

# Intersecting Archives

## Intertextuality and the Early West African Photographer

Charles Gore

This paper examines practices of intertextuality in the dispersion of images by some selected early West African photographers<sup>1</sup> who utilized dry plate technologies in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. There is a burgeoning literature on early African photographers but little attention has been devoted to their dialectical relations with each other or the modes of intertextuality that operated between photographers. Photography was at the center of the visual fabrication of localized West African modernities and imaginaries<sup>2</sup> during the second half of the nineteenth century. The technology, initially patented and made publicly available in 1839 in France, was taken up in Africa from the 1840s onwards and offered innovative modes of representation (Szarkowski 1966:1–6, Rajchman 1988:88–117). Its points of entry into West Africa, as elsewhere on the continent, were multiple (Viditz-Ward 1987:510–18, Yarak 1995:9–11, Haney 2010:24–27), and initially images were mostly produced as single, unique daguerreotypes on a polished silvered surface, usually sealed under glass.<sup>3</sup> The daguerreotype was, however, paralleled by the invention and publication of the calotype process in Britain by Henry Fox Talbot in 1841. This paper-based negative-positive process allowed for unlimited photographic reproduction. Despite these advantages, it did not initially have the commercial success of the daguerreotype.<sup>4</sup> Photographic technologies were diverse, rapidly changing, and developed throughout the nineteenth century. Such innovations, whether temporary or long-lasting, were imported into West Africa shortly after their availability in European or American markets. The daguerreotype persisted in Africa until the end of the nineteenth century, as exemplified in an advertisement of the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* (1884) where Shadrack A. St. John (identified as a photographer of African descent by Viditz-Ward,

1987:512) offered an improved daguerreotype process as well as the subsequent Gelatine Instaneous (dry plate) process.<sup>5</sup>

The adoption and popularity of the wet collodion glass plate process (1851 onwards) was quickly adopted by professional photographers and contributed to the burgeoning of professional studios around the world (Pols 2002:11). Its dissemination and subsequent refinement as the dry glass plate process (1870s onwards) allowed for the widespread use of the negative transfer technology pioneered by Talbot with its capacity for faster speeds, sharper, clearer images, and unlimited multiple mechanical reproduction. Moreover, as Walter Benjamin famously noted (1968:211–44), this technological capacity meant that each individual production of a given image had the potential to be constituted within a range of differing contexts that transformed their significances. For professional photographers, in particular, this offered the possibility of developing an archive of images, each of which could be repeatedly sold to a range of clients to maximize earnings. Indeed, by 1893 the Gold Coast-born photographer Neils Walwin Holm, who had settled in Lagos Colony in 1886, identified some eighty professional and amateur photographers in West Africa who were using the dry plate photographic technology (Holm 1893b:211).

Itinerant commercial European and African photographers travelled the shipping routes in search of patrons and to build up image stock, and in so doing developed numerous markets for photographic services among diverse West African communities. This was greatly aided by the innovation of regular steamship services from the United Kingdom to the Niger Delta region in 1852, with increased numbers of destination ports along the West African coast (Lynn 1992:421–25). With the importation of the newer photographic technologies of dry (and prior wet) plate photography and multiple image production, West African photographers,



1 Flat copy of a photograph taken by J.A. Green, 1897, of Oba Ovonramwen on board the S.S. *Ivy* en route to exile in Calabar.

Photo: Collection of Michael Graham-Stuart

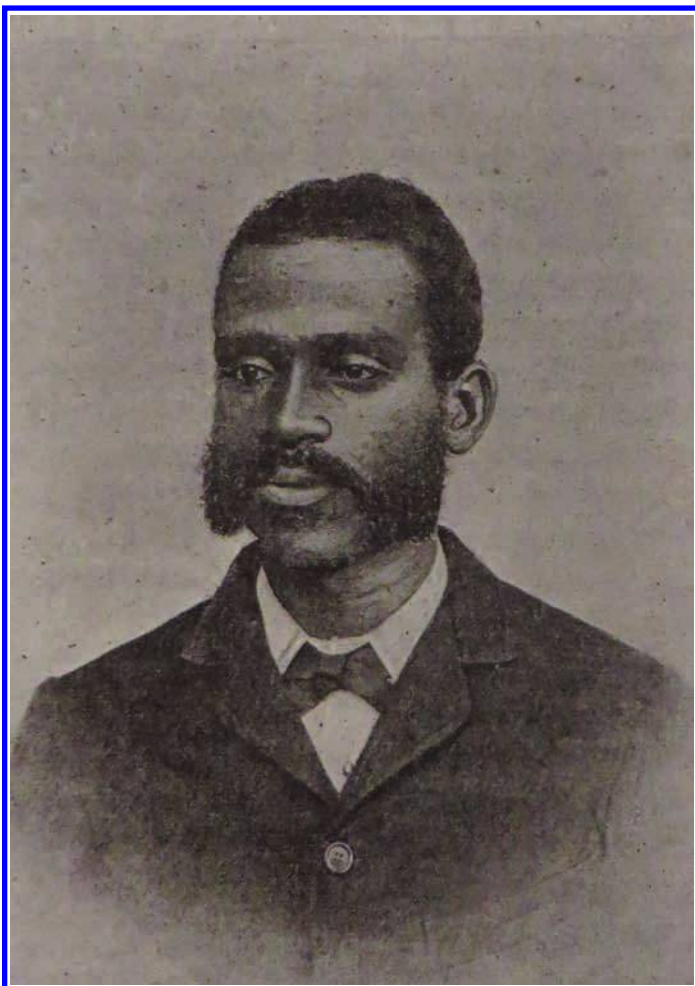
alongside their European counterparts, developed their own archives<sup>6</sup> that were often conceptualized in diverse and culturally localized framings. Likewise, their patrons, who were drawn from a range of African communities, European visitors, and residents, also constituted their own archives. Among early patrons of photography in West Africa were heterogeneous communities of African descent (from Nova Scotia, Jamaica, and the United Kingdom) who had settled at Freetown from its establishment in 1787 onwards; African Americans who had settled at Monrovia on the West African coast from the 1820s onwards; and freed slave captives who were disembarked at Freetown by the British naval blockades following the British abolition of slavery in 1807. Likewise, from the 1830s onwards there were returnees from Brazil. Many of these individuals sought to return to their homelands on the coast and in the interior, where there was often the risk of re-enslavement. Returnees (and some local Africans) asserted modes

