“ALTES EHEPAAR”: A POSTMODERN POSTCOLONIAL
PERSPECTIVE ON ANNA WUHRMANN’S COLONIAL
PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE BAMUM

A Thesis
Presented
to the Faculty of
California State University, Chico

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Art

by
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Spring 2014
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the entire Art Department of CSU Chico, especially Dr. Matthew Looper whose advice and instruction made this thesis possible. I also appreciate the continual challenges posed to me by Dr. Asa Mittman. Additionally, I am thankful for the help and thoughtfulness of Dr. Madga Mueller, who is the coordinator of the German Department, and for the support of Catherine Sullivan, the Janet Turner Print Museum curator. Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends, particularly my husband for always believing in me, and my mother and sisters for encouraging me. Thank you.
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ABSTRACT

“ALTES EHEPAAR”: A POSTMODERN POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE ON ANNA WUHRMANN’S COLONIAL PHOTOGRAPHY OF THE BAMUM

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The purpose of this study is to examine the photographic collaboration between Anna Wuhrmann and the Bamum people. Wuhrmann was a Swiss teacher and a hobbyist photographer who taught at the Basel Mission in Foumban, the capital of the Bamum people in present day Cameroon, Africa. Wuhrmann taught and took photographs of the Bamum in the early twentieth century when Germany was colonizing Cameroon. This study will specifically investigate the fluid medium of photography, which has been globally distributed and locally adapted. Thus, cultural photographic appropriation and collaboration between natives and non-natives will specifically be proven by Wuhrmann’s “Altes Ehepaar” (Old Couple) photograph.

“Altes Ehepaar” was a photograph Wuhrmann took of a Bamum noble couple in 1915. Wuhrmann wrote about the picture in her 1925 book, Mein Bamumvolk im
Grasland von Kamerun (My Bamum Folk in the Grasslands of Cameroon). Therefore, this thesis will investigate the transaction between Wuhrmann and the noble couple in an effort to show the agency of both the colonized and the colonizer. However, the greatest limitation to this study is that the transaction that resulted between Wuhrmann and the couple is strictly from Wuhrmann’s perspective. The methodological discourses selected to support this study is photographic theory, postcolonialism, and postmodern postcolonialism. Finally, this thesis will also be supported by a thorough investigation of the early twentieth century’s ideologies and technologies in order to contextualize the time period in which “Altes Ehepaar” was produced.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

From the very beginning, native people were deeply involved in the photographic process, as models, consumers, and also creators of photographs themselves. As a result, a pluralistic approach towards colonial photography has been taken on by postmodern postcolonial discourse in an attempt to examine multiple arguments. By doing this, postmodern postcolonialism endeavors to show the collaboration between the native and the non-native in making photographs, as opposed to the prevailing notion of colonial photographs being just a form of objectification of the Other. For example, the standard postcolonial critique of colonial photography states that it manipulates the representation of native peoples as a social and political tool. However, postmodern evaluations of this approach suggest that the situation may be more complex, in which diverse points of view may be constituted in photography, because a photograph’s images are fixed, but its meaning is not. Thus, photographs lack completeness in their interpretation.¹

The agency of both the colonizer and colonized can be present in photographs and this will be demonstrated in the photographic collaboration between Wuhrmann and her interactions with the Bamum people. The photographic cross-cultural relationship will be shown in the photograph “Altes Ehepaar,” which was taken by Wuhrmann of a

Bamum noble couple. In her book, *Mein Bamumvolk im Grasland von Kamerun*, Wuhrmann wrote about the circumstances under which this photograph was taken. For instance, Wuhrmann wrote how the sons of the noble couple asked her to take a photograph of their parents, which she enthusiastically agreed to do. The next day, the sons arranged for the photograph to be taken under a tree. There was only one stool under the tree for their father to sit on, which he promptly did and instructed his wife to squat on the ground next to him. However, Wuhrmann did not agree with the arrangements and protested. By the end of the transaction, the photograph was taken with the wife sitting on a stool next to her husband. Thus, the cross-cultural interaction that produced “Altes Ehepaar” shows a dialog between Wuhrmann and the Bamum, the colonizer and the colonized.\(^2\) The greatest limitation to this thesis is that the interaction accompanying the photograph is solely from Wuhrmann’s perception, which is common in a colonial setting. Nevertheless, Wuhrmann’s information brings to light the diverse cross-cultural interactions that ensued in photography, as well as the cultural adaptation of photography.

The purpose of this investigation is to adapt a postmodern postcolonial discourse towards Wuhrmann’s colonial era photograph in order to display the multilayered meanings, intentions, and agencies of everyone in the colonial encounter.\(^3\) This is significant because a postmodern postcolonial approach draws heavily from the foundation of postcolonialism, but also differs by focusing on multiple perspectives; i.e. the agency of the native in colonial photography. Finally, this thesis is also important because it is focused on the photographic work of a fairly unknown photographer,


Wuhrmann, and the Bamum people, who are also considerably unrecognized. Thus, this thesis extends knowledge of colonial photography and the varied agencies that helped to create colonial period photographs, and examines new subject matter.
CHAPTER II

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDY

One of the greatest limitations to this study is that I am not working directly in the Basel Mission archive in Basel, Switzerland. Nor am I working in the Palace Museum in Bamum, Cameron, which houses many of Wuhrmann’s original photographs.\(^4\) Instead, I have to rely on photographs and texts that have been published online through Mission 21, the new version of the Basel Mission.\(^5\) The problem of self-representation and documentation by the colonized is practically nonexistent due to the colonial power system. Indeed, only the colonizer had the power to document, and this thesis is no different because it is based almost exclusively on Wuhrmann’s documents, and her perspective. Much of Wuhrmann’s writings and photographs were lost upon her decease in 1971, therefore I am using the part of her collection that remains.\(^6\) Furthermore, postmodern postcolonial discourse on colonial photography is a growing field, which emphasizes the hermeneutics of cross cultural play, or simply put, the role of both the colonizer and the colonized in colonial photography.\(^7\) Thus, the postmodern postcolonial approach to colonial photography extends present interpretations and allows for a re-examination of colonial photographs. Finally, this

\(^6\) Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 145.
investigation will seek to cultivate interest in Wuhrmann’s and the Bamum’s photographic work in future scholarly efforts.
CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

“There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a
document of barbarism,” Walter Benjamin.8

In order to grasp the scope and depth of a postmodern postcolonial discourse
on Anna Wuhrmann’s colonial photography, a large array of sources were consulted. As
a result, this topic found a diverse mixture of discourses relevant. Therefore, this
literature review will be divided into subcategories with the following main topics of
interest: photographic theory, postcolonial discourse, postmodern postcolonial discourse
on colonial photography, and finally postmodern postcolonial discourse on African
colonial photography. These four discourses have been selected to help illuminate the
density of this topic, as well as its multiplicity. Because discourses on photography and
postcolonialism are numerous and highly controversial for many varied reasons, a simple
reading of them will not suffice. This review will try to explore their interrelationships,
because these discourses are not fixed but fluid.

Photographic theory is a contentious discipline due to its scope and breadth.
Undoubtedly, part of the reason why photographic theory is so hard to define is the
omnipresence of the medium of photography, as well as its beguiling mimetic
representation to reality. Furthermore, the medium of photography itself is elusive

8 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York:
Schocken, 1986), 256.
because it has changed forms and technologies many times since its invention. However, this thesis’s focus will be on photographic interpretation, as opposed to being limited to technological evolution. Regardless of the fact that Wuhrmann was working in the early twentieth century, from 1911 to 1915, making her process vastly different from modern day photography. Consequently, in his essay “Little History of Photography” (1931), Walter Benjamin created a Marxist model that considered photography as a pervasive medium that entered into various realms, such as the social, the political, and especially for Benjamin, the psychological. For Benjamin, the psychological was specifically related to the “aura” of the photograph, meaning the photograph’s indexicality to the present viewer. However, Benjamin believed that the aura was destroyed when the photograph was mass produced. Indeed, many Marxist tended to dislike mass produced art, especially photography, because it was seen as a controlling political device. Benjamin’s short essay introduced a set of important considerations when it comes to the field of photography, but most importantly for this thesis, the social and political aspects of photography that leads into a colonial discourse.

For Benjamin, the photograph revealed the “secret” that was not visible to the naked eye, and stated that:

We have some idea what is involved in the act of walking (if only in general terms) we have no idea at all what happens during the fraction of a second when a person actually takes a step. Photography, with its devices of slow motion and enlargement, reveals the secret.

