

# Photography and Anthropological intention in Nineteenth Century Britain

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This essay is intended as a critical overview of the relationship between anthropology and photography in the nineteenth century in what emerged, by about 1920, the British School. I am going to consider the construction of an anthropological way of seeing in photography, how those interested in anthropology gave visual expression to their science and the currency of images within those concerns. Integral to this is the fundamental nature of the anthropological exercise on one hand and the nature of the photograph on the other. These 'parallel histories', as Pinney has characterised them (1992a), in turn implicate many other histories embedded in these images which would constitute whole papers in themselves.

I shall argue implicitly that, despite uncertainties, photography in the nineteenth century actually made a substantial but often unacknowledged and unidentified contribution to the establishment of the anthropological object and then after about 1900 there is a radical reversal of this confidence, which had a profound effect on the position of visual material in British anthropology and the dissemination of its images. This intellectual trend, once identified, can also be seen mirrored in the shape of all the major anthropological archive collections in Britain<sup>1</sup>. All these collections share the same basic shape, moulded, like any collection within changing frameworks of knowledge. Likewise all the images in them were absorbed into anthropological knowledge and, whatever their maker's intentions, were deemed of 'anthropological interest' at some point in the discipline's history.

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<sup>1</sup> These are those at my own institution, Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, the Royal Anthropological Institute, the Museum of Mankind (British Museum) and the University Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge. The precise contents of the collection at Cambridge are not yet known in detail. The Museum was awarded National Lottery Heritage Funding in 1997 and work is in progress on this exceptionally rich collection.

It has long been argued that the nineteenth century was a visualist culture, that observation, vision, display and spectacle, whether in photography, department stores, colonial exhibitions or scientific drawing were intrinsic to its cultural processes and values, redrawing the boundaries of experiential knowledge and its institutional apparatus (see for example Greenhaugh 1988; Lalvani 1996; Sekula 1986; Barkan & Bush 1995). If the pre-conditions for seeing photographically were, in formal and perceptual terms, well established by 1839 (Galassi 1981), more importantly so were the intellectual and conceptual parameters which defined its cultural role (Batchen 1997). But more important here perhaps is the consideration that the emergence of both photography and anthropology were products of a shift in the cultural arrangements of knowledge, positioning bodies of both the observer and observed into something which could be calculated and regulated, and of human vision into something measurable and thus exchangeable (Crary 1990). Observation, establishing the privileged position of the visual, and positivist science were different aspects of the same cultural frameworks.

The emerging discipline of anthropology was part of that explanatory process which encompassed simultaneously the search for the human race's physical and cultural origins. The nineteenth century gave those living in the Euro-American world a sense of scale hitherto unknown, a sense of cause, effect and connection on a massive scale through the rapidly expanding chronological frame and the expanding geographical world. The latter offered, within the dominant progressivist cultural paradigm, a template of multiplying cultural difference onto which broadly evolutionary concepts could be projected while photography itself, and later film, presented new forms for the expression of new content (Grimshaw 1997: 36-37)<sup>2</sup>.

Within these contexts photography thus rapidly came to stand for the ultimate realism – the truth of the physical world laid out for our inspection. Light was reflected off the physical world on to chemically sensitised plate and that reflected image made permanent through further chemical transformation. A direct reflection of the world without the mediation of the artists imagination and the artist's hand – a quotation from life itself rather than an interpretation. On the surface it would appear that photography's «quantifying and reality appropriating capacities [were] perfectly suited to the realist and quantitative aspirations of anthropology»

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<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps a significant co-incidence —at least retrospectively, that the first public announcement of photography in 1839 and the foundation in Britain of the Aboriginal Protection Society, the forerunner of the Royal Anthropological Institute, were within two years of each other (Pinney 1992a: 74).

(Pinney 1990a: 260). Nevertheless this should not be seen as a naive and undifferentiated realism but an assessment of evidential possibilities premised on the nature of photography itself and cultural assumptions about the medium. The disquiet about what exactly constituted anthropological photography can be located in the tensions between the nature of the photograph, the nature of scientific observation, specifically anthropological notions of the scientific and the differential values ascribed to them (Tucker 1997: 381).

What were these scientific requirements as they applied to anthropology and what were the expectations of the medium that this implied? By the third quarter of the nineteenth century anthropology had begun to establish itself as a separate discipline in Britain. Its proponents<sup>3</sup> saw themselves as scientists working in the tradition of the biological sciences on the science of mankind in both physical and cultural manifestations, and applying rigorous method to their data and analysis, classification being the primary aim for the ordering and thus understanding. Evolutionism, or at least progressivism, was the dominant model in analysis<sup>4</sup>. Theories of evolution also encompassed such concepts as degeneration, diffusion and recapitulation. What is important here, is that evolutionism was a highly visualised theory, it was based on observation and comparison and expressed graphically in precisely scientific drawing<sup>5</sup>, charts, «family trees» and graphs and the visualist rhetoric of the language of much written science.

As they defined their object, anthropologists were at pains to distance themselves from travel writing and geography which were seen as merely descriptive, impression rather than verified «facts about which there can be no question» (Read 1899: 76) –precisely reflecting the opposition be-

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<sup>3</sup> There were anthropological concerns, for instance, in biology, anatomy, archaeology, philology, technology and history of religion. See Stocking 1987.

<sup>4</sup> In very simplest terms, the human race (if it were one race – a hotly debated point) was perceived as ascending from lowest (Australian Aboriginals were usually assigned to this slot) in a linear march of progress to the pinnacle of civilised achievement, the white Anglo-Saxon upper or upper-middle class male, with the rest of the world ranged, by comparative method, between the two – there is some very interesting writing on the subject of women's brains. (See Gould 1981).

<sup>5</sup> It is significant here that two major arguments in British science in the 1860s - the *hippocampus minor* debate amongst anatomists interested in the study of human relationship with the higher apes (Di Gregorio 1984: 137-138) and the row which caused the decade long split between the Anthropological Society and the Ethnological Society in London (Stocking 1971) - revolved around the 'scientific accuracy' represented in specific drawings in question in each case and thus the moral value of truth in relation to scientific objectivity.

tween painting and photography. The potential for photography to provide the sought objectivity was perceived as immense but the enthusiasm and perception of photographic «reality» and the visual forms of evolutionism had difficulty in any useful articulation of the theory in the face of practical difficulties on one hand and on the other the diversity and apparently unstructured nature (in terms of data) of photographs, that «surplus of meaning» (Pinney 1992b: 27) which resisted systematic expression and classification. As in other sciences, what actually constituted 'objective' and 'realistic' in anthropological terms, was morally charged, carrying the weight of the 'truth-telling' of science, 'subjectivity' threatened the premises of science itself (Daston and Galison 1992: 117-120). What was, in fact, an anthropological photograph?

