

THE IMAGE AS ANTHROPOLOGICAL DOCUMENT

Photographic "Types": The Pursuit of Method¹

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This paper is a preliminary examination of one of the ways in which anthropologists attempted to apply photography systematically within the growing body of anthropological method during the 1860s and early 1870s. It concentrates on the "type" photograph, the main purpose of which was to illustrate the characteristics of a racial group. However, a wide variety of material was categorized as "types" of anthropological interest, for the term was more widely used than in a strictly biological context. Anthropologists were nonetheless anxious to improve the quality of their scientific data. The paper examines the role of photography in this context, looking first at the broader framework and then more specifically at two nineteenth century projects, one from England, the other from Germany, which might be described as the "incunabula of visual anthropology".

INTRODUCTION

Given the amount of photographic material available in archives and museums, the history of visual anthropology as such has received scant attention. In the mid-nineteenth century the developing discipline of anthropology eagerly embraced the equally new and exciting science of photography as a much needed method of collecting data. The most pervasive data was the form of portrait photography that contemporaries referred to as a "type". This term, as we shall see, covered a multitude of images, although all of them were viewed as being of broad interest to anthropology and ethnology in their attempts to define and classify the physical nature and origin of human races, and by implication their culture. The apparent dullness of these photographs, their lack of "provenanced" ethnographic detail and articulated visual information, has meant that although a considerable amount of work has been done on some of the aesthetic, representational, and socio-political aspects of these images, their place in anthropology has been largely overlooked. There is, of course, a sizeable body of photography recording the culture of non-European peoples dating from the 1860s and early 1870s, such as travel photography, which is outside the scope of

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this paper, for it was not at this time included in attempts at structured and scientific recording. The demands of contemporary method for identifiable and quantifiable "types" lent itself admirably to the limited photographic technology of the day. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the earliest attempts to use photography in a systematic and scientific fashion within anthropology are found in this field. It is the intention of this paper to look at these photographs as the earliest manifestation of photographic visual anthropology—the incunabula of a sub-discipline—and what anthropologists hoped to achieve by them. Such an exercise is of necessity an overview. Many issues, for instance contemporary social theory and racial beliefs, cannot be explored fully and in any case have been more thoroughly dealt with elsewhere [Stephan 1982; Stocking 1968, 1987; Burrow 1965]. In an examination of the early use of photography in anthropology it is necessary to consider the science of anthropology in general and the study of race in particular within contemporary socio-political frameworks. Science must be viewed as social phenomenon, constrained by the operators' culture and world-view in which ideas and method were expressed in a recognized language thus gaining both intellectual weight and popular appeal [Burke 1972:259–261; Stepan 1982:xiv–xv]. However, the position should not be over-stated, factual reality in science did exist, as indeed it still does, and nineteenth century anthropologists were endeavouring to achieve this [Gould 1981:21–23].

By the 1860s and 1870s, the two decades which are the main focus of this paper, evolutionary theory had influenced every sphere of thought. Far from being incompatible with previous racial classifications and hierarchies which can be traced back to Linneaus in the eighteenth century and earlier, it merely reinforced them [Stocking 1987:178, 183]. Races were seen as forming a natural but static chain of excellence in human kind, representing differing stages in the evolution of the species, of which the northern Caucasian was the highest and the Negro the lowest; further, cultural diversity was seen largely as being biologically determined [Stepan 1982:46–49]. Indeed the new evolutionary science, although strongly monogenist in its view of the origins of the human race, also managed to accommodate traditionally polygenist views, especially of the fixity of races, for both monogenists and polygenists agreed that the formation of races by whatever means was of extreme antiquity [Stocking 1968:42–68]. Within the evolutionary structure the fixity of races had particular importance in the establishment of the notion of "types" which were the essence of classificatory method.

This paper examines two nineteenth century photographic projects, one English the other German, in the light of general discussion of the early use of photography in anthropology. I am using the term "anthropology" in the broadest sense for the sake of convenience although in nineteenth century parlance, this is not strictly correct. The terms "anthropology" and "ethnol-

ogy" have meant different aspects of the study of mankind in various countries and at different times. Although "ethnological" more correctly relates to physical anthropology, in nineteenth century Britain at any rate, when applied to photography by contemporaries its meaning was broader. As the discipline became more structured and recognized anthropological sub-disciplines emerged in the course of the twentieth century, much of the anthropometric material discussed here was regarded as physical anthropology, whereas "portrait types" discussed below became regarded as being more "cultural" in nature. However, it would be anachronistic to categorise nineteenth century material too rigidly, for it is in fact part of a much wider discourse.

Despite these conscious omissions and compromises it is nevertheless hoped that this preliminary study will lead to further investigation of the history and historiography of visual anthropology.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

It is difficult, in the late twentieth century, saturated by the visual image, to grasp the excitement aroused by the invention of photography and its scientific possibilities [Thomas 1978:37]. Photography was, like the railways, one of the great technical inventions of the nineteenth century, for it changed the face of the world or at least the way in which people saw that world. Photography played a vital role in the demystification of the physical world in the wake of rapid European expansion. Techniques were developed to record as many aspects of the planet as possible. It was an information revolution for its vital characteristic was that it recorded reality—the positivist tool *par excellence*. An article in the *Photographic News* of 1859 stated

the photographer is bound by simple truth—happily that is an important, if not the all important principle in representation, he [the photographer] can neither add anything to adorn his picture, nor remove anything that is offensive . . . appearing as the exact transcript of nature [Bourne 1859].

This enthusiastic statement essentially sums up the contemporary attitude toward photography. It would, of course, be both arrogant and naive to claim that contemporaries accepted unquestioningly every image that was put in front of them, but there was an underlying optimism in the use of the medium, and justifiably so, for it undoubtedly opened new, undreamt of fields of recording when compared with artists' impressions which had previously been the sole source of visual data.