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11 Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 510, 518.
Expanding on Benjamin’s “secret,” Susan Sontag wrote that the fraction of a second that is captured in a photograph is a temporal dislocation, and therefore belongs in its own time space continuum because it disrupts the flow of time.14 Indeed, this contradiction of time that is literally captured in a photograph is seen as violent by Sontag. In *On Photography* (1977), Sontag argued about the violence of photography and the language associated with it, such as “loading,” “aiming,” and “shooting.” The most important argument in Sontag’s book is the problem with photographing people. For instance, Sontag came to the conclusion that “to photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they can never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed.”15 Thus, Sontag’s position is central to the discussion of postcolonial photography. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for scholars that were informed by Marxism, such as Sontag and Benjamin, to strongly dislike photography.

Roland Barthes, a scholar in semiotics, explored the social impact of photography. In *Mythologies* (1972), Barthes investigated the semiotic analysis of culture, and significant to this study, he stated that every photograph is unnatural because there is no “universal language.” Therefore, photographs are coded historically and contingently by culture.16 In *Image, Music, Text* (1977), Barthes argued about the malleability of photographs; i.e. the photograph can change meanings depending upon the context in which it is presented, and therefore, it can easily be manipulated. This is particularly relevant in the context of colonial power structures, a point that will be

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15 Sontag, 4.
expanded upon later. However, Barthes also wrote in *Camera Lucida* (1981) that “every photograph is somehow co-natural with its referent,” because Barthes saw the photograph as a document of both reality and the past. This type of statement is precisely what John Tagg railed against in his book, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (1988). Tagg fiercely countered Barthes’s stance of photographs representing any sort of documentation or evidence of reality, and even stated “every photograph is a result of specific and, in every sense, significant distortions which render its relation to any prior reality deeply problematic.” Aligning strongly with Tagg, the main photographic theorem of this thesis is that photographs do not duplicate reality, but are instead social artifacts that can reveal hidden histories through close contextual interrogation, specifically pertaining to colonial photography.

Postcolonialism, in simplest terms, is the academic and intellectual support for the process of decolonization. However, postcolonial discourse is quite a dense topic that overarches into many other subcategories, as has already been seen with photography. One of the most influential writers of postcolonialism was Frantz Fanon (1926-1961). Fanon was born in the French colony of Martinique, and became a psychiatrist who studied the psychological effects of colonialism on natives during Algeria’s struggle against colonial French rule in the 1940s. In *Black Skin, White Masks*

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21 Ibid, 8.
(1952), Fanon stated that the effects of the colonial structure, such as the white man’s superiority and the black man’s inferiority, was so internalized by the colonized black man that “all his efforts are aimed at achieving a white existence.”

In his ground breaking study, *Orientalism* (1979), which is credited as the official inauguration to the discipline of postcolonialism, Edward W. Said set out to define the European practice of Asian representation. Said built on the discourse of power/knowledge because knowledge gives control. Thus, information about Asia allowed the West to have authority over what was dubbed the “Oriental” world. Consequently, “Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense creates the Orient, the Oriental, and his world.” The grouping of Asia, China, Japan, and the Arab world into one generalized conglomerate was done by the West to create the constructs of a “them” (Orientals) and an “us” (Westerners) relationship. By creating these boundaries, the West was able to dominate the East by categorizing them as an Other, meaning everything the West was not, such as lazy, feminine, childlike, and therefore morally and intellectually inferior. While on the other hand, the West wanted to be seen as active, masculine, mature, and generally superior.

Homi Bhabha expanded on Said’s foundation by further exploring the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized within a colonial relationship. In the *Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha defined the objective of colonialism to represent the colonized as a degenerate race in order to condone the colonizer’s subjugation of them.

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24 Author’s emphasis.
25 Said, 40.
26 Ibid, 40, 45.
under colonial rule. Thus the relationship between the two is rigged in such a way that the colonizer monopolizes the power. However, Bhabha found that the colonial relationship was unstable due to “productive ambivalence,” meaning that the “Otherness” of the Other made the transactions between the colonizer and the colonized flawed and contradictory because the colonizer both feared and desired the Other at the same time. Therefore, due to the ambivalence the colonizer had for the colonized, the relationship between the two was destined to fail. Bhabha felt Said did not fully explore this issue in his discourse of power/knowledge in the colonial relationship.

Postcolonial discourse as explained by Fanon, Said, and Bhabha all focused on the constructs of colonialism, and the representation of the Other by the West. However, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explored new issues in her essay (1988), “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Spivak argued that the West’s objectification of the Other through colonialism made the Other part of the discourse, i.e., that the Other developed its identity from the West’s discourse of power/knowledge. Therefore, the Other, or the subaltern colonized subject, assumes the identity of the discourse because they have no control over it and are accordingly insufficiently represented. The subaltern then has no voice because the colonial enterprise ruthlessly Obliterates the subaltern’s interests in order for the colonizers power to be complete. Spivak asserts that the subaltern cannot speak, and consequently must be spoken for, and this is the moral dilemma facing

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29 Ibid, 103.
postcolonialism: Is it appropriate and/or possible for scholars to speak for the colonized?\(^3\)

In an effort to allow the subaltern to speak, Prospecting: From Reader to Response to Literary Anthropology (1989), Wolfgang Iser presented the concept of cross-cultural hermeneutics through the process of “play.” For instance, Iser defined “play” as an “oscillation, or to-and-fro movement, is basic to play, and it permits the coexistence of the mutually exclusive.”\(^3\) Using Iser’s cross-cultural hermeneutics as a model, Paul B. Armstrong then expanded on Said’s principle of equality, and self representation. For example, Said stated that due to Western domination over the Orient, the Orient was not allowed to represent itself.\(^3\) Therefore, returning to Spivak’s argument, the Western intellectual world could either let the subaltern speak, but allowing the subaltern a chance of self-representation is far from freedom. Or finally, if given the chance to speak, the subaltern may not know how to represent themselves properly.\(^3\) As a result, Armstrong places great importance on “play,” because “play” would emphasize the commonality of humanity, and as Spivak has stated, “Knowledge is possible and is sustained by irreducible difference, not identity.”\(^3\) Armstrong held that the concept of “play” between cultures would highlight a “common humanity,” which would allow a conversation to begin.\(^3\) However, that is not to simplify the predicament of cross-cultural interaction after the wake of colonialism. For that reason, Armstrong ruminated:

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\(^3\) Spivak, Can the Subaltern Speak?, 35.
\(^3\) Iser, 255.
\(^3\) Said, 283.
Can one culture use its own terms to say something about another culture without engaging in a hostile act of appropriation or without simply reflecting itself and not engaging in the otherness of the Other?\textsuperscript{37}

Colonial photography, just like colonialism, was made to objectify the Other in a stark binary position to the Westerner, as well as to produce and to confirm racial theories to justify colonial expansion, as argued by Anne Maxwell in \textit{Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the “Native” and the Making of European Identities} (1999).\textsuperscript{38} However, Paul Stuart Landau stated that “the idea that Western photographs objectified colonized people…is correct, if also banal,” in “Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Administration in Africa” (2002).\textsuperscript{39} Therefore, postcolonial discourse directly informs the basic principles of colonial photography. Indeed, building on Sontag’s argument of photography being violent, Landau pointed out that the technology of the camera and the gun coevolved. Some of the dry-plate camera processes that influenced the camera were based on the Colt revolver. In 1881, Eastman Kodak and William Walker created a partnership that allowed cameras and guns to have interchangeable parts, as well as the same chemicals in their cartridges. Since then, Kodak Camera advertisements used terms similar to hunting such as “caught” and “instantaneous.” Thus, the development of photography during colonization enabled the consumer to stalk, aim and shoot the world, particularly the colonized person. Most importantly, Landau argued that the camera in a colonial context was more than just a weapon against the Other, but a tool to control them. For example, by photographing and

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid, 157.
cataloguing the Other, the Westerner was able to control the Other in the domains of signs by false representation, as argued by Said. In the end, colonialism and photography mutually assisted each other.

