

Use of Photographs as Data Sources for Costume Research

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore that what is the consideration when using photographs as data sources for historic costume research. So in other to achieve the study , first of all, I have to think over about the new media, photography, and then review the articles and studies how they have been used by scholars outside or our field.

The considerations are the followings:

1. What kind of information can be found in historic photographs? The kind of information that may only be found in historic photographs and not in any other data source. What types of photographs are there; how the information varies by type of photograph.
2. What photographs can provide as data sources? How photographs can be used quantitative versus qualitative information; how to collect this information from one or more photographs, the criteria for the use of photographs.
3. Limitations of using historic photographs and what kind of information cannot be found in historic photographs. Be sure to discuss investigating the reliability of assigned dates;the importance of and suggestions on how could be done as part of the criterial for use of photographs. So, by asking and understanding these questions, we will use photographs better as a visual resource forward.

I. Introduction

Most of the researches and studies for historic apparel and textile require visual data sources. Therefore we need to be informed of visual data sources which we use. What are visual data sources? They are illustrations of the objects studied such as paintings, drawings, sculpture, caricatures, engravings, woodcuts, fashion plates, frescoes, tapestries, illuminated manuscripts, monumental effigies, mosaics, stained glass, silhouettes, embroidery,

photographs and actual specimens of costume.

They have been used as the most immediately available primary sources. Primary sources consisted of evidence that was actually part of or produced by the event the historian is studying. For example extant garment, diary in which individual discusses clothing and photographs taken during the time period being studied. Some historian might call these secondary sources but one believe photographs would be primary when individuals in the photographs had knowledge and wanted the photographs to be taken.

According to the special period visual data sources are different. Greek researchers have used sculptures and ceramic decorations, while for Roman sculpture, mosaics and frescoes would be sources. For nineteenth century, paintings, drawings, miniatures, engravings, silhouettes, caricatures, fashion plates, photographs and dolls, while for twentieth century, photographs, films, paintings, drawings, and caricatures would be sources. Before camera's invention, paintings, drawing and others are major visual sources for costume studies. Paintings particularly in periods from which few specimens of costume survive but they should always be considered most carefully in relation to other sources whenever possible. Sculpture is the most widespread form of all arts and examples survived from earliest times. It can broadly be defined as the art of representing observed or imagine objects in solid materials and in three dimensions by modeling or carving. From the point of view of the costume historians it is the record of an observed object, the clothed human figure which is of interest. Sculptures in stone which have endured the ravages of time are often the only sources of information still in existence for early periods from which few no examples of textiles have been preserved. Drawings and engravings provide much source material. A pen chalk or pencil sketch will give impression of movement that is often lacking in painting, while a careful drawing in a medium like silver point can convey a great deal information. Mosaics were used as decorative surfaces in both domestic and ecclesiastical architectural settings. Patterns and pictures were made by setting small pieces of mineral, glass, stone. In the second and early third century a lot of mosaic works were used all over the Roman Empire.

Stained glass windows are an important element in church decoration from the beginning of the twelfth century. During the Middle ages they played an important role in glorifying and telling the scripture stories, there are many figures depicted in contemporary dresses from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. Silhouettes which were very popular are the fore runners of the photograph.

As a source of information about costume they have the advantage of forcing the observer to study the outline of the costumed figure. At last early attempts at photography were made by Joseph Niepce, Jacques Daguerre and William Talbot. So far, photograph is one part of important elements for studies and have also been used it other fields than clothing and textiles.

Therefore the purpose of this paper is to explore that what is the consideration when using photographs as data sources for historic costume research. So in other to achieve the study , first of all, I have to think over about the new media, photography, and then review the articles and studies how they have been used by scholars outside or our field.

II. The new visual media ; photography

After camera's invent, the photograph has become new visual media source for historic and textile research in the nineteenth century. In other to perform these researches, first of all, we have to think over, that is, why we have to know the history of photography? Because understanding of the history of photography helps to assess the validity of particular photographic images for specific costume research projects. And it

reveals the technical constraints and the format. Also recognition of a photographic process or format can provide a general date.