of British or American citizenship to enhance personal security along with the adoption of British and American forms of education and social practice. Among these, the album, photographic *carte-de-visite*, and cabinet card were utilized in a similar manner to Europe and deployed in the establishment of social status as well as for the enhancement of personal and professional networks, both African and European.

#### THE ARCHIVE AND INTERTEXTUALITY

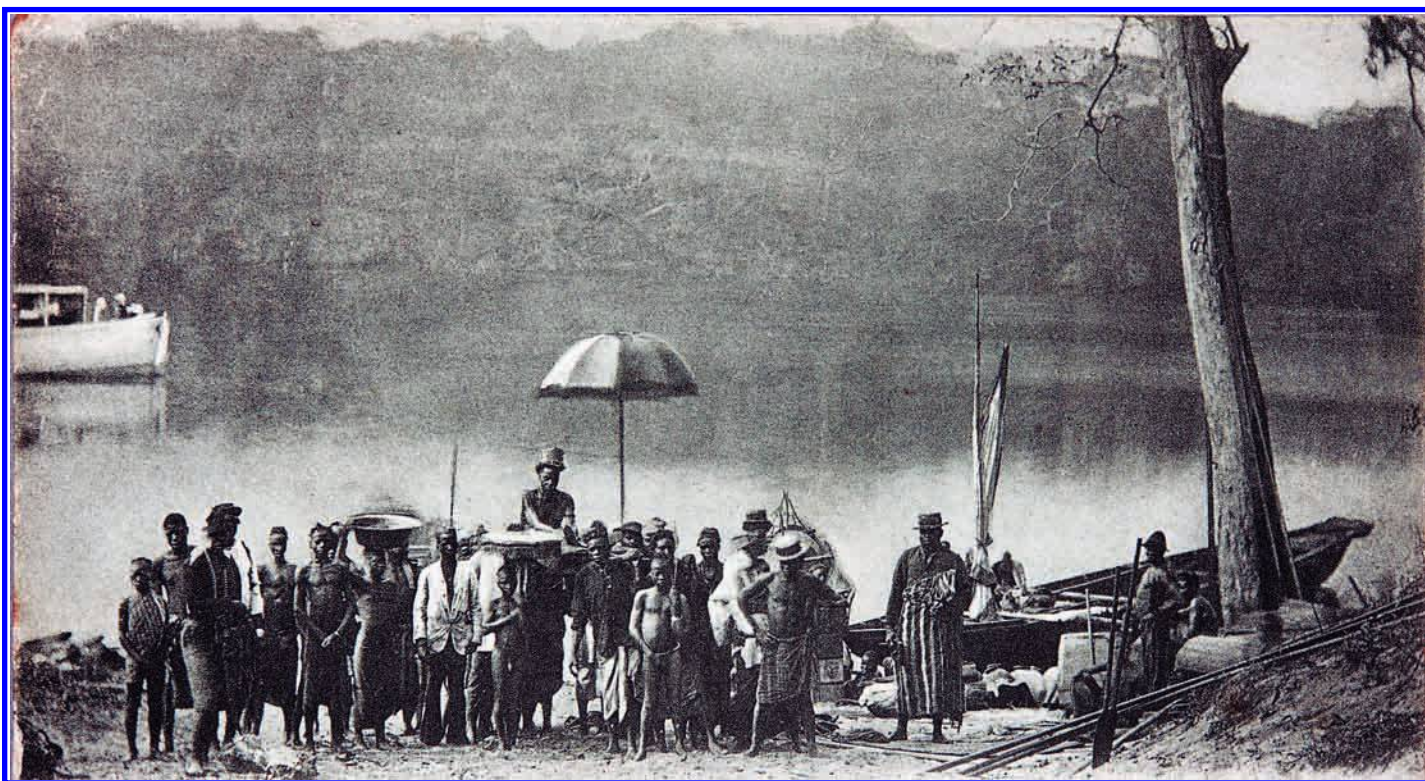
Photographs in West Africa were produced and consumed within assemblages that constituted local archives. These sometimes corresponded to European practices and sometimes differed considerably and were instead articulated within local configurations and modes of taxonomy (see Tagg 1988:5–8, Sekula 1999:183–85; see also the discussion of *xoymet* for an example of a temporary archive, Evans this issue). However,

within both the conceptual space and the material embodiments of these archives, a given image is dispersed and multiplied across a wide range of sites, such that it may in many instances intersect with a range of other archives. These intersecting trajectories of an image can give insights into nineteenth century photographic practices in West Africa, where there were dialectical relations between European and African photographers who, as part of their shared professional status, collaborated in the exchange of ideas and technologies and vied for the same patrons and markets of sale (Gore 2013:287). The concept of intertextuality as proposed by Kristeva (1986, 1982) offers a purchase on these cartographies of image distribution. The intertextuality<sup>7</sup> of the photographic image (and its various elements) focuses on its multiple modes of dispersal between different archives and sites which are not self-contained or closed systems of signification but rather are shaped dynamically by the interaction between differentiated social and historical structures. The processes of intertextuality offer transpositions between systems and conceptual structures to articulate a plurality of significances and interactions. With respect to visual practices such as art or photography, Gombrich (1965:321) advanced a dialectical concept of schemata in which the iconography and practice of an artist (or photographer) develops from looking at and appropriating elements from the artworks of prior artists which may be copied,