Photography can be violent, and the resulting product can, according to Elizabeth Edwards, be distressing and unprocessed as seen in *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (2001). Edwards wrote that colonial photographs are documents of raw histories that are painful, and can contain too many meanings. To Edwards, the practice of photography, especially colonial photography, is not about the theoretical abstraction of photography, but instead an examination of a social biography. In addition, Christopher Pinney and Nicolaus Peterson argued that photography needed to be reevaluated as a social practice. In *Photography’s Other Histories* (2003), Pinney and Peterson argued that the camera was not just a Western instrument (historically or currently), but demonstrated that the camera is “a globally disseminated and locally appropriated medium.” Pinney and Peterson sought to address the cultural fluidity of photography that frees it from the sole interpretation as a Western tool, which is an underrepresented approach.

In accordance with Pinney and Peterson, Heike Behrend wanted to demonstrate that photography was not just a Western tool for exoticizing and othering the Other, but instead an intercultural instrument that had been utilized by Europeans and

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40 Landau, 146-150.
43 Ibid, 2.
44 Pinney and Peterson, 1.
Africans in her essay, “Photo Magic: Photographs in Practices of Healing and Harming in East Africa” (2003). To prove her point, Behrend compared the uses of photography in both the Christian Eucharist and the cult of relics to demonstrate that the uses of photography mirrored each other cross-culturally. Behrend’s stance defined a postmodern postcolonial discourse on colonial photography that focused on the interrogation of African colonial photography solely.

Annie E. Coombes took a similar approach to Behrend in *Reinventing Africa: Museums, Material Culture and Popular Imagination in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (1994). Coombes argued that African tropes were not fixed but malleable to the means of consumption, such as anthropology and other social sciences that evolved with the camera. Coombes stated that the negative representations of Africans instilled during colonization are no longer at the edge of the colonial periphery but are very much alive in modern culture. Thus, Coombes’s and Behrend’s approaches align with a postmodern stance because they interrogate colonial photography by examining what is happening now, and what preconceptions have been inherited. Returning to Said’s argument, the “unchanging abstraction” of colonial tropes are no longer at the periphery but are now residing at the interior. In conclusion, a postmodern stance tries to identify and reconcile the past and the present, and to blur the boundaries between a “them” and an “us” relationship.

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47 Coombes, 1-6.
49 Said, 8.
50 The postmodern postcolonial approach will be expanded upon more in the Methodology Chapter.
The investigation of African history in colonial photography has largely been ignored by scholarly research. However, South African photographer Santu Mofokeng, and historian James T. Campbell, set out to address this lack of representation in *Black Photo Album: Look at Me: 1890-1950* (2013). Mofokeng enhanced old photographic portraits of Africans that were commissioned by Africans during European colonization to fill in the blank spaces of African history. Thus, this example demonstrates the cultural fluidity and adaptation of photography. The section of *Black Photo Album* that Mofokeng orchestrated had black pages on the right side of the book, and white pages on the left side, which created a strong color contrast. The photographs were on the left page of the book, in black and white, with the corresponding text on the right page, in a white font. Some of the photographs had lots of information, while others had none and were left next to a blank page. At the beginning of the book, the first page stated: “Look at me.”\(^{51}\) Pivotal to a postmodern approach, Mofokeng is asking the viewer to look at him and the people in the photographs specifically, and not to assign them to a colonial trope.

Throughout *Black Photo Album*, there were spaces left open for dialogue that usually asked the reader questions, such as: “What was the occasion? Who was gazing?”\(^{52}\) From this question, Mofokeng was trying to assert that these photographs were taken for Africans, therefore Africans were gazing, not Westerners. In the process, Mofokeng recasts photography as a locally appropriated medium. In this manner, Mofokeng used the captions to tease out assumptions about labels like “mentally colonized.” Campbell’s written section, “African Subjects,” ruminated why colonized

\(^{52}\) Ibid, 11.
South Africans would commission and pose for photographs that were made to mimic Victorian style photographs. Campbell argued the people who commissioned and were in the photographs did so in order to fight for their identity, as opposed to being assigned one. Campbell also saw the photographs as evidence of a struggle against racial order, and most importantly, the colonizers’ power. Finally, Mofokeng asked: “Are these images evidence of mental colonization or did they serve to challenge prevailing images of ‘The African’ in Western world?” The photographs in Mofokeng’s book show alternate histories, which demonstrates that the photographic tradition needs to be rethought.

Close to Mofokeng’s argument is In/Sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the Present (1996), by Okwui Enwezor, Oliu Oguibe, and Octavio Zaya that was made to accompany the Guggenheim’s exhibition on African photography. This book addressed the issue of postcolonialism’s insistence on equating identities to race and Otherness, which looses many historical photographic narratives. Therefore, returning to Spivak’s question, “Can the subaltern speak?” the answer is multidimensional. Photography can be a violent act, but it has still been appropriated and adapted to different cultures. Thus, the agency of the colonized in photography cannot be ignored. In conclusion, it is not possible, nor appropriate, for scholars to speak for the colonized. Addressing their contribution to history by the photographs they made is not speaking for them; rather, it is acknowledging their existence. In the end, the medium of photography was never a simple act of foreign

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53 Ibid, 125-137.
54 Ibid, 61.
importation but rather a technology that was perpetually changing and being adapted into
local practices and uses.\textsuperscript{56}

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{56} Haney, 126.
CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

The wake of postcolonialism is vast and encompasses various areas such as demonstrated in the literature review. However, this thesis’s methodology will be focused on a postmodern postcolonial discourse of colonial photography as already argued by Coombes and Behrend. Specifically, in an attempt to not over generalize the constructs in which the Other has been categorized in, this thesis will examine the agencies of both the colonizer and the colonized in colonial photography from a postmodern standpoint. Postcolonialism traditionally emphasizes the dyadic power dynamic of the “West” vs. the “Other.” In contrast, the postmodern approach to these issues tends to blur the lines between subject and object and to make a case for a more fluid power dynamic.

Almost all cultures are heterogeneous, except for completely isolated cultures which are extremely rare. Yet, because of colonization and the subsequent creation of postcolonial discourse, the term “hybridity” entered into scholarship to indicate power structures in the colonial relationship. A very problematic term, hybridity usually denotes objects or practices that were newly, or partially, appropriated by Europeans. In other words, hybridity in a postcolonial discourse identified European conventions and set it in opposition to “non-European” practices. Hybridity’s imagined boundaries gave credence to the concepts of authenticity and purity because what other purpose could the discourse
of hybridity have in art history and in anthropology other than to reify these confines? Comprehensibly summarized by Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn, “Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America” (2003), they stated that “hybridity is not so much the natural by-product of an ‘us’ meeting a ‘them,’ but rather the recognition--or creation--of an ‘us’ and a ‘them.’” Thus, the colonial power dynamic has no a priori existence, but is generated within the context of the colonial encounter.

One of the most problematic aspects in the discourse of hybridity are both the acknowledged, and even more importantly, the ignored “hybrid” forms. This stance is similar to Pinney’s and Peterson’s argument of photography being a global technology, not just Western, and the issue of history ignoring the Other’s use of photography. In accordance with Pinney’s and Peterson’s stance, the unacknowledged history of King Ibrahim Njoya’s use of photography speaks largely to the faulty constructs of hybridity. King Njoya was the king of the Bamum people during German colonization (1902-1915) while Wuhrmann was a Swiss missionary teacher in the kingdom. The photographic record of King Njoya during German colonization is quite extensive because King Njoya willingly and purposefully posed for photographs that were taken by German colonial agents for colonial propaganda. Heavily romanticized by the colonial enterprise, the photographs of King Njoya often showcase him as an exotic Other and as a noble savage.

