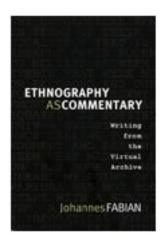
Ethnography as Commentary



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The Internet allows ethnographers to deposit the textual materials on which they base their writing in virtual archives. Electronically archived fieldwork documents can be accessed at any time by the writer, his or her readers, as well as by the people studied. Johannes Fabian, a leading theorist of anthropological practice, argues that virtual archives have the potential to shift the emphasis in ethnographic writing from the monograph to commentary. In this insightful study, he returns to the recording of a conversation he had with a ritual healer in the Congolese town of Lubumbashi more than three decades ago. Fabian's transcript and translation of the exchange have been deposited on a web site (Language and Popular Culture in Africa) and in "Ethnography and Commentary" he provides a model of writing in the presence of a virtual archive. In his commentary, Fabian reconstructs his meeting with the healer Kahenga Mukonkwa Michel, in which they discussed the ritual that Kahenga performed to protect Fabian's home from burglary. He reflects on the expectations and terminology that shape his description of Kahenga's ritual and meditates on how ethnographic texts are made, considering the settings, the participants, the technologies, and the linguistic medium that influence the transcription and translation of a recording and thus fashion ethnographic knowledge. Turning more directly to Kahenga - as a practitioner, a

person, and an ethnographic subject - and to the questions Fabian posed to him, the anthropologist reconsiders questions of ethnic identity, politics, and religion. While Fabian hopes that emerging anthropologists will share their fieldwork through virtual archives, he does not suggest that traditional ethnography will disappear. It will become part of a broader project facilitated by new media.

作者介绍:

Johannes Fabian is Professor Emeritus of Cultural Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam and a member of the Amsterdam School of Social Research. He is the author of many books, including Memory against Culture: Arguments and Reminders, also published by Duke University Press; Out of Our Minds: Reason and Madness in the Exploration of Central Africa; Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire; Language and Colonial Power: The Appropriation of Swahili in the Former Belgian Congo, 1880–1938; and Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object.

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