

## 2 RICHARD BUCHTA AND THE VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF EQUATORIA IN THE LATER NINETEENTH CENTURY

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The Austrian photographer Richard Buchta (1845–94) is regarded as having undertaken the earliest photographic tour of central Africa, in 1878–9. The photographs he published as a result were celebrated and reproduced, mostly in engraved form, by all the major explorer-writers of central Africa in the period, including Wilhelm Junker, Gaetano Casati, and the missionaries C. T. Wilson and R. W. Felkin. His photographs were also drawn upon extensively by Friedrich Ratzel in his lavishly illustrated three-volume work *The History of Mankind* (1896). Yet despite such contemporary success, Buchta's pioneering photographic work fell into obscurity in the twentieth century, and knowledge of his work is now largely confined to regional specialists. While it is certainly time for Buchta to be re-inserted into mainstream accounts of the history of photography in Africa, it is also my interest here to build a fuller understanding of the way in which his photographs of the historical Equatoria Province (now parts of South Sudan and northern Uganda) shaped the visual representation of its peoples in European literature for a generation and continue to do so in the digital age.

I will try to unpick some of the reasons why his work has been so neglected and show how recent archival work on a Buchta collection in Oxford has released his images into the online image ecology. This has led to a new phase of reappropriation and repurposing of Buchta's images in public websites such as Wikipedia, where the scans from the Oxford project have been used in encyclopaedic accounts of the peoples that he photographed, creating a tension between archival visibility and continuing academic obscurity. An argument might be put forward, from a technological perspective, that obscurity was determined at an early stage;

Buchta's photographs were invariably reproduced in contemporary accounts as engraved or drawn illustrations (sometimes uncredited) due to the limitations of photomechanical reproduction of photographs at the time. Buchta's own publication of a boxed set of mounted albumen prints relating to the tour – titled *Die Oberen Nil-länder: Volkstypen und Landschaften* (Buchta 1881a; hereafter DON)<sup>1</sup> – was bulky, expensive, and destined for specialists and collectors only. It is today found complete in only a handful of major archives and libraries. Being some years ahead of popular technologies of photomechanical reproduction in publishing, Buchta's photography, in common with much photography of the period, worked on a principle of extrinsic rather than intrinsic finality;<sup>2</sup> that is, that the photographs were made with a view to their use in artistic illustration beyond the photographic inscription itself. This approach influences many of Buchta's photographic compositions, with figures arranged in non-naturalistic groupings and arrangements and holding 'typical' items of material culture. There is in Buchta's photographs of Equatoria a dynamic interplay between the intrinsicality of the photographic moment and the extrinsicality that the photographer seeks in the artistic liberation of the subject from that moment within a tradition of engraved illustration of African peoples. As Elizabeth Edwards observes, this tension within the photographic image can be considered a denial of history in that the image 'defies diachronic connections, being dislocated from the flow of life from which it was extracted' (2001: 8). Given this realization, we should approach Buchta's photographs not just from the perspective of their visual content as a source of historical information and the sorts of histories that they might speak to but also include an examination of the contexts of his own publications, their extensive contemporary use, their subsequent neglect in the history of photography in Africa, and more recent digital reappropriations of them, as connected strands within a wider history of visual representation of the region.

## Buchta and the historiography of African photography

That Buchta was a notable figure in the cultural scene of the German-speaking world (Deutscher sprachraum) at the end of the nineteenth century is demonstrated by his entry, authored by Friedrich Ratzel, in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (Ratzel 1903). It is this biographical entry we have to thank for much of the information we have about Buchta. Ratzel states that Buchta was born in 1845 in Radlow in Galicia (now Poland) and that he travelled to Egypt around 1870 as a practising photographer. After his travels in Sudan and northern Uganda between 1878 and 1880, he returned to Munich where he worked for the Bavarian King Ludwig II, for whom he painted and made

miniatures in ivory. During this period he published DON through a publisher in Berlin and also wrote a short book *Der Sudan und Der Mahdi* (1884), which includes a few of his photographs. His royal appointment seems to have allowed him to return to Egypt in 1885, where he visited Fayum. After Ludwig's death in 1886 Buchta moved to Vienna, where he worked on Junker's first volume of travels (1890) and his own book *Der Sudan Unter Ägyptischer Herrschaft* (1888). Ratzel praises Buchta's artistic eye and photographic achievements,<sup>3</sup> an appreciation also shown in his extensive use of Buchta's work in his own published work. Ratzel states that Buchta died in Vienna in 1894, where a collection of some of his negatives, as well as prints from DON, are in the collections of the Weltmuseum.<sup>4</sup>

Although there are few references to Buchta's work in the first half of the twentieth century, the fact that regional scholars remained aware of his contribution is attested to by his inclusion in Richard Hill's *A Biographical Dictionary of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (1951), as well as in H. B. Thomas's short article 'Richard Buchta and Early Photography in Uganda' (1960). Thomas's account of Buchta's travels and photography in Bunyoro is the fullest account of any of his work to date and, although only a short research note, presents much useful detail on Buchta's journey from contemporary sources. Buchta was also praised by the anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard, who stated that '[t]he real scholar among these travellers would seem to have been the Austrian photographer Richard Buchta, many of whose fine illustrations adorn Junker's volumes, to which he contributed also notes (he got his Arabic right in them)' (1971: 140, n.1). However, as Roberts later points out, despite Evans-Pritchard's acknowledgement of Buchta's contribution, his bias is still towards written sources, in this case Arabic captions, and he 'ignored the whole complex matter of illustrations' as sources in their own right (Roberts 1988: 304).

From the 1980s onwards, historians of Africa such as Christraud Geary (1986) began to take photographic sources much more seriously. However, as Andrew Roberts bemoaned in his review article 'Photographs and African History' (1988), although a number of photographic collections were being published, there was still no overview history of photography in Africa and little critical examination of what sort of history photography provided. 'By and large', Roberts complained, 'photographs have seldom been accorded the critical respect commanded by written, or even oral, testimony' (1988: 303). Roberts mentions, by way of an exception, H. B. Thomas's research note on Buchta and notes that DON constituted 'the first substantial photographic record of the interior of tropical Africa' (1988: 304).

The following year David Killingray and Andrew Roberts published their article 'An Outline History of Photography in Africa to Circa 1940' (1989), which was prompted, in part, by a sense that photographs were 'attracting growing interest amongst Africanists' (1989: 197). In this essay the authors note

that ‘by far the most considerable name from the 1870s is that of Richard Buchta’ (1989: 199). They also lamented that ‘unfortunately, Buchta never published more than a cursory account of his travels, and for full identification of his pictures we have to turn to other travellers in the region who made use of them when illustrating their own accounts’ (1989: 200). This observation certainly helps to explain why Buchta has been neglected by historians, but it also speaks of the continued dominance of text-based sources in African history, even among those historians beginning to take photography seriously as sources to think with. Killingray’s and Roberts’ comment on Buchta’s photographic style was that it was ‘undoubtedly “artistic” work’ (1989: 200), which they do not expand upon, but which was presumably intended as a reference to his carefully composed studies of people and material culture. However, as I shall discuss later, many of his portraits were in fact informed by scientific ideas of the period relating to anthropometry and physical type portraiture, which he had originally been tasked by Romolo Gessi to record.