From the earliest days of photography, photographs were produced which the photographic journals, in their reviews described as being «of anthropological interest». At the same time «anthropologists» began to collect visual material which could be used as raw data for analysis, very much in the way eighteenth century and early nineteenth century antiquarians collected folios of engravings for scholarly study of architecture or other antiquities. Material was collected by scholars from scientific travellers, missionaries, colonial administrators, exhibited at meetings and learned societies, bought from dealers and photographic studios, a broad currency of imagery, made concrete through exchange amongst interested parties. Photographs were seen as a centralized resource in anthropology, the 'man on the spot' constituted both the eyes and camera of anthropology, the photographs moving observation on the colonial periphery to the interpreting centres of the university, museum and learned society. Photographs, as 'immutable mobiles' *par excellence*, allowed inscribed information to move across different spaces uncontaminated, a kind of intellectual common property (Edwards and Schwartz 1998). Photographs also appear to have functioned in this way, in the way they were used in connection in those other tangible links and evidences of difference museum, displays of material culture, where photographs produced a 'reality effect' for objects, authoritating and authenticating. Temple, discussing the Pitt Rivers typological display of material culture in 1888 describes their being <sup>6</sup>:

A collection of photographs of the various races of mankind, and with them a series of those skulls which best show the best marked social characteristics (1888: 173).

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<sup>6</sup> The Blackmore Museum in Salisbury in the 1860s (which Pitt Rivers might well have known, having family estates nearby) used a similar integration of objects and photographs in this way. It is highly likely that these are some of the photographs now in the Blackmore collection at the Museum of Mankind in London, although I have not yet found any direct evidence to date.

Throughout the period under discussion, up to about 1910, there are parallel sources of visual material, the precisely scientific and material produced outside any sort of disciplinary control. The problematic nature of this dichotomy was overridden by the broad belief in the analogical realism of photography which allowed the interpenetration of the scientific and the popular despite the critical standards of scientific objectivity, the beguiling realism of photographs had the potential to subvert, especially when the anthropological desire was culturally focused rather than somatic. For the classification of knowledge allows content (subject matter) to be privileged over both contexts of intention and photographic style, a point which reoccurs throughout this essay.

By the late 1860s and 1870s anthropology became increasingly concerned to improve both the quality and quantity of its data. But by the end of the 1870s one can perhaps detect an increasing specialisation in photographic practise in anthropology. On one hand the increasingly scientific applications to physical anthropology, the most famous of which is Francis Galton's development of the composite type, first published within anthropology in 1878. This was developed to overcome the inferential reading of individual case studies in the establishment of racial and criminal types and the role of hereditary and to establish those scientific generalities which expressed the essentialist anthropology of race and criminality, a road which expressed itself in Anglo-American eugenics (Green 1985) and its most extreme manifestations in German National Socialist *Rassentheorie* of the mid-20th century. What concerns me here are the more general links between this visualisation of statistical method of the anthropometric laboratory such as that established by Galton in South Kensington in 1884, and the more generalised investigation of the biological nature of culture, for both have the same starting point. In the 1860s and 1870s physical anthropology was the primary concern. Scientific circles concerned themselves with transferring the presumed accuracy of anatomical drawing and scientific illustration to the 'truth' potential of photography. However beyond craniometry and other such biometric exercises, which were not in themselves unproblematic as critiques of Galton's work and debates about correct or more 'truthful' forms of photography suggest. the definition of anthropological or scientific as applied to photography was less clear. However this had much wider implications given that culture itself was believed to be biologically determined. It is more precisely within this structure, rather than the visualisation of statistics and biometrics developed by Galton, that we should ground the emergence of photographic usage within the developing and discrete field of cultural anthropology or social anthropology as it was eventually to become in the British School.

As we have seen, Galton was experimenting with controlling the visual parameters of type within scientific reference, but this scientific reference was absorbed neatly into the received aesthetic for representing non-Europeans. The scientific language was disseminated through reports of anthropological endeavour in the popular press, descriptions of visual mapping of races in the photographic journals, the visual dialects of the popular sciences of the relationship between surface and depth, phrenology and physiognomy and more general notions of positivist quantification and mathematization of data. Within this broad discourse, portraits of almost any kind became described as «types» –transforming the individuality of the portrait into a scientific generality– a «type».

It was through photography that the concept of «type», which was crucial to taxonomy and classification, was given physical form –the photograph made the abstract visible and tangible. There are some striking examples of this mechanism at work. In 1862–64 the French photographer L. Rousseau photographed, amongst others, a Japanese diplomatic delegation<sup>7</sup>. Another example of the production of «type» are Woolley's famous portraits of the Tasmanian Aborigines taken for the Intercolonial Exhibition in Melbourne in 1866 and as such, images actually intended for display, mass-consumption, and thus heightened visibility. These are strong portraits by any standards, presented in a specifically European aesthetic, a gentle play of light on the subject who is surrounded by a misty vignette (the dying race indeed). Yet the scientific reference is unmistakable as each subject is photographed full face and profile, and in this case the optional extra – three quarter face (plate 1). It is significant that these portraits appear in almost all the major anthro-



PLATE 1.—Profile of Bessie Clarke. Photograph by C. A. Woolley, Hobart 1866. PRM B.44.16a.  
© Pitt Rivers Museum, Univ. of Oxford

<sup>7</sup> There are over 450 prints in this series in the Pitt Rivers Museum collection (including 80 of Japanese subjects). The original negatives are in Musée de l'Homme, Paris.

pological collections, in Europe, in America and in Australia. For they were aggressively marketed as scientific data both by Woolley and by the famous Hobart photographer J. Beattie, who later acquired the negatives. Further these photographs, provide an example of the use of such generalised and generalising photographs. They were used as cranial/facial projections in a paper entitled «Is Mrs. Smith the Last Tasmanian» which appeared in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* in 1898. – profiles, presented as engravings, traced off a series of images, traced off reality (Ling Roth 1898).