**2** Self portrait of Niels Walwin Holm circa 1892–93.  
Photo: Anonymous 1894

**3** Postcard image of Chief Manuah of Ijebu, Alijere wharf, Lagos, by N.W. Holm circa 1890s, highlighting the influence of the Pictorialist movement in the background massed landscape composition.  
Photo: Collection of Charles Gore



transformed, or referenced in ways that parallel those of intertextuality. Further to this, intertextuality is also predicated on the capacity of the photographic image to inscribe social practices within its frame and as a site for their reproduction and circulation, such as, for example, Pinney's (1997:74–75) delineation in India of the European swagger portrait, which was also present in Africa in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, intertextuality provides a means to trace circulations of power that enabled and restricted such intersections (Alfaro 1996:282, Foucault 1980:98). This was particularly salient in the relationships between European enclaves on the West African coast and local populations, with the shift by the end of the nineteenth century to territorial and political annexation of its interior and an attendant shift to an ideology of hierarchized colonial domination (and its contestation by local communities), which are also inflected in photographic image production (Landau 2002:1–40). Some of these intersections and modes of intertextuality are now examined in the practices of selected African photographers

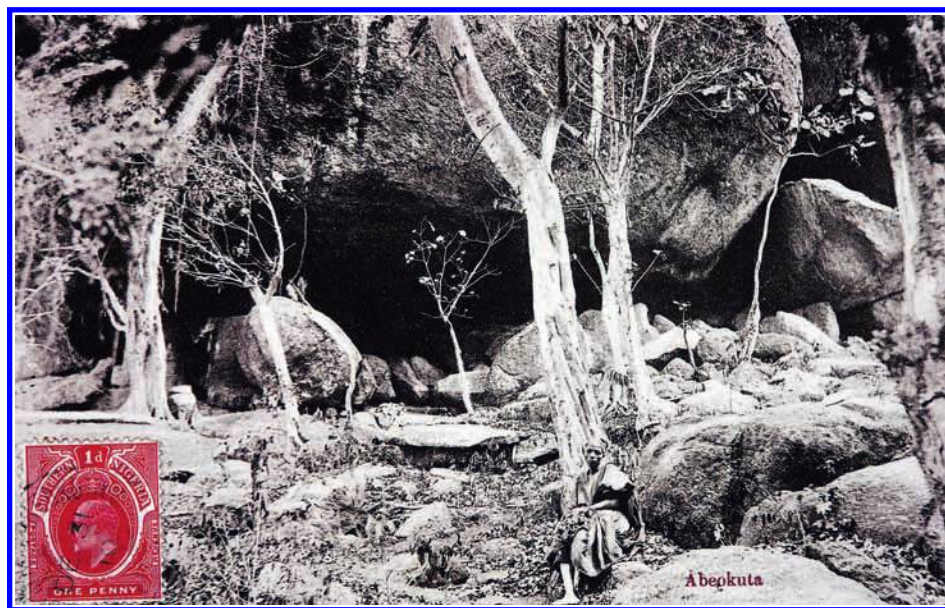
**AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHERS, THEIR NETWORKS, AND INTERTEXTUALITY**

J.A. Green, a notable indigenous photographer operating from the 1890s onwards at Bonny<sup>8</sup> in the Niger Delta, produced a number of images of Oba Ovonranmwen, the king of Benin, who was exiled in 1897 after the conquest of his kingdom by the British Punitive Expedition. These were taken when the ship HMS *Ivy*, which was transporting the king to exile, alighted at Bonny en route to Calabar, where he was to remain in exile until his death in 1914. This series of images gained a wide British (and European) consumption and later became iconic of the changed relations between Britain and Lagos colony and of the Niger protectorate as a new imperialist regime. In the kingship's ousting and its replacement by British rule, colonial law, and commerce, these patrons were interpellated by such images (Figure 1 was particularly popular), often as protagonists of the colonial administration in one capacity or another.

However, many of the multiple copies of the images of Oba Ovonranmwen on the HMS *Ivy* were not produced by J.A. Green

himself but are flat copies of an original J.A. Green print held by another patron and taken by other photographers. This social exchange of the images articulated differentiated positionings and individuated narratives that were shaped by the discourses of colonial rule (Edwards 2004:11–12). These images were also made into postcards (see also Gore 2013:290–300) that had a wide circulation. When Oba Ovonranmwen died in 1914, there had been a number of punitive expeditions visited upon various communities in southern Nigeria that had resisted one or another aspect of colonial domination. His death was reported in detail in newspapers along the West Coast of Africa. For local populations, his image, whether the series produced by J.A. Green on the HMS *Ivy* or those taken by the number of photographers who visited Calabar to document his exile, had become iconic and elicited memories of the punitive militaristic processes of colonial disciplining and military subordination that they experienced.