By the third quarter of the nineteenth century photography was being extensively used in the recording of anthropological material at a time when anthropologists were seriously concerned with improving the quality and the quantity of their data and strengthening the scientific base of their discipline's method. Already by the late 1860s there was much material

available which could legitimately be grouped under the title "ethnological" or "anthropological". Such terms were often used by reviewers in praise of photographs, implying a value beyond the purely documentary in that they had application in science. Although the photographs discussed appear very different, be they overtly scientific such as those of Lamprey or Huxley or the *cartes-de-visite* of "A Typical Native", they should be seen as a sort of continuum, showing the contemporary acceptability of apparently arbitrary groupings.

The production of photographs of anthropological interest was largely outside the intellectual control of those who sought to use them as evidence. A large proportion were produced by professional photographers making images for European consumption [Thomas 1982:65]. Given that the photographer controls the image produced in terms of his or her own perceptions, beliefs, and visual vocabulary [Sontag 1977], attitudes towards the nature of primitive man and race permeated the production of contemporary anthropological photography [Banta and Hinsley 1986:39–40]. Many of the beliefs and ensuing discussions which occupied the anthropological interests of the day were widely circulated in popular and often vulgarized form [MacKenzie 1984:113–118, 184–185; Stepan 1982:46]. They provided the subject of cartoons, newspaper articles, and popular lectures. Thus photographs reflect not only the heterogeneous nature of those with declared anthropological interests at the time but also the popular interest. It is difficult to assess the circulation of anthropological photographic images. Many such photographs were widely available to tourists in photographers' shops. They were exhibited or shown as stereoscopes and lantern slides. They were also collected by scholars and learned institutions in addition to the more specifically "scientific" images which were shown at meetings of learned societies and exchanged between scholars. For example, Charles Woolley's photographs of Tasmanians [Figure 1] produced for public exhibition, were widely circulated in both photographic and engraving form and collected by scholars as scientific evidence [Edwards 1988a:38]. Book and exhibition reviews provide interesting insights into popular opinion on such photographs:

The figure subjects are certainly more curious than beautiful. A more unintellectual, nay, actually hideous set of creatures than those which are grouped together in No. 559 "Bengalese Clerks" and (No. 561) "Bengalese School" it would be hard to imagine (Review of photographs shown at the Photographic Society of Scotland Exhibition, 1860) [Anonymous 1860:157].

The faces here are more comic than repulsive. Others to which similar description will apply may be found from New South Wales, [and] from Queensland (hideous specimens of humanity). (Report on the photographic section of the 1862 International Exhibition in London) [Anonymous 1862b:256].

Whatever the more popular interpretation of such material, those scholars seriously concerned with the rising discipline of anthropology were anxious



Figure 1. Profile of Tasmanian woman Bessie Clarke. One of a series taken for the Tasmanian display at the Intercolonial Exhibition in Melbourne, Australia. Photograph by C.A. Woolley, Hobart, 1866. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, B44.16A.

to improve both the quality of their data within the framework of scientific objectivity as it was then perceived. In the words of Topinard a few years later: "The study of anthropology requires a calm and vigorous judgement, free from prejudice, but with one aspiration—that of the truth" [Topinard 1890:9].

Method was couched broadly in terms of the biological sciences and emulated its precision, with taxonomy or classification, and comparative and evolutionary method in the forefront. By the 1860s amongst serious scientists the idea of evolution formed the rationale and unifying theory for different aspects of the discipline [Voget 1975:116]. Questions of culture, including psychology, linguistics, technology, and religion, were also interpreted according to the evolutionary standpoint [Lane Fox 1875] and were perceived to be inherently related to those of race. There was considered a correlation between physical nature and mental ability. Thus the nature of humankind and the identification of racial variation was central to the argument:

The question of questions for mankind—the problem which underlies all others, and is more deeply interesting than any other—is the ascertainment of the place which Man occupies in nature and of his relations to the universe of things. [T.H. Huxley 1863:52].

To answer this "question of questions" reliable data was essential.

In 1866 John Anderson, Natural History Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, expressed the opinion that:

the one great reason why the Sciences of Ethnology and Anthropology have not progressed in a ratio corresponding with that which in past years has characterized the advance of other and cognate sciences, is due to the fact that the Natural History method has never as yet been applied to the elucidation of the various phenomena which they offer for our observation and research [T.H. Huxley 1840-1895:2(16):166].

He echoed the sentiments of Prideaux a year earlier:

The want of precision in language, the discordance in opinion, the absence of order and method, or any recognized starting point, so different from the regular and progressive growth of a system of ideas that has once attained a firm basis of truth to rest upon, all proclaim that in ethnology the reign of chaos is not yet ended [Prideaux 1865:408].

The methodological need for contemporary scientists to classify material in the biological sciences required a typological conception of humankind, hence the preoccupation with measurement and quantification which dominated anthropological method in the mid- and late nineteenth century [Stepan 1982:xviii]. In bald terms, the stress was on the physical nature of humankind which could be classified, quantified, and placed appropriately in the evolutionary framework.

The "type" was one of the most important elements in nineteenth century anthropological analysis. Although ostensibly a specifically biological or physical anthropology term, it had broader applications, for it influenced the collection and interpretation of cultural and other material, for example, Lane Fox's analysis of E.H. Man's Andamanese material [Lane Fox 1878: 434-470; Edwards 1988b]. The "type" was a complex concept, especially when applied beyond the strictly biological context. It was not a new concept for the idea of type specimens was well established in the natural sciences of the eighteenth century [Kennedy 1976:24-28]. By the mid-nineteenth century "racial type", an abstract concept, became regarded as something real and concrete. In broad nineteenth century anthropological usage, the "type" represented the general form or character which distinguishes a given group and was accepted as standard; it was also the person or thing which exhibits these qualities, or at least some of them. Within the Darwinian context, "types" expressed a range of variation within a race or population, the development of variants being central to the process of evolution. Although many anthropologists did in fact acknowledge that the "type" represented an essence of race, not every feature being present in every specimen, they felt the "type" established the parameters of a race. Paradoxically it was the reification of this abstraction and the related assumption of the "fixity of type", a stress on the non-variability of "type" which made classification and comparison possible [Stepan 1982:96]. The "reality" of photography, the actual visual representation of the "type", only strengthened this perception.