This brief historiographical account highlights how historians of African photography have continued to rely on written sources, and particularly secondary literature, in constructing a visual history of the continent. In Buchta’s case, the lack of any significant published account of his journey in English and the fact that DON was not published in book form, but as a folio of mounted photographs, suggests how visual histories are still often based on written rather than visual sources and also how photographs become lost or marginalized when they are detached, or not linked in the first place, to written sources. This is demonstrated both in the way in which the historian H. B. Thomas first encountered Buchta’s work, in the published travel accounts of his contemporaries, as well as in the way in which Buchta’s work is mentioned in more recent summaries of early African photography.

## **Die Oberen Nil-Länder: Image and object**

My research on Buchta’s photography began with a set of mounted prints by Buchta in the collections of the Pitt Rivers Museum (PRM) in Oxford. This set is a selection of 116 of the 160 prints on 103 mounts that appeared in DON, but differs in other respects. The most obvious differences are that the mounts of the PRM set are somewhat larger than the published set, have ornate red borders, and no printed numbers and captions on the mounts. There are also several less obvious differences. One is that the compiler has in many cases reversed the pairings on the mounts, which either suggests that a reference set of DON was not available, or that it was considered unimportant how they were paired given that they had no printed captions beneath, unlike the published version. The other more important difference is that many of the physical-type portraits taken against a plain backdrop, which in DON appear in a vignette, appear in the PRM set as

full-frame images. These fuller frames in many cases reveal a reference number in the corner of the image,<sup>5</sup> and in one example the presence of a measuring scale to the right of the subject, an Aka girl (Figure 2.1).<sup>6</sup> On the reverse of the mounts in the PRM set are also found pencil numbers that apparently correspond to Buchta's negative numbers. In the case of the Aka girl portrait just discussed, the number '91-214' is visible in the left corner of the full-face portrait, but not in the profile image it is paired with. This might suggest that both portraits were taken on the same full plate negative, half exposed at a time; the mount has the pencil



**FIGURE 2.1** Portrait of an Aka girl against a backdrop with measurements marked to right. Courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford [PRM1998.203.1.60.1].

number 214 on the reverse. The presence of these numbers, as well as the absence of vignettes from a number of the portraits, suggests that whoever compiled this mounted set did so from the original negatives. The mounts of the PRM set have all been captioned in pencil beneath the prints, possibly by someone before their deposit in the Museum, or else by a curator at some point later. These captions sometimes copy the French captions that were inscribed in many of the negatives, sometimes copy the German captions of the published version and sometimes offer an English translation. The fact that these captions have also been numbered according to the order in DON means that a copy was at this point consulted when captioning the set. Unfortunately, it is not known when the set was donated, or by whom, but inscriptions in the hand of former curator T. K. Penniman (retired 1963) on some of the mounts indicate that they have been in the PRM's collection since at least the mid-twentieth century. More detailed research on the various holdings of Buchta's photographs in other European collections may shed light on when and for what purpose this set was produced.

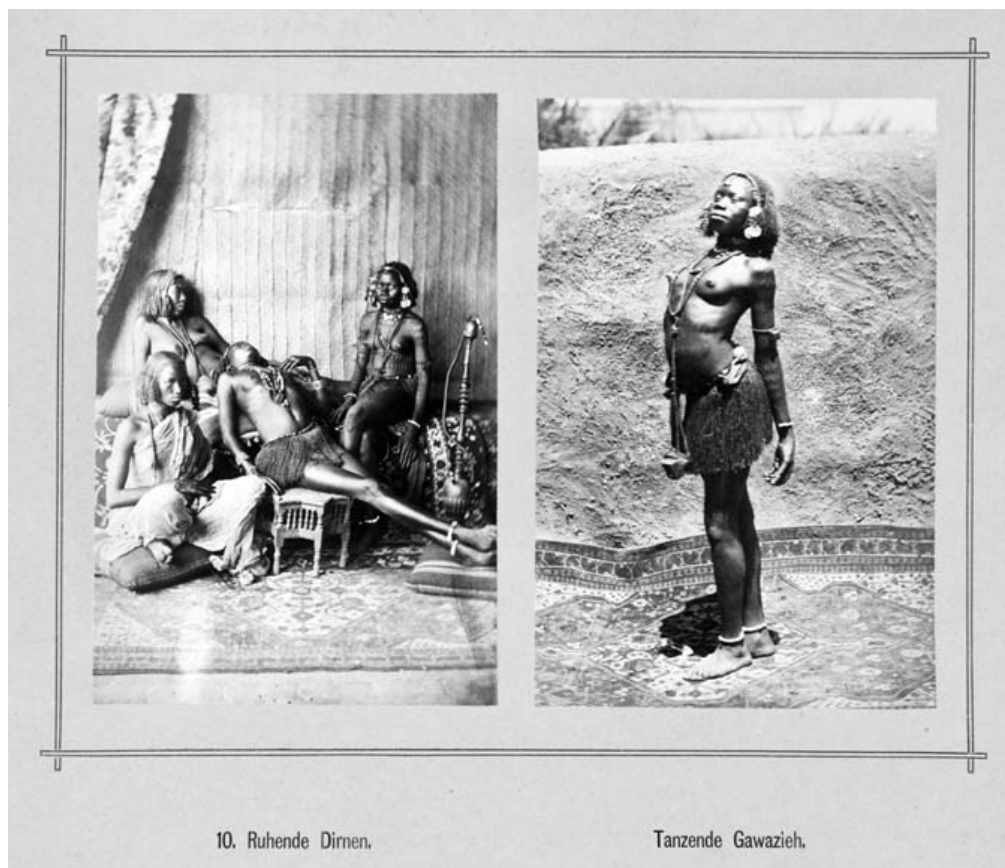
## **Buchta's photographic tour, 1878–97**

As Ratzel notes in his brief biographical sketch, Richard Buchta seems to have travelled to Egypt around 1870 and set himself up in Cairo as a professional photographer. He was possibly still working there in April 1877, when the Italian soldier and explorer Romolo Gessi (1831–81) engaged him as photographer on an expedition to the Sudan that he was organizing. As the British explorer and administrator Harry Johnston wrote some years later, Gessi had returned to Italy after his explorations around Lake Albert in 1876 and 'was received with great distinction by the Italian Geographical Society at Rome, who presented him with their Gold Medal' (1903: 243). Gessi returned to Africa as an explorer with distinct scientific aims. In a letter to the president of the Italian Geographical Society dated 15 June 1877, Gessi wrote:

I had proposed to myself to undertake a new expedition to the upper eastern valley of the Nile as far as the lakes, accompanied by a naturalist and a photographic artist, with a view to collecting the astronomical, anthropological, and natural history material necessary to the ample and exact knowledge of this part of the Dark Continent, so interesting and so little known . . . I found in Mr. Giacomo Mörch, Doctor of Natural Science, and Mr. Riccardo Buchta, skilled photographic artist, two companions full of goodwill and courage, and, after consulting with them, decided to reach Khartoum via Suakin and Berber, and thence across the White Nile, the Sobat and the Gazelle, so as to penetrate beyond the tribes of the Madi to those of the Akka. There I intended Mr. Buchta to make photographs and drawings of numerous anthropological types. (Gessi 1892: 140–1)

This helps explain the dominance of physical type photography in DON, such as full-face and profile images, and also why traces of anthropometric measuring devices are occasionally seen, presumably taken according to Gessi's instructions that were possibly derived from notes given him by the Italian Geographical Society.