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58 Ibid, 6.
59 Ibid, 5.
60 Pinney and Peterson, 14.
However, King Njoya’s submission to German colonial rule should be understood as a political act.\textsuperscript{62}

When the German colonizers arrived at Bamum, King Njoya did not resist German rule and quickly submitted. Presumably, King Njoya did this because he had spies that kept him informed about German activity, and so he learned about their atrocities to other neighboring kingdoms. For example, before the German colonizers came to Bamum, in 1901 they reached the kingdoms of Bafut and Mankon. Bafut was completely decimated and Mankon was pillaged. In the unpublished official report, Captain Kurt Pavel wrote that 1,062 Bafur and 218 Mankon people were killed, and that 366 Bafut and 217 Mankon were taken prisoners.\textsuperscript{63} The Bafut and Mankon kingdoms were a grisly result of colonization, and King Njoya manipulated the colonial power structure to minimize Bamum casualties and to keep his culture alive.\textsuperscript{64}

A keen adaptor, King Njoya utilized the camera extensively for political purposes. Initially, King Njoya did not understand the merits of the camera as seen in his first photographs upon German arrival in Bamum. In these photographs, King Njoya looked away from the camera but in later photographs, he purposefully posed to send the right message abroad to Germany.\textsuperscript{65} Indeed, the photographic record between King Njoya and the colonists was well documented. Accordingly, he posed often for photographs, took many photographs himself, and even owned a camera by the 1920s.\textsuperscript{66}

The medium of photography and King Njoya seems to fall into two realms: the widely

\textsuperscript{62} Haney, 74.
\textsuperscript{63} Adolf Rüger, “Die Entstehung und Lage der Arbeiterklasse unter dem deutschen Kolonialregime in Kamerun,” Kamerun unter deutschen Kolonialherrschaft (1895-1905), 197.
\textsuperscript{64} Geary, Images from Bamum, 37-38.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid, 47.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid, 40.
circulated and the personal. In the public realm, King Njoya knew that the photographs German colonizers took of him were going to be disseminated outside of the Bamum kingdom. In an effort to present the correct political message, King Njoya would gladly pose for the photographs and wore certain clothes to meet his political goals. For instance, King Njoya chose to wear German military clothes in photographs from which he was dubbed “the German ally.” In other photographs, he was shown in his palace and among his prized possessions that staged him as the ignoble savage back in Germany.  

However, it seemed that the stereotypes King Njoya played into were carefully planned. Photographs were developed in Foumban, which gave King Njoya the chance to approve the photographs before they left his kingdom. King Njoya did not seem to mind his public persona that he so carefully staged, and in exchange, the German colonial enterprise allowed him to rule autonomously.  

The photographs that fall into the personal realm for King Njoya were mostly portraits of him and his wives. King Njoya was credited with taking many photographs in which he himself was present. Christraud Geary, the foremost scholar on Wuhrmann and the Bamum, ruminated whether King Njoya set the camera on a timer or had a servant click the shutter for him, however the answer remains unknown. One such photograph appeared in Wuhrmann book, Mein Bamumvolk im Grasland von Kamerun, where she credited King Njoya as the photographer.  

Not well documented, it remains unclear how Wuhrmann came into possession of this photograph that she ultimately published, but it seems to belong to the same series of portrait photographs of King Njoya and his wives.

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67 Geary, Images from Bamum, 52-53.
68 Ibid, 38, 48.
69 Rein-Wuhrmann, Mein Bamumvolk, 155.
In addition, there are many oral and written accounts that attest to his inclination towards photography. Some of King Njoya’s photographs are still in the Bamum palace today, but most have been lost or have deteriorated.\textsuperscript{70} However, King Njoya was not the only person in Bamum to take up photography. Seen as a prestigious medium, the noble Bamum people immediately took an affinity towards the new medium and utilized it in traditional practices. One practice that the medium of photography was appropriated to was as an emblem of rank for the noble class of the Bamum people. Carved portraits originally served as a status marker for the nobility, but photography was quickly adapted as a supplement to portrait statues.\textsuperscript{71}

The postcolonial discourse of hybridity can easily be identified in the Bamum’s use of photography. However, the recognition of the Bamum’s adaptation of photography is in itself a political act; i.e. why were the boundaries of the West and Other created if not to reify the concept of an “us” and a “them” binary? Therefore, postcolonialism’s main objective is to use ethnicity as the primary interpretative lens of all cultural objects and practices, which in turn assigns a preordained identity to everyone and everything.\textsuperscript{72} Returning back to the first page in \textit{The Black Photo Album}, Mofokeng stated: “Look at me.”\textsuperscript{73} From this sentiment, Mofokeng is imploring the reader to look at the people in the portraits as individuals, and not as colonial tropes, or belonging to a certain ethnicity, but as distinct people.

\textsuperscript{70} Geary, \textit{Images from Bamum}, 40.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, 42.
\textsuperscript{72} Dean and Liebsohn, 23-24.
\textsuperscript{73} Mofokeng and Campbell, 1.
A current trend in scholarship searches for the “authentic” objects and practices of people before colonial contact in order to assess their culture as either victims or survivors. This practice turns indigenous people into artifacts belonging to an earlier time, which ultimately romanticizes them and their culture.\footnote{Dean and Liebsohn, 14-15.} This stance does not allow for new cultural interpretive qualities, meaning that all cultures are heterogeneous and will continue to be heterogeneous. For example, the medium of photography has been utilized and adapted to other cultures that in turn have changed, such as the Bamum’s use of photography as a sign of status. Postmodern approach to traditional postcolonialism seeks to identify the individual players in a more fluid power dynamic, as opposed to classifying people to a cultural, racial, or ethnic order. Therefore, postmodernism addresses and looks at the person, not their categorization. King Njoya is an excellent test case to a postmodern postcolonial approach. For instance, King Njoya not only worked directly with Wuhrmann, but his contribution to history helps to illuminate the diverse voices that were implicit in some colonial images. In conclusion, this methodology used a postmodern postcolonial approach in order to elucidate the agencies of everyone in the colonial encounter, instead of categorizing them.
CHAPTER V

CONTEXTUALIZATION

Anna Wuhrmann was alive in a time of great change, and contextualizing her and the time period she was active in is paramount to understand the scope of her work, especially in comparison to her contemporaries. For instance, technology was rapidly growing, and the world was becoming more accessible, which made a new colonial epoch possible. From November 1884 through March 1885, Africa was split into territories at the Berlin Conference. Germany, as a newly unified nation (1871), was a relative late comer to this conference since Otto von Bismarck did not perceive colonies as economically beneficial. However, at the urgings of Emperor Wilhelm II, in the first and last Kaiserreich (1871-1918), Germany did eventually claim territories. The German colonial years were short, and lasted approximately from 1885-1918. However, Germany did not impose a colonial structure in many African kingdoms until after the beginning of the twentieth century. Then, Germany lost all of its territories in 1915 because of World War I, but not officially until 1918 at the Treaty of Versailles.\footnote{Jeremy Sarkin-Hughes, \textit{Germany’s Genocide of the Herero: Kaiser Wilhelm II, his Generals, his Settlers} (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2011), 3-6.} It was not until 1902 that German colonizers reached Foumban, the capital of the independent kingdom of Bamum,
currently located in present day Cameroon.\textsuperscript{76} Nine years later, Wuhrmann would arrive in Foumban in 1911 as a missionary teacher for the Basel Mission.\textsuperscript{77}

Biological racism developed from social Darwinism during the second half of the nineteenth century. Social Darwinism’s main theory stipulated that people were subject to the same principles of natural selection as other organisms.\textsuperscript{78} Ironically, the Enlightenment, which gave credence to the belief in race, was one of the prime contributors to the colonial enterprise. The Enlightenment spawned anthropological and philosophical discourses on human races that linked physiognomy and anatomy to morality and intellect. Most importantly, such discourses were made to establish a cultural hierarchy based on the concept of race, specifically categorizing black, white, red, and yellow skin colors.\textsuperscript{79} The interconnectedness of photography and the colonial enterprise cannot be stressed enough; it is no coincidence that colonialism and photography evolved together and subsequently created other mutual fields of interests such as anthropology and ethnology. In totality, all these fields informed and grew from one another, and all of these practices were enabled and bolstered by the technological evolution of photography with the colonial enterprise.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{76} Geary, \textit{Images from Bamum}, 37, 121.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid, 121.
\textsuperscript{78} Maxwell, 40.
Anthropological photography was born out of the need to define and catalogue the origin of all human races.\textsuperscript{81} Indeed, earlier anthropologists were not as interested in race, since the concept of race did not exist as we know it until the Enlightenment. Yet, anthropological photography in the nineteenth century is hard to define since few anthropologists took their own photographs and instead collected photographs or commissioned photographers, which made the photographs not anthropological through intention, but rather in reception.\textsuperscript{82} Consequently, the use of photographs in an anthropological discourse gave tangible credibility to the field, and because of this, racial hierarchies were confirmed. By supporting the concept of race, anthropological photographs further perpetuated the colonial enterprise.\textsuperscript{83} In addition to anthropology, ethnology was a prominent field since it was publicized by photographs that could be showcased in lectures, exhibitions, and scholarly books\textsuperscript{84} such as \textit{The Living Races} by Hutchinson (1901), which separated Europeans from other “primitive races,” which trapped natives into tropes of the Other.\textsuperscript{85}

Even more invasive than anthropology, anthropometric photography set out to define the differences of people through their physical bodies, such as skin color, hair color, eye color, and body measurements.\textsuperscript{86} In order to create, catalogue, and rule the world, anthropometric photographs were used for imperialist and scientific means, which

\textsuperscript{82} Lenman, 38-40.
\textsuperscript{83} Coombes, 215.
\textsuperscript{84} Mawell, 55.
\textsuperscript{86} Mawell, 39-40.
tried to photograph every “race” of people. In addition, it was seen as beneficial to have anthropometric photographs taken by colonial agents to assists with the cataloguing of human races. Only through a colonial setting, where the colonized individual was so completely subjugated, could anthropometric photographs have taken place. The colonized individual was posed nude in front of a measuring grid system, in both profile and frontal full-length views. This rendered the colonized person so powerless that they were unable to protect themselves from bodily exposure, and this practice occurred in many colonized areas throughout the globe.