The concepts or characteristics of the "type" were arrived at by empirical means but were defined in relation to what were perceived to be the distinguishing features which might indeed be tenuous or even spurious,

for example, the idea of "pure race" in Europe [Stocking 1968:57-58]. Although "type" or specimen still exists within the study of physical anthropology, it exists within a wider theoretical and interpretive framework. In the nineteenth century, in what Washburn described as the "Old Physical Anthropology", the facts presented in classificatory types were seen as speaking for themselves [Washburn 1962:3-5].

Another closely related facet of "type", and one which was used extensively in anthropological and photographic literature of the period was what would now be described as the "stereotype". Specific characteristics of physique or custom stood for generalities and indeed the "reality" of a given place or peoples. The "type", by its very nature is anonymous. Individuality is subsumed to type, for by definition individuality is incompatible with "type". "Types" were very seldom named or identified beyond the very general; tribe, place of origin, or trade, for example,—"A Burmese Beauty", "A Typical Native", "A Native Warrior". The stress was on the generality as represented in one specimen. Photographically, the "type" is expressed in a way which isolates, suppressing context and thus individuality. The specimen is in scientific isolation, physically, and metaphorically, the plain background accentuates physical characteristics and denies context. The meaning and "reality" of the subject can be given only by those who interpret the visual evidence. The appropriation of the subject as a specimen was thus legitimised through science and achieved through the control of another science, photography. Through photography the specimens, "types", were neutralized and objectified for scientific use to be interpreted and reinterpreted.

This can be seen in the way in which the notion of "type" extended beyond the scientific and physical and even cultural nature of human kind. Scientific ideas on "primitive man" merged with popular curiosity provided a wide market for the provided *cartes-de-visite* or "typical natives". This kind of studio work constituted a considerable part of the output of many commercial photographers. Although they are apparently far removed from the scientific definition of "type", they were eagerly sought after by contemporaries, as is testified by the very large numbers surviving in anthropological archive and museum collections. There are references to culture in many of these photographs, but these again provide the viewer with pointers to a culture of a general rather than a specific nature, for example, a basket, shawl, or blanket [Blackman 1986:69]. In many ways these props, which may or may not have been the subject's own, were intended to stress the "reality" of the subject. They are also an extension of the concept of "type", expressing distinguishable, identifiable characteristics and thus the reality of the subject's otherness, primitiveness, or anthropological worth, establishing the subject's position in relation to the viewers and reaffirming the natural order in the latter's eyes. So the spear and feather circlet of an Arawak man or boomerang of the Australian Aborigine assume an icono-

graphical power of their own in this context. More sophisticated and "aesthetic" in conception and often execution, were photographs described by contemporaries as "portrait types" [Figure 2] such as those taken by L. Rousseau in the early 1860s [Lacan 1862:52–53] or Johnson and Hoffman's photographs from India dating from the 1880s [Poignant 1980:11]. It was not unusual for such photographs to be produced as either *carte-de-visite* or cabinet prints. Many of these are skilled portraits but their categorisation implied that such subject matter was by definition of scientific interest. Indeed, the documentary intent of such photographs was unmistakable and contemporaries certainly viewed these images in such a way. The Woolley photographs of Tasmanians [Figure 1] represents a mental distancing of the subject by the viewer, the "type" as specimen. Thus, "portrait types" and tourist *cartes-de-visite* were merely exhibiting a different degree and manifestation of the same set of assumptions and interests which produced the scientific "type". It appears that it was the non-European nature of the subject which was the crucial characteristic in the categorising material. The impetus which created the image may not necessarily have been strictly anthropological, but its application to and interpretation in anthropological study was seen as totally legitimate both by producers and consumers.



Figure 2. Half-length front and profile, half-plate prints "Seki-sin-patsi (23 years old), born in Yedo [Japan]. Second class Officer and English interpreter of the Ambassador of Taicoune to Paris" [transl.]. Photograph by L. Rousseau, Paris, for the Musée de Paris, 1864. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, NY. 130–131; another print is in the Musée de l'Homme, Paris.

THE SYSTEMATIC APPROACH

The research potential of photography in anthropology was, by the late 1860s, clear. However, the production of structured visual information which could be used in a scientific fashion still remained a problem. The opinion of *The Quarterly Review* in 1864 could equally well have been turned on photography itself:

It is to science however that photography, the child of science, renders and will unceasingly render, the most valuable aid. . . . Hitherto men of science, in many departments, has been at the mercy of the unscientific traveller. The ethnologist, the historian, the antiquarian, and often the geologist have to form their theories upon data which have been gathered by a gleaner whose appreciation of the value of minute accuracy may be inadequate [Anonymous 1864:139].

It was as a reaction to this unstructured use of visual material and as a response to the growing body of "method" in anthropology that attempts were made to exert greater intellectual control over the visual data so that the "reality" of photographic recording could be usefully and systematically harnessed to anthropological study. Further, a systematic photographic record was a matter of urgency, for there was widespread belief that primitive races were dying out.

As fitted the optimism of the period, large and ambitious schemes were initiated by both the scientific and non-scientific community. In 1861 the *Athanaeum* magazine stated that:

Great and interesting changes of which no exact record is kept are taking place in the human condition in every part of the world. Some races of men are dying out before our eyes and others are becoming greatly modified by a variety of circumstances. . . . Locomotion is mixing races everywhere in both the Old and New Worlds; soon a pure race will (if not already) cease to exist. . . . Everywhere faces and forms, of which the ethnologist would long to preserve authentic memorials, are becoming extinct. . . . In photography we have the means to do something to provide for ourselves and to hand down to the future ethnologist, the exact features and forms of head at least, of the leading races, sub-races, nations as they now exist [Anonymous 1861:60].

