
EXPERIENCE WITH TWO FILMS IN TANGANYIKA

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It is becoming clear that the successful application of visual aids is directly related to the emphasis placed upon the visual material as an "aid", and the following notes are concerned with two films, *Smallpox* and *Dipping*, which have been used successfully in Tanganyika. The two films differ in several respects: *Smallpox* was made in Nigeria on 35 mm. film stock and by a small unit of professional film makers, and *Dipping* was made on the opposite side of the continent in 16 mm. colour by a professional one-man unit.

In January 1952, the Port Health Office, Dar-es-Salaam, received a report of an outbreak of smallpox in a nearby village. It was decided to start a mass campaign of vaccination in the coastal belt affected. This was well advanced when the possibility of the use of a film was discussed.

The intentions of the makers of the film were unknown to us, but in this case it was the intention of the user which was of paramount importance, and we wanted to know if it were possible to use *Smallpox*, either as it stood or with alterations, to combat a certain amount of local resistance to the vaccination campaign. The film emphasised the following points:

- (a) Vaccination is a free protective measure available at all times.
- (b) Smallpox can cause death, blindness, and disfigurement.
- (c) Early treatment can effect a cure.
- (d) Concealment is a social crime and a personal danger.
- (e) A Health Department's job is to protect the community.

In our opinion the one weakness lay in the implicit suggestion throughout the film that vaccination gave complete immunity, and so we revised the commentary, and gave a talk before each showing of the film to make the point that vaccination would minimise the risk of infection, and should a person catch smallpox, the attack was likely to be a mild one and the chances of recovery excellent.

The innate parochialism of our audiences made us fearful that differences in locale, and in the method of vaccination, might

cause criticism and prejudice the message of the film. The following typical remarks overheard by our observers being made by members of the audience to each other, or out loud as an expression of emotional impact, witness the fact that our fears were groundless.

"I don't want to be Mr. Alabi (a character in the film who caught smallpox). Let me be vaccinated."

"This disease can easily spread and kill others."

"Yes, this is smallpox, just like we get it."

Ultimately the success of the visual aid could only be measured by the positive action taken by those who saw the film. After one of the shows a man got talking to our commentator and during the conversation said: "When the vaccinators first came here many people fought to avoid them, but this time they come willingly—Europeans are crafty."

No other visual aid was used, and the briefing of the commentator consisted of getting the timing of the commentary right. This was given in the local language through the film-projector's sound system, and replaced the original photographic sound track, which was switched off.

Our success was due to three things: association with a campaign, immediate vaccination as an outlet for the emotion aroused by the film, and a film of simple construction told at the level of African understanding. Although there must be a limit of tolerable difference between what is shown on the screen and the experience of the audience seeing the film, the use of *Smallpox* is an interesting example of the value of visual material used in an area outside its country of origin.

Dipping was made in the Iringa District of Tanganyika for the Dipping Scheme at the request of the Veterinary Officer in charge, Mr. G. Yeoman. The scheme was designed to control the ticks which carried the parasite responsible for cattle deaths by East Coast Fever, and at the time of the making of the film, the scheme was still in its voluntary stage. A number of dips had already been constructed and were in use, and others were under construction, but to many of the tribesmen the idea of dipping brought deep misgivings. This was in no way a reflection upon extensive and thorough propaganda of the sponsors of the scheme. Despite all this, rumour was rife, and at the time the film was made a story was being circulated that the dip was poisoned and cattle would die as a result of entering it, even if they were not drowned in the process. This rumour gained such force in one area that cattle were being sold at the local markets well below ruling prices so that owners might escape the dread results of dipping.

The scheme had received the assent and blessing of the Hehe Council, which meant that the tribal leaders were prepared to pass

rules of a compulsory kind when the time was ripe, for the success of the scheme depended upon every man dipping all his cattle regularly.

Yeoman believed that compulsion without education was a poor foundation for success, and as the ultimate success depended upon the continued goodwill of each individual dipping cattle, he was most anxious to reach a much wider audience than he had been able to influence by the traditional methods already employed, and so he turned to the film, which always drew great crowds.



Daylight projection of *Smallpox*.

The Film Research Officer who made the film, and the Veterinary Officer who asked for it were in one mind on many matters, not the least important being the need for a simple aim, and so the purpose of the film was to show the African what happened at a dip. In order to relate this to East Coast Fever, the film started with an all too common experience, a man entering his cattle boma to find a sick beast. The film goes on to show the well-known symptoms, and the diagnosis of East Coast Fever is linked with tick infestation. By the analogy of washing clothes the audience is introduced to the idea of washing cattle with a medicated solution which kills ticks. This is shown to be harmless to man and beast. In editing the film an actual shot of an animal entering the dip, going through it, and emerging unscathed the other side, all in the one shot, was delayed towards the end of the film to create tension, and proved most effective.

The technique of use sprang from the classroom, for the Film



Spectators watching daylight film show.

Research Officer had been convinced for a number of years that people unused to the cinema find it difficult to follow a moving picture and a commentary at one and the same time, and to this end he advocated that all instruction should be in the form of a story with emphasis upon the visual material as the medium for conveying essential information. It is but a short step to make the first showing of the film a silent one, and after giving the audience time to ask questions, to play the film again with its commentary. This always brought a great gain in attention, and at no time appears to have bored the audience, rather the reverse, for they welcomed the chance to understand thoroughly what they were looking at. During question time, if the answers were given in the commentary to the film, we directed the attention of the audience to this fact, which made them all the more attentive during the second showing.

What were the results? Of statistical data there are none. However, it was estimated that as a result of the campaign with which the film was associated, there was an increase of 50 per cent in voluntary dipping. Villages asked to see the films again; those who had been left out demanded a visit, and in every audience observers overheard people saying: "I didn't know cattle could

swim". One unexpected reaction was the interpretation given to use of the cinema. It went something like this: "If the Government think dipping so important that they have made a film about it and are showing it to us, then dipping must be very important indeed". After all, a film show is something of an event in the bush.

The Veterinary Officer in charge of the scheme was so convinced of the value of the film in affecting the psychological climate that another one has been made about the economics of the scheme, and is now undergoing test showings to reveal any faults. This time the commentary is on a magnetic strip along the side of the film, and is spoken by the Chairman of the Hehe Council in the tribal language. Our conversion to "striping" was due to experiments conducted with a magnetic sound projector loaned to Tanganyika by Unesco in the early days of manufacture. *Dipping* was shown in another area where a scheme was being planned, but it received a poor response. Whether this was due to the use of a film made for a specific set of circumstances in a specific area, or due to an unfavourable political climate, is a matter of speculation. Or it may have been bad timing, for an important factor in the success of the film in the Iringa District was its timing. A few months later its effect would have been much less.

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