



CITIZENS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTODEMOS COLLECTIVE,
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON



Royal Anthropological Institute

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Anthropology & Photography

is a new open-access RAI publication series edited by the RAI Photography Committee. Emerging from the international conference of the same name organized by the RAI at the British Museum in 2014, the series will highlight and make available to the widest possible audience the best new work in the field.

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Volume 14 *Citizens of photography*

PhotoDemos Collective, University College London

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Cover image: ‘Panorama of the painted backdrop of ‘Fishtail’ Mountain, in Chakra Studio, Kathmandu. Photograph by Christopher Pinney, 2018.

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'Anyone who stands in any relation whatsoever to photography has membership of the citizenry of photography – by virtue of the fact she is a photographer; that she views photographs; comments on or interprets them; displays them to others or is herself photographed.'

(Azoulay 2012:69)

'Imagine the damage caused by a theft which robbed you only of your frames...'

(Derrida 2017:18)

This photo-essay presents fragments from a collaborative project that has explored the ways in which 'demotic' photography might illuminate and frame political futures. The project, 'Citizens of photography: the camera and the political imagination', is an empirical anthropological investigation into the relationship between 'representation' through everyday images and 'representation' through politics. The PhotoDemos Collective is a group of six researchers. The names of the researchers and the countries in which they researched are: Naluwembe Binaisa (Nigeria), Vindhya Buthpitiya (Sri Lanka), Konstantinos Kalantzis (Greece), Christopher Pinney (Bangladesh, India and Nepal), Ileana L. Selejan (Nicaragua) and Sokphea Young (Cambodia). The project is based in the Department of Anthropology at UCL and is funded by a European Research Council Advanced Grant no. 695283.

A brief text introduces some of the hypotheses informing the research and outlines the expanded field (geographical, cultural and conceptual) in which we attempt to situate photographic practice. This is then followed by six thematic sections, presenting images with long contextualizing captions, which offer comparative perspectives on questions

concerning visibility, atrocity and futurity, among others. The photographs we reproduce here are sometimes explicitly authored and situate the images they document clearly within specific social practices. Sometimes the images are 're-photographed' with minimal or no wider framing, because we want to dwell on the 'bare' original. 'Re-photographed' here, paradoxically, indicates that the researcher has become a simple 'photo-copier', reproducing the image, on its own terms, as closely possible. The researcher moves the camera closer and closer, until its focal length encompasses the paper print, or screen, that is its object. This is the geometrical point at which the anthropologist/photographer is rendered theoretically invisible and obsolete. Yet such subordination to the original is never complete. As photographic-interventionist Sherrie Levine demonstrated (Crimp 1980), there is always a new authorship that erupts from selection and intention, or indeed the mere act of reproduction. No matter how close the photographer/anthropologist gets to the original, they are always foregrounding the concerns of an observer. Perhaps we should call this 'copying' action simply 'photography' – an act of reproduction devoid of recursivity – yet that technical procedure is already (unavoidably) contaminated by an assumption of creativity, of conscious choice, of the marshalling of the viewfinder as a way of framing a subjective world-view. The overall effect of this toggling of frames, we hope, generates an oscillating focus, providing a sense of the logic of single images, and also of how they are mobilized in everyday practice. The zooming in, and zooming out, may be disorienting, but also productive.

The images, and our understanding of them, are the product of immersive local fieldwork. However, we view this as a prerequisite rather than a localizing end in itself. Through

juxtapositions, governed by both likeness and disjunction, we attempt to clarify broader themes by placing them in conversation with each other in a space that is ‘more than local and less than global’. As befits a photo-essay the method owes more to filmic montage – of the Eisenstein (1943) variety – and that ‘other way of telling’ perfected by Berger and Mohr (1982), than comparative social science.¹ It strives to awaken what Benjamin called ‘inner image-imperatives’ (*Bildnotwendigkeiten*) that ‘have the last word in all phases and stages of things conceived as metamorphoses’ (Benjamin 2008:273). Our method involves alignment, echo and resonance, but also contrast, disjunction and refusal. Rather than the ‘paradigmatic’ axis of a totalizing social science, our method invokes the ‘syntagmatic’ concatenation of storytelling.

A conversation with an activist for textile workers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in 2018, made clear that the relationship between photographic and political representation operates in a sphere beyond the literal existence of photographic images. Rather, a form of latent ‘photographability’ emerged as a form of entitlement parallel to those within more conventional citizenship claims. This realization was provoked by recollections of the Rana Plaza textile-factory disaster and the work of the photographer and activist Taslima Akhter in reclaiming the visibility of the thousand plus workers who died during the collapse in 2013. Akhter undertook a work of engaged visual anthropology, provoked by relatives’ public display of photocopies of images of the missing at the disaster site. With other activists, she met



Figure 1 Group studio portrait of Ready Made Garment Workers. Akhi Akhter (18), shown centre of back row, worked on the 6th floor of the Rana Plaza building at New Wave Style Ltd factory. She and her friends were photographed in a local studio on Bangla New Year (Pohela Boishakh 1420), 14 April 2013. Akhi and six of the friends in this photograph died in the Rana Plaza collapse. A copy of the photograph was given by Akhi’s family to the activist and photographer Taslima Akhter after the disaster. Courtesy of Taslima Akhter.

