

Viewing Violence in the British Empire: Images of Atrocity from the Battle of Omdurman, 1898

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Abstract: This article explores a range of photographs taken in the aftermath of the Battle of Omdurman on 2 September 1898, the final and decisive battle of the Anglo-Egyptian Reconquest of the Sudan (1896–98). This campaign was particularly controversial for the methods that were used against the Mahdīa, which included the massacring of the enemy wounded and those trying to surrender. The photographs under examination are relevant to considerations of the ensuing controversies of the campaign in which Kitchener was obliged to write directly to Queen Victoria to explain his actions, notably in relation to the bombing of the Mahdī's tomb and the treatment of his remains. As historians have previously noted, the events in Omdurman constituted a massacre rather than a battle, and areas of dispute include whether Emirs were specifically targeted for destruction in the campaign. The photographs in question contribute to this debate. This article addresses the photographs in the wider context of violence throughout the British Empire and in the context of other images of British violence. That such photographs are not commonly viewed and discussed speaks to wider issues regarding popular perceptions of the 'benevolent' British Empire, particularly in comparison to its European counterparts.

Keywords: Sudan, colonial violence, British Empire, atrocity photography, mass violence, genocide studies

This article examines a selection of photographs taken by correspondent Francis Gregson in the final days of the Anglo-Egyptian reconquest of Sudan in 1898. These images were included in an album which conveyed various aspects of the campaign, from the mundane to the atrocious. Some of these images relate to the most controversial aspects of the campaign and depict the violence and aftermaths of the Battle of Omdurman, under Horatio Herbert Kitchener. This battle entailed a range of appalling acts on the part of the Anglo-Egyptian army, including the massacring of the enemy wounded. I argue that these images of atrocity provide a counterbalance to the representation of Britain's 'small wars' across the Empire as 'colonial derring-do'. Such accounts contribute to masking the brutalities of British colonial warfare.¹ While discussions on atroc-

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ity photography typically centre on issues of ethics, my focus here goes beyond these debates.² I argue that the album represents a part of the atrocity and, by extension, in his actions as photographer Gregson is part of these events as a perpetrator of violence.

The British examples of atrocity photography that I address here have been largely overlooked in the historiography of both this conflict and atrocity photography more broadly; that these images have garnered limited exposure is indicative of wider issues related to popular perceptions of a 'benevolent' British Empire and the failure of some imperial historians to grapple with its legacies. This apparent neglect has again come to the fore in reaction to Nigel Biggar's 'Ethics and Empire' project, which takes a typical 'balance-sheet' approach that has long dominated attitudes towards the Empire in Britain.³ However, there are imperial historians and genocide scholars who are exploring Britain's colonial practices within a wider history of European mass violence; this history is part of an important context to the genocidal violence of the first half of the twentieth century.⁴ I argue that greater engagement with images of violence from the British Empire is necessary and represents an important antidote to popular representations of the Empire, notably Niall Ferguson's.⁵ The mis- and unremembering of violence across the British Empire has important consequences, not least in ongoing debates on Brexit, in which the Empire has loomed large.

The first collections of war (and atrocity) photography contributed to an important visual record of the violence that British troops perpetrated in the pursuit of the imperial project. However, I argue that the

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1 See, e.g., Donald F. Featherstone, *Colonial Small Wars: 1837-1901* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973).

2 See, e.g., Susan A. Crane, 'Choosing Not to Look: Representation, Repatriation, and Holocaust Atrocity Photography', *History and Theory*, 47.3 (2008), 309-30.

3 Matthew Reisz, 'Oxford Project's "Balance-Sheet View" of Colonialism Criticised', *Times Higher Education*, 22 December 2017, <<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/oxford-projects-balance-sheet-view-colonialism-criticised>>; Charlotte L. Riley, 'Imperial History Wars', *History Workshop*, 19 March 2018, <<http://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/imperial-history-wars>> [accessed 9 May 2018].

4 Tom Lawson, *The Last Man: A British Genocide in Tasmania* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014); Michelle Gordon, 'Colonial Violence and Holocaust Studies', *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History*, 21.4 (2015), 272-91.

5 Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2002).

images under discussion here – and indeed those from this campaign more generally – have been neither sufficiently integrated into the historiography of the British Empire, nor the body of work on warfare and photography.⁶ This situation is indicative of wider issues related to imperial historians' treatment – and at times, sanitisation – of colonial violence. Notable visual records include Felice Beato's images of the aftermaths of the Indian Uprising of 1857;⁷ Beato's significance includes providing the first dead bodies in photographic form to the British public.⁸ Beato did not sanitise scenes of violence, indeed, he undertook the 'manipulation of the dead', by ordering that the bones of the enemy fallen be dug up for his famous images of Secundra Bagh on the outskirts of Lucknow.⁹ The photographer's images of the aftermaths of the Second Opium War in China (1857–1860) also contributed to an early photographic archive of British colonial violence.¹⁰ Also noteworthy are Willoughby Wallace Hooper's execution photographs from the Anglo-Burmese War in 1885, owing to the context in which he took them: Hooper apparently put the execution of two Burmese rebels on hold until his camera was ready to 'shoot' them as they were being shot.¹¹

The practices of Beato and Hooper illuminate the potential for photographers to contribute to the suffering of their subjects. Other important 'images of bodily suffering' in the trajectory of atrocity imagery include Hooper's posed photographs of victims of the Madras famine in 1876–8.¹² The images from the concentration camps of the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) also brought home the brutalities of empire,¹³

6 One exception is Pat Hodgson, *Early War Photographs: 50 Years of War Photographs from the Nineteenth Century* (Reading, Berks: Osprey, 1974), pp. 119–23. However, there is no systematic study of the images of violence that came out of the Sudan campaign.

7 Such as Felice Beato, 'The Hanging of Two Rebels', 1858 or 1859, photograph. This rare image is made use of in: Zahid R. Chaudhary, *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), p. 103.

8 John Hannavy, *The Victorians and Edwardians at War* (Oxford: Shire, 2012), p. 8.

9 Chaudhary, p. 77; Sean Willcock, 'The Aesthetics of Imperial Crisis: Image Making and Intervention in British India: C. 1857–1919' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2013), pp. 118–19; however, Colonel Maude stated, 'I presume the dogs dug them up', see Hodgson, p. 51.

10 London, National Army Museum (NAM), Felice Beato, Photograph Album: 1857–1860, 1862–08–16–12.

11 Chaudhary, pp. 161–67; 'Willoughby Wallace Hooper: Photographer of Death', *Madras Courier*, 18 July 2018, <<https://madrascourier.com/biography/willoughby-wallace-hooper-photographer-of-death/>> [accessed 17 August 2018].

12 Christina Twomey, 'Framing Atrocity: Photography and Humanitarianism', in *Humanitarian Photography: A History*, ed. by Heide Fehrenbach and Davide Rodogno (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 52.

13 Elizabeth van Heyningen, *The Concentration Camps of the Anglo-Boer War: A Social History* (Auckland Park, South Africa: Jacana Media, 2013); Emanuel Lee, *To the Bitter End: A Photo-*

and the controversial (but also rarely discussed) 'Malaya decapitation' photographs from the Malayan Emergency (1948–60) starkly convey extreme British violence.¹⁴ I argue that Gregson's images warrant recognition as an integral component of this 'archive' of violence,¹⁵ and I will address the importance of these images within a wider consideration of atrocity photography in the British Empire.

The photographs under discussion were taken during the Anglo-Egyptian reconquest of Sudan, which took place from 1896 to 1899. These images are a visual expression of the campaign's extreme violence and its ensuing controversies. Kitchener, the Sirdar of the Egyptian army, was obliged to write directly to Queen Victoria to explain his actions at the end of the reconquest campaign; notably in relation to the bombing of the Mahdi's tomb and the treatment of his remains.¹⁶ The Gordon Relief Mission of 1885 is an essential context to Kitchener's campaign. The former occurred after General Charles Gordon travelled to Khartoum to oversee the withdrawal of the Egyptian military and the civilian population in response to the rise of an Islamic movement, the Mahdia, under the leadership of the Mahdi, Muhammed Ahmad. This movement was viewed as undermining Egyptian rule in Sudan from the early 1880s.¹⁷ After the Mahdists had succeeded in a number of crushing defeats on the Egyptian forces,¹⁸ Gordon became trapped and overrun by Mahdist troops, and Prime Minister William Gladstone belatedly sent a relief expedition to rescue Gordon. However, by the time the expedition had arrived, Mahdist troops had murdered and decapitated Gordon – apparently in direct contravention of Ahmad's orders.¹⁹ Gordon's murder and the subsequent withdrawal of British and Egypt-

graphic History of the Boer War 1899–1902 (London: Penguin, 1986).

