

## Session 4

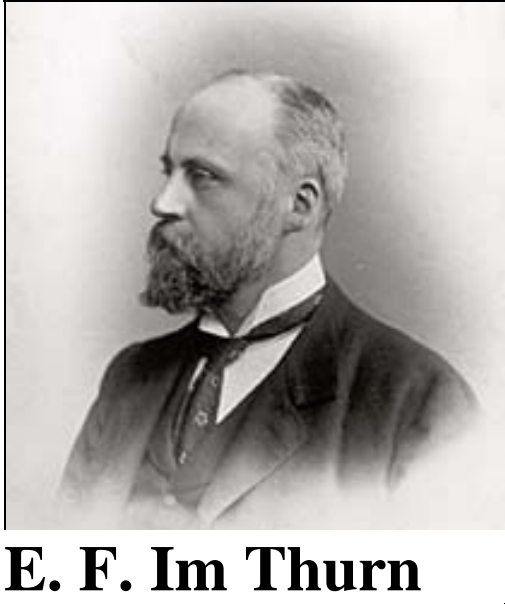


# **Ethnographic Photography: Conventions and Methodologies**

## **Conventions in Photography by Ethnographers**

### **Research ABOUT the subject** **Explanation—*Erklärung***

- To use for scientific categorization and explanation
- No image enhancement
- To document
- Show objects in actual, local, use
- Intended for an audience outside of the field setting



**E. F. Im Thurn**

**“a good series of photographs showing each of the possessions of a primitive folk, and its use, would be far more instructive and far more interesting than any collection of the articles themselves.”**



## “corpses would be better”

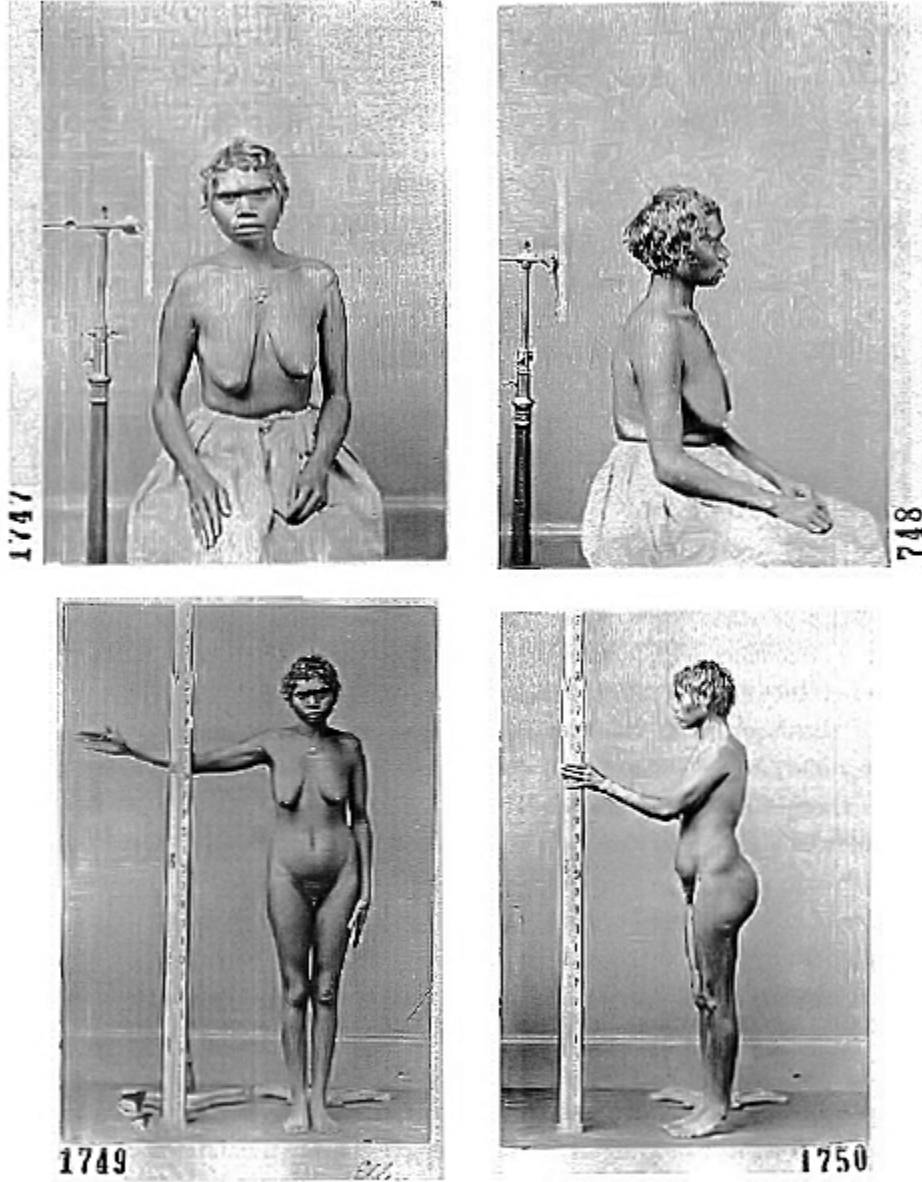
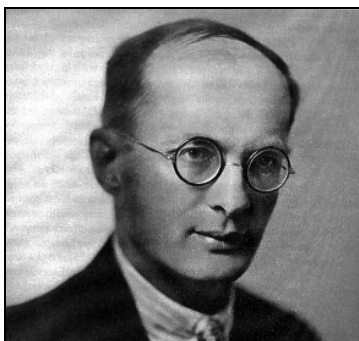