The practice of anthropometric photographs ended because as the world became more globally accessible, the concept of “pure races” perished. However, colonial photography had a new mission, which was to preserve what was thought to be disappearing. For instance, “pure races” were thought to be dying out due to the modifications of cross-cultural breeding, which was a consequence of globalization. From the perspective of Social Darwinism, the races that were seen as “doomed” were being replaced by the more “intelligent races,” thus the races that were vanishing were meant to fail. For example, in an effort to catalogue the “disappearing” races in South Africa, the Irish photographer Alfred M. Duggan-Cronin (1874-1954) worked at recording the vanishing natives in Africa. By trying to document the various disappearing “races,” Duggan-Cronin’s work was a typical product of the colonial period.

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87 Haney, 40.
88 Maxwell, 41.
89 Ibid, 41, 53.
90 Haney, 39.
91 Maxwell, 49.
92 Mofokeng and Campbell, 127.
The Religious Revival was a movement that came to fruition as a backlash against the scientific emphasis of the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, the Religious Revival ultimately represented the same imperialistic ideals of colonialism when abroad. Central to contextualizing Wuhrmann, the Religious Revival inspired the creation of many religious organizations such as Pietism, a religious movement that ultimately started the Basel Mission for which Wuhrmann volunteered. Pietism was a movement that originated in Germany in the later seventeenth century from a book called *Pious Desires*, which was written in 1675 by Philipp Jakob Spencer, a German theologian. Spencer’s foremost concern was with the hierarchy of church politics, so he advocated for church affairs to be operated by ordinary church members. Being deeply religious, Pietists rebelled against Enlightenment ideology, such as liberal religious beliefs. Keen adaptors, Pietists were a growing religious group despite of the Enlightenment, because they relied on networking. Hence, Pietists ignored doctrinal differences of other Protestant denominations and aligned with them in order to advocate their beliefs.93

Basel, Switzerland was one of the oldest Protestant cities in Europe.94 As a result, the Basel Mission was officially opened in 1815 in Basel, but its history and influences date further back.95 Based on a strong interconnectedness, Württemberg, a German kingdom, and Basel, a Swiss city, coevolved together through religion. Indeed, Württemberg Pietism had a strong influence in Basel, and therefore the foundation for the

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94 Ibid, 11-12.
The Basel Mission was built upon it. The Basel Mission (Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft Basel) was established in 1815 by the German Society of Christendom (Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft), a Pietist organization in Basel. The patrons of the Basel Mission were Pietists from all over Europe, such as Britain, Württemberg, the Principality of Baden, and Basel.

After the opening of the Basel Mission, the mission’s prime intention was to open a college to train men as missionaries, which opened in 1816. However, university-educated missionaries were not normative; most missionaries were not from the upper-classes but were instead farmers, craftsmen, or had backgrounds in other trades that were considered part of the working class. Therefore, early missionaries were utilitarian, as opposed to highly educated, but the Basel Mission wanted to change that in order to have the correct representation abroad for their mission. When the Basel Mission first opened, only men were allowed to be missionaries, but as the effort of missions, and colonialism, increased at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, women were also allowed to be missionaries.

At the time, women abroad were still seen as slightly taboo, as the “uncivilized” areas of the world were no place for a white woman. However, it was acknowledged that women could serve a functional purpose abroad, such as to prevent sexual relationships between the male colonizer/missionary with native women, and to

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97 Schweizer, 7, 11.
99 Katharina Gerstenberger, Truth to Tell: German Women’s Autobiographies and Turn-of-the-Century Culture (University of Michigan Press, 2001), 66.
also promote domesticity. Indeed, in Europe, women were expected to keep house and to do the cooking and cleaning in order to allow the men to do their work, and therefore the constraints of women in a “civilized” society were also imposed on them when they were abroad. Nevertheless, the Basel Mission’s policy on women missionaries remained unclear despite the Women’s Mission Committee, which was created in 1841. It was not until 1901 that a distinct program of missionary work for women was created, which actually allowed women to be missionaries. Still, the Basel Mission had two primary concerns with women missionaries. Firstly, the mission distinguished between wives of missionary men, and unmarried women missionaries. As a result, the mission did not want missionary men to marry freely, but instead the mission required the men to earn a missionary wife through a stringent approval procedure. Also, women were not allowed abroad until enough infrastructure was in place to ensure their survival, since women were believed unable to endure the same hardships that their male counterparts could. In summary, the road for a woman to be a missionary was long and arduous.

Both the colonial and mission enterprises facilitated the same imperialist constructs when abroad in order to spread Western ideology, especially through the medium of photography. A relatively new invention, photographs were used for propagandistic purposes to derive support for colonial and missionary efforts. For example, the spreading of Christianity mirrored the ideals of colonialism, especially in colonial photographs that objectified the colonized as the Other. Therefore, these two

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100 Ibid, 77.
101 Schweizer, 30.
enterprises were joined in a common effort of spreading European culture, which consequently created an “us” and “them” dynamic, as seen in postcolonial discourse.\footnote{103 Christraud Geary, “Missionary Photography: Private and Public Readings,” \textit{African Arts} 24:4 (1991), 48.}

Born into a Swiss-German speaking family in Marseille, Switzerland in 1881, Anna Wuhrmann first lived with her grandparents in Winterhut until she and her parents moved to Basel together in 1888. Born to an upper-middle class family, Wuhrmann was offered many advantages; she attended boarding school in the French speaking region of Switzerland where she became fluent in French. In boarding school, Wuhrmann studied to become a teacher, and then passed the teachers’ examination in 1902. From there, we see Wuhrmann’s humanitarian side in her first job teaching orphans in Bern, and then teaching deaf students in Riehen. At the age of twenty-four in 1905, Wuhrmann had a permanent teaching position in Basel. For the time, Wuhrmann was considered an old-maid, but that did not affect her.\footnote{104 Geary, \textit{Images from Bamum}, 119-120.} Going against normative practices, in 1910 Wuhrmann applied to the Basel Mission:

\begin{quote}
Only slowly have I realized that I should enter the service of the Mission. When years ago life demanded great sacrifice from me, I first understood that God wanted to have me in His service.\footnote{105 Wuhrmann’s own emphasis.} Two years ago, I was close to joining a missionary society, but my parents wanted no part of it and made me promise to wait another two years. Last year, I fell ill and had to take leave for a longer period of time, and many doubted that I would recover. I said to my Lord, “If you want to use me in your service, make me healthy. Then I will go where you lead me.” Soon I became better, and now I feel strong and well, as I have not felt in years. I saw my path clearly in front of me. They have now agreed, and I will happily devote my life to Jesus in gratitude for his endless loyalty.\footnote{106 Geary, \textit{Images from Bamum}, 119-120.}
\end{quote}

Through the accomplishments of Wuhrmann’s early life, it is easy to see that she was a very educated, independent, and a strong willed person. She chose to have a career,
instead of marrying and settling down, as an upper-class woman was expected to do during the time period. Wuhrmann was accepted by the Basel Mission, and in 1911, at the age of thirty, she arrived in Foumban, Cameroon as a missionary teacher for the Bamum people.  

