128-41.

[15] "Dans le genre de marche qui est aujourd'hui universellement pratiqué, le pied se détache progressivement du sol, du talon à la pointe, et s'élève à une hauteur assez grande, la cuisse se relevant fortement. L'exagération de cette marche est le pas de parade des soldats prussiens. Dans la marche en demi-flexion au contraire le pied se détache du sol d'un coup pour se porter en avant, l'articulation tibio-tarsienne reste à demi-fléchie sur le pied et la cuisse sur la jambe." Félix Regnault, "Des différentes manières de marcher," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris* IV[e] série, 4 (1893): 381-4, p. 381.

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steps resembled that of a horse in a walking gait. Prussian soldiers carried that to the extreme with the goose step in parades, undergoing superfluous fatigue: "un exercise national chez nos voisins" of which Regnault – obviously not being a Germanophile – reproduced a caricature. **(FIG. 4)** The gymnastic step required special training, during which one had to learn how to coordinate one's movement and breathing.[16]

With the aforementioned captain and *chef d'escadron* Albert-Charlemagne-Oscar de Raoul, Regnault explained in 1898 *Comment on marche*, insisting again on the superiority of the *mode en flexion*. In his introduction to their book, Marey posed the question as to why – given the advantages associated with that type of gait – it had not been universally adopted. It came down to a matter of conventional aesthetics, he argued; from childhood one learns that walking in a distinguished manner required that one keep the torso straight, the arms relatively still, and the legs well extended, effectively condemning one for life to the citizen's *marche élégante*. Nevertheless, if on the crowded streets of a city like Paris one will tend to imitate and follow the general movement, on open roads the goal becomes to reach one's destination as quickly as possible with minimal effort. And the book written by Regnault and de Raoul showed that people could, after just a few weeks of training, double or even triple their pace. On this subject physiology had a great deal to contribute by explaining the mechanisms of the various ways of walking, while chronophotography revealed all the movements that we unconsciously perform during the act of walking: "In this manner chronophotography tutors us in our movements, it shows us the ideal perfection that we must reach." Thus science and practice went hand in hand and triumphed over habit.[17] **(FIG. 5-6)**

Regnault's interest in studying gait patterns was quite original, in part because it was associated with his search for any possible racial implications. On the one hand, his findings

[16] Félix Regnault, "La marche et le pas gymnastique militaire," *La Nature* 21/2 (1893): 129-30; Id., "Du pas gymnastique," ibid, 22/1 (1894): 83-6.

[17] "Elle est, de cette manière, l'educatrice de nos movements, elle nous fait connaître la perfection idéale que nous devons atteindre." Félix Regnault, de Raoul, *Comment on marche. De divers modes de progression. De la superiorité du mode en flexion* (Paris: Charles-Lavauzelle, 1898), 7-8. See Andreas Mayer, *The Science of Walking. Investigations into Locomotion in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

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distinguished Europeans from other, so-called 'primitive' populations; at the same time the manner of walking of the latter was acknowledged to be functionally superior and presented as a model to be imitated. In fact, the question of race is often raised in Regnault's multifarious work. For instance, in 1892 during the period when he was still focused on craniology, he stole nineteen skulls from the cemetery of Chandernagor, a city in West Bengal. The deceased were all members of the lower castes – the only Bengalese who buried their dead – and he subjected their skulls to the usual measurements. After comparing his results with those obtained by other authors, he drew the conclusion that the Bengali race was not as distinct from more northern races as their linguistic differences (Dravidian vs. Aryan) might lead one to think. Notwithstanding the contrary advice of English officials, the Indians who had seen him take away the skulls showed indifference to his theft, and a local doctor assured him that according to their religion they were just bones without value, once the soul had departed from the body.[18]

In 1893, together with Léon Azoulay, Regnault presented a communication to the Société d'anthropologie about differences in tooth shape between races. In general the more 'primitive' had a more voluminous dentition, but particularly interesting was the fact that they seemed to share with apes a tendency of the lateral edges of the upper incisors to diverge from the root, creating a more or less triangular appearance. In comparison, among the more 'civilized' races, the lateral edges tend to run parallel with the crown of the tooth assuming a rectangular shape. Yet even among White people incisors "à forme simienne" could be found, or even teeth that resembled the superior type in some savage individuals. Measurements were also taken of the upper right incisors and a drawing made comparing the incisor of the gorilla, the African, and the Caucasian. **(FIG. 7)** Regnault and Azoulay noted that the shape of the incisors was dependent to a large degree on the configuration of the maxillary bone, and that maxillary prognathism increased the surface of the

[18] Félix Regnault, "Crânes d'Indiens du Bengale," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris* IV[e] série 3 (1892): 66-8.

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dental alveoli, allowing space for larger teeth with a wider cutting edge and no overlapping.[19]

The following year Regnault extended his research to the canine teeth, which – similarly to the incisors – are less wide at the collar than at the crown, as the table of measurements for different races made evident. Too few subjects had been examined – about fifty in all – but he nevertheless drew the conclusion that the crown of the canine is wider in the lower races. If this point of view alone was considered, it might seem that the shape of the canine differs more from that of the monkey in the 'lower' races. As a matter of fact, the gorilla's canine reaches its maximum width at the collar and from there tapers like an offensive weapon. However, his first impression was corrected by the observation that the tip of the human canine is sharper when the race is less advanced. In principle, the important thing was to emphasize data that served to differentiate between the races purely on the basis of anatomy, while remaining aware that some bodily features (such as flat or curved nails) were not connected with race. Since nail flattening was due to manual labor, Regnault noted in 1898 that a laterally curved shape was rightly believed to be characteristic of the leisured class, though he admitted that various indigenous populations (in Africa and Asia), also had quite refined hands and nails.[20]

The same was true of the prehensile foot, which on more than one occasion formed an object of study for him. For Europeans, accustomed to wearing footwear, the lower extremity had no other function than that of supporting bodily movements. This would be the main difference between modern man and the apes, whose opposable big toe made their foot an effective gripping tool. Darwin had argued that in order to assume a bipedal gait the human foot lost all of its grasping ability, and Ernst Haeckel had wondered how man had become a biped, while still noting that some savage populations kept that monkey-ish prerogative. Regnault confirmed this fact with conviction,

[19] Léon Azoulay, Félix Regnault, "Des diverses formes des dents incisives supérieures," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris* IV[e] Série, 4 (1893): 266-9.
[20] Félix Regnault, "Variations dans la forme des dents, suivant les races humaines," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris*, IV[e] Série, 5 (1894): 14-8; Id., "Accroisement des ongles de la main," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris*, IV Série, 9 (1898): 38-9.