- 14 See Simon Harrison, *Dark Trophies: Hunting and the Enemy Body in Modern War* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 158 'End this Horror!', *Daily Worker*, 10 May 1952; see also the admission by the Secretary of State for the Colonies that the images were genuine: London, House of Commons Hansard (HC), HC Debate, 7 May 1952, vol. 500, c388, 'Malaya (Decapitation)'.
- 15 Donald Bloxham and others, 'Europe in the World: Systems and Cultures of Violence', in *Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. by Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 19. For a discussion of some of these images see Paul Fox, 'Severed Heads: The Spoils of War in the Egyptian Sudan', *Mapping War: Mapping Europe* (MWME), 1–33 <<http://www.mwme.eu/essays/index.html>> [accessed 18 October 2019].
- 16 See M. W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile: The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan: 1898–1934* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 5.
- 17 On the rise of the Mahdia see P. M. Holt, *The Mahdist State in the Sudan, 1881–1898: A Study of Its Origins, Development and Overthrow* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970 [1958]).
- 18 Notably, the Hicks Expedition, which was annihilated on 5 November 1883. See P. M. Holt, 'The Place in History of the Sudanese Mahdia', *Sudan Notes and Records*, 40 (1959), 110.
- 19 See Holt, *The Mahdist State*, p. 95 (n. 2).

tian forces from Sudan dealt a significant blow to British prestige. The British public was outraged by these events and supported the need to avenge Gordon, who was now glorified as a Christian hero.²⁰ The Mahdi also died 1885 (from typhus), and the Khalifa Abdallahi Muhammad took over as leader of the Mahdia. In 1896, Italy requested support in the region in the wake of the 'Italian débâcle at Adowa' on 1 March 1896, thereby presenting Britain – and Lord Cromer, consul general of Egypt – with an opportunity to re-enter the country by force.²¹

First-hand accounts of the battle convey the key role that avenging Gordon's death played in the campaign, and the troops were encouraged by Kitchener to 'remember Gordon' during combat.²² A number of smaller battles occurred before the reconquest's culmination at Omdurman on 2 September 1898. This military campaign was extreme in nature from the start. For example, Prime Minister Lord Salisbury advised Cromer to 'starve out' the enemy from their camp.²³ The Anglo-Egyptian army routinely utilised tactics, which included 'offering no quarter' to surrendering and wounded troops, as well as the destruction of towns, villages and food stores. The first military engagement was the Battle of Firket on 7 June 1896 which, as Major Farley recollected, was conducted in an uncompromising manner as 'many of [the opposition] were only waiting the opportunity to surrender, and as they came out with hands in the air, they were duly put in the bag'.²⁴ These practices were undertaken *en masse* in the final battle in Omdurman, which, as one observer acknowledged, 'was not a battle, but an execution'.²⁵

20 On 'Gordon mania' see Fox, 'Severed Heads'; Richard Fulton, 'The Sudan Sensation of 1898', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 42.1 (2009), 37–63.

21 Ian F. W. Beckett, 'Kitchener and the Politics of Command', in *Sudan: The Reconquest Reappraised*, ed. by Edward M. Spiers (Oxford: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 35. See also London, The National Archives (hereafter: TNA), Cromer Papers, Kimberley to Cromer, 15 February 1895, FO633/114.

22 For example, Winston S. Churchill, *The River War: An Historical Account of the Reconquest of the Soudan*, 2 vols (London: Longman's Green, 1899), I, 196; on British propaganda targeting the Mahdia see Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London; New York: Verso, 2001), p. 136; Joseph Ohrwalder, *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp: 1882–1892*, ed. by F. R. Wingate (London: Sampson Low & Co, 1894).

23 TNA, Cromer Papers, Salisbury to Cromer, 20 March 1896, TNA, FO633/114.

24 Durham, University of Durham Library, Sudan Archive (hereafter: SAD), J. B. B. Farley, 'Recollections of the Dongola Expedition', SAD/304/2.

25 G. W. Stevens, *With Kitchener to Khartum* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1898), p. 264.

'Khartum 1898'

The photographs under analysis are part of an album put together by Francis Gregson, correspondent for the *St. James's Gazette*.²⁶ The album, simply entitled 'Khartum 1898', commemorates victory over the Mahdia. There are 232 photographs in this album, of which several copies still exist.²⁷ 'Khartum 1898' contains images that relate to a variety of aspects of the reconquest and takes us through the campaign step-by-step, providing a visual narrative of the events that unfolded in the processes of colonial conquest.²⁸ I shall focus here on key aspects of the Battle of Omdurman and Gregson's images in relation to perceptions of colonial warfare both then and now. I will explore what these photographs reveal (and conceal) regarding the more controversial aspects of the campaign, as well as the context of these photographs as commemorative, an extension of the atrocity and the implications of 'colonial blind spots'.²⁹

While it was often the case in colonial warfare that indigenous opponents sought to fight Europeans with guerrilla tactics and refused to fight in open battle, this was not the case regarding the Mahdists, and the results were devastating for the enemy troops.³⁰ In the final battle, 11,000 of the Khalifa's army were killed and 16,000 wounded – although the number of actual fatalities would have been significantly higher owing to the neglect and killing of the wounded.³¹ In contrast, Anglo-Egyptian forces lost just 48 men and 382 were wounded.³² In figure 1, we see the troops waiting to engage with the enemy.³³ This photograph conveys signs of the impending violence, and our attention is immediately drawn to the ominous bayonet in the foreground. This image provides an important counterbalance to the written sources and historiography in which there is an overemphasis on the role of the Max-

26 I refer the reader to the Royal Collection, Windsor website (hereafter: RCW) <<https://www.royal-collection.org.uk/collection>>, where the digitised album can be viewed: RCIN: 2501722-2501955. Figures 1-7 are provided courtesy of the National Army Museum. I thank the museum for granting permission to reproduce them (captions used with the images are Gregson's own, unless otherwise stated). I provide the RCWs catalogue reference when referring to further images from the album.

27 Held at the following: the National Army Museum, London; the Royal Engineers Museum, Gillingham; the Sudan Archive, University of Durham; and the Royal Collection, Windsor.

28 London, NAM, Francis Gregson, Photograph Album, 'Khartum 1898', NAM 1973-05-42.

29 Jane Lydon, *Photography, Humanitarianism, Empire* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), p. 76.

30 H. L. Wesseling, 'Colonial Wars: An Introduction', in *Imperialism and War: Essays on Colonial Wars in Asia and Africa*, ed. by J. A. de Moor and Wesseling (Leiden: Brill, 1989), p. 3.

31 See Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, pp. 2-3.

32 Holt, *The Mahdist State*, p. 240.

33 Francis Gregson, *The Grenadiers during the Fight*, photograph, NAM, London, NAM 1973-05-42-111.



FIGURE 1. The Grenadiers during the Fight (September 2, 6 am). Courtesy of the National Army Museum.

im gun in portrayals of the victory; as Hilaire Belloc famously quipped, '[w]hatever happens we have got The Maxim Gun, and they have not.'³⁴ Indeed, arguments related to the central role of modern technology in this campaign have led Vinay Lal to make direct comparisons between the 'terrible tedium' experienced by Kitchener's men in shooting down their enemy and the alleged bureaucratisation of killing in the Holocaust, referencing the *Schreibtischtäter*.³⁵ However, this viewpoint underplays the role of face-to-face killing in the battle (as well as in the Holocaust) and certainly, there was no anonymity when troops bayoneted the wounded on the battlefield or surrendering troops.

Contemporary arguments supporting colonial violence are directly related to concepts of 'civilised warfare' and assumptions regarding the effects of modern technology including dum-dum bullets, which were specif-

³⁴ Hilaire Belloc, *The Modern Traveller* (London: Edward Arnold, 1898), p. 41.

