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## Selected Readings in the Anthropology of Religion

*Theoretical and  
Methodological Essays*

EDITED BY STEPHEN D. GLAZIER  
AND CHARLES A. FLOWERDAY

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## CHAPTER 10

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# The Use of Visual Media in the Study of Religious Belief and Practice

*Christine Greenway and Todd T. Lewis*

### INTRODUCTION

The anthropological corollary to the maxim “a picture is worth a thousand words” is that, as research tools, photographs can evoke valuable explanations of key cultural symbols and rituals, as well as personal attitudes and beliefs. In our view, photography’s value in the study of religion is not that photographs reflect or document reality—rather, that the taking and viewing of photographs create new cultural realities fostering new meanings that emerge in the research context. When photographs are viewed and interpreted by photographers, ethnographers, subjects, or audiences, new contexts are created, interpretations are negotiated, and understandings of differing realities are achieved.

As something tangible, photographs may be particularly constructive in the study of religious belief systems.<sup>1</sup> The cohesion of religion derives from the way individuals interpret, remember, imagine, and believe. Certain indicators of belief such as ritual practice, icons, sacred buildings, and other visible aspects of expressive culture are observable, but in order to understand the meanings underlying religious belief, expression, and practice, it is essential to grasp the intangible—the “native’s point of view”—with regard to such objects and practices (Geertz 1973).

The systematic use of photographs as stimuli in structured and unstructured interviews can be unparalleled in leading to an understanding of a religious system from believers’ perspectives. The purpose of interviewing with photographs is to get at what is invisible—thoughts, faith, perceptions, memories, values. Photographs may help on a number of different levels—the showing and giving of photographs may establish a

social relationship between researcher and informants. Photographs may also aid in "picturing religion," or moving the interview from discussion about what is visible in the photographic image to the unseen worlds that may be represented. Obviously, there are limits to using photographs to either document or elicit religious world views, yet photographs "invite people into the inquiry" (Collier and Collier 1986:105).

Some scholars, following Sontag, have questioned the research potential of photographs, arguing that because they have different meanings for different viewers, they are purely subjective (Sontag 1973:109). This would suggest that meaning cannot be found in photographs because of their inherent subjectivity, as they are viewed by different audiences (Scherer 1991:132). Others argue that "correct readings" of pictures are possible through decoding and understanding the original context of the photograph (Gombrich 1972:86). In this sense, photographs are seen as reflections of the creator, conveying more about the culture of the photographer than of the subject. As Scherer argues, the research potential of photographs is limited if we agree with either of the above perspectives: "Photographs will continue to be underutilized by scholars as long as their analysis is clouded by philosophical pursuits of 'meaning,' 'reality,' and 'truth'" (Scherer 1991:134).

While Scherer (1991, 1992) and others (Edwards 1992; Wright 1992) are interested in creating a way of reading photographs and providing a methodology for the reanalysis of historical photographic materials by other scholars, our focus in this chapter is on the use of photographs during fieldwork as implements for primary research. Seeing a photograph "invites interpretation" and, as Banks argues, it thus "diminishes the apparent authority of the author/photographer" (1989:67). Our methodology empowers informants to become collaborators in the interpretation of meanings represented through visual media; we join Collier and Collier in visualizing photographs as "communication bridges" that start conversations and "become pathways into unfamiliar, unforeseen environments and subjects" (1986:99). As the Colliers discovered during interviewing with photographs, "When native eyes interpret and enlarge upon the photographic content... the potential range of data enlarges beyond that contained in the photographs themselves" (Collier and Collier 1986:99).

The use of photography in the research setting and in the presentation of data may help us move closer to the dispersal of authority that is at issue in contemporary ethnography (Clifford 1988; Marcus and Cushman 1982:43).<sup>2</sup> Photography does not have to be seen solely as a stilted medium that reflects Western authority, culture, and technology. We present some considerations for the methodological use of photographs to elicit and represent emic perspectives and as devices to promote informants' collaboration and self representation. Researchers are cautioned that making use of photographs will require wrestling with the ethical issues inherent

in the imbalance of power that photographic documentation of others has typically embodied.

Given their diffusion across the modern world, visual media are increasingly inexpensive, familiar, portable, and available to communities and researchers alike. Complementary to other methodological field techniques employed by anthropologists, this chapter discusses how inquiries using visual images can be a productive methodology in the study of religious traditions. Our conviction is that photographs and other visual media used systematically can effectively measure and convey context-sensitive indicators of belief and practice. There are a variety of ways in which the use of photographs is productive. For example, the administration of standard photo sets to a representative sample of a community—balanced by gender, age, and class—allows hypothesis testing on a host of issues regarding the context of religious belief and points to variations among individuals in the conceptions of specific ritual practices. Interviews based on photographs taken by research subjects themselves may facilitate the compilation of native views regarding religious experience.

We have also found this method useful in other, less obvious, areas. Mere recognition of certain types of objects can be an effective research design, as can commentary on photographs detailing ritual implements, individual ornaments, gestures, and so forth. We found that such commentary provided rich insight into cultural change, historical context, and interethnic group differences. The ways of "seeing" media may also add insight to the nature of religious belief (Carpenter 1972; MacDougall 1992; McLuhan 1964; McLuhan and Fiore 1967). For example, the photograph of a sacred object may itself be seen to be imbued with power—in Carpenter's words, it may "convey"—and not "create, evoke, or apply—this value" (1972:17). What is seen and not seen in the viewing of photographs may be indicative of taboo topics, irrelevant features, or concepts of the sacred.

Drawing on the authors' own research case studies, we survey a range of possibilities open to religion researchers using visual media: primarily still photography sets, but with comments on the use of video and film as well.

## METHODS

### Overview of Fieldwork

For purposes of this chapter, it is assumed that the researcher will have mastered the basic principles of photography and be competent in equipment operation.<sup>3</sup> This must be part of predeparture training and shake-down: fieldwork time is far too valuable to be spent bumbling with the technology, discovering factory defects, or botching whole rolls of film. This competence also includes the use of tripod, flash, cable release, and

filters. Field conditions are hard on electronic equipment, and essential gear includes the carrying case(s) that must protect it as well as meet the demands of on-the-move fieldwork.

We also assume familiarity with John Collier Jr. and Malcolm Collier's *Visual Anthropology*, a masterful classic that describes the many possibilities photography brings to anthropological research. The Colliers provide technical information on the use of photography, film, and video in the study of human behavior and culture. Lessons on the art of observation, the photographer as a participant-observer, the use of photography for mapping, community surveys, and cultural inventories have had significant impact on a generation of ethnographers. The Colliers also provide tips and examples on the role of photography in interviewing, establishing or threatening rapport, and in ethnographic analysis. Their primary contribution to the field of visual anthropology has been in inspiring and instructing ethnographers to find patterns and meaning in the visual representation of culture. We view our discussion as an extension of this classic into the field of religious studies and as a way of "penetrating the cultural cliché—the projection of our own Western patterns for organizing the visual world onto non-Western peoples" (Hall 1986:xv).

### Note Taking

It is particularly important that the researcher establish a sound system for taking field notes to maximize the contributions of photography. This should include regular date and time notations for events observed (the "running field note system" devised by Margaret Mead [Jacknis 1988:163]), sketch maps of contexts, lists of people present, a careful record of which informant provided which explanation, and the cultural themes or behaviors represented. A system for archiving photographs should be integral to the research note library, and all visual records—slides, contact sheets, videos—should be organized through a numerical system that allows reference to and retrieval of discrete individual images.

Filing systems can be customized according to many criteria. Magilvy et al. note that they categorized photos according to different headings such as geographic area, subject, and chronological order (1992:256); criteria specific to a study's particular focus can be preselected for cross-referencing and future use. Field notes should be written up with specific annotations, and images printed up for use with key informants should be logged as well. The use of computer databases and management systems further facilitates the efficient filing and retrieval of such information.

Every archive should be cross-indexed after one returns. In Collier and Collier's discussion of filing (1986:233–38), they note variations on filing and cross-referencing and lament how infrequently anthropologists use files of visual materials.

Every ethnographer should also be familiar with the scientific requirements for preserving and archiving their photographic records, both in the field and upon return (Collier and Collier 1986; Kenworthy et al. 1985; Weinstein and Booth 1977).

A disciplined approach to research photography goes far beyond mere documentation and becomes a valuable investigative tool. It imposes high standards of thoroughness on the researcher in both making a comprehensive data archive and in implicitly calling for systematic explanations by the researcher regarding the content of the images rendered. Slides and photographs are also *aides de memoire* for the researcher and historical records for follow-up studies. Through proper archiving, a good research collection constitutes invaluable data for future scholars and may even become a resource for the subject community as well.

We recognize that there are a variety of approaches. We urge adopting a detailed and organized record taking system with Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson's photographic corpus in mind. It is clear that the selection and documentation of culture is a subjective process that may reflect more about the photographer/ethnographer's theoretical perspective than about the underlying meanings within the culture itself. Yet with a good record-keeping system, photographic materials can be shared among researchers and informants: "intersubjectivity," if not objectivity, can be attained. Mead and Bateson left detailed notes about the context of the photographs they took—whether they were posed or not, if the subject was aware of the camera, and so forth. (Jacknis 1988:165).<sup>4</sup>

Worth asserts that the reason Mead and Bateson's photographs and films are usable records for later researchers is that "they were taken in ways which allowed them to be analyzed so as to illuminate patterns observed by scientists who knew what they were looking for" (1980:17). Researchers can use this record to form new investigative questions and new interpretations, in part because that is the nature of photography and, in part, because of the notes kept by the original researchers and their openness about the theories that they were attempting to document on film. We also recognize that note taking can be very personal and idiosyncratic, and that much of what is "ethnographic" emerges in later rewritten elaborations of field notes, recorded interview transcripts, and descriptions of photographs. Yet a minimum structure of noting time, dates, participants, context, and other pertinent information will alleviate many of the inaccuracies and headaches of later analysis.