Whilst all this underlined the definition of the anthropological object, British practitioners continued to be concerned that photography still failed to fulfil its potential and produce hard data. In Britain in the late 1860s and early 1870s there were several attempts to produce quantifiable photographic data. Again the stress was on physical anthropology but as we have seen this had much wider implications. In 1869 J. Lamprey published a short article in the *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* describing a method of measurement using photographs (plate 2). This system was never widely adopted although it was not without some influence, for example the anthropometric photography of M. V. Portman in the Andaman Islands which I shall come to later. Almost contemporary with Lamprey's attempts, and possibly as a response to it, was a more ambitious project initiated on behalf of the Ethnological Society by Professor Thomas H. Huxley, the eminent evolutionary biologist, to collect a systematic photographic portfolio of the races of the British Empire (Edwards 1990; Edwards and Schwartz 1998). This project was one of a number of hugely ambitious universal photographic resources to be envisaged around this date, others, for instance *The Peoples of India*, organised by Forbes Watson and Kaye and published, lavish volumes of tipped in albumen prints, between 1868 and 1875; a visual expression of the classification of peoples of the sub-continent as perceived and developed by the colonial administration. (Pinney 1990b).

Huxley's detailed instructions to photographers were circulated to colonial governors who were expected to send the results to the Colonial Office to be passed on to Huxley. The project was on the whole a failure, the images which came back in response to Huxley's request however stress the fundamental problem over control over production of data, for what came back was totally unstructured (in terms of anthropometric data). However, on the other hand it stresses the general perception of the anthropological object –the perceived nature of the subject matter, however represented was of «anthropological interest», with little regard to the intention of the producers or of the true nature of the subject it-

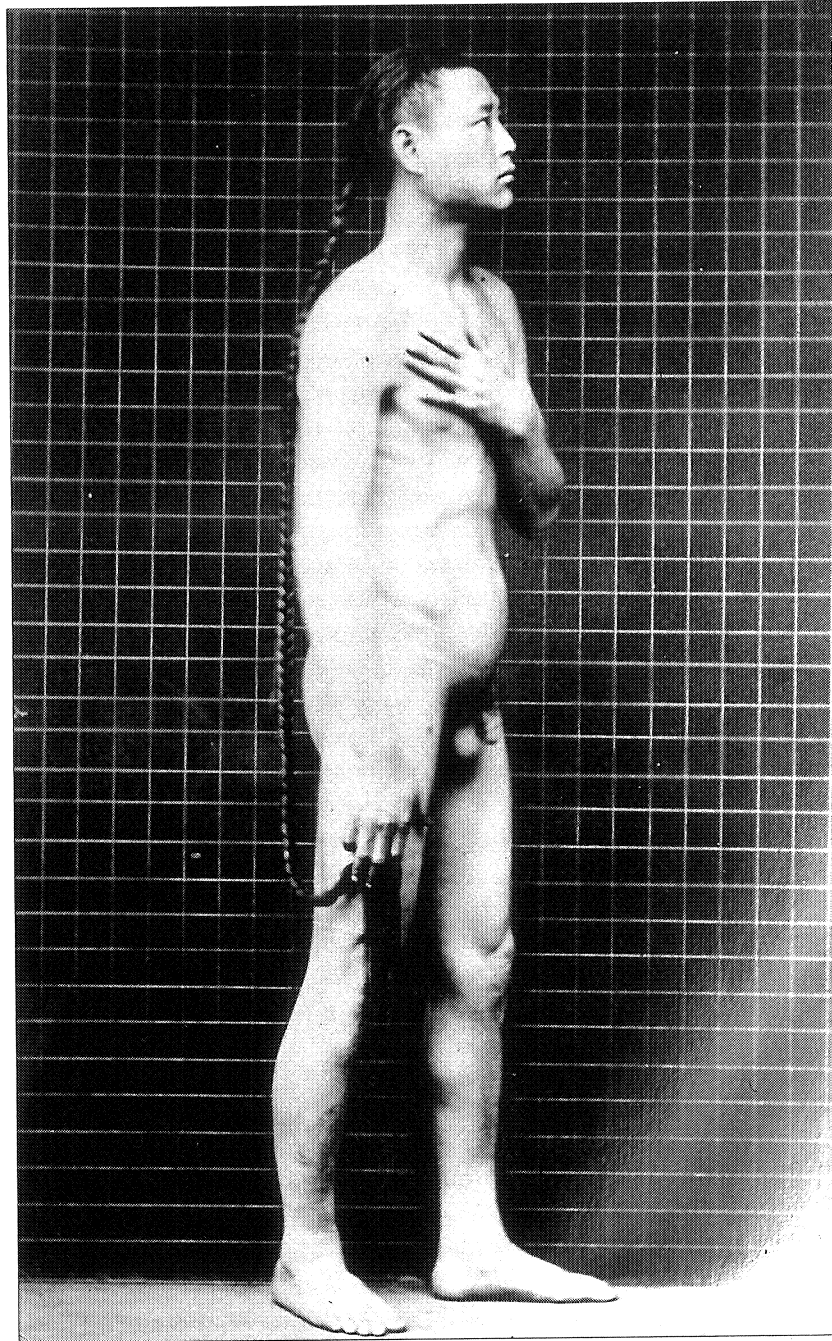


PLATE 2.—Anthropometric photograph by J. Lamprey, 1868-9 demonstrating his system of photographic measurement. PRM AL.31. © Pitt Rivers Museum, Univ. of Oxford.



self or the photographic modes of representation (Edwards & Schwartz 1998). For what was supplied where Huxley's instructions were not carried out to the letter were a mixture of the quasi-anthropometric and portrait types of native peoples.

The perception of the «other», the non-European, the marginal as an object of scientific study (plate 3a-b) was by this date firmly entrenched in the cultural assumptions and power structures of the colonialising and hence interpreting powers. As we shall see, despite the non-systematic production of visual material in anthropology, the cultural mechanisms of power-relations, which turned human experience and human bodies into objects of study as either scientific specimens or as expressions of the producer's perception of the significant aspects of that reality expressed through a series of culturally determined constructions, allowed for of a wide range of material to be used in the scientific domain for visual dissection and interpretation according to a pre-ordained model. Cultural assumption was thus given the weight of scientific fact, and photographic material created and selected through such a cultural grid merely reinforced the impression.

