

# Introduction

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## Contexts

Anthropology, whatever its intellectual twists and turns over the years, remains a highly visualized practice. This has resulted in a rich photographic legacy, both intentional and incidental. The aim of this book is to bring to this legacy a range of contemporary approaches from within anthropology, in order to consider the expanding ways in which its ongoing relevance, methodological complexity and institutional structures are being addressed. Not only does the book focus on strands of current research in the field, but it also represents a critical mass of approaches to the entangled relations between photography, anthropology and histories. It also suggests ways in which visual methods, and a consideration of photography and photographs, constitutes an increasingly important prism through which to address wider theoretical concerns within mainstream anthropology, and thus the contribution of the visual, and indeed material, to anthropological thought.

Reflecting the enormous breadth of anthropology's visual legacy, contributors take a very wide sweep, bringing a diverse range of aspects of that visual legacy into analytical focus. They range from discussions of the historical antecedents of anthropology's interest in visual media, to the role of institutions in Britain and America in shaping the anthropological archive, the role of photography in British, German and Japanese fieldwork traditions, the excavation of indigenous histories within Western archives, and local responses to, and appropriations of, "anthropological" images. What all the essays have in common is that they can be read across two mutually sustaining and mutually inflected grains. Firstly, they furnish methodological examples of different approaches to working with archival material, asking variously photographic, anthropological and historical questions. Secondly, they constitute, in their own right, essays on the complex and entangled relations between photography and anthropology. As such the essays address both the subject and object of some of those theoretical and methodological twists and turns.

This book therefore demonstrates the way in which it has become necessary for contemporary methodologies to look beyond narrow disciplinary concerns with, on the one hand, decoding or recoding historical images, and on the other to look beyond the reductive and universalizing tendencies of Foucault-inspired readings of the "colonial archive". These methodologies are not merely concerned with "better" or "more sensitive" readings of the forensic or semiotic tensions of images. Rather they respond to the methodological demand for a closer attention

to the various practices of social and sensory engagement with photography that are being actively entered into by communities who were themselves the focus of anthropology in the past. This is especially so in an era of increasing digital access to museums and archive collections.

The impetus for this volume is the enormous expansion in recent years of interest in, and analytical attention to, the historical relationship between anthropology and photography. Perhaps it is one of those twists, turns or enthusiasms, but it is one that is now sustained by a body of critical writing on visual matters over several decades, something that has enriched writing on both anthropology and photography themselves. This trend emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, as part of an increasing concern with the nature and making of anthropological knowledge. Perhaps the most high-profile or widely disseminated project in this regard was that initiated by the Royal Anthropological Institute (UK) in 1984 to explore anthropology's visual legacy as held in its own collections. The project was eventually published in 1992 as *Anthropology and Photography 1860–1920* (Edwards 1992)<sup>1</sup> but it is no coincidence that other survey volumes, posing similar questions, also emerged around this time, for example *From Site to Sight* (Banta and Hinsley 1986) in USA, and in Germany *Der Geraubte Schatten* (Theye 1989).<sup>2</sup> Although the intellectual imperative for these projects seems clear now, some twenty-five years later, there was in fact institutional resistance in some quarters. In his Foreword to *Anthropology and Photography*, the then Director of the RAI, Jonathan Benthall, suggested that this reticence reflected a sense within mainstream anthropology that the visual deposits of (especially nineteenth-century) anthropology were 'discreditable and nothing to do with the humanist discipline established since Malinowski and Boas; or even that the project was not really anthropology' (Benthall 1992: viii). Yet in a postmodern intellectual environment the potential of photography to illuminate key areas of reflexive theory and method and the construction of disciplinary knowledge (as well as the institutional structures of such knowledge) became increasingly apparent.

The models for that earlier work on photography were those that had been developed in relation to text, for instance the work of Fabian (1983) and Clifford and Marcus (1986), which provided a stringent critique of the processes

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1 According to Google Scholar [accessed 25 March 2009] *Anthropology and Photography 1860–1920* has been cited in 184 different publications, reinforcing its status as a key text within the study of anthropological photography. Probably the central reason for this is its focus upon methodological concerns in approaching historical imagery and archives. It is still regularly cited outside anthropology, in history, literature studies and geography, as an authority on historical anthropological photography, long after, as the essays in this volume show, anthropological analysis has moved on.

2 Both these publications were related to museum exhibitions. *Anthropology and Photography 1860–1920* was immediately preceded by a touring exhibition of photographs from the Royal Anthropological Institute's collections entitled *Observers of Man* (1980) curated by Roslyn Poinant.