The trajectory of Neils Walwin Holm (Fig. 2) highlights the dynamic relations between social and technological networks and the production of intertextuality between images and their archiving. Holm had become the preeminent photographer of Lagos Colony by the end of the nineteenth century (Gore 2013). On leaving school in 1883, Holm was apprenticed to his cousins, who were professional photographers, but this arrangement came to an abrupt end two years later (*Practical Photographer* 1894:6). He was subsequently commissioned by a German merchant who had imported £100 worth of photographic equipment in order to obtain work from Holm. Through his photographic commissions he was able to pay off the outstanding amount for the equipment and in 1886 moved to Lagos Colony (*Lagos Weekly Record* 1907). In that year Lagos Colony had been hived off from the jurisdiction of the Gold Coast colony to form an autonomous British administration. It became a major center of expansion on the West African coast and offered many economic opportunities. Here Holm rapidly built up a successful photographic business, initially gaining many commissions from the colonial administration of Lagos Colony. He was the first photographer to introduce the use of dry plates (which were



4 Postcard image of Olumo rock at Abeokuta by N.W. Holm circa 1890s, highlighting the influence of the Pictorialist movement in the shadows found in the landscape composition.  
Photo: Collection of Charles Gore



5 Urban image from the United Kingdom printed by Lutterodt brothers in West Africa, highlighting another mode of intertextuality in the printing of images taken by other photographers.  
 Photo: Collection of Charles Gore

of Ilford manufacture) within Lagos Colony, and this gave him a competitive advantage over his fellow practitioners (*Practical Photographer* 1894:7). His success allowed him to marry in 1890, but his wife died two years later (*Practical Photographer* 1894:7). In February 1893, he wrote to *Practical Photographer*, a photographic journal published in London, to complain about the recent poor quality of photographic dry plates available in West Africa (Holm 1893a:39).<sup>9</sup> Holm had been a subscriber and importer of *Practical Photographer* to Lagos since its inception (*Practical Photographer* 1894:6). Such photographic publications were an important means for West African photographers to acquire and enhance photographic skills. Shortly after, in July 1893, he made his first visit to London to further his understanding of photography, particularly process printing work. He visited the Photographic Society of Great Britain's exhibition at Pall Mall (comprising a display of 334 photographs) along with a Mr. Johnson,<sup>10</sup> who was also identified as a native of West Africa (*Practical Photographer* 1893a). Drawing on the connections he had built up during his 1893 sojourn to London, Holm (1895) was able to advertise as a West African representative of UK manufacturers using the telegraphic cable address "Photoholm, Lagos," thereby taking advantage of the Atlantic telegraphic cable that had been laid from London to Lagos via Accra in 1886 (*London Gazetteer* 1887). He advertised locally to British colonial and amateur clients in the *Lagos Standard*, but also directly within the United Kingdom in *Practical Photographer* (Holm 1894:321) to advise British clients that he had moved address in November 1894 from Tinibu Square to Broad Street. He also noted, during his tour of the Gold Coast to the end of that year, that he had left Mr. Vincent Freeman as the photographer in charge at his Lagos studio. In 1896, Freeman set up Eureka Studio in S.H. Pearse's building on Hamburg Street, having completed the terms of his apprenticeship with Holms Limited.<sup>11</sup>

In 1895 in *Practical Photographer*, Holm (1895) advertised the availability of a dark room "that is always free for customers," which was an attractive incentive for amateur photographers of European and African elite status.<sup>12</sup> By offering this facility,

he maintained his elite networks and consolidated on an ongoing basis his professional status.<sup>13</sup> It allowed him to straddle the transatlantic networks, and this strategy culminated in his election as a member of Royal Photographic Society in 1895. In 1894, The British Photographic Society of Great Britain became The Royal Photographic Society and in April of the same year instituted a new privileged status of Fellow that recognized the exceptional skills and/or contribution of certain members. Holm was inducted as a Fellow in 1896. Needless to say, these transatlantic networks also increased his social capital in Lagos, enhancing his prestige as a photographer and his client base to secure his preeminence.<sup>14</sup> An advertisement which appeared in 1897 indicates that he offered an expanded range of services. It stated that

Colonial and Amateur Photographers Photographic Requisites can be had at the "Adela" Photo materials warehouse, Daguerre House, Wesley Street, Lagos. ....NB Amateurs work developed. Negatives touched, printed and mounted at moderate prices (*Lagos Standard* 1897b).

This targeted the increasing influx of new British arrivals to administer the ongoing expansion of territory under British rule, among whom were many amateur photographers. Printing the work of European amateur photographers also kept him abreast of further stylistic developments, as did his subsequent visits to London in 1900 (when he attended the first Pan African conference organized by Sylvester Williams) and 1903 (Gore 2013:289). By offering these services, Holm situated himself within transatlantic networks and was able to participate within the ongoing developments in European technological and artistic practices until his sojourn in Britain from 1910 until 1917, when he trained at Middle Temple as a barrister for the Lagos courts, having relinquished photography as a profession.

The Pictorial movement in the United Kingdom had gained a high profile with the formation of the Linked Ring brotherhood in 1892 by amateur and professional photographers who had resigned from the Photographic Society of Great Britain. This new association of photographers held salons from 1892 to 1909. They advocated artistic intervention through the expression of an indi-

vidualized, personal interpretation of photographic subject matter that was realized in part through the application of creative processes and treatments during the hand printing of the photographic image.<sup>15</sup> In his visit of 1893, Holm would have encountered the debate generated by the Pictorialist movement (Figs. 3–4), especially when he visited the Pall Mall exhibition of 1893, where the Linked Ring Brotherhood was notable by its absence (see Bunnell 1992:12–14).