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adducing a few examples: a Dahomean exhibited and photographed at the Champ de Mars, who in a sacrificial ritual to his gods tore off the head of a chicken by squeezing it between his toes. **(FIG. 8)** The Arabs, Berbers, Abyssinians, Senegalese, Papuans, Yucatan Indians, Charruas, Guaycurus, and even the Annamites demonstrated great prehensile skills in various ordinary tasks. In India Regnault had observed how men skillfully used their feet in various activities from woodturning and carpentry to butchery, etc. This habit had produced a space (*ecartement*) between the big toe and the second toe.

Moreover, it was not rare to find individuals in Europe affected by ectromelia, who performed incredible feats with their feet. Regnault analyzed their underlying anatomical characteristics and concluded that, despite the wide range of uses to which his feet could be put, man only had a *pied-pince*, certainly not a *pied-main* like the monkey. And again in 1909, he specified that man can grasp an object between the first and second toes only with a lateral movement, not by opposing them. All in all, a certain degree of admiration on his part transpires for those 'primitive' peoples who, having escaped the fate of permanently locking their feet in shoes, could use them in such a versatile way.[21]

In 1926 Regnault was elected president of the Société d'Anthropologie de Paris, an honorary position lasting only one year, while its actual direction was in the hands of the *secrétaire general*, Léonce Manouvrier, who kept it for nearly a quarter of a century. The *Bulletin* of the Société, to which Regnault had contributed nearly a hundred articles during his career, dedicated a one-page obituary to him. Most significantly, it was written not by an anthropologist but by the occupational

[21] Id., "De la fonction prehensile du pied," *La Nature* 21/2 (1893): 229-31. Regnault had already presented the case of a man who, having his arms congenitally atrophied and retracted, used his feet with great dexterity: "Une observation de pied prehensile," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris*, IV[e] série, 3 (1892): 342-4. See also his "Du rôle du pied comme organe préhensile chez les Hindous," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris*, IV[e] série, 2 (1891): 683-95, a speech that was followed by a long discussion, during which some participants expressed concern about the deformations caused by the footwear, among others Léonce Manouvrier: "il ajoute qu'il a fait fabriquer pour lui, conformement à ses études, des chaussures de forme vraiment rationelle qu'il porte depuis six mois avec grande satisfaction. Il se fera un plaisir de donner, en particulier, à ses collègues qui le desireraient, toutes les indications nécessaires pour obtenir des chaussures semblables." (p. 687). The question of the prehensile foot, Regnault concluded, still required research on all peoples and mainly the savage tribes, although it could be said that the peculiarity of the prehensile foot was not present in all of them (pp. 694-5).

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physician Henri Desoille, who principally recalled his medical work:

> In the world of anthropology everyone knew his slim figure, slightly hunched over with age, his gentle smile, imbued with a touch of irony. He was good, modest, independent, he worked tirelessly and everyone loved him. […] He strove, through articles in the popular press, to make anthropology understood and appreciated, and very recently reminded us what the attitude of any man of science worthy of the name should assume in the face of the racial problem.[22]

The truth was that Regnault's dedicated lifetime of research and his promotion of ethnographic cinema do not seem to have counted for much in the milieu of anthropological studies in France, in part because he was considered an outsider by the relatively closed academic community. Yet his multifaceted experience cannot fail to arouse the historian's curiosity.

3. Haddon & Co.

In 1919 Regnault proposed the term "glossethnie", or more simply "ethnie" for a human group whose members spoke the same language, even if he pronounced himself ready to abandon these terms if somebody invented a better one. In his view "race" should remain an exclusively anatomical term, in order to avoid confusion between the physical and the mental order. Making a bold generalization, he believed that primitive societies were divided into tribes, each with its own form of self-governance and a language that was not understood by its neighbors due to the fact that it could change quite rapidly, and that a given tribe might live in complete isolation from others. Thus a race could fragment into multiple *ethnies*. At a more advanced stage of civilization, relations between tribes were established under a shared form of governance. The *ethnie* would then temporarily correspond to the race of its members and inhabit a particular geographic territory. An ethnic group might extend its territory, either by destroying or absorbing neighboring groups. Thus

[22] "Dans le monde des anthropologistes chacun connaissait sa silhouette mince, légèrement voûtée par l'âge, son sourire doux, empreint d'un peu d'ironie. Il était bon, modeste, indépendent, il travaillait sans rêlache et chacun l'aimait.[…] il s'efforçait, par des articles des vulgarisation, de faire comprendre et aimer l'Anthropologie, et rappelait, tout récemment, quelle devait être l'attitude de l'homme de science digne de ce nom en face du problème racial." Henri Desoille, "Félix Regnault. Notice nécrologique," *Bulletin et mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris* VIII série, 9 (1938): 120.

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large ethnic groups would be formed, which included different races and encompassed diversified territories.[23]

The post-World War I period saw rapid developments in many spheres and in 1935 the authors of a survey of "racial problems" decided to replace the word race with "(ethnic) group or people". After a complex genesis a singular book came out in 1935with the title *We Europeans*. The publisher Jonathan Cape had asked the biologist Julian S. Huxley to write a work on the racial problem, given the "nonsensical rantings" with which Hitler was stressing the danger that the so-called purity of the Aryan race might be contaminated.[24] Huxley, who was about to be elected secretary of the London Zoological Society, persuaded four friends to participate in the editorial project: the venerable anthropologist Alfred C. Haddon, the sociologist Alexander M. Carr-Saunders, the historian of medicine and science Charles Singer, and the anthropologist Charles G. Seligman. Five pairs of hands, therefore, contributed to the draft of *New Europeans* – four of which, however, were invisible in the finished product. Singer and Seligman were in fact Jewish and preferred to remain anonymous, both being involved in the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, which became a key agency in the international attempt to rescue refugee scholars.[25]

In 1934 the Royal Anthropological Institute and the Institute of Sociology appointed a group of scholars to study the relationship between racial factors and cultural development. Two years later their work came to an end without their reaching a unanimous definition of race, as every member of the group seemed to have a different definition in mind. All they could agree upon was that their knowledge was riddled with gaps, that no such thing as a 'pure race' existed, and that the notion of the superiority of the Aryan race was a myth. Race remained a highly controversial issue,

[23] Félix Regnault, "Il convient de différencier l'ethnie linguistique de la race anatomique," *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris* VI[e] série, 10 (1919): 55-6.
[24] Julian S. Huxley, *Memories* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), 216.
[25] Julian S. Huxley, Alfred C. Haddon, *We Europeans. A Survey of "Racial Problems"* (London – Toronto: Jonathan Cape, 1935).

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however.[26] Although he had joined Huxley in deconstructing the concept, Haddon later wrote to the botanist, geneticist, and eugenicist Reginald Ruggles Gates expressing his disaccord with his co-author's tendency to polemicize and to mix science and propaganda.[27] Evidently, in the mid-1930s, the idea of expelling the term "race" from the scientific lexicon was too radical and inconsistent to gain the full consent of the scholarly community.