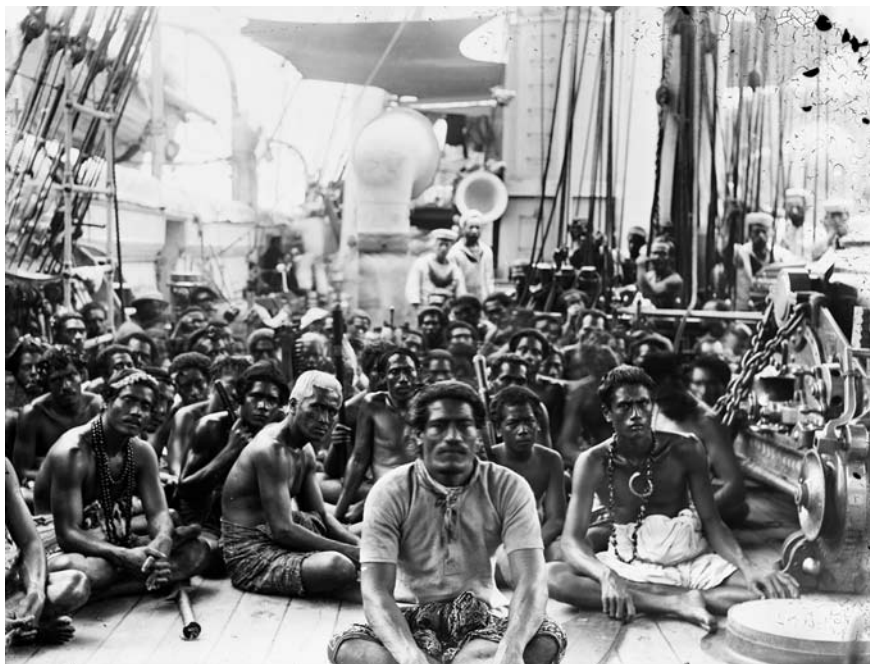
through which anthropology had traditionally made its object and articulated its disciplinary authority. Here is not the place to reiterate those debates in detail, but in relation to photography the methodology and analysis drew upon, on the one hand, a broadly Foucaultian-derived configuration of surveillance, gaze and objectification (Foucault 1979, Green 1984, Tagg 1988), and on the other, the influence of linguistically-framed semiotics in the reading of images (for example Barthes 1977). Photography, because of its inherent physical properties – an indexical trace of light reflected off the colonial body – constituted a potent and fertile field for such analyses. This was especially so given the manner in which the processes and outcomes of the photographic encounter had been objectified, reified and controlled within the disciplinary archive as an imagined and homogenized entity of universalizing desire, born of political ideologies of disciplinary consumption. Tagg's assertion that '[p]hotography as such has no identity ... [i]ts status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it' (1988: 63) typified the sense of the ideologically-determined instrumentality of photography in developing discourses of race and culture both within and beyond the discipline. Such approaches constituted photography and its accumulations as having been absorbed and imbued with similar values, where the disordered and excessive array of visual information was controlled, classified, given meaning and performed. In this model, both imagery and practice have tended to be constructed as an immovable "truth" that simplistically reflects a set of cultural and political dispositions held by the makers of those images (Pinney 2003: 2). Whilst on some level this may have made some forms of photographs and their archival accumulation thinkable in the first place, these political dispositions have been given a naïve and direct causality that needs to be problematized.

For as soon became apparent, the problem with much Foucault-inspired analysis of both the photograph and the archive was that there was an uncomfortable tendency to dichotomize and over-determine the dynamics of power relations and their visualizing rhetoric, sometimes to almost nihilist effect (see for instance Faris 1992). Such was the weight of these arguments that not only could they become analytically paralyzing in their trade in absolutes, but even more troubling they effectively silenced precisely those voices – the indigenous, the "Other", the disempowered – that they were intended to valorize. Consequently, and perhaps ironically, the anthropological subjects of much post-colonial theory were rendered as powerless, objectified and passive under the colonial gaze (Barkan 1994: 181, Dubin 1999: 71). While the limitations of such analytical approaches are now well recognized (see Edwards forthcoming), they nonetheless laid the foundations of analytical approaches to the discursive practices of photography within anthropology, for they pointed to the constructed nature of the anthropological object, its ideological foundations and its ultimate recodability through critical readings. It is a destabilization to which all the essays in this volume and beyond owe their existence.

The essays in this volume can also be seen as challenging and modifying in some way a static model of asymmetrical power structures and homogenized

instrumentality. There has been increasing focus in recent writing on anthropology and photography of the lines of fracture within such models, a shift which also became evident in the growing literature on postcolonial politics and critical theory, which sought to complicate previous assumptions about colonial relationships as well as the relationship between anthropological endeavour and photographic practice. There is an increasing concern for instance to constitute photographs as contested sites of encounter and cultural exchange even within asymmetrical power relations. It should be noted that such methods emerge from a constructive engagement with the nature of photography itself. This has allowed a number of alternative critical routes to come through. These have included extended discussions of the random inclusiveness (and hence visual excess) of photographic inscription, its fixity of appearance and yet potentially infinite recodability, the instability of photographic meaning, and its temporal and spatial slippages across both its literal and metaphorical border zones. These moves do not de-politicize photographs or argue that colonial administrations did not employ anthropology for political ends – one only has to glance at the Seligman's *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan* (Seligman and Seligman 1932) to see how directly ethnography and indirect rule could come together for instance. Whilst the intersections of anthropology, colonialism and photography also resonate through a number of the essays presented here, such as those by Wong, Bell and Wright, they complicate those relations and importantly allow space for indigenous agency and indigenous experiences of the encounter to emerge. The methodological approaches that underpin the essays are therefore part of an intellectual shift which has been characterized by Poole as a move 'away from a concern with representation *per se* in favour of the more complex discursive and political landscapes opened up by the concepts of media and the archive' (2005: 159). It should be noted too that the recognition of photography's potential to manifest points of fracture has not only made new analytical approaches possible, it has opened up new narrative spaces, relating both to the subjects of images themselves and of anthropology as a discipline (see Edwards forthcoming). As Geismar has recently argued, there is an increasing acknowledgement that historical photographs are 'creative actors within, not merely representations of, the development of "anthropological" ideas' (2006: 524).

Related to these developing intellectual strands has been the ongoing rehabilitation of history within anthropology, which has continued apace in recent years, although perhaps not to the degree signalled by Evans-Pritchard many years ago in his argument for anthropology as 'a kind of historiography' (Evans-Pritchard 1962: 26). Photography has increasingly come to be seen as representing multiple and dynamic historical presences surrounding the photographic encounter and its resulting image. A methodological awareness of the peripheral and boundary areas of the photograph, often those areas beyond the central subject matter of the photographer's attention, as sites of alternative readings and meanings, inflect many current understandings of historical imagery. Edwards's analysis, for instance, of the self-conscious Samoan arrangement of space within the colonial



**Figure I.1** Mauga Manuma and his supporters on the Quarterdeck of H.M.S. *Miranda*

encounter and the photographic frame in photographs by W.A.D. Acland in 1883 (Figure I.1) suggests how alternative and indigenous experiences of an event can be excavated from dominant historical readings of photographic inscription within the archive (2001: 113–22).