Pictorialism extended perennial nineteenth century discourses which asserted photography's status as an artistic practice as opposed to a formulaic commercial mechanical reproduction. Moreover, it was a theme that many West African photographers addressed by presenting themselves as artist practitioners through their studio stamps, advertisements, on postcard images

(that circulated in Anglophone areas of West Africa from 1894 onwards), and in newspaper reports of their skills. For example, at Accra in the Gold Coast, Godfrey Augustus Lutterodt of the well-known Lutterodt family of photographers emphasized the artistic credentials of display by naming his photographic studio The Royal Photographic Gallery, as also featured in advertisements that appeared in both the *Gold Coast Independent* (1895) and the *Gold Coast Express* (1897) for a period of four months, highlighting in its presentation its artistic merits.<sup>16</sup> He and his brothers were educated in Scotland (*Gold Coast Nation* 1920) and acquired a familiarity with European photography. This overlap between local and European styles of composition and content was maintained subsequently as he and his brothers made prints from photographic negatives brought to them by colonial amateurs. Some of these prints were made from negatives taken in the United Kingdom (Fig. 5). The Sierra Leone photographer Adolphus Lisk-Carew (see Crooks this issue) also offered this service. At an early stage in his career, Lisk-Carew took out newspaper advertisements in the *Sierra Leone Weekly News* in order to extend his range of clients. He provided testimonials from colonial patrons who both celebrated the quality of his work and praised his skill in printing up images from their own negatives which they had taken to him to process (*Sierra Leone*

6 Postcard titled *Amazone du Roi Behanzin* by N.W. Holm, highlighting a shared iconography and mode of intertextuality with G.G. Cole's postcard in Figure 6.  
Photo: Collection of Charles Gore

7 Postcard titled *Dahomey. Amazone* by G.G. Cole.  
Photo: Collection of Charles Gore





8 Sepia landscape postcard entitled *Rope Bridge in a Forest Covered with Osiers, Sierra Leone* by Adolphus Lisk-Carew c. 1910–20 that was influenced by compositional approaches of the Pictorialist movement.  
Photo: Collection of Charles Gore

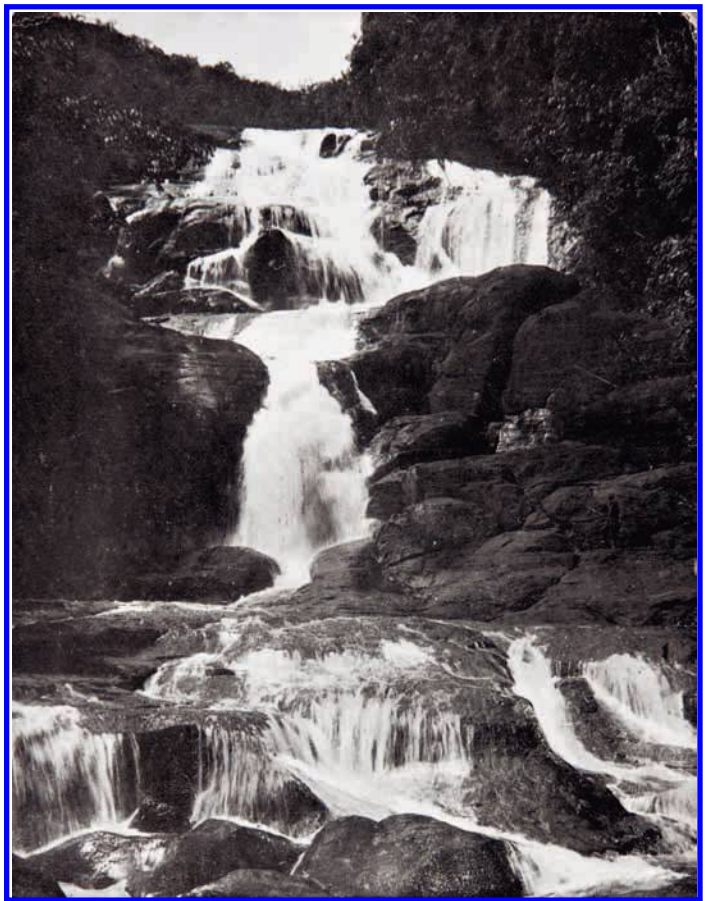
9 Landscape postcard entitled *Charlotte Falls, Sierra Leone* by Adolphus Lisk-Carew c. 1908–13 that was influenced by composition approaches of the Pictorialist movement.  
Photo: Collection of Charles Gore

*Weekly News* 1907). He competed with British chemists, such as Martins of Southampton in Britain, who advertised postal photographic developing and printing services extensively in West African newspapers as they sought to take advantage of the new portable Kodak cameras and the use of roll film that facilitated amateur photography. This practice of printing up images by other photographers instigated an overlap and intertextuality between styles of European and West African photography that highlights the dialectical ways in which photographic ideas and practices were being disseminated through the transatlantic confluence during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Figs. 6–7).

#### A TRANSATLANTIC CONFLUENCE AND THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

West African itinerant and studio photographers who plied the shipping routes were shaped within intercontinental circuits of mobility. Whether they travelled to other continents or not, they were shaped by a “professional cosmopolitanism” (Hannerz 2005:206–209) through their photographic expertise that mediated their positionings as subalterns within such circuits. As intermediaries, they participated in “a skein of networks” (Latour 1993:48, 121) that enabled the distribution of ongoing refinements of photographic technology, knowledge, and practice that their professional livelihood depended upon. Institutional nodes of these networks, such as, for example, The Royal Photographic Society located in London, figured prominently as intermediary sites for association and the dissemination of photographic ideas and practices (for a South African example, see Corrigan this issue) while legitimating and professionalizing its practitioners’ status and its discourses. Although its fluctuating memberships correlated with British mercantile and subsequent colonial cartographies, it inducted a number of professional photographers from West and South Africa as well as India and other parts of the world.