### Photographic Training for Assistants

Photographic assistants in the field can be useful in a variety of contexts: helping document the whirlwind of activity often associated with multi-layered religious events; taking photographs for a photo questionnaire

survey; alerting the ethnographer to important scenes, individuals, items, and events; assisting in interviewing; and as photographers and filmmakers who represent themselves and their own view of significant ceremonies and religious practice. Some ethnographers choose to team up in order to alleviate some of the isolation that can occur behind the eye of the camera; Jacknis notes that in Mead and Bateson's famous photographic research in Bali, Mead directed Bateson's attention to "particularly interesting behavior to be filmed, behavior which he tended to lose track of with his eye to the viewfinder" (1988:164).

Native assistants can be trained in still, film, and video technology. A number of researchers report interesting results of native filmmaking and archive-building endeavors (Ruby 1991; Asch 1991; Michaels 1982). In order to make photographic technology available to assistants, it is necessary to consider including funds for such a likelihood in the budget preparation phase.<sup>5</sup> Feitosa (1991) and Asch (1991) discuss examples of the pragmatics of training assistants and donating equipment, and bring up the possible results of leaving video equipment in native communities.

If assistants are used, it is suggested that time be spent looking at photographs together, discussing the subject and reaching agreement on critical moments, important gestures, key participants, and so forth. If one also directs assistants to shoot whatever else they think is important, however, the difference between the researchers' and the assistants' results may serve as a basis for further analysis.

Polaroid cameras, and more recently, digital cameras, have been used by a number of researchers with success. Most use Polaroids as a way to establish rapport, to give instant gifts,<sup>6</sup> to interest potential interviewees, and for immediate informant feedback (Blinn and Harrist 1991; Bunster 1977). Blinn and Harrist (1991) report success with subjects taking pictures themselves and with using a photo elicitation interview technique (Suchar 1989) afterward to give subjects an opportunity to explain and expand upon the meaning of the photos they took for themselves.

### Site Documentation

Photographing the environmental context of fieldwork provides an opportunity to visit and observe all geographical areas in the research site. Keyed to sketch maps of the location, the camera can help to create a thoroughgoing record of human geography, a visual database that can have many unanticipated uses in later work. Not the least of the benefits of site documentation is to give the researcher a personal sense of closure regarding the baseline, physical geography of the research venue.

For many ethnographers, this type of documentation is carried out very early in one's fieldwork. Being the photographer may ease alienation in unfamiliar places and help one move into spaces in which one feels inse-

cure (Sontag 1973). We would like to note that photo surveying in the initial stages of fieldwork may ease one's transition into a foreign culture and help establish rapport, but too much viewing from behind a lens can also distance one from the setting and action. Photography should be a tool of immersion and a way to gain an emic perspective. Our suggestions aim at using photography not as a way of isolating the researcher from the subject, but as the basis of a two-way communicative process.

As part of "surface archaeology" recording, the religion researcher can photograph temples, shrines, and sacred objects. If relevant, a detailed record of site placements and shrine iconography can be compiled; inscriptions may also be photographed. Attention to overview shots showing the largest possible context of the religious shrines is important, and making sets of day-long interval shots (e.g., every 10 or 15 minutes) of an important shrine can have many future uses with regard to interpreting ritual or devotional behavior. We suggest that such photographs can be used in interviewing to construct a sense of the "religious landscape" from the informants' points of view. To supplement a photographic survey, it may be worthwhile to have informants direct the picture taking and do comparisons between subjects of their cognitive ordering of sacred sites.

This same documentary approach, again keyed to sketch maps, can be continued on a smaller scale in the courtyard and household. There can be similar attention to the material culture of religious tradition: ritual rooms, sacred imagery displayed, protective amulets, sacred architectural details, and so forth. The commitment to document this baseline existential venue in a thoroughgoing manner can lead the researcher to a full awareness of the household as a central unit of cultural activity. Once again, however, we are not advocating an old-fashioned, notes-and-queries approach to the outsider's documentation of material culture as the goal; we see such activities as a way of establishing an archive for qualitative interviews, and we encourage researchers to design strategies that incorporate native input throughout the process.

In doing this survey, researchers should be sensitive to subjects' concerns about objects, sites, or events that they do not want photographed. Some communities, such as the Pueblo Indians of the American Southwest, require the purchasing and displaying of photo permits and restrict access to certain areas and photographing of ceremonial events. Other researchers among various groups must agree not to show photographs or films of sacred sites, rituals, and objects in certain locales or to particular audiences. The code of rules that the researcher uncovers following a request for photographic access may be more informative than the granting of permission to take photographs of a site. Again, the aim of using photographs as a methodological tool is not simply to document what one sees, but to engage others to project their interpretations. Photographs spur questions, but if the taking of a photograph makes informants uncomfortable, angry,

or secretive, then one must approach the topic from other angles and may perhaps ultimately uncover more interesting material.

Material culture—the objects associated with the rituals and the structures, sites, and spaces involved in religious practice—provides an important way of mapping belief and tradition. Such items open discussions about religious syncretism and change as sacred objects and places are added, removed, merged, or transformed.

### Documenting People: Portraits

Posed portraits of individuals are useful in kinship research and can be discussed projectively with individuals.<sup>7</sup> Because the family is often the locus of religious activity, this type of information may be particularly relevant.

Fine portraits are prized gifts, and this work is especially satisfying to do with families with whom one has close relationships. Asking religious specialists (priests, monks, shamans) and participants in rituals to pose for a portrait can reveal important details of costume, status, gesture, and choice of context.

In an analysis of a Japanese male initiation ceremony, for example, Ben-Ari (1991) notes that groups involved in different capacities (relatives, press, social scientists) make different kinds of posed photographic records of the proceedings. He argues that these visual records influence the manner in which such groups perceive and interpret the event. His analysis is suggestive of ways in which different sets of photographs could be used in interviews with a variety of ritual participants in follow-up interviews after the event.

Researchers may find family portraits useful reminders of an individual's kinship network. Weiser suggests the usefulness of family photographs during interviewing as a way of assessing an individual's degree of acculturation, comfort, cross-cultural communication, flexibility, and openness to new input (1988:252). Figure 10.5 is an example of the value of a portrait revealing unexpected insights about religious identity.

### Documenting Religious Events

Anthropologists have long recognized the value of photography to record events and illustrate their findings (Caldorola 1987; Collier and Collier 1986; Heider 1976; Hockings 1975). This is a demanding and exacting task, with varying levels of attempted coverage. At the one extreme, a few shots are taken at key moments; at the other, recording events for maximum detail requires many rolls of film, ideally in collaboration with a photographer. Shooting movie film or video well requires nearly 100 percent concentration.

Photographs should ideally be noted in the field notebook as they are taken amidst fieldwork observations and systematic, real-time notations can be the basis of coordinating the write-up of field notes with the photo archive. Even with photographic assistants adding second camera images, the time-line basis serves well. Good coverage of an event moves fully between the details and microdetails of the principal actors, and records central images, gestures, and offerings; but it also attends to the audience, those making private preparations and the larger spatial context. The camera can also record any historical data or emic illustrations in texts, paintings, or inscriptions. Although members of one sex may be the principal public actors in particular religious ceremonies, those of the opposite sex may also play crucial backstage parts that can be important subject matter to document.

Religion researchers may find it useful (even critically important) to photograph the specific texts used to guide ritualists or storytellers; competence in copys shooting such small objects should be one of the researcher's skills. This means carrying rolls of appropriate film stock.<sup>8</sup>

We feel that anthropologists should review the work of the great documentary photographers (e.g., Walker Evans; Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paul Strand, among others) to expand their sense of the medium's possibilities and to heighten their own sense of composition.<sup>9</sup> Feld's discussion of juxtaposing two photographs he took of a Kaluli dancer addresses the possibility of ethnographers using photographs to convey emic sensibilities (1982:233–36).<sup>10</sup> One photograph is a typical, clearly focused, documentary shot of the dancer in his finery; the second is a planned, "art" shot that blurs the dancer in such a way that the viewer can see how in the middle of a dance the man would appear to be the bird that he symbolizes. Feld says that he "decided to use a metaphoric convention from my own culture's expressive tradition in photography to make a synthetic and analytic statement about a Kaluli metaphor" (1982:236). In doing so, he conveys with an image the ethnographic analysis previously articulated with words in his book. We think this example challenges ethnographers to experiment artistically with ways of using photography to portray emic perspectives, aesthetics, and meanings.

Eventual qualitative work with participants and informants is one of the strongest reasons for careful photography. Many religious ceremonies are so multidimensional and fast-paced, especially at peak moments, that the researcher barely has time to watch and make minimal notes, much less attend to all details. Later follow-up, moving through the photographic record, can allow for systematic, multilevel reconstruction of the performance with key individuals. Photographs of especially important scenes should be enlarged for discussion with informants.

In certain settings, religion researchers must attend carefully to community norms regarding the acceptable distance that one must keep to respect sacred areas, as well as to the question of whether photography itself is permissible. It is often at precisely these moments when normative boundaries are clarified; if possible, it is best to anticipate such problems and obtain permission prior to the event. Here, the researcher's wish to observe everything and be close enough for optimal pictures must be balanced with the commitment to respect cultural norms. The value of an indigenous photographic assistant can be quite apparent when photography is acceptable, but the proximity of the outsider to the sacred zone is not. With regard to subsequent interviewing, Collier and Collier provide a guideline regarding photographic prohibitions: "Pictures that are made in the public domain can be fed back into the public domain. Pictures made in private circumstances should *be shown only to people in these circumstances*" (emphasis in original, 1986:136).