Buchta reached Khartoum by mid-1878, and although it is not known whether the plan was to accompany Gessi on his expedition along the Sobat River, examples of his photographs taken at Khartoum feature in DON, such as the Orientalist portrait of two women described as 'Nubian dancers' (*Nubische Tänzerinnen*), posed on a raised platform covered with carpet and cushions. In the next pair of images (Figure 2.2), they are described as a group of 'reclining prostitutes' (*Ruhende Dirnen*) and as a *Ghawazi* dancer (*Tanzende Gawazieh*), a type of erotic dance that had been banned in 1834 by Muhammed Ali, but which continued to be practised in Upper Egypt. Here he also photographed young slave women, reflecting both Gessi's mission against a powerful Arab slave trader in Sudan as well as general European attitudes. In the left portrait, the base and shadow of a measuring pole are visible, which serves to remind us of the



**FIGURE 2.2** Folio 10 from *Die Oberen Nil-länder* showing a group of 'reclining prostitutes' (*Ruhende Dirnen*), and a *Ghawazi* dancer (*Tanzende Gawazieh*). Courtesy Sackler Library, University of Oxford.

anthropological nature of Buchta's commission. But the fact that the measuring device has been (almost entirely) cropped from the print in DON strongly suggests that Buchta intended his photographs to serve the interests of multiple audiences. For Gessi and the Italian Geographical Society, a full-frame version of the image was presumably produced showing the measuring device, allowing for the comparative measurement of ethnic groups. And yet Buchta was careful to place the measuring pole just far enough away from his subject to allow it to also be cropped out of images that were destined for the more general audience that he eventually targeted in DON.

The circumstances of Buchta's decision in mid-1878 to undertake a photographic tour south into Equatoria are not known, but it was possibly discussed with Gessi at the time of his departure for Bahr el Ghazal. We know that Buchta left Khartoum on the steamer *Safia* on 8 August 1878, since fellow passenger Robert Felkin (a Church Missionary Society missionary heading for Uganda) mentions him in his account of the journey (Wilson and Felkin 1882; see also Thomas 1960: 115). The steamer stopped at Fashoda, a Shilluk settlement on the Nile, on 23 August. Felkin's account describes a performance of music and dance put on for the group by local Shilluk outside the Mudir's house. It was here that Buchta presumably took his Shilluk photographs, including his composition of weapons and portable possessions (*Waffen und Geräte der Schilluk*). The steamer *Safia* then encountered serious problems with *sudd* blockage in the Nile, and the journey up to Emin Bey's base at Lado, which should have taken 13 days, ended up taking 56, not arriving there until 9 October.

Emin Bey (later Pasha) (born Isaak Eduard Schnitzer in Germany) had been appointed as chief medical officer of Equatoria Province in 1876, and then Gordon's replacement as governor in 1878. Equatoria had only been established as a province of Egypt by Samuel Baker a few years earlier in 1870, having led an expedition to the region at the request of the Khedive Ismail, with the intention of suppressing slavery and opening up trade routes. Only ever consisting of a handful of defended garrison bases, Equatoria and Emin were cut off from other Egyptian forces after the Mahdist uprising in Khartoum in 1885. Emin's public persona as 'Gordon's last lieutenant', promulgated by Felkin and others in the press, famously prompted the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition (1887–9), led by Henry Morton Stanley, after which Equatoria ceased to exist as an Egyptian province.

Emin seems to have housed the Europeans on the *Safia* further down the Nile from Lado at Rejaf, from where on 11 November 1878, Felkin and Buchta went to photograph the hill behind the station, a scene that appears in DON. Most of the Europeans who travelled into Equatoria province stayed for a considerable amount of time with Emin at Lado, and Buchta was no exception, although Emin didn't seem to have much time for him, describing him in December 1878 as a 'typical Austrian kleinbürger', that is, having a small-town outlook (quoted in Thomas 1960: 116). Buchta took numerous photographs of Bari people and landscapes

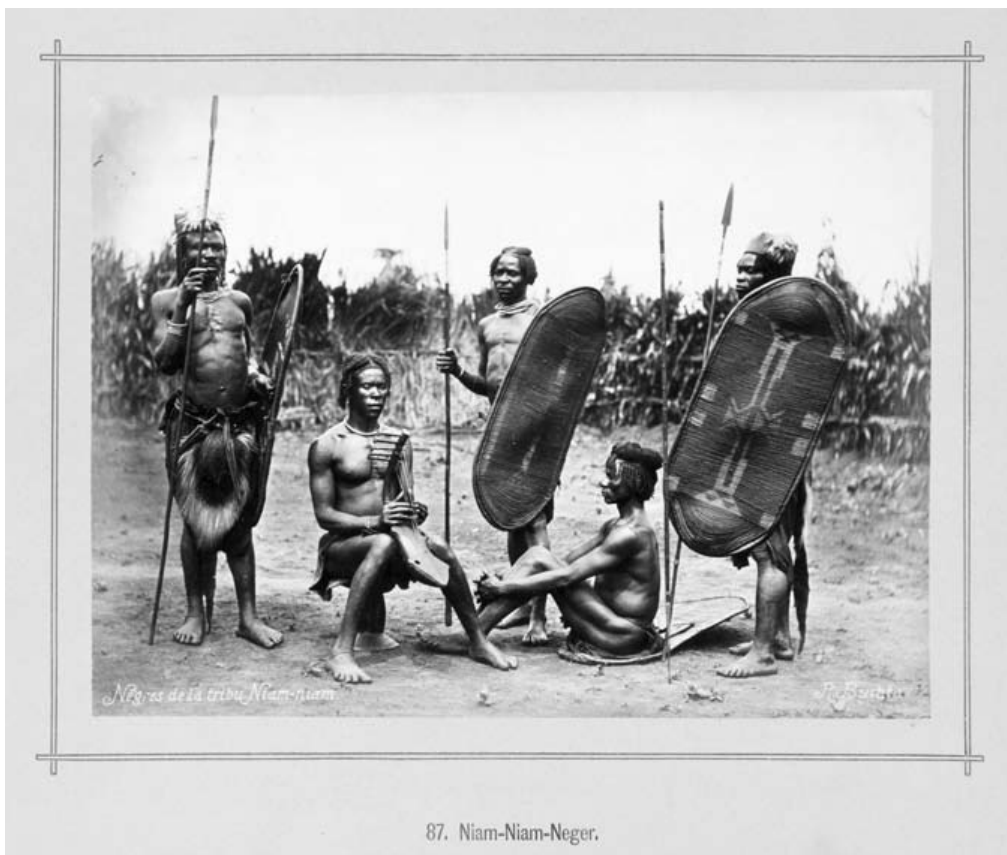
in the Lado region, either at this time or during his return trip. His photograph of Loron, the chief of Gondokoro, was probably taken on the return journey in September 1879 when Loron visited Emin at Lado, an event mentioned by Felkin (1882: 86).

