

Private Photographic Collections as an Ethnological Source

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Private photo collections have great potential value as sources of cultural history, and as indicators of ideals and sentiments of their time. The aim of the article is to explore some methodological aspects of the study of such collections. The question is how to get beyond the stage of mere description of objects that can be registered in the photo, in order to grasp some of the meaning behind it. Systematizing the various levels of information that can be extracted from a photograph, I discuss a mere visual analysis of the image, as opposed to a combination of interview and pictorial analysis, which is referred to as a visual/contextual approach. Both ways a photograph can be used both as narrative and as document, but a combined visual/contextual analysis naturally offers much richer possibilities.

Touching upon some central problems of photographic analysis, such as code and function, I conclude with a small series of examples, which as a warning of the need for source criticism, demonstrate how decisive the inside information given by an informant may be to avoid misinterpretation.

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“A family’s collection of snapshots represents one of many constructions of a symbolic reality that has been tacitly agreed on and is shared by members of the same culture” (Chalfen 1987: 142).

Someone has calculated that 11.75 BILLION amateur photographs were taken in 1983. The extent of this activity is no less today, round and about in private homes is to be found an amazing amount of photographs. These pictures are amongst the possessions people value highest. The older people are, the greater sentimental value they place on their photographs. For the oldest generation the pictures represent their dearest possessions (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton 1987: 66-69). These private photo collections, and photo albums in particular, have a great potential value as a source of cultural history.

All photographs are not put in an album, and shoe boxes with the loose pictures of gene-

rations are of course also sources. However, photographs are the product of a choice, a certain situation at a certain moment which was chosen to be preserved for posterity. When the photographs are developed and copied, some are sifted out, others are put in an album. Such editing represents yet another choice, and makes the pictures in the album even greater carriers of information and meaning (Chalfen 1987: 98). One can say that this meaning is presented in the album in condensed form, after having gone through the process implied by picture choice, editing, texting etc.

An important distinction must be pointed out. Photographs can be used with the sole intent of illustrating an account, clarifying a point or making an account more attractive. In contrast, this article is concerned with the use of photographs in such a way that they form part of the basis for a conclusion (Boe 1980).

It must also be stressed that the use of pho-



Fig. 1. Seter in Bittdalen, Telemark, Norway. Photo by Olav Berge about 1920.

tographs as an ethnological source will not here be limited to pictures as the only source. The chief purpose will be to discuss the use of photographs in combination with interviews. One then attains an interaction between the photograph as a fixed memory and the informant's recollections (Borchgrevink 1978: 9). I will therefore distinguish between what can be inferred from the picture without supplementary information, the picture's immediate, purely visual source potential on the one side. On the other side there is the combination of the information which can be inferred directly from the picture and the supplementary information of a factual and meaningful nature which an informant can give. I here refer to this as the visual/contextual side of photographs as a source.

The "seter" picture (fig. 1) and the diagram (fig. 2) can illustrate this.¹

The purely visual aspect

The Factual

The first step is to register that which most people would recognise as the subject of the photograph. Here there is a group of three persons, surrounded by the livestock and with "seter" buildings and landscape in the background. A good deal of information can be inferred directly from the picture concerning, for

example, the type of activity the picture bears witness to, the participants' clothing, sex and approximate age, time of year, the type of physical environment in which it takes place, etc.

Further, a photograph often contains in an incidental way other information, independent of the photographer's conscious choice of subject. This may concern such things as details of buildings in the background, characteristics of the landscape etc. (Borchgrevink 1978: 11). Of interest in this case is, for example, the scarce vegetation. When the practice of using the mountain areas for "setering" came to an end, the natural surroundings changed markedly as the mountain pastures gradually became covered with mountain birch. (Incidentally the valley floor is now submerged as a part of the Tokke hydro-electrical development.)

Information such as this can be inferred from the picture without supplementary information, as the photograph's narrative.