In another application of such an approach, Pinney’s formulation of the visibility of Evans-Pritchard’s tent in the periphery of Plate XIV of *The Nuer* (1940) (Figure I.2) as ‘photography’s *Las Meninas*’ (1992: 76), serves to show how the reflexive turn in anthropology has also informed an analytical shift away from dominant or presented readings of historical imagery, toward an appreciation of the incidental and revealing visual excesses of the photographic frame.

These analyses demonstrate the inherent uncontainability of photographs, the way that they constantly refer beyond their framed boundaries, connecting to cinema, panorama and visual discourse as a whole. Raising the important question of just how photographs become “anthropological”, an increasing critical strain has emerged that examines the fluidity of historical categories, and indeed the very construction of such categories, for instance “popular” and “scientific” imagery. This sort of approach has also sought to understand how contextual meaning was frequently generated in the interplay between such generalized categories as production and consumption (Edwards 2001, Poignant 2004). Some of the



**Figure I.2** ‘Photography’s *Las Meninas*’: Evans-Pritchard’s tent in Nuerland, 1935

photographs discussed in this volume were produced with specific anthropological intention, such as those discussed by Morton, Wong, Bell, Hempel and Herle, whereas others, such as those discussed by Edwards, Wright and Griffiths move in and out of ethnographic meaning within a more fluid or expansive visual economy. Indeed, the model of a visual economy (Poole 1997) has also built upon this broadening of the historical field, allowing a more nuanced approach in which the production, dissemination, consumption, possession and display of photographs are all considered as generating photography’s situational and historical meanings. Thus Griffiths (2001, 2003, this volume) explores the discourses operating in the interstices between nineteenth-century anthropology, popular culture, and the incipient genre of ethnographic film, whereas MacDougall (2006) has focused critical attention on the corporeal aspects of images and image-making, ‘with

the moment at which ... meanings emerge from experience, before they become separated from physical encounters' (2006: 1).

Such emerging positions have thus led to an appreciable destabilization of long-established methods of "reading" archival or historical photographs since their potential range of meanings can no longer be understood as containable within parameters drawn from only one cultural direction. As Trachtenberg has commented, 'the relationship between images and imprinted meanings is fraught with uncertainties, for like opaque facts, images cannot be readily trapped within a single explanation or interpretation. They have a life of their own...' (1989: xv). There has been a growing awareness of not only the inherent visual excess of photography as a medium of anthropological description, but also how this characteristic might be engaged with to question long-held assumptions about well-established photographic imagery from anthropology's past (e.g. Pinney 1992: 76, 1992a: 27, Edwards 2001: 99–100, Morton 2005).

The intrinsic status of the photograph as both an authored document (patterned by intention) as well as a site of cultural encounter and intersection, is well attested to by the plethora of different approaches to historical imagery across differing academic disciplines. Michael Aird for instance has described how 'Aboriginal people look past the stereotypical way in which their relatives and ancestors have been portrayed, because they are just happy to be able to see photographs of people who play a part in their family's history' (2003: 25). This process of 'looking past' (or at least accommodating) the historical contexts of colonial visualization and picture making, can be understood as a contemporary and ongoing process of reappropriating historical imagery by indigenous communities. During a series of local exhibitions of archival photography from the Pitt Rivers Museum's collections in Western Kenya in 2007 for instance, comments by Luo visitors attested to the fact that for many local viewers of archival imagery, the colonial and scientific motivations that informed the production of the images on display often remain implicit by comparison with what is being represented. Perhaps not surprisingly, the recodable potential of photographic content emerges strongly in such cases, not as a neutral narrative on the past, but with the potential for representational transformation according to local reference.<sup>3</sup> The ontological complexity of photography – its dual semiotic status as both an *index* of its subject matter and yet also an *icon* that resembles it – lies at the heart of photography's continuing

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3 *Paro Manene* was a series of four exhibitions of Luo photographs from the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, held in Nyanza, Kenya in February 2007, curated by Gilbert Oteyo and Christopher Morton with the support of the National Museums of Kenya and British Institute in Eastern Africa. It included one hundred photographs, mostly by C.W. Hobley from c. 1900 and E.E. Evans-Pritchard from 1936. A number of comment books were left for visitors to the exhibitions, and a set of digital resources, prints and a catalogue of the collection were deposited with Kisumu Museum at the completion of the project. See Morton and Oteyo (2009) and <http://photos.prm.ox.ac.uk/luo> for more on this project.

ability to be mobilized in a variety of different ways, and to the strikingly different intellectual approaches to photography in recent anthropology.

Thus one could argue that overall, whilst continuing to acknowledge the broader economic and imperialistic contexts that facilitated the production, dissemination and acquisition of anthropology's visual legacy, the methodological approaches exemplified by the essays in this volume demonstrate ways in which the fluid and discursive set of relations that frequently existed on the colonial periphery can be critically unravelled by questioning and complicating previous models of power, encounter and agency around photography and around cultures of visualization.

### **Archival situations**

As we have already suggested, the formation common to all the essays in this volume to a greater or lesser extent is that of the archive and its practices, for this is the form that anthropology's visual legacy comes to assume. It is an historiographical commonplace that history is texted by the forms, practices and contexts of its archiving. Thus the archives of noted anthropologists discussed in this volume (Franz Boas, Edward Evans-Pritchard, John Layard, Torii Ryuzo, Theodor Koch-Grünberg, the Haddons and Beatrice Blackwood) cannot be understood as unmediated deposits of anthropological activity itself, or an historically neutral resting-place for individually interesting images, but as being shaped by the processes and procedures of the institutions that curate them and the researchers who use them (Rose 2000, Edwards and Hart 2004). The detailed archival engagements represented in this book reveal the historical spaces of knowledge accumulation – the shape and patterning of visually mediated anthropological intention, aspiration and method. While this is obviously most clearly articulated in the section on institutional practices, its power resonates throughout, for it is through archival practices that the visual legacy of anthropology comes to us, whether in the anthropologist's post-facto engagement with their field photographs or in self-conscious expansions of archival meaning, as in the essays by Herle and Peers and Brown.