What is the source of historic photographs? There are a lot of things individuals books published historical photographs, author's photograph collection, historical or heritage center, archives, family snapshots or photograph collection.

In the photographic medium and portraiture format, there are daguerreotype, ambrotype, tintype, card and carte de viste(Rowat, Theres. p32). Daguerreotype was invented by Louis Daguerre, it was introduced into Americans in 1839. With beginning 1860's, technical evolution of cameras and technique was rapid. Portability was the initial attraction by mid 1880's were several kinds of hand held cameras. In the late 1880's, an inexpensive method of reprinting photographs in books, magazines, and newspapers was developed.

There have been six pieces according to the archival context(Rowat, Theres. p32). One is a personal and family collections. The fact that they have found their way into archival repositories suggests that the originators were conscious of the social status of the family. They were acquired as donations directly from the family, suggesting that family recognized its place in the community. Family collections allow costume researchers to concern with the identity of the wearer to expand their profile of the individual depicted by referring to other photographs as well as diaries, letters, scrapbooks and clippings that form part of the collection. The occupation, social and economic status and position within the family can often be determined. Anecdotal information about the events photographed and the costume worn might be found in personal

papers accompanying the photographs and may perhaps recast the interpretation of the costume. Two is a professional and studio photographs. Their continuity and comprehensiveness make them particularly valuable as research sources. Their negative collections may be found in archival collection and maybe accompanied by the appointment logbooks which identify the sitter, the date and the format. The strength of these collections lies in the continuity, comprehensiveness and identification that they offer as a source for comparative costume study. As a relatively complete working records, they are not subject to the personal selection process that influence the composition

of family collections. With the context of studio portraiture established, the researcher can consider other variables such as date, location. Three is a amateur photography. It 's more likely to exist outside the approval of public tastes or business practice, since there was no reliance on selling prints to earn a living. Spontaneity, naturalness and familiarity are more likely to appear in this domain. The very personal perspective of the serious amateur enriches the study of dress in informal or intimate situations, unposed postures or pure flights of fancy. Four is a press photography. Newspaper photograph collections are among the most prolific creators of photographs. These collections are most often organized chronologically by assignment, containing all of the negatives in a photo shoot. The archival collection allows the researcher to access to a wealth of additional imagines that were rejected in the editing process. It provides a more comprehensive context and the possibility of incidental information that may be revealing. Captions that usually accompany these photographs not only provide extensive

identification but also the vocabulary and language structures employed reveal cultural values that have informed the viewpoint from which the photograph was taken and the viewpoint from which it was interpreted in its time. Five is organizational and business records. Related photographic holdings document the workplace, production processes, product lines and organizational activities. As costume sources, these collections document dress in the work context as well as in group activities such as company picnics, promotions and celebrations. Groups include religious organizations, benevolent societies, sports or recreational associations, multi-cultural organization and educational bodies. These collections tend to cover organized activities which are repeated at regular intervals and allow costume comparisons over time. Six is government records. The public collections served a precise purpose that can be connected to stated departmental mandates. They are also often well documented through captions and comprehensive in spanning time periods. The study of the costume in these images is enhanced by an understanding of the cultural values that are reflected in the objectives of the institution. These values are likely to be echoed in the choice of identifying information appearing with the images and in the languages used in original captions.

III. Use of photography as data source

What should be considered when using photographs as data sources? What are the criteria to use photographs? It depends upon research question. The value of photographic image as documentary evidence is greatly

enhanced by the context in which it is found. What are the advantages? Those are; what kind of information can be found in historic photographs? And what photographs can be used as data sources? What are the disadvantages? Those are; what are the limitations and problems or using historic photographs? How that have been used in research? How that could be used?