Interpretation

In addition to the purely factual elements which can be registered in the picture, one can also observe things of such a nature that they contain a message which can be interpreted. Another question is whether it is possible to draw conclusions as to the intention behind the

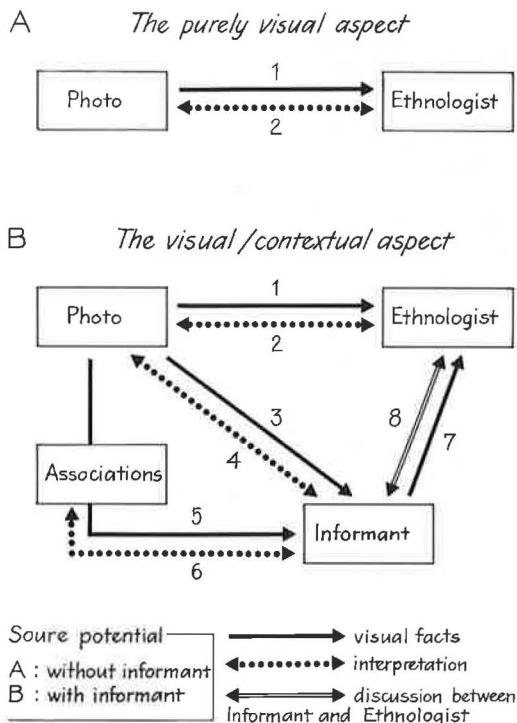


Fig. 2. This diagram illustrates the source potential in the photograph. The figure A is identical with the top part of figure B, and indicates facts that can be read directly out of the image without further information (1) and the interpretations that are possible on the basis of these facts (2). In cooperation with an informant, supplementary information will be available. The visual facts revive the informants memory (3), and the informant interprets this (4). Furthermore the photo may give the informant connected associations which can be described (5) and interpreted (6). All of this is related by the informant to the researcher (7), and thus the analysis may evolve in the interaction between them (8). Drawing by Ingrid Lowzow.

picture, why it was taken? There are also interpretation possibilities in objects with symbolic value, or other expressions of non-verbal communication. What does it mean, for example, that two of the young women are wearing the festive costume?

It will also be important to identify and isolate things which are conditional upon general conventions associated with the taking of photographs or letting oneself be photographed (Erlandsen 1982). Note for instance the way the girls are holding their arms. This pose is repeated in other pictures by the same photo-

grapher. Convention is not merely a characteristic of studio photography. Most researchers agree that amateur photography frequently is far less spontaneous in choice of subject and expression than we may think.

In an interpretational context the photographs are used as document.

The visual/contextual approach

Also in a combined visual-contextual analysis a division can be drawn between the purely factual and the interpretational, and likewise between the photograph as a narrative or a document.

The Factual

In this category belongs the information which must be mediated through an informant who knows something of the picture's who-what-where. That is information about the people in the picture, the whereabouts of the place, what is happening etc. In short factual, supplementary information which adds to the information found in the photograph. The pictures give the interviewer a starting point for questions. At the same time they act as a catalyser for the memory process. Photographs can also activate not only the memory of the specific elements found in the picture. They may also give associations to a number of connected phenomena (Ohrn 1975: 30). We get an account which evolves in the interaction between informant and photograph.

Supplementary information can in part also be written in the form of texts to photographs in an album, but this seldom produces more than a limited number of facts.

Interpretation

At the interpreting level we can ask for the informant's interpretation of situation and function, and for the reason for immortalizing just this incident. The informant may even be willing to relate something of personal reactions concerning the recorded events. This constitutes a set of additional data which gives an inside perspective to the situation and the pic-



Fig. 3. Photograph taken at the social occasion of the yearly elk hunt at Fossum Manor near Skien, Norway, in 1904.

ture's function. This inside perspective will be central if one wishes to develop the analysis beyond the stage of registering themes and elements in the images. The combination of photographs and interview is probably amongst the angles of approach which lends itself most profitably to an inside perspective, an "emic approach".²

The concepts that I use to distinguish between the various levels of information that

may be extracted from a photograph, are of course related to the specific problems of method that this article deals with.

It can be mentioned that Hannu Sinisola discusses a somewhat related problem in a study of photography as a process of innovation. Sinisola uses the term surface content for the observable content of the picture, as opposed to deep structure contents for the messages transmitted by the contentual elements.



Fig. 4. Hare hunt in Numedal, Norway 1936.