Nor was this activity confined to colonialised peoples. Throughout the late 1860s and early 1870s again, there had been attempts to construct a photographic racial typology of the British Isles<sup>8</sup> which constituted a differently formulated but closely related search of origins and self-referential affirmation which was implicated in the anthropological study of colonialised peoples (Poignant 1992: 57-60). This project was also seen as problematic by the sub-committee of the BAAS which organised it, in that they recognised the tensions between anthropological intention and the data yielded by a specific photograph or series of photographs

It was premised on the collecting of effectively random visual data, but it is likely that it was precisely these various photographs resulting from the various projects which Huxley considered as:

Great numbers of ethnological photographs already exist but they lose much from their value from not being taken upon a uniform and well considered plan (Huxley Ms. 30.f.1.75).

The value placed on such photographs as anthropological data is stressed by an interesting contemporary project in Germany for the dissemination of anthropological images organised by the Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie and a Hamburg photographer Carl Dammann<sup>9</sup> and which

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<sup>8</sup> The albums resulting from this project are now in the collections of the Royal Anthropological Institute in London.

<sup>9</sup> For an account of the Berlin. Dammann project see Theye 1989.



PLATE 3a-b.—Tahitian man photographed in scientific style during H. M. S. Challenger's scientific expedition. 1875. PRM B.43.25c-d.

sheds a useful comparative light on the production and consumption of images in Britain and her Empire. The aim of the Dammann was very similar to the Huxley and BAAS projects, but its brief somewhat broader, in that it extended beyond physical anthropology specifically. E. B. Tylor, arguably the greatest British anthropologist of the emerging discipline<sup>10</sup> reviewing the resulting 2 volume folio of over 600 photographs, described it as:

One of the most important contributions ever made to the science of man...they [the photographs] will do more than any quantity of written criticisms to check the rash generalization as to race so common in ethnological systems (1876: 184)

However the material was arranged and presented within the broad frameworks of physical anthropology making clear the believed link between physical type and cultural nature. The kind of material gathered together has many similarities with that collected by the BAAS British Racial survey, serendipitous and randomly acquired *cartes de visite*, and local exotica mixed with the scientific. Some of the material used in the Dammann project was rendered «anthropological» by masking the contextualizing background, isolating the subjects through photographic manipulation the physical nature is privileged over cultural reality. Further the arrangement of the album overtly displayed the racial determinants of culture as spectacle for academy and drawing room, inviting comparison and clearly articulates the exchangeability of image. In many ways it parallels the results of the Huxley and BAAS projects, but its implicit concentration on *visibility* in format is I think significant.

What we have seen in all the uses I have described so far is the flexible nature of the anthropological photographs both in its definition and the meaning attributed to it. As I have suggested, in parallel with systematic approaches to photography in anthropology, there was a large body of material of «anthropological interest» which was collected, displayed and archived by scholars. These embrace a wide range of material: Commercial photographers such as J. W. Lindt's recontextualising studio images of Clarence River Aborigines; Josiah Martin, a leading photographer in New Zealand<sup>11</sup> advertised special type collections of ethnological and anthropological subjects selected for students, societies and museums; survey photographs such as a set sent to Tylor and Moseley for Pitt Rivers Museum from J. W. Powell of the US Geological Survey/Bureau of American Ethnology in 1886, or missionaries such Rev. W. G. Lawes (London Mission-

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<sup>10</sup> I should add the first academic teaching post in anthropology in Britain and thus the foundation of my own department in Oxford.

<sup>11</sup> Like many photographers he described himself as a photographic *artist*.

ary Society Port Moresby) whose photographs were sold through Kerry & Kings in Sydney (Webb 1997) or travellers with anthropological interests such as C. F. Wood who actually took a photographer with him not unlike the way earlier voyagers had taken artists to re-present their observations (plate 4)<sup>12</sup>. They all saw themselves in some way as being involved in serving the interests of anthropology.

What is significant is that all these images, whatever their intention were seen as having anthropological interest and thereby having some scientific value. The BAAS British project, the Dammann and Huxley projects illustrate this perception in that different modes of representation from the scientific to the romantic were conceived as being a continuum of representation, variations on a theme. What defined it as anthropological was its consumption as much as its intention and content – its anthropology lay in the meanings it performed and the evidential value attributed to those meanings in any given context.

In 1874 BAAS published a little volume entitled *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*. This Volume (which had antecedents in the Admiralty Notes of the early nineteenth century and the *Manual of Ethnological Enquiry* of 1854, and which had run to 4 editions by 1912) comprised a series of detailed questions to aid travellers, missionaries, colonial administrators and so forth in the production of structured anthropological data which could be analyzed by anthropologists back at the metropolitan centres. It is interesting that this little volume is often presented merely as a statement of *post-facto* method –indeed it is at one level– but as George Stocking argued in his Huxley Memorial Lecture of 1993, a careful reading reveals an emerging relativist position, especially in the sections by Tylor and that as such it is more closely related to modern discipline of anthropology than might first meet the eye. The stress in *Notes and Queries* was on accuracy of detached objective observation. What it in fact did was structure an anthropological way of seeing which defined the anthropological object (Urry 1972), pre-selecting classes of data as «valid» and excluding other ways of seeing. Although there was no chapter on photography<sup>13</sup>, the general statement on observation as expressed in *Notes and Queries* did sharpen the definition of the anthropological within photography and

<sup>12</sup> «I was accompanied by Mr. George Smith as photographic artists, who most ably performed his part, often under the most trying circumstances

The opportunity of taking portraits of these people [Pacific Islanders] in their primitive condition will soon be lost so rapid is the advance of so-called civilization» (Wood 1875: [i]).

<sup>13</sup> It had been intended and indeed the chapter heading was printed but the contributor failed to deliver on time [that well known editorial hassle].