FIG. 3.2 Four views of Ellen, age 22, a South Australian Aboriginal woman photographed according to T. H. Huxley's instructions, c. 1870. (Royal Anthropological Institute 1747, 1748, 1749, 1750. Courtesy RAI)

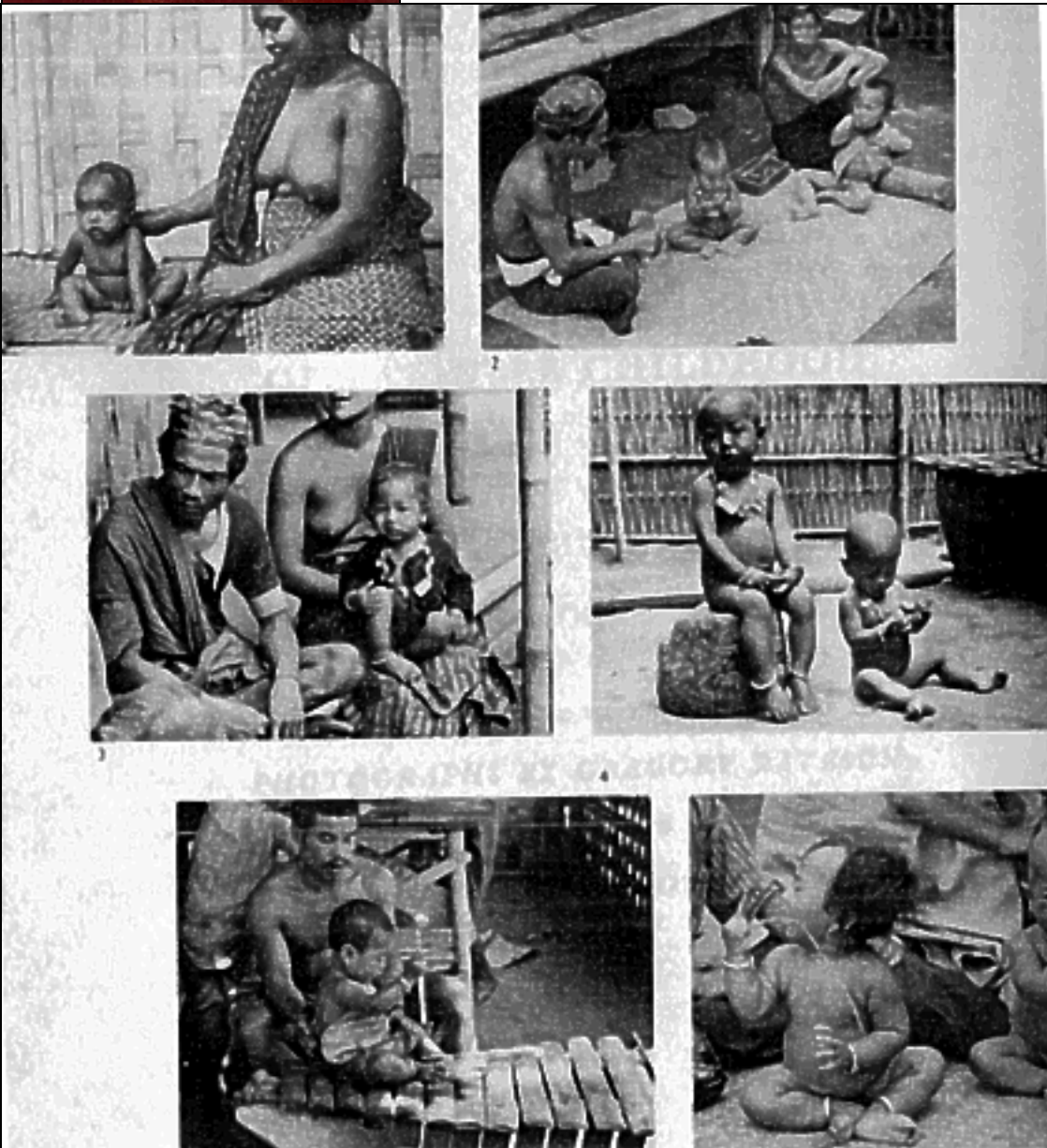


**Bronislaw  
Malinowski**



**“a photograph should capture not only the image of whoever or whatever was the focus of the photographer's attention, but also the visible context for that focus, and it should provide sufficient clues to the meaning of the object, person, or act which was the subject of the photograph”—Michael Young**

# Margaret Mead



## **Research WITH the subject**

### **Understanding— *Verstehen***

- Make the photograph part of the research setting itself
- Allowing subjects to shape the photograph
- Pictures used in interaction with informants, used within the local setting [see “photo elicitation” below]



“Photographs...themselves become commodities for exchange and the sites of negotiation, for example, among informants, between researchers and informants, between researchers and their families and friends ‘at home’ and among researchers... .images associated with ethnographers will also be implicated in the way other people construct their identities and thus impact on their social relationships and experiences” (Sarah Pink 2001: 35-36)

# **Methodology—Challenges and Benefits of Photography in Fieldwork**

## ***Theoretical purposes of the photos***

- What are your research questions?
- What will images do to address these questions?

## ***Methodological considerations***

- Rapport
- Permission
- Participant observation?
- Camera-oriented behaviours? Are they “acting”?

## ***Photo elicitation, lessening anxiety, creating opportunities for discussion:***

- 1) “subjects” → collaborators
- 2) memory aids
- 3) direct group discussions
- 4) conversation more than interview
- 5) “native point of view”

### ***Benefits in Building Rapport***

- 1) shared with the people you photographed
- 2) a talking point with research subjects
- 3) can further, extend and deepen rapport like few other research interactions



# Methodology—The Historical Analysis of “Old Photographs”

Things to keep in mind about photography:

- a mode of **communication**
- **conventions**
- **social contexts**
- **power relations**

*Strategy:*

**The author of a picture**

**The picture itself**

**The content of an image/ internal narrative**

**The viewer**

*In Elizabeth Edwards (1992):*

- (1) analysis of internal evidence and comparisons
- (2) history of photography
- (3) intention and purposes
- (4) ethnographic subjects
- (5) uses