It has been argued that archives and anthropology share many epistemological concerns, especially around questions of representation, authority, objectivity and authenticity, as well as, of course, a common cultural, historical and intellectual matrix (Kaplan 2002). Despite this position, Stoler has commented that 'archival labour tends to remain a more extractive enterprise than an ethnographic one' (2002: 84). Whilst this might remain a problem for manuscript archives, consideration of the visual deposits of anthropology's past has increasingly become an ethnographic one, concerned with the way in which whole collections and their institutional lives frame meanings, disclose intentions, and offer practices which can be read "against the grain". All the essays in this volume share a common concern not only with 'legitimising social coordinates of epistemologies; how people imagine they know what they know and what institutions validate that knowledge' (Stoler 2002:

88), but with showing those points of fracture, refiguration and reimagining that can transform received ways of approaching anthropological archives. Whilst the anthropological analysis of photographs and photographic practice remain at the centre, at the same time the essays give analytical attention to whole archives as cultural productions in themselves, either explicitly, as in the essays by Edwards, Morton, Hempel, Wong and Herle, or implicitly such as in those by Griffiths, Glass and Bell.

The archive, and its discursive form in cultural theory “The Archive”, has become an increasing focus for analytical consideration in recent years. Whilst Derrida’s contemplation of a fevered archival desire in a Freudian environment (1996) has brought the archive into a general theoretical focus, there has also been an identifiable “archival turn” within anthropology as a discipline. This has increasingly brought epistemological scrutiny to the practices and poetics of collecting, collating and classifying photographs. It has also sought to understand such practices as complex sites of disciplinary desire, selectivity, forgetfulness, and contested or intersecting histories (see for instance Poignant 1992, Edwards 2001, 2003, Edwards and Hart 2004, Lydon 2005, Morton 2005, Geismar 2006 and forthcoming). As we have already suggested, archives have been subjected to totalizing assumptions that have stressed their instrumentality and entanglement with discourses of power, surveillance and gaze, as well as their key role in the production of categories such as race, gender and culture (for example by Sekula 1989, Isles and Roberts 1997, Green 1984). An important adjunct to this position has been the tracing of nineteenth-century collecting practices and the compilation of colonial and state archives, the distinction between discursive and *realpolitik* configurations of power and representational politics, and the encyclopaedic fantasies of an informational utopia (for example by Coombes 1994, Bennett 1995, Barringer and Flynn 1998, Richards 1993). Pinney for instance has argued that the anthropological archive constitutes a ‘vast linguistic grid enmeshing otherwise volatile images within what it hopes will be a structuring certainty’ (1992: 90). In this way the language of the archive can be understood as “filling in” the blank or undecidable spaces of a photograph, with ideologies being performed through an abstract visual equivalence between pictures (see also Sekula 1987: 117). The anthropological archive came to stand for the meta-level of institutional mediation (including the disciplinary action of individuals) characterized by the discursive practices of institutional objectification, appropriation and abstraction in the visual representation of culture. Disciplinary authority can then be said to have moulded the anthropological archive, and in turn been moulded by it.

However, even the most saturated of signs can take on a host of new meanings (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 55–6). As we have suggested, increasing attention to the historicity of the archive and the situations through which photographs, as archival objects, generate new understandings and meanings has registered a rethinking of the materiality and imaginary of collections and ‘what kinds of truth-claims lie in documentation’ (Stoler 2002: 87). Consequently, ethnographies of the archive increasingly seek to explore not just the multi-valancy of the photograph –

the way it performs meaning in different cultural contexts – but also the potentially destabilizing points of fracture within the archive itself, as hitherto unheard voices within the photographic image begin to emerge and inflect archival practice.

In this conception the archive is both constituted by, and constitutive of, a fluid historical process, one that is materially performed by things (the photographic object) that are active in a defined social space. Kopytoff argues in his influential model of the cultural biography of things that ‘an eventful biography of a thing becomes a story of the various singularizations of it, of classifications and reclassifications in an uncertain world of categories whose importance alters with every minor change in context. As with persons, the drama lies in the uncertainties of valuation and identity’ (1986: 90). It is not only photographs in archives that can be seen as having dynamic social lives, but also the institutional structures that surround them. Archives themselves play host to numerous small dramas of contestation that leave their marks.

Archival practices, despite being designed to create singular or dominant meanings, can actually be seen as helping establish serial and overlapping meanings over time. Brothman, for instance, has argued that ‘archival arrangement also necessarily distorts original order in more subtle ways. In the first place they become archival. The assignment of record group numbers, volume numbers, and inventory designations and descriptions as well as other archival adornments to permanently retained documents also serve to transfigure, if not to transform, the record’ (1991: 85). Archival processes such as this are rarely permanent or stable. Although the notion of grouping within an archive appears normalized, it is also often highly serendipitous. The manner in which photographs move and come together within a collection over time, works to both deconstruct meaning and renarrativize the photographs in accordance with each new archival situation. This process is often informed by the successive material performances of an image – whether a photograph is chosen to be copied, enlarged, annotated or published for instance often suggests new groupings over time that are inflected by shifting intellectual interest in the images themselves. What look like pragmatic, systematic and permanent decisions about mounting and labelling for instance are usually more provisional than they might appear on the surface (Edwards and Hart 2004). The archive is then an active historical process rather than a static and unchangeable entity. The verb ‘to archive’, far from being a neutral activity, is actually one in which a collection is subjected to repeated attempts to refigure or re-impose perceived meaning over time. The discursive relationship between a photograph and its user can also be seen to have an ongoing impact upon the perceptions and processes of the archive itself and its analytically productive materiality (Rose 2000: 560–61, Geismar 2006). Examples of this abound in recent curatorial practice and academic writing on photograph collections, especially with the increasing engagement of indigenous communities with their visual history, as the essays here suggest. The varied responses to archives by local communities often lead to the creation of new layers of institutional meaning and organization with respect to the way such photographs are curated.