Emin and Buchta seem to have travelled south together, arriving at Dufile (now just inside Uganda near Lake Albert) on Christmas Eve 1878. This appears to be the only time they travelled together. We next hear of Buchta when Emin bumps into him on 7 January 1879 – Buchta is heading into Acholiland en route to Bunyoro, whereas Emin is returning from a short visit to Bunyoro. Buchta took a number of photographs of Acholi people and villages, one of which is described as having been taken in a village at the bottom of a hill called Chua, which Felkin mentions (1882: 69) in his account as rising 700 or 800 feet above the plain between Patiko and Dufile (in Kitgum District). Other Acholi images are of individuals or posed groups, such as one of a group of three musicians. On his way down to Bunyoro, he also photographed Lango and Moru people, including a portrait of a Lango headman wearing a headdress of gourds, paired with a portrait of another man with long matted hair.<sup>8</sup>

In Bunyoro, Buchta reached as far up the Nile as Kodj, which was a village of the Nyoro chief Ruyonga, a relative and rival of Kabarega the Omukama of Bunyoro, and where there was an Egyptian fort. Ruyonga was friendly to the Egyptian government, whereas Kabarega was hostile. Here he photographed Ruyonga's sister Nakatshupi and daughter Kagaja dressed in barkcloth, paired in DON with a portrait of two Banyoro warriors. Felkin describes his own meeting with Nakatshupi in detail, relating that she begged him for his revolver so that she might kill Ruyonga's enemy Kabarega (1892: 45). On the return journey to Dufile, Buchta turned westwards along the Nile, photographing Murchison Falls (renamed Kabarega Falls in 1972 by Idi Amin) on the way. He then arrived at Magungu on Lake Albert, where he photographed a number of Bagungu people. Buchta arrived back at Lado from Magungu on 18 March 1879, having travelled in northern Uganda for some ten weeks, and having made the first photographic record of its people and landscapes.

Buchta stayed with Emin at Lado until 7 July 1879 (nearly four months), until heading off to Makaraka to the west, returning to Lado on 26 August. The people Buchta called Makaraka are properly known as the Adio, a Zande group who today live in Central Equatoria State of South Sudan. We know very little about Buchta's visit there, but he took a number of photographs during his visit of around one month. Ivanov (2002: 153) notes that Buchta describes having stayed with Chief Ringio of Makaraka, presumably either at the *zariba* (fort) at Kabajendi or nearby. Especially striking from this trip is the portrait of a Zande *binza* (witchdoctor), a figure later to become famous in African ethnography through the work of E. E. Evans-Pritchard in nearby Yambio. Buchta's Zande images include composed groups, such as men holding spears and a musical instrument

(Figure 2.3), as well as more scientific-reference head-and-shoulders physical type photographs with a plain backdrop. Having returned from Makaraka on 26 August, Buchta left Lado on 25 September, apparently on a steamer for Shambe. We then hear of him again in Wilson's and Felkin's account, meeting up with the two missionaries and Romolo Gessi in Djour Ghattas in Bahr el Ghazal on 11 November. They all travel off together to Dem Suleiman, the scene of Gessi's recent victory over Suleiman Zubeyr. Buchta took a number of photographs during this visit, none of which is in the PRM set of prints, though all are in DON, including an arrangement of war trophies accumulated by Gessi in his campaign. The two missionaries then left for Khartoum overland via Darfur, whereas Buchta stayed with Gessi, then making his way east to Meshra'er Rek, where he waited for a steamer. He was met there by the traveller Wilhelm Junker at the end of February 1880. Junker wrote: 'He came on board and we passed several pleasant days together looking at the beautiful photographs and other pictures which he had brought back from the Magungo and Makaraka Region' (Junker 1891: 60). Buchta made his way by steamer back to Khartoum and then soon afterwards to Germany, publishing his set of photographs in 1881. The favourable comments by Junker about Buchta's photographs and drawings are evidence that Buchta printed his successful negatives en route so as to show his