The Anglo-Indian biologist Cedric Dover – who dedicated his life to the defense of ethnic minorities – welcomed *We Europeans* as "an opportune prophylactic against the spreading virus of racialism", but other readers were much more critical of the underlying operation, which threw into doubt long held clichés and prejudices.[28] An entire generation separated its two main authors, thirty-two years that made Huxley a twentieth-century scientist, while placing Haddon and more than half of his career in the previous century. Just when the book came out, an anonymous page in *Nature* congratulated Haddon on celebrating his 80th birthday. His personal qualities and his lifelong selfless devotion to scientific research in general had won him the admiration and respect of a wide circle, while his originality of thought and his achievements in particular won him a leading place in anthropological studies:

> When in the course of his first visit to the Torres Strait he turned from zoology to the study of the native peoples, the technique of ethnological investigation in the field was in its infancy. The great expedition to the Torres Straits, which he organized later, in the closing years of the nineteenth century, under the auspices of the University of Cambridge, has been an inspiration and a model for all the more important of the expeditions of ethnological investigation which have followed.[29]

[26] Royal Anthropological Institute and the Institute of Sociology, *Race and Culture* (London, Le Play House Press, 1936). On the failure of the Race and Culture Committee to reach agreement, see Elazar Barkan, *The Retreat of Scientific Racism. Changing Concepts in Britain and in the United States* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992), 286-90.
[27] The ultraconservative Gates had discredited *We Europeans* in little more than one column published by the official organ of British anthropologists: see his untitled review in *Man* 36 (1936): 161-2. See also Haddon's letter to Gates, 23 February 1937, in Gates Papers, King's College, London.
[28] Cedric Dover, "We Europeans," *Nature* 136 (1935): 736-7.
[29] "Dr. A. C. Haddon," *Nature* 135 (1935): https://doi.org/10.1038/135865a0

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Haddon was born in London to a family of dissenters engaged in the printing and publishing trade. From his mother, who wrote children's books on the Bible and on the divine government of the natural world, he inherited a great passion for plants and animals. He was expected to work in the family firm, but the call of science was stronger and at the age of 20 he entered Christ's College. He was studying there when Charles Darwin received an honorary Doctorate of Law from the University of Cambridge. According to his biographer Alison Hingston Quiggin, "[Haddon] took a keen and active interest in the preparations for Darwin's reception" and Thomas H. Huxley, then at the height of his power, became his chosen mentor.[30]

Fallen under the influence of the great prophets of evolution, Haddon became a zoologist, spent the customary period at the Stazione Zoologica in Naples, and eventually, with Huxley's support, was appointed to a chair at the Dublin Royal College of Science in 1880. During the 1880s, naturalistic expeditions led him to dredge marine organisms along the coast of Ireland, until Huxley encouraged him to undertake the long journey to the Torres Strait, which divides the North Australian coast from New Guinea and offers ships a passage between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. While there his job as a biologist was to study the coral formations – their physico-chemical conditions, the marine life they harbored, and their overall ecosystem. However, the shift in his interests to anthropology had already begun in the summer of 1888:

> Very soon after my arrival in the Straits I found that the natives of the islands had of late years been greatly reduced in number, and that, with the exception of but one or two individuals, none of the white residents knew anything about the customs of the natives, and not a single person cared about them personally. When I began to question the natives I discovered that the young men had a very imperfect acquaintance with the old habits and beliefs, and that only from the older men was reliable information to be obtained. So it was made clear to me that if I neglected to avail myself of the present opportunity of collecting information on the ethnography of the islanders, it was extremely probable that that knowledge would never be gleaned […] This being my opinion, I felt it my duty to fill up all the time not actually employed in my zoological researches in

[30] Alison Hingston Quiggin, *Haddon the Head Hunter. A Short Sketch of the Life of A. C. Haddon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1942), 50.

anthropological studies, and the following is a portion of the results of my enquiries amongst the Western Tribes of Torres Straits.[31]

It is significant that, after eight months in the field, Haddon brought back with him to England not only zoological specimens, but also a goodly collection of artefacts – masks, pipes, sacred and profane ornaments, bows and arrows – which he then sold to the British Museum. The decision to devote himself entirely to the study of man did not take long, encouraged by Huxley and also by James G. Frazer, who congratulated him on the article published by the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, in which he recorded information on the customs and ceremonies of the islanders, the memory of which might otherwise have been lost.[32]

For a while Haddon mulled over writing an introduction to anthropology from a biological point of view, but this proved too ambitious a task and in fact came to nothing. Instead, his first book, which was published in 1895, posited an unusual way of looking at works of art, considering them as biological species, organisms which had their own "life-histories" and were subject to a form of selection.[33] That same year he delivered a talk at a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in which he sharply criticized the misdeeds of colonialism. Civilization, in his view, did not consist of railways, the telegraph, representative government, "nor even of those characteristic British exports – beer and the Bible –", but of right living and the cultivation of morality. There was no relation between the amount of clothing worn and the degree of virtue in an individual. If the need was to expand the market for cotton products, why not do it honestly, without false claims of religion or morality? And if the British had taken upon themselves the government of half the earth, they should at least avoid rampant injustice. Haddon set out the imperatives to impede the worst excesses of the white man, such as the extermination perpetrated in

[31] Alfred C. Haddon, "The Ethnography of the Western Tribes of Torres Straits," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* 19 (1890): 297-440, in particular pp. 297-8. See Jude Philp, "'Embryonic science': The 1888 Torres Strait photographic collection of A.C. Haddon," in Richard Davis (ed.), *Woven Histories Dancing Lives. Torres Strait Islander Identity, Culture and History* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), 90-106.
[32] Robert Ackerman (ed.), *Selected Letters of Sir J.G. Frazer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 80-1.
[33] Alfred C. Haddon, *Evolution in Art. As Illustrated by the Life-Histories of Designs* (London: Walter Scott, 1895).