Various attempts were made at systematic recording. In Paris, the Société d'Ethnographie embarked upon a major recording of "human types" [Anonymous 1866:431]. In St. Petersburg, the Academy of Sciences was actively involved in a project to photograph the races of the Russian Empire:

Each figure is produced in profile and in a front view, with head uncovered, and the hair shaved off so that the measurements of the three principle dimensions of the cranium can be taken without difficulty. As it is much easier to take photographic portraits of a large number of living individuals than to collect the same number of authentic crania it follows that photographs of this kind will furnish an excellent method of determining the mean proportions of the skull in different races of men, and of the limits of variation in any given type [Anonymous 1862a:49].

Like the idea of "type", that of measurement was by no means new. It had a long tradition as a method for examining racial difference, as in the work of

the Dutch anatomist Peter Camper in the eighteenth century and that of the American Samuel G. Morton in the 1830s and 1840s [Stepan 1982:8–9; Gould 1981:50–60]. By the mid-nineteenth century, “the allure of numbers, the faith that rigorous measurements could guarantee irrefutable precision, and might mark the transition between subjective speculation and true science as worthy of Newtonian physics” was articulated [Gould 1981:74]. Photography offered a new medium for the collection of such data. Given the equal optimism concerning the “reality” of photographic recording it was inevitable that anthropologists should look for ways of applying it to the analysis of the human race.

In 1869 the Ethnological Society of London published a system of measurement devised by John Lamprey which posed the unclothed subject against a backdrop divided into two inch squares by means of threads [Figure 3]:

By means of such photographs the anatomical structure of a good academy figure or model of six feet can be compared with a Malay of four feet eight in height; and study of all those peculiarities of contour which are so distinctly observable in each group, are greatly helped by this system of perpendicular lines, and they serve as good guides to their definition, which no verbal description can convey, and but few artists could delineate. . . . Photographers on foreign stations would greatly assist us if they adopted the same plan [Lamprey 1869a:84–85].



Figure 3. J. Lamprey's system of anthropometric photography. Photograph by J. Lamprey, London, 1868–1869. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, AL31. Further examples of Lamprey's anthropometric photographs are in the Museum of Mankind, London.

Two projects, a British and a German one, bear a closer examination because although the “type” is central to both, they illustrate very different systematic approaches to the use of visual material in anthropology. They highlight the problem of control over the production of visual data. The projects were very different in nature and indeed the apparent application of scientific rigour, but were driven by the common forces outlined above.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY'S PROJECT

In 1869, as a result of a request to the Colonial Office in his capacity as President of the Ethnological Society [L. Huxley 1900:307], Professor T.H. Huxley was asked to submit detailed instructions for the “formation of a systematic series of photographs of the various races of men comprehended within the British Empire” [T.H. Huxley 1840–1895:30:75]. The object of the proposed project was clearly to improve the quality of data available to anthropologists in their work on classification.

Great numbers of ethnological photographs already exist but they lose much of their value from not being taken upon a uniform and well considered plan. The result is that they are rarely either measurable or comparable with one another and that they fail to give that precise information respecting the proportions and the conformation of the body, which alone of any considerable worth to the ethnologist [T.H. Huxley 1840–1895:30:75].

As a distinguished biologist and a leading exponent and populariser of Darwinism, Huxley was, through photography, trying to amass precisely quantifiable data for the classification of races.

Taxonomy should be a precise and logical arrangement of verifiable facts, and there is no little danger of throwing science into confusion if the taxonomist allows himself to be influenced by merely speculative considerations [T.H. Huxley 1876:199].

The project was conceived as a massive and far-reaching study. It possibly owes some of its inspiration to the grand but unrealised scheme to gather “specimens” of all the races of India, Southeast Asia, the Pacific, and Australia in Calcutta to form what was, in effect, an anthropological zoo [L. Huxley 1900:307], and secondly to the *Peoples of India* project [Forbes-Watson 1868–75] which began to appear in 1868 and aroused favourable interest amongst anthropologists. Although this later project was largely unstructured, comprising “portrait types” and cultural genre pieces, there was a unity of purpose which suggested the possibility for more stringent photographic recording in anthropology.

T.H. Huxley's photographic project dates from the end of his most active period in anthropology. Huxley himself appears to have been particularly interested in the correct classification of races in the late 1860s and early 1870s [T.H. Huxley 1870]. This was probably in response to the spectacular and, to Huxley's view, thoroughly unscientific [Taylor 1864], opinions on race being loudly proclaimed by members of the rival anthropological

society [Stocking 1971:381]. There was thus an added impetus to collect accurate and quantifiable data, for to Huxley and his circle, the respectability of the discipline depended upon it.

The system advocated by Huxley required the unclothed subject to be photographed full length, both front and profile [Figure 4]. In the front view, the right arm must be outstretched horizontally, the palm of the hand towards the camera. The ankles should be together "in the attitude of attention". In the profile view the left side should be turned to the camera and the left arm bent at the elbow and arranged so as not to obscure the dorsal contour; the back of the hand should be turned towards the camera. In addition to the two full length photographs, full face and profile photographs of the head were recommended. All the photographs should be accompanied by a clearly marked measuring rod.

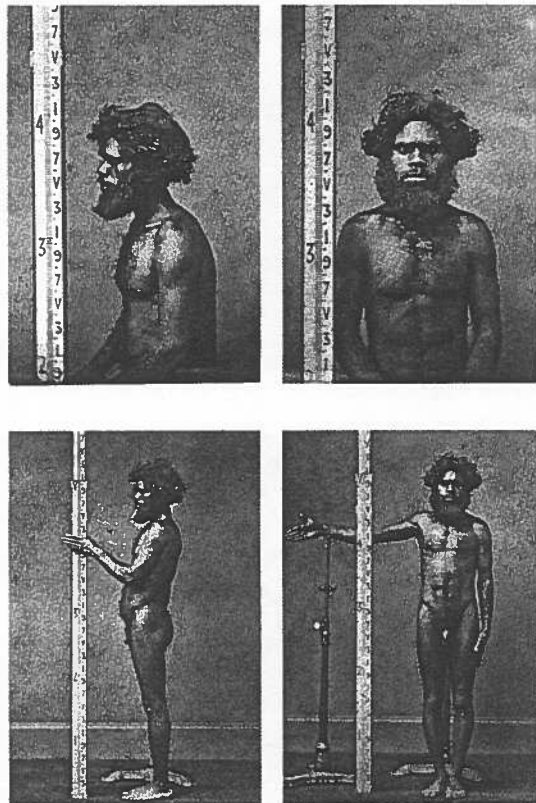


Figure 4. Man from South Australia photographed precisely according to Huxley's instructions. Photographer unknown, c.1870. Imperial College Archives, London: Huxley Mss, Box H.109.