³⁵ Vinay Lal, 'The Concentration Camp and Development: The Pasts and Future of Genocide', in *Colonialism and Genocide*, ed. by A. Dirk Moses and Dan Stone (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 131–32; Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

ically designed for use in the colonies.³⁶ However, accounts of the campaign make it quite clear that there was nothing ‘civilised’ about the tactics used here. As Winston Churchill, who was present as both a war correspondent and as a soldier, observed regarding the opening scenes of the battle:

bullets were shearing through flesh, smashing and splintering bone; blood spouted from terrible wounds; valiant men were struggling on through a hell of whistling metal, exploding shells, and spurting dust – suffering, despairing, dying.³⁷

More ‘primitive’ methods of violence were also used in the killing of the wounded and also during the infamous Charge of the 21st Lancers; as Churchill stated, ‘[t]he other [battle] might have been a massacre; but here the fighting was fair, for we too fought with sword and spear.’³⁸ Historians have also perpetuated the view of ‘cold’ technology – Paul Fox discusses the images of another photographer present in Omdurman, René Bull, and describes Bull’s photographs as having ‘documentary qualities [...] as cool and distant as the tactics themselves’.³⁹ However, I argue that such a portrayal of the violence is inaccurate.

While the first war photographers had hoped to capture battles in action, at this time, technological limitations made photographs of ‘live’ battle impossible. However, as Gregson’s work shows, photographers were still able to record the brutalities of colonial warfare in the immediate *aftermaths* of battle. Indeed, as I discuss below, the atrocity continued after the fighting was over. In the strangely titled ‘Like Snowdrifts’ (figures 2 & 3), we see an overview of one section of the battlefield (figure 3), across which the bodies of the dead and wounded enemy troops are strewn.⁴⁰ While this image conveys the brutalities of battle, it is only through first-hand accounts that we can fully understand the violence that Gregson depicts: the troops are likely checking for wounded soldiers (possibly to bayonet⁴¹), as well as looting the bodies.⁴²

36 David Killingray, ‘Colonial Warfare in West Africa: 1870–1914’, in *Imperialism and War*, ed. by de Moor and Wesseling, p. 155.

37 Churchill, *The River War: An Historical Account of the Reconquest of the Soudan*, 2 vols (London: Longman’s Green, 1899), II, 119.

38 *Ibid.*, 138.

39 Paul Fox, ‘An Unprecedented Wartime Practice: Kodaking the Egyptian Sudan’, *Media, War & Conflict*, 11.3 (2018), 322.

40 Gregson, *Like Snowdrifts*, photograph, NAM, London, NAM 1973-05-42-121. Figures 2 and 3 share the same bibliographical reference because they were developed onto one photograph paper in the album.

41 See, e.g., Lt. H. V. Fison, in *Marching over Africa: Letters from Victorian Soldiers*, ed. by Frank Emery (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986), p. 171.

42 E.g., H. P. Creagh-Osborne, *Diary Extracts*, in SAD, J. Longe Papers, SAD/643/1.



FIGURES 2 & 3. Like Snowdrifts (September 2, 11:30 am). Courtesy of the National Army Museum.





FIGURE 4. *Is He Moving?* (September 2, 11:30 am). Courtesy of the National Army Museum.

Figure 4 shows the image ‘*Is He Moving?*’ as captioned by Gregson.⁴³ There is some dispute regarding what we are viewing in this image, as evidenced by the differing interpretations that have been applied to it. While several copies of the original album were produced and bound in the same way, with Gregson’s own captions, archives have provided differing descriptions in their catalogues.⁴⁴ In so doing, the archives have inferred further meaning onto the images. This example demonstrates the subjective role of archives in cataloguing archival materials. As such, the album is both singular and multiple, conveying a variety of

⁴³ Gregson, *Is He Moving?*, photograph, NAM, London, NAM 1973-05-42-120.

⁴⁴ I have viewed the album at the NAM, which provides no information on provenance and at the SAD (Wingate’s copy). The albums appear to be identical. The images at the Imperial War Museum are copies and have been placed in plastic photograph sleeves (although this fact is not evident from the catalogue entry: London, Imperial War Museum (IWM), Edward Douglas Loch, Photograph Collection, IWM 2006-04-05. Unfortunately, I have not viewed the album at the Royal Engineers Museum; the archive was undergoing renovations at the time of writing and was inaccessible. The Royal Collection does not currently allow personal viewing of the album they hold, but the digitised version shows that the copy is identical to the other two I have viewed.

meanings.⁴⁵ The ambiguity of figure 4 is revealed by the following descriptions: the Sudan Archive at Durham University Library (hereafter SAD) describes the image as 'Egyptian soldier approaching a wounded Mahdist on the battlefield at Karari after the battle of Omdurman'.⁴⁶ In contrast, the Royal Collection, Windsor, dispassionately describes the image as: 'Photograph of an Egyptian standing next to a sitting camel, foreground left; a wounded Mahdist-Sudanese soldier sits up, behind left, on plain after battle of Omdurman'.⁴⁷ In a rare publication of the image, William Wright describes it as '[a] rare photograph of a correspondent ... trying to take a picture of a dying dervish'.⁴⁸ Hence, it is unclear whether the man to the left is reaching for camera equipment or a weapon – clearly, he had the power to do either. Gregson's assumed knowledge of these practices makes his caption particularly menacing, suggesting as it does possible further violence. Wright has used this image, but does not engage with it, or any others from Gregson's collection.

Typically, photographs are used as illustration; as Peter Burke has noted, historians tend to take the approach of 'reproducing [photographs] in their books without comment'.⁴⁹ While historians are increasingly looking to photographs within their historical analysis, it is often the case that this medium is used to illustrate conclusions already met rather than to give new answers, to ask new questions or critically engage with them.⁵⁰ In this case, the implications of the image can only be fully realised in relation to our knowledge of the practice of massacring the enemy wounded. This information shapes our perception of the image, and the caption guides our interpretation of its meaning.⁵¹ Of course, a caption is not objective, as demonstrated by the discrepancies between the captions of the photographer and third parties.⁵² The act of taking a photograph in these circumstances is an integral part of the

45 Elizabeth Edwards, 'Objects of Affect: Photography Beyond the Image', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41.1 (2012), 223.

46 See SAD's catalogue, <http://reed.dur.ac.uk/xtf/view?docId=ark/32150_s15h73pw10k.xml> [accessed 1 September 2018].

47 RCW/RCIN 2501841.

48 William Wright, *Omdurman 1898* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Spellmount, 2012), p. 133.

49 Cited in Jennifer Tucker, 'Entwined Practices: Engagements with Photography in Historical Inquiry', *History and Theory*, 48.4 (2009), 4.

50 See Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 10; Tucker.

51 Crane, 125; Walter Benjamin acknowledged the key role of captions related to the interpretation of photography in 1931: Walter Benjamin, 'A Small History of Photography', in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), p. 256.

52 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1978), pp. 108–9.



FIGURE 5. Looting after the Battle (September 2, 11:30 am). Courtesy of the National Army Museum.

(colonial) aggression. Indeed, photographically capturing someone's dying moments is violence. As Sean Willcock has described,

[A]cts of documentation were also acts of aggressive intervention. The psychological effects of being photographed *in extremis* rendered such photography controversial even when it worked in harmony with relatively uncontroversial (to the British, that is) methods of state-sanctioned violence.⁵³

We cannot imagine the 'psychological effects' of being photographed in such circumstances. In this sense too, photography is a 'performative act', creating an 'intimidating spectacle' marked by indifference to suffering.⁵⁴ These images thereby contribute to and are consistent with the aforementioned body of work from this period in exacerbating the suffering of the photographer's subject.

Figure 5, captioned by the SAD as 'Soldiers looting from dead and wounded Mahdists on the battlefield at Karari after the battle of Omdurman', demonstrates a practice that was prevalent throughout the re-

⁵³ Willcock, p. 122.

⁵⁴ In relation to imperial famine photography see *Ibid.*, p. 104.