The essays in this book all demonstrate ways in which a detailed analysis of the cultural performances of photographs both complicate and destabilize those homogenizing models of the archive that we have already discussed. They destabilize received notions of photographic, colonial and indeed anthropological meaning that, as we have commented, were problematic in the homogenizing concept of the “colonial archive”. They also demonstrate ways in which the notion of the archive influences the understanding of individual photographs – to return to Stoler’s comment quoted above, the archive itself becomes profoundly and reflexively ethnographic. The reading of archival processes “against the grain”, so to speak, can assist in opening up these new interpretative spaces, allowing alternative narratives and previously subordinated histories to emerge.

It is a critical engagement with the archival concept of registry order for instance that allows Morton in his essay to excavate the cultural biography of Evans-Pritchard’s photographs and the shifting meanings of images for both Evans-Pritchard himself and the archive where he deposited them. What becomes apparent is that the collection has been subjected to several phases of reordering and documentation over time, suggesting attempts to reimpose order on a working collection whose main purpose was to provide visual data and illustration rather than intellectual coherence. Not only does an understanding of this process illuminate the nature of fieldwork relations in what might be seen as the classic period of early British social anthropology, it also disrupts the assumed relationship between anthropological observation and the archive. In another, very different, example it was the very labelling practices of anthropology and its archive, recording names and ages like scientific specimens, which, as Peers and Brown demonstrate, became the route through which indigenous people could assert their claims on the photographs. Similarly, Herle shows how the shape of Layard’s responsive interest in Vanuatu ritual sites, reproduced through his archival ordering and documentation, has created an expandable narrative which appealed to contemporary interests in ni-Vanuatu (see also Geismar 2006 and forthcoming).

If history is textured by archival patterns, the contestation of those histories also constitutes a contestation of the archive. As Wareham notes, ‘although records created by outsiders [such as anthropologists] reflect the expectations and aspirations, values and beliefs, of their creators ... they constitute vital parts of the evidential systems for the countries to which they relate. They are also sources for the reassertion of cultural identities and rights through the renegotiation of histories’ (2002: 199). Each of the essays in the ‘Indigenous Histories’ section of this book demonstrate how such responses have reshaped the way the archive is thought about within certain institutions, forming a shifting discursive practice between archive and users. This discursive practice does not constitute simply another layer of appropriation but a form of recognition of what the archive could be (see Edwards 2003, Peers and Brown 2006). The collaboration between the Kainai Nation of Canada and the Pitt Rivers Museum, discussed by Peers and Brown, demonstrates how the premise from which the archive operates can shift

radically to integrate local perspectives and practices surrounding images. This process is also one that in effect disperses and atomizes archival control, since, with such a cultural biography, photographic meaning within the institution is inevitably reshaped: ‘repatriation can also be a matter of revitalizing archival institutions, returning life which exists when a community recognizes the heritage contained in archival sources and is actively involved in its governance and management’ (Wareham 2002: 204).

Despite the destabilization and refiguring of archival power that is characteristic of much of the analysis in this volume – with photographs becoming absorbed into different constructions, formations and dialects which give meaning to the intersection of photography, history and memory – the concept of the archive remains a powerful one in terms of Western practice. Although our main aim here has been to highlight significant and apparent processes of archival destabilization in recent thinking on photographs, it is also important that one does not lose sight of the continuing asymmetries of power relations with respect to the accessibility, determination and control of archives. Practices of definition, surveillance, and the struggle for control over “archival knowledge” of land and of genealogy – made tangibly real through photographs – is at the heart of this struggle.<sup>4</sup>

As has been pointed out, most critiques of the archive assume a Western model of the centralized state and the rigid and immovable organizational control of images (see for instance Sekula 1989). While Edwards’s chapter points to the complex and ultimately uncontrollable nature of the archive, as well as its excess of meaning even in a Western context, there is an ambiguous attitude of development-orientated and post-colonial nation-states, towards archives. As Wareham (2002) has pointed out in relation to the Pacific, is partly a result of a tension between historically oral and literate cultures, and partly a response to colonial disempowerment and a reassertion of indigenous rights. But there is also the difficulty of maintaining nation-state systems, such as archives, in somewhat isolated, resource-poor locations. In such environments the Western concept of an all-encompassing, centrally powerful archive does not necessarily apply, nor are historical modalities necessarily given the same weight as material is ‘assembled unevenly, haphazardly, anonymously – and is not easily rendered up for scrutiny, not through design but through lack of prioritization’ (Hayes et al. 2002: 115, see also Buckley 2005, 2008). Meanings are therefore fluid, marginalized and dissipated, performed through a social biography of the material neglect and disintegration of the photographs. Such a differing conception of the archive challenges the presumed relevance of colonial images as active elements of post-colonial histories. It also raises a question that Wright (this volume) addresses: for whom, in what circumstances, in what forms and under what conditions are

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4 There is a very substantial literature on the relationship between indigenous groups and central state archives, a subject that is beyond the scope of this paper. See for instance policy documents for the National Archives of Australia (<http://www.naa.gov.au>) See also Wareham 2002 and references therein.

colonial or anthropological photographs “relevant”? Western valorizations and hierarchies of archival value and evidence do not necessarily apply universally.

The broader questions that then emerge, ones that inflect many of the essays in this volume, are: how are photographs made historically significant? How do we analytically get beneath the level of surface appearance? How do we move beyond a position whereby photographs are straightforward representations to be decoded, and instead see them as representational objects, where issues such as ownership, juxtaposition and format often inform the very semiotics of the image itself? Ultimately, where is “the archive” as a body of knowledge, as history, or even as imagination and fantasy, actually located? As we have indicated, these questions are at the heart of contemporary understandings of the anthropological archive and the development of new perspectives upon, and methodological engagements with, those archival situations in which historical photographs exist and how they make their meanings. The uses we have indicated are of course themselves reflections of the concerns of visual and historical anthropology at a given historical moment. What is clear is that theoretical contemplation of the archive is far from exhausted. Whilst all the essays in this volume openly point to the agency of the researcher in the process of interpretation (see also Rose 2000: 556), in the questions asked at a given moment and in response to certain material, they also seek to open up new dynamic spaces into which thinking with photographs might expand historiographically, methodologically and theoretically. They also relate in important ways to current concerns within anthropology more generally (Edwards forthcoming), for instance concerning questions of evidence (Engelke 2008) and the construction, ownership and flow of disciplinary knowledge as well as the politics of cross-cultural relations. Multilayered and multifaceted readings of the past are all questions that inform current ethnographic work on both photographs and the archives that sustain them. It is perhaps outside the traditional or formal archive, perhaps within a wholly different conceptualization of the archive that these visual records may build their future historical meaning.<sup>5</sup> The contestation of rights over knowledge, evidence and value for instance has increasingly seen the visual archive placed at the centre of indigenous political claims, a ‘core aspect of re-empowerment and colonization; it is also increasingly urgent in the framework of cultural rights’ (Wareham 2002: 198).