¹ Berger and Mohr’s experiments can be seen as elaborations on Eisenstein’s elementary proposition (what we might think of as the ‘atom’ of montage) that ‘two film pieces, of any kind, inevitably combine into a new concept, a new quality, arising out of that juxtaposition’ (Eisenstein 1943:16).

and interviewed the families of the missing and attempted to photographically document the lives of those who had died. This work echoed her broader project of making visible the faces and testimonies of textile workers (Akhter 2017).²

A series of memorial quilts (*srmitti katha*) incorporating photographs of the victims were unveiled in front of the Rana Plaza site on the fifth anniversary of the disaster, 20 April 2018, and I asked the activist Nadví Abdulláh which of the images most affected him. He pointed to a photograph recording a visit to a photographic studio by eight female workers and friends who lived together in a hostel. The occasion was New Year (14 April, 2013) and they wore matching red and green colours – the colours of the Bangladesh national flag. The studio backdrop shows a verdant foreground and a dramatic horizon punctuated by vertiginous blue mountains. Seven of the eight women would die in the collapse of the building.

In the activist's reasoning, the collective nature of the portrait pointed to a double injustice: destruction, through what he saw as an act of corporate murder of so many people; and the denial of the kind of individual visual representation that was every worker's right. 'Her relatives³ only had the group photo,' the activist lamented, 'there wasn't even a photo of her on her own.' This lament in part reflected the assumption that the lack of other ID photos that could have been used was a symptom of further disempowerment: she would not have had a bank account, or any voter ID. In other words, not only did the absence of any individuated image index a life destroyed at a cruelly young age; the absence of representation also indexed itself, the

lack of the visibility to which she was entitled, *tout court*.

This establishes the ubiquity of photography, even (or perhaps, especially) where it is absent or incomplete, and alerts us to the correction that ethnography can offer to accounts that assume the over-abundance and saturation of existence by photography. Just as it is illuminating to learn that 80 per cent of the world's population have never travelled by airplane, so it is important to acknowledge that in significant parts of the Global South photography remains a 'scarce resource', proffering not 'anaesthetization' through excess, but a thwarted 'citizenship' through an interrupted visibility.

The encounter in Dhaka, recounted above, provides an instance of the illumination offered by the early work of Ariella Azoulay, whose *Civil Contract of Photography* (2008) has been important in formulating several of the hypotheses explored ethnographically by the PhotoDemos Collective. Azoulay argued that photography makes possible a new form of 'civil imagination', and offers a subjunctive form of citizenship. The reassertion of the foundational role of the Benjaminian photographic 'event' and of 'contingency' have opened up questions concerning the conjunction of the photographic with the political that several decades of Foucauldian and Althusserian influence (with its claim that photography's power was ultimately determined by the state) had foreclosed. Among the most damaging impacts of the Foucauldian consensus in photographic theory was the foregrounding of the ideological work of the image at the expense of the contingencies and logistics of its making. It is these unruly contingencies that PhotoDemos embraces

At the heart of the PhotoDemos approach is a refusal to reduce 'representation' to mere power, and to instead see it, following Walter

2 See also the Bengali and English documentation at www.athousandcries.org.

3 Who had used the photo as part of a 'missing' poster.

Benjamin's insights (2008:23, 29), as an active, unpredictable and potentially transformative process. Whereas John Tagg's (1988) influential Foucauldian position saw photography as a mere epiphenomenon of the state, its power being in actuality that of the state to document, surveil and archive, Azoulay argues that photography 'has created a space of political relations that are not mediated exclusively by the ruling power' (2008:12) inculcating 'civil skills' (2008:18) creating 'civil knowledge' (2012:10) and facilitating a 'citizenship of photography' (2008:17).

Our research also builds upon a tradition of ethnographies of photography (Bajorek 2020; Kalantzis 2019; Miryarrka Media 2019; Pinney 1997; Strassler 2010; Wright 2013) that has sought to understand and present photographic practice through conventional long-term ethnographic fieldwork. However, we seek to fuse the study of specific locations and traditions with broader questions concerning power and possibility. We are hence interested in both territories and networks.

The Collective explores, through field research, the metaphorically 'prophetic' – that is, future-oriented – nature of photographic visibility, and the possibility that the camera can

offer a form of political recognition in advance of ordinary citizenship. It also explores the latent and covert political identifications and contestations that drive photography's 'political unconscious' and 'not-quite-secular' status, and the benefits of considering the object of our concern through the gerund 'photographing', rather than the noun 'photography'. Approaching Azoulay's work as set of generative starting points rather than as a new orthodoxy, the PhotoDemos Collective has researched photography as actually existing practice. Its concern is with the pragmatic, 'demotic', everyday routines, interventions and predicaments, staged through photography, which only ethnography can capture.

Photography has always been in a state of transformation. Its forms and scope demand new, and resurgent, modes of analysis. This introduction to the work of the PhotoDemos Collective aims to make a contribution to this task. It does this on the basis of comparative narratives of the role of the camera in the political imagination in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Greece, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Nepal and India. What follows are fragments of some of our post-fieldwork conversations, as we have tried to assemble extra-local montages, narratives and connections.