Socially, Wuhrmann was received into the Bamum culture quite quickly. In her teaching at the Basel Mission in Foumban, her missionary peer Eugen Schwarz acknowledged in his diary that she raised the school to a whole new level. Wuhrmann was not prejudiced towards her students, as other teachers had been in the past. Additionally, unlike her fellow missionaries, Wuhrmann did occasionally write about her doubts of whether the Basel Mission was in fact serving the Bamum people properly. Wuhrmann’s most pointed critique of the mission was its insistence on male Christian converts giving up all but one wife since the Bamum culture practiced polygamy. Wuhrmann observed that once a wife was given up, she would then have to return to her family in disgrace, and there were no niches in the Bamum culture for an unmarried woman, which would in consequence make her status very low. Indeed, King Njoya had approximately three-hundred wives, with numerous children, and since the Bamum were on favorable terms with the German colonizers, King Njoya was able to rule autonomously. In addition, because King Njoya allowed the Basel Mission to be built in Foumban, the Bamum people were not required to convert to Christianity. Therefore,

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107 Ibid, 120.
110 Rein-Wuhrmann, die Stadt, 129-131.
111 Geary, Images from Bamum, 67.
many of the Bamum elite did not become Christians, though not for a lack of trying by the missionaries.

Since Wuhrmann was an unmarried and a highly educated woman, she was able to do things that other women colonizers and missionaries could not. Through recollection, Hanne Eckardt, the daughter of missionaries Eugen Schwarz and Mrs. Schwarz, who were also missionaries in Bamum with Wuhrmann, remembered her mother being resentful of Wuhrmann because she had all the privileges of an unmarried male missionary. Wuhrmann was not expected to clean or cook, and was able to move freely among the Bamum, a privilege that Mrs. Schwarz herself did not get despite her also being a certified teacher. Instead, Mrs. Schwarz was expected to cook and clean for her family, and also for Wuhrmann. Perhaps Wuhrmann’s experience abroad was exempt from the restraints of a normal woman because of her class status, but it is difficult to say exactly.

In practice, most missionaries did not care about Bamum wives, especially King Njoya’s wives. Cut off from society, and especially all men, the wives of King Njoya were somewhat anonymous and in consequence were detested by the missionaries who believed them to be vain and very lazy. Wuhrmann, however, was fluent in Bamum, which allowed her to move about the wives’ quarters in the palace, so she got to know many of the royal wives quite well. Due to Wuhrmann’s familiarity with them, she was an advocate for the king’s wives by asserting that they were forced into marrying

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112 At the time this paper was written, the writer could not find Mrs. Schwarz’s first name because in texts and photographic captions, she is only referred to as Mrs. Schwarz but hopefully her name will surface with further research.
113 Geary, Images from Bamum, 145.
114 Ibid, 77.
King Njoya and therefore were captives in the royal palace. However, only about thirty of the three-hundred wives of King Njoya were Christian converts, but that did not stop Wuhrmann from socializing with the non-converts. Furthermore, Wuhrmann stayed in contact with her students and their mothers, regardless of them being converts or not, and she would even visit them in their houses. Because of her independence, and personal relationships with many of the Bamum people, Wuhrmann was criticized by the other missionaries who believed her views to be wrong and her actions inappropriate for a woman.\textsuperscript{115}

A skilled photographer, Wuhrmann photographed extensively when she lived in Foumban. She was friends with King Njoya, and took many of his most memorable portraits. Additionally, because Wuhrmann was also close with the royal wives, she was one of the only photographers to take photographs of them in their daily lives.\textsuperscript{116}

Furthermore, the photographs Wuhrmann took while in Foumban ended up in two realms, the private and the public. Specifically, some of Wuhrmann’s photographs never made it into the public realm, while other photographs did, in both Europe and Bamum. The photographs that were never published were kept in Wuhrmann’s private photo album which upon her decease was given to the Basel Mission archive. Unfortunately, many of her photographs were thrown away when her apartment was cleaned out, and it is unknown what happened to the original glass plate negatives for her photographs.\textsuperscript{117}

Her personal photo album was bound in expansive leather with a gold-stamped title of “Kamerun I” (Cameroon I). The photographs themselves were small contact prints that

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, 77-78, 123.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, 77.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid, 145.
were glued onto dark gray paper, and the photographs were uncaptioned, presumably because Wuhrmann did not need any.\textsuperscript{118} By staying in the private realm, the meanings and memories of Wuhrmann’s photographs stayed with them, as opposed to public images that are based entirely on the context in which they are presented in.\textsuperscript{119}

Wuhrmann wrote many books in her life time about her stay in Foumban, which all focused on the Bamum people and were accompanied by some of her photographs. For example, the photographs in \textit{Mein Bamumvolk im Grasland von Kamerun}, displayed a diverse subject matter, from buildings, landscapes, bridges, and individualized portraits.\textsuperscript{120} Once her photographs were published, the caption for the photographs were minimal and generalized, leading the reader to believe that she was not close with the people in the photographs, when in actuality she was as many personal documents attest too. The impersonal presentation of Wuhrmann’s publications leaves scholars to wonder if they were heavily editorialized, or if Wuhrmann was just adopting the conventional norm for her time. Regardless, there is a stark contrast to her personal texts and photographs in comparison to the ones that were circulated.\textsuperscript{121}

In 1915, shortly after the start of World War I, the German colonists and the Basel missionaries were forced to leave Bamum when it came under British rule. Reluctant to leave, Wuhrmann later went back to Bamum when it was under French colonial rule in 1920, as a missionary for the Mission de Paris. However, since the Bamum were on friendly terms Germany, the alliance only worked against them under
French colonial rule, and they were no longer allowed to hold their ceremonies, and King Njóya was removed from power. Devastated by the new regime and the subsequent destruction of the Bamum culture, Wuhrmann only stayed for two years and then never returned. However, during her second stay in Foumban, Wuhrmann created six carefully annotated albums that she left in the missionary station in Foumban. These albums are still there to this day. 122

Wuhrmann did publish some of her photographs outside of her books. As demonstrated throughout this chapter, colonial and mission photographs that were circulated in the public realm were meant to reify the colonial enterprise, and Wuhrmann’s photographs were no exception. For example, one of the photographs out of the album Wuhrmann left in Foumban was published by the Mission de Paris. The photograph was a portrait of Po Puore, a six year old girl who was the daughter of a Bamum noble. We know this because Wuhrmann carefully captioned the photograph. However, when Wuhrmann was a missionary for the Mission de Paris, she allowed the mission to use her photographs. Consequently, the Mission de Paris took Wuhrmann’s photograph of Po Puore and used it for a postcard. 123 On the postcard, the Mission de Paris simply captioned Po Puore as “Petite Fille de Foumban-Helena” (Little Foumban Girl-Helena). 124 From this, Po Puore lost her name, her identity, and was given a generic Christian name to display her as an exotic convert.

122 Ibid, 125-128.
124 Geary, Delivering Views, 155.
Choosing an unconventional path yet again, at the age of forty-two in 1923, Wuhrmann married Dr. Rein, a teacher who was twenty-one years her senior. During the rest of her life, Wuhrmann wrote about her time in Bamum, and the Bamum people, which showed the deep impact they had on her life. She lived in Basel for the rest of her life, and despite her work for the Basel Mission, she was not on friendly terms with the mission because she did not feel that her work was properly appreciated because she was a woman.\footnote{Geary, \textit{Images from Bamum}, 145.} Wuhrmann died at the age of eighty-nine in 1971, but her legacy lived on in Bamum with not only the elderly people who remembered her time there, but also by the younger generation who had heard of her.\footnote{Ibid, 128, 145.} In conclusion, the various contexts in which Wuhrmann’s photographs were kept, whether private or public, illustrate how the use of photographs can change their meanings, especially during the colonial time period.\footnote{Ibid, 124.}
CHAPTER VI

COLLABORATION: “ALTES EHEPAAR”

A postmodern postcolonial standpoint focuses on the individuals involved in the creation, circulation, use, and consumption of colonial photographs.\textsuperscript{128} This approach also draws attention to power structures. For example, instead of imposing simplistic notions of a “top-down” power frame, it explores the complex and indeterminate relations in which images were created and used. Therefore, a postmodern postcolonial perspective is much more complicated than a traditional postcolonial discourse.

Supporting this methodology, Mofokeng demonstrated that photography was culturally appropriated into South African colonial society, and was therefore not merely a “Western” medium. For instance, Mofokeng asked, “Who is gazing?” This question emphasized the photographer and/or consumer, which in Mofokeng’s case, was the South African, not the Westerner.\textsuperscript{129} In addition, King Njoya staged photographs to accomplish his own political goals, and also took photographs for his own personal uses. These examples call attention to the diversity of agents that created colonial images.\textsuperscript{130} Who is saying “Look at me” and why?\textsuperscript{131} Thus, these examples illustrate the complexity of the postmodern notion when

\textsuperscript{128} Dean and Leibsohn, 23.
\textsuperscript{129} Mofokeng and Campbell, 11.
\textsuperscript{130} Geary, \textit{Images from Bamum}, 52-53.
\textsuperscript{131} Mofokeng and Campbell, 1.