FIGURE 6. Bodies of Baggaras (Omdurman). Courtesy of the National Army Museum.

conquest.⁵⁵ Looting was standard across the Empire in colonial warfare and in this case, soldiers wrote home to their families listing the articles they had procured for them; items included Mahdist flags and spears.⁵⁶ Both soldiers and war correspondents returned to the horrors of the battlefield in the days after to loot the bodies.⁵⁷ Clearly, violence and looting were intertwined (as figure 6 shows): in Sudan, this occurred both on the battlefield and in the events that took place in the city that evening. As General Archibald Hunter's statement conveys, after the battle:

[W]e could now enjoy ourselves like boys ratting in a stack yard. And we did have an afternoon, poking into houses, in and out of narrow alleys, kicking down doors, forcing gateways, chasing devils all over the place, most surrendered, but we had to kill some 300 or 400.⁵⁸

55 Gregson, *Looting after the Battle*, photograph, NAM, London, NAM 1973-05-42-118.

56 London, IWM, Carleton, Frederick Montgomerie, Private Papers, 11 June 1986 and 19 June 1986.

57 SAD, A. Hunter, 'Sudan Campaign May-Oct 1898', SAD/964/3.

58 Ibid.

In figure 6, we are confronted with the aftermaths of violence in viewing the post-looted, stripped 'Bodies of Baggaras'.⁵⁹ This photograph expresses a clear lack of empathy for the fallen enemy soldiers and strips these 'fanatics' of their humanity, thereby mirroring the view of the colonisers. Furthermore, the naked corpses here suggest that, contrary to Fox's interpretation of these images as 'the representation of combat',⁶⁰ there is more than 'standard' warfare here. However, Fox does acknowledge that albums such as Gregson's and René Bull's 'depict with candour the effect of Anglo-Egyptian firepower on Sudanese bodies in a way that further transformed the representation of combat's battlefield "realities"'.⁶¹ But again, the focus in this statement is on technology and 'firepower'. That these images depict an atrocity is evident from the naked, looted corpses of the Baggara. Gregson presents us with intimate and at times, voyeuristic images, defying the distance between the photographer/viewer and subject. However, rather than reflect on the suffering that he captured, Gregson repeatedly expressed his experience positively in private correspondence, stating his 'thorough enjoyment of the whole show from start to finish'.⁶²

Of course, Britain's imperial project was informed by racial prejudices which categorised and hierarchised indigenous populations based on their supposed 'savage' or 'semi-civilised' status.⁶³ The dehumanisation of the enemy was demonstrated both before and during the campaign: rather than human beings, the Mahdists were considered 'fanatics' or 'Fuzzy Wuzzy', and this way of thinking was present in first-hand accounts written by those who took part in the violence.⁶⁴ As Lt. A. Unsworth expressed, the 'sight of the mutilated bodies had no more effect on me than the sight of a wounded fly would have'.⁶⁵ Gregson's images are consistent with the use of photography during the second half of the nineteenth century; they represent violence as part of wider cultural practices as well as 'knowledge' related to the 'natives'. As a result of the dehumanisation of 'natives' in the rhetoric of empire, both on the bat-

59 Gregson, *Bodies of Baggaras*, photograph, NAM, London, NAM 1973-05-42-183.

60 Fox, 'An Unprecedented Wartime Practice', 309.

61 Ibid., 321.

62 SAD, Wingate Papers, Gregson to Wingate, 23 November 1898, SAD/226/3/50.

63 See, e.g., Alex Hinton, 'Savages, Subjects, and Sovereigns: Conjunctions of Modernity, Genocide, and Colonialism', in *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquest, Occupation, and Subaltern Resistance in World History*, ed. by A. Dirk Moses (New York: Berghahn, 2010 [2008]), p. 443.

64 E.g., C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: General Staff, War Office, 1906 [1896, 1899]), p. 148.

65 SAD, A. Unsworth, 16 April 1898, SAD/233/5.



FIGURE 7. Baggara Emir Killed (Omdurman). Courtesy of the National Army Museum.

tlefield and in the metropole, the enemy, to use Judith Butler's term, was not deemed 'grievable'.⁶⁶ We are not supposed to recognise humanity in these images: the 'gaze' is colonial and our disgust should be directed at those who are dead, rather than at how they came to die. While photographer Robert Frank claimed, 'there is one thing the photograph must contain, the humanity of the moment';⁶⁷ from Gregson's point of view, humanity is wholly lacking here. However, this missing element is to be compensated by the role of British 'civilisation' in ridding Sudan of these 'fanatics'. Rather than seeing these images through Gregson's 'gaze', and as an extension of British 'civility', we are witness to the barbaric practices that British troops took part in and the imperial ideology that underpinned the project. As such, it is possible to think of these images as self-portraits of degradation on behalf of the British troops.⁶⁸

While the Baggara as a whole were not to be 'grieved', the Anglo-Egyptian Army specifically targeted their leaders, the Khalifa's Emirs, for violence throughout the reconquest campaign. Figure 7,

66 Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2016 [2010]).

67 Cited in Sontag, p. 122.

68 In relation to Nazi atrocity photographs see Susie Linfield, *The Cruel Radiance: Photography and Political Violence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 71.

'Baggara Emir Killed',⁶⁹ provides 'proof' of this practice.⁷⁰ In 1896, as one Royal Engineer's account conveys, prisoners were only taken selectively. He states that, '500 of the less desperate characters' were taken prisoner; in addition, at least 40 Emirs were 'among the slain'.⁷¹ First-hand accounts also describe how the Emirs were targeted on the night of 2 September 1898, and Sudanese soldiers from the Anglo-Egyptian army 'captured four big Baggara Emirs [the] next day, all severely wounded from the fight and shot them the next morning'.⁷² Colonel John Maxwell also later admitted his involvement in individual killings in private correspondence, admitting that he 'quietly made away with a bunch of Emirs after Omdurman and I was very sorry for them after all was over'.⁷³ Therefore, it is clear that British forces not only permitted Sudanese soldiers to carry out acts of revenge, they actively encouraged them, as well as committing atrocities themselves. Ronald Lamothe has argued that many of the Sudanese soldiers of the Egyptian army were motivated to 'avenge' the 'social death' they [had] suffered via the Baggara – this vengeance is exhibited in these photographs.⁷⁴ It is noteworthy that Gregson specifically refers to these men as 'Baggara' in his captions, related to the most graphic and disturbing images.

Ernest Bennett, a war correspondent who was present at the final battle, drew attention to these issues in an article, in which he criticised key aspects of Kitchener's campaign.⁷⁵ Responses to his accusations were telling. For example, one soldier's denial of Bennett's claims presented a rather peculiar argument. After stating that Bennett's claims were 'clap-trap' with regards to the killing of the Emirs, he continued: 'I regret very much that we have not nearly exterminated all the Baggaras, only, unfortunately, they are endowed by Nature with strong knees, and many escaped'.⁷⁶ The Baggara were targeted for specific violence

69 Gregson, *Baggara Emir Killed*, photograph, NAM, London, NAM 1973-05-42-182.

70 Henry S. L. Alford and W. Dennistoun Sword, *The Egyptian Sudan: Its Loss and Recovery* (London: Macmillan, 1898), p. 227. For a list of the Emirs killed in Omdurman, see SAD, Sudanese Intelligence Report 60, appendix 19b.

71 E. W. C. Sandes, *The Royal Engineers in Egypt and the Sudan* (Chatham: Institute of Royal Engineers, Mackays, 1937), pp. 164–65.

72 SAD, J. S. R. Duncan Papers, Egerton, 9 September 1898, SAD/477/8.

73 SAD, Wingate Papers, Maxwell to Wingate, 24 May 1908, SAD/282/5; see also: Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p. 4.

74 Ronald M. Lamothe, *Slaves of Fortune: Sudanese Soldiers & the River War, 1896–1898* (Oxford: James Currey, 2011), p. 147.

75 Ernest N. Bennett, 'After Omdurman', *Contemporary Review*, 75 (1899), 18–33.

76 'Omdurman. Charge of Killing the Wounded. Letters of Denial', *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 January 1899.

due to their perceived 'nature': one Royal Engineer described them as 'fierce, war-like, vicious and treacherous',⁷⁷ and the Director of Military Intelligence of the Egyptian Army, Reginald Wingate, referred to them as the 'Red Indians of the Sudan'.⁷⁸ Major-General G. M. Franks openly elaborated on how the enemy was pursued into the desert and stated that the Baggara 'for an excellent reason are not at all likely to come in [...] he carries his own death warrant in his name.'⁷⁹

Gregson's album includes an image entitled 'Defiant Baggaras made prisoners', which shows a group of men standing in front of the Mahdi's bombed-out tomb.⁸⁰ It is significant that Gregson refers specifically to these men as 'Baggara' and that they are given the characteristic of 'defiance' in having survived the onslaught, though we do not know if they survived the night. However, the view of the Mahdi's bombed tomb is no coincidence, and this desecration had huge symbolic significance. As Churchill stated, '[t]his place had been for more than ten years the most sacred place and holy thing that the people of the Soudan knew'.⁸¹ As General Hunter confirmed, it *had* to be destroyed, as its presence 'was a conspicuous memorial to celebrate the Victory of the Savage over us'.⁸² Further symbolism was clear in Kitchener's order to have the Mahdi's body dug up, and his skull removed. This action led to outrage in Britain not least as a result of the persistent rumours that the Mahdi's skull was to be packaged up for Kitchener to use as a drinking cup.⁸³ Churchill described how '[t]he limbs and trunk were thrown into the Nile. Such was the chivalry of the conquerors!'⁸⁴