### The Record of Emic Collections

In addition to archival prints or photographs taken by the ethnographer for research purposes, the prints people choose to put on the walls of their houses, as well as the photographs they collect, constitute a rarely used source of insight in the study of religion. Both individual and family wall spaces represent a primary indication of the family's collective priorities and aesthetics, zones where kin's ongoing (re-)arrangement of their accretive traditions is visually negotiated. All imagery hung on the walls, not just photographs, should be reckoned "visual media." The location of religious icons in this universe can be especially suggestive of priorities, hierarchies, and the placement of household rituals.

Here again, photographs of the living spaces—both private and "backstage"—must be taken with great sensitivity, given their intimacy. Some images or rooms may be taboo for an outsider's or noninitiate's physical presence; this may be separate from a refusal to allow a camera and its potential for duplication.

Other important resources in photographic research are snapshots, family albums, home movies, and home videos (Chalfen 1987, 1991; Weiser 1988). The subject matter in these collections also constitutes what the family considers its most defining or important moments that, Bourdieu argues, reinforce the "integration of the family group by reasserting the sense that it has both of itself and its unity" (1990:19). He points out with respect to family rituals that "if one accepts, with Durkheim, that the function of the festivity is to revitalize and recreate the group, one will understand why the photograph is associated with it, since it supplies the means of solemnizing those climactic moments of social life in which the group solemnly reaffirms its unity" (1990:20–21).

These moments will doubtless be dominated by weddings, birthdays, and other happy life-cycle rituals, holiday festivals, and feasts. An analysis of family albums may reveal changes over time in the types of ceremonies families record and so suggest changes in attitudes, values, and ritual participation. Bourdieu argues that the order in which certain types of photographs (weddings, first communion, baptism, etc.) were introduced into the ritual of important family ceremonies corresponds to the social importance of those ceremonies.<sup>11</sup> Family and community photographs capture behavior that is socially approved and regulated; ethno-historical investigations into changes in the kinds of people and events documented may prove to be an important source of information regarding changing social norms, traditional practices, and religious beliefs.

Pilgrimages or other special rituals undertaken by a family member may also provide key entry points for investigations. Chalfen notes that family snapshots are representations of symbolic behavior that provide "a logical connection to questions of identity in general and ethnicity in particular" (1991:15). Bourdieu argues that "the most trivial photograph expresses, apart from the explicit intentions of the photographer, the system of schemes of perception, thought and appreciation common to the whole group" (1990:5). Therefore, family and amateur photographs can communicate specific information about concepts of ethnic identity while providing historical samples indicating continuity and change in cultural values.<sup>12</sup>

Researchers should consider doing "religious life histories," especially if such photographic records exist. Such histories would document an individual's spiritual development, religious experiences, or initiations. Families may have photographic records of individuals' progression through stages of immersion into the religious life of the community; photos can also assist in guided interviews about a person's religious experiences and development. It may be interesting to contrast how different individuals in a community construct a sense of self in terms of their religious tradition.

As videotaping equipment becomes less expensive, family video libraries are now increasingly found from middle-class European living rooms to Amazonian outposts. Having one's own video camcorder (with patch cord adapters to connect both sides of the transfer) makes the copying of family tapes for future study feasible, although the confusion of having four world video formats can complicate the procedure. Researchers may also want to use videos as interview props in the same way we are suggesting that still photographs be used.

We have found that having a copy of photographs or videos of our own families or important rites of passage is invaluable to share with informants while collecting their life histories. Such discussions invite comparisons and contrasts while demonstrating the researcher's sincere interest in the individual's personal circumstances.

### Public and Private Archives

Researchers should avail themselves of archives containing historical photographs for studying religion in historical perspective. Many Western nations, other governmental units, and research universities have museums and Web sites possessing photographic archives. A partial list includes the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D.C.), the Natural History Museum (New York City), the Peabody Museum (Harvard University), the Lowie Museum (University of California–Berkeley), the Royal Anthropological Institute (London), and the National Geographic Society (Washington, D.C.). Many have the facilities to provide researchers with copies of materials at cost. Most nations also possess similar collections.<sup>13</sup>

Coffee-table photography books, travel books, and old *National Geographic* magazines can provide valuable records for use with modern informants or for interpretive analysis (Abramson 1991; Lutz and Collins 1991; National Geographic Society 1981). Missionary and colonial administration photographs have proven to be rich sources of analysis and critique (Edwards 1992); many such archival and amateur travel photos focused overwhelmingly on religious rituals, festivals, and paraphernalia and may thus prove useful. The use of archival materials in present-day interviewing may also be an interesting way to elucidate perceptions of colonial domination, conversion to Christianity, and resistance to or acceptance of alternative religious practices, among other topics. However, some of the subjects of these photographs stare out at the viewer, challenging our interpretation of their reality and our penchant for collecting "images."<sup>14</sup> The challenge posed by examining these photographs has led to a number of provocative essays that will undoubtedly have an impact on the way we think about photographing research subjects in the future (Edwards 1992).

Other sources of useful images are local photography businesses. These shops often possess private negative collections that can contain a wealth of data dating back decades. Whether taken by the proprietors for their own amusement or for commercial purposes, these old photographs can be of great value and they are often for sale. Many great collections have been printed in book form (for example, see McElroy 1985; Levine 1989; Ranney and Mondejar 1993).

Finally, it bears repeating that one's own photographs become historical documents and useful for later field studies—one's own and others'. Margaret Mead's standards here are worth pondering: make the fieldwork record so well indexed and cross-referenced that a person a hundred years later can use them for additional inquiry. Again, we underline the need for sound preservation and archiving as part of the researcher's repertoire.

### THE USE OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Questionnaire Design: Community

The basic conception underlying one version of this research methodology is that one shows a standard set of images to a representative sample of the community, as Lewis did in Nepal. This means seeking gender symmetry and the inclusion of all ages, from 10 to 80, and all classes. The researcher can also include in the sample resident nongroup members or religious specialists for further fruitful comparative purposes.

Another equally productive way to use photographs is as projective prompts in more open-ended informal interviewing, as Greenway did in Peru. As Collier and Collier argue, photographs invite open expression "while maintaining concrete and explicit reference points" (1986:105). They underscore the spontaneity and uninhibitedness that characterized interviews with photographs; subjects were less aware of note taking, and the photographs offered the possibility for "detachment that allows the maximum free association possible within structured interviewing" (1986:107).

Interviewing with photographs can become a means of collaborative exploration and discussion. Collier and Collier report the results of tests comparing interviewing with and without photographs in two separate studies and noted that the pattern in both cases was that the cycle of verbal interviewing without photographs went from good to poor as later interviews were difficult or impossible (1986:108). With photographs, however, the strain was eased and the quality of subsequent interviews was high. The importance of the projective interpretation by the viewer greatly assists in the exploration of inner states and value systems.

It is particularly important for researchers to be aware that the perception of photographs can vary in culture-specific ways, although currently there are very few groups who remain unexposed to photography.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, it is useful background information to inquire about the history of photography (black and white, color, commercial movies, video) in the community, as well as the extent to which families make and display their own media images. The researcher may want to have a set of photographs used for interviewing about what people see in order to establish a baseline with regard to how people "read" two-dimensional visual images.

The power of photographs to evoke memories, stir emotions, convey the supernatural, or document so-called reality may vary from culture to culture. The photographs that seem religious to the ethnographer may not seem so to research subjects. Similarly, photographs that may seem irrelevant or mundane may provoke the most impassioned responses from different viewers. Collier and Collier cite the example of a photograph of



mutton roasting on an open fire as stimulating the most magnetic response among Navajo viewers, while one photograph of a government corral silenced people (1986:111). Rather than assuming Navajo ignorance or inability to interpret the corral photo, Collier and Collier analyzed the Navajo "misreading" of it as a significant expression of "anger and hurt" that tied into traditional Navajo values. (1986:112). They report similar inabilities of Peruvian Quechua Indians to identify hacienda buildings, while pointing out distant details pertaining to weaving technology and other items (1986:112). They concluded that "it was clear that the Indian peons could read photographs, even in the negative, even long-distance photographs, so long as the subject was one they were willing to discuss and explain" (1986:113).

It is essential that a full, consistent record be kept of the informants, noting all variables that might prove significant in the analysis. These could include age, kinship, class, ethnic group, education, details of religious life history, and so forth. It is useful that each person be designated by some code letter/number, to expedite the administration of a survey and to maintain informant confidentiality.

### Questionnaire Design: Photographs

The selection of photos will be based upon the particular questions addressed by the researcher. Lewis found it useful to divide the questionnaire into topical photograph sets. For a broad religious ethnography, the following have proven useful: Divinities, Major Rituals, Life Cycle Rituals, Festivals, Didactic Religious Media, Religious Specialists, Religious Shrines or Spaces, and Ritual Paraphernalia. For addressing a particular research question, photographs relevant to a specific ritual, type of practitioner, or sacred sites can be taken. And in other approaches such as that illustrated in Greenway's case study, informants may provide emic categories to be photographed. One should also be aware that the above categories may impose an outsider's framework on religious experience and that there may be a great deal of fluidity between such boundaries from the native perspective. The aim of interviewing with such photographs is to elucidate emic categories.

Both modern and archival images may be used in the sets with the choice of specific images keyed to the precise needs of the inquiry. Most images will doubtless be drawn from one's own ethnographic archive, although the researcher may also find it necessary to shoot several rolls specifically for survey use. It may also be useful to ask informants for suggestions of important events or images. The compilation of photograph sets *taken by subjects* might be an innovative way of obtaining information about religious beliefs, or of informants' priorities and perspectives. Informants can direct us to images with symbolic significance to them that may differ from

our preconceived notions of the sacred. Images that we least expect to elicit a religious response may inspire the most fruitful exchanges. Again, we urge pretest consultation in the field and collaboration with native subjects.