These last are divided into rational and irrational. Irrational is applied to a message impossible to understand, to measure or to determine by logical thought, but perceived more by way of experience. Among the irrational aspects of a photograph are its relationship to time, and, referring to Roland Barthes, its ability to incorporate an irrational "punctum" (Sinisola 1987-88: 27-28).

Synthesism

At another level of abstraction there is the formation of hypotheses on the basis of the patterns which can be traced in the choice of subject and in mode of expression, together with the implications indicated by the analysis with regard to the meaning and function of the pictures. One has then proceeded to the question of the photographs' possibility as basis for culture-analytical conclusions.

Source criticism

"Reading" photographs raises numerous questions. Are the pictures representative? To what extent are they arranged? (Enerstvedt 1978). Are the people behaving as they would have done without a photographer present, or are they posing? What is an expression of conventions and what is the picture's own message? What were the photographer's motivations for photographing just that scene?

When the pictures are used purely visually, as a narrative, such questions must be considered, and the value of assertions must be limited by this. In addition can be raised a number of other questions, such as: is it possible to establish a date for the photograph in order to place it in a correct chronological context? How much of this type of material is necessary in order to reach conclusions? etc.

In an emic approach, however, it is a different matter. The more the pictures are edited and arranged, the stronger they witness the meaning that lay behind. In other words, the more relevant and significant they are for an approach which intends to uncover this meaning. The questions of source criticism which must be considered in such a connection have

much in common with those which apply to interview material.

Two examples

There exists a marked difference between the oldest and the younger pictures, which amongst other things has consequences for such assessments. Before amateur photography became usual amongst ordinary people, experts were called in. The photographs tended to be strongly influenced by the fact that it was an outsider who created a picture on the basis of a conventional perception of what pictures should look like (Erlandsen 1982). When amateur photography became more usual, this was partly resolved, although by no means entirely. The difference is demonstrated in the pair of hunting photographs (fig. 3 and 4).

The first picture (fig. 3) is titled "Elk hunt at Fossum 1904". The photograph tells us that 4 elk were killed (3 heads and a skull), that 12 gentlemen took part in the hunt, and that the hunt represented a social occasion which included the family's female members and the hunting party's ladies. The building in the background and the dress of the participants suggests a good deal about the social-economic setting. On the other hand the picture tells us nothing about the hunt itself. The professional photographer took a picture which documents the hosts' contribution to the local social life, it confirms social relationships, and it gives the participants an opportunity to present themselves in a particularly status-giving context. It is also a picture strongly influenced by conventions with regard to, amongst other things, arrangement, facial expression and bearing. It is a picture of an elk hunt with maximum stylization, we learn next to nothing about real activities of the hunt. The picture invites reflections upon the social function of this photograph, and the codes which influence the participants' self presentation.

The other photograph (fig. 4) is an amateur picture from 1936. The picture is taken at the end of a successful hare hunt. It has an atmosphere which gives a far greater feeling of the spirit of the hunt. Mere observation of the picture shows a group of 4 hunters dressed in

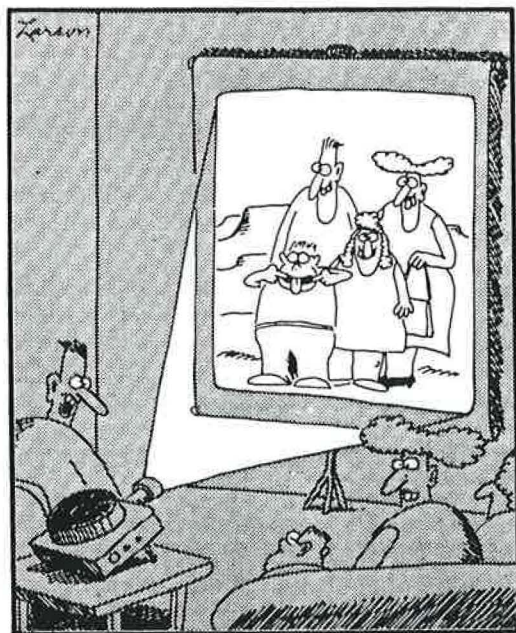


Fig. 5. "Well, here we all are at the Grand Canyon... But as usual, Johnny just had to ruin the picture for everyone else."

hunting clothes and carrying their hunting guns. The dogs are haring hounds of "Dunker" type. The 5 hares and the hounds are central in the picture.