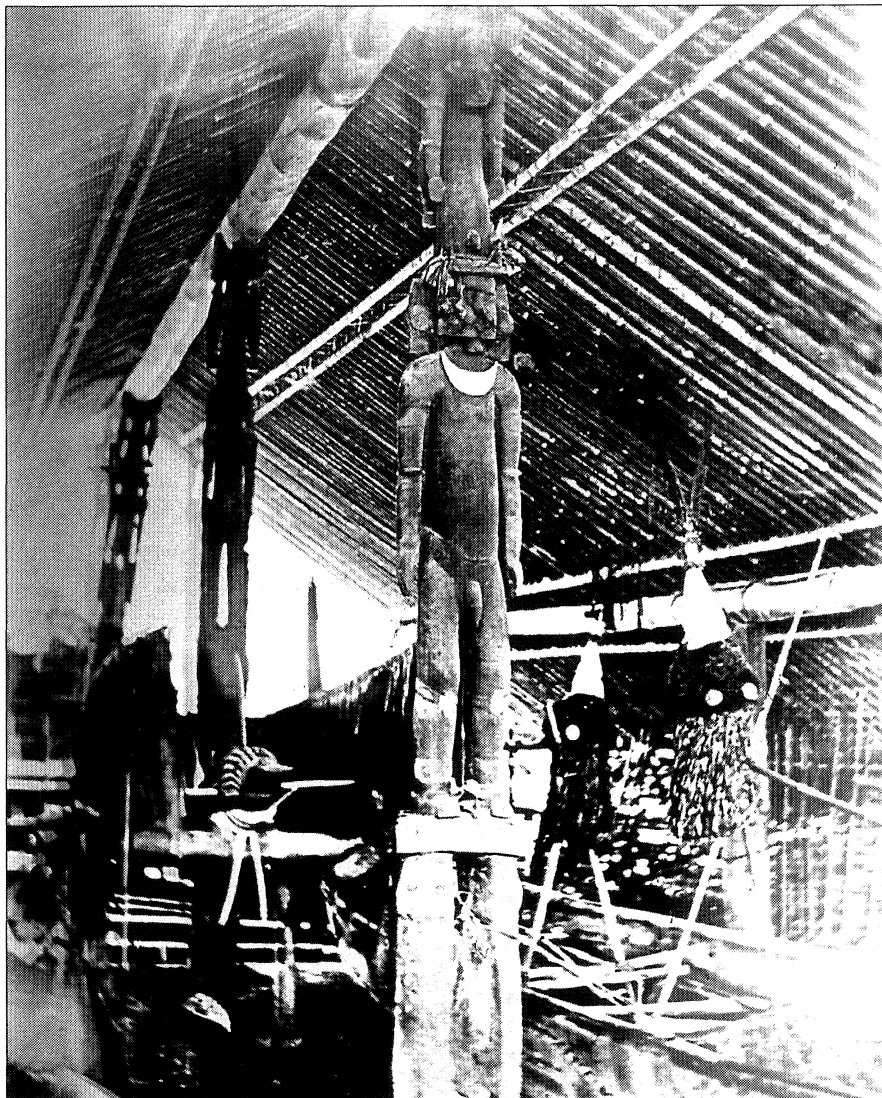


PLATE 4.—Interior of canoe house, Makira, Solomon Islands. 1873.  
Photograph. G. Smith for C. F. Wood. PRM AL.10.16.

at the same time photography underlined the reality of the anthropological object of study.

Perhaps the most notable example of *Notes and Queries* In action was the colonial administrator E. H. Man in the Andaman Islands who produced a thorough ethnography of the inhabitants which was a precise response to *Notes and Queries*. Whilst he was still producing photographs of physical type which were intended as scientific their nature was more iconographic than scientifically systematic, the measuring pole does little more than give scale to the object of study, its role in suggesting «serious science» is more important –it marks out the photography as «scientific» in the terms of *Notes and Queries* (plate 5). What is more interesting is the way in which Andamanese culture is expressed in these photographs – each photograph is carefully posed precisely in response to the questions posited by *Notes and Queries*. Anthropological truth was thus that which was defined in *Notes and Queries*. In broad terms this kind of observation and recording became the anthropologically desired way of representing. Whereas it is arguable that technical restrictions played a not inconsiderable role in structuring the image at this period, this cannot be argued for Man's latter work which still shows the same clinical scientific way of seeing Andamanese culture, displaying culture as a discreet and undynamic entity for scientific dissection rather than giving any hint at the reality of Andamanese experience in a colonial context (Edwards 1989; 1992).

The increasing interest in the broader study of culture of the non-European world in the last quarter of the C19th posed increasing problems in the definition or identification of anthropological truth in photography. By its very nature photography is fragmentary and selective, as are all texts to a greater or lesser degree, but it is the realism of photography and cultural expectancy of the medium which is beguiling. Yet photography dislocates time and space, elevates detail or fragment to perhaps disproportionate importance, standing for a generality. The past becomes present, yet it is the realist tool, par excellence. It becomes the great perpetrator of the ethnographic present as the there-then becomes the here-now. The photograph thus becomes an important expression of cultural myths and myths of culture as the power of selection and interpretation is vested in the creating culture and the physical evidence (the photograph) remains long after the creating intentions are gone (Fabian 1983).

Such ideas, although unarticulated, informed the notion of salvage ethnography which became a driving force in the production and collection of photographs of anthropological interest by the last two decades of the C19th. I should add that this was not necessarily restricted to «exotic»