The assembly of research subsets can be done from a number of perspectives. Most commonly, the researcher will ask the respondent to discuss the subject matter of the photograph, the same methodology used with key informants as follow-up to events observed.<sup>16</sup>

There may be sets of images assembled for which recognition itself is analytically useful. For example, in Lewis's work with Hindu and Buddhists, a set of deities from both traditions was assembled to see to what extent those of each faith recognized the other's gods; the photographs were of images in local temples or monasteries. Within the same group, too, this protocol can test how far into community awareness the knowledge of saints, shrines, or esoteric practices extends. Such studies are useful in pluralistic societies in which the investigator wishes to examine the contested identities of supernatural beings or the manner in which syncretism has occurred.

Putting together the photograph questionnaire should be a creative enterprise for the researcher. Some rather mundane pictures can be shown with a standard verbal question framework, inserted orally, and these can be especially aimed at targeting key areas of research interest. (See Lewis's case study for two examples.) For example, in the study of merchant ethics, a photograph of a shopkeeper weighing food-grain on a scale might be shown, with the query: "Can a businessman make enough profit today and still be honest?" Our experience is that this important attuning of the questionnaire to the specific research focus is done through pretesting.

Once the suitable prints for a photographic questionnaire are assembled, they should be organized into sets, with each image receiving a letter/number code. The order of final presentation should be consistent, and there should be no identifying labels or writing on the side facing the informant. We have found it useful to mount the photographs on a sturdy card stock, both for appearance and for durability, with any verbal framing words written conveniently on the side facing the ethnographer. Other researchers have reported success using photographs inserted in plastic envelopes and carried in notebooks (Magilvy et al. 1992:256). Some researchers in Peru assembled photographs in large, heavy albums and report that although bulky, they could be opened on the ground where women sit or spread across market vendor's carts while interviewing (Bunster 1977).

### Design: Note System

We suggest that large note cards coded and keyed to each photograph are an efficient way to record responses. If each card has a designation that

matches its picture, there will be a matching note card set that goes along with each photograph set. With minimal practice, this is a simple, fluid system that arranges the data in an image-specific format, making later analyses and computer entry especially convenient. A computer database cache system can replicate this organization, making all notation words the terms for maximal cross-referencing. Other systems include companion notebooks—ring binders with photographs in plastic envelopes on one side and sheets for note taking on the facing page.

### Administration of the Questionnaire Sets

A standard general introduction to the photograph questionnaire is necessary both for consistency and to establish the respondent's proper orientation. A short speech should indicate the researcher's interest in all comments that come to mind about the photograph, the practice of his or her taking notes, assurances about confidentiality, an indication of the usual length of the session, and other relevant factors. We have found it useful to ask informants to first identify the subject and then to comment on it.

The photographs are organized in standard sets and shown individually to the respondent. The entry on each card begins with the appropriate informant code number, and the responses are noted on the cards such that the data cards are turned over in time with the photograph being shown the informant. (See the Lewis case study for an example of this methodology.)

Several problems in administration can be anticipated. First, the researcher must be sure that the respondent can actually see the images clearly; this can be a problem with older informants. In many research settings, there is also the likelihood of having the photographic questionnaire turn into a family affair, especially when children or young adults are the subjects. There are two contrasting perspectives on this situation. From one point of view, since the problem of collective response obviously erodes the value of the sampling method, the researcher should try to maintain the integrity of the protocol, inviting the family to view the photographs later together when their collective responses will be valuable. On the other hand, for some purposes, the multiple perspectives that emerge in collective responses can be extremely informative; people contradict each other, compete to provide information, agree with one another, and remember together. Collier and Collier discuss the value of group interviews and note the kinds of data that can be gained and lost in such a process (1986:104-5). Both approaches prompt projective responses and often the telling of relevant narratives. Both yield valuable data and may provide more or less personal surveys of religious beliefs and practices.

Other examples of the administration of photo questionnaires illustrate techniques that could be adapted to the study of religion. Weiser (1988) provides examples from phototherapy: she used photographs as projective techniques that provided insights into clients' values, emotions, expectations, and cognitive styles. She gained such insight by observing the manner in which clients took photos, responded to pictures, and verbally explored how they wish to be photographed. According to Collier and Collier, photography may have a significant role to play in exploring inner states and value systems, because "photographs offer the thought process a fluency of imagery in the projective interview" (1986:117).

Another suggestion made by Weiser (1988) is to have subjects examine groups of photos and make comparative judgments between them. Or subjects can sort photographs into groups, picking out those that do not belong or organizing them according to a sequence that makes sense to them; researchers can determine other criteria for directing the selection or sorting of pictures. Weiser also suggests asking subjects to comment verbally on which pictures they would take to express themselves; again, this could be expanded upon with a religious theme. Collier and Collier (1986) described using an ethnographer-produced photo essay approach that depicted industrial life, family life, housing, and public interaction to elicit interview data. People can also be asked to describe and interpret the situation portrayed in found or existing images in the mass media (Blinn and Harrist 1991). All of these techniques suggest directions a researcher interested in religion might take.

### Pretest

—As with any questionnaire, professional practice dictates the need to spend sufficient time developing the fullest and most effective possible sample of photographs through preliminary work with key informants and sample respondents. Trial use of framing interrogatives by the researcher should be experimented with as well.

### FURTHER POSSIBILITIES: PHOTO EXHIBITIONS AND LATER WORK

At the end of the fieldwork season, anthropologists should consider having exhibitions in the research communities. Simple mat or backing can make enlargements presentable, with exhibit openings and viewing arrangements designed to bid farewell... and can even enable the researcher to learn a final series of lessons about subject matter and the viewing community in the process. In addition to the satisfying presentation of images that sum up one's work, one also can use these choice images during the display to obtain "readings" on one's insights and interpretations

through in situ discussions with friends, neighbors, even strangers. In Kathmandu, Lewis even asked all who attended to vote on which image was the favorite and to write why on the ballot. This added a richly rewarding set of note cards and marvelous memories of the closing days of study.

Photographs are also treasured gifts. In Peru, Greenway left albums documenting the ritual cycle of a year in the school, creating the community's first photographic archive. Other researchers have noted the success with which video showings of films to the subjects have been received and the depth of information gained in the natives' critiques of the videos. Mead and Bateson used a hand-powered projector to show films to their subjects (Jacknis 1988:164): they asked Balinese viewers to comment on whether they believed dancers were in trance and "in July 1936 they filmed several carvers watching films of themselves" (Jacknis 1988:165). This practice has been called the "film elicitation technique" (Krebs 1975) and foreshadows later reflexive ethnographic practices.

The Kayapo video project in Brazil has resulted in the establishment of an archive of videos the Kayapo themselves have taken that document their communal ceremonies and other aspects of their culture (Turner 1991). The Kayapo had long collected photographs of themselves taken by photojournalists and anthropologists because they could use them "to convert their cultural and ethnic 'otherness' into a means of extracting a quid pro quo from the national society" (Turner 1991:68). The compilation of the archive combined political, historical, and cultural motives and the Kayapo have attained a certain notoriety in their astute manipulation of videos of themselves for political purposes (Turner 1991:68). Turner points out that "to the extent that video assumes political and cultural importance, control of its uses and its products will become a focus of struggle among community members" (Turner 1991:74). His warning that the introduction of video for communal purposes will affect internal relations is an important one to be heeded, and researchers should consider carefully their own motives in their research design. Certainly, however, as the Kayapo and other indigenous peoples acquire photographic technology, additional ways of "picturing" culture will emerge.<sup>17</sup> Digital photography further offers opportunity for immediate documentation feedback. Assisting in the establishment of archives of such subject-generated materials opens many possibilities for both researchers and native peoples.

Our experience also suggests that through the process of analysis and the writing of manuscripts for publication, other photographs will emerge from the archive as particularly important. These, too, can be mailed back to informants in the community or used on subsequent field trips for eliciting more commentary. Thus, photographs connect the writing studio to the field and further extend the fieldwork dialectic. Other questions about photographs arise as their audience broadens and varies and their con-

texts shift. These factors make photographs particularly deep representations and tools for cultural analysis.

#### FURTHER POSSIBILITIES: COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS AND NATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

We urge investigators to take up the challenge posed by Worth and Adair's groundbreaking research in the 1960s (*Through Navajo Eyes*) and to develop new and innovative ways of using collaborative techniques to further illuminate the belief worlds of informants.<sup>18</sup> Questions regarding the legitimacy of speaking for and about other people have led filmmakers and ethnographers to focus on the themes of voice, authorship, and authority as serious issues. This debate resulted in the writing of ethnographies that incorporate multiple voices, and in the development of cooperative, collaborative, and subject-generated films and videos. As Ruby has commented on this important development in visual anthropology over the last decade, "[Such films] offer the possibility of perceiving the world from the viewpoint of the people who lead lives that are different from those traditionally in control of the means for imaging the world" (1991:50). We feel the example currently being set in the arena of filmmaking has relevance for the kind of dynamic methodology we propose here.

Only recently have anthropologists begun to explore the dynamics of collaborative research with regard to photography. The most progress has been made with respect to video production, but this work offers innovative ideas for future research with still photography as well: the Mekarón Opoi Djoï project with the Kayapo (Feitosa 1991; Turner 1991), MacDougall's (1991) work with Australian aborigines, and Asch's (1991) with the Amazonian Yanāmamo aim to teach video technology so that people are able to produce videos according to their own interests and needs. These efforts have empowered these groups to take control over the means of self-representation, and in many cases their videos have become political tools. Ruby (1991) noted that in the first two years of the Kayapo project, most of the videos recorded communal ceremonies; he interprets these as "collective dramas of social reproduction" (1991:75) and as ways that the Kayapo have chosen to construct identity in terms of their ideals of beauty and perfection, yet in a medium accessible to a non-Kayapo audience. He argues that the Kayapo transformed their role as video technicians to become "exponents of cultural values" who effectively appropriated the technology to reproduce cultural values (1991:76). It is apparent that through still photography, film, and video, people document and create meaning; the products of their efforts contain important information about identity, cultural values, and aesthetics that may provide us with significantly more insight than the ethnographer's photographs and films alone.<sup>19</sup>

We believe that a great deal more could be developed in terms of methods that will incorporate the photographs, films, and videos produced by subjects in our investigations of religion. Much of the work with self or native photography has taken place in clinical or social psychology (Ammerman and Fryrear 1975; Fryrear, Nuell, and White 1977; Milford, Fryrear, and Swank 1983; Blinn 1987, 1988; Weiser 1988). Weiser (1988) makes some interesting suggestions for photos taken by clients in therapeutic situations that we believe offer a new approach for research methodology: she offers suggestions for photo-taking assignments that range from "Go out and shoot a roll of film" (leaving the selection of subjects up to the client) to more specific assignments focusing on specific themes or issues (1988:267). With the availability of disposable and digital cameras, we have asked students to do similar tasks and believe it would work equally well in certain fieldwork situations.