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Tasmania, "that fearful page" in colonial history; these were to support native institutions as far as possible and to refrain from forcing radical change upon native cultures. After all, trying to transform indigenous peoples into Anglo-Saxons was not only an impossible task, but also an undesirable one. Consequently, in order to gain a more profound and accurate knowledge of native peoples and their cultures, Haddon recommended the creation of a Bureau of Ethnography of Native Races, which should be furnished with all the appropriate resources to fulfill its function of providing information to members of Parliament and others with a legitimate interest in colonial issues.[34]

During this period Haddon was impatiently waiting an opportunity to return to the distant islands that had inspired him to change the course of his career. In recognition of the importance of his work thus far, in 1895 at the age of 40 he received an appointment as a lecturer in physical anthropology at the University of Cambridge. The enterprise with which his name is most closely associated finally began in April 1898, when after a long period of preparation a group of seven scholars set off for the Torres Strait (Queensland) to begin a multidisciplinary field project. Funds for the groundbreaking venture came from various sources – academic institutions, philanthropic associations, and personal and family contributions – while each member paid for his own passage. This expedition is so well known that it would be redundant to dwell on its details. Suffice it to say that this was one of the first examples of what would later be called "salvage" or "urgent" anthropology: an innovative, wide-ranging investigation that brought together physical anthropology, ethnology, psychology, linguistics, sociology, ethnomusicology, and anthropogeography. For approximately seven months the group worked under Haddon's guidance – observing, measuring, and collecting data and objects. Indeed, the quantity of their findings was

[34] Alfred C. Haddon, in the Discussion section: "*On the Contact of Europeans and Native Civilizations, Held at the Meeting of the British Association"* (Ipswich: The "East Anglian Times" Printing Work, 1895), 6-8.

such that it took more than thirty years to publish them in six volumes.[35]

What is of interest here in relation to the practice of ethnographic filming, which had been inaugurated just a few years earlier by Regnault in a European and an urban context – the Champ de Mars in Paris – is to underline the importance that Haddon ascribed to visual testimony, which in his case was rigorously collected and assembled through fieldwork. As early as 1888, during his first exploration of the Torres Strait, he had sketched – being an accomplished draughtsman – and photographed the inhabitants of Mer Island. In preparation for his second expedition, Haddon bought a Newman and Guardia moving picture camera for £25, together with 30 rolls of 75-foot film, two wax-cylinder phonographs, and equipment for color photographs. Importantly, one member of the expedition – Haddon's student, Anthony Wilkin – was given the main responsibility of the photographic activity. According to the historian Alison Griffiths, this assignment suggests that there was:

> […] a real commitment to photography as a research tool (why else would Haddon tie up one of the expedition members with such a task?); it may also have freed Haddon to work on other aspects of the research and to devote his energies to the more complex of the two media at the time, the cinematograph.[36]

Unfortunately, a mistake in the posting of the moving picture film from England meant that they could only begin work in early September, just as the expedition was heading towards its conclusion, and the filming was conducted over the course of no more than a few days. To make matters worse, the camera had suffered some damage when it was being shipped and the nitrate film deteriorated easily in the local torrid climate. Therefore, Haddon harbored serious doubts as to the

[35] The *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits* came out between 1901 and 1935, although not in numerical order, starting with volume 2 in two parts (*Physiology and Psychology*) and finishing with volume 1 (*General Ethnography*). See also the collection of essays in *Cambridge and the Torres Strait. Centenary essays on the 1898 anthropological expedition*, eds. Anita Herle and Sandra Rouse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Jude Philp, "Receiving Guests. The Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits 1998," in *Expeditionary Anthropology. Teamwork, Travel and the 'Science of Man'* eds. Martin Thomas and Amanda Harris (New York – Oxford: Berghahn, 2018), 64-94.

[36] Alison Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference. Cinema, Anthropology, and Turn-of the-Century Visual Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 133. Wilkin's personal collection of photographs taken at the Torres Strait are housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

outcome of Wilkin's work until he was able to view the final product months later. In the end, given these circumstances only a few meters of film were shot and Haddon described in his diary the difficulties that they encountered:

> Some Australian Natives came in a beche de mer boat and I wanted to get a cinematograph of their dancing – and it was also only just at the last that we could get part of the Malu ceremony danced with the masks that had been made for me – but the dance was worth waiting for. I tried to cinematograph it but as has often happened the machine jams and the film is spoiled – I am afraid that this part of my outfit will prove a failure & the colour photography is I fear at present of little practical value. I have had many disappointments on this expedition, perhaps I was too sanguine.[37]

Despite this, five filmed sequences lasting a total of four and a half minutes survived and are now conserved in the British Library.[38] The first features a secret initiation ceremony for young men – the Bomai-Malu *zogo le*, a custom that had left a lasting impression on Haddon after it was described to him on his first expedition. Oddly enough, however, in the accurate description of the ceremony that appears in the first 'popular' account of his expedition, Haddon did not mention having recorded it on film, even though he presented three frames in his book. **(FIG. 9)** He also included four images in the sixth volume of his *Reports*.[39] The second, third, and fourth filmed sequences show some Mer islanders performing dances on a beach, while the fifth shows their method of starting a fire using a drill. **(FIG. 10)**.

Haddon did not hide the difficulties he encountered in trying to persuade the natives to be filmed, or even to permit their language and songs be recorded. This delicate task was entrusted to Charles S. Myers, at that time still a student in Cambridge. Missionary activity on the islands had been intense over the past three decades, and therefore a "jargon English" made communication possible just at the time when the full effects of Christianization in suppressing the natives'

[37] Haddon Papers, Journal 1898, env. 1030, Cambridge University Library.
[38] The British Library owns the original films; copies of them are also conserved at the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA).
[39] Alfred C. Haddon, *Head-Hunters. Black, White, and Brown* (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), 42-52, plate V after p. 48.

traditional rituals and customs were making themselves felt. The ceremonies Haddon and his companions could attend were purposely "revived for and witnessed by us"[40]; in other words, the staging of dances that belonged to the recent past and were kept hidden from missionaries who would have prohibited it, could be commissioned and re-enacted after negotiation with the community leaders. Even the mask worn by one of the dancers during the *zogo le* performance had been modeled *ex novo*, on payment, out of packing cardboard.[41]

In this respect, Haddon's films, although shot in the field rather than in an artificial Parisian setting – as Regnault had done – were likewise "on-request performances" that the participants prepared because the film-maker had asked for them. This was due to the limitations of the available technology:

> It was impossible for a film to be shot without the active collaboration of the subjects, be it to ensure that filming was taking place at a location where there was adequate lighting, or simply to guarantee that they kept within the field of view of the camera. The notion of filming people going about their business without taking into account the camera's presence was simply not realisable at that time. But in making a request to the subjects to perform a particular action in a particular place, early ethnographic film-makers, despite themselves, were in effect engaged in an act of authorship.[42]

As for the few exemplars from Mer Island, Griffiths has pointed out "the tactile quality of the cinematic image", which opened a sort of haptic space where the spectator's eye seems to reach and "feel" the moving image. While Regnault had arranged his *chronophotographie* with a view to conducting a comparative taxonomic study of body movements, Haddon's team was motivated by the intent to unearth and record – in both verbal and visual form – the modes of expression of a race and its culture, which were rapidly changing or even being extinguished by contact with

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[40] *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition* (cit. note 35), vol. VI (1908): 306-8. Plates XXIX and XXX include three phases of the ceremonial dance of the Bomai-Malu *zogo le* and an overall view ("restoration"), respectively.
[41] The original Bomai masks had likely been burnt by missionaries; regarding the fashioning of these copies see Anita Herle, "The life-histories of objects: collections of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Strait," in *Cambridge and the Torres Strait* eds. Herle and Rouse (cit. note 35), 87-96.
[42] Henley, *Beyond Observation* (cit. note 12), 30.