Presence and occlusion



Figure 2 Photographic remains at a Jaffna Studio, Sri Lanka. Decades of war have shaped the visual-material trajectories of everyday photographic practices in northern Sri Lanka. Studio archives ruined by war offered rich insight into the ways in which conflict shaped the Tamil social world. Despite the advent of mobile-phone photography, Jaffna's studios persist. Photographs produced extend from state-mandated National Identity Card and passport headshots to fantastical portraits captured against painted and photoshopped backdrops that conjure for the studio's clients the possibilities of elsewhere. Such everyday photographs not only mediate popular aspirations for migration, but help replicate the romance and possibility of South Indian Tamil cinema. Photograph by Vindhya Buthpitiya, 2018.



Figure 3 Giannis Psaros photographing with his mobile phone a black-and-white portrait of himself taken by Kalantzis in 2007, in Crete. The scene unfolded at a coffee house in a highland Sfakian village, where he has been doing intermittent fieldwork since 2006. During his visits, he has been returning photographs to interlocutors. Giannis' gesture speaks to the affective intensity and dialogue of the ethnographic encounter, but also to scarcity and asymmetry: locals are historically the sitters rather than the photographers of their life-worlds,

and they are in constant search of the few available early images of themselves and their ancestors. The gratifying sense of contribution that emanates from giving back images warrants reflection on the political and affective roles of visitors with cameras in Sfakia (as well as the parallels and differences between ethnographer and tourist subject positions). When discussing such images, Sfakian interlocutors often stress the shock of encountering a purer, younger self. Photograph by Konstantinos Kalantzis, 2017.

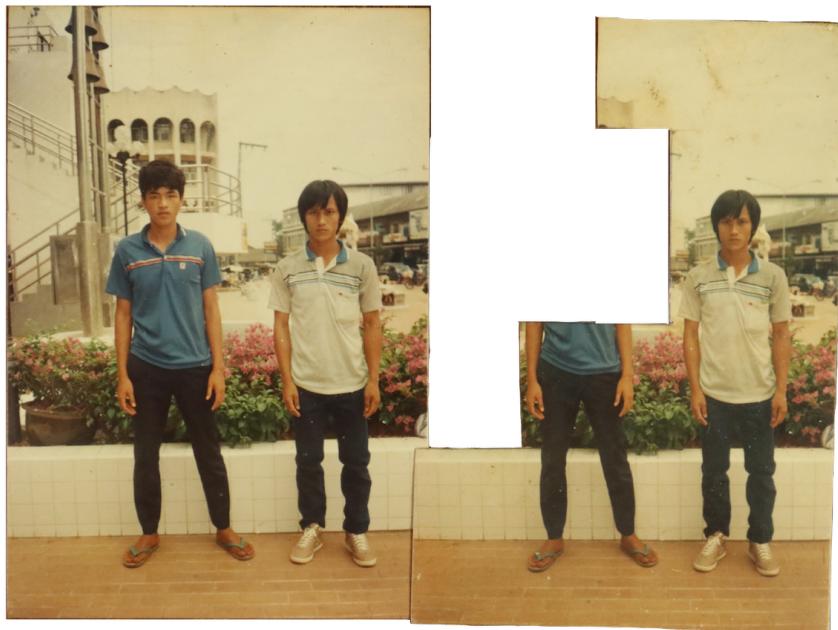


Figure 4 A photograph of Nharm Nham, on the left with a blue shirt, taken at a camp along the Cambodia-Thailand border in the 1980s. On the right, his portrait has been cut to make a photo ID for a job application. In the 1980s, Cambodia's situation was fragile, with most of the country's territory controlled by Vietnamese troops, while the Khmer Rouge occupied the Thai border zones. As Vietnam invaded and overthrew the Khmer Rouge in 1979, up to a million Cambodians fled the country and sought shelter along the borders with Thailand and Vietnam, before seeking asylum elsewhere. In this transition period, photography, and especially photo-ID services, were not available, and that compelled the young Nharm to duplicate a pre-existing photograph (in Thailand, before he returned to the camp) and then dismember it for his photo ID. Re-photographed by Sokphea Young, 2018.



Figure 5 Dr Mrs Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti group portrait. The archives of Dr Mrs Funmilayo Ransome Kuti are held in The University of Ibadan Special Collections. In a career that spanned education and political activism from the colonial to the post-colonial era, she was the leading campaigner for women's rights, with a national and international platform. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti tirelessly organized women building strategic alliances cross the country. The women in this group portrait, taken outside the Premier Hotel in Ibadan just before independence, utilize the power of photography to amplify their visibility. Such photographs appeared in newspapers, campaign literature and elsewhere. Funmilayo

Ransome-Kuti in this image is seated in the second row, surrounded by her compatriots. She strategically emphasised the group portrait and always dressed in traditional Nigerian attire to symbolize the solidarity, unity and organization of women across class, economic and ethnic boundaries. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti stepped beyond a passive self-fashioning, and embraced the disruptive potential of photography to challenge the politicization of ethnicity, class and gender, as exemplified in this photograph, heightening the power of mobilization and dissemination. Photograph © University of Ibadan, Special Collections, Ibadan, Nigeria, date and photographer unknown.



Figure 6 Visitors to Ambedkar Memorial Park photograph each other on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti (Ambedkar's Birthday), inside the Ambedkar stupa, Lucknow, 2018. Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891–1956) was the twentieth century's leading Dalit thinker and politician. In the current century he has become the figurehead of a newly energized social movement. Initiated by Mayawati, the former Dalit Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Ambedkar Park covers 108 acres and is a monumental work of public architecture. The sculptures inside the stupa are

modelled on photographs (here showing Ambedkar on the left, Kanshiram in the centre and Ambedkar's wife Ramabai on the right) which now form part of a sacred iconography. The trajectory from analogue photograph to sculpture to digital image alerts us to the protean, ever-changing nature of photography. The Ambedkar Memorial Park, especially the interior space of the stupa, is a sacred space for Dalits. Here a conventional political identification is propagated and affirmed through photography. Photograph by Christopher Pinney, 2018.