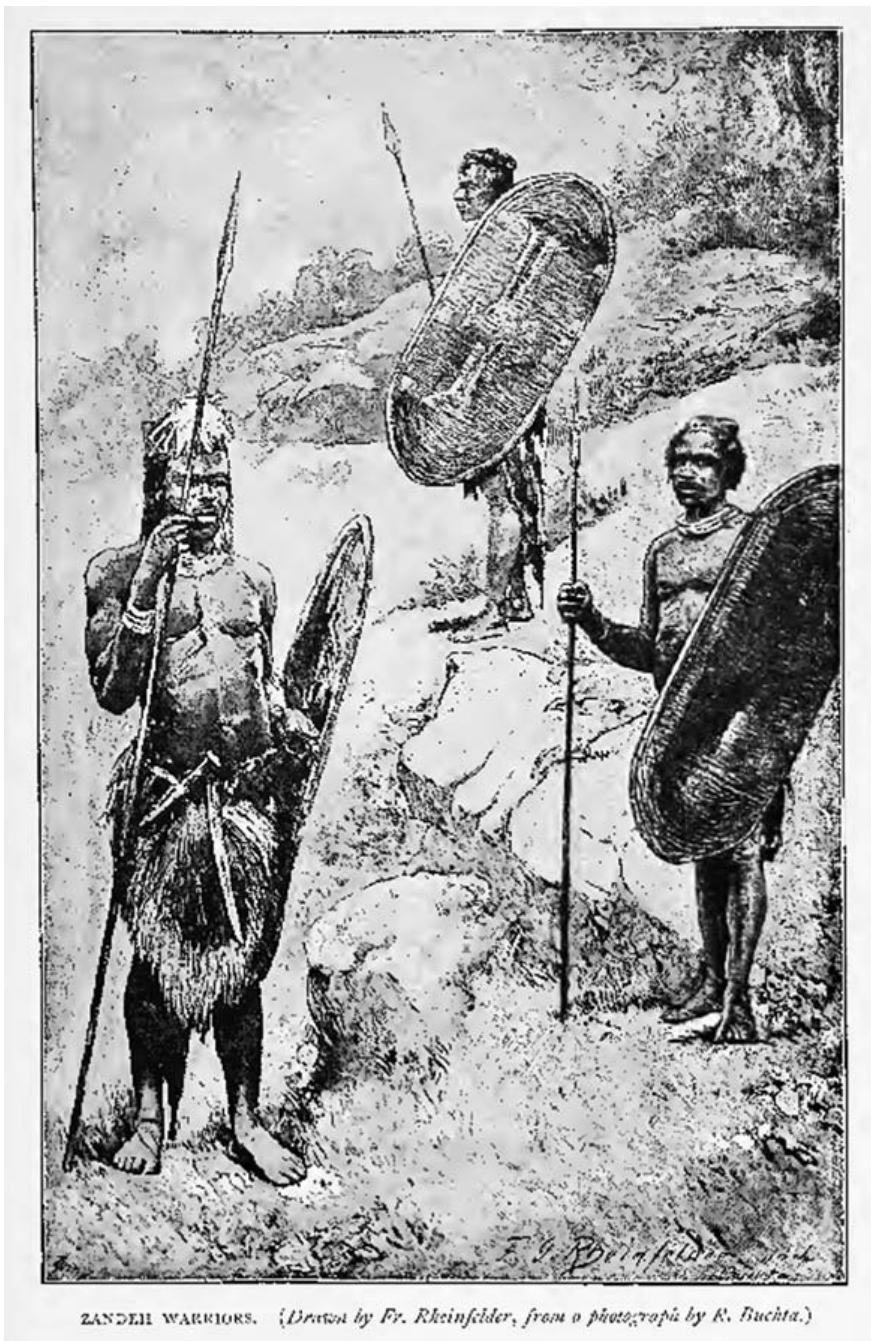


**FIGURE 2.3** Posed group of Zande warriors, South Sudan, 1879. Folio 10 from *Die Oberen Nil-länder*. Courtesy Sackler Library, University of Oxford.

fellow travellers the results immediately, most of whom subsequently used them as the basis for illustrations in their written accounts.

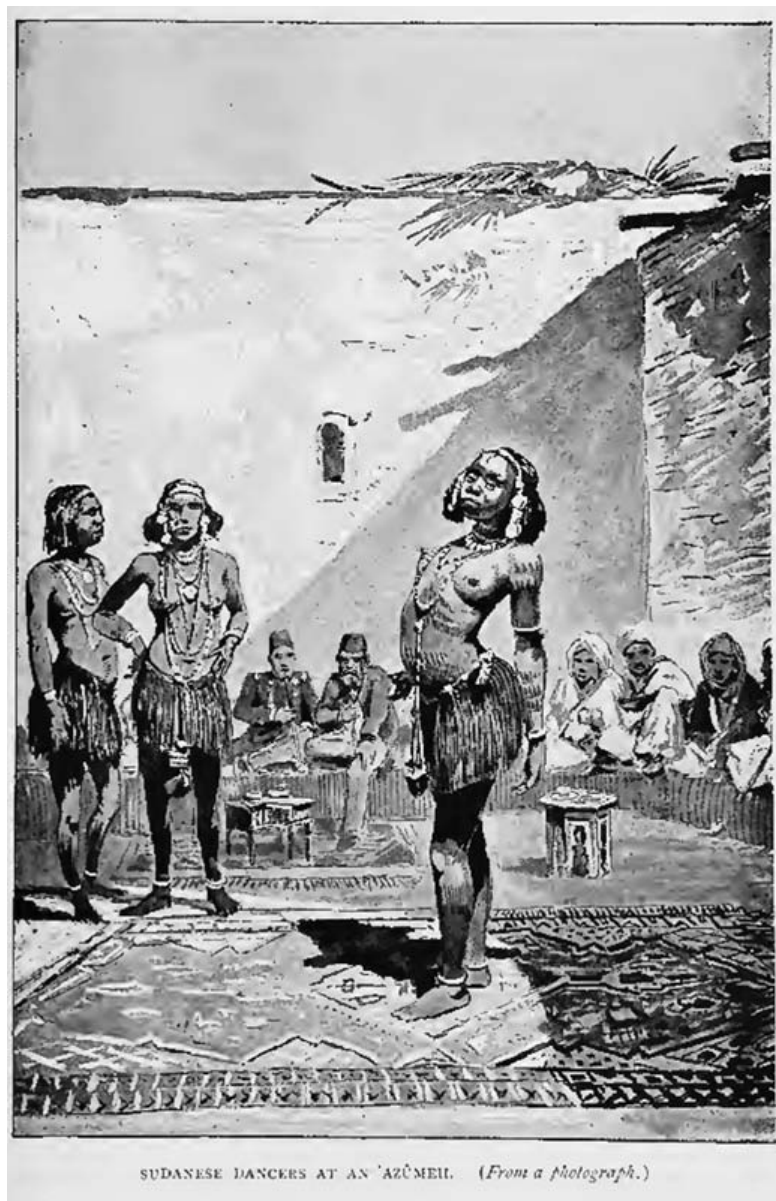
## Contemporary use of Buchta's photographs

In 1881, shortly after Buchta left the Sudan, Muhammad Ahmad Abdullah proclaimed himself the Mahdi and began a campaign to unite the Muslim tribes of western and Central Sudan. As a result, the window of opportunity afforded in the 1870s to travellers such as Buchta to make their way into the province quickly closed. Yet at the same time, the events precipitated by the Mahdist uprising of the 1880s, such as the siege of Khartoum, the death of Gordon, and the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, all led to intense public interest in Equatoria, and subsequent travel accounts by those who had travelled there ran into many editions. Personally known to many of these authors, Buchta's work formed the basis of many illustrations of peoples and scenes from the region until the end of the nineteenth century, playing a crucial role in shaping its visual representation for a generation. According to Ratzel, after moving to Vienna on the death of his former employer Ludwig II of Bavaria in 1886, Buchta worked closely with Wilhelm Junker on the illustrations for his three-volume *Travels in Africa* (1890–2). The illustrations in Junker's volumes acknowledge Buchta's photographs as their source, but often depart from them compositionally. One engraving in the book – by the Austrian artist Friedrich Rheinfelder (1833–1903) – of Zande warriors is based on three individual figures in Buchta's photograph shown in Figure 2.3, but placed on different levels in an imaginary rocky landscape (Figure 2.4). Likewise, Rheinfelder's engraving of the Zande *binza* has a very different background, with the eaves of the hut replaced by a fence and shield placed below, two background elements borrowed from another portrait.<sup>9</sup> Another engraving published by Junker, titled 'Sudanese Dancers at An 'Azûmeh (from a photograph)' (Figure 2.5), takes the portrait of the *Gawazieh* dancer by Buchta (Figure 2.2) and places her in an imaginary courtyard, with other dancers standing nearby and European and local male onlookers seated around the periphery. In his *Ten Years in Equatoria* (1891) Gaetano Casati publishes around 60 of Buchta's images (none credited to him), some as repainted versions, but most of them as photomechanical versions of the original photographs. All of the illustrations, whether repainted or direct from photographs, are reproduced in one of the earliest photomechanical processes, known as Albertype. This collotype process was developed by Joseph Albert of Munich around 1870, and the trade name Albert may be seen in the corner of the plates. Casati is unusual in not acknowledging Buchta as the source of his illustrations. The missionaries C. T. Wilson and R. W. Felkin publish a number of Buchta's images as engravings in their *Uganda and the Egyptian Soudan* (1882), all credited 'from photographs taken by Herr R. Buchta.' In general, the engravings reproduced in their book