At the interpreting level the picture is free of the former picture's strong, formalized conveyance of social connection and status. Even so it is a picture which communicates much nonverbal, visual communication of status and prestige. Weapons and dogs are pronounced male attributes, the 5 hares are trophies to be proud of. One member of the party, who has killed 2 hares, is placed in the foreground. The shotguns are carried in a way which demonstrates familiarity with hunting weapons. The way the hounds are allowed to sniff the game is part of the conventions of such pictures, etc.

Since it is my father and my maternal grandfather with friends who are pictured, I could take the role of informant and give the additional data which give the picture a context. I could supply details about people, social relationship, about the hunt's role in my father's and grandfather's life, and give a num-

ber of relevant details about the totality from which the picture is taken.

Further the picture creates associations. The dogs are allowed to sniff the hares, that reminds me that the hunt had its own rituals, such as giving the hounds certain titbits of the offal when the entrails are removed. And I associate further to many features I remember from the hunts, things that I otherwise would probably not have thought of. The hunting horn which was used to blow hunting signals in morse, the "Tot-supen" when a hare was shot, etc.³

The function of the picture is to document the result of the hunt and to fix the happy moment so that it can be relived later. It is primarily for use by the participants themselves and others in their near circle. In addition the picture can also fill the role that such pictures often get, to create associations which set off hunting talk and hunting stories. The family photographs becomes a vehicle for passing on the traditions of the family (Greenhill 1981). When the album is brought out, or the slide projector is put up at a family gathering, the pictures are the starting point for transference of the family history and stories, they become a medium for family enculturation.

Aspects to remember in the analysis of photographs

Model for descriptive analysis of photographs

It is important to bring forth as much as possible of the source potential which lies in the photographs. To this end Richard Chalfen has developed a model for descriptive analysis of photographs. It applies to what he calls "Home Mode of Visual Communication", which he defines as a pattern of small group communication centred around the home. The pictures represent ONE relevant mode of communication and are usually supplemented during "use" by verbal communication. The audience, "the users", usually consist of a chosen, select circle.

The cartoon (fig. 5) can serve to demonstrate the type of activities that Chalfen takes into consideration. Just to mention certain obvious aspects: someone has decided that a picture

shall be taken. A decision has been made as to who shall take the photograph, who is to be in the picture, and where and how people shall pose. Behind the camera the photographer has an idea of how such pictures shall be, and releases the shutter when he feels the arrangement corresponds with this. Perhaps he does things to bring forth the expressions he is waiting for. In front of the camera the people have similar ideas of how they should/wish to appear in the picture. Little Johnny and his parents have had conflicting opinions on this point. This has obviously become a problem when the father had to decide which pictures should be included in the presentation; that means during the editing. Nonetheless the picture was included, on account of the documentational value, we imagine. "We were there!". However, Grand Canyon is not exactly prominent in the picture, the people will usually be the most central in the image. And we see that the picture gets shown, is "used", within a select circle, supplemented by the comments of the man in the house (Chalfen 1987: 17-48).

Probably it will often prove difficult to obtain information on all of these aspects of photographs and their use. It would in addition require far too much work to complete a proper analysis of all the pictures in the private collections one can imagine seeing during field work. As a *modus vivendi* one needs to discover those pictures which stand out as particularly relevant for the type of problem in question, and concentrate on them. One must then be satisfied with a much more cursory registering of the other pictures in the collection, in order to put the chosen pictures in a context.

Coding and the interpretation of photographs

The next question concerns interpretation of the pictures. How do people code a situation into a picture. How do the users interpret the picture. What steers people's opinion of what are good pictures, and what is it that pictures communicate for most people. Allan Sekula points out the distinction between two different principles for coding and interpreting within the use of photographs as communication. There is the difference between a "rea-

list" principle in contrast to a "symbolist" principle. According to realist folk myth the photographs are a documentation of something that has happened, it shows the TRUTH about that which is pictured. Photographs in the albums therefore represent reports from reality. In contrast to this stands the symbolist use of photography as an expression of something the photographer wishes to communicate, an expressive use of the technique of photography. The latter can for example be observed in connection with advertising's use of real or simulated amateur photographs, and in photography which has artistic ambitions (Sekula, in Ohrn 1977: 4-5, in Chalfen 1987: 120-21, 126-27).