Ultimately, the desecration of the Mahdi's tomb was a display of power and proof of conquest as well as a way of avenging Gordon's death and symbolically 'killing' the Mahdi in a mirror image of the treatment of Gordon's corpse. Fox discusses the reconquest within the context of trophy taking and 'severed heads' in reference to the killing of Gordon and argues: 'The taking of trophies and their display would prove fundamental to narrative accounts of a job well done and moral

77 Sandes, p. 161.

78 Wingate cited in *ibid.*

79 SAD, G. M. Franks, 9 April 1898, SAD/403/2.

80 RCW/RCIN 2501884.

81 Churchill, II, 211.

82 SAD, Hunter, 'Sudan Campaign May-Oct 1898', SAD/964/4.

83 See Kim A. Wagner, *The Skull of Alum Bhag: The Life and Death of a Rebel of 1857* (London: Hurst, 2017), pp. 209-12.

84 Churchill, II, 212.

order re-established.⁸⁵ As Simon Harrison has described, 'Kitchener's treatment of the Mahdi's remains was a post-mortem settling of scores over the death of Gordon, and the mutilation of his body.'⁸⁶ Gregson's album may be viewed as an extension of this rationale and as such, these photographs are not innocent and can be viewed as part of the atrocity.⁸⁷ Clearly, the relationship between the photographer and the photographed within a colonial context also represented colonial power over the colonised – colonial power relations were, as I discussed above, articulated throughout photographs from this period.⁸⁸ As Willcock highlights, photography 'was historically entwined with an imperialistic drive to gain visual knowledge that could facilitate the control of distant people, objects, and space'.⁸⁹ As such, it is clear that the camera was 'no innocent instrument',⁹⁰ and by extension, the photographer no innocent agent. By taking these pictures, Gregson's actions were complicit in, as well as witness to, British imperial aggression.⁹¹ We cannot know what Gregson was thinking while he took these images, but his descriptions of the campaign in private correspondence suggest he considered his actions as consistent with contemporary norms. Gregson created a souvenir of 'colonial derring-do' and did not intend to catalogue British atrocities – however, it is interesting to note the meticulousness with which he presented the photographs, not least providing the exact times for key images.

The outrage that ensued in the aftermath of the controversial reconquest campaign was aimed at the taking of the Mahdi's skull and the desecration of his grave, rather than at the treatment of the enemy wounded, and it was only the treatment of the Mahdi's corpse that forced Kitchener to write personally to Queen Victoria, explaining his actions.⁹² In the context of the Indian Uprising of 1857, Kim Wag-

85 Fox, 'Severed Heads', 18.

86 Simon J. Harrison, 'Skulls and Scientific Collecting in the Victorian Military: Keeping the Enemy Dead in British Frontier Warfare', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50.1 (2008), 290.

87 See Jay Prosser, 'Introduction', in *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis*, ed. by Geoffrey Batchen and others (London: Reaktion Books, 2012), pp. 7–14.

88 See Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, 'Introduction: Photography, "Race", and Post-Colonial Theory', in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place*, ed. by Hight and Sampson (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 1.

89 Willcock, p. 38; on issues of power and photography see also John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

90 Willcock, p. 112.

91 In relation to Beato's Lucknow photographs see *ibid.*, p. 122.

92 See TNA, Cromer Papers, Cromer to Salisbury, 12 March 1899, TNA, F0633/68.

ner highlights that the taking of human body parts inevitably included some degree of violence.⁹³ It was standard within colonial warfare for Europeans to adapt their methods subject to their indigenous foes, and deviating from international standards of warfare was deemed necessary based on assumptions regarding the 'nature' of the 'natives' – in this case, this 'uncivilised' behaviour extended to the treatment of the enemy dead.⁹⁴ While the British public expressed aversion to these practices, even contemporary critics of empire subscribed to the basic tenets of the racial rhetoric of the imperial project. British forces claimed the use of 'savage' methods was necessary in colonial warfare. Charles Callwell's key treatise on 'small wars' represented a commonly held acceptance that there was a clear distinction between 'civilised' and 'uncivilised' warfare, and that 'small war' tactics might mean 'committing havoc which the laws of regular warfare do not sanction'.⁹⁵ Bennett's aforementioned article highlighted the question of applicability regarding international standards of warfare to 'savages', stating,

To assert that because Dervishes or Zulus never signed the Geneva Convention [...] we are at liberty to pillage their villages after surrender or to kill their unarmed wounded is simply monstrous.⁹⁶

Within the album, images of the enemy fallen strewn across the battlefield are placed next to those of 'civilised' burials of the British dead, whose bodies are absent, and only their neat and tidy graves are to be seen.⁹⁷ The juxtaposition of these images highlights the treatment of the 'uncivilised' dead in relation to the 'civilised' treatment of fallen British troops. The relationship between photography and mortality is commonly acknowledged. Gregson's album provides 'proof' that the Mahdia is dead; in contrast, throughout Gregson's album the British are full of life, both before and after the final major battle.⁹⁸ Hence, while Siegfried Kracauer argues that our attraction to photographs is our desire to deny mortality, in this case, a sense of immortality is further but-

93 Wagner, *The Skull of Alum Bhag*, p. 2.

94 Harrison, 'Skulls and Scientific Collecting', 291.

95 Callwell, p. 42; for more on the nature of colonial warfare, see *Imperialism and War*, edited by de Moor and Wesseling, which remains a key text.

96 Bennett, 19.

97 See RCW/RCIN 2501851 and RCW/RCIN 2501852.

98 The Khalifa escaped the Anglo-Egyptian forces until the final showdown in which he was killed during the Battle of Umm Diwaykarāt on 24 November 1899: SAD, A. Cameron, 'In Pursuit of the Khalifa', SAD/622/6.

tressed by the perceived inevitable demise of the 'savage' and the nature of photography in immediately turning the present into the past.⁹⁹

The reconquest campaign was concluded with a memorial service for Gordon, which Kitchener recognised as a 'media opportunity'.¹⁰⁰ This memorial marked the salvaging of British prestige and the achievement of a 'long-delayed duty' to avenge Gordon's death, a mission that was seen to vindicate the troops' brutal actions.¹⁰¹ Gregson and others captured the memorial service on camera, including the former's 'Three Cheers for the Queen'.¹⁰² These images express military triumphalism, and in turn commend rather than condemn cruelty.¹⁰³ Significantly, while the army was busy presenting 'proof' that Gordon had been avenged, the enemy wounded who had not already been killed or pulled into the town by locals were still lying unaided on the battlefield, left for dead.¹⁰⁴ It is curious that the victors did not help these wounded men after the Anglo-Egyptian wounded had been attended to, particularly as British accounts of the battle's aftermath convey that troops were able to revisit the battlefield over a number of days. One example was General Neville Lyttelton:

I rode over the battlefield, a grisly sight. I saw two wounded Arabs who had been shot through both thighs and unable to walk. They were propelling themselves along the ground in a sitting position with short sticks and left a conspicuous track in the sand. A day or two later after I came across the two just arriving in our lines, I should say nearly 3 miles from where I had first seen them.¹⁰⁵

Indeed, there are even some images in another collection of photographs by Major H. N. Dunn, which specifically show the corpses left on the battlefield; these images were taken on 17 September 1898 and are a stark reminder of this atrocity.¹⁰⁶

99 See Linfield, p. 65. On 'extinction discourse' see Patrick Brantlinger, *Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races, 1800-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

100 Fox, 'An Unprecedented Wartime Practice', 311.

101 See Steevens' account, *With Kitchener to Khartum*, pp. 310-16; Churchill, II, 204-5; Lt. Samuel FitzGibbon Cox, in *Omdurman Diaries 1898: Eyewitness Accounts of the Legendary Campaign*, ed. by John Meredith (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books, 1998), p. 88.

102 RCW/RCIN 2501919 and RCW/RCIN 2501860.

103 Linfield, p. 51.

104 Churchill, II, 225.

105 Neville Lyttelton, *Eighty Years: Soldiering, Politics, Games* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1927), p. 195.