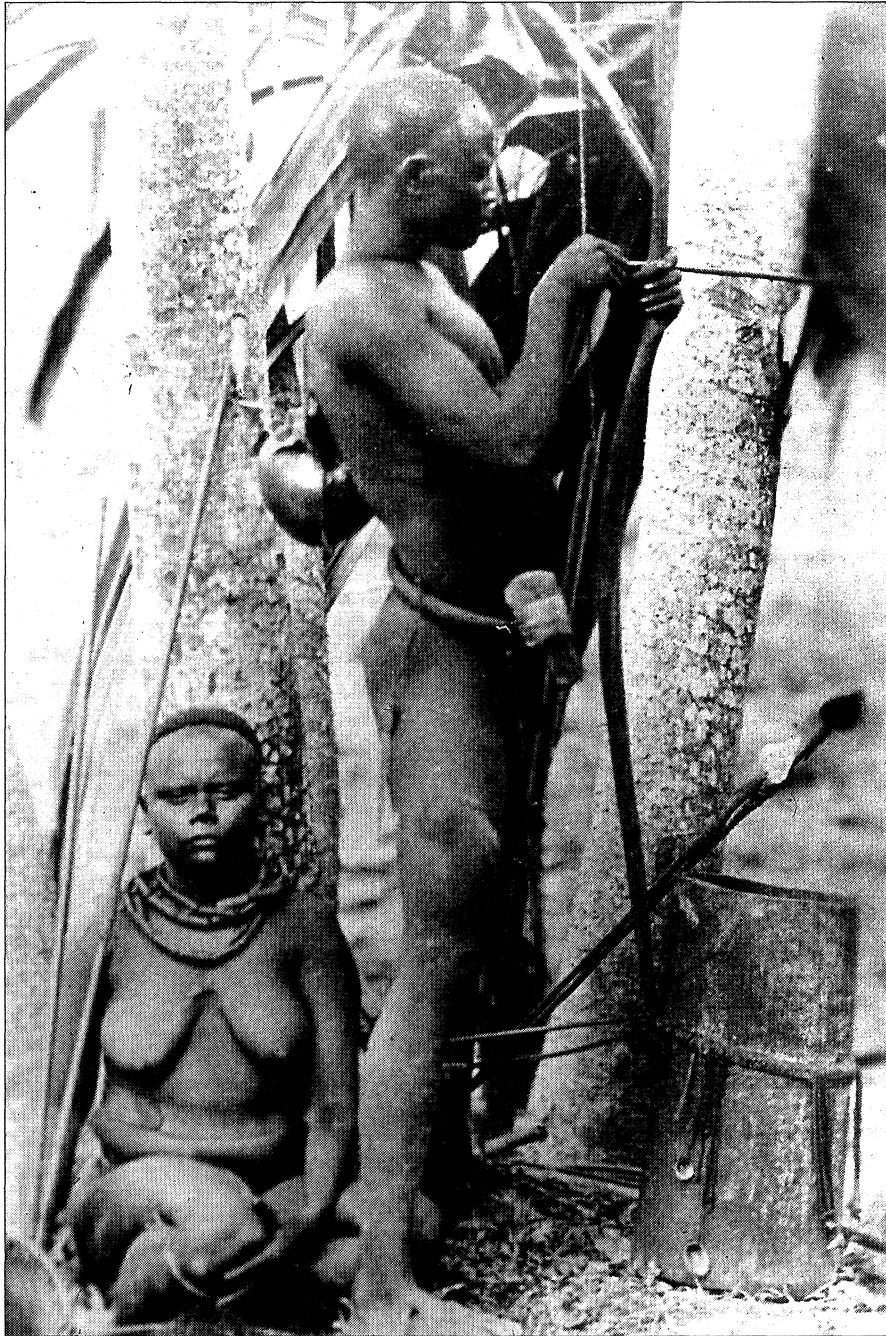


PLATE 5.—Biology and culture in the Andaman Islands. Photograph by E. H. Man.  
c. 1876. PRM B.30.5b.

peoples of the British Empire although it became increasingly so. Anthropology also embraced but also domestic empires such as working class life, survivals of rural ceremonies and technologies and it is significant that the Anthropological Institute and the Folklore Society (which was founded in 1878) shared many of the same interests and many of the same members. While the Folklore Society produced a *Notes and Queries* –like volume on collecting folktale, the British Association produced a schedule for enquiry into British custom in 1896. This survey interestingly was to be accompanied by full face & profile photographs of the informants and others. Its activities are reported in the Reports of the Anthropometric Committee which appear in the annual proceedings of the BAAS. However it was abandoned after a few years as the data was meagre and the results therefore unsatisfactory (Poignant 1992: 61).

The most notable British cultural project of the latter part of the century was Sir Benjamin Stone's<sup>14</sup> National Photographic Archive which:

...aimed at showing those who will succeed us, not only our buildings... but our everyday life of the people: (1906: [i]).

The stress was on the truth value of photography and its ability to map the scientifically observed reality which suggested the ancient solidity of national identity. This project is interesting because although premised on the idea of salvage ethnography, nevertheless, like other anthropological survey work, its omissions are significant and its aesthetically charged programme clear as «the trivial and ugly [are] omitted» (1906: [iv]). What is significant about this project is how survival of primitive custom and festival is seen in positive terms as the root of Englishness, rather than, as is the case of colonial peoples, a negatively charged sign of backwardness. There is a strong counterpoint in the signification running between the colonial and the British photographs in Stone's collection. The assumption of the contained and tamed savage within European culture was devastatingly shattered by the Great War, as all Europe's barbarism exploded to the surface, refiguring the concept of humanity (Grimshaw 1997: 40).

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<sup>14</sup> Stone was a Member of Parliament and a rich Birmingham industrialist who photographed extensively himself and employed photographers to work for him, travelling around the country to record «the manners and customs, festivals and pageants, the historic buildings and places of our time» (1906: [iv]). Stone also travelled abroad photographing colonial peoples extensively and buying photographs from local photographers. His huge collection is now in Birmingham City Library. Some prints from the National Photographic Archive project are also at the British Museum and National Portrait Gallery, London.



Such points of fracture which emerged so strongly in the British school of anthropology through Malinowski's anthropology after the Great War can be found earlier, located in the shifting paradigms of the late nineteenth century. In photographic terms, while the older, positivist position persisted, especially through the observational edicts of the 2nd and 3rd editions of *Notes and Queries* (18912 and 1899)<sup>15</sup>, one can detect a strand of continuing and mounting unease about the quality of material which presented itself to anthropologists, for objectivity especially as represented in visual images could not be an absolute value but a judgement of evidential value<sup>16</sup>. This brought about a flurry of activity in the 1890s in which anthropology tried to establish the photograph as a workable resource to delineate the relation between subjectivity and objectivity and indeed subject and object, a dichotomy of photography itself.

In 1893 Everard im Thurn gave a paper to the Anthropological Institute entitled «Anthropological Uses of the Camera» based on a decade of experience as colonial administrator, anthropologist and photographer in British Guiana, he argued strongly against the tradition of the «type» and the anthropometric influence, taken in «unnatural» conditions which he described as being like photographs of badly stuffed animals (1893: 186). Instead he emphasises the necessity of a strongly realist and cultural relativist approach in photography which attempts to convey the reality of Indian existence as he understood it, especially the intricate body movements of natural social behaviours and interaction. While his own photography does not necessarily support this position in every instance, for example, he masked out backgrounds in the tradition of the earlier «ethnological mode» and some of his responses, in framing selection and masking, are arguably strongly aesthetic, yet his subjects are relaxed with him, mostly happy in his company, revealing the climate of the encounter (Tayler 1992). Nevertheless, his fascination with half-breed Indians not only harks back to arguments about the biologically determined nature of culture, but also he is actually sub-consciously constructing an idea of «the natural Indian» –a romantic manifestation of the anthropological object expressed through a tension of photographic realism and photographic

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<sup>15</sup> In the Preface to the Ethnography section of the 3rd edition of *Notes and Queries* Read wrote «The best plan seems to be to devote as much time as possible to the photographic camera» (1899: 87).