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5 Donna Oxenham has commented, in an Australian Aboriginal context, that indigenous identities are not necessarily locked into the periodization of past, present and future; rather all three exist, like photographs, in the here and now. Thus the archival assumption of “the past” is profoundly problematic (personal communication 2002) (See Edwards 2003: 93).

### **Developing positions: methodologies and the structure of this book**

As we have suggested, the approaches to historical photographs that resonate throughout the essays in this book characterize a number of important strands in current research on anthropology's visual legacy, namely the interface between anthropology, science, and popular visual culture, the historical ethnography of anthropological fieldwork practices, and questions of historical narrative, agency and institutional practice. It is these key themes that set the structure for the book. What follows is a brief orientation.

In the first section 'Historicizing Visual Anthropology', two chapters take a broad historical approach to anthropology's visual legacy to examine the interface between anthropology, science, and popular visual culture in ways that inflect both photography and film. Griffiths's chapter on early nineteenth-century panoramas explores questions of representation and spectatorship at the time when anthropology emerged as a discipline in the 1830s and 1840s. In doing so, she develops a rich set of historical contexts for the emergence of ethnographic film in the early twentieth century, with its mix of scientific and popular approaches to subject matter. As phenomenologically complex sign systems, panoramas traded in the highest form of illusionism on offer to late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century audiences, offering spectators *trompe l'oeil* of unsurpassed realism. By exploring some of the diverse and distinctive ways panoramic painters constructed their ethnographic subjects, and how the panorama as a means of articulating cultural difference might be explicable, Griffiths's essay opens up a new way of thinking about ethnographic image-making in the era immediately preceding photography's emergence, by delving into an historical art form largely neglected by visual anthropologists. The second chapter, by David MacDougall, also takes a far-reaching perspective on the historical foundations of visual anthropology, discussing what he identifies as the emergence of a 'cinematic imagination' within anthropology. The appearance of this imagination, he argues, can be seen as occurring before, and probably independently of, its appearance in anthropological filmmaking itself. The 'cinematic imagination' in anthropology, he argues, represents a way of thinking within nineteenth-century literature and photography that paved the way for the emergence of film as the dominant medium of representing other cultures. Both chapters here point to the impossibility of understanding anthropological photography as an isolated practice, whether from other visual media or from the realms of popular culture more generally. Rather they point to the richness of extending and rethinking context, from something containing to an expansive base.

This exploration of the popular visual antecedents of visual anthropology is followed by a second section that examines two differing institutional environments through which 'anthropological' photographs have been activated and ascribed meaning. Both essays, by Edwards and Glass, address the destabilization of those structures as a result of new demands placed on historical imagery and the absorption of such imagery into different sets of relations beyond the discipline of

anthropology. In a sense this returns us to understandings of the historical interface between anthropology and popular culture, but with the latter being very differently constituted. Further it could be argued that they explore flows which move in opposite directions: whilst Edwards's essay explores the way popular and amateur practice aspired to the standards of scientific ethnography and folklore, Glass's essay looks at the symbiotic relationships between popular and scientific in the interpretation of the scientific within the popular domain, here in the museum.

Edwards's chapter explores a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century concern with visually recording the perceivedly disappearing historical topography of England. This set of widespread concerns in the period, argues Edwards, can be understood as a popularization of key concepts of nineteenth-century anthropology (especially as formulated by Edward Burnett Tylor), namely "salvage" and "survival" and their inflections. Like Griffiths in the previous section, Edwards demonstrates the fluid and unstable boundary between the way anthropology as a discipline defined itself and public perceptions of its subject matter. Both authors raise the question of how visual media were used to position the object of anthropological scrutiny at a given historical moment, a theme that resonates in some measure through most of the essays in this volume. In more general terms, detailed archival research and visual analysis has also begun to demonstrate just how responsive individual photographic practitioners were to the demands of differing markets for photographic imagery from a very early date, setting up tensions between the "objective" eye and the aesthetic one.

The importance of early institutional performances of photography when considering historical questions of cultural identity and representation are central to Glass's detailed analysis of museum dioramas showing the Kwakwaka'wakw Hamat'sa dance, documented by Franz Boas. Boas used photography at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair as well as during his British Columbia fieldwork in 1894 in order to prepare a Hamat'sa diorama at the National Museum. In this Boas also drew upon his own embodied knowledge of the dance from having witnessed it in the field and at the Fair, and a now-famous set of photographs record Boas's efforts to model the dance for mannequin makers at the Museum. Glass's chapter not only raises questions about the way in which shifts in anthropology's relationship to photography are integrally related to the institutional structures and spaces of consumption by which anthropological authority was articulated and consolidated, but also the ways in which approaching anthropological representations as material culture, we can better understand the social and material practice of generating ethnographic knowledge itself. This approach entails attention to the unique materialities of cultural depictions (from textual illustrations and photographs to museum exhibits of objects and dioramas) as well as their particular modes of production, circulation and reception.