Members of The Royal Photographic Society were an important conduit of both technologies and current art movements to other photographers. J.A. Green at Bonny may have partici-



pated in such local photographic circuits, including at Opobo, another important commercial center for the palm oil trade that was some thirty miles away and which had close relations with Bonny (having seceded in 1869 under Jaja). He photographed there extensively. The Vice-Consul and postmaster of Opobo (in the early 1890s), W.V. Tanner, although not a member of the Royal Photographic Society, was a keen photographer and gave a testimonial in the *Journal of the Royal Photographic Society* (1897) on the efficacy of Hintokinone as a photographic devel-



10 Couple photographed by A.A.H. Obafemi, c. late 1890s. A photograph from a Mannheim family album in Germany features the same couple in a similar pose in a photo taken by N.W. Holm (see Gore 2013:294–95).

Photo: Collection of Charles Gore

11 Photograph entitled *The Grandstand in the Bicycle Course*, taken by A.A.H. Obafemi in Porto Novo, French colony of Dahomey, July 14, 1914.

Photo: Collection of the British Museum AF/A66/6



oper in tropical climates. Moreover, Benjamin Tregaskis Woode, who replaced Tanner as postmaster of Opobo, was elected a member of the RPS in 1901 (*Journal of the Royal Photographic Society* 1901). As Bonny was an island, international mail for southeastern Nigeria was distributed via Opobo, and such local circuits, photographic and postal, most likely supported Green's trajectory as a photographer, while European companies in the Niger Delta utilized and disseminated his imagery in the United Kingdom. The prominence of images by Holm and Green in European publications is a product of their preeminent yet differing interconnections within these networks.

After Holm, a number of other West African photographers became members of the Royal Photographic Society. Miss Tejumade Sapara-Johnson of Sapara House, Lagos, became a member in 1899, although it was only to last until 1900 (*Journal of the Royal Photographic Society* 1900). There is no evidence of public advertisements in local newspapers to indicate a career as a professional photographer, which suggests that she was an amateur practitioner whose accomplishment marked her out as a member of elite Lagos society. This contrasts with Miss Lumpkin,<sup>17</sup> who opened a photographic studio on Broad Street, a favored location for photographers, on June 27, 1908, and advertised its opening in *The Lagos Weekly Record* (1908:7). She did not join the Royal Photographic Society, suggesting that she was embedded in other transatlantic confluences of photography in order to acquire her skills. Her advertisement featured in this newspaper for a year. Her long-term commercial activities as a photographer may have been problematic in a male-dominated profession and the gendered relations (including marriage) that defined elite African women in Lagos (Mann 1981:213–15).

At an early stage in his professional career at Freetown, Sierra Leone, Lisk-Carew applied for election to the Royal Photographic Society in July 1908 and gained membership the fol-





**12** Undated Christmas calling card photograph by W.J. Sawyer that artfully composes an image of Calabar, with the four corners curled to highlight the materiality of photographs.

*Photo: Collection of Charles Gore*

**13** Self portrait of W.J. Sawyer, an African photographer based at Calabar, with his two children, not dated.

*Photo: Collection of Michael Graham-Stuart*

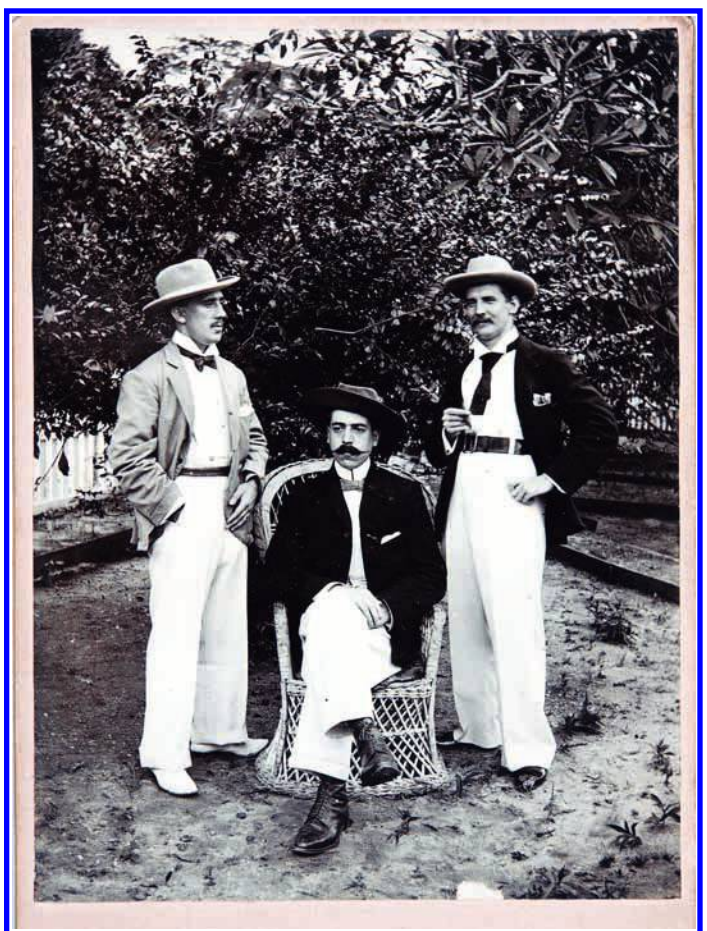
**14** Undated photograph of three of W.J. Sawyer's colonial clients (untitled) who cannot match Sawyer's self-presentation in elegant European attire (Fig. 13).