The resulting images are interesting in themselves as early manifestations of visual anthropology but more so because they and the related correspondence reveal how the visual requirements of physical anthropology were perceived in the colonies. It is too easily assumed that the collection of visual data was relatively simple within the colonial power structure and legitimised objectification of people for anthropological purposes. This project shows that the case is not quite so straightforward. First and foremost, the need for visual data was resisted in the colonies because it was feared that such a demand might undermine the delicate balance between the colonial power and the indigenous population. It is significant that the only groups photographed exactly according to Huxley's method are precisely those over whom control was total—prisoners, Indians, Sri Lankans, and Malays (including women) photographed at the Straits Penal Colony and Bushmen photographed at Breakwater prison in South Africa, where the subjects were totally powerless, and presumably refusal not possible. It is further significant that the only non-convicts photographed according to Huxley's instructions were Aborigines from South Australia (again including women), a race believed to be at "the very confines of animality" and a small group from East Africa, whose circumstances are unknown. These photographs suggest something of the intrusive nature of photography in what was clearly a stressful situation. It is significant that the successful application of Huxley's method is confined to these groups. It is interesting to compare them with, on one hand, Paul Foelsche's photographs of Northern Territory Aborigines which illustrate another manifestation of this genre in Australia [Edwards 1988a:39], and on the other hand, the less structured Bushmen photographs of Gustav Fritsch which were included in the Berlin project [Dammann 1873–1876].

Outside such highly controlled environments, different standards were applied in the collection of visual data. Attitudes which designated peoples as "types" and "specimens" to be collected still pertained but their application was perhaps more subtle. A number of colonial officers mention the difficulty they encountered trying to obtain the required photographs, but few elaborate on the nature of these problems. For some, the native population refused to comply. Thus, A. Musgrave, British Columbia, reported to Lord Granville in 1870 his attempts to carry out the instructions on the Northwest Coast of Canada:

I am informed that no Indians here will consent to be photographed in a state of nudity, although reward has been offered. It is believed that they have a superstitious dread of some hidden purpose which they do not understand, and it would be impossible to explain to them the scientific object of the proceeding [Colonial Office Papers 60/38:335].

Huxley's request was also seen as incompatible with the civilizing role which was a fundamental principle of colonial administrative policy. Clearly

the set of conditions which allowed for some Aborigines to be photographed did not apply uniformly:

In Victoria the Aborigines, I am glad to say are civilized as regards their habits, but they are not sufficiently enlightened to submit themselves in a state of nudity for portraiture in order for the advancement of science. Indeed they are careful in the matter of their clothing, and if I empowered a photographer to visit the stations and take photographs with Professor Huxley's instructions in hand he would, I am sure, offend the Aborigines and meet with little success . . . the good influence of those officers [in charge of the stations] would be diminished if they proposed to exhibit in a state of nudity, their pupils [T.H. Huxley 1840–1895:1(15):117].

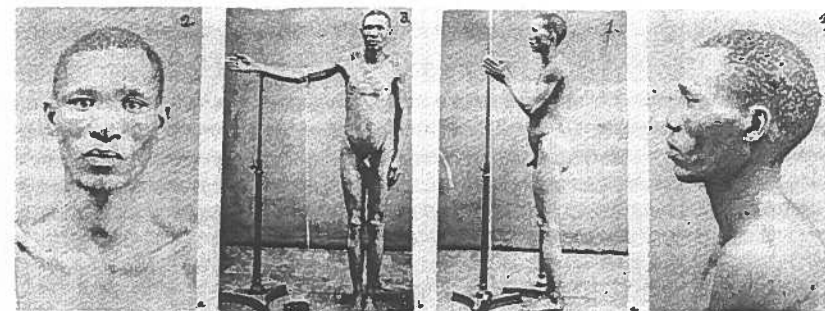
Similar sentiments were expressed by the Governor of the Falkland Islands concerning the photographing of Tierra del Fuegians:

I was unable to persuade the Rev. Mr. Bridges . . . to comply with the instructions so clearly laid down by Professor Huxley, but the acting superintendent was adverse to the natives being taken otherwise [i.e., clothed], as he feared compliance with the Professor's instructions might tend to disturb the civilizing influence the [Mission] Society had laboured for so many years to establish amongst these wild people [T.H. Huxley 1840–1895:2(16):180].

However, another comment from Australia betrays the racial beliefs and values which legitimised these photographs. Having agreed with the above remarks, Sir James McCulloch wrote, "It is scarcely necessary to state that the objections which apply to the Aborigines would be still more weighty in the case of half-castes and others" [T.H. Huxley 1840–1895:1(15):115].

It is interesting that the intrusive mode of photography required by science, which reduced people to "types", specimens, and objects was not necessarily seen by contemporaries as acceptable either from their own morality or from that of the indigenous populations. However, such sensitivities were respected more for the need to maintain the delicate balance of control in the "civilizing" process than for totally humanitarian and egalitarian reasons. The legitimacy of the assumptions underlying the project were not in question.