The concern with institutional practices is not of course new. Poignant mapped out the analytical territory in her study of the making of the Royal Anthropological Institute's collection (Poignant 1992) as did Banta and Hinsley (1989) in their study of the Peabody Museum, Harvard. These studies were further inflected

by critical developments in museological theory and practice (Coombes 1994, Bennett 1995, Clifford 1997) that emerged, as we outlined earlier, from the same cultural and political moment as the reengagement with photography itself. The approaches of Glass and Edwards demonstrate the shifts in thinking in this area over the last three decades, where studies of the institutional field and curatorial practices have been informed through experiences of working with indigenous groups and visual media, especially in North America, Australia and New Zealand, where particular historical contexts – especially dispossession, social trauma and cultural change as a result of settler colonialism – feed directly into national (and by extension) museum discourse (see for instance Peers and Brown 2003 and references therein). As Glass suggests, it is through the highly selective and recursive practices of visual citation that complex and variable phenomena are often transformed into simplified cultural icons, an epistemological process which has repercussions for both academic scholarship and originating communities. Uncovering the particular history of ethnographic depictions thus allows us to better evaluate their cultural veracity as well as their legacies of influence within reconfigured sets of relations.

The third section of this book explores case studies in the visual methodology of anthropological fieldwork. This has traditionally been the core relationship between disciplinary anthropology and photography – translating field observation into anthropological representation. Several of the chapters contribute to the growing body of work on historical ethnographies of anthropological practice. Grounded in detailed archival research, using the photographs themselves as the methodological and analytical starting point, they demonstrate the way in which both photographic practice and the nuanced experiences of the photographic encounter can be used to track shifts in anthropological concerns with fieldwork relationships, the production of evidence and anthropological knowledge. The underlying assumption here is that context is not merely a form of historical closure and assumed explanation, but a way of interrogating imagery and opening up analytical possibilities, through which a deeper understanding of the anthropological project might emerge (see also Edwards 1998).

Although the evidential value of the photograph was, and continues to be, an essential rationale for its prolific use by anthropologists in the field, recent critical analysis has instead focused attention towards using the whole corpus of photographs to re-examine fieldwork relationships. Hempel's analysis of the South American fieldwork photography of Theodor Koch-Grünberg, a well-known figure in German anthropology, demonstrates just how under-recognized Koch-Grünberg's contribution to the development of visual methods in the discipline is. Visual methods were crucial to Koch-Grünberg's development of a more participatory and reflexive form of anthropology than hitherto found in the German anthropological tradition, and the centrality of this visual methodology stands in marked contrast, for instance, to the more self-conscious interpenetrations of the scientific and aesthetic in Malinowski's fieldwork photography (Samain 1995, Young 1998, Grimshaw 2001).

Like Hempel's chapter, those by Bell, Morton and Wong also demonstrate the way in which the analytical base of such explorations has been vastly expanded. Bell's chapter explores the evidence of a personal memoir of fieldwork in order to shed light on the historical relationship between science and travelogue as modes of visual representation. Drawing upon Kathleen Haddon's unpublished memoir of the 1914 fieldwork that she conducted with her anthropologist father Alfred Cort Haddon, as well as field notes and other documents, Bell explores the competing agendas at play within the paradigm of "salvage ethnography", a theme that also shaped Edwards's essay. As an essential part of A.C. Haddon's developing fieldwork methodology, photography was a critical tool through which to examine evidence of cultural evolution and the diffusion of cultural forms in the Torres Strait and Papua New Guinea. Importantly, in a way that recalls Glass's paper on Boas, this essay contributes to the larger refocusing of visual history to understand the corporeal practices that surround the process of photography as well as how photographs as image-objects have particular material effects and inscribed histories. Further, in ways similar to other essays in this section, notably those by Morton and Herle, it also calls into question received histories of anthropological photographic practice through an integrated look at the various material and textual traces of events surrounding the Haddon's 1914 trip to Papua now dispersed in archives and museums. In taking us back to the archive, the essay points to the productivity of working with these sources in the rethinking of disciplinary histories and events.

Morton's essay also explores the role of photography as a fieldwork tool, in particular within the context of one of Evans-Pritchard's core fieldwork methodologies, that of writing vernacular texts. His analysis of Evans-Pritchard's photographic series of the initiation of his servant Kamanga into the Zande corporation of witchdoctors is also a case study in archival reconstruction in which the notion of photographic seriality is employed to explore the intersection between archival and fieldwork situations. In comparing photographs and texts as products of Evans-Pritchard's Zande ethnography, Morton argues that both forms of inscription can be seen to be involved in processes of translation and cross-commentary, as well as containing an inherent "excess" of ethnographic information that Evans-Pritchard is often forced to explicitly address within his writings.

Emerging from a perhaps less familiar tradition, that of Japanese academic anthropology, the field photography of Torii Ryuzu discussed in Wong's chapter reminds us of the connected and yet contrasting histories of visual anthropology within Euro-American and Asian disciplinary traditions. Wong argues that historians of anthropology rarely include the Japanese case in their discussions of the early years of the discipline, and yet Japanese anthropology was formalized as early as 1884, with the foundation of the *Jinruigaku no Tomo* (Friends of Anthropology) at the Tokyo Imperial University (now University of Tokyo), and with Japan's first professor of anthropology being appointed at the same university in 1892. In particular, Wong explores the way in which the field photography of

Torii Ryuzo in Taiwan emerged out of a nexus of discourses of science, identity, nationalism and colonialism in a modernizing and increasingly powerful Japan. It provides highly important material with which to think about the emergence of a Japanese visual tradition in anthropology, contributing to a more comprehensive and global view of the emergence of the visual in anthropology generally.

The chapters in the final section of the book also relate to anthropological fieldwork, but a fieldwork in which indigenous expectations and appropriations of photographs becomes the focus for anthropological research and analysis. The homogenizing and reductive tendencies of Foucaultian visual analysis which we have already noted notwithstanding, photographs, with their indexical traces and their realist insistence, have become a powerful symbol of the asymmetries of power relations and the inappropriate control of histories. The realization that photographs, effectively locked away in institutions, were potentially important voices in indigenous histories (Dubin 1999: 72), has had a profound effect on practices of ownership, access to images, rights to knowledge and to ideas of evidence and value. Increasingly, indigenous people have begun to demand control over their own histories, represented by material and visual collections in Western museums and archives, a process that, as we noted in the discussion of archives, is increasing their ability to assert their own identities and political voice (see Holman 1996, Powers 1996, Peterson 2003, Edwards 2003).