*Photo: Collection of Charles Gore*

lowing month (*Journal of the Royal Photographic Society* 1908). He also submitted an application to the conjoined scientific and pictorial committee to join as a fellow, but on November 8th of that year his application was declined without a vote (Royal Photographic Society Council Minutes 1908). It is unlikely that his photography matched the scientific criteria and his application was therefore directed at the Pictorial category of membership. Pictorialism as a photographic movement had now been accepted by the Royal Photographic Society and incorporated as

one of its most important and prestigious categories of membership. Despite rejection, his application highlights a familiarity and interest in the Pictorial approach, which had become widespread globally by the beginning of the twentieth century (Figs. 8–9). He maintained his membership until 1914.

Similarly, A.A.H. Obafemi of Hope Studio joined the Royal Photographic Society in 1911, giving his address in Lagos as Ajele Street, a short distance from his former addresses of Broad Street and subsequently at Tinubu Square (*Journal of the Royal Pho-*





### SUBALTERN CONTESTATIONS

Calabar was a notable site for the production and consumption of large quantities of photographic image production. This coastal settlement was a major commercial hub at the eastern edge of Britain's West African sphere of influence, acting as the center for the oil rivers protectorate 1891–1893 and subsequently as a headquarters for the British administration until 1906. There were permanent studios and amateur photographers as well as many itinerant photographers. The various sectors of this administration and the European companies who traded in palm oil located there provided a stream of patrons who required a colonial imaginary of Calabar and its environs. Many of these images were placed in albums along with images of the exiled King Ovonranmwun, often portraits taken on the HMS *Ivy* at Bonny by J.A. Green, as discussed earlier. Such albums circulated in a shared imaginary that positioned the roles of these British colonial officials in the public professional and the more intimate private domains of sociality. W.J. Sawyer was the most well-known local professional African photographer, with a permanent studio at Calabar (Fig. 12). He is reported undertaking a photographic commission at Ferdinand Po in 1883 (Schneider and Guell 2014:320–21).

However, during this period there was considerable tension between Europeans and elite professionals of African descent who utilized the increased shipping services from the 1850s onwards, due to the intense competition between African and European export and broker businesses in the oil palm trade. As early as the 1870s, African traders were being excluded from the steamers and physically attacked. By the 1890s, a range of measures at Calabar discriminated against the small-scale African traders to the advantage of the larger European firms that had consolidated from smaller operations (Lynn 1997:142–43). Such antagonistic relations permeated social interaction between Europeans and elite professionals of African descent and instigated a more prominent advocacy of colonization and a more developed predisposition to an imperialist ideology by European merchants than was found at Lagos Colony (Lynn 1997:185–87).

*tographic Society* 1911:338). He remained a member until 1921 (*Journal of the Royal Photographic Society* 1921). He was a former apprentice of Holm (like Mr. Vincent Freeman) and the wording of his advertisements (*Lagos Standard* 1900) echoed those of Holm. He photographed some of the same patrons, both elite and non-elite, using similar compositional elements (Figs. 10–11)—possibly while Holm was on tour along the West African coast.



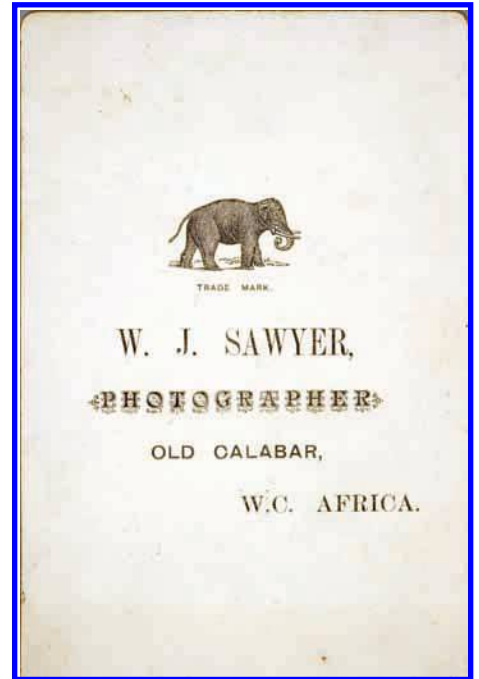
**15** Photograph that highlights the prison staff's exercise of power within the emergent colonial regime entitled *Niger Coast Protectorate Prison Staff, Old Calabar* by W.J. Sawyer c. 1893–1900. Photo: Collection of Charles Gore

**16** A juxtaposition with Figure 15 in depicting a colonial court in action at Calabar and the manifestation of imperial power, c. 1890s by W.J. Sawyer. Photo: Collection of the British Museum Af/A50/71