Westerners.[43] It should be added that in both cases the cinema experiment was abandoned quite soon. In Borneo, the last stop of the Cambridge expedition, no attempt was made to shoot any film footage at all due to Haddon's disappointment with the results hitherto achieved. This could also explain at least in part why he never wrote about the technique of ethnographic cinema nor did he promote it publicly. And unlike Regnault, he certainly never boasted of having provided ethnology with a new tool. At a meeting of the Royal Geographical Society held in May 1900 he apparently limited himself to showing photographs, and received glowing praise from the society's president for that "most beautiful and interesting series of illustration".[44] Almost five years later, a brief mention appeared in the proceedings of the Anthropological Institute of a public screening held on February 14, 1905:

> Dr. A. C. Haddon, F.R.S., exhibited a number of lantern slides and cinematograph films illustrative of the ethnography and dances of New Guinea and the Torres Straits; and Dr. C. S. Myers sang a number of native songs, accompanying himself on the drum. The exhibit was discussed by Messrs. Durand, Tabor, Gomme and Ray, and Dr. Haddon replied.[45]

As far as we know, there is no trace of any other use made of that material, and Haddon did no further ethnographic filming in the following decades.

4. Spencer & Gillen, and other stories

Nevertheless, in October 1900 Haddon sent advice to a colleague who was about to embark on an expedition to Central Australia:

> Your really must take a kinematograph – a biograph – or whatever they call it in your part of the world. It is an indispensable piece of anthropological apparatus. Get an ordinary commercial one. If you order from London I

[43] Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference* (cit. note 37), 142-3.
[44] Alfred C. Haddon, "Studies in the Anthropogeography of British New Guinea," *The Geographical Journal* 16 (1900): 265-91, 414-41.
[45] "Proceedings of the Anthropological Institute," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 35 (1905): 435.

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> think I would place myself in the hands of the Warwick Trading Company […] I have asked them to send you a catalogue and to write to you as well. I have stated what you want it for. I have no doubt that your films will pay for the whole apparatus if you care to let some of them be copied by the trade. […] I hope you will take a phonograph.[46]

Five years younger than him, the recipient Walter Baldwin Spencer was born in Stretford (Lancashire), studied at Oxford under Henry N. Moseley, professor of human and comparative anatomy, and assisted Edward B. Tylor in organizing exhibits at the Pitt Rivers Museum. In 1887 he moved to Australia to teach biology at the University of Melbourne and in 1894 he joined the group recruited by the mining magnate and politician William Austin Horn to study the natural history of a central, unexplored area of the continent. The universities of Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sidney supplied scientific personnel to cover a broad spectrum of interests. They set out from Oodnadatta, where the railway line ended, and proceeded north by camel for three months. Spencer filled the roles of zoologist, photographer, and editor of the final 4-volume *Report*.[47] The last volume contained the anthropological data that had been gathered, and featured an extensive survey written by Edward C. Stirling, director of the South Australian Museum and medical officer of the expedition, who started by sketching a picture of the difficult conditions facing the researchers:

> It is only those who have made the attempt to investigate the modes of thought and mainsprings of action of the lower races of mankind that can fully appreciate the difficulties of the task. And nowhere, perhaps, are the difficulties greater than amongst the Australian aborigines. […] Thus ethnological science in Australia has fared badly. […] Rites, ceremonies, customs, traditions soon become modified, obsolete, or their significance wholly lost […] The vices and diseases of Europeans have already borne their evil fruits, and the native population, never a large one, has diminished with painful rapidity; whole tribes even have vanished from the scene.[48]

Stirling stated that he was fortunate to be able to supplement his own observations with the

[46] Haddon to Spencer, 23 October 1899, in W. B. Spencer Papers, Box 1, Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford University.
[47] Baldwin Spencer (ed.), *Report on the Work of the Scientific Expedition to Central Australia* (London-Melbourne: Dulau and Co.; Melville, Mullen and Slade, 1896), 4 volumes. See in general John Mulvaney and John H. Calaby, *'So Much that is New: Baldwin Spencer, 1860-1929. A Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1985).
[48] Edward C. Stirling, "Anthropology," in Baldwin, *Report* (cit. note 46), Part 4, 2-4.

notes of Francis James Gillen, postmaster and Special Magistrate at Alice Springs, who had also been appointed Sub-Protector of the Aborigines and was quite "kindly disposed toward them". An Australian born to Irish parents, he provided the *Report* with twenty-five pages of information dealing with the manners and customs of the Arunta tribe living in the McDonnell Ranges and twenty-nine reproductions of photographs taken in collaboration with Spencer.[49] **FIGS. 11-12**

From their meeting, which took place towards the end of the Horn expedition, an enduring partnership sprang up between the two despite their very different personalities, which is testified to by their frequent correspondence. Stirling, an Oxford graduate and the son of a wealthy Protestant industrialist from Manchester, had just recently immigrated to Australia, while Gillen was an autodidact whose parents were Catholic shop-keepers in a South Australian country town.[50] In the summer of 1896, Spencer and Gillen embarked on three-months of intensive fieldwork around Alice Springs, studying and photographing the ceremonial rituals (*Engwura*) of certain tribes that regularly gathered there. The rich collection of observations and the researchers' interpretations of them were presented after frequent discussions conducted by mail, in a volume that provided ample space for photos of high quality. This report was well received by both the academic community and the general public. Stirling and Gillen gave public lectures complete with lantern-slides that became very popular and a not unimportant occupation for both of them. As early as 1895, Gillen had written to Spencer about the great success of his public presentations, which were "attended by an enthusiastic audience of Niggers whose respect for my magic powers have been thereby greatly enhanced."[51]

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[49] Francis J. Gillen, "Notes on Some Manners and Customs of the Aborigines of the McDonnell Ranges Belonging to the Arunta Tribe," in Baldwin, *Report* (cit. note 46), Part 4, pp. 161-186. Twenty-year-old Gillen had already begun keeping a diary while travelling along the Overland Telegraph Line from Adelaide to work in Alice Springs; see Robert S. Gillen (ed.), *F.J. Gillen's First Diary 1875* (Mile End: Wakefield Press, 2019[2]).