Figure 7 On 18 April 2018, anti-governmental protests erupted in Managua, Nicaragua, before developing into the largest social movement since the Sandinista revolution that toppled the Somoza dictatorship in July 1979. This time, the population rebelled against the Sandinista Party, the FSLN, and its leaders, President Daniel Ortega and Vice-President Rosario Murillo. The evidence revealed by photography can only be understood within a broader regime of visibility and invisibility. ‘Photographability’ is also linked to ‘seeability’. At a solidarity march in the town of Masaya on 13 May 2018 near Managua, a woman is pictured wearing

an ‘intervened’ traditional mask, commonly used in folkloric dances. Protesters placed eye patches on the masks to honour students who were injured by rubber bullets during violent confrontations with the police during the 2018 protests. The same type of mask was worn as a disguise during the Sandinista popular insurrection of 1978–9, and protesters are drawing upon this important historical connection deliberately. Masaya has been a Sandinista stronghold since the revolution, yet turned against the Ortega-Murillo regime in 2018. Photograph by Ileana L. Selejan, 2018.

Regarding the pain of history



Figure 8 Children of cadres of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia (from a family photographic archive). This photograph was taken in the 1970s. The country was thrown into civil war (induced by the regional geopolitical turbulence associated with the US–Vietnam War). In 1970 a pro-US general deposed Norodom Sihanouk. The Khmer Rouge, dissatisfied by the inequality of Sihanouk's regime, encouraged class-based resistance and then overthrew the general. Khmer Rouge took control of the regime and attempted to eliminate all lifestyle and class differences, levelling the populace to peasant status. Every citizen of Khmer Rouge was expected to work in rice fields. The photographing of individual citizens under Khmer Rouge rule was very rare, as the camera was generally only used to document the leaders' activities, and to make propaganda documents. All Cambodians were ordered to wear black shirts and trousers. Variety in colours was believed to create class inequality. The Khmer Rouge cadres imposed the same dress code on their children. Re-photographed by Sokphea Young, 2018.



Figure 9 Giorgos Dimopoulos, a survivor of the 1943 slaughter of civilians perpetrated by Wehrmacht troops in Kalavryta, Greece, showing Kalantzis a portrait of his father displayed on the victims' photo wall at the Municipal Museum of the Kalavryta Holocaust. Following the slaughter, victims' kin, who were as a rule women and children, collected photographs and created collages depicting murdered male relatives. The museum has collected many of these images in recent decades, and has a room dedicated to victims' portraits. Interlocutors have expressed the hope that they might one day locate photographs or videos from the massacre that would offer a tangible archive of events and dispel any ambiguity about it. The 1943 slaughter

has been reactivated in national representations following Greece's post-2010 bailout deal by the EU and IMF, in which Germany is seen as having a central role. For many local interlocutors the Greek crisis and associated austerity is a sequel to the 1940s occupation. A visit to this museum often becomes a pilgrimage to the victimhood that many Greeks see as undeniably captured in the portraits of murdered locals, and a stage from which to lament Greece's dependence within contemporary European realpolitik. The act of photographing is a key component of these visits, as images circulate on Greek social-media posts with captions ranging from anti-fascist calls to nationalist EU-scepticism. Photograph by Konstantinos Kalantzis, 2018.



Figure 10 Frame shop remains, Kilinochchi, Sri Lanka. War and displacement amplified the precarity of personal images. Studios and framing shops became the keepers of uncollected photographs abandoned over the years, as their owners were scattered across the island or beyond, at best; or killed or disappeared, at worst. Where personal photographs were commonly destroyed by war or lost on account of multiple displacements, these chance repositories highlight the role of image-makers in the safeguarding of social histories imperilled by conflict. Photograph by Vindhya Buthpitiya, 2018.



Figure 11 9 May 2018, Managua, Nicaragua. Towards the end of a march in Managua, protesters gathered in front of the headquarters of the national police, demanding the release of political prisoners. To the left, a man wears a T-shirt with the insignia of the 'Movimento estudiantil 19 de abril' (the 19 April Student Movement), an organization that was formed in response to the violence of the Ortega regime. The other man holds a handmade poster with information about a fellow student from the Polytechnics University (UPoli) who has been injured, and is arbitrarily detained. Photograph by Ileana L. Selejan, 2018.



Figure 12 Memorializing State Violence, Jaffna.
Within the fraught politics of nation, state and citizenship in post-war Sri Lanka, these personal photographs have been mobilized within acts and spaces of political resistance and claim-making linked to accountability and redress, visually enumerating individual lives lost to state violence. Where state atrocities against Tamil civilians have been glossed over with cinematic narratives of 'triumph' and the 'defeat of terrorism', these portraits were actively wielded to amplify the visibility of protest. Photograph by Vindhya Buthpitiya, 2018.