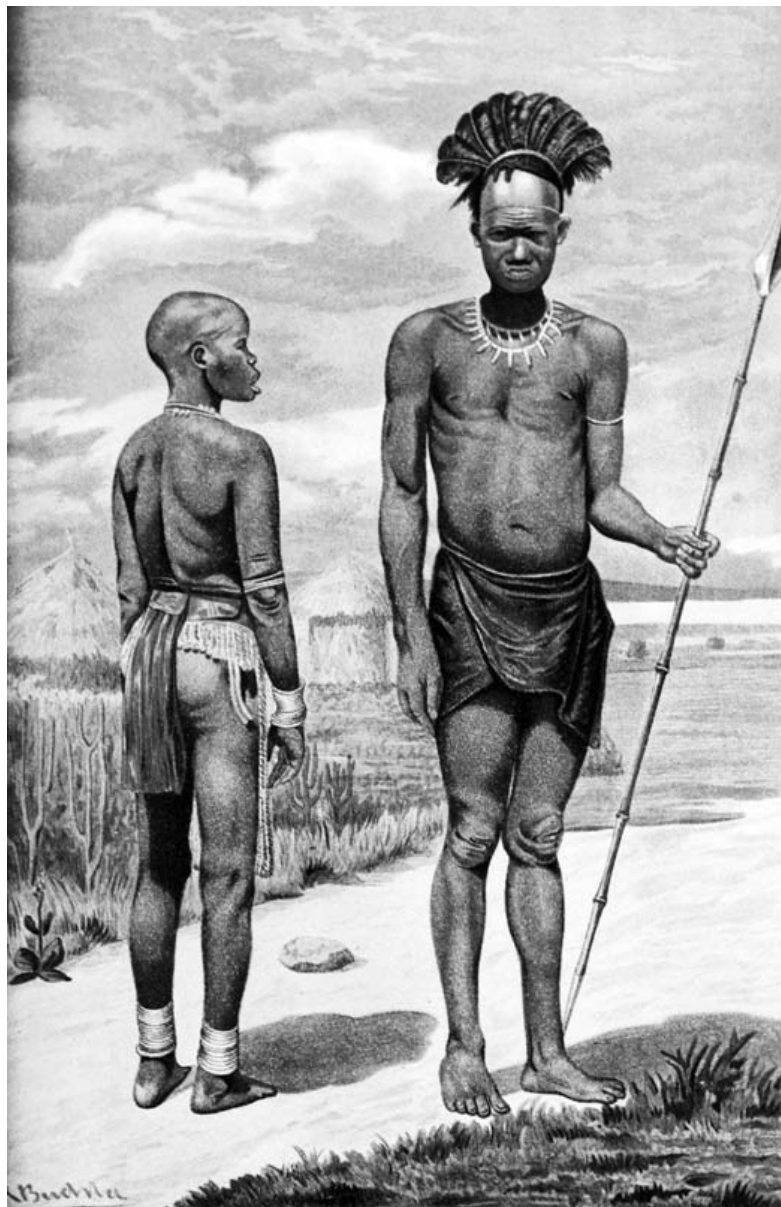
**FIGURE 2.4** 'Zandeh Warriors'. Drawn by Friedrich Rheinfelder, from a photograph by R. Buchta. From Wilhelm Junker's, *Travels in Africa*, vol. 2 (Junker 1891: 467).

are extremely faithful to the original photographs, although occasionally some revealing changes have been made in the engraved versions. Of the engraving of Buchta's photograph of a group of Zande women in a homestead ('Niam-Niam-Gehöfte'), they write that 'the group of women which forms the picture is of great interest, for M. Buchta has been able to show in one photograph all the different



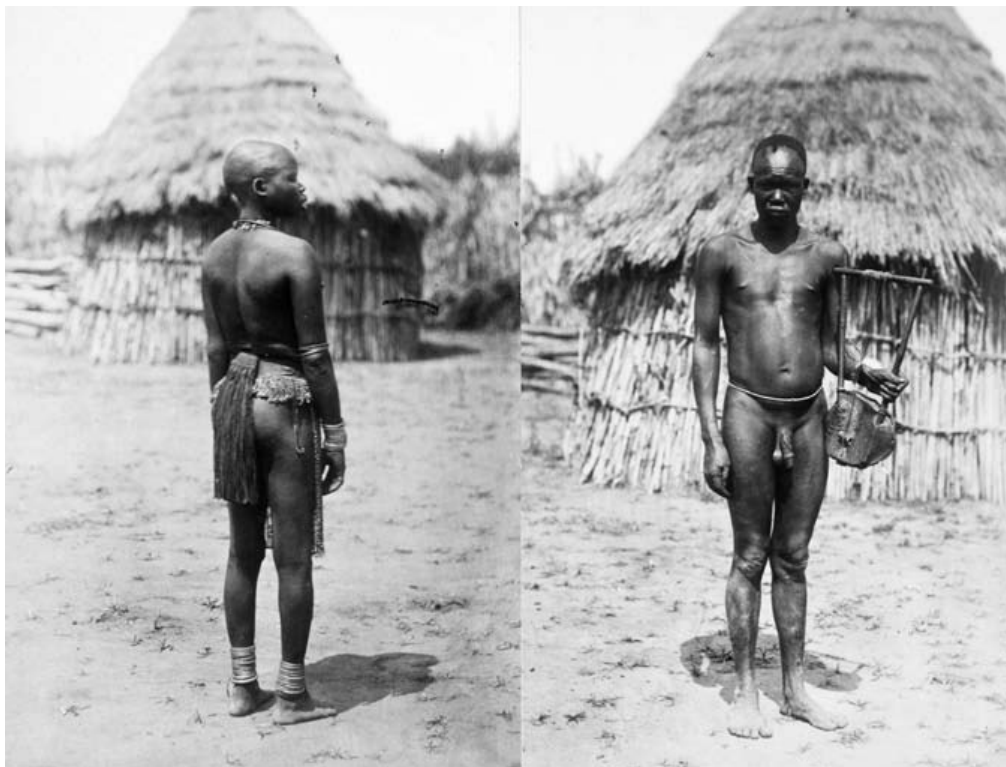
**FIGURE 2.5** ‘Sudanese dancers at An ‘Azûmeh (from a photograph)’. Drawn by Friedrich Rheinfelder, from a photograph by R. Buchta. From Wilhelm Junker’s, *Travels in Africa*, vol. 1 (Junker 1890: 181).

processes in the preparation of food . . . it is a striking picture of the every-day life of the natives’ (Wilson and Felkin 1882: 138–9). However the engraved version is missing the incongruous man to the right, dressed in loose Egyptian clothing and holding a huge elephant spear. In 1887, responding to massive public interest in the subject, Felkin wrote a four-page article in *The Graphic* about the Emin Pasha Relief Expedition, illustrated with numerous engravings based on Buchta’s photographs.<sup>10</sup>



**FIGURE 2.6** 'Bari-warrior and wife. From nature by Richard Buchta', in *History of Mankind* by Freidrich Ratzel (1898), Vol. 3, p. 31.