Native photography would involve asking the "native informants to be involved in the production of visual images which are considered as a source of data" (Blinn and Harrist 1991:176). Chalfen (1989) suggested levels of native activities in anthropological film that included having informants suggest topics and make films. Blinn and Harrist (1991) describe using this type of involvement in still photography in a study of older female college students who photographed themselves. Their study revealed role conflicts the women were experiencing that they had previously not articulated. Ziller (1990) developed a technique called "photographic phenomenology," in which subjects produced photos to show their own unique perceptual orientations. Ziller and Smith (1977) asked students in wheelchairs to shoot photographs depicting their environs, and Ziller, Vern, and De Santoya (1988) compared the psychological perspectives of poor and affluent children in Mexico city using "autophotography." They asked the children to shoot 12 photos that portrayed themselves and found that the psychological outlook of the poor children was dominated by an other-orientation, while that of the affluent children was dominated by a self-orientation. Because the focus of studies of religion must take into account individual experience and belief, we are surprised that more researchers have not followed some of these provocative leads in developing innovative research strategies and designs.

#### CASE STUDIES

The authors' case studies are presented to provide examples of the methodologies discussed, illustrating different approaches with actual images and data from their research. In some sections, commentary is intended to indicate the context of the investigation and how insights were derived from the specific photograph employed.

#### Cultural Change in the Santiago Celebration in a Quechua Community (Peru)

One of us (Greenway) conducted research in Mollamarca, a Quechua community of 67 households in the south central Peruvian Andes,<sup>20</sup> to investigate the Quechua constructions of self, body, illness, and symbolic healing.<sup>21</sup> Initially, photography complemented immersion in the life of the community in a fairly traditional way—as a tool to complete an ethnographic survey of the community with photos of daily activities and ritual events, as a means of establishing rapport, and to prompt initial interviews with informants.

Greenway first assumed that these pictures would serve as an important backup record of events that were witnessed and described in written field notes. However, the opportunity to document a number of rituals between 1983 and 1987 altered the way in which she used photographs to illuminate aspects of ritual practice. The aim of the study was to examine the ways in which a religious fiesta held in commemoration of Santiago (Saint James), the patron saint of horses, reflected changing constructions of ethnic and gender identity. The use of photographs in open-ended, informal interviewing resulted in the collection of narratives that conveyed how patterns of inter- and intracommunity relations may be both generated and manipulated. This creation of new meanings has important ramifications for evolving constructions of community identity.<sup>22</sup>

Asking informants to compare and contrast annual Santiago celebrations and (in 1987) to inform Greenway what to photograph was far more productive than solely relying on research photographs to stimulate memory, correct field notes, or elicit more details from people. Photographs of different versions of the ritual clearly instigated qualitatively richer reflections on the part of informants than did earlier attempts at using photographs to ask who the actors were, what they were doing, and other particulars.

Photos had first been shown occasionally during interviews and given as gifts at various times during 1983–84, 1986, and 1987; it was thus well established that informants were somewhat familiar with photos, could identify themselves and other community members, and responded with enthusiasm and interest whenever photos were present during interviews. In 1986, in a pretest, photographs depicting the events and participants in the ritual of Santiago were shown to a key group of informants, and information was recorded regarding the ritual details, sequence of events, and participants. At this time, an album was left in the community depicting the ritual and household activities of 1983–84. School children were given paper, pencils, and crayons in 1986 and asked to draw the ritual celebration of Santiago. This was repeated in 1987. In 1987, while the celebration of Santiago was underway, participants were asked what pictures should be taken.

Afterward, the people interviewed included males and females, unmarried and married, and ritual participants and nonparticipants. Throughout the fieldwork, photographic interviews of one to two hours in length were conducted in households with family members present; a few people were interviewed individually. Interviews were tape recorded and notes were taken. A set of open-ended questions was devised before the interviews; but the interviewer also asked questions for clarification as the interview proceeded. People were asked to describe what was happening in the photographs, to select their favorite photos and explain why, to talk about ritual details, to compare sets of photos with past enactments of the ritual, and to choose photos that they thought best depicted the ritual.

Sets of photos were compiled that outlined the ritual activities and participants and highlighted similarities and differences between the ritual. The following photographs are representative of photographs that caused particular comment; subjects were selected by ritual participants for Greenway to take, or photographs were used for comparisons with previous fiestas. They demonstrate some of the comparisons that people drew between the various enactments of the ritual and the kinds of meanings they associated with the changes that reflected underlying changes in conceptions of gender and ethnic identity. A brief summary of the ritual is included for clarification of the following figures.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Ritual Sponsor (1986)*

*Method:* This photograph of the ritual's sponsor outside the chapel on the second day of the fiesta was shown with photographs of 1987's sponsor. People were asked to describe the picture and to evaluate the success of the fiesta.

*Observations:* Drinking had taken place in the chapel all evening after the statue of Santiago was returned from its trip to town to be blessed by the priest. The next morning, the men rode their horses into the chapel, prayed, toasted the earth spirits, and continued drinking. The sponsor passed out before the central feature of this day, the rooster pull, was carried out. A rooster was eventually strung between two poles, but the men never raced with horses underneath to grab it. Several drunken men and teenage boys performed the rooster pull on foot.

*Comment:* This photograph sparked many contradictory comments. Surprisingly to the researcher, many older men and women commented that the ritual sponsored in 1986 by the drunken ritual sponsor was far more "beautiful" and "proper" than the one supported by the sponsor of 1987 (shown in the second photograph) and not a failure.

Others commented on how "badly" the sponsor had completed his obligations. They were particularly "angry" that he had not made the young

**Figure 10.1**  
Ritual Sponsor (1986) Asleep during Santiago Celebration



men ride on horseback. None of the sponsor's brothers or compadres (close friends with whom one has social, economic and spiritual reciprocal obligations) recalled that the rooster pull had not been performed on horseback.

Older men and women said that the 1984 and 1986 pictures showed that "things were better before" when "anyone who wanted to" could participate in the rooster pull instead of only those who had been invited by the sponsor.

Young men commented on the drunkenness of the man and how much more beautiful their celebration (1987) had been. They said the 1986 fiesta did not show the proper spirit of the community.

Older men and women stated that the fiesta was performed the same way in the days of the former hacienda, except that there was more food and food was provided for everyone.

The former hacienda owner and the mestizo (mixed Indian and Spanish) schoolteacher commented on the drinking: "No one is working, they are all drinking." The former hacienda owner said the Santiago celebration was "identical" to the ones celebrated years ago.

Showing photographs of different enactments of the ritual revealed the contested meanings it held for people of different generations, familial alliance, and genders. The method pointed to further comparisons that could be drawn between the understandings held by the Quechua villagers, the former landowners, mestizos, and members of neighboring communities who witnessed parts of the ritual in 1987.

#### *Ritual Sponsor (1987)*

*Method:* The subject of this photograph was selected by the ritual sponsor. The sponsor of the 1987 fiesta, his relatives, and male companions asked me to take many pictures depicting their involvement in the ritual. Their selections included: the storeroom with all the white roosters they had raised during the year, including the "seed" rooster that would be given to next year's sponsor and spouse during the feast; the painting of roosters and white horses with streaks of red paint; the sponsor's wife, female companions and relatives cooking the feast on a newly purchased propane stove (the only one in the village) and later feeding people; other objects and activities that reflected their contributions.

*Observations:* The compadre is tying the rooster by his feet from a line strung between two poles. Men on horseback ride under the poles while the rooster is hoisted by others at both ends of the line. They attempt to grab it and pull it off the line; after fighting one another on horseback for possession of the dying cock, the victor delivers the remains to his spouse.

*Comment:* Younger male informants said frequently, "See, this is how it is done." "You have to do cargo (ritual sponsorship) with horses." They elaborated, with comparisons to the disorganized 1986 rooster pull, that unlike the "drunken," "lying" sponsor of that year, this photo was the kind of rooster a sponsor should provide.

When informants compared this event to the 1986 fiesta, they revealed that the ritual sponsor for that year had not even provided a single rooster. The one photographed and described in field notes had been stolen. Greenway reported in notes at the time that a large fight had broken out over the dismembered rooster, but no one had been willing to explain the cause of the fight at the time.

Older men and women of both generations agreed that the numbers of roosters used in 1987 were impressive. But a number of women mentioned how expensive the burden of a sponsor's obligations; many said that in 1986 they could not afford a rooster or talked about the sponsor having had a bad harvest or no money.

Figure 10.2  
Ritual Sponsor (1987) Watches Compadre Prepare for Rooster Pull



Some young men explained, in their comparisons, that the older man in 1986 did not have good compadres who had contributed their part. They stated that the 1987 sponsor had good "help" or reciprocal obligations (*ayni*) with his compadres.

Photographs directed by the ritual participants and later discussions clarified significant aspects of the rite and underlying economic, political, and social tensions.

Figure 10.3  
Four Young Men Ready for the Rooster Pull (1987)



*Four Young Men Ready for the Rooster Pull (1987)*

*Method:* This was another photograph solicited by the compadres of the ritual sponsor. They requested this photo to be taken to demonstrate the beauty of their celebration and the excellence of the village. They wanted photographs during the preparation of the horses, one of them posed, and others as they raced under the dangling rooster fighting one another for it. They also wanted photographs of the roosters on the sacred table prior to being suspended between the poles, the distribution of the birds to their spouses, and the feast.