Where photographs according to Huxley's instructions could not be obtained, the colonial administration furnished studio portrait "types" and *cartes-de-visite* as an effort to cooperate with the project. Some of these were taken specifically for the project, such as the Tierra del Fuegians, others appear to have been purchased from stock of local commercial photographers, for example, the Maori photographs by E.S. Richards and Swan & Wigglesworth of Wellington, New Zealand. This suggests again the continuum in the minds of contemporaries between "scientific", documentary, and the *cartes-de-visite* "type", and the non-European photographs being identified by the European viewer as subjects of legitimate anthropological study. Thus they are presented as "types" rather than individuals. Very few of the images in Huxley's collection have documentation beyond general appellations to place. An exception is a series of South African photographs from Dr. Bleek [Figure 5] who furnished them with very detailed prove-



1. Abraham Lucas, a prisoner at Breakwater Jail, South Africa, photographed according to Huxley's instructions, c. 1870. Original caption by Dr. Wilhelm Bleek, ethnologist and philologist, Custodian of the Grey Library, Cape Town. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: B11.13a-d.

nance as might be relevant to a scientific specimen. Although Bleek had much wider anthropological interests, clearly this was the kind of documentation relevant to the "type".

THE BERLIN PROJECT

Another nineteenth century project, in which commercially produced photographs were presented as being of anthropological interest and compared with more rigorously scientific material, was initiated by the newly formed Berliner Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte. The project, begun in 1870, was more broadly based at the outset, although it undoubtedly was of serious scientific intent. Late in 1870 the Berlin Society commissioned a Hamburg photographer Carl Dammann (1819–1874) to photograph the crew of a corvette belonging to the Sultan of Zanzibar which had put into Hamburg for repairs. The intent was specifically to record "types" from the different African races in a fashion useful in anthropological study [Dammann 1871]. Dammann gives an interesting insight into the friction caused between the photographer and the subject in the production of such images:

The task of taking pictures of 20 men although very interesting, was extremely difficult owing to the lack of understanding of photography on the part of the subjects and to the religious scruples which made themselves felt. Added to this was a lack of adaptability, avarice and other unpleasant manifestations which are normally unknown in a photographic studio [transl.] [Dammann 1871].

The series comprised forty (twenty pairs) full face and profile studies [Figure 6] taken in a uniform fashion against a plain background; race, age, and place of origin were also recorded. Although not so overtly "scientific"

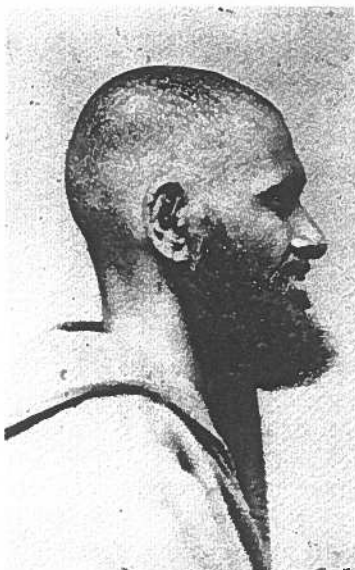


Figure 6. Profile, carte-de-visite print, "Arab, aged 30". Crewman from Zanzibar. This photograph appeared in both the Album and the popular version the Races of Men. Photograph by C. Dammann, Hamburg, 1870. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: AL60.

in Huxley's terms, they were certainly perceived as scientific and anthropological in intent and improvement in the quality of data was undoubtedly the impetus behind this work. At a meeting of the Berlin Society, Gustav Fritsch [1870:172–174] discussed the problems of producing photographs for scientific use, his sentiments echoing Huxley's almost entirely. The photographs were clearly well received in scientific circles for not only did two of the leading figures in German anthropology, Adolf Bastian and Rudolf Virchow, actually endorse the scientific worth of them on behalf of the Berlin Society [Fritsch 1870:171–172], but Dammann states that he had supplied the photographs to some fifteen universities, learned societies, and museums in Britain and Germany and that he had been asked to increase the collection.

With the support and assistance of the Berlin Society Dammann photographed, again in the anthropologically approved manner, a visiting troop of Japanese acrobats, whose photographs were made available in both cabinet and *carte-de-visite* format [Figure 7]. The photographing of visiting "exotic" peoples for anthropological purposes was not uncommon in the mid-nineteenth century. The "portrait type" was the result of such enterprises, as seen in Rousseau's series for the Musée de Paris [Figure 2] or the United States Government's photographs of Indians who came to Washing-



Figure 7. Front and profile cabinet prints of a Japanese boy acrobat. These photographs appeared in the Album and another pair of photographs from the same series appeared in carte-de-visite form in the Races of Men. Photograph by C. Dammann, Hamburg, 1870. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: B33/1.12e-f.

ton. The attitude about the collection of "types" was summed up in an article on "Photographic Science and Medicine" with the implication that true cultural identity does not enter into the equation:

One might think that London was the worst place for making such a collection of the portraits of aboriginal and strange people, whereas in reality it is the best. We have seen, in our streets, African Negroes six feet high and of primeval a character as though they had just arrived from the swamps of Gabon. In London, we may portray kings, if not queens of the Cannibal Islands, Persian ministers, Siam princes; and in the purlieus of Whitechapel, Malays, New Zealanders, Turks, Egyptians—a real Noah's Ark of humanity. A selected collection of such portraits would be worth its weight in gold [Anonymous 1859:97].

Dammann does not appear to have taken any photographs for the Berlin Society after 1871. Until his death in 1874 he concentrated on copying material, particularly racial types, from works by other photographers supplied by German expatriate communities. These he made available to anthropologists. Appeals for suitable material were made by the society's officers at meetings of the Berlin Society and were repeated in the pages of their journal. The project was published in a large folio size album *Anthropologisch-Ethnologisches Album in Photographien* [Dammann 1873–1876]. There was also a smaller and cheaper "popular" edition published in London which shows the wide circulation this kind of image had outside

the strictly scientific community [Dammann and Dammann 1875]. The German project in both editions includes Europeans [Figure 8]. In particular, European peasants in costume are juxtaposed with peoples more conventionally categorized as "ethnographic" such as Lapps. This is in contrast to Huxley's project which specifically excluded Europeans, its scope being "the various races of men comprehended within the British Empire". Indeed Huxley's collection includes only two photographs of Europeans, both considerably later in date than the main project. This difference is consistent with contemporary fields of interest. Although British scientists were interested in the nature of European races, it was of more particular concern on the continent.²

