

PHOTOGRAPHY AND AFRICAN STUDIES

Photography and African Studies: A Bibliography. Compiled by Massimo Zaccaria. Pavia: University of Pavia, Department of Political and Social Studies 2001. 175 pp.

In the past fifteen years, historians and anthropologists have become increasingly attuned to the value of photographic materials—including formal photographs and snapshots, glass lantern slides, and picture postcards—for the study of the modern African past. Yet a problem facing scholars is that many, perhaps most, photographic materials remain scattered and uncatalogued, inhabiting library archives, museums, private collections, and even dusty old attics. Moreover, while the language of images is broadly accessible (albeit open to multiple ‘readings’ or interpretations), the language of writing on photography is less so: studies on African visual culture routinely appear in English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, and surface in a variety of genres or forums (for example, as newspaper articles and museum catalogues, or in journals dedicated to the study of Christian missionaries or art photography).

In an effort to facilitate research on African photography, Massimo Zaccaria, a historian based at the University of Pavia in Italy, compiled this bibliography, entitled *Photography and African Studies*, during a research visit to the University of Bergen in Norway. Zaccaria describes his volume as an extension of the preliminary bibliography, edited by Andrew Roberts, that emerged from the 1988 workshop on historical uses of African photography held at the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS). He acknowledges that his bibliography is an

ongoing and partial project, not a comprehensive work, and invites readers to notify him of other relevant references.

Zaccaria's bibliography has four major strengths. It includes references to English, French, Italian, Spanish, German, French, Dutch, and Arabic texts; it has sections on every country in Africa (including Madagascar and the Indian Ocean islands); it sketches out archival resources in major African, European, and North American libraries and archives; and it incorporates materials traced through a range of Internet sources. (Through the Internet, for example, Zaccaria was able to locate a series of articles by Richard Pankhurst on the history of film culture in Ethiopia, published in 1998 in the *Addis Tribune* and available through the newspaper's online archive.) For Anglophone researchers in particular, this bibliography also has the advantage of pointing to a rich trove of German, French, and Italian materials especially, suggesting directions for research that can reduce the common emphasis (and perhaps over-emphasis) on British imperial Africa.

Zaccaria's preface provides a cursory, one-page explanation of the historical import of photography. Its brevity suggests that this reference guide is intended for the person who already knows why the study of African photography is valuable and who seeks guidelines for further reading or research. A complete novice to the subject needs to know two things: first, that the major developments in photographic technologies occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, periods that coincided with the European exploration, conquest, and colonization of Africa; and second, that pictorial images help to chronicle the history of colonialism and its aftermath while offering insights into African material culture and social change. Among my own favourite works on the subject of photography in colonial Africa are the following books (which are cited in Zaccaria's bibliography): Christraud M. Geary, *Images from Bamun: German Colonial Photography at the Court of King Njoya* (Cameroon, West Africa, 1902-1915) (Washington, DC

1988); Malek Alloula, *Le harem colonial: images d'un sous-érotisme* (Paris 1987), translated into English as *The Colonial Harem*; James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London 1997); and Sarah Graham-Brown, *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East, 1860-1950* (New York 1988).

At a time when the use of photographic materials has become increasingly valued in colonial and postcolonial studies, Zaccaria's bibliography represents an extremely useful resource, both for Africanists and for scholars of modern imperialism in general. One can only hope that he will be able to distribute his volume to researchers and research institutions far beyond the University of Pavia and that he will decide to compile successor volumes.

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