1. What kind of information can be found in historic photographs?

In the nineteenth century, photographs are essential components in interpretation of costume. Patterns and designs record what was conceived; surviving artifacts present what was produced delivered; business records document volumes and costs; catalogues and prescriptive materials portray ideals Photographs contribute a unique dimension to the study of what was actually worn, how it was worn, and what it meant to the wearer and the viewer (Rowat, Theresa, p.32).

In using photographic sources, the analysis of researches can focus on the interplay of the conventions of dress and photography. Dress is a part of the emblematic structure that conveys class, economic, status, gender roles, races and beliefs. In a conscious photo occasion, dress and pose work together to place the individual within a system of signification, dress and pose work together to place the individual within a system of signification. The image is constructed so that it controls the manner in which it is read by its intended audience. Photographic collections provide a range source for comparative study, complementing prescriptive fashion found in catalogues and promotional materials. Also visual

information is most useful for researchers when it is in a specialized collection(Jussim, E, p.764). It is at this point that research may be said to become possible, as what is ordinarily needed to solve a problem is a sufficient quantity of information to permit generalization.

Individual visual records acquired comprehensively can provide sufficient visual information to permit the verification of hypotheses about the nature of various phenomena.

The essential assumption of this time of research is that history is not a compilation of unique visual records exists but rather is a normative phenomenon for which the quantitative evaluation of the content of large number of visual records may provide visual evidence(Jussim, E, p.765).

Photographs need to be studied as a part of popular culture and within the large concept they represent. In doing so we will deepen our understanding both of the photographs and of culture. The value of photographs as culture artifacts rests with their prevalence their sense of intimacy and their reflection of the deeper assumptions of both maker and subject (Oestreicher, R. p48).

Photographs provide a more intimate kind of evidence, an opportunity to directly confront a representation of a living individual. What kind of clothes does one wear? What are they doing? If we ponder the meaning of what we see in the photographs, we can deduce something about assumptions of the people in the photographs and the people who made them. Photograph's potential as historical evidence was recognized almost immediately after the medium's invention(Holt, G.E, p.278).

As researchers have come to recognize the

intrinsic value of the photograph in scholarly and popular research treated the photograph as an equal partner to more traditional forms of special collection. Historians are now much more careful about verifying the caption on the back of the print and utilizing the photograph as a primary source of evidence and documentation. Photographs are no longer considered as mere conveyors of information but also as artifacts (Kurutz, G.F, p69). It is often clearly understood what cannot be done with photography because of the semantic problem. But it is the task of the photographer working in behavioral science to discover what observational and communication purposes photography can serve(Byers, P, p.79).

Of all the types of popular culture media is amateur snapshot photography. Snapshot photography is still primarily a private mode. Visual images can provide us with clues that have usefulness as historical evidence, providing information that may open up rich veins of historical truths and meanings(Bogardus, R.P, p.117). Also it is to investigate fashion change and it's to record a way of life prior to the advent of mass transportation or mass communication.

2. What photographs can provide as data sources?

Some kinds of information that may only be found in historic photographs and not in any other data source. If we can recognize meaningful patterns within this quantity of data, we can generalize on the basis of thousands of case spread over vast time and space and drawn from every conceivable category of experience (Oestreicher, R. pp48-9).

In the case family albums, it is record of family life, travel and shared activities. Albums created

in the late nineteenth century can be compared with each other and with those produced in this century as records of social and cultural continuity and diversity (Peter, M & Mergen, B, p298). What the photographer thought most important to record, attitudes of people toward the camera, kinds of activities and relationship depicted. First it's information on culture, that is cultural rituals, attitudes towards ritual events; wedding portraits and photographs. Information on relationships among groups of people-sports teams, occupational groups, clubs or association and informal groups. Second it's questions of identity. By looking at a cross section of these pictures, the researcher can begin to develop a list of what elements in the photographs make them similar or unique. A comparison can be made between occupational group portraits.

In the case snapshot, it is a private form of communication, snapshots gave additional date to what was collected in oral interview. We can see the look of a time past, showing us

3. What is the limitations or problems of using historic photographs?

First, it is limitation of personal and family collection. The cross-section of society represented in these collections tends, therefore to be limited to those with a sense of family lineage and with disposable income to obtain photographs. It also suggests there has been a continuity of family home where the material was physically collected and preserved over time.