*Observations:* These four young men were invited by the sponsor to contribute roosters, money for visiting musicians, food, corn beer, alcohol, and cases of beer, and to ride their horses in the rooster pull. They were chosen, in part, because they owned, or could borrow, white horses which the ritual sponsor had decided were essential to the rite. The horses were painted, decorated with tassels, and covered with male ceremonial ponchos.

*Comment:* The ritual sponsor and the young, newly married (and thus, newly adult) men who participated in the ceremony talked about the connection between the white horses and the statue of Santiago. They explic-

itly linked themselves to symbols of *mestizo* identity (in terms of the way a white, bearded man on a white horse reminded them of the former landowner and his horses), wealth, and masculinity. They said the community's celebration was "beautiful," in contrast to years in which any kind of horse was allowed to participate. The older men disagreed angrily and older women thought that the *runa* (term Quechua speakers use to refer to Quechua people) way of decorating the horses and offering coca was the "beautiful" part.

For one informant this photograph prompted a very emotional response. He had with "great anticipation" been "invited" by the sponsor to ride his horse. But five days before the fiesta, someone stabbed his horse in the ribs with a knife. He was distraught, and "angry" at being unable to participate. He filed a grievance with the community authorities. The undercurrent of dissension about the way the celebration was run by invitation only was reiterated by older men who said "everyone" should be in the rooster pull. In the past, "everyone took part." A young man said, "this is how much we love Mollamarca... this shows the pride of Mollamarca."

Older men and both older and younger women (except for those related to the sponsor and his compadres) lamented the lost egalitarian days when anyone with a horse could and did participate in the rooster pull portion of the ceremony. They compared the celebration to the year before: many informants said it was very bad that no horses had been used, that the rooster had been stolen, and that it was dead before it was hung between the poles. Others stated that they put more emphasis on making offerings to Pachamama (female earth spirit) than to Santiago. Celebrations of Santiago were postponed each year however to coincide with offerings to Pachamama and masculine and feminine principles linked ceremonially.

Again, the use of comparisons stimulated debate as differing views were expressed. Primary differences in the meanings of the ritual were seen generationally.

#### *Woman Decorating Household Santiago Shrine*

*Method:* This photograph was taken at the invitation of the woman who is decorating her Santiago shrine housing. She asked that a ritual specialist's offerings to earth spirits, the ceremonial feeding of her horses, and other aspects of her individual celebration be photographed.

*Observations:* From 1983 to 1987 the number of horses in the community increased from approximately 30 in 1983-84 to over 200 in 1987. This occurred in spite of a newly finished road that seasonally linked Mollamarca to the closest market town. Sacrificial offerings for the fertility of horses became increasingly important as demonstrated by the complexity of the ceremony enacted by this woman. She invited a ritual specialist and

Figure 10.4  
Woman Decorating Household Santiago Shrine (1987)



two couples to help. Her shrine used the statue from the old hacienda chapel. She is the mother of the former *mayordomo* (foreman) of the hacienda and operates a small shop out of her house. She relies on horses to carry oil, sugar, coca, and other market goods to exchange for food as illness and age prevent her from caring for fields. Her dress style distinguishes her from other women in the village.

*Comment:* This photograph brought out comparisons to both the public celebration and other household ceremonies. During the private ceremonies families described and were observed ceremonially feeding and decorating horses.

Photographs of the household fertility rites prompted comments on changes over the years in terms of the prevalence of the public versus the private version of fertility ceremonies. In 1987, young people commented that most of their attention was on the public ritual, although they burned offerings for the health and fertility of their horses. Many said they "selected the offering" themselves without a ritual specialist. It was "expensive" to do it the way this woman did.

Her granddaughter explained that this woman was "very devout" and "very Catholic." She could take the Santiago statue because of her former relationship to the hacienda and because she cared for the "patron Santiago" during the year. "People will be pleased that she has spent so much money to *festejar* (celebrate) the patron."

Others commented on the flag on the shrine, noting that the school-teacher "taught us to parade on July 28 for Peru."

This photo and others taken in 1987 revealed the development of links to national politics (people commented on her use of the Peruvian flag on the shrine), emerging differences in status and wealth in the community, and differences in the practices of Catholicism versus those who made their burnt sacrifices solely to the earth and mountain spirits.

#### *Men on Stick Horses Reenact Rooster Pull*

*Method:* Photographs of this added day of festivities were taken at the encouragement of participants who were later asked to explain these activities.

*Observations:* During the celebration of Santiago in 1987, an additional day was added that symbolically inverted all the activities of the previous day's celebration. This photograph demonstrates a few of the day's multi-layered activities. Old men set up a rooster pull in the middle of the weekly soccer tournament with another village. Soccer tournaments with neighboring communities have had increasing social and political importance over the last ten years. The older men rode on long sticks instead of horses while the young men took the old men's place behind the ceremonial table. Women did not prepare a feast, alcohol instead of corn beer was consumed, men danced together, and many other elements underwent change. This festival elaborated all symbols of masculinity and public ceremony with its link to the soccer game yet retained elements of fertility and sexuality of traditional Andean ritual. The young men who had eliminated egalitarian participation by anyone with a horse and who were connected to the increasingly important soccer game had their day disrupted by the older men who performed a farcical version of a Santiago festival. Later the young men joined in, as pictured here.

*Comment:* An older man commented, "Others can see how good Mollomarca is. This is how we celebrate."



Figure 10.5  
Men on Stick Horses Reenact Rooster Pull (1987)



Another said, "We are dancing. This is custom. This is the way Santiago is. We are singing..." (sings song with sexual themes—explicit references to impregnating women, having lots to eat, etc.).

Another explained, "We are doing the 'finch pull.' It is the old men on horses. But the young men had to give up the soccer and join us in dancing to Santiago."

A younger man said, "We did not invite the visitors to drink or dance, no. But they can see how Mollamarca celebrates. They see how proud we are."

The elaboration of this third day of symbolically inverted ritual was initiated by the older men and underscored the contested meanings held by those of older and younger generations. It became clear younger and older men held differing views on what it is to be male and to be Mollomarquino. Older men and women discussed the rituals of the past that celebrated the well being of the horses with feasting and sacrificial offerings. Horses have symbolic potency as representations of wealth and mestizo identity about which Mollomarquinos feel ambivalent or hostile. The old men's inversion of the ritual replaces the manipulations of masculine identity by the young men back into the realm of Quechua conceptions of self and community.

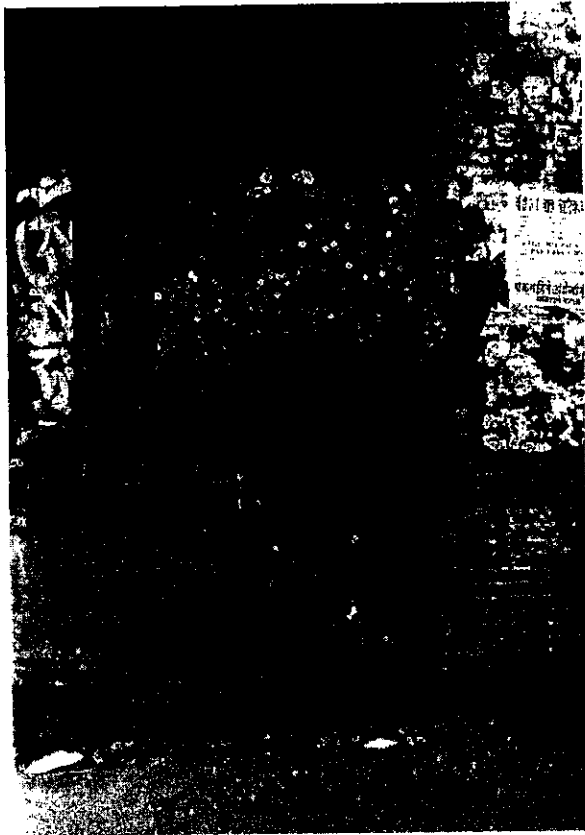
In writing this paper and reviewing tapes, field notes, and photographs, Greenway arrived at new conclusions about the conflicting interpretations individuals held about the Santiago ceremonies; reviewing photographs and people's comments underscored the complexity of belief and experience and reopened the dialectical process of understanding others' points of view.

#### Religious Traditions in a Buddhist Merchant Community, Asan Tol, Kathmandu (Nepal)

Field research<sup>24</sup> by Lewis was conducted among Newar Buddhist merchants in the old market of Kathmandu, Nepal.<sup>25</sup> It began with demographic surveys of the religious order in individual households, including inventories of the visual media adorning household walls. Lewis also documented the area's religious geography; a master map keyed to over 650 photographs organized the preliminary research inquiry. Lewis also collected and utilized historical photographs of both Tibet and Nepal to record merchant family histories.

The elaborately ritualized Buddhist lifestyle was a chief concern, and myriad rituals and festivals were documented using still photography. Many examples were selected, printed, and discussed with key informants. Eventually, Lewis faced an issue common in urban anthropology: sample size and the reliability of generalization. The focal group, a Buddhist merchant caste, included far more households than it was possible to survey. Toward the end of the first fieldwork (1979–82), having recorded many festivals, rituals, and views pertaining to Buddhist-Hindu belief and practice, a representative community sample was selected and shown standard sets of photographs in areas central to the research. This provided a capstone data corpus, resulting in a nuanced portrait of Newar lay Buddhist traditions. Archival films were shot in the middle of the fieldwork, and in the last eight months Lewis worked with a photographer in collaboration for a monograph. Photo exhibitions marked the closing days of fieldwork in 1982.

Figure 10.6  
The Tooth-Ache Naga



*The Tooth-Ache Naga*

*Follow-up Question:* Have you ever made an offering there?