<sup>16</sup> For instance writing as early as 1866 Henry Wesley stated that «It does not appear to me probable that photography will ever supersede drawing for scientific purposes... [The] disadvantage [is] that the photograph renders every minute detail with absolute certain fidelity» (1866:193). In other words the object of study could not be represented in terms of what was perceived to have evidential validity.

aesthetic. However Im Thurn's concern for a more «truthful», equitable form of representation should be seen also in the context of concern to produce better more accurate sources of knowledge within anthropology during the early years of the paradigm shift I have outlined.

In contrast M. V. Portman, in his paper «Photography for Anthropologists» given in 1896, gives a strong restatement of the traditional approach. The camera used for detailed recording of facts about which there can be no question in precisely the way that Read delineated. A colonial officer with long experience and knowledge of the Andaman Islands, he built on E. H. Man's representational modes of scientific truth, extending and codifying it. «Properly taken photographs, with the additional explanatory letter-press [note he advocates adding text to amplify image not the other way round], will be found» he continues «the most satisfactory answers to most of the questions in *Notes and Queries*» and later he says «Photography will be found of the greatest use in answering the questions accurately» (1896: 74). In many ways his photography illustrates the final manifestations of the decontextualised, objectified scientific specimen. As examples of salvage ethnography in material culture they are a *tour de force*, yet they are expressions not of Andamanese culture but of the producing and consuming culture which sustained them. In conceptual terms, they are little better than Im Thurn's badly stuffed animals.

What is significant here too is that different points of view articulated by Im Thurn and Portman echo debates on-going in art photography at precisely the same time — Emerson's naturalism as opposed to Robinson's interventionist creed of manipulation. These might be translated as Im Thurn's naturalism as against Portman's scientific manipulation — which was the surer road to anthropological truth? Yet, paradoxically within this particular argument, Portman objects precisely to artistic manipulation even at its most muted, speaking of «[d]elicate lighting and picturesque photography» being unwanted (1896: 77) and «fuzzigraphs [being] quite out of place in anthropological work» (1896: 81) whereas the moral value of scientific manipulation is unquestioned. What is significant here is the suggestion that concerns about manipulation and naturalism were not merely anthropological concerns but were intrinsic to thinking about photography at that period and that thinking about anthropological photography cannot necessarily be separated from the broader discourses of photography at any specific historical moment.

Anthropologists continued to collect a wide range of material of anthropological interest produced outside the specifically scientific framework. However one has to be very careful in attributing contemporary anthropological value to such images. Certainly, as I have argued, the very na-

ture of the subject matter put them within the domain of legitimate scientific interest but it is difficult to assess to what extent they were regarded, say by 1890s, as representing scientific data *per se*. Rather they represented a tangible reality of «otherness» of the object of study. This is suggested by the way in which photographs were exhibited as of interest to members at meetings of the Anthropological Institute (and indeed other such institutions all over Europe and Euro-America). Such displays were noted in the published minutes next to objects –other tangible realities of otherness– and listed after gifts to the Library. There was an attempt to put this kind of material on a more systematic footing. In September 1898 a BAAS committee for the «Collection, Preservation and Systematic Registration of Photographs of Anthropological Interest» was established. Myres at Christ Church College was in charge of the project aided by Henry Balfour, first curator of my own Museum. Numbers were issued and photographers registered their work in this centralized resource. The range of material included is typified by some of the images acquired by Pitt Rivers Museum at that time which appeared on the register, images as diverse as «type» portraits of the castes of southern India by Thurston of the Madras Museum and photographs of traditional Ulster life by the Belfast photographer R.W. Welch. The project was not especially productive and it was abandoned in 1911, many of the photographs landing up in either Royal Anthropological Institute or Pitt Rivers Museum. Again we find the collapse of a centralised endeavour, for the comparative method of the nineteenth century, which had attempted to utilize photographs, was in decline.

In the final statement of the 1890s one can detect the influence of both Portman and im Thurn. In 1898 the Cambridge Torres Strait Expedition, under the leadership of A. C. Haddon (but including such notable figures as W. H. R. Rivers and C. Seligman) was the first scientific anthropological expedition from this country. They made extensive use of photography, bringing back about 500 photographs and a small amount of cine film. From the beginning photography was perceived as an integral part of the fieldwork survey method, the photographic work being entrusted to Antony Wilkin, and marked the beginning of anthropologically informed field photography in this country in what might be described as a proto-modern sense, the emphasis being on the everyday (many of which may have been taken by another expedition member Charles Myers), ritual and material cultural although «physical types» were still on the agenda.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> For a detailed discussion of the photography of the Torres Strait Expedition see Edwards 1998b.

Similar trends can be seen elsewhere, for example Franz Boas worked closely with the professional photographer O. C. Hastings in his work on the Kwakiutl and Baldwin Spencer working in Australia was similarly using photographs as part of his extensive fieldwork there. While one can see the influence of the Torres Strait photography<sup>18</sup> in photographs by anthropologists such as Jenness in Papua New Guinea (plate 6) and Hocart in Fiji, the impetus was not maintained. Despite the increasingly 'unmediated' style of photography, there was a slow but crucial paradigm shift from photography as a process of anthropological investigation to photography as a mere product of investigation.

So why, at a point when photography was becoming so much easier in technical terms, did interest in visual material in anthropology collapse? It could be argued that in terms of the available technology, that photography could not be pushed much further. This may be so, but such tech-



PLATE 6.—Funeral at Kabuna, Goodemough Island, Papua New Guinea.  
Photograph by D. Jenness 1911. PRMJS.395.