The political work of images



Figure 13 A billboard extolls the virtues of ID cards for Osun State indigenes, Nigeria. In Ilé-Ifè, Osun, the heartland of the Yoruba, an invisible demarcation line separates the Modakeke and Ilé-Ifè peoples, who despite sharing the same ethnicity as Yoruba have suffered over 150 years of inter-ethnic conflict. Although the region is currently peaceful, tensions remain, as this billboard with its particular location indicates. Nigeria's current constitution, heralding the return to democratic governance in 1999 after decades of military rule, bequeaths rights at the national level, and also by indigeneity at the federal-state level, through patrilineal ancestry. Passport

photographs are the main component of all ID cards, and they form an important core business for many small studios in both the rural economy and busy metropolis. The text on the billboard can be translated as: 'Good citizens card/ We are good citizens! / Here is our card/ Register today/ for development/ progress/ and the advancement of your work'. It is striking how the two women in this photograph are presented as idly focused on beautification, whilst the men, by contrast, are holding their Osun state ID cards ready for the state's project of 'development'. Photograph by Naluwembe Binaisa, 2018.



Figure 14 Portrait of a Sfakian man, Giannis Zambetis, taken in the 1970s by a German tourist, held up by his daughter, Maria. Sfakia is a mountainous region of Crete, whose visitors, since at least the eighteenth century, have emphasized the residents' ostensible cultural and racial purity, and adored their rugged lifestyle. These ideas have fused with the residents' own perceptions of themselves, and this synergy may be observed in the photographic process. Photographers who looked for idioms, such as those of masculine tradition, later gifted their images to the sitters, who used them in ornamenting their houses. The process whereby one sees oneself in images created by outsiders entails asymmetry, as locals are not the producers of these pictures, but it

also enables possibilities of exchange. Photographic returns by Germans in the 1960s, for instance, enabled a dialogical proximity between subject and photographer that may be said to mitigate the position locals would express if asked formally about their relationship to tourism and the German nation-state. The relationship to Germany has been particularly re-politicized in the post-2010 'Greek crisis' period, during which Greek governments applied an EU/German-derived austerity plan, and Crete became resignified among anti-austerity critics as a force of nativist resistance to foreign domination. Original photo by unknown photographer, c.1970, subsequent image by Konstantinos Kalantzis, 2017.



Figure 15 Spyros Tsikouras showing Kalantzis photographs depicting his interactions with tourists from the time he operated a small restaurant in the 1980s and 1990s in a Sfakian highland village. These images were given to him in later years by the photographers. Most pictures show him performing the role of a host (e.g., offering visitors walnuts). The vision of hospitality as a morally superior offering by those rooted in place, is a key fantasy that Western European tourists pursue in Sfakia, and it engages

the Sfakian self-image of hospitality. Through their photographs, returning tourists insert themselves into the local aesthetic landscape and seek to reciprocate their hosts' treatment. The idealization of hospitality is complicated today by tourists' buying of land, which shifts hospitality's power dynamics and is read locally in the light of Greece's perceived post-'crisis' diminishment of national patrimony. Photograph by Konstantinos Kalantzis, 2017.



Figure 16 Female students photographed by FemsFotos, 2004. Fifty years after independence, these young women at play reflect the ongoing struggles for women's rights and meaningful political change. In Nigeria, the work of professional photographers is highly prized and seen as an essential element of every celebration, even in the age of the smartphone. Many of these celebrations are linked to life-stage events, such as birthdays, baptism, marriages and funerals. Photographs are seen as acts of remembrance and divination, as markers for future aspirations and life outcomes. At these events, most group portraits of young women generally portray them dressed in their finest, with

immaculate hair and make-up. A new generation of photographers in Ilá Òràngún have expanded on the transformative potential of the image event. In this photograph taken by FemsFotos, a group of female students' co-curate and self-fashion their critique and resistance to society's expectations. These young women parody a stubbornly patriarchal society that, on the one hand, encourages young women to continue in education, but on the other hand, expects them to retain their roles as mothers, cooks and cleaners, tasked with the gendered care responsibilities of reproducing the nation and its future citizens. Photograph © 2014, FemsFotos, Ilá Òràngún and Abeokuta, Nigeria.



Figure 17 Uncle Special Mirror Photograph. Simple Photo and Sir Special, elder photographers whose work featured in Stephen Sprague's seminal article 'Yorubaphotography: how the Yoruba see themselves' (1978), still live in the ancient city of Ilá Òràngún, Osun. In this image, Sir Special, who is now known as Uncle Special to reflect his elder status, explains to Binisa how he perfected the art of merging photographs within mirrors, a technique that first came to him in a dream. The practice, process, audience and afterlives of the final artefact reflect in profound ways the continuities and discontinuities within political

imaginaries. These reflect communal hierarchies and societal structures that predate post-colonial democracy, as elite clients and members of royal lineages remain the main customers for the service. Despite the availability of 'mirror portraits' from commercial developing laboratories, Uncle Special insists that the efficacy of his unique technique is unrivalled, and many dignitaries continue to commission these handcrafted mirror portraits that index wealth, power and privilege to their beholders, Photograph by Naluwembe Binisa, 2017.



Figure 18 A ‘photoshopped’ image of a graduate with Hun Sen, the Prime Minister of Cambodia. Believing that being photographed in the presence of a powerful figure will bring fortune and facilitate a flow of power, many Cambodians desire such images. In an official event or ceremony like a graduation, not many students are fortunate enough to be photographed with the premier, unless they

get the highest score or are recommended by the university rector or chancellor. This economically impoverished graduate paid a photographer to use software to depict him with Hun Sen. A photograph like this would be displayed in the home or office, to show relatives and friends one’s indexical connection to power. Re-photographed by Sokphea Young, 2018.