There is considerable agreement that in usual popular interpretation a realist comprehension of photographs prevails. The possibility for identification of persons, place and situation, decides whether the picture awakens interest. Pierre Bourdieu also claims that most people reject an attitude of distanced, neutral aesthetic evaluation. That is only something which characterises the upper classes, together with a minority of especially interested amongst other groups. Knowing how to appreciate the purely aesthetic aspects of a photograph constitutes part of their knowledge capital (Broady 1985: 43-49).

Moreover, it is a point that people quite often do not remember or know who has taken the pictures. It is the content of the picture that is interesting, not the photographer. Quite often it can also seem as if the photographic quality of the picture is quite subordinate. It matters little that the picture of baby is a bit out of focus and somewhat crooked, just as long as the child has a lovely smile (Ohrn 1977: 1-2).

The function of the photographs

The function of the photographs is obvious. They fix perception and memory, represent a method of preserving memories, document important moments and confirm social relationships and fact of belonging.

Photographs are also used to document change. However it must be noted that this will be change of expected and wished-for type,



Fig. 6. Dean Hans Backer with family, Tønsberg, Norway, 1924.

as when children are photographed at different ages (Bourdieu 1986; Chalfen 1987: 73-99). New mothers conscientiously collect notes and pictures for the "Child's Own Book" which will document the development in the child's first years. Or one takes pictures of a new and better house, a new costume etc.

In many ways the photograph album resembles the writing of family history (Bourdieu 1986: 75). There is however an important difference from, for example, diaries. The sad and difficult things are non-existent. Funeral scenes are however a fairly common exception to this. Photographs showing decorated coffins, funeral processions etc. used to be quite common. Occasionally the dead person was pictured. Amongst the reasons for this can be the important role a death plays in the family connection, the picture as a factor in processing sorrow, etc. (Chalfen 1987: 78 and 91-92, Kildegård 1985).

Much of the more important literature dealing with the functions of photographs, concerns analyses of family photographs. In an essay collection from 1965 Pierre Bourdieu emphasizes the role of the family photograph in the social integration within the family. He claims that amateur photography exists essentially through its family function. The family is the subject and object in the majority of the

pictures, photographs are exchanged within the family and near circle, and bring up to date the kin's knowledge of each other. By preserving for posterity the high lights of family life, and through an almost obligatory exchange of such pictures, the family integration is strengthened (Broadly 1985). The family picture (fig. 6) contains much obvious non-verbal communication, which underlines this. Note, for example, grandfather's enveloping hold on the youngest grandchild, and the grandparents' place in the centre.

Photography became widespread at about the same time as the nuclear family became the dominating family structure, and it very soon acquired the function of compensation for lack of physical proximity between the scat-



Fig. 7. Bridal pair (civil ceremony), Skien, Norway 1936.

tered members of the family. The photo collections function as a kind of family chronicle, which preserves and strengthens the unity within the family.

Nuclear families further confirm themselves through the accumulation of photographically-fixed memories as symbols of emotional solidarity (Bourdieu 1986). The photograph of a couple (fig. 7) is an example, which in the intimate pose demonstrates a marked difference from the ceremonious and solemn bearing of the people in older photographs.

Bourdieu has been criticised for lack of history, because his theses were built on a material from the 1960s, and were far too static. He did not see that the functional connections that he described were time related, and that they might not be the same at other times and in other societies. Thus it has been pointed out that there is an increasing tendency for the holiday to take over the significance as a crystallizing point for the family's private photographic practice (Wang Hanssen 1982: 87).

In his studies of family photographs, Andre Wang Hanssen focused on what can be derived from non-verbal communication in the pictures, in posing and other body language. He mentions amongst other things different expressions for a child's relationship to its parents. Both the dependence in young years, as well as the need to revolt during puberty and youth, can be seen manifested.