Second, it is limitations of professional and studio photographers. Costume in studio collections may be limited to formal attire and frontal views, since the photograph occasion is governed by the conventions of portraiture.

Third, it is limitations of amateur photography. Due to the eclectic nature of amateur collections, patterns of research and possible findings are more difficult to predict. Also most amateur snapshots do little to illuminate city history. The amateur aimed his camera at more narrowly personal subjects like his house, family, friends and garden or subjects of immediate interest.

Fourth, it is technology limitations. Technology limitations minimized movement and curtailed the taking of photographs in bad weather and at night; the personal interest of the photographer, which has meant concentration on the public city, rather than on residential neighborhoods; the bias of the photographer, who may have consciously aimed his camera or cropped his print to produce a picture that perhaps falsely conveyed more than it recorded and finally, the fecklessness of historical preservation.

Fifth, it is size and clarity. The sample is neither random nor necessarily representative. The small size of the sample would severely limit the statistical validity of any conclusions which might be drawn from it (Oestreicher, Richard, p.61). Since all the photographs are black, the exact colors remain indeterminable. Also early photograph was unable to render color, but tonal translation of color was also misleading and deficient.

Sixth, it is date. Whether the dates given are too late, too early or on the mark, the researcher must be aware of the pitfalls of identification. Often, photographs are undated and provide little or no information about the source of the photograph, that is who took it, the reason it was taken and whether it was staged or spontaneous.

Seventh, it is cost. No or few computer databases of photographs (CD-ROM indexes) must be able to publish the photographs and

have a good image for publication, obtaining rights may be a problem and cost of photo reproduction is high. When it published images it may be highly degraded versions of original.

Photographs also offer limited information about the women in the picture, their names, ages or occupations. The photographs likewise do not reveal where the woman lived. So it's difficult to delineate whether the women in the photographs were rural or urban, making it is impossible to determine the extent of usage in these areas(Hunt, patricia p.31)

IV. Conclusion

Photography is the new visual media source for study of costume, particularly in nineteenth century. It was in 1837 that Louis Daguerre first produced a clear, permanent photographic image and within a few years his daguerro type technique was widely used to create small, mirror image portraits. The improved ambrotype of the 1850's brought portiture to a wide social range but the real impetus came with craze for carte de viste inthe 1860's. Portrait photographs of friends, relatives and celebrities from the royal family downwards, were printed in the size of visiting cards. Usually studio portraits with avery limited range of poses and backdrops, they are invaluable for details of fashionable usually formal dress. At the early 1870's new technical advances led the development of the snapshot. By the late 1880's, the use of continuous film enabled amateurs to capture crowd scenes and outdoor portraits. The latter is an unique source for the study of informal working class and occupational dress. Most photographs have

become available in the form of published illustration in newspaper and magazines but some archives of the original photographs are housed in museum. In these days new techniques and reproduction have made a wider range of visual material available and these can be useful source to supplement and counter balance those which are more concerned about dresses. A selection of these can be found in this survey to represent other areas that can be explored such as magazines, shop catalogue and advertisements. Nevertheless nineteenth and twentieth century are so rich periods than any previous periods. If we use photographs for studying costume, we indispensably consider the following which I already have discussed:

What kind of information can be found in historic photographs? The kind of information that may only be found in historic photographs and not in any other data source. What types of photographs are there; how the information varies by type of photograph.

What photographs can provide as data sources? How photographs can be used quantitative versus qualitative information; how to collect this information from one or more photographs, the criteria for the use of photographs.

Limitations of using historic photographs and what kind of information cannot be found in historic photographs. Be sure to discuss investigating the reliability of assigned dates;the importance of and suggestions on how could be done as part of the criterial for use of photographs. So, by asking and understanding these questions, we will use photographs better as a visual resource forward.

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