

James Lloyd Photograph Analysis



At first glance, this is clearly a black and white photograph of an archaeological excavation site, with what could be interpreted as the site director being situated in the trench, two women overlooking him in the foreground and then 6 other men- who look like the workers of the site- watching on in the background. Upon further research, I have found that this photograph is taken from Vere Gordon Childe's excavation of Neolithic settlement Skara Brae somewhat between 1928 and 1920, though it is believed that this picture was actually taken in 1929 (Williams, 2019). However, upon even further analysis, it is quite apparent that this particular photograph could have a deeper meaning than is initially thought. For example, it is quite clear that the main focus of this image is meant to be Childe himself (bottom left) in the trench, portraying the fact that he was the person who actually dug this trench. This is apparent as he is in the foreground of the image, and is stood in a way that makes him look important or influential, when in reality it would have been the workers in the background that would have dug the trench. This point is also supported by the fact that the two women in the picture seem to be watching Childe in admiration. Due to the fact that this picture would have been published in records and newspapers talking about this excavation, it is rather obvious that Childe is trying to

project himself as if he has done all the work himself. It could also be noted how the theory of structuralism could play a part in this photograph, in particular Lévi-Strauss' theory of binary oppositions (Watson and Fotiadis, 1990). This theory touches upon how binary opposites underpin all human thought (Steel, 2019). It is clear that this theory could possibly be used, as it clearly distinguishes the differences not only between males and females on an excavation site, but also the roles of different classes. For example, it is apparent from this picture that the males in the background of this picture were the people who actually dug this trench, and Childe himself is the site leader, whereas the women in this image were clearly just on-lookers, despite the fact that the lady on the left is holding a trowel. After further analysis of the picture, it is clear that the woman holding the trowel seems uncomfortable in doing so, suggesting that she it isn't natural for her. This further suggests that the photograph is staged. Another clear binary opposite in this picture is the class difference. This is clear as the working class men who would have done most of the excavation work have been situated at the back of the picture, whereas the higher class Childe has situated himself in the foreground of the photograph in the trench, deceiving viewers at first glance that he in fact dug the trench. This class difference can also be seen by the items of clothing being worn, as Childe is in more formal wear as opposed to the working class gentlemen behind. It is clear that this photograph could tell us many things about archaeological interpretation, the main factor being how archaeology could easily have been used as a way to express political statements.

References

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