The role of photography in such processes of empowerment politics, whereby visual artists make critical interventions in the anthropological archive, is an increasing phenomenon and one that many anthropologists, both within visual anthropology and beyond, have become theoretically concerned with. Work such as Leah King-Smith's *Patterns of Connection* (1991) which engaged with images from Australian archives, Zig Jackson's *Spirit* (1989) exploring Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara heritage in North America, or the work of Pamela Shields (Kainai Nation, North America) such as *We are Many, We are One* (1997), are expressive re-engagements with, and re-negotiations of, archival imagery; they represent a dynamic articulation of history as a continuing dialogue between past and present concerns. Although mainstream anthropology has shown reluctance in critically engaging with contemporary art as making a meaningful contribution to representational practices, recent volumes such as *Contemporary Art and Anthropology* (Schneider and Wright 2005) have signalled an increasing interest in such intersections between differing disciplinary approaches.

There is also a growing recognition within anthropology not just of the multivalency of the photograph in and of itself, but of the profoundly different expectations of photographs within different cultures and the diverse ways in which photographs are used and given meaning in different societies. Indeed, received histories of photography have been recently challenged by important anthropological studies that have examined long traditions of photography beyond the Western world (Pinney and Peterson 2003) and the essays in this section can be seen as part of that refiguring and constituting tradition.

In Wright's analysis of the uses of photography in the Western Solomon Islands, for instance, he argues that historically 'photography was readily ascribed a place by Simbo people within a pre-existing scheme of connections between the living and the dead, the seen and unseen' (2004: 75), and demonstrates the way in which the domestic display, and ritual interaction with, photographs of deceased relatives resonates with Simbo ideas about embodiment and the corporeality of the photographic image. Indeed, it was from such a position, which relates to the points of fracture discussed earlier, that the projects discussed in the final section of this volume by Wright, Herle, and Peers and Brown first emerged. The performance of photographs in differing cultural environments and differing modes of historical narrative have also pointed to the limits of a purely visual approach to photographs, as it increasingly becomes clear that a photograph's "meaning" is negotiated through its materiality, embodied presence and orality (Pinney 2004, Edwards 2006). As a result of this understanding, collaborative research and authorship with indigenous communities has had to grapple with issues of voice and representation, and rethink long-established Western norms concerning intellectual property.

The notion of history links most of the chapters in this book, both as an analytical approach and as a set of indigenous discourses about the past. Much of this analytical interest reflects the historical resonances, as well as contemporary uses, of archival collections within indigenous communities today – the subject of the final three essays in this volume. Wright's chapter explores contemporary indigenous discourses surrounding a collection of photographs taken during a so-called "punitive" raid carried out by sailors and marines from the British naval ship HMS *Royalist* on villages in Roviana Lagoon in the Solomon Islands in 1891. Wright grounds his discussion in the materiality of photographic imagery in circulation in the region, including poor quality photocopies. He develops the argument that the recording of histories that circulate around such objects reveals differing expectations of photography between Roviana and the West, differences that ultimately question the universal category "history" and the evidential role of photography within it. In a similar manner, Herle's essay on John Layard's Malakulan photographs shows how such images have played a crucial role in forming ideas about culture and society, both in Vanuatu and within the discipline of anthropology, but also how they have more recently been rediscovered by ni-Vanuatu as documents of "traditional" life, facilitating cultural revitalization. As material instantiations of ancestors and customary practices, the photographs were situated within competing narratives of colonial encounter, family status and entitlement, whilst simultaneously being incorporated into a national project to promote a "traditional economy" (*kastom ekonomi* in Bislama, the local language), a socio-economic model described as operating in a distinctly differing manner to the cash economy. Herle's chapter explores the multiple readings that Layard's field images afford as they move through time and space, and the ways in which these photographic objects actively participate in the process of their own recontextualization. The final chapter in this section by Peers and Brown also

discusses the contemporary relevance of historical photography held in Western institutions, this time for a First Nations community in Canada (the Kainai Nation), and in this instance produced within an explicitly anthropological context by Beatrice Blackwood in 1925. Their chapter reflexively explores the implications of their project to research Blackwood's fieldwork and photographs, arguing that there is a creative space opened up through the interaction between researchers, institutions, communities and other agencies. This process, they argue, is also integral to the wider contemporary phenomenon of First Nations's attempts to understand, articulate, and present to others their own interpretations of cultural identity and history.

### **Summary**

The sort of "thinking through photography" demonstrated in the chapters of this book illuminates not merely the empirical base of anthropological photography, but contributes to a more nuanced historical understanding of the nature of cultural engagement, cross-cultural encounter and experience. The developing positions on anthropology, photography and the archive represented here highlight the ongoing relevance and importance of studying the interaction between anthropology's visual history and contemporary issues of identity and memory. The essays also increase our understanding of the cultural dynamic between anthropology and photography itself. As Pinney has argued, one crucial methodological question is to what extent, and how, can photographs narrate different stories, ones that emerge, at least in part, at the level of the image itself. The photograph becomes the site of a struggle for historical articulation (Pinney 2004: 8). This is not, of course, a linear history. It is instead characterized by a series of overlapping, simultaneous, and often contested strategies to understand complex visual practices, in which anthropology is necessarily entangled. In many ways, archives and the photographs within them have everything to do with the humanistic discipline that anthropology has become. The essays in this volume can be understood as contributions to that process, offering distinct strands of engagement with anthropology's visual legacy, demonstrating the breadth of methodological and theoretical reference. They also signal, we hope, critical pathways ahead toward a more nuanced understanding of this legacy, as well as demonstrating emerging modes of collaborative engagement with indigenous communities regarding the cultural co-production or civil contract (Azoulay 2008) that lies at the heart of the photographic encounter.

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