Repetition and contingency



Figure 19 Nicaragua, 24 April 2018. An affective archive was made and remade, as events unfolded. Nicaraguans spoke of the repetition of past conflicts and events, specifically from the historic insurrection of 1978–9, reflecting on the coincidence of images and, by association, events. Correspondences between new documentary pictures and well-known images from 1978–9 were tested, as memory was being actively worked with in the streets. This digital montage constitutes one such example. Widely

shared on social media, it shows a timeline of protest in Nicaragua: an image of national hero Andrés Castro, who in 1856 fought against the invasion of US filibuster William Walker (sourced from a 1964 painting by Luis Vergara Ahumada), juxtaposed with Susan Meiselas' iconic Molotov Man photograph from the historic Sandinista insurrection, taken in 1979 in the town of Esteli, and a contemporary image taken during an April 2018 protest in the capital city Managua.



Figure 20 9 May 2018, Managua, Nicaragua. During one of the largest marches organized as part of the 2018 protests, people gathered around the monumental statue of Alexis Argüello, a famous boxer, former mayor of Managua and vocal opponent of the Ortega regime. His death, still un-explained,

has in recent years become symbolic of the regime's impunity. For many hours that day, people scaled the monument, holding flags, signs and pictures of the victims of government repression. Photograph by Ileana L. Selejan, 2018.



Figure 21 Print of elements from a Photoshop template in use by photographic studios at Dakshinkali, Nepal. This popular goddess shrine south of Kathmandu attracts pilgrims, many of whom mark their visit by commissioning photographic images depicting them in front of the shrine. The twenty makeshift studios all use a Photoshop template, key elements of which have been imported from the pilgrimage destination of Manakamana (this accounts for the cable-car). The minimization of photographic contingency resulting from this move from the Dakshinkali shrine to the highly mediated Photoshopped space of the studio not only tells us about the commercial ingenuity of

Nepalis, but also reveals the threat that contingency poses to cultic authority. Maurice Bloch maps the opposition between ‘everyday speech acts’ and ‘formalized speech acts’ in ways that can illuminate practices at Dakshinkali ((Bloch 1989:25). The former are characterized by a complete vocabulary, the absence of stylistic rules and numerous choices concerning presentation. The latter involves exclusions, limitations and fixity. This Dakshinkali template reveals the impoverished digital langue that replaces the exorbitant contingency of photography in what Benjamin liked to call its ‘native’ state. Re-photographed by Christopher Pinney, 2018.



Figure 22 Tejas Dasmi is a festival celebrating the pastoral deity Tejaji, who through the allied figure of Nag Maharaj (King Cobra) provides protection from snake bites. In central India, in 1977 at least, the festival also involved a matki phod, a human tower associated with Krishna. Photographs carefully preserved in a village album document participants congregating around the shrine after the procession circumambulating the village. Later images in the series show the matki phod, a human tower, being constructed by 30 or perhaps 40 persons in three tiers. It was while this living pyramid struggled to take form that the participants became aware of a mysterious presence, a zone of energy of the kind that someone 15–20 feet high might exert. The final photograph in the series delivers the denouement: parallel to the tower, a soaring mottled snake-like stripe sears the left side of the image. For the participants in the matki phod, and the many excited spectators whose presence the image also documents, the photograph clarified what they had experienced: the King Cobra, whom the festival remembers, had been the mysterious presence assisting in its own effervescent celebration. Professional photographers in the nearby town are highly sceptical of the rural ontology of photography that prizes it as a medium in which the spirits of the deceased become visible. observing that when developing 120 medium-format film the negative can easily get scratched, producing confusing noise on the surface of the image. Deep scratches can also start to 'melt' at high temperatures. Split negatives often produced a mottled pattern on the final printed image. A photograph taken by Krishna Studio, Nagda, in 1977, re-photographed by Christopher Pinney in 2019.

Elsewhere, and meanwhile



Figure 23 Painted studio backdrop at a Jaffna studio. Rendered in a style midway between what in European Art History might be categorized as Late Baroque and Impressionism, Jaffna's picturesque studio backdrops evoke the scenery of unidentifiable Mediterranean coastal towns or summon the opulent imagined interiors of English manor houses. These did not reflect recognizable features of a local built or natural landscape, or the modern imaginaries

offered by studios elsewhere in South Asia, but fanciful visions of an unfixed elsewhere for a studios' patrons to inhabit. Even as conventional studio portraiture falls out of fashion in favour of extravagant outdoor shoots, the residents of Jaffna continue to seek out the fantasies of these backdrops, as well as studio photographers' *kai rasi* or 'lucky hands'. Photograph by Vindhya Buthpitiya, 2018.



Figure 24 Colourized photograph of a Chinese migrant family, c.1930s. Taken in a photographic studio in Phnom Penh during the French colonial period, the photograph was 'upgraded' from black and white in order to reprint and share with relatives (years after the subjects in the image had passed away). To recall Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, it exemplifies an elongated 'anterior future' (1981:96)

and embodies the ambivalent temporality of photography. It survived through apocalyptic and political calamities, from peace to war, from war to genocidal regime, and to peace again. It is a treasured photograph archived by descendants, and is also an indication that photography was not accessible to everyone, especially rural Cambodians. Re-photographed by Sokphea Young, 2018.