*Data Card Entries:* Respondent #2: Recognized/ (Hereafter R/) "Wasayh. Dyah. ("Tooth-Ache Deity"). There used to be an image of the *nāga* ("serpent deity") on this but it disappeared long ago."

#4: R/ "I don't believe in this. A similar shrine is in Patan [a neighboring town]."

#8: R/ "I recognize this place but our family has never done this."

#15: R/ [woman of 56] "No, I've never seen this." [Calls over son, ask him, he explains] "I don't know this."

#17: R/ [a Buddhist priest] "Both Hindus and Buddhists worship at this place. Before going to the dentist, one should make an offering there. Another *nāga* to worship for this is in Cikhan Mul neighborhood. I have much faith in this. (R. lifts his shirt to show a red marking on his lower back.) "A witch (*boksi*) has drunk my blood right here. Someone is trying to have me killed." [TTL: "Who?"] I cannot say... I showed it to a doctor and he cannot explain it."

#20: R/ "We know of the practice but this is old idea and I've never done this. We just go to the dentist."

#30: R/ "This fixing a coin with the ritual nail was not done in my childhood."

#33: R/ "When I was small, my parents did this once or twice and it worked."

*Data Summary Points:* 86% recognized shrine; 15% had done ritual; only 10% believed in the efficacy.

*Comment:* Featured in every tourist brochure, this suspended nail-filled block of wood is unique in Kathmandu as the place to make offerings—driving an iron nail into the block—in case of toothache. This small shrine is a five-minute walk from the neighborhood studied. A verbal question would have been hard to frame without, in some way, defining the shrine for the respondent; the photograph opened up free associations connected with issues beyond the mere folk belief. The lack of reported resort or belief in this shrine by the merchants indicated how local "folk traditions" are not universally recognized. The responses of several older women supported other data indicating the limited movement and awareness that women had of neighborhoods, shrines, and so on outside those proximate to their own kin.

*Untouchable Sweeper Women*

*Follow-up Question:* According to Buddhist doctrine, are untouchables really inferior?

*Data Card Entries:* (All respondents recognized)

#7: "The older generation used to say, 'It is inauspicious to touch them or even see their faces.'"

#9: "The lowest caste. They are always dirty, eating dirty foods. When we pay them for sweeping, we always drop the money, as we must never touch them directly. Their rebirth is according to the Dharma ("Buddha's teachings"): in previous lifetimes they must have made bad karma."

#3: "Low people. They do good work, but are poor. They are not polite and use bad speech. Yes, being born in this group is the result of bad karma."

#11: "In my childhood, the town was so much cleaner. Their old practice was to use buffalo ribs, straw brooms. Now look what has happened: the

Figure 10.7  
Untouchable Sweeper Women



West German project has bought tractors and that equipment costing hundreds of thousands of rupees, yet the town has gotten dirtier."

#17: "There are actually three or four sub-groups among untouchables. Some are served by the Buddhist priests, some aren't."

#14: "In our courtyard, we give them 5 rupees to clean our courtyard each month. I think that they are born in this state to do this work, having just been in hell (narak)."

#26: "The worst part of their lifestyle is their eating the food leftovers from our feast plates. This is karma punishment."

#32: "Their rebirth is due to the fact that they didn't give *dāna* ("religious donations") or earn *punya* ("merit") in their previous lifetime."

*Comment:* Useful information on the history of traditional public health obtained, as well as side comments on the ineffectiveness of development project work. How much more effective a photograph was compared to the mere abstraction of a verbal question alone. Responses to this image showed how close Newar Buddhist attitudes were to Hindu attitudes on questions of caste reckoning. Here, too, Buddhist doctrine was used to explain the justice of the caste system. Heuristically, this led to my re-examination of popular Buddhist story literature for caste sentiments: I found these narratives to express views congruent with Newar community attitudes.



Figure 10.8  
Buddha Procession

### Buddha Procession

*Data Card Entries:* #2: "Meaning is that all the deities obey the Buddha."

#5: "The Hindu gods go before and do not step on the cloth, showing the Buddha being above them. I think I once read the Sanskrit text which just says 'all gods and goddesses worshipped Buddha.' Newars have added these details."

#27: "The Hindus say the Buddha is one of Visnu's *avatāras*; we Buddhists say the Hindu gods are servants."

#13: "Another thing is that the Hindu gods will be reborn on Earth again. You should also show *Shristikantha Avalokiteshwara*, in which all the Hindu deities come forth from the Buddha's body."

#14: "We have this one right on the wall over there! Each Hindu deity has a job to do."

#11: [The respondent (male, 46) breaks into a popular song that describes the procession, including a line or two that describes each individual figure shown. He points to each as he sings happily.]

#17: "We like to show this picture to the Shrestas (Hindu shopkeepers of the market, competitors, and neighbors)...of"

#32: "The Buddhist priests made this up."

#18: [Grandmother, over 60] "I have heard the Theravada nuns tell this story." [Calls over grandson, age 9; explains it to him, then touches the photo reverently to her head, then his.]

*Data Summary:* 96% of informants recognized.

*Comment:* This incident from the Buddha's life is popular in local devotional prints and paintings. Showing the Buddha revisiting Lumbini, his birthplace, the scene is a powerful statement of Buddhism's superiority over Hinduism: among the servants are the Hindu gods Shiva, Visnu, Brahma, along with a host of demigods. The responses elicited Hindu-Buddhist sentiments and pointed to other such polemical arts. Several informants showed how this scene had also been incorporated into song. In the pretest, comments on other Hindu-Buddhist images alerted me to the existence of other "polemic" art/iconographic forms, which I then added to the final questionnaire.

### The Goat Sacrifice

*Data Card Entries:* #1: "A non-Buddhist custom.... One shouldn't harm others. It's demerit (*pāpa*). The Hindus say that the animal goes to heaven. They say that the ritualist repeats a *mantra* so that the animal goes to heaven. Ha! If that is so, why not sacrifice one's mother, father, children!"

#7: "Buddhists today say this should not be done, but up until the recent past, they also sacrificed. The Theravada monks [an organized presence in Nepal since the 1930s] have really changed this attitude..."

Figure 10.9  
The Goat Sacrifice



#8: (Looks for a minute silently, then laughs.) "I'd like a copy of this photograph." [TTL: "Why do you like it?"] "The sacrificer is like Yama, the Lord of Death. It reminds me of the fact of impending death, that death will claim me, just as it will this goat. And look how the others look on, making bad karma (*pāpa*)."

#19: [Informant looks at the photograph, puts it down quickly, seeming upset] "It's inauspicious even to look at this. If killing is mentioned, I cannot eat meat." (This was the reaction of six others.)

#13: "It was the Hindu teacher Shankarācārya who convinced the Buddhists to tolerate such offerings, saying that the deities are happy only if this is done."

#15 [A Buddhist priest]: "In the Buddhist ritual, we say mantras to ensure that the animal is reborn in Sukhāvati ("The Buddhist Pure Land, a heaven where meditation and salvation are easy"). We believe that the animal state is not a good one.... In my opinion, we began doing these rituals for the laymen, to meet their wishes."

*Data Summary:* Only 55% of all informants knew the occasion of the sacrifice, with 75% of women unsure of the location.

*Comment:* The original intent of this photo was to see how widespread the community awareness was of an event held right in the central crossroads of the bazaar. Yearly during the fall Durga Festival (Nepali: Dasain; Newari: Mohani), a pole bearing a flag showing Bhairava, the fierce protector of the modern Hindu state, is erected where it will remain for an entire year. The style of sacrifice is non-Newar; it is done by "outsiders," sponsored by the state. The responses elicited a shift in attitudes and current ambivalent attitudes toward animal sacrifice. Priestly Mahayana Buddhist justifications for it are juxtaposed with lay preferences. The responses indicate how problematic it is to assume that urban people living amidst ritual traditions will necessarily know of their existence, much less share in them.

### Marx and Buddha

*Data Card Entries:* #26: "This is where we are today. Here is a Buddhist priest also venerating Marx."

#6: "The man on the left... has not learned the proper spoken formula (*mantras*) to Buddhist rituals to carry on as his own father has. When the old man dies, what will happen to the grandson? It is cases like this that make me pessimistic about the old traditions surviving."

#12: "I know that in your country, Marx is an enemy. But Nepal is a very tiny country. For us, his doctrine tells us not to accept oppression and we can respect that. Of course, the Buddha is far beyond any human so there can be no comparison."

#36: "... For me, a true communist is a great bodhisattva. [A bodhisattva is a Mahayana Buddhist who has the spiritual capacity to enter nirvāna but makes a vow instead to help other beings ceaselessly until all are saved.] Concern with the well-being of all others, not just oneself after death, is superior. Today, it is *not* offering this flower to that deity, but working for others that should be the true service of Buddhists in Nepal."