[50] John Mulvaney, Howard Morphy and Alison Petch (eds.), *"My Dear Spencer": The Letters of F.J. Gillen to Baldwin Spencer* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1997); see also by the same editors, *From the Frontier. Outback Letters to Baldwin Spencer* (Sidney: Allen & Unwin, 2000). *Correspondence with Francis (Frank) Gillen dating from 1894 to 1904* is also available in Box 2 of the Spencer papers, Pitt-Rivers Museum: https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/spencer-papers

[51] Baldwin Spencer and Francis J. Gillen, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1899). See the letter dated 20 December 1895 in John Mulvaney, Howard Morphy and Alison Petch (eds.), *"My Dear Spencer"* (cit.

These lectures provided the springboard for a new shared venture, which started in 1901 and availed itself of the Warwick Bioscope camera that Stirling had acquired at Haddon's urging, in addition to an Edison phonograph with wax cylinders for sound recordings. From Cambridge James Frazer launched a petition in favor of the project, which was signed by seventy-seven academics and politicians and then sent to the Government of Victoria. Australia was seen as "the most interesting field of observation now open to students of primitive man", a sort of laboratory in which to test the principles of social evolutionism. As Philip Batty commented, "The more 'primitive' the people under study were, the greater the chance of extracting from them what Gillen later termed 'bedrock' data concerning the evolution of human society."[52]

Financially backed primarily by David Syme, owner of the Melbourne newspaper *The Age*, and supported by a modest retinue of aides consisting of a trooper and two aborigines, Spencer and Gillen covered 1600 miles from Port Augusta to Darwin over the course of a year. They managed to collect information regarding numerous native groups, and to compile afterwards a massive "sequel" to their 1899 book. Moreover, both of them kept diaries that convey a wealth of feelings and perceptions.[53] "I want to try the cinematograph," Spencer wrote on March 27th 1901 and three days later: "The natives have not come in as yet & all that we can do is to wait patiently for them. I have the cinematograph ready to work when they do come. They are going to give us some rain dances during which they wear big head dresses & look very grotesque." The camera is often mentioned in his diary, even with some involuntarily comic effect:

> I got my cinematograph all fixed up but to my disgust the performers who were supposed to be coming in a

note 49), p. 91. Nicolas Peterson highlights the specific and strong interest that both of them had in photography, noting its "great archival value" and that its products could serve as "reality transcripts"; see his "Visual Knowledge: Spencer and Gillen's use of photography in the *Native Tribes of Central Australia*," *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, n. 1 (2006): 12-22.

[52] Philip Batty, "Assembling the Ethnographic Field: The 1901-1902 Expedition of Baldwin Spencer and Francis Gillen," in *Expeditionary Anthropology,* eds. Thomas and Harris (cit. note 35), 40.

[53] Baldwin Spencer and Francis J. Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (London: Macmillan, 1904); Jason Gibson (ed.), *Walter Baldwin Spencer's Diary from the Spencer and Gillen Expedition 1901-1902*: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320741186_Walter_Baldwin_Spencer%27s_Diary_from_the_Spencer_and_Gillen_Expedition_1901-1902; *Gillen's Diary: The Camp Jottings of F.J. Gillen on the Spencer and Gillen Expedition across Australia, 1901-1902* (Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1968). For a detailed commentary see Batty, "Assembling the Ethnographic Field" (cit. note 48), 37-63.

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> certain direction which I had focused for suddenly skipped away behind some bushes and made a great circle round the country so as I patiently ground on and on at the handle hoping every second that they would come into the field I secured a good deal of scenery but very little performance. Of course it wasn't the natives fault: their fathers for generations before had danced round the country generally instead of saving themselves time and trouble by coming in a straight line and so of course they had to do the same for naturally they didn't give a two penny dumb about the cinematograph. However Gillen and I were so disgusted with their ancestral stupidity that we packed our things up and departed in wrath leaving the natives sad and supperless and hoping that they would – which they doubtless did – regret that their ancestors had not known of the existence of a cinematograph and arranged their ceremonies to suit this.[54]

In the end, despite the performers stubbornly continuing to move out of the frame, Spencer's relative inexperience in cinematography, and unfavorable environmental conditions, brief film sequences were shot of Arrernte dances and ceremonies, with a skillful changing of setups and viewpoints.[55] The preface to the 1904 book gives technical reasons for the limited use of the so-called biograph:

> The biograph we only used during the first part of our journey, taking it with us as far as the McDonnell Ranges. It was not practical to carry film further and retain them undeveloped for more than a year, especially as the last few months of our time were to be spent in the damp heat of the Gulf Country. Both of the cameras, however, went through the whole expedition without any mishap, and, despite heat and dust interminable, served their purpose admirably. A certain number of the numerous photographs taken by us are used in the illustrations of the following pages.[56]

In fact, another reason can be traced to the indecipherability of those ceremonies: neither the bare visual phenomena nor the meager commentary provided by the natives were enough to explain their hidden meanings in European terms. Therefore the impression gained from attending these

[54] Gibson (ed.), *Walter Baldwin Spencer's Diary* (cit. note 49), 34.
[55] For a description of the contents of the films see Arthur Cantrill and Corinne Cantrill, "The 1901 Cinematography of Walter Baldwin Spencer," *Cantrills Filmnotes*, n. 37-38 (1982): 26-42, and Griffiths, *Wondrous Difference* (cit. note 37), pp. 153-160. Restricted access to the footage has been asked and obtained by the Arrernte people's descendants, so the parts relating to sacred ceremonial dances can no longer be viewed by the general public; see Henley, *Beyond Observation* (cit. note 12), 32.
[56] Spencer and Gillen, *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (cit. note 51), x.

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rituals was quite ambivalent, despite the curiosity and the scientific commitment of the observers, as is attested to in the same preface:

> A word of warning must, however, be written in regard to this "elaborate ritual". To a certain extent it is without doubt elaborate, but at the same time it is eminently crude and savage in all essential points. It must be remembered that these ceremonies are performed by naked, howling savages, who have no idea of permanent abodes, no clothing, no knowledge of any implements save those fashioned out of wood, bone and stone, no idea whatever of the cultivation of crops, or of the laying in of a supply of food to tide over hard times, no word of any number beyond three, and no belief in anything like a supreme being. Apart from the simple but often decorative nature of the design drawn on the bodies of the performers, or on the ground during the performance of ceremonies, the latter are crude in the extreme.[57]

It has been suggested that the defining quality of their work was not so much scientific racism as a "muddle both of thought and feeling". Contradiction certainly dominated their judgments: sometimes Spencer and Gillen debased aboriginal beliefs and customs, which elsewhere were attentively and respectfully treated by them. They encouraged their readers and listeners to try to enter the natives' souls, even though they never managed to modify their own viewpoints, which were typical of the white settler.[58] It is worth noting that their intensive fieldwork in August 1903, during which they spent 10 days among the Arabana people, did not include any sound or film recordings; only a single notebook and some photographs survive. Again in 1911-1912 Spencer brought a camera with him, equipped this time with a tripod and a tilt and pan device, on a short expedition sponsored by the Commonwealth Government to explore conditions in the Northern Territory.[59]

