

Hopi Culture in Transformation 7 – 29 July, 1989



# TECHQUA IKACHI

## LAND – MY LIFE

a Hopi film

by Danaqyumtewa, Agnes Barmettler, Anka Schmid

### Meaning of "A documentary film by the Hopi about the Hopi" – by Anka Schmid

At the beginning there was the wish of Dan Kachongwa, the Kigmongwi of Hotevilla who died in 1973, to create his own film. He trusted the "moving pictures" and hoped that he and his village Elders could bring their concerns to a larger public through a film, as well as producing a document for their children and grandchildren at the same time. For they know the Hopi culture will soon be extinguished.

In hopes of creating the document they desire, the Elders of Hotevilla work with various film teams. But they are disappointed, for the important things, in their point of view, are censored, edited and left out. Justified mistrust of film-teams they don't know arises.

At the end of the 60's, Danaqyumtewa, a Hopi from Hotevilla, begins at the request of Dan Kachongwa to film ceremonies and political events in the village with a Super-8 camera and a tape recorder.

In 1985 he comes to Agnes Barmettler and me with the request to help him in the realization of a Hopi film. At 70 years of age he still holds the hope of being able to fulfill his commission. He says, this is the last try.

I'm conscious of the fact that it's a difficult task to apply the medium of film, a part of "white" culture, as a vehicle for the traditional customs of the Hopi; their history, culture and way of life. Our intention to create a film with and about the Hopi requires that we create the appropriate conditions for this film work. Danaqyumtewa must decisively be there during the entire work process. So we want to take into consideration his daily life as a Hopi farmer and his religious tasks, and bring them into the film.

After three years of preparation through conversations, travels, writing screenplays, researching and seeking financing, we were able to begin in the fourth year with the realization of the film. For that purpose I lived almost a year long in Arizona, U.S.A. and commuted between the Hopi village Hotevilla and Flagstaff, an American town.

Agnes Barmettler and I had first to establish a "film workshop", composed of an editing table, a tape recorder, a 16-mm camera and a post office box address. At the end of May we began the first filming.

#### **Planting Time**

Six weeks long we filmed with a small team. Because Hotevilla, like other Hopi villages, has a prohibition against taking photos, filming and recording, our filming is limited to the fields and some houses. We accompany Danaqyumtewa to the fields, film him by planting and by various conversations with the Elders from his village. They report as witness of events in recent history, of their resistance against the interference of the American government and its repression in the form of schools and prisons. They speak about prophecies and their current situation.

The first film phase is completed. The planted corn grows. Niman takes place, the homecoming dance of the Kachinas. Danaqyumtewa participates in this ceremony and must fast for 16 days and withdraws from film work.

#### **Summer. Caring for the Fields.**

We begin editing. Danaqyumtewa must leave his fields and family again and again in order to work with us in the "editing room" and in the town with the translations from Hopi to English and in the selection of conversations.

And, the other way around, we accompany him again and again to his family and work in the house and in the field. I journey with the camera to record changes in the fields and in the landscape. We often have opportunities to attend dances at the Plaza. In a further editing phase, we choose material from Danaqyumtewa's archives of film and Super-8 documents to insert into this film.

We work out a first structure of the film that, in accordance with Hopi traditions, begins with the climb out of the third world into the present, fourth world, and ends with the 'purification' of the world.

### **Harvest. Preparing and Storing the Fruits of the Field.**

A second filming phase begins. This time with another team, smaller, more intimate. Again we accompany Danaqyumtewa to the field, film the harvest and also work ourselves. Processing the harvest means much work for the women. We were able to film here too.

The empty field rests. The provisions are stored.

Danaqyumtewa comes to our small "film studio" again. We work on a ceremonial cycle. A woven unity of a year's cycle should arise from his Super-8 films of the ceremonies - some of which are nomlonger conducted - and our films of the fields, the land and the work of a Hopi farmer. In choosing the respective music, Danaqyumtewa is very precise and strict. All too often have the Hopis had to experience that film music would be randomly mixed, that even music from other Indian tribes would be added in.

We make additional sound recordings with Danaqyumtewa, for he'd like to add certain supplements and explanations to the conversations with the Elders.

In the meantime, all historical photographs from different archives have arrived. Danaqyumtewa determines a small selection of photos for the film.

### **Winter. The first snow falls.**

I make the last landscape shots. Now the year's cycle is complete. The shortened selection of conversations and the supplements made by Danaqyumtewa are edited into their final order. The framework of the film is complete.

Before I leave, all the Elders who have appeared in the film come to us to see the raw cut on the editing table, or, more precisely, to hear it. They give their yes to the film.

I travel to Berlin to begin filming the historical photos. A month later, Danaqyumtewa and Agnes come also and bring the last films of songs, which also have to be inserted. Danaqyumtewa sees the first filmed photos. For the last time we work on translations from Hopi to English, so that final editing can be made more precisely, and so that the final translation into German is also correct. We have little time left for our collaborative work in Berlin, for Danaqyumtewa must soon return to Hotevilla to participate in a ceremony. Agnes returns to Switzerland and paints images for the film.

### **Planting Time.**

Danaqyumtewa is in the fields again. The corn grows. The edited and mixed film finally goes to the copy lab.

On July 6, 1989, TECHQUA IKACHI, LAND - MY LIFE is shown publicly for the first time. Danaqyumtewa will come to Berlin for this premiere with his daughter and granddaughter. Immediately afterward he travels back to his village, so he can perform his services as priest in the Niman ceremony.

The search for financing and work on the English version continue. It's completed at the end of 1991. I travel to Hopicountry again and am deeply touched meeting the people and the land again. The film is shown to a small group. In January, 1992, TECHQUA IKACHI, LAND - MY LIFE receives its American premiere at the Sundance Film Festival in Utah, in the presence of James Danaqyumtewa and Agnes Barnettler.