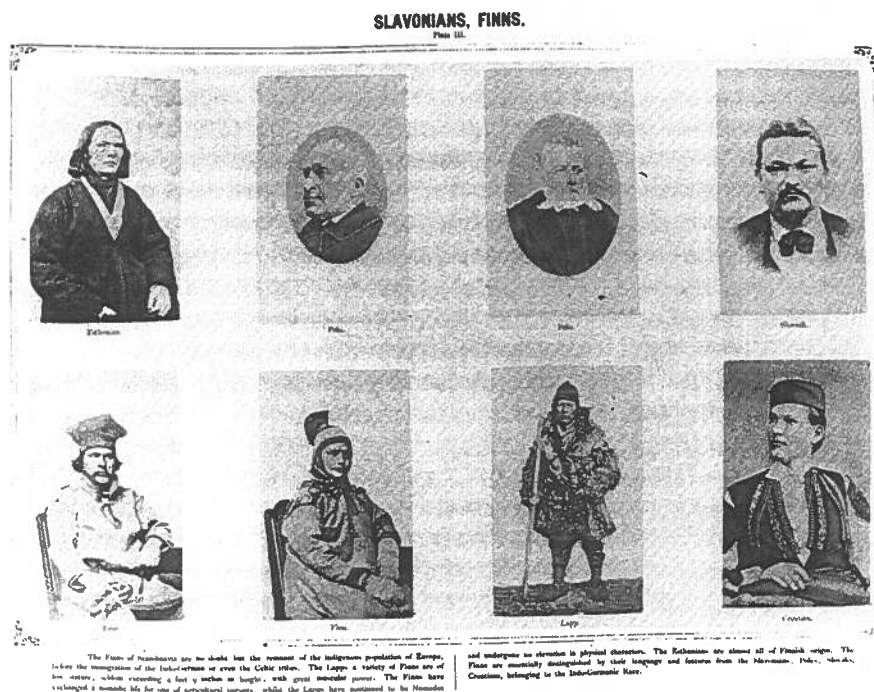


Figure 8. "The Finns of Scandinavia are no doubt but the remnant of the indigenous population of Europe, before the immigration of the Indo-German or even the Celtic tribes. The Lapps, a variety of Finns are of low stature, seldom exceeding 4 feet 9 inches in height, with great muscular power. The Finns have exchanged a nomadic way of life for one of agricultural pursuits, whilst the Lapps have continued to be Nomades [sic] and undergone no evolution in physical characteristics. The Estonians are almost Finnish in origin. The Finns are essentially distinguished by their language and features from the Slavonians, Poles, Slovaks, Croatians, belonging to the Indo-Germanic Race". A page from The Races of Men the popular edition of the Dammann/Berlin Society Album, comprising cartes-de-visite by various commercial photographers, c.1875. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: AL60.

The *Album*, which won a bronze medal for especial scientific interest at the Vienna International Exhibition of 1873, contains almost six hundred images arranged by geographical region and mounted in groups of between six and eighteen on fifty plates accompanied by "nutshell" captions summarizing racial and culture type. The result is a wide range of material which illustrates well the desire for quantifiable data on one hand against the problems of controlling the nature of the data. Some of the images are copies of well known photographers' works, for example, Charles Gentile and Frederick Dally on the Northwest Coast of Canada, Julian Vannerson and James Earle McClees in Washington or O. Schoefft in Cairo, but the source of others has still to be identified [Edwards 1982:260]. Many of these images were readily available on the market and appear in both anthropological collections and travellers' albums.³ Some of the photographs appear to have been taken specifically for "scientific" purposes, like those by John Lamprey [1869b:184] whose method [Figure 3] was reported at the Berlin Society in 1869. The photographs taken by Dammann on the instructions of the Berlin Society are uniform in the "anthropological mode" and were apparently accompanied by measurements although none of this documentation survives. The photographs of South Africans by Gustav Fritsch comprise full face and profile portraits with captions giving group, age and place of origin, some seventy-nine pairs and four single images altogether. In addition there is a series of "types" from Southeast Asia and Indonesia which appear to have belonged to the Berlin Society and may well have been commissioned by them in Asia. The scientific intent of this series is clear. All subjects were taken full face and profile, half-length [Figure 9], of the forty pairs of photographs, twenty-six have one arm bent at the elbow and lower arm placed across the abdomen or have their arms folded. It is significant that the whole set also appears in Huxley's collection and, although there is no record to prove it, they were probably purchased from Dammann.

An interesting aspect of the Dammann *Album* is the way it underlines the nature of the photographic "type" in early visual anthropology. The subject set against a plain background was the anthropologically accepted mode of photography in the eyes of the viewer. In some images in the *Album*, this process can actually be seen. There are a number of pictures which have been taken in the field rather than in the studio. In order to render them anthropological in both photographic and iconographical terms, the background or the context has been painted out on the negative, thus stressing the decontextualised physical nature of the subject. In some cases this was done before the photographs were copied for the project but some of the surviving wet collodion plates for the copy negatives from the project, in Pitt Rivers Museum Archives, show that the overpainting on the negative was done specifically to produce these images in a form for anthropological consumption.

The photographic work is of extremely mixed quality both technically and visually. But what is significant is that the images themselves must have



Figure 9. Front and profile cabinet prints of man from Indo-China. From a series of photographs of Asian "types" which was used extensively in the *Album* but not the *Races of Men*. Albumen prints by C. Dammann from a negative in the possession of the Berlin Society, 1870–1871. Another print on an unidentified cabinet mount, with manuscript caption in German, is in Huxley's collection, Imperial College Archives, London. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: B27.18c-d, acquired when the museum purchased the residue of Dammann's photographic work in 1901.

been deemed worthy of inclusion by the Berlin Society in what, after all, must have been an expensive and ambitious project. It implies a considerable enthusiasm for the broader scientific value of this kind of visual material by contemporaries and the wide range of material which was considered relevant. E.B. Tylor described the *Album* 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 criticism to check the rash generalization as to race so common in ethnological systems. . . [Tylor 1876:184].