Wuhrmann’s “Altes Ehepaar” photograph embodies the constructs of individual mutual participation in the making of a photograph.\footnote{Rein-Wuhrmann, \textit{Mein Bamumvolk}, 49.} In \textit{Mein Bamumvolk im Grasland von Kamerun}, Wuhrmann wrote about the two circumstances under which the “Altes Ehepaar” photograph was taken:

\begin{quote}

\end{quote}
nachgaben. Von den umstehenden Frauen erntete ich Beifall, und die alte Mutter selbst war hocherfreut über den Sieg. 135

Depending on the position to which a member of the Bamum tribe belongs, his retirement is sunny or gloomy. The noble stone-old man is surrounded by his children with love. Until his last breath, he is regarded as the master of his homestead. Everybody obeys him. Everybody reacts to his hint. Everyone in his family is looking after him to ease the infirmities of his old age. I have seen a distinguished old Nschi honored by his five sons. These five gentlemen who all held influential positions with the king in the city, themselves owned impressive estates. One day they were with me in the courtyard of the estate of the oldest of them. We sat under a large tree on chairs and chatted. There appeared, accompanied by a myriad of slaves, the stone-old father of the five gentlemen. Once they had noticed him, they went towards him to meet him, and they led him to the place where the chairs were, and asked him to sit on a chair, and they themselves settled down on the ground in some distance from him.

With the same old man, I experienced a small incident which was educational in a different way. His sons had asked me to make a photograph of their father and their mother. I had gladly agreed to do that. On the appointed day, I went to the estate and waited for the two old people. The family had already made the arrangements for the photo shoot. One chair stood in the shadow of the great tree in the courtyard. The old couple came, and the stone-old man sat readily on the chair and commanded his wife to squat beside him on the floor. I objected to that, and so I asked the old man: "How many children has your wife born for you?" "Twelve!" -- "Well," I asked, "then she has every right to sit beside you on a chair, and indeed on your right hand side she has the right to sit!" - The old man would hear nothing of this, and also the sons were not in agreement with the fact that their mother should occupy the place of honor. I remained steadfast and refused to photograph them until the men gave way. From the women who surrounded us, I reaped applause, and the old mother herself was delighted with the victory. 136

The resulting image and text that Wuhrmann produced has some interpretive limitations. Firstly, the text is published a decade after the photograph was taken, so did she write about the incident immediately or later? This distinction is important because it differentiates whether Wuhrmann wrote about the encounter after it had transpired, or if it was a distant memory that lacks accuracy. These discrepancies are important to acknowledge, however, we do not know the answer. Secondly, the photograph’s

135 Rein-Wuhrmann, Mein Bamumvolk, 49-50.
136 By the author and Prof. Magda Mueller.
information is solely from Wuhrmann’s point of view and no one else’s. This result is fairly normative of the colonial structure for only the colonizer had power to document. Additionally, the situation of the colonized subject being underrepresented has already been seen in Spivak’s argument. Furthermore, the description of the couple was minimal, and did not include the couple’s names. “Altes Ehepaar” was published in Wuhrmann’s book, and, as already mentioned, Wuhrmann’s writing and captions in her publications could be somewhat impersonal, and no additional information on the couple has been found in Wuhrmann’s personal records. Nevertheless, Wuhrmann did write about this encounter, which made the resulting transactions noteworthy to her.

The interpretive qualities of the photograph are important to investigate to understand the power relations exhibited in this collaboration. For example, the sons of the noble Bamum man wanted the photograph of their parents to be taken, and there is not much reason to think that Wuhrmann would have lied about their request. The resulting product, however, shows two very solemn looking figures. The brow of the wife seems to be a little furrowed and the husband’s face is lowered. Perhaps this is because camera technology was limited in the early twentieth century and needed lengthy exposure time. Additionally, even though Wuhrmann wrote that the picture was taken under a tree, the couple appears to be out in broad daylight. Therefore, their gazes might have been cast downwards because of the harsh light, although due to the photograph’s age, it is hard to say for certain.

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137 Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, 21.
“Altes Ehepaar” was also used for the cover of the book it appeared in. On the cover in relief print, only the nobleman’s face is shown. Therefore, the nobleman’s enigmatic face on the cover could be read by European Christians as an unhappy heathen, which could have been the purpose of this image as it was published by the Basel Mission itself. Indeed, the practice of showing images of unnamed people to play into colonial tropes has been a typical procedure of missions for generations. Thus, the Basel Mission manipulated “Altes Ehepaar” to serve their agenda.

As discussed earlier in this thesis, Barthes argues that a photograph’s meaning depends upon the manner in which it is displayed. In this case, the cover of Wuhrmann’s book displayed a much altered version of the original “Altes Ehepaar” photograph. For example, the photograph was changed into a relief print and exhibited only the husband, with the wife and the estate behind them completely removed. Therefore, the cover is a portrait of the noble man and his facial features convey a strong sense of austerity: his head is down cast but his eyes look up and confront the viewer. His mouth is set and not smiling, and with the highly contrasted winkleles on his face, his demeanor seems very severe. In addition, the color palette chosen highlights his clothing, specifically his hat and shirt, which was probably chosen to showcase his exotic otherness. For example, the cover of the book is brown and the text is black, but the relief print of the noble man is black, and his clothes are white, which creates a strong contrast between his skin and clothes.

138 Rein-Wuhrmann, Mein Bamumvolk, cover.
140 Barthes, Image, Music, Text, 15.
141 Rein-Wuhrmann, Mein Bamumvolk, cover.
Were the impersonal captions and the cover a purposeful choice of Wuhrmann, or was it someone else’s decision who worked at the Basel Mission? Either way, why would Wuhrmann allow these edits to be done? Unfortunately, we have no way of knowing because “Altes Ehepaar” was taken in 1915, and the book was published in 1925. Almost a century later, the information one can gather pertaining to the photograph is rather limited, especially about the photographer’s original intent. However, it is not too much to suppose that a great portion of the photograph’s manipulation, in its caption and on the cover, was purposefully done by the Basel Mission to perpetuate the exotic qualities of the Other.

The transaction between Wuhrmann, the husband, the wife, the five noble sons, the women bystanders, and finally, the Basel Mission, involve a number of distinct agents with different motives that inform the reading of the resulting product. Indeed, everyone in the transaction arguably affected the end result of the photograph and text. The Basel Mission’s motives were already discussed. As for the noble sons, Wuhrmann identified them as gentlemen with very affluent positions. The sons asked Wuhrmann to take a photograph of their parents, which Wuhrmann “gladly agreed to do.” As shown earlier, photography was quickly adapted into the Bamum culture and used as a sign of status. Therefore, it is not too hard to surmise that the sons’ motivations were essentially placed in showcasing their father’s status. For example, Wuhrmann wrote that she and the sons were all sitting on chairs and talking until the son’s father, the noble man, appeared. Once the noble man was seated on a stool, the sons honored him by not

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143 Rein-Wuhrmann, Mein Bamumvolk, 49-50.
144 Geary, Images from Bamum, 42.
only sitting on the ground instead of their chairs, but also by sitting some distance from him.\textsuperscript{145} Thus, the sons wanted their father’s high status to be shown by not only having a photograph of him taken, but also through a hierarchal composition with respect to his wife, their mother. In accordance with the patriarchal and hierarchal practices and beliefs of their society, the sons’ desires naturally ran against Wuhrmann’s wishes because they wanted their mother to honor the same principles that they shared with their father. In the end, a photograph of their parents was taken as they had asked. However, the composition of the photograph was not what they had intended.

One could argue that the husband’s motivations and ultimate impact on the photograph and text was very similar to his sons. He wanted the photograph to be taken as an emblem of his status, and he also wanted it to adhere to the practices of his culture. Thus, perhaps “Altes Ehepaar” just shows a very unhappy couple: a husband who was disregarded, and a wife who is sure that she will pay for the event later.\textsuperscript{146} But how were the husband’s wishes overlooked? The status that he held in his society should not have been questioned, but due to the German colonial structure that was being imposed onto the Bamum, social roles were changing rapidly.