106 NAM, H. N. Dunn, Photograph Album, NAM 1974-09-81-9, 10, 11, 12.

Certainly, the neglect of the enemy wounded on the battlefield was an atrocious act on the part of Kitchener's army. This atrocity is not visible in Gregson's album; hence, the images celebrating the vindication of Gordon and the 'death' of Mahdism are also of significance for what they do not show us. As Ariella Azoulay has commented, a photograph does not need to depict the atrocity occurring to be an 'atrocity photograph'¹⁰⁷ – there can be an absence rather than a presence of violence.¹⁰⁸ As such, there is much that is 'outside the frame' in this album, and the viewer requires further details about the campaign to truly grasp the significance of what is viewable in Gregson's images.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, this album provides visual confirmation that atrocities did take place, and Gregson's act of photographing these images without further reflection articulates his acceptance of the events. While Gregson's images would likely be more controversial today and possibly lead to recriminations, there was no such danger of that at the end of the nineteenth century. Indeed, in spite of repeatedly controversial campaigns, Kitchener's willingness to engage in extreme methods of violence was continuously rewarded: after the Sudan campaign he received £30,000 and became Baron Kitchener of Khartoum,¹¹⁰ after the Second Anglo-Boer War he became Viscount and was awarded £50,000.¹¹¹ This acceptance of extreme violence that underpinned the Empire is substantiated by the fact that one copy of this album 'presenting mass death' was presented to Queen Victoria.¹¹² According to Gregson, the Queen had requested a copy, and he later expressed his delight that the Queen was 'much pleased and greatly interested' with the album.¹¹³

Gregson was the main photographer of this album,¹¹⁴ but he was by no means the only person present who captured the campaign on cam-

107 Ariella Azoulay, 'The Execution Portrait', in *Picturing Atrocity*, ed. by Batchen and others, p. 251.

108 On 'vacant spaces' in the aftermath of conflict see Willcock, p. 35.

109 Linfield, p. 51; Azoulay, p. 252. On suffering within photography see also Elizabeth Edwards and Matt Mead, 'Absent Histories and Absent Images: Photographs, Museums and the Colonial Past', *Museum and Society*, 11.1 (2013), 19–38.

110 Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p. 24.

111 V. G. Kiernan, *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse: 1815 – 1960* (London: Fontana, 1982), p. 133.

112 As I have stated, Fox treats Gregson's photographs from the perspective that they represent 'combat'. However, he hints at the nature of the violence in reference to the fact that 'it was even possible to offer Queen Victoria pages of album prints of mass death for her delectation', Fox, 'An Unprecedented Wartime Practice', 23.

113 SAD, Wingate Papers, Gregson to Wingate, 27 December 1898, SAD/226/4/42.

114 The section of the album, which relates to the Battle of the Atbara, consists of photographs taken, according to Gregson, by F. Rhodes, Cecil's brother: SAD/226/3/50. Pat Hodgson speculates that

era. As Peter Harrington observes, 'Kodak cameras were in evidence everywhere during the [Sudan] campaign'.¹¹⁵ Gregson had fought at Abu Klea, part of the Gordon relief campaign in 1885, and therefore he would already have been familiar with tactics of shooting dead the wounded. Certainly, there is no indication in private, previously overlooked correspondence from Gregson to Wingate that he was shocked by what he saw at Omdurman.¹¹⁶ On the contrary, Gregson expressed his pleasure in accompanying the campaign in 1898, stating his 'disappointment' that 'it didn't last much longer [...] you know how mad keen I was to come and it was all far better than I ever expected'.¹¹⁷ Within his letter, Gregson also revealed having 'taken about 300 Kodaks', of which 'I am having the best of them collected in an album [...] as a little souvenir of your kindness to me and as you appear in it frequently I hope it may prove of interest to Lady Wingate and her boys' – the latter being around aged six and nine at the time of the battle.¹¹⁸ Here, Gregson voices his desire to create a 'souvenir' in the more traditional sense, as a gift or memento of his 'enjoyment' during the campaign. Indeed, he may have created the album to preserve the 'trip', after stating 'I am longing for another now'.¹¹⁹

Gregson's album provides a visual narrative of the unfolding of the campaign and subscribes to the official British line regarding the need to avenge Gordon. In it, Gregson adheres to the rhetoric of empire which included the dichotomisation of the 'civilised' and the 'barbaric' and racial assumptions related to 'fanatics'.¹²⁰ It is unsurprising that these photographs of the aftermaths of direct violence were not used in newspapers. As Willcock has argued, it was deemed acceptable to represent violence through other means; it was not the killing in colonial violence that was upsetting to contemporaries, but rather a belief that 'to capture that killing on camera is morally suspect'.¹²¹ However, Gregson was not

either E. D. Loch or Gregson took them and also states that 'Loch was certainly responsible for distributing the photographs afterwards', Hodgson, p. 120.

115 Peter Harrington, 'Images and Perceptions: Visualising the Sudan Campaign', in *Sudan*, ed. by Edward M. Spiers, p. 88.

116 See, e.g., Private William Burge's account of this battle cited in Emery, *Marching over Africa*, p. 226.

117 SAD, Wingate Papers, Gregson to Wingate, 23 November 1898 SAD/226/3/50.

118 *Ibid.*, SAD/226/3/51.

119 On souvenirs see Chaudhary, p. 21; Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

120 On racial categorisations see, e.g., Elizabeth Kolsky, 'The Colonial Rule of Law and the Legal Regime of Exception: Frontier "Fanaticism" and State Violence in British India', *The American Historical Review*, 120.4 (2015), 1218–46.

121 Willcock, p. 123.

concerned by such considerations. Representations of the Battle of Omdurman typically focused and have continued to focus on the heroism of the troops and the 'order' that the colonisers would bring to Sudan, 'liberating' Omdurman from 'savagery', in the usual rhetoric of the 'civilising mission' and the colonial project. The explicit nature of Gregson's images (unintentionally) comes in stark contrast to this prevalent viewpoint.

Gregson's images have not been considered previously in line with his expressed thoughts on the campaign. Indeed, the National Army Museum's (NAM) inventory simply describes them as 'photographs from an album associated with the 2nd Sudan war', with no mention of Gregson. As Janina Struk reminds us, 'archives are not neutral spaces; they impose their own meaning on photographs.'¹²² In this case, the archives have procured them, but neglected to place them within their full historical context. It seems that while the albums were initially viewed by their intended recipients, they have since languished in homes and archives. The dying experiences of these men have not been deemed worthy of 'visibility'.¹²³ Hence, these images have enjoyed little 'visual economy'.¹²⁴ It is doubtful that these photographs would have had an impact on the metropole, had they been made available for public consumption: to the contemporary audience, these images convey what they believed to already know regarding the 'nature' of 'the native' and the 'necessity' for British troops to engage in 'uncivilised' practices. These photographs were neither used nor taken with the aim of engaging the British public in humanitarian sentiment, a practice of increasing prevalence in humanitarian discourse in this period, related to atrocities elsewhere, notably in the Congo.¹²⁵ While the British public received images of the concentration camps of the Second Anglo-Boer War with condemnation, the outcry against this loss of civilian life was motivated by the victims' skin colour. No moral outrage was directed against the 'native' camps, the conditions of which were far worse and which were long ignored in historical memory.¹²⁶

As I have alluded to, Gregson was not alone in trying to capture the events at Omdurman: Bull also took images, which were published at

¹²² Janina Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust: Interpretations of the Evidence* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), p. 13.

¹²³ See Chaudhary, p. 89.

¹²⁴ Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

¹²⁵ On humanitarian photography see, e.g., *Humanitarian Photography*, ed. by Fehrenbach and Rodogno.