CONCLUSIONS

The two projects discussed were based on very different intellectual standpoints. Huxley was strongly Darwinian in his views whereas the German school was more concerned with the nature of human and cultural variety. Yet both had the wish to collect data before they were lost and to organize a comprehensive body of data in a systemic and quantifiable fashion which reflected the development of human races and thus culture. Finally, both saw the photographic "type" in its various manifestations as central to the exercise.⁴ Neither achieved precisely what had been intended. The Berlin Society work was at least published, giving the images a wide circulation which would "make new anthropologists wherever it goes" [Tylor 1876:184]. Huxley's project fell far short of his ambitions for a truly systematic record of classifiable types. No published work can be directly attributed to this

photographic effort. It may be possible that such projects were bound to fail. Production was still largely outside the control of those who initiated such ideas and the necessary manipulation and control of people was integrally tied up with colonial administration. More important, in the final analysis, anthropologists had no firm idea of what could or could not be achieved by photography in the attempt to apply the "truth" and "reality" offered by photography to the "truth" resulting from rigorous scientific investigation. However, this judgement is perhaps too harsh. Photography should not be seen in isolation, but as part of a general movement towards a more structured method, be it the adoption of the "Frankfurt Plane" in craniometry in 1877 or the publication of *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* in 1874. As anthropological method in general became more structured and sub-disciplines emerged, so specific genres of anthropological photography became more clearly distinguished. During the decades discussed in this paper these genres were not necessarily clearly distinguished in the minds of contemporaries. Central to this early stage in visual anthropology was the "photographic type". The subject of investigation, reduced physically and metaphorically to "type", largely denied cultural existence. In the recording of non-European peoples, reference to the "scientific mode" of photography itself, in addition to being a means of collecting data, became of iconographical significance, denoting serious anthropological/scientific intent even if the application was spurious in a given context. Thus the measuring rod became an iconographical device in itself, providing little in the way of scientifically quantifiable evidence [Figure 10] [Edwards 1988b].⁵

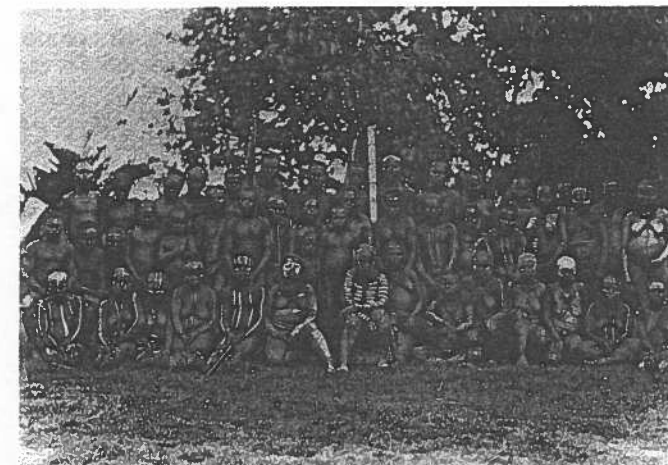


Figure 10. Group of Andamanese with measuring rod. Photograph by E. H. Man, colonial administrator and notable ethnographer of the Andamanese. Port Blair (?), c.1875–1876. Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford: B30.2e.

Although to some the "type" photograph belongs strictly in the field of physical anthropology, such strict categorization is anachronistic. To the nineteenth century scholar the implications of physiology were more wide reaching. Racial characteristics were defined within the "type" which was inexorably linked to culture. The method by which such could be defined was thus crucial and photography was part of this method. The "type" in all its variations, with all its associated implications, should thus be seen, in this context, as a groping towards a visual expression of anthropological method.

NOTES

1. I should like to thank Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, for giving me access to T.H. Huxley's Papers and especially Mrs. J. Felton of the college archives for all her assistance. I should also like to thank Joan Schwartz and lastly Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, my home institution for their forbearance.
2. It should be noted that marginal and peasant groups in Europe were also considered to be "anthropologically valid" for study. Anthropometric photographs of Europeans were available for scientific study. An example are those in the J. Barnard Davies collection at the Museum of Mankind, London.
3. For example, albums of photographs collected by H. Moseley in the collections of the Department of Zoology, University of Oxford. Moseley collected the material whilst working as a naturalist on the H.M.S. Challenger expedition (1872–1876), he was later Professor of Human Anatomy at the University of Oxford.
4. This idea continued to have photographic manifestations in the work of August Sander, from Germany, in the 1920s [Jeffrey 1981:130–136].
5. C.F. Wood's "types" from the Pacific, dating from 1872, in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, provide a further example.

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Classification and Fantasy in the Photographic Construction of Caste and Tribe¹

Christopher Pinney

Much of the photographic record of caste and tribe in India beginning in 1840 formed part of a positivist system of classification which took external characteristics encoded in the bodies of photographic subjects as indices of cultural and political characteristics. Because of the prevalence of endogamous caste groupings India was held to be uniquely suited to this anthropometric investigation and photographic vision came to stand as a metaphor for the process through which the peoples of India became the objects of anthropological knowledge. However, alongside this ocular domination lay a parallel fabulous language which inverted positivist goals and created an unknowable secret arena beyond the power of sight.

In India, as in other colonies, photography was but one means of mapping the indigenous people. The main function of this mapping was to make the topography classifiable and controllable, but I want also to suggest that even the most dour imperial cartographers might ultimately have agreed that a map which does not include utopia is not worth the paper it is drawn upon.

CLASSIFICATION AND FANTASY

In December 1865, Dr. Joseph Fayrer proposed that the Asiatic Society of Bengal should organise an ethnological exhibition with "typical examples of the races of the old world. . . . On certain hours, on certain days", he suggested, "the exhibitors, classified according to races and tribes should sit each in his own stall, should receive and converse with the Public, and submit to be photographed, painted, taken off in casts and otherwise reasonably dealt with in the interests of science"² [Asiatic Society of Bengal, Proceedings 1867:90].

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