The final, most significant nineteenth-century publication of Buchta's Equatorial photographs is Friedrich Ratzel's *The History of Mankind* (1896), which includes a wide variety of illustrations based on Buchta's photographs and his drawings.<sup>11</sup> Curiously, many of the engravings from Buchta's original photographs in Ratzel's volume are flipped horizontally compared to the photographs. In the engravings of Buchta's photographs of Lango men the artist has not only put the figures in a bucolic setting with the addition of plants and rolling hills, but has also turned one man's face slightly more towards the viewer, so that he is no longer looking into the distance. This alters the image



**FIGURE 2.7** Composite image showing ‘Bari-Mädchen’ (Folio 39a) and ‘Tomm-Spieler’ (Folio 41b) from *Die Oberen Nil-länder*. Courtesy Sackler Library, University of Oxford.

dramatically, since the man now appears to make direct eye contact with the reader. The extent to which the suggestions in Ratzel’s captions – ‘from nature’ and ‘from a photograph’ – means that they are faithful reproductions is far from straightforward. In general these rhetorical claims mean that original photographs and drawings are reference points for details in the illustration rather than exact reproductions. In the case of Buchta’s work, the term ‘from nature’ often means that the illustration was based on a sketch by Buchta rather than a photograph. Occasionally however, a photograph provided Buchta with the basis for a drawn illustration. A good example is the colour illustration (signed by Buchta as the artist), ‘Bari-warrior and wife. From nature by Richard Buchta’ (Figure 2.6), which is in fact based on two photographs rather than drawings. The female figure is based on a photograph of a Bari woman, which is reproduced accurately (although it is not known whether Buchta recorded that the tassels were red). The male figure, however, is based loosely on a very different photograph of a Bari man holding a stringed instrument rather than a spear, and without either a headdress or a loincloth (Figure 2.7). The headdress is in fact taken from another photographic portrait of a Bari man by Buchta in DON.

So extensive was the contemporary use of Buchta’s work that it can be said to have influenced the way Equatoria was visually represented for an entire generation

during a period when its place in the European consciousness was at its peak. And yet it is important to point out that although Buchta's use of photography in the region was pioneering, he was also – and at the same time – an artist, and one who was continuing a tradition of visual representation of the peoples of Africa that was already well established, in particular through the publication of Georg Schweinfurth's *The Heart of Africa* in 1874, which included in engraved form (based on original drawings) all the visual elements that Buchta was to capture in DON: arrangements of material culture and weapons, head-and-shoulders 'type' portraits, scenes, full-length portraits with subjects turned to front and side, groups of musicians, etc. In this context Buchta's use of photography might be understood as providing him and others with a source for detailed engraved representations of peoples and scenes, which in the period was one of the functions of the photographic encounter.

## Difficult archives: Research and curatorial trajectories

One of the arguments of this chapter is that a significant reason for the neglect of Buchta's photography in the twentieth century is that DON is a 'difficult' archive, an ambiguous object that is both a published work and a photographic archive. As a boxed set of loose mounted prints, it was produced in limited numbers and for a predominantly anthropological academic and specialist market. It is reported, for instance, that R. W. Felkin 'exhibited' it to Fellows at the Anthropological Institute in London on 22 March 1881.<sup>12</sup> And yet even among this constituency it was sporadically collected, and many key European museums and archives do not have a set. The two sets I have traced in the United Kingdom (aside from the one in the PRM) are located in libraries, possibly since it was considered a 'published' work, it being produced by a Berlin publishing company (J. F. Stiehm). In this respect it follows a collecting pattern that characterizes another important German work, the *Anthropologisches-Ethnologisches Album in Photographien* (1872–4) by Carl and Frederick W. Dammann of Hamburg, which was also produced as a large boxed set of mounted prints for specialist collections. One of the main reasons for this form of dissemination was that although various forms of mechanical reproduction of images were becoming available to publishers in the period, they were still new and uneconomical in 1881 when Buchta produced his collection. When Casati published his copies of Buchta's images by Albertype in 1891 the process had presumably become a much more feasible one for a mass-printed popular travel book. As Christraud Geary notes, 'with the advent of photography . . . illustrators were initially provided with new models from which to create more specific imagery' (1998: 135). This is certainly demonstrated in Buchta's style of photography, in which both

portraits and scenes are composed with a sense of an extrinsic finality in mind, that of conversion to engraved illustration. This extrinsicality can be seen to inform the still life images of material culture, as well as some of the poses that his subjects have been asked to hold for the camera, which appear to reference an earlier tradition of drawing and sketching.

Alongside the question of technology is that of presentation. Buchta only wrote a few notes about his journeys in Africa (Buchta 1881b), and his later publication about the Mahdist uprising in Sudan (1884) makes no mention of his Equatorial journey. Presumably, should he have wished to publish a travel account of his own, relating his experiences with Gessi, Emin Bey, Junker and others, lavishly illustrated with his own photographs, such as tipped-in albumen prints, he would have found a ready market for it. That he didn't do so suggests that he felt that his own contribution was to augment the accounts of others, as well as to provide more scientific visual descriptions of the various peoples he had encountered, as well as commercially popular 'scenes' of a little-known region of the Upper Nile. That one of Buchta's photographic intentions was anthropometric is clear from the images already discussed in which there is evidence that he used measuring devices, as well as occasionally a blank backdrop, and from his production of profile and full-face studies. Yet when it came to publishing the images in DON, the measuring devices were cropped out of frame or excluded through the use of a vignette. These editorial decisions shift the register of the images from the scientific measurement of physical form to a much more general description of physical type, which Buchta may have felt would appeal to a wider constituency than those interested in comparative anatomy. I have yet to find any archival trace of Buchta's physical anthropology images having been printed or used in their anthropometric form, but future research may be revealing.<sup>13</sup>

The fact that Buchta did publish multiple sets of DON that are today held in a number of European libraries and museum collections might on the face of it undermine the idea that it constitutes a difficult archive. If it was disseminated through a publisher in photographic form, with explanatory notes and descriptive captions, surely it is an easy archive to work with? The essential problem with both DON and the Dammanns' *Anthropologisches-Ethnologisches Album*, and which has arguably led to their relative neglect in the history of photography, is the fact that they take the form, favoured in the 1870s, of the boxed set of mounted albumen prints with printed captions, produced for the commercial market of academics, collectors, libraries, etc. In some cases this has led to their accession into large national library collections, which has meant that they have not been as visible to many researchers of photographic history as those in photographic collections. The other fact is that researchers are much more used to dealing with a certain type of photographic archive, usually one that has not been distributed commercially. Although interested in dissemination, exchange and the concept of multiple originals, many researchers are much less comfortable with the historical

contexts in which these early photographic publications of original prints are embedded.