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[57] Ibid., xiv.
[58] Dean Ashenden, "The strange career of the Australian conscience. The remarkable collaboration of anthropologists Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen," *Inside Story*, 10 June 2010: https://insidestory.org.au/the-strange-career-of-the-australian-conscience/
[59] See Jason Gibson and Luise Hercus, "Capturing Histories at Thantyi-Wanparda: Comparing Early and Late Twentieth Century Ethnographies in Arabana Territory, South Australia," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of South Australia. Special Edition. Culture Contact in Indigenous Australia* 42 (2018): 175-210. Spencer's notebook *(1903 Urabunna Old Peak Station)* is preserved (item XM5863) at the Museum Victoria, as are seventeen of his films: see http://spencerandgillen.net/objects/50ce72f4023fd7358c8a93fc
http://spencerandgillen.net/objects?type=MovingImage&groupby=Properties.ObjectType_s

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Numbers matter: from the 1901-1902 expedition the two anthropologists brought back over one thousand artefacts, a total of sixteen films, twenty-seven audio recordings, about eight hundred photographs, and thousands of pages of notes, sketches and drawings. Between 1902 and 1904 Spencer gave a total of sixty-three lectures accompanied by films and lantern slides to large audiences in Australian and British cities, and to a lesser extent Gillen did not shy away from making crowd-pleasing presentations of their results. The fruitful collaboration between the two friends lasted until Gillen's untimely death in 1912, when their book *Across Australia* was published. Significantly, when in this same year the fourth edition of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* – a prestigious guide whose first edition appeared in 1874 – was published it included only a passing reference to the cinematograph, while giving more space to the mechanical recording of music. The motion picture camera had to be used, if possible, with the same general precautions as the phonograph, and "full explanatory notes should be taken while [it] is in operation". Then, when the film and sound recordings were spliced together, " […] care must be taken that the musical record is adjusted to keep time with the steps and figures." Other recommendations highlight how anthropologists were still rather unused to working with this new medium.[60]

For his part, Spencer used the vast amount of material gathered during his years of groundbreaking research in the early 20th to produce other two books.[61] In the second of them, published in 1928, he recalled the prohibitive conditions that had plagued his film experiments at the beginning of the century:

[60] Barbara Freire-Marreco and John Linton Myers (eds.), *Notes and Queries of Anthropology. Fourth Edition* (London: The Royal Anthropological Institute, 1912), 226.

[61] Baldwin Spencer and Francis J. Gillen, *Across Australia* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912), 2 volumes; Baldwin Spencer and (the late) Francis J. Gillen, *The Arunta: a Study of a Stone Age People* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1927), 2 volumes; Baldwin Spencer, *Wanderings in Wild Australia* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1928), 2 volumes. Regarding the vicissitudes undergone by this collection, see Philip Batty and Jason Gibson, "Reconstructing the Spencer and Gillen Collection Online. Museums, Indigenous Perspectives and the Production of Cultural Knowledge in the Digital Age," in *Corpora ethnographica online: Strategien der Digitalisierung kultureller Archive und ihrer Präsentation im Internet* (Münster: Waxmann, 2014), 29-48. The ethnographic filmmaker Ian Dunlop made a 34-minute film entitled *Aborigines of Central and Northern Australia 1901, 1912* showing selected pieces from the Baldwin/Spencer collection for the Retrospective of Australian Ethnographic Film, which was organized as part of the 1967 Festival dei Popoli in Florence; see his "Ethnographic Film-Making in Australia. The First Seventy Years (1898-1968)," *Aboriginal History* 3 (1979): 111-9, p. 113n.

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> It was a Warwick machine and, if not actually the first, was amongst the earliest cinematographs to be used in Australia. It was certainly the first used amongst Aboriginals. A diagram showed how to fix the film in the machine, so as to make it run round, but no instructions had been sent out as to what rate to turn the handle, so I had to make a guess at it. The focusing glass was, of necessity, small and you could only get a sideways and not a direct view of it, but after a little practice with a blank spool, I felt equal to a first attempt in real life. This was in 1901; the quarter of a century that has elapsed since then has seen considerable improvements in cinematography that have made it, if not a simpler, at all events a more certain method.[62]

Notwithstanding the "considerable improvements" claimed by Spencer in 1928, the following year the fifth edition of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* still raised a caveat regarding the application of the "kinematograph" – "invaluable as it is for giving a record of the life of native peoples." Certain difficulties were described. First of all, the camera was being used by an academic researcher to document ethnographic findings under challenging conditions. Well before the expedition, the scientist had to be thoroughly trained in the techniques of cinematography, and when in the field the use of the camera required his undivided attention. If, on the other hand, the expedition had taken along a professional film operator ("kinematographer") he would have had difficulty fitting into the scientific *milieu* owing to his different mentality and skills.

Furthermore, essential technical aspects had to be kept in mind; a full-sized reliable motion picture camera with a complete set of lenses, not to mention some good quality photographic cameras were indispensable but were also quite expensive. Both still and moving pictures should always be taken. The films had to be treated with great care, shipped back to Europe for development as soon as possible after they were made, and the supply of unexposed film had to be periodically replenished. Adding the expense of the materiel itself, "The cost of a kinematograph to an expedition is therefore considerable and runs into hundreds of pounds." Finally, when adequate funds and competencies were available, pictures and films should not be limited to ceremonies or to

[62] Baldwin Spencer, *Wanderings in Wild Australia* (cit. note 58), I, pp. 359-360. For information on the locations of their fieldwork materials at the beginning of this century, see Alison Petch, "Spencer and Gillen's Collaborative Fieldwork in Central Australia and its Legacy," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 31 (2000): 309-28, 326-7.

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technological objects, but should also include typical attitudes, movements, and facial expressions of the natives being studied.[63] The march of civilization was rapidly effacing native customs and the cinematographic medium seemed to offer an effective instrument to record and conserve knowledge of them. The film producer and distributor Charles Urban, a pioneer in the field of scientific documentaries, asserted as much in a booklet published in 1907.[64]

It should not be overlooked that in the early 20th century colonial Germany was also engaged in producing phonographic recordings and ethnographic films as research and teaching tools: a combination of sound and moving images seemed to make the sensory experience more complete. As early as 1904 the leading anthropologist Felix von Luschan included cinematography in his manual for the observation and collection of data, which prescribed every single move that the operator should make in the field. In April 1905 a premiere screening of colonial films was held at the Deutsches Kolonialmuseum in Berlin for an elite audience. Two years later Karl Weule did considerable filming during his expedition to East Africa, and upon his return he was appointed director of the Leipzig Museum für Völkerkunde. In his report he expressed pride in the fact that he was a pioneer, facing all of the difficulties that a technique still in its infancy entailed. Despite these challenges, about two-thirds of his thirty-eight cinematograph recordings turned out to be of acceptable quality and he congratulated himself on this good outcome.