*Comment:* Only after obtaining the subjects' permission could I show this picture in 1982, when all political parties in Nepal, Communists included, were officially prohibited. The Buddhist merchants were (and

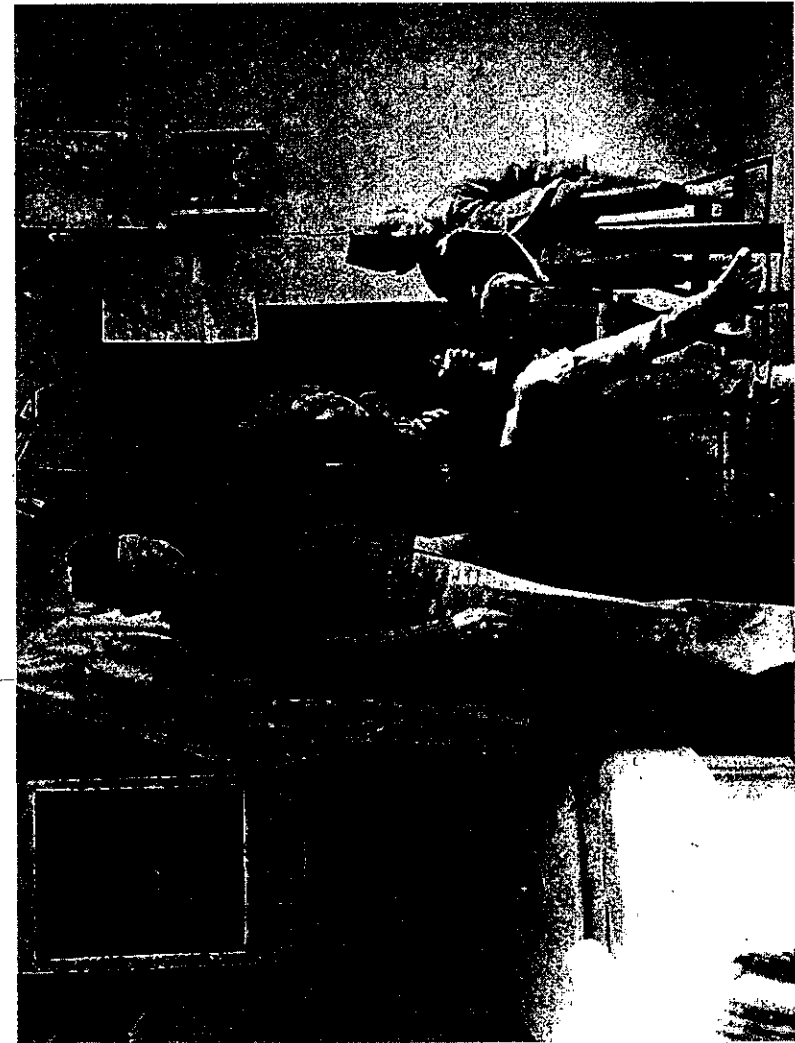


Figure 10.10  
Marx and Buddha

are) quite sympathetic to leftist parties. (Since 1990, when leftist groups led a popular uprising that restored multiparty government, Communist Party membership has been legal.) To me, this photograph summarized the two major landmarks in the community's cognitive awareness. Questionnaire responses showed that others saw this in the portrait, too.

## CONCLUSION

Anthropologists find themselves in some of the most unique human encounters. Care in the mastery of photographic technology and the design of studies that incorporate its use will enhance the understanding and interpretation of other realities. Researchers who have used photography as a research tool laud its contribution to the clarification of complex layers of culture and its facilitation of the inclusion of native viewpoints and participation (Banks and Morphy 1997; van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001).

With regard to the study of religion, we view photography as a means of tapping into the multivocal nature of traditional practices and beliefs. Interviews with groups and individuals, using photographs as prompts, have in our experience elucidated the varieties of ways individuals within a culture, religious tradition, or community can experience and perceive religion. We have also found that for those of us who study religion, there is a danger of overrepresenting tradition and belief; we tend to systematize, categorize and construct a view of religious reality as if it were a *thing*. The types of methodological techniques we have outlined above provide ways of incorporating the multiple views and meanings that emerge as people engage themselves in a variety of social, political, and economic contexts. We have also noted, perhaps due to the "detachment" that people seem to express when viewing photos (Collier and Collier 1986:107), that when photographs are used in conversation or systematic interviews, people are often freer to express doubt, disbelief or skepticism. Significantly, in the interview process photographs import—and reimport—the spontaneity and chaos of everyday life back into the fieldwork-analysis dialectic: photographs open many windows for informants to see and explain from, and help the researcher as well to keep seeing and evaluating with fresh inputs and sound, analytical clues. Photographs thus infuse the interview context with a dialectical reflexivity for the subject, the photographer/researcher, and the future audience.

Photographic methodologies, particularly when people photograph themselves, may also become avenues through which our former research "subjects" objectify, represent, and articulate their own belief systems and world views. As previous "objects" or "subjects" become agents in our ethnographic endeavors (Asch 1991:106), our understanding of religion

will broaden and incorporate the multiple views of believers. The spread of such photographic research methods may not necessarily lead to media "swallowing" cultures (Carpenter 1972:165; Prins and Bishop 2002), but shows the possibility for empowering subjects to represent themselves and to challenge researchers to yield authority over the interpretation of others' religious experiences.

## NOTES

1. Other scholars have used photography as a qualitative tool in gerontology (Howell 1991; Magilvy et al. 1992), health research (Highley and Ferentz 1988), environmental psychology (Stamps 1990), phenomenology (Ziller 1990), ethnohistorical analysis (Edwards 1992; Kaplan 1990), and psychological therapy (Blinn 1987; Weiser 1988).

2. See the photographic essays of Banks (1989), Driesson (1987), Kielstra (1986), Keenoy and Stanton (1985), Bateson and Mead (1942).

3. For a discussion of technical considerations, see Collier and Collier (1986:207–38). Light Impressions, an archival supply and visual resources supplier, publishes a visual resources catalogue that has a number of instructional books and videos, such as *Beyond Basic Photography*, Horenstein, and guides to lenses, camera repair and maintenance, and so forth. Light Impressions, 439 Monroe Ave., P.O. Box 940, Rochester, NY 14603-094.

4. The photographer should remember to use the automated timer to place him- or herself within the frame. Documentary filmmaker Michael Lemle (*Media Probes 1977–82*) insists that honesty in filming demands these scenes to unmask any (false) assumption that the camera was invisible or that the technology itself did not participate in shaping the study.

5. For a discussion of funding for ethnographic filming, see Jell-Bahlsen (1988), Pink (2001), and Prosser (1998).

6. Lewis adds a note of caution, having seen anthropologists in Nepal discard them in despair as the camera became a magnet attracting hundreds of requests for portraits, making other work nearly impossible.

7. See the film *A Man Called Bee* for a portrayal of Napoleon Chagnon's use of photographs in genealogical interviewing, village mapping, and documenting political change.

8. For example, Kodak Panatomic-X.

9. See also the *History of Photography* (Newhall 1982) and Becker (1981). Again, Light Impressions is a good source for supplies and also for photographic editions of collections of documentary photographers, historical photographs, and technical manuals.

10. Michaels (1982) discusses similar issues for video and film.

11. For example, as European society placed more emphasis on children, it became more important to have them photographed. Prior to 1939, first communion and baptism photographs are absent in family collections; after 1945, they make up half the photos (Bordieu 1990:22).

12. See also Blinn (1988), Boerdam (1980), Hirsch (1981), Kotkin (1978), Lesy (1980).

13. See Chiozzi (1989) for a discussion of Tuscan photographic collections, Hoppál (1990) for Eastern European ethnographic photographic sources, Davidson (1988) for sources of photographs in Mexico, and Glenn (1992) for a discussion of the Smithsonian National Anthropology Archives. Pink (2001) includes a useful list of Web sites that allow access to photographic collections.

14. For example, the photograph of an Igorot man who was himself on display during the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair (Clifford 1988:164) and the photograph of Trucanini, "the last Tasmanian" discussed by Poignant (1992), or !Nai, who looks out at the filmmaker and audience and says, "Don't look at my face" (!Nai, the Story of a !Kung Woman).

15. MacDougall (1992) asserts that photographs may be viewed differently in different cultural contexts. In India, he argues, photographs may be iconic versus the indexical Western view of them. See also Miller (1973).

16. Collier and Collier provide information on interviewing with photographs (1986:99-119); see Spradley (1979) on ethnographic interviewing and participant-observation (1980) and Pelto and Pelto (1979), Prosser (1998), and van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2001) for research methods.

17. See Moore (1992) for a consideration of the consequences of indigenous video production for anthropology and ethnographic film.

18. This project is also discussed in Worth (1981).

19. It is interesting to compare these native-generated efforts with ethnographic films such as those in the Disappearing World Series (Ginsburg 1992; Weiner 1992; Turner 1992; Turton 1992; Singer and Seidenberg 1992).

20. This research was supported by a Fulbright Award, 1983-84, and photographic supplies were purchased with a University of Washington Graduate School Award. Susan Lagerquist assisted Greenway in 1986, and in 1987 Barbara Knox-Seith accompanied Greenway to the field and also took many photographs of the Santiago celebration.

21. See Greenway (1987, 1998, 2002).

22. For a fuller discussion of the ritual, see Greenway (1988).

23. The three-day ritual focuses on the fertility of horses. Typically, the first day the ritual sponsor and his compadres remove a replica of Santiago, a white, bearded, sword-wielding Spaniard astride a white horse from his usual home in the chapel. The saint is carried 28 kilometers to the closest town with a priest, who blesses it. Also on the first day, individual households carry out fertility ceremonies (ritual marriages) for their horses, decorating, feeding, anointing them with corn beer and making offerings of coca leaves and other items to the Earth spirits. The second day, upon the return of the saint, men astride horses enter the chapel for prayers, carry the saint up the hill, and set up a shrine and altar (mesa) of a cloth on the ground near the school. On this day, the rooster pull (*gallo t' ipiy*) is carried out—a rooster is strung on a line suspended between two poles and men on horseback race underneath and attempt to pull the rooster down. In the past, on the last day, sponsors for the next year are selected, the saint is returned to the chapel, and festivities continue through the night. In 1987, however, additional activities were enacted on the last day. A celebration took place in which a reversal of all the activities of the previous day occurred. Old men (not young bachelors and newly married men) used eucalyptus poles and plow handles between their legs as horses and carried out a rooster pull, interrupted the young men's soccer

championship, and with a great deal of boisterous clowning, physical horseplay, and dancing among themselves, finished the final day of the celebration.

24. Field research in Nepal was supported by a Fulbright award 1979-81 and a Kent Foundation Fellowship, 1981-82. Special funding for photographic studies is gratefully acknowledged from the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.

25. See Lewis (1984, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c, 1993a, 1993b, 1993c, 1993d, 1993e, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000, and research films 1980, 1982, 1987, 1992).

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