Figure 25 Image depicting four Pashto film stars, displayed in AYR Digital Studio, Peshawar, Pakistan. The two males are well-known actors, Jahangir Khan and Abraz Khan, giving body to the Pakhtun observation that guns are a form of 'male jewellery'. The identities of the two females are unknown. AYR Digital is located on Cinema Road, and serves film fans who arrive seeking montages that place them near to their film heroes. Re-photographed by Danial Shah, 2021.



Figure 26 Elaborate photomontage of a prospective migrant from Birgunj, Nepal, visualizing a future in the Persian Gulf. Photography is frequently used to record or imagine mobility. Historically, bicycles were frequently brought into the studio. Then studios started to use motorbikes as a prop. In turn, the studio itself became a staging space for travels in airplanes and automobiles. Frequently, this was tied to the desire and/or necessity of transnational migration. Such images speak to the aspirational and subjunctive space of the photography, actualizing what-is-yet-to-be. Re-photographed by Christopher Pinney, 2019.



Figure 27 The Instagram profile of an 18-year-old Bangladeshi student, revealing images recording one of his several visits to Jaflong in northern Bangladesh. The River Piyain, which separates Bangladesh and the Indian state of Meghalaya, is a popular tourist destination for younger Bangladeshis, many of whom avail of the services of one of the dozens of photographers who use printers on floating barges to produce images for their clients. Tourists sit on rocks

in the middle of the river and exchange WhatsApp details with Indian tourists who flock from the Meghalaya side. Photography is deeply entangled in this fantasy of transnational border crossing and escape to a 'beyond'. Subsequently, the student emigrated to Saudi Arabia, where he had been promised a job in a McDonalds outlet. Photograph by Christopher Pinney, 2018.

Lifting the veil that hides the future



Figure 28 Managua, Nicaragua. For several weeks, while TV channels were censored, citizens used social media extensively, to organize themselves and to document confrontations with anti-riot police and government supporters. Images of struggle became the norm on social-media feeds, often accompanied by intimate accounts and testimonies. A march was called by the Catholic Church in support of students and protesters, and to condemn the government's violent response. The image shows young men seated on top of the high walls of the Catedral Metropolitana in Managua on 29 April. One of them is holding up a smartphone. During the protests mobile devices

became ubiquitous on the streets. Everyday citizens documented their participation in protests and events that were acknowledged as extraordinary. As observed on numerous occasions, people would take portraits and selfies with the overflowing crowds, and pose in front of a background of streets filled with graffiti, stencils and tags. Such images present opportunities to reflect on the use of the phone camera as a tool for demanding justice, as well as for witnessing and documenting history as it is being 'made' close-by. Photograph by Ileana L. Selejan, 2018.



Figure 29 A family reunion after the Khmer Rouge, Stoung district of Kampong Thom, Cambodia, 1989. During the Khmer Rouge regime, about two million people died, as a result of starvation, forced labour, illness and execution. Trust within and among family members was fragile, as children were encouraged to spy for the Khmer Rouge, and to report misconduct such as stealing food. Without proper investigation, the accused were routinely executed. Family members were deployed to work in different parts of the country, and they were unable to communicate concerning their livelihoods and conditions until the regime was overthrown by the Vietnamese troops in 1979. This photograph records a family reunion of two brothers who lived apart from 1970 to 1988,

without knowing that each of them had survived and also had family and children. Photographed just after they met, one part of the family (from the Thai-Cambodia border) had to travel at least five days to reach the Stoung district of Kampong Thom. The colour of the backdrop and the outfits of the children depict a new form of integration, reunion and celebration. Contrasting with the black and white of the Khmer Rouge outfits, the variety of coloured apparel in this photograph can be read as a form of 're-civilization' in the post-genocidal regime, where survivors like those in this photograph liberate themselves from the black and dark colours (of sadness and terror) imposed by the Khmer Rouge. Re-photographed by Sokphea Young, 2018.



Figure 30 Visa photographs of those who successfully obtained American green cards displayed by an immigration consultancy, Jaffna, 2018. As a consequence of war, new modes of photography were developed in order to respond to the effects of impaired citizenship. Photographers became facilitators of their clients' anticipated futures. Some studio practitioners were sought out because of their *kai rasi* or 'lucky hands'. They helped mediate new kinds of aspirational citizenship

by way of marriage-proposal portraits, passport and visa photographs, or the artful compilation of wedding photographs and albums to satisfy Western immigration/border regimes. These desired futures, partly brokered by photographers and photographs, reflected the lingering effects of war on citizenship, combined with the possibilities for mobility afforded by the Tamil community's transnational displacement and dispersal. Photograph by Vindhya Buthpitiya, 2018.