In that connection it may be mentioned that different forms of acting can express revolt against the conventional aims of family photography, and are very usual in child and youth pictures (Wang Hanssen 1982: 141). Little Johnny from the cartoon (fig. 5) is a good example of this. Acting is also a usual (read conventional) means of expressing and underlining the fun and party spirit that certain pictures are meant to document.

Some of the albums that I have seen, confirm the central role photographs play in connection with defining and integrating the family. This is especially prominent in a couple of albums from a farmers family. A considerable number of the pictures shows different forms of family gatherings, and the collection includes many

pictures sent from distant relatives at home and abroad.

Interestingly enough, my material also contains examples which in this respect can be interpreted as anti-expressions. Two of the albums are put together by young men, before they became established with their own families. One is from the 1920s, the other from the 1950s. It is a striking characteristic with both that family pictures are totally non-existent. Instead the albums show meetings with comrades and within other types of group formation than the family. In particular there are school pictures and pictures from other situations outside the family, such as national service life. They communicate an individual's emancipation from the family. This naturally confirms, in the neglect of the family in this period, the role of the photographs in social identification and as a means of integration.

It might be mentioned that my material also reflects Wang Hanssen's point that spare time and holidays to an increasing extent take over the role as the centre for family photography. There is an indication that spare time with participation in outdoor life and sport is manifested in the Norwegian albums earlier and more clearly than in the French and Danish photographs described by Bourdieu and Wang Hanssen. Here we are possibly touching on some basic differences with regard to lifestyle and activity patterns.

The importance of supplementary information

I will now return to the main aim of this article, which was to argue for the importance of supplementary information in order that we can understand what it is that the photographs actually can communicate. The following series of pictures, picked from a couple of albums from upper Telemark, is meant to demonstrate this. Since photographs showing people in local folk costume are numerous in these albums, I will fabricate a particular problem: What type of local folk dress was used when, where and why, in this particular rural society.

The old family picture (fig. 8) was taken on a beautiful summer weekend. On such days peo-



Fig. 8. Relatives and neighbours gathered on a Sunday afternoon near Berge farm, Rauland Parish, Telemark, Norway. Photo by Olav Berge about 1920.

ple often gathered on the mound behind the photographer's farm. The informant remembered with obvious pleasure how splendid it was when the weather allowed dressing up and gathering in this way to have a pleasant time. Even though the people are arranged for the photographer, the situation itself has arisen naturally.

The seven proud girls (fig. 9) may look as if they are on a picnic, but the picture reeks of studio conventions. Notice the placing of the

people in the picture, the pet as an accessory, the way they all hold one arm behind the back, as in the "seter" picture (fig. 1). The informant related that these pictures were taken by the same photographer, a man in the parish who was good at taking photographs, and who came close to being what Sinisola terms a village photographer (Sinisola 1987-88: 30). People went to him to be photographed. Obviously he was influenced by professional studio pictures. As opposed to the previous photo (fig.



Fig. 9. Group of three sisters and two friends, Rauland Parish, Telemark, Norway. Photo by Olav Berge about 1910-20.

Fig. 10. The household and the large animals of Nigard Rauland, Rauland Parish, Telemark, Norway, 1911. The photo is probably taken by Olav Berge.



8) this is a picture which was arranged from the start.

The large gathering in the farmyard (fig. 10) first made me think of the festive occasion of the departure of the cattle for the "seter" in the summer pastures, but it turned out that this is not the case. It was usual in a certain period to include the large farm animals when the photographer came. The most central elements in life are represented: family and household, home, horse and cattle. This is not a situation from real life. The documentational function dominates the picture entirely. One can also observe typical expressions of the conventional

roles of the sexes. The man holds the horse, the women pose with the cattle.

The picture showing an old man with three women and a girl, all wearing "the blue cotton costume", (fig. 11) is even more difficult to understand without supplementary information. The women's posture indicates a certain negative attitude to what is happening. The man is courteous. He behaves politely to the camera, one can see that he responds as if confronted by those who will see the picture later. This is a typical attitude to the fact of being photographed, especially before amateur photography became usual (Bourdieu in Broady 1985).



Fig. 11. From Berge, Rauland Parish, Telemark, Norway, about 1925-30.



Fig. 12. Torbjørg Gøytil, mistress of Berge farm, Rauland Parish, Telemark, Norway, about 1945-50.