¹²⁶ Elizabeth van Heyningen, 'Costly Mythologies: The Concentration Camps of the South African War in Afrikaner Historiography', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 34.3 (2008), 495–513.

the time.¹²⁷ However, these were fewer in number and less graphic than Gregson's. As material objects, Gregson's images were ignored and neglected. Arguably, the languishing of such stark representations of colonial suffering adds further insult to injury: there is no 'mattering' here from a British perspective.¹²⁸ Likewise, Dunn's powerful images are stored away in an archive; these also do not fit with official narratives of the war.¹²⁹ A wider comparison between these albums is beyond the scope of this article, but an endeavour for my future research. In any case, I argue that Gregson's album/s is/are of unique significance for their stark imagery, the insights garnered in connection with his work and motivations in private correspondence, as well as for his presentation of them to the Queen. It seems that Gregson was not commissioned for his photographs, and, as one source emphasises, he was 'a rich man and with every comfort at home!' He therefore did not need to be there.¹³⁰ At this time, it seems there was little in the way of censorship for war photographs, and Gregson's images do not suggest that he was inhibited with regards to what he chose to take images of. This situation would obviously change in the twentieth century.¹³¹ In contrast, written accounts from Sudan were scrutinised and censored.¹³² Details that were forbidden include the difficult conditions of the campaign. For example, Lt. Samuel FitzGibbon Cox reported: 'Very hot in the day, reporters not allowed to send temperatures home to papers, yesterday it was 115° in the shade'.¹³³

With regards to the neglect of Gregson's images historically, there are of course ethical considerations related to displaying these images, not least the inability of the subjects to give their consent to being 'captured' in the first place. However, it is unsettling, but indicative of wider treatments of British violence, that these images have been largely ignored. It is unfortunate that the archives that hold them appear to have accepted the albums without ascertaining the album's journey to them. It seems

127 René Bull, *Black and White War Albums: Soudan No. 1, Omdurman* (London: Black and White, n. d. [1899]).

128 Edwards, 'Objects of Affect', 224.

129 NAM, H. N. Dunn, NAM 1974-09-81.

130 Hugh Cecil, 'British Correspondents and the Sudan Campaign of 1896-98', in *Sudan*, ed. by Edward M. Spiers, pp. 115-16; NAM, David Francis Lewis, *Journal: August to December 1898*, NAM 1975-03-09. As Janina Struk notes, 'the business of photographing war was primarily the domain of entrepreneurial travellers, wealthy "enthusiasts" or military officers', Struk, *Private Pictures: Soldiers' Inside View of War* (London; New York, NY: I. B. Tauris, 2011), p. 24.

131 Notably in World War I: Struk, *Private Pictures*, p. 25.

132 Cecil, 'British Correspondents', pp. 109-10; Hannavy, pp. 23-24.

133 Cox, in *Omdurman Diaries*, ed. by John Meredith, p. 81.

that the 'mattering' of these images has been deemed low.¹³⁴ The omission of these images in works of photography from the period are part of a wider issue regarding representations of British violence in the Empire. Both military and regimental archives focus on heroic aspects of British military history, while tending to ignore Britain's relationship with extreme violence and the Empire's legacy.¹³⁵ From their point of view, these photographs do not necessarily depict anything of significance, but are simply viewed as the realities of battle.¹³⁶ But I would argue that we need to consider such images within a context of studies of extreme and mass violence; we need to remove them from the purview of what Wagner has termed, 'parochial military history'.¹³⁷ Britain's 'small wars' need to be explored within a wider framework of extreme violence. A consideration of visual records confirms this perspective; British military history needs to be 'demilitarised' and viewing such violence challenges those approaches that focus on tactics and 'drum and trumpet nationalism'.¹³⁸

It was typical to take 'souvenirs' or 'trophies' from colonial wars, as demonstrated by the regularity with which looting took place; Kitchener presented souvenirs to the Queen including the Khalifa's Qu'ran originating from the fifteenth century.¹³⁹ It is also possible to view the album within the context of 'war trophies' and as a symbol of conquest. The traditional use of photography to convey explicit power is identifiable in the American cases of Wounded Knee, lynching photography and, more recently, Abu Ghraib.¹⁴⁰ In the case of Gregson, his album represents victory and power over the Mahdia.

134 Edwards, 'Objects of Affect', 224. The following work ignores Gregson's images altogether: M. W. Daly and Jane R. Hogan, *Images of Empire: Photographic Sources for the British in the Sudan* (Boston: Brill, 2005).

135 Debates on the IWM and the Holocaust Exhibition have illuminated similar issues: see, e.g., Tom Lawson, 'The Holocaust and Colonial Genocide at the Imperial War Museum', in *Britain and the Holocaust: Remembering and Representing War and Genocide*, ed. by Caroline Sharples and Olaf Jensen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 160–70.

136 See Fox, 'An Unprecedented Wartime Practice'.

137 See Kim A. Wagner, 'Seeing Like a Soldier: The Amritsar Massacre and the Politics of Military History', in *Decolonization and Conflict: Colonial Comparisons and Legacies*, ed. by Martin Thomas and Gareth Curless (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 25.

138 Matthew Ford, 'Towards De-Militarising Military History', *Defence-in-Depth*, 12 January 2018, <<http://www.defenceindepth.co/2018/01/12/towards-de-militarising-military-history>> [accessed 12 July 2018]; Edwards and Mead, 'Absent Histories and Absent Images'; Jenny Kidd, 'Challenging History: Summative Document', <https://www.city.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/84082/Challenging-History-Summative-Document.pdf> [accessed 5 July 2018].

139 See RCW/RCIN 1005000.

140 Lydon, p. 67.

Liam Kennedy and Caitlin Patrick explore photography's complicity in violence and argue that photography 'commonly functions as a privileged medium of "Western" values and worldviews.'¹⁴¹ Clearly, this is the case in the colonial context of the nineteenth century, and we cannot trace a 'universal language' in these photographs; we cannot view them in line with their original intent.¹⁴² As has also been typical within war photography, as well as colonial and atrocity photography more specifically, images of violence are interspersed with photographs of 'the natives', tourism and relaxed scenes of troops and officers: the mundane meets the extraordinary.¹⁴³ However, in consideration of Gregson's comments on his time in Sudan and his ability to take such photographs without being censored, it is clear that these photographs were not viewed as extraordinary at all. Significantly, these images were informed by the racial ideology that underpinned the British imperial project, to which Gregson evidently subscribed. Rather than encourage the viewer to recognise the humanity of their subjects, Gregson sought to affirm British racial 'superiority' and provide 'proof' of the justification of Britain's 'moral duty' to intervene.¹⁴⁴

As James Ryan observes, 'photographic images do not simply "speak for themselves" or show us the world through an innocent historical eye'.¹⁴⁵ We certainly do not view the images in the same way that Gregson intended, but the images do provide us with a glimpse of the rationale of the colonial gaze. But to understand the true meaning behind the images and the violence we are viewing, a wider range of evidence is necessary, including the context of colonialism, the information provided in first-hand accounts of the battle by perpetrators of the violence and our knowledge of the extremities of the campaign. In this sense, Zahid Chaudhary suggests that there is a dialectic between words and images, which is necessary to 'see' the violence 'and discern the nature of the (in)visibility of violence laid out before us'.¹⁴⁶ As Susan Sontag stated, 'photographs do not explain; they acknowledge'.¹⁴⁷

141 Liam Kennedy and Caitlin Patrick, 'Introduction: The Violence of the Image', in *The Violence of the Image: Photography and International Conflict*, ed. by Kennedy and Patrick (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), p. 1.

142 Crane, 311.

143 See NAM 1973-05-4-5/6/7/8/9/10; the photograph 'At the Slave Marketplace' 1973-05-4-165, 190-197; Chaudhary, pp. 79-80.

144 Hilary Roberts, 'War Trophy Photographs: Proof or Pornography?', in *Picturing Atrocity*, ed. by Batchen and others.

145 James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), Kindle edition.

146 Chaudhary, pp. 73-74.

147 Sontag, p. 111.

Unviewed Suffering

While these images focus on the violence perpetrated against combatants, non-combatants were also caught up in the campaign. The war effort significantly worsened the situation for local populations, as they were expected to provide food to troops on both sides of the campaign.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, this album is a record of violence attributable to both sides of the conflict, as evidenced by images such as 'The Gallows' and the ruins of Gordon's palace, including the stairs where he was murdered and the view Gordon had as he awaited the relief expedition.¹⁴⁹ In addition, much is missing from these photographs and evidently of little interest to Gregson. There is an invisibility of suffering or to use Jane Lydon's term, 'colonial blind spots'.¹⁵⁰ So much of the suffering that resulted from colonialism was captured neither in war photographs nor in drawings by war artists, or indeed in the archives; this invisibility includes the aftermaths of scorched earth and the burning of villages in Britain's 'small wars'. As Struk has observed, 'photographs, like memory, can reveal evidence of a moment-in-time but they can also conceal the story that lies outside the image'.¹⁵¹ In this, as in other cases of colonial violence, much suffering is concealed in the historical record. This issue relates to the fact that photography presents that which the photographer deems 'worth recording' or, in Elizabeth Edwards' words, the 'mattering' of potential subjects.¹⁵²

Clearly, the role of British troops stands at the forefront of Gregson's representations and Lamothe in particular has highlighted the ways in which Sudanese troops fighting under Kitchener have been ignored in the historiography and representations of the campaign. In so doing, he cites E. P. Thompson's phrase regarding the 'enormous condescension of posterity'.¹⁵³ Certainly, based on Gregson's album one would not realise that the Anglo-Egyptian army was made up by two-thirds

148 Henry Keown-Boyd, *A Good Dusting: A Centenary Review of the Sudan Campaigns: 1883-1899* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1986), p. 212. On the pressures exerted on the local populations by the colonists see SAD, Hunter, 'For Information of Sirdar and Chief of Staff', 24 September 1897, SAD/964/3.

149 RCW: RCIN 2501886, RCIN 2501863, RCIN 2501865 and RCIN 2501866.

150 Lydon.

151 Struk, *Photographing the Holocaust*, p. 212.

152 John Berger, *Understanding a Photograph*, ed. by Geoff Dyer (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 25; Edwards and Mead, 'Absent Histories and Absent Images', 224.

153 Cited in Lamothe, p. 6.

of Sudanese and Egyptian troops.¹⁵⁴ It would be of interest to explore Sudanese representations of the Mahdia and the reconquest campaign; certainly, as P. M. Holt has observed, the Mahdi has been revered as a 'national hero and a fighter against alien rule'.¹⁵⁵ I have not been able to conduct comprehensive research regarding Sudanese representations of the battle resulting from geographic and language constrictions, however, it is clear that the events remained present in Sudanese consciousness throughout the twentieth century. The followers of the Mahdi, the Ansar, have made direct links in folklore between the Battle of Omdurman and the Aba Island massacre in 1970.¹⁵⁶ Clearly, more research is needed in this regard.¹⁵⁷

A Photographic 'Archive' of Violence

While war photographs that laid bare the results of British colonial violence and conquest were perhaps more rare in the nineteenth century, there were photographers who bucked this trend and went beyond providing sanitised views of violence and colonialism. Such visual records of the effects of colonial violence, including Gregson's, directly contradict British claims of the Empire as a 'civilising mission' and its alleged benevolence, both then and now.

Gregson's 'Khartum album' is an important record of the brutalities and contradictory rhetoric of the British Empire. Such rhetoric includes 'Despatching the Dervish Wounded', and Gregson's images work powerfully against this euphemistic language of Empire and are an important addition to the 'archive' of nineteenth-century colonial photography.¹⁵⁸ That such photographs are not commonly viewed and discussed, is consistent with the wider approach and view regarding popular perceptions of the British Empire, particularly in comparison

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ P. M. Holt, 'The Mahdia in the Sudan: 1881-1898', *History Today*, 8.3 (1958), 187-95.

¹⁵⁶ Gabriel Warburg, 'Mahdism and Islamism in Sudan', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27.2 (1995), 221.

¹⁵⁷ One example in English is Amil Khan, 'Sudanese Honour Warriors who Fell Fighting British', *Sudanese Tribune*, 2 September 2005, <<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article11447>> [accessed 18 August 2018].

¹⁵⁸ The actions of both armies were depicted in the images: 'Despatching the Dervish Wounded' and 'The Reason Why', in W. T. Maud, 'The Dark Side of Campaigning', *The Graphic*, 1 October 1898.

to its European counterparts.¹⁵⁹ We need an open and honest conversation about extreme violence in British history, related but not limited to the British Empire. There remains a 'disavowal' and a state of 'colonial aphasia' in Britain related to its empire.¹⁶⁰ These issues within British memory have been further highlighted by the rhetoric surrounding arguments for Brexit in post-EU referendum Britain.¹⁶¹ This situation is part of a wider issue in which there is an ongoing reluctance of some imperial historians to engage with the issues at hand regarding the relationship between violence and the British Empire. This reluctance extends to images of extreme violence. Despite a general lack of familiarity with such images, clearly, an important range of atrocity photography exists, but unlike photographs that capture the violence of others, we are not exposed to the results of the British Empire.¹⁶² This neglect is indicative of an issue that has been illuminated by a recent roundtable on John Darwin's *The Empire Project*.¹⁶³ Within Duncan Bell's contribution to this debate, he argues that rather than a sanitised view of empire, we need to focus on 'the broken and abused bodies – almost invariably black or brown – on which empire was erected'.¹⁶⁴ This focus needs to include a consideration of the indigenous populations who fought against the British colonisation process in Britain's nineteenth-century 'small wars'. As Dominik Schaller and Jürgen Zimmerer emphasise, in cases of colonial warfare 'in which colonial military commanders did not aim at exterminating their indigenous enemies they usually willingly and cynically accepted the death of thousands of Africans or Asians as a collateral damage of their method of warfare'.¹⁶⁵

Photographs of empire are littered with evidence of violence, but hundreds of thousands of 'bodies' are missing from contemporary photographs. That images of 'the dead native' are frequently overlooked may be understood in terms of the concept of 'grievability' related to

159 On British 'peaceableness' see Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain', *The Journal of Modern History*, 75.3 (2003), 557–89.

160 Edwards and Mead, 'Absent Histories and Absent Images', 20; A. L. Stoler, 'Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France', *Public Culture*, 23.1 (2011), 121–56.

161 A point also made by Wagner, 'Seeing like a Soldier', p. 37 (n. 56).

162 Again, this issue relates to representations of violence in British museums.

163 John Darwin, 'Roundtable: Imperial History by the Book: A Roundtable on John Darwin's *The Empire Project*. Reply', *Journal of British Studies*, 54.4 (2015), 993–97.

164 Duncan Bell, 'Roundtable: Imperial History by the Book: A Roundtable on John Darwin's *The Empire Project*. Comment: Desolation Goes before Us', *Journal of British Studies*, 54.4 (2015), 987–93.

165 Dominik J. Schaller and Jürgen Zimmerer, 'Settlers, Imperialism, Genocide: Seeing the Global without Ignoring the Local: Introduction', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 10.2 (2008), 193–94.

'colonised' victims.¹⁶⁶ This idea extends to the millions who died in 'colonial blind spots'; the repercussions of tactics of colonial warfare extended beyond armed opponents, and their stories are all but invisible in the archives and historiography. Genocide scholars have been key in highlighting the relationship between European colonialism and extreme violence, including genocidal violence.¹⁶⁷ The often one-sided nature of colonial violence had implications for the 'potentiality' of genocide throughout the Empire, not least as a result of the racial assumptions and 'total' tactics that marked colonial conquests.¹⁶⁸ Scholars of genocide have previously recognised the extreme nature of the reconquest campaign. For example, Doris Bergen emphasises the campaign within the context of a period which 'must have contributed to a sense among many Europeans that human life – at least the lives of people they considered inferior – was extremely cheap'.¹⁶⁹ While the one-sided nature of this campaign was part of a wider pattern of colonial warfare, it stands apart for the massacring of enemy wounded and surrendering troops, although these practices were not without precedent.¹⁷⁰

In the aforementioned roundtable, Darwin acknowledges the role that violence played in empire building, but he deems this violence to be self-evident and unworthy of further exploration. Darwin claims that an emphasis on the centrality of violence to the Empire 'is not to add much to the sum of knowledge'.¹⁷¹ However, the aim is certainly not to claim that the British 'invented' empire and its corresponding violence, but to locate, as Darwin himself states, 'the scale, operation, and meaning of British imperial violence'.¹⁷² We need to assess the role of extreme violence, not as the result of individual 'excesses', but as part of the 'logic' of the British Empire.¹⁷³ Of course, we *know* that empire building was brutal and that colonial warfare was 'barbaric', but I argue that pho-

¹⁶⁶ Chaudhary, p. 85.

¹⁶⁷ Notable examples are *Empire, Colony, Genocide*, ed. by Moses; Mark Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation State*, 2 vols (London; New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2005), II: *Rise of the West and the Coming of Genocide*.

¹⁶⁸ Michelle Gordon, 'British Colonial Violence in Perak, Sierra Leone and the Sudan' (unpublished PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2017).

¹⁶⁹ Doris L. Bergen, *The Holocaust: A New History* (Stroud: Tempus, 2008 [2003]), p. 260.

¹⁷⁰ Michael Lieven, "Butchering the Brutes All Over the Place": Total War and Massacre in Zululand, 1879', *History*, 18 (1999), 614–32.

¹⁷¹ Darwin, 994.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 995.

¹⁷³ Historians of Empire are exploring the everyday violence that was inherent within the structures of the colonial systems. One example is Jill C. Bender, *The 1857 Indian Uprising and the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

tographs such as Gregson's are important in comprehending that violence and the racial ideology that underpinned it. As has been the case with other events of mass violence, images provide an irrefutable veracity to descriptions of violence, and speak in ways that words cannot.

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