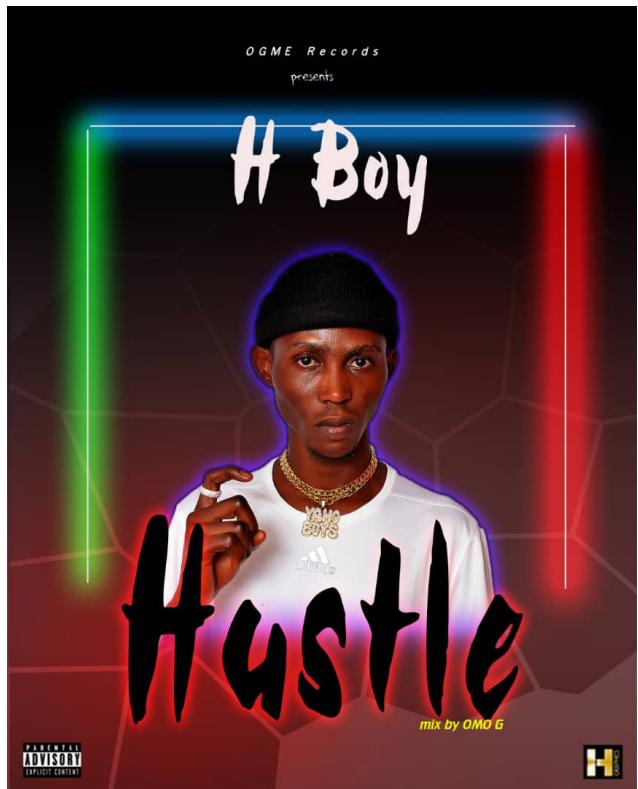


Figure 31 ‘Hustle’. The advent of the smartphone, digital technologies and social media has led to a burst of entrepreneurial ventures by many young Nigerians. In a country of approximately 200 million people, with limited opportunities for a growing youth population, many of them experience ‘waithood’. They endure the liminality of poverty, underemployment, conflict and insecurity. The digital platforms of social media are an access point where dreams can potentially flourish, despite limited resources. A common saying is ‘the phone is my shop’, as tailors, carpenters, shoemakers and others photograph their merchandise and showcase their services. Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram are as popular for artists as for community activists. In this image, produced by Hboi an Afro-pop artist, photographer and graphics designer, he aspires to align his work with a transnational visual music scene. Hboi uses intersecting visual mediums (photography, selfies, video), vernacular aesthetics of value and success, jewellery, shine and cool. The strap line ‘OMO G’ signifies another layer of reference, omo being Yoruba for ‘child’ and ‘G’ the hip-hop vernacular for ‘God’. ‘Child of God’ launches forth in the ‘digisphere’ in which artists seek to enthrall through their image as much as through their talent. The appeal to a higher power is a repeated motif in the aspirational landscapes of photography and political imaginaries in Nigeria. Photograph © Wuraola Olanrewaju Hboi, Nigeria, 2020.



Figure 32 'Come, Come, Liqiat Bagh': a printed photographic montage displayed on the back of an auto-rickshaw, Rawalpindi, Pakistan. This remarkable fusion of image and text advertises the chelum (the fortieth day after death) of Mumtaz Husaain Qadri, to be held on 27 March 2016 at the Liqiat Bagh, Rawalpindi, the site of Benazir Bhutto's assassination. Qadri, whose corpse is shown at top left, had assassinated the governor of Punjab, Salmaan Taseer, and was hanged in February 2016.

Taseer had spoken in defence of Asia Bibi, who had been accused of 'blasphemy', and consequently Qadri was hailed as a ghazi and shahid (warrior of Islam and martyr) by some orthodox Sunni. Although rooted in the past, the poster announces a future event and photographically imagines a vast crowd that was yet to assemble. Images such as these helped summon the twenty-five thousand people who would subsequently assemble to mark Qadri's chelum. Photograph by Christopher Pinney, 2016.



Figure 33 ‘Since Dad doesn’t have a son’. This photograph, with its humorous caption chosen by the photographer for the exhibition ‘The Sfakian Screen’, curated by Kalantzis in 2018, speaks to a new way of approaching the mountain in Sfakia, Crete. It represents an emergent genre of imagery in Sfakians’ social-media pages, in which young women highlight the locally perceived contradiction of a subject posing on the mountain, and yet not being a man. Sfakia, a pastoral and tourist area, invokes a myth of highland purity and savage backwardness, and the mountain is its idealized realm of (male) ruggedness and warriorhood. Sfakia has been represented for centuries by urban outsiders, and most households feature images of ancestors taken

by passing botanists, folklorists and, more recently, tourists. Since 2010, there has been an explosion of digital photographs taken by locals. This represents a novel moment, in that residents are no longer solely dependent on outsiders for getting hold of representations of themselves and the region. In many digital photos, women publicly comment on the dominant androcentric iconography of the region, and supply other visions of what village life could look like. At the same time, far from uniformly embracing digital photography as emancipation, many Sfakian interlocutors question social-media visual practices and express preference for historical analogue photographs often depicting male ancestors. Photo by Iosifina Lefaki, 2017.

Conclusion

The montaged juxtaposition of these images reveals that the camera is largely un-colonized by the state. The Foucauldian/Taggian perspective, which claimed that it was, and has weighed so heavily on the theory of photography, fails to explain the diversity of photography in actually existing practices. However, whereas the standard anthropological reflex anticipates an endless diversity of appropriation, driven by the creativity of human subjects, this collection highlights a set of recurring tropes and architectures that point to photography's ambivalently determining presence. Difference does not necessarily fragment a practice: it may indeed reveal a complex and constraining 'tensility'. Hence, across these regional practices, we can see echoes and commonalities: the recurrent concern with the contingency of the photographic event, the camera's predisposition to imagine futures rather than simply memorialize the past, and the fusion of performance and the real; in short, the complex dance of opposites that testifies to the 'disturbance' (Barthes 1981:12) that photography brings to human life.

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