Meanwhile, the Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft (DKG), a voluntary association, was instrumental in arousing public interest in ethnographic films.[65] Finally, it must also be mentioned

[63] *Notes and Queries on Anthropology. Fifth Edition edited for the British Association for the Advancement of Science by a Committee of Section H* (London: The Royal Anthropological Institute, 1919), 379-81. According to Henley, "it seems very likely that this entry was written by no other than Alfred Haddon, but whoever the author, the decline in perceived importance [of films] is notable […]" (cit. note 12, p. 35).
[64] Charles Urban, *The Cinematograph in Science, Education, and Matters of State* (London: Charles Urban Trading Co., 1907), 45-6.
[65] See Felix v. Luschan, "Anleitung für ethnographische Beobachtungen und Sammlungen in Afrika und Ozeanien," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie (Sonderabdruck),* 36 (1904); Karl Weule, *Negerleben in Ostafrika. Ergebnisse einer ethnologischen Forschungsreise* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1909), 466. A general picture of the German context is provided by Assenka Oksiloff, *Picturing the Primitive. Visual Culture, Ethnography, and Early German Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Wolfgang Fuhrmann, "First Contact: The Beginning of Ethnographic Filmmaking in Germany, 1900-1930," *History of Anthropology Newsletter* 34/1 (2007): 3-9; Id., *Imperial Projections: Screening the German Colonies* (New York – Oxford: Berghahn Press, 2015).

that the Austrian Rudolf Pöch brought cinematographic equipment with him, first on an expedition to German, British, and Dutch New Guinea between 1904 and 1906, and again from 1907 to 1909 when he filmed scenes and recorded voices, besides collecting an array of skulls, during a stay with the indigenous population of Kalahari, the bushmen who were traditionally singled out as the prototype of a primitive race.[66]

As stated by Alison Griffiths, the fate of cinema in anthropology was particularly complicated during its early stages, and certainly not a triumphal march, although no explicit refusal or opposition came from within the scientific community. Those few who dared to test the new medium encountered logistic, technical and financial obstacles, as well as being hindered by the lack of "a strong theoretical and methodological justification for incorporating moving pictures into the arsenal of fieldwork methods." The impression among the general public that ethnographic films were a sort of popular entertainment – *cinéma 2*, as Regnault called it – did little to enhance its reputation as a serious research tool.

The short films shot between 1895 and the first decade of the 20th century seemed to contain a wealth of meaning, but much of it was tantalizingly undecipherable, and so cinematography seemed destined to remain "a decidedly ancillary method".[67] Then World War I broke out and had the effect of postponing to the 1920s and 1930s any resumption of research activities. In the meantime, social evolutionism had begun to decline as the dominant heuristic model, with the effect – among other things – of shifting the anthropologist's priorities towards languages, kinship and belief systems, which lent themselves far more readily to verbal rather than visual treatment. It is noteworthy that Paul Henley borrowed a phrase from the Belgian anthropologist Luc de Heusch and

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[66] For a general report on the trip see Rudolf Pöch, "Reisen in Neu-Guinea in den Jahren 1904-1906," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 39 (1907): 382-97. See also Walter Hirschberg, *Völkerkundliche Ergebnisse der südafrikanischen Reisen Rudolf Pöch's in den Jahren 1907 bis 1909* (Wien: Verlag der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft, 1936).

[67] Alison Griffiths, "Knowledge and Visuality in Turn of the Century Anthropology: The Early Ethnographic Cinema of Alfred Cort Haddon and Walter Baldwin Spencer," *Visual Anthropology Review* 12 (1996): 35-7; Id., *Wondrous Difference* (cit. note 37), 167-70; Id.,"'We Partake, as it Were, of its Life': The Status of the Visual in Early Ethnographic Film," in *Moving Images: From Edison to the Webcam*, eds. John Fullerton and Astrid Söderbergh Widding (Sidney: John Libbey & Company, 2000), 91-110, p. 92.

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gave the title "The long prehistory of the ethnographic film" to the first chapter of his recent book. In his opinion, a laborious gestation would run from the mid-1890s up to the Second World War, "a period of tentative beginnings, sporadic activity and blurred genres".[68]

Captions

1. *Négresse Oulove* modeling a clay pot *sans tour*. J. Lajard, F. Regnault, "Poterie crue et origine du tour," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie*, IV[e] série, 1895, p. 738.
2. Everyday life. F. Regnault, "Exposition ethnographique. L'Afrique occidentale au Champs-de-Mars à Paris. Sénégal et Soudan français," *La Nature*, 1895, p. 185.
3. F. Regnault, two films: **a)** *nègre grimpeur* [an African tree climber]; **b)** *saut de trois nègres* [three Africans jumping], Cinémathèque de Paris.
4. Caricature of the goose step. F. Regnault, "Du pas gymnastique," *La Nature*, 1894, p. 84.
5. Marche ordinaire, marche en flexion [An ordinary gait, walking in a flexed position]. F. Regnault, de Raoul, *Comment on marche. De divers modes de progression. De la superiorité du mode en flexion* (Paris, 1898), p. 75.
6. Idem, p. 77.
7. Three types of upper incisors. L. Azoulay, F. Regnault, "Des diverses formes des dents incisives supérieures," *Bulletins de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris*, IV[e] Série, 1893, p. 267.
8. A Dahomean tearing off the head of a chicken. F. Regnault, "De la fonction prehensile du pied," *La Nature*, 1893, p. 229.

[68] Henley, *Beyond Observation* (cit. note 12), p. 28. See also Luc de Heusch, "The Prehistory of Ethnographic Film," in *Memories of the Origins of Ethnographic film*, ed. Beate Engelbrecht (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2007), 15-22.

9. A Malu zogo-le dance. Alfred C. Haddon, *Head-Hunters. Black, White, and Brown* (London 1901), Plate V after p. 48. (image provided by the Biblioteca Nazionale, Napoli, MIBAC).

10. Fire-making, a still from Haddon's film. https://aso.gov.au/titles/collections/ethnographic-film-in-Australia/

11. Plate viii. Ceremonial and Corrobboree head dresses, Arunta tribe, in Baldwin Spencer (ed.), *Report on the Work of the Scientific Expedition to Central Australia* (London-Melbourne 1896)

12. Plate x. Adult males, Luritcha and Arunta tribes, ibid.