Colonial structures first and foremost imposed a racial hierarchy that was then followed by a gender hierarchy. For instance, male colonizers occupied the highest position in any society, European or colonial. European women and native men however held much more ambiguous roles. In some instances, women colonizers out-ranked

\textsuperscript{145} Rein-Wuhrmann, \textit{Mein Bamumvolk}, 49-50.
\textsuperscript{146} Jenkins, “The Enigmatic,” 107-109.
natural men, and in other cases, native men had more power than women colonizers. The hierarchy between native men and women colonizers is vague and depended upon the individual case. This is also very similar to the status between native and colonial women. Most often, colonial women had a higher status than native women. However, there are some examples of bonding between colonial and native women. In Paul Jenkins essay, “Everyday Life Encapsulated? Two Photographs concerning Women and the Basel Mission in West Africa, c. 1900” (2002), he explored the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous women that were exhibited in Basel Mission photography. From his study, Jenkins surmised that not all colonial hierarchies between women adhered to a racial hierarchy, because they both occupied the lowest status in their societies, which gave them common ground.

What stratified system did “Altes Ehepaar” ultimately represent? King Njoya submitted to German colonial rule, so he maintained a sense of autonomy from Germany, which meant that colonizers did not have complete power. King Njoya also allowed the Basel Mission to be built in Foumban, thus Wuhrmann as a missionary did not have absolute authority over anyone, especially indigenous men. In addition, by the time Wuhrmann had arrived in Foumban, the Basel Mission was unhappy with King Njoya and the Bamum nobility because they were rejecting Christianity and embracing Islam. The Basel Mission was powerless to resist the influence of Islam on the Bamum because German colonial policy did not require the Bamum to convert to Christianity as already

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147 Jenkins, “Everyday Life Encapsulated?,” 46.
148 Gerstenberger, 71-72.
149 Jenkins, “Everyday Life Encapsulated?,” 45-60.
150 Geary, Images from Bamum, 67.
discussed.\textsuperscript{151} With no supreme authoritarian figure, the noble husband gave way to Wuhrmann’s wishes, but not because he had too. However, Wuhrmann did own the camera, so it is possible that he conceded to her request in order to have his picture taken. The wife’s role in the making of the photograph was very submissive. The wife did not protest against her husband’s wishes of her squatting on the ground, and Wuhrmann did not write about the wife supporting her stance either. Wuhrmann did acknowledge, however, that the noble wife was happy to sit next to her husband. If we take this statement at face value, the noble wife was pleased to be shown as an equal to her husband.\textsuperscript{152} Yet, the resulting image, at least to European eyes, could be construed as solemn, but this is a very limiting interpretation to the photograph.\textsuperscript{153} Therefore, the direct influence the noble wife had in the making of the image was not great, but she did eventually have a large impact in the final result. Indeed, she was photographed sitting next to her husband, as an equal, which highlighted her status. In the end, the noble wife’s agency in the photograph was paramount.

The women bystanders also influenced the final product of the photograph and text. For example, when the husband acquiesced to Wuhrmann’s wishes, the women applauded. So, perhaps the women were not directly active in the making of the photograph, but they could have helped to sway the sons and noble man, and therefore their agency and influence in the photograph is shown. Additionally, Jenkins’ argument proposed that in some cases, there was cross-cultural bonding between colonial and

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid, 121.
\textsuperscript{152} Rein-Wuhrmann, \textit{Mein Bamumvolk}, 50.
native women. Possibly then, Wuhrmann, the wife, and the women bystanders exhibit this kind of relationship.

Why did Wuhrmann write about this transaction? Was it a ploy to romanticize the Bamum? Was it to show herself as the hero of the story who was awarded with applause? After all, it is important to remember that her book was published by the Basel Mission, so the mission surely would have wanted to portray Wuhrmann in a positive light. However, it is also significant to remember that Wuhrmann did support the Bamum culture in many ways, such as against some missionary practices as mentioned earlier in this thesis. In addition, many missionaries looked down on Wuhrmann because of her support of Bamum converts and non-converts alike, which arguably led to the dissolution of her relationship with the Basel Mission. This is not to say that Wuhrmann was not also critical of some Bamum cultural practices. Wuhrmann openly disapproved of the slavery that existed in their culture, and she obviously did not support the gender hierarchy. Arguably, Wuhrmann adhered to the principles of gender equality, and that is why she wanted the noble wife to sit next her husband in order to show her as an equal. This suggestion is maintained by the manner in which Wuhrmann lived her own life, and also by the support she gave to many of the Bamum women. Furthermore, this photograph and text are further proof of Wuhrmann’s gender equality stance. However, it is important not to reduce the social transactions represented by this photograph to a simple imposition of one (European) woman’s gender politics onto a

154 Jenkins, “Everyday Life Encapsulated?,” 45-60.
155 Rein-Wuhrmann, Mein Bamumvolk, 50.
156 Geary, Images from Bamum, 123, 145.
157 Geary, Images from Bamum, 141-142.
colonized people. By reading Wuhrmann’s photograph against the text that later appeared with the image, we may reconstruct a complex power dynamic involving multiple agents with diverse agendas. As I have argued, both the husband and wife were well aware of photography’s potential for enhancing their status. Additionally, diverse native actors located outside of the picture itself played important roles. These include the couple’s sons, who, like their parents, used the medium of photography to bolster their status, and to women, who used the transaction as an opportunity to express female solidarity.

In conclusion, Wuhrmann did not blindly follow mission doctrine nor completely romanticize the Bamum. Instead, she was somewhere in between and her photograph and text elucidate a cross-cultural interaction, which made the resulting products possible. In summary, “Altes Ehepaar” demonstrates a cross-cultural interaction, and the sequential cultural adaptation of photography by the Bamum. Indeed, based upon the evidence of the photograph and the book, the agency of each party is expressed. Wuhrmann, the husband, the wife, the sons, the women bystanders, and the Basel Mission all expressed influences and desires that intersect in complex ways within the process of creating and manipulating the photographic image. The analysis demonstrates not only the complexity of individual agency within the context of colonial photography, but also its indeterminacy. For agency does not simply reside “within” a photograph, but is implicit in the complex social relations that surround its creation and use.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This study has allowed for a new perspective on colonial photography. It intersects with a number of discourses, such as photographic theory, postcolonialism, and postmodern postcolonialism. One of the most pertinent arguments produced from these discourses was Spivak’s question pertaining to subaltern self-representation. However, as shown by the analysis of photography among the Bamum, the study demonstrates the multifaceted interpretations to colonial photography. For example, while it is never appropriate and/or possible for scholars to speak for the colonized, recognizing their contribution and presence in colonial photography is valid. Additionally, as seen in South African colonial photographs that were enhanced by the artist Mofokeng, the colonized person used photography to fight for their identity, as opposed to being viewed by outsiders according to a racial trope. Thus, this investigation has brought to light the cross-cultural interaction, collaboration, and appropriation of photography during the colonial era through a postmodern postcolonial discourse that focused on the indeterminacy of power structures.

To further situate the argument of indigenous and non-ingenious collaboration, and cultural photographic appropriation during colonialism, this thesis

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158 Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, 35.
159 Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 40, 47.
160 Mofokeng and Campbell, 125-137.
investigated the ideologies and technologies of the early twentieth century. For instance, photography became globally disseminated as camera technology grew more streamlined and was able to be transported abroad. In addition, because of colonialism, photography was used to perpetuate imperialist propaganda.\textsuperscript{161}

This thesis also examined the photographic work of Wuhrmann, an historically obscure photographer who worked in the German colonial city of Foumban. Wuhrmann’s cultural and religious background was explored to better contextualize her in the time in which she was active. Additionally, the Bamum people and their cultural adaptation of photography was investigated. Indeed, the Bamum’s use of photography was featured in the interaction between Wuhrmann and the noble couple, together with other native agents, which produced the photograph, “Altes Ehepaar.” Thus, Wuhrmann’s photograph and text illustrates the collaboration between her and the Bamum. Furthermore, postmodern postcolonial discourse showed the indeterminate complexities of the colonial hierarchical power structure that made “Altes Ehepaar” possible. In conclusion, this thesis has endeavored to show the photographic relationship between the native and the non-native captured in colonial photography to elucidate the complications in this encounter.

\textsuperscript{161} Geary, “Missionary Photography,” 48.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
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APPENDIX A
"ALTES EHEPAAR"