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1 Camera Ethica

Photography, modernity and the governed in late-colonial Indonesia

Susie Protschky

Camera Ethica: Re-envisioning a period of “ethical” colonial reform

“Ethical Policy” (*Ethische Politiek*) is the term frequently used by historians to indicate the suite of liberal-developmental reforms debated and implemented by Dutch colonial elites in early-twentieth-century Indonesia (c. 1901-42), then the Netherlands East Indies. The reforms have a well-established intellectual history in the Dutch-language literature, where their social and cultural trajectory has conventionally been traced through the words and texts of (mainly Dutch) elites.¹ Yet despite the Ethical Policy’s ideological resonance and temporal coincidence with other forms of European liberal imperialism – notably the “white man’s burden” of the Anglophone world and the French *mission civilisatrice* – the Dutch program in the Indies is little known outside a narrow specialist field.² This volume aims to revise current understandings of the Indies reforms by re-examining them through

1 Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in fragmenten: Vijf studies over koloniaal denken en doen van Nederlanders in de Indonesische Archipel 1877-1942* (Utrecht: HES Publishers, 1981); Janny de Jong, *Van batig slot naar ereschuld: De discussie over de financiële verhouding tussen Nederland en Indië en de hervorming van de Nederlandse koloniale politiek 1860-1900* (The Hague: SDU, 1989); Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben, eds., *Het koloniale beschavingsoffensief: Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië, 1890-1950* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2009); Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, “Imperialism after the great wave: The Dutch case in the Netherlands Indies 1860-1914,” in *Liberal Imperialism in Europe*, ed. Matthew P. Fitzpatrick (Palgrave: New York, 2012), 25-46.

2 Scholars of the Ethical Policy have long noted a similarity between the Dutch reforms and other contemporary liberal imperialisms: Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in fragmenten*, 183; De Jong, *Van batig slot naar ereschuld*, 290; Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben, “Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië, 1890-1950,” in *Het koloniale beschavingsoffensief: Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië, 1890-1950*, ed. Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2009), 7-24 at 7. On the role of liberal political philosophies in furthering European expansion, see: Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005); David Long, “Liberalism, imperialism and empire,” *Studies in Political Economy* 78 (2006): 201-23; Matthew P. Fitzpatrick, “Particular or universal? Historicising liberal approaches to

a significant yet neglected photographic source base, and in the process to introduce the Ethical Policy to a wider community of scholars on European colonialism.

Specifically, the essays in this volume focus on the photographic works of the lower officials who implemented the policy “on the ground” and, importantly, the Indies people over whom colonial elites presumed to govern. In doing so, the contributors argue that the articulation, relevance and, ultimately, success or failure of the Ethical Policy was contingent on more than the moral, intellectual and political concerns of the Dutch elite who conceived and debated the reforms. Contests over the aims, nature and extent of the Ethical Policy, and competing visions of the kind of future it might bring, were formulated in the social and cultural realms of a larger, more diverse Indies population than extant studies have accounted for.

In two regards, photographs provide unique historical access to the various “life worlds” of Indies peoples from different classes, ethnicities, religions, genders and language backgrounds.³ First, the Ethical Policy commenced when photography began to circulate in the media and among amateur practitioners in the Netherlands Indies at an historically unprecedented range and volume following advancements to the camera, the image development process, and printing and reproduction technologies. Second, the key promises of the Ethical Policy to Indies people resonated uniquely with the qualities then associated with photography. Both suggested modernity, progress and civilisation, concepts that exasperate historians today for much the same reasons they have galvanised people in the past: because they evoke more than they define, and their meanings alter according to the claims that are made with them.

In a pattern that closely followed developments in Europe, the birthplace of the daguerreotype process in 1839, photography in the Netherlands Indies was initially accessible mainly to wealthy elites. When cameras were first used in the Indies in the early 1840s, Europeans working at the behest of colonial authorities were almost entirely responsible for the dissemination of photography in the archipelago.⁴ Photographers were craftsmen skilled

empire in Europe”, in *Liberal Imperialism in Europe*, ed. Matthew P. Fitzpatrick (Palgrave: New York, 2012), 1-24; Locher-Scholten, “Imperialism after the great wave”.

3 The term is taken from Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 72.

4 Anneke Groeneveld, “Photography in aid of science: Making an inventory of the country and its population 1839-1920,” in *Toekang Potret: 100 Years of Photography in the Dutch Indies 1839-1939* (Amsterdam and Rotterdam: Fragment Uitgeverij/Museum voor Volkenkunde, 1989), 16-20; Paul Bijl, “Old, eternal, and future light in the Dutch East Indies: Colonial photographs

in chemical processes, mechanical apparatuses and staging techniques that required specialist training and considerable financial investment. Portraits and albums were thus the privilege of those who could afford the fees of studio photographers. In the Indies, this class of consumer typically included European planters and officials, Javanese aristocrats and Chinese entrepreneurs.⁵

By the early twentieth century, owning a camera was still beyond the means of the majority of the Indies population, but photography had undergone an early stage of “democratisation” and Indies visual culture was awash with photographic images.⁶ Photography had become a highly differentiated, widely distributed medium that pervaded both high and popular cultures. Advancements in printing techniques (particularly the development of the half-tone process) that allowed photographs to be reproduced cheaply facilitated their proliferation in newspapers, periodicals and books for a variety of readerships in different languages. In addition, new social groups were taking photos and being photographed. Studios run by Asians (particularly ethnic Chinese, as Karen Strassler points out in this volume) offered affordable photographs to fellow Asian clients. More importantly, the invention of portable, hand-held cameras and roll film had broken the monopoly of skilled studio operators, bringing photography into the realm of amateurs. A growing number of “middle-class” Indo-Europeans, Chinese and indigenous people could afford to hire photographers or even purchase their own cameras.⁷

In the era when “ethical” ideologies became colonial policy, then, the camera was beginning to fundamentally transform the ways in which Indies

and the history of the globe,” in *Mediation, Remediation and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory*, eds. Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 49–66.

5 Anneke Groeneveld and Steve Wachlin, “Commercial photographers till 1870,” in *Toekang Potret: 100 Years of Photography in the Dutch Indies 1839–1939* (Amsterdam and Rotterdam: Fragment Uitgeverij/Museum voor Volkenