

Interpreting images from South African family photographic collections of the Anglo-Boer War period 1899 to 1902

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Photography's truth telling technology enticed early photographers to capture images of war such as the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902. Many of these images include family photographic collections that were taken in and around the concentration camps. These images offer us valuable messages. Photography performs an important role in expressing people's complex relationships in the identity of cultural groups and a national belonging. This study strives to unravel the potential reasons for the way that society chose to visually represent itself. The question of why a photograph was made involves an understanding of the social, cultural and historical relationships figured in the image, as well as a larger set of relationships outside and beyond the frame. The social aspects of a photograph incorporate the purpose of both the sitters and the photographers as reflected in their decisions to take particular styles of pictures. Posed photographs in particular, provide reliable evidence of how people want to express their identity. Many of the Anglo-Boer War family and portrait photographs are formally posed and could provide evidence of the sitters' ambition, their dreams and their relationship with processes and people outside the picture frame. A heuristic interpretation of a sample of posed family photographs of the Anglo-Boer War indicate that the sitters sought an identity of respect, and projected a unified family despite their somber adversary. These images reflect a relationship between history and memory and present the past as it was. This research will contribute to our understanding of the value of photography in the lives of South Africans, why time and funds were spent on this activity and why family photographic collections were seen as valuable.

Key words: Anglo-Boer War, interpretation, family photographs

Interpretasie beelde van Suid Afrikaanse familie-fotoversamelings gedurende die Anglo-Boere-Oorlog-periode 1899 tot 1902

Fotografie se waarheidsvertellingstegnologie het vroeëre fotografeerders genoodsaak om beelde gedurende die Anglo-Boere-Oorlog 1899-1902 vas te vang. Baie van die fotobeelde sluit in familie versamelings wat in en rondom die omgewing van die konsentrasiekampe geneem is. Hierdie beelde bied aan ons waardevolle boodskappe. Fotografie voer 'n belangrike rol om mense se komplekse verhoudings in die identiteit van kultuurgroepe en nasionale belang uit te beeld. Hierdie studie poog om die moontlike redes te ontbloot hoe en waarom die gemeenskap hulself visueel wou uitbeeld. Die vraag waarom die foto gemaak is, beklemtoon 'n begrip van sosiale, kulturele en geskiedkundige verhoudings, verbeeld in 'n foto, asook die breër verhoudings buite en verby die raam. Die sosiale aspekte van 'n foto inkorporeer die doel van beide die gefotografeerde en die fotograaf en dit reflekteer hulle besluitneming vir die spesifieke aard van foto's. Met spesifieke geposeerde foto's word betroubare bewyse gelewer van hoe mense hulself en hulle identiteit wou uitdruk. Verskeie van die Anglo-Boere-Oorlog familie- en portretfoto's wat geneem is, is amptelik formeel geposeer om die model se ambisies, hulle drome en hulle verhoudings met mense buite die raam te voorsien. 'n Heuristiese interpretasie as 'n voorbeeld en openbaring van opgestelde familie foto's gedurende die Anglo-Boere-Oorlog, om aan te dui dat die modelle gehunker het na 'n identiteit van respek, en 'n geprojekeerde verenigde familie ten spyte van hul somber teenstand. Die foto's se verhouding tussen geskiedenis en herinneringe en met die verlede word hierin gereflekteer. Die studie sal bydra tot ons begrip en waarde van fotografie in die lewe van Suid-Afrikaners, hoekom fondse en tyd op die wyse aangewend is en waarom fotografiese familieversamelings as waardevol gesien is.

Slutelwoorde: Anglo-Boere-Oorlog, interpretasie, familiefoto's

The camera, as a critical eye and recorder, is a valuable instrument which gathers accurate visual information with the potential to extend the viewer's awareness of and insight into the visual information thus collected (Collier & Collier 1992: 1-5). A photograph's

meaning is not only to reveal what is not there anymore, but to also reflect on what has been (Barthes 1993: 85). It is therefore possible to reason that the content and message of a photograph can approve authenticity, which in turn may relate to the truthfulness of photographic evidence. Photographs reflecting on society convey evidence of when they were captured. Stated differently, photographs may prove to be even “truer” than a human witness of those events (Rose 2003: 11). Throughout the Second Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902 (also referred to as the South African War), cameras were widely used for documentation purposes relating to personal as well as official matters.

In interviews conducted with, by Gillian Rose, she reflects on the significance of family photographic collections and their role in society (Rose 2010: 25). Rose argues that photographs are objects that are “powerful and transformative”. Family members view their photographs as objects representing togetherness and as part of their home within the domestic space (Rose 2010: 45). Togetherness reflects on how family members see their family photographs, where photographs are displayed and how the photographs are looked at (Rose 2010: 43-45). Furthermore as regards the viewer, photographs have the ability to evoke certain memories, which further motivates the action for creating and preserving family photographic collections (Rose 2010: 50). In Rose’s writing, she often refers to and supports the viewpoints of the French sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu. Her research further highlights complexities in relationships and the advantages or shortcomings in the exchange of photographs in a visual context. American philosopher Kendall Walton (2008: 22) comments that photography allows viewers to observe the past by, *inter alia*, enabling them to see or observe their ancestors and past scenes and occurrences as and when they were photographed.

Photographs, moreover, can provide evidence in both a formal and in an informal context. For example, informally photographs may, reflect on a past photograph of a loved one or loved ones. Photography can substantiate the object or subject being photographed. It reflects on the object or subject photographed in relation to the world and may signify knowledge or even power (Sontag 1977: 174). Written text concerning a person or an event may be viewed as an elucidation, but a perspective on a photograph may represent a part or portion or segment of the world, a miniature slice of an occasion (Williams 1997: 1). In this regard, John and Malcolm Collier (Collier & Collier 1992: 8) state that; “man always used photographs to give form to his concepts of reality”. Rose (2010: 47) supports this notion by referring to family as a tincture of the family member’s presence, to “bring an awareness of absence and distance”.

Three family photographs

It is the intention of this paper to reflect on three families that were photographed within the concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902. In this war the Boer guerrilla warfare strategies allowed the British forces to act with drastic action against the Boer and their families. The original ideas communicated to the Boer families regarding the establishment of concentration camps were as follows. In the first place, if the Boer families put down their weapons and signed the oath of neutrality they would be protected and their private property would be respected, this however did not happen (Grobler & Grobler 2013: 1). Secondly, the camps were the result of Lord Kitchener’s scorched-earth policy and the concentration camps were one of the consequences thereof. All men, women, children and workers that could be found were brought in and camped (Lee 1985: 163). Countless farmhouses were burned down, infrastructure destroyed and live stock stolen or killed. Some British soldiers objected to this destruction of property and other belongings, but they were forced to follow their superiors’

orders. On the other hand others enjoyed doing this (Grobler & Grobler 2013: 5-7). The aim of this policy, as photographic records reflect, was to cause maximum damage to property on farms and to the lives of the Boer families (Kessler 2012: 14). In addition this was done to punish the Boer which were on the battlefields, to intimidate them and to prevent any logistical support to them from farms. This all had a significant effect on food supplies in the rural areas (Grobler & Grobler 2013: 1).

Role of photography during the Anglo-Boer War

Amongst the concentration camp photographs taken, are records of families. These photographs offer us valuable insight into the Boer families held in camps of what was photographed and why many families were photographed. Rose (2003: 30) refers to this as the site of production. The three chosen photographs will strive to unravel the reasons for the way that the families visually represent themselves within these camp records. This paper will contribute to an understanding of the technology of that time and the value of photography as a record of the Boer families. Photography performs an important role in articulating people's multifaceted relationships in the identity of cultural groups and national belonging. In this reflection the British records of Boer families in the camps provides an opportunity to understand how families were recorded, how they chose to represent themselves and insight into the significance of photography during this period.

When analysing the images this paper uses Rose's (2010: 30) proposed "productive methodologies" include sites (site of production, site of audiencing and site of photograph itself), modalities (technological modality, compositional modality and social modality) and methods for interpreting found visual materials. This study reflects on Rose's (2010: 217) interpretation of the family photograph by tracing the social practices within the photographs of Boer families.

During the Anglo-Boer War, photographs relating to the war were predominantly disseminated in the British press and were used to create an impression of British invincibility – with many photographs, nonetheless, being posed and not an actual account of the war. At the same time photographs of concentration camps where families were interned, as well as the devastation and havoc wreaked by the British on the battlefield, were recorded by photographers sympathetic to the Boer cause. This paper will further comment on why the Boer families were photographed and who was the audience at that time. These photographs, however, did not receive much attention during the conflict itself and were only published after the war in publications such as *To the Bitter End* (Lee 1985). It is of value to note how these photographs are used today and who is the intended audience. New publications, including photographic content are still published today.

Photographs of society during and emanating from the Anglo-Boer War period, in particular family photography, can be considered as archival documents which leave a paper trail of the lives that individuals led (Fachry, Kamps & Zhang 2008: 102). Blanco (2010: 4) rightly states that family photography contributes to the importance of concrete moments in the lives of a family and adds to making those moments memorable. It is these types of photographs that this paper focuses on in an attempt to create a more nuanced and distinctioned understanding of South African society's heterogeneous character at the time of the Anglo-Boer War. Society here refers to people from various cultures and convictions, for example, farmers, women, children, labourers, teachers and soldiers. However most of the mentioned categories will be used in the larger study. Not only women and children were held in the concentration camps, but men from

various cultures too. A variety of these families and other individuals were photographed for many reasons, weaving an intricate pattern of social interaction during the period in question and countering the more publicised visual reflection.

In reference to early painters, the likes of Jan van Noordt and the Nineteenth Century, impressionist artists such as Vincent van Gogh influenced the people constructed family portraits. Van Noordt's family paintings were formal and structured and Van Gogh's paintings were of common people in common situations resulting in a movement of informal portraiture. Similar changes happened during the photographic period in the early Twentieth Century. Due to this the posing and the clothing became more relaxed and the backgrounds became more meaningful. These kinds of photographs became the forerunners to a more casual type of the family photograph (Williams 1997: 2).

In the 1889 George Eastman commercialised his roll-film on transparent celluloid photographic emulsion (Cole 1978: 13). During 1899 to 1902 the older sheet film, glass negatives and new roll film cameras were used. The roll film was used in the Kodak cameras (Cole 1978: 48-49). This resulted in a more mobile camera technology where handheld photographers could capture people and families in an informal environment. The result of these developments was that more people were able to afford photography and more were visiting a photographic studio.

One can read from earlier photographs that the photographic event was important and a well respected occasion. Even with advancements of technology in the photographic industry the exposures times were uncomfortable long for people, which requires subjects to remain motionless for the time of the exposure (Williams 1997: 3).

By viewing family photographs, much can be discovered, interpreted and analysed about family structures and family relationships. One purpose of family photographs are to remind people of certain good times with loved ones, but in contrast to the above, many family photographs taken during the Anglo-Boer War period remind us about cruel events against families.

I hypothesise that by using a hermeneutical approach to uncover forgotten meanings of family photographs from the Anglo-Boer War, that it is possible to formulate interpretations of these photographs. Photographs are prosthetic devices that empower us to see things that otherwise would remain unknown. It is a kind of a mirror or telescope assisting us to see remote things (Walton 2008: 78).

Research methods employed

This study adheres to archival research principles and focuses on the interpretations as the primary analysis perspective in order to uncover new and forgotten meanings. This will assist in the understanding of meaning and to probe deeper into reality. In Rose's (2010) research similar principles were used to interpret family and domestic photographs rely on the collection, recording and analysis of materials. Photographs for the purpose of this paper represent focused samples of three families which reflect on the society, interpretations and the technology used to record them.

The emphasis of the proposed study will be on formulating the analysis model to interpret and to help come to an understanding of the photographs of the Anglo-Boer War period. For the purpose of this study, a judgement sampling method was used.

From these categories of photographs, noticeable characteristics are evident and consequently the main categories can be subdivided into additional sub-categories, such as single portraits, family groups, males, females, children, poses, clothes, setting, animals in photographs, camera techniques and so forth. This process will be refined as the selection of photographs occurs and continues.

As far as the photograph analysis procedure is concerned, the majority of family photographs are likely to have a dominant subject within the photograph and this will most likely form the basis of a narrative meaning of the specific photograph (Blomgren 1999: 27).

Photographs as a model of social life

Saayman-Hattingh (2013: 248) comments that photographs signify an example or model of social life; this takes place when such photographs are viewed at a date in the future and it may support a historical indication or a specific mind set of cultures and social situations.

In the Anglo-Boer War, mobile or location photography became another option, as mentioned this was mainly due to the advancement and mobility in photography. It was also noticeable during the time of the Anglo-Boer War; not all photographs were taken in the studio and some of the poses became more relaxed.

There appears to be a “performance” when people request a photographer’s services, they make provision for their presentation in a photograph and how their friends and families will view them. Photography conduct is a performance or presentation in which the model will take on a technique or pose, to give people the impression of who they are or how they would want to be seen. This can be understood as impression management, on purpose people attempt not to project the wrong impression of themselves to others. The question may be asked, is this always the case? Photography allows people to present their family to others and to themselves (Boerdam & Martinius 1980: 109).

Seeing that photography can be regarded as a technique of impression management, one can notice that people on purpose present themselves in a positive way. People mostly use photography to selectively show their family.

For family photography this means that a family presents an idealised version of itself by means of photographs. This change of ideals into pictures is a complex social process in which the influence of visual images in art and photography must not be underestimated (Boerdam & Martinius 1980: 110). To reflect on the above statement one can argue that paintings in the 1800s and 1900s had the same effect on how people wanted to present or reflect themselves in a photograph.

Apart from simple to general aesthetics; the distinctive attitude of the typical informal photograph is the way the model posed. Many times the photographer directs the arrangement for family or single portrait photographs. In this way we can speak of arranging and directing of the people in the photograph. Posing may be understood as “assuming a specific attitude”, more so for artistic purposes, thus having one’s photograph made or captured by a photographer, artist of even a sculptor. This explains to a certain extent the ties between photography and painting, this tie was more evident in the initial years of photography which resembled posing for a painter. It was the duty of the photographer to determine and direct the facial expression and the

best lighting and the attitude for the model. Posing means for the model to sit still (Boerdam & Martinius 1980: 111-112).

Boerdam & Martinius (1980: 112-116) claim that outside the studio the people are more inclined to make-up their poses. People in a photograph that are posed appear more formal when they look directly into the camera lens. We also witness the beginning of another kind of photography where people are involved in an activity and it becomes more relaxed and informal, namely snapshot photographs. In the life of a family it appears that family photographs has an important role to play. Photographs can bring memorable moments to light for those who were part of them and to everyone else concerned.

Family photographs

This landscape format photograph of the Van Deventer family was taken in a concentration camp situated in the town of Kimberley (Nasson & Grundlingh 2013: 57) (figure 1). The camp was established on the De Beers property in Newton, on the town's outskirts. This camp was known for its shortage of water and poor health conditions (Heyningen).



Figure 1
Van Deventer family (source: Anglo-Boer War Museum, number 04858).

The photograph represents a large family with ten children, the children range from a fairly young age to their mid twenties. From this photographic record it comes across that this family took pride in the way they were photographed. They appear dignified and respectable. An assumption is that they required the photographer to document them as a family as a reference and for future audiences who will view them. It was not uncommon for families to own a family album. It was also a way to document and record families and family life in the camps.

Most of the families photographed in the concentration camps do not include a father figure with older brothers. These men were normally on the battlefields, in prison camps, wartime casualties or on the run from the British. Possible reasons for the men's presence in this family

photograph could be that they were “hensoppers” meaning surrendered burghers or that they probably signed the oath of neutrality (Nasson & Grundlingh 2013: 29-32, 59).

This family was photographed against a makeshift outdoor studio arrangement. A vertical fabric backdrop was positioned as the studio’s background, including a groundsheet to try and follow the portraiture convention that was popular at that time. The background contributes to strong compositional and vertical lines; this puts emphasis on the frame around the family grouping. One can presume the arranged studio set-up in the Kimberly camp was for the purpose to document the different family groups held captive in the camp for record purposes of their captors. The convention of family photography has therefore been appropriated for record purposes where the traditional role would be for family consumption. In reference to this paper’s discussions, this photograph is one of the few where a studio on location was established.

The family appears formal and rigid with the two parents seated. This reveals its own character regarding the social status of parents in a family, as senior family members they are seated and surrounded by their children. The father and mother’s hand gestures illustrate some affection with the youngest daughter. Four of the children are brothers, with their six sisters. Another possibility could be that the elder sons in the back row are standing with their wives, but this information is unknown. Statistics indicate that nearly a third of the adults in camps were men, mostly of a young age (Nasson & Grundlingh 2013: 101). The three photographs as discussed in this paper supports that notion.

The formal clothing of each family member appears neat and in good condition. The males are dressed in white-collar shirts, mainly long trousers and jackets. All the females are dressed in long black dresses; some of the females are wearing white rounded collars. The mother’s dress is finished off with a black ribbon at the top, possibly the significance of this is for the Victorian dress. They are formally dressed for the purpose of documenting them as the family. The black coloured dresses could reveal their pain for what they have lost. One can reason that the purpose for this event was to record and document them as a family. It could also be to illustrate and prove that they were alive at that point in time. Some photographic records reveal that dead children formed part of the family photograph. Their mood reflects a dismal attitude possibly revealing on their unbearable situation being held against their will in a concentration camp. As the photograph illustrates – none of them are smiling.

The camera’s vantage point is rather high, pointing down at the family group with a bit of lens flare from the top left hand corner. The camera could have been secured on a tripod for stability purposes. Due to this formal set-up and arrangement with significant photo detail, the camera most likely exposed an image on a large format glass negative. The sensitivity of these glass negatives was low resulting in longer exposure times. The photographer took care in arranging each family member. All of them are visible in the three composed rows and some of the children sit comfortably, securing themselves for the long exposure time. Everyone has a specific body language they are portraying. The negative space areas in the photograph inform the viewer of certain living conditions of the Boer families. The tent represents the kind of homes in the camp; a zinc tub in the background is normally used for washing purposes. This bit of information provides the viewer with a visual input of a setting in a concentration camp.

The dark coloured clothing and formal outfits are similar in most of the other concentration camp family photographs. This could refer to the selective show of the family and the impression management to avoid representation by making a wrong impression. These kind of photographs account to a similar comment from Saayman-Hattingh (2013: 248) that the viewer is exposed to

a model of social life when this photograph is viewed at a future date. This photograph reflects on what the people in concentration camps dealt with in their world of tents and barbwire fences, this was where they were forced to stay. The formal character of the photograph is a time slice moment in the life of the Van Deventer family.

This informal family photograph of the Faure family was exposed in the Norvals Pont concentration camp located on the banks of the Orange River (figure2). This camp was established to accommodate Boer families from the overcrowded Bloemfontein camp (Grobler & Grobler 2013: 22). The family originated from the town of Smithfield in the Orange Free State province, currently known as Free State. The visual evidence reflects fourteen family members who represent approximately three generations.



Figure 2
Faure family (source: Anglo-Boer War Museum, number 02079).

The stand appears large enough to accommodate the everyday rituals of cooking, washing of clothing and family interactions without being in direct contact with the family positioned directly next to them. This large tent size was not the standard when compared to tents in other documentary photographs taken of the concentration camp at the time. In the foreground there is a number of lime painted white stones and timber poles, indicating boundaries and a pathway; this could signify structure, stand sizes and uniformity throughout the camp. The photograph clearly indicates a certain form of basic lifestyle against a strong rural backdrop. It is assumed that families had a say in how they were presented in their photographs. This display is in contrast to the first photograph in figure 1. It appears less formal, with some family activity-taking place. One assumes that the family required to be photographed reflecting the position of their tent and to record them at some open kitchen action. In similar consumptions this photograph could be initiated by the British for their records and media purposes in the United Kingdom.

The content of this photograph also reflects a large family. On the man's right hand side sits a woman, which could be the grandmother. There are seven young children, three boys, four girls, and three or four elder sisters. The wife is looking away from the camera and the husband,

smoking a pipe appears if he has just arrived from somewhere else. Two women do not form part of the grouping; they are positioned in the background on the right hand side. The one with her hands on her waist shows possible dissatisfaction with the event, this is reflected through her body language. Both ladies are dressed in white dresses, which are in complete contrast to the other female's clothing. The reason for this is not known, it could be that they were just visiting. It is interesting to note the photograph has elements of an informal arrangement; this is prompted by the way the photographer composed the grouping. The appearance of the family's clothing is mostly formal and arranged, meaning this photograph was planned and staged. Two women are wearing their aprons, which enhances the less formal arrangement. A few family members appear to be preparing food for the family. There is some open-air kitchen activity in action.

The photographer included a wide view of the family and their surroundings. His camera's position indicates he is far away from the family. The camera is at about waistline to the family grouping. The style of photography is not only a portrait photograph of the family grouping, but the family in their environment, resulting in a documentation of the family life. In comparison to other discussed photographs this one portrays a type of documentary style. The hill in the background indicates their position in the landscape of the concentration camp; they are possibly slightly higher than their neighbours. The sharply focused tent ropes in the background indicates that there is sufficient depth of field for focusing purpose.

One purpose for these kinds of family photographs is to be looked at and possibly in the company of others to bring back reminiscences in a way that outsiders can be initiated in the family history (Boerdam & Martinus 1980: 95).

Reference material indicates that this photograph of a mother and child was taken in an unknown concentration camp (Pretorius 2001: 36) (figure 3). We do not know the names of these individuals. Due to limited information it is possible they were in a transit or temporary camp. The wagons in the background standing close to the tents could support this finding. The previous two images are visually structured and of a permanent base. The availability of recorded information of family names and the camp's location supports this. In some of the concentration camps attempts were made to keep an accurate record of all residents. It appears if the British photographers have documented the families in a specific structured way, even in this transit or temporary camp.



Figure 3
Surviving child of seven with mother (source: Anglo-Boer War Museum, number 00054).

In the rectangular format framing of the photograph there is a definite open distance between the family's position in the framing and the tents in the background. This space isolates them from the camp's living environment and can read as a metaphor, illustrating their sorrow, loneliness and loss. The space creates a dividing line putting them in the foreground with all the visual attention on them. The division is further supported by the strong separation line marked by stones, almost in the centre of the frame, separating the background from the mother and child grouping. The photographer created a compact composition with the viewer's attention focused onto the foregrounded family.

The background in this image is very different to the backgrounds portrayed in the first two images discussed. This is the most informal and portrays elements of the living circumstances of the concentration camp, a few closely pitched tents are visible as well as a wagon, which could have transported them to the camp. In both the other photographs discussed the photographer has taken time with organizing the families, either in front of a background or posed within the family's living environment. The families have been provided with the opportunity to present themselves to be photographed and appear to have dressed for the occasion. In this instance the everyday clothing and cropping of the subjects being recorded seem to indicate a less formal occasion for the photographic activity.

Looking at the child, her small figure posture and body weight makes one wonder how she survived, and did she stay alive until the end of the war. Her legs and arms are thin, most likely due to malnutrition or illness. The glare from the little girl's big eyes and thin face are touching. The child's expression shows no pretence and no emotion. She is seated on a wooden chair lined with a softer material to make her more comfortable. Due to no body fat it must have been strenuous to sit on a hard chair. She sits slightly into the chair – that could reflect on the marginally sagged strap (riempi) material used for the seated sections of chairs. One can argue the child could not stand still for the exposure time and is therefore seated. The mother is positioned in a kneeling pose, on her left knee next to her daughter. She lowered herself to the same level of her child. In this tough camp situation she is not portraying herself as mother on a higher level. This could reflect on her empathy and love for her child. Here is no physical touch of comfort between the two of them, not even her right hand, which is close to her daughter's arm. The absence of physical demonstration of sentiment or affection is clearly visible. She appears emotional about her losses and she is aware of her child's pain and suffering, knowing the road that she already walked.

In comparison to her mother the little child appears to portray a slight untidiness, her hair is cut short and she is not warmly dressed. Her mother is neatly presented and dressed in a formal black outfit. The mother's face is slightly lowered and her glance is upwards, almost respectfully looking up at the photographer. Boerdam & Martinius (1980: 95) maintain for many people their photographic collections are the only biographical material that they leave behind after their deaths.

The camera's viewpoint is slightly higher than eye level, pointing down at a slight angle. The grouping is close to the camera in the foreground and therefore the camera's focus is on the two members with the background out of focus. This further enhances and focuses the viewer's attention onto the mother and child. The lighting conditions for the photographs appear with a slightness of softer and diffused light. There are some shadow areas visible on their bodies, some of the highlighted facial features are over exposed; their eyes are semi-blocked and are hidden in shadow. The black clothing carries some detail, which assists in seeing the fabric and

textures. Due to the camera's settings and overexposure the tents in the background lost their textures and detail.

Conclusion

In this paper attention has been given to a specific selected three photographs. These photographs represent a time slice moment of the life of specific families. This article demonstrates that in the initial years of photography and during the time of the Anglo-Boer War, people attached the greatest value of a respectable dignified past. This is supported by the overwhelming evidence of many photographic records in museums and archives nationally and internationally. One can state the way in which families presented themselves, contribute to the notion that they appear dignified and respectable. The composition, dress code and body language support this. However, much of the visual and background information reflect upon the circumstances in a concentration camp. The photographs are the evidence of that viewpoint. This paper provides insight of captured families and how they presented themselves in their society. The role of family photographs played an important, it was seen as a valuable commodity. The research of these photographs argued to make past conditions visible for those who took part in them and for future viewing.

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Flip du Toit's current field of research is about the hermeneutical aspects of family photographs that were recorded during the time of the Anglo-Boer War. This article comes from a doctoral research study currently conducted.