The women's slightly rejecting body language is explained by the informant with the words: The tourists wanted pictures of us. So we had to go in and change to our costumes. It was so pompous, ugh!

About the next picture, showing a woman wearing "the blue cotton costume" on the way into the storehouse, (fig. 12) the informant explained that they usually had many summer guests. The guests liked the idea of the local women wearing their costumes. Her mother

had therefore started wearing this costume rather like a working uniform.

The group picture (fig. 13) is a greeting from a confirmand. A summer guest was so thrilled with the West Telemark festive costume that she had costumes made for both of her daughters. When celebrating a daughters confirmation in Oslo, both the confirmand and others wore folk dress. It is uncertain what kind of association the other people can have had to the area their costumes come from.



Fig. 13. From a confirmation party in Oslo about 1970.

Fig. 14. Group of siblings with spouses gathered at their childhood home Berge in Rauland Parish, Telemark, Norway, about 1960.



In contrast to that, the last picture (fig. 14) shows a group of siblings with husbands and wives gathered in the childhood home. To them the festive costume is not only a party dress which represents a large investment, but which in return is beautiful and suits almost all occasions. In addition there are other important aspects attached. Costume represents an emphasizing of a feeling of belonging, of which the local population would be very conscious. Local costume therefore carries a symbolic and ideological meaning, and not least can mean much to those who have moved away from their home district.

There are actually a great many elements that could be examined in each one of these pictures, and many themes could have been followed. My aim here was to demonstrate how decisive supplementary information may be for the understanding of what a picture really can convey. To return to the problem of the what, when, where and why of local folk dress, the results would be meagre without the interviews. From the photographs can safely be inferred what type of costumes was used in this area at various times, and many technical details of dress are documented. But without supplementary information it is difficult to know what kind of occasion is pictured, or to understand a person's reason for wearing costume.

Incidentally, the interview revealed that

these costume pictures amongst other things could also be a possible source regarding the relationship between people in the mountain parish and the summer guests.

Thus, even though the photograph represents a mode of communication of iconographic type, the message cannot necessarily be interpreted straight off. Richard Chalfen emphasizes the point that transmission and interpretation of the photographic message take place within a closer circle where the users can be assumed to have the same, culturally dependent understanding of how the pictures shall be interpreted. When the pictures are viewed by others than the owner or participant, it is usually in a communication situation where the pictures can be commented on (Chalfen 1987: 8 and 70). When photographs are used as sources of cultural history, we are usually outside this internal, common cultural understanding, and are dependent on the informant as interpreter to help with decoding the message and transmitting the meaning of the picture.

Concluding, I will say that private photographs can give much information and raise many interesting questions alone. The combination of photographs and interview will nevertheless be the method which gives private photo collections the safest and greatest value as a source of cultural history. Whenever in-

formants can be found, it may increase the source potential of a photograph immensely. Furthermore, approaching the informants through the preserved memories of their photographic collection is a wonderful way of reviving their recollection and making them interested in a topic almost without their realizing it.

The modest attention which until recently has been paid this method is rather strange. With interpreting methodology and conscious use of the inside perspective one can get closer to the aim of unveiling the difficult aspect of meaning. Such an analysis could give information far beyond ordinary data-based and fact-emphasized methods.

Notes

The empirical part of my study is partly built on a collection of albums of three different origins from the mountain parish of Rauland in Telemark. For the rest it builds on my own collection of albums which includes albums from several generations both of my paternal family from Arendal and my maternal family from Skien.

Many people have helped me in the progress of this work. I especially want to thank Ingebjørg Kron-
tveit, of Rauland Parish in Telemark, who graciously opened her family albums to this project, and gave supplementary information about the pictures. Karin Becker and Richard Chalfen both very helpfully answered my letters. Their work represent an important base for my study. Asbjørn Klepp advised me on the manuscript. They deserve warm thanks.

1. A "seter" is a summer, dairy outfarm.
2. About "the emic approach", I refer to the way this is used in cognitive anthropology, basing a study on the culturally influenced way that people perceive the realities of their lives.
3. "Tot-suppen" is the dram which is served when the prey has been killed.

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