Faded and fading, Buchta's albumen prints have nonetheless recently been subject to digital reproduction and dissemination via the internet. In December 2006 the PRM published 82 of the 116 Buchta prints that it holds on an online research resource dedicated to its holdings from South Sudan.<sup>14</sup> Aside from his Acholi portraits from northern Uganda, included to complement other Acholi material from South Sudan, none of Buchta's other Ugandan images were included in this resource. Three years after publication online, all 82 of these scans were uploaded to Wikimedia Commons (the source for many images used in Wikipedia articles) between 2009 and 2012 by a Czech contributor to Wikipedia, who also added them to his page on Buchta on the Czech-language Wikipedia site. As a result of their uploading to Wikimedia Commons, the Buchta images have subsequently been used in a wide variety of Wikipedia pages in many languages, such as a French Wikibooks publication *Personnalités de la photographie*; Catalan, English and Ukrainian language pages on the Acholi people; English, French and Croatian language pages on the Shilluk people; an English-language page on the Madi; English and Slovakian pages on the Dinka; and Spanish, Catalan and French language pages on the Bari.<sup>15</sup> The list goes on for every cultural group represented in the images uploaded originally to the southern Sudan website and is growing rapidly as more language groups expand their Wikipedia presence. Although the PRM's southern Sudan website still receives many online visitors, it is clear that its images are now seen by many more people on other webpages that have made use of the collections. The good news for the PRM is that, since they are all accessed via Wikimedia Commons, the original museum webpage is only ever two clicks away – one click takes the user to the image's page on Wikimedia Commons, and the second to the source page with all the museological metadata a researcher would need.

The great problem with the international Wikipedia usage of Buchta's images is that almost without exception they are used without any sort of historical context and with minimal captioning. They are simply used to adorn what would otherwise be a plain text page. If you search for groups such as Shilluk, Dinka or Acholi on Wikimedia Commons, Buchta's images are some of the first offered to any budding Wikipedia author, and the fact that so many new pages include them suggests that they are regarded as lending spurious historical weight to an entry on an African people. And yet, of course, what these Wikipedia authors are doing is reproducing almost exactly the representational scheme of a nineteenth-century colonial ethnographic encyclopaedia. The use of these decontextualized nineteenth-century images from museum archives to accompany such online articles is highly problematic; far from giving these collections a new relevance in the contemporary world, they are merely re-entrenching representational asymmetries that much current collaborative museological activity seeks to

address (see, for instance, Brown and Peers 2006; Edwards and Morton 2009). Nonetheless, it is this sort of reappropriation and repurposing of Buchta's photography that curators and researchers need to pay attention to within the online image ecology (see Morton 2014).

## Conclusion

I began this chapter with the observation that despite Buchta's photographs of Equatoria being lauded and extensively reproduced by travellers in the region and anthropologists of the period, both his pioneering photographic journey of 1878–9 and his subsequent opus *Die Oberen Nil-Länder*, slowly declined into historiographical obscurity. I have examined some of the complex reasons for this, especially the way in which his photographs were frequently published as illustrations in the 1880s, part of a transitional phase in which questions about the veracity of artistic renderings of African peoples were pre-empted by the assertion that they were 'from a photograph' or 'from nature', and thereby a truthful record. When it came to Buchta publishing his own photographs, the materiality of *Die Oberen Nil-Länder* as a commercially produced and expensive boxed set of mounted prints, aimed at a specialist academic audience with accompanying notes in German by a professor of anatomy, meant that distribution was very limited, and their acquisition uneven by even major European archives and libraries. As a 'difficult' archive of multiple original prints and yet commercially published, it presents historians of photography with the challenge of how to explore its multiple contexts of commercial distribution and the advertising, circulation and disciplinary consumption of visual material within later nineteenth-century anthropology, and its re-circulation in the present.

## Notes

- 1 Roughly translated as *Peoples of the Upper Nile: Ethnic Types and Landscapes*.
- 2 In teleology, extrinsic and intrinsic finalities can be said to be the two types of final causes, being either for the sake of something else, or for the sake of the thing itself.
- 3 He writes, 'Buchta hatte einen feinen künstlerischen Blick, leistete als Maler und besonders als Photograph Hervorragendes, verstand auch gewandt und anziehend mit der Feder zu schildern' (1903: 333).
- 4 Barbara Plankensteiner, personal communication 28 November 2011.
- 5 Prints that appear vignettted in *Die Oberen Nil-Länder* but full frame in the PRM set are numbers 40, 56, 80 (right side), 89, 97 and 102.
- 6 Accession number 1998.203.1.60.1 (no. 97 in DON).

- 7 I have plotted all of the locations that Buchta is known to have visited or photographed on a Google map, available at: <http://goo.gl/maps/hYo09>.
- 8 On the mount underneath these prints in the copy of DON in the Sackler Library, Oxford, is the pencil annotation 'Northern name of Karamojo tribe – JRLM'. The initialled remarks were almost certainly made by the Scottish explorer, engineer and cartographer James Ronald Leslie Macdonald (1862–1927), who was Chief Staff Officer on an expedition to Bunyoro in 1894.
- 9 The shield and fence are taken from the left side plate of no. 92 in *Die Oberen Nil-Länder*, titled 'Niam-Niam-Negerinen'.
- 10 *The Graphic* began in 1869 as a rival to the *Illustrated London News* and was hugely popular.
- 11 It is not currently known if Buchta's drawings survive. In the archives of the Welt Museum in Vienna, only six engravings based on his drawings survive, prepared for Ratzel's *The History of Mankind* (1896) (Ildikó Cazan-Simányi, personal communication, 19 June 2013). Junker also published a number of illustrations based on Buchta's drawings.
- 12 Unauthored note in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1882, XI, p. 74.
- 13 There appears to be no collection of Buchta's photographs for instance in the Italian Geographical Society collections, which might have been expected given the connection between Gessi and the society.
- 14 'Recovering the Material and Visual Cultures of Southern Sudan: A Museological Resource' (<<http://southernsudan.prm.ox.ac.uk>>) was funded by an Arts and Humanities Research Council Resource Enhancement Scheme award to Jeremy Coote and Elizabeth Edwards in 2003. See Morton (2014).
- 15 <[http://fr.wikibooks.org/wiki/Catégorie:Personnalités\\_de\\_la\\_photographie](http://fr.wikibooks.org/wiki/Catégorie:Personnalités_de_la_photographie)>; <<http://ca.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acholi>>; <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acholi\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acholi_people)>; <<http://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ачолі>>; <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shilluk\\_Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shilluk_Kingdom)>; <[http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shilluk\\_\(monarchie\)](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shilluk_(monarchie))>; <<http://hr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Šiluki>>; <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madi\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madi_people)>; <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinka\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinka_people)>; <<http://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dinkovia>>; <[http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barí\\_\(etnia\)](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barí_(etnia))>; <<http://ca.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baris>>; <[http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barí\\_\(peuple\\_d%27Afrique\)](http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barí_(peuple_d%27Afrique))>.