Sawyer and other elite Africans, as rivals to European commercial interests, were imbricated in these discourses which sought to subordinate and exclude. In a self-portrait, Sawyer as a professional photographer asserted his eminent professional status and expertise (Fig. 13) with his self-presentation through a sophisticated elaboration of elite European attire that vied favorably with, if not surpassed, those of his European clients (Fig. 14). As part of this emergent imperialist discourse, Europeans heavily criticized the European attire worn by Africans (which often also incorporated local elements of clothing) for not complying fully with the formal European code of dress. In this self-portrait, Sawyer demonstrated his adept skill at appropriating European fashions, thereby effecting a successful intertextual transposition to the dominant colonial fashion code (Barthes 1983). This is further underscored by the similar attire worn by his two accompanying children (suggestive of his long-standing prosperity as a photographer) as well as a framing with an elegant backdrop. This image, sometimes used as a calling card, contested the perceptions and prejudices of European clients and gave him access to their often lavish patronage. In a similar manner, a portrait taken by Sawyer entitled *Prison Staff Calabar, Nigeria* (Fig. 15) on one level marked out their subordinate status as employees of a colonial regime but also subverted it by emphasizing the disciplinarian power that they held and could exercise (often in a brutal physical form) over their prisoners (Fig. 16). However, Sawyer's use of elephant iconography for the logo that was often to be found on the back of his cabinet cards also addressed African publics (Fig. 17). The elephant is a widespread regional visual metaphor within West Africa (Roberts 1995:12–17, Ben-Amos Gershwick 1976:247) that has connotations of power, leadership, and success within its particular localized West African configurations. His professional status and expertise were advanced through the iconography of this logo.

## CONCLUSION

There was a diversity of West African photographers who utilized the dry plate technologies imported from Europe to produce with great skill multiples of high clarity images. At one time or another, many travelled extensively along the West African coast in order to increase their stock and patronage, and this shaped an elite professional transnational cosmopolitanism. Moreover, some, albeit fewer in number, participated in the transatlantic nexus through joining institutions such as The Royal Photographic society or travelling directly to Europe. They thereby became agents and conduits for the dissemination of new technological innovations and visual practices, including art movements such as Pictorialism. Acting as interme-



17 W.J. Sawyer's trademark uses the iconography of the elephant, which regionally was considered the most powerful of the forest animals, to address local African publics and assert his superiority as a photographer. Back of Photograph.

Photo: Collection of Charles Gore

diaries between the local and global, they engendered various modes of intertextuality constituted through the social practices required to make a photographic image and the formal visual elements that made up the composition of the image. The transpositions effected through these various modes of intertextuality highlight how the differentiated fields of European and West African photography were interlinked. The imagery produced by West African photographers fashioned local and regional social imaginaries that participated in engendering an emergent local modernity for mass consumption aligned to the penetration of European modes of production upon which they were also dependent; and it is these intermediary networks that, in Latour's words (1993:121), "allow us to pass with continuity from the local to the global, from the human to the non-human. It is the thread of networks of practices and instruments, of documents and translations."

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## Notes

1 "African" as a category is used provisionally as it is unstable and fluid.

2 The latter half of the nineteenth century witnessed an increased penetration of European modes of production which ultimately was to lead to colonial imposition. However, this was not some inevitable process. African elites saw the European presence as temporary and many European entrepreneurs (and indeed British officials) considered the costs of annexing and administering territory as too high and detrimental to

trade and profit. There was therefore a space for varied social imaginings "of a new and different social order" (Calhoun 2002:170) as it emerged during this period.

3 Daguerreotypes (composed of silver) are prone to degradation in a tropical climate and their condition over time periods of more than a few decades in such environments substantially deteriorate. Ambrotypes and tintypes were developed from the 1850s onwards and are more stable in terms of image surface.

4 For a discussion of the value placed on the innate

materiality of the daguerreotype, see Schwartz 2004:16–31.

5 He was also a member of a photographic art establishment, Messrs. Maul and Maux of 187a Piccadilly, London, in the United Kingdom. His mobility highlights how photographic technologies and its discourses of ideas and practice were situated within wider networks that articulated trajectories of modernity within Europe and West Africa (Latour 1993:72–74).

6 For examples of a commercial postcard archive and a spatial archive of West African photographers

of the late nineteenth century respectively, see Gore 2013:291–300 and Schneider and Guell 2014:1–31.

7 Intertextuality as it has developed as an approach draws on both Bakhtinian and post-semiotic models that interrelate in affording a deconstruction of semiotic signification by highlighting the pluralities generated.

8 N.W. Holm and other African photographers also photographed at Bonny and the oil rivers region. See Aronson and Anderson 2012 for a brief account of Green.

9 Judging by an unsigned account (*Practical Photographer* 1894:6–7), the plates Holm was complaining about were presumably those manufactured by Ilford.

10 As this part of the text is identifying non-British photographers, it is possible this Mr. Johnson is W.S. Johnson, an itinerant but prominent photographer who settled in Freetown in 1893 (Viditz-Ward 1987:514).

11 However, soon after, in 1897, Mr. Vincent Freeman set up a shared photographic studio with Mr. George Da Costa in Holm's former premises (*Lagos Standard* 1897a) although this association only lasted some six months.

12 Members of the British administration were keen amateur photographers, such as Acting Governor Denton (Gore 2013:286, *Practical Photographer* 1893c:178).

13 Dry plate photography's high level of skill, rapidly changing technologies, and cost restricted its practitioners to professionals and gentleman amateurs, albeit Holm (1893b:211) criticized "quacks and price-cutters" but noted that "a good photographer is respected and recognised by all classes of people."

14 For a detailed subsequent biography of Neils Walwin Holm and the formation a memory archive to offer local African publics a counternarrative to the imposition of a hegemonic imperialist colonial ideology, see Gore 2013.

16 Holm was also noted as having visited other photographic exhibitions (*Practical Photographer* 1893b:273).

17 For further discussion of Lutterodt family of photographers, see Haney 2013:67–101.

18 Miss Lumpkin is identified by Mann (1983:54) as Carrie Lumpkin, the daughter of Dr. C.J. Lumpkin, although this information is not indicated in the *Lagos Weekly Record* advertisement. However, she did travel from the United Kingdom to Lagos in 1906.

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