<sup>18</sup> Haddon wrote the section on photography for the 3rd edition of *Notes and Queries* which came out in 1899. It is not clear whether he was drawing on his experience on the 1898 expedition or only on his earlier experiences using the camera in the contexts of Irish ethnography and his 1889 Torres Strait Expedition. My own view tends towards the latter interpretation.

nologically determinist view is not, to my mind, casual in any primary way. I would argue that in the first two decades of this century various strands which had been slowly evolving came together and brought about a major change in the direction of anthropology and the perception and evaluation of visual material. First, was the development of professional, institutionally based social anthropology and the establishment of individual fieldwork as its central practice. Related to this was the increasing emphasis on the detailed analysis of social forms and practices which were not necessarily perceived as being «visible» in photographic terms. Photography was thus perceived as the tool of the «old anthropology» where surface and appearance were presumed to be privileged over depth, form over function. Furthermore the comparative method, in which photography played a significant role and which had been central to a method grounded in evolutionary biology, was passing. Thirdly, and again related, there would appear to be an analogy between what Malinowski called the cult of pure fact or scientifically sterile object fetishism (1935: 460), the result of which, he argued, was of a fragmentary and incoherent nature, and the fragmenting and decontextualizing mechanisms of still photography. Fourthly, perhaps less quantifiable but equally related, was the crisis in confidence in the analogical view of photography as recording unmediated truth. Lastly, good photographic equipment became available to the amateur photographer and the sheer mass of raw data became overwhelming. The net consequence was that photography became yet another ancillary tool in the fieldworker's arsenal, as I have suggested a mere product of fieldwork rather than central to the process of recording and more importantly analyzing. Photographs became specific to given individual fieldwork projects. One might go as far as to say that photographs moved from a public sphere of consumption into a more private role. A technique perceived as recording surface rather than the depth which was by this time seen as the true business of anthropologists. The excitement that was caused by the visual material of, for instance Torres Strait Expedition or Baldwin Spencer, was deadened by the intellectual movement that succeeded them (Banks & Morphy 1997: 9). As such the visual became marginal to the process of explanation: rather than becoming part of a centrally conceived resource. Indeed the fragmentary nature of photography sits in almost total opposition to the integrating models of functionalism. Malinowski, who was of course a pivotal figure in the development of British social anthropology based on individual fieldwork and functionalist anthropology, articulates this in his assessment of his 1915 fieldwork method written some 20 years later (at least he had the grace to admit the error of his ways) he writes:

I treated photography as a secondary occupation and a somewhat unimportant way of collecting evidence...I have committed one or two deadly sins against method of fieldwork. In particular I went by the principle...of picturesqueness and accessibility. Whenever something important was going to happen, I had my camera with me. If the picture looked nice in the camera and fitted well I snapped it...I put photography on the same level as the collecting of curios— almost as an accessory relaxation of fieldwork (1935: 461)<sup>19</sup>.

It was only in the peripheral remains of descriptive ethnography and museum collecting, areas by and large excluded by the new order and described by Malinowski as «scientifically sterile», that photography was still seen as a valuable centralised resource in anthropology, for instance Balfour never shifted from his opinion expressed in a letter to Baldwin Spencer in 1898 that «Photos are so important an adjunct...that I try to beg all I can for a series I am making for the Museum». For example Hutton's photographs of the Naga Hills, or Rattray's in Gold Coast (now Ghana) were given to the Museum at the time, they were conceived as a valuable resource integral to the object collections and its detailed documentation. On the other hand, fieldwork material from social anthropologists tended to be deposited either in their old age or after their death and even then often without the documentation and manuscript material which would contextualise them both as a record and intellectually. The classic example here is Evans-Pritchard, who photographed extensively and often interestingly; yet the documentation of the photographs and their disposal suggests their function to be largely illustrative and confirming rather than integral in intellectual terms. Photography, indeed visual material, made no theoretical contribution to British anthropology in the way in which it had in the earlier period, where it was integral to the comparative method of evolutionary analysis, or in the way in which modern visual anthropology (especially film and historical studies) has become a central voice in the theoretical critiques of representation.

Things are beginning to change however as collections and significances are re-evaluated and it seems significant to me that visual material, including historical material and visual systems, within culture have become a significant and expanding site of anthropological activity at exactly the time when material culture studies have been rehabilitated in the anthropological academy. Fresh eyes with fresh ideas are bringing valuable and unexpected insights to material in terms not only of the physical reality recorded by those photographs but also at a more metaphorical and re-

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<sup>19</sup> For a general analysis of Malinowski's photography see Young 1998 and for a analysis of Malinowski's use of photography in publication see Samain 1995.

flexive level. A significant indicator was an exhibition produced by the Royal Anthropological Institute and the Photographers' Gallery in London in 1995. *The Impossible Science of Being* considered the notion of the anthropological archive and the fascinations and suppressions embedded in its making, British black and Asian photographers were commissioned to respond to these histories and their enabling formations. While not unproblematic, the exhibition pointed to the richness and complexity of reflexive and critical re-engagements with the visual documents of anthropology's history<sup>20</sup>. In this process, the archive itself should be read as a cultural artifact – selected, rejected, classified – all of which are cultural controls, making meanings and translating culture. As Greg Denning has argued so cogently in his histories of Pacific encounters, historical documents are «texted» through the contexts of their preservation. (1988: 26) Thus the archive is not just a repository of pictures, it is more than the sum of its parts – a pattern of ideas, inscriptional deposits and specifically articulated intentions expressed in material terms which survive for consideration and reinterpretation long after their initiation.

It is in the concepts and contexts of photography in anthropology, in the historical refigurations, the articulating of hidden histories, in forms of photography's material culture, in tracking the 'performances' of images as they move into different spaces, that there is depth. As I hope this overview has made clear, neither photography or anthropology constitute homogenised or unproblematic categories and discourses in relation to one another. It is these uncertainties, points of tension and fracture that become most revealing and it is perhaps at those points that research effort should now be focused. I have not dwelt in any depth on the numerous and various projects which I have touched upon. However I have chosen this approach to suggest the fluid, contradictory and uncertain mosaic of concerns (and there are many more) which constitute the function of visualising and projecting anthropology in the seconde half of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>20</sup> See the exhibition catalogue (Charity 1994) and a review essay of the exhibition (Edwards 1998).

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El ensayo ofrece una visión crítica de la relación entre antropología y fotografía en el siglo XIX hasta el período de entreguerras en la Gran Bretaña, estudiándose, en concreto, la expresión visual que adoptó la antropología en su proceso de construcción como disciplina científica, teniendo presente el fuerte paralelismo existente entre su desarrollo y el de la fotografía.

The author offers a critical view on the relationship between photography and anthropology in Great Britain from the 19th century to the period between the two world wars. He focuses on the visual expression that anthropology adopted in the process of its construction as a scientific discipline, which clearly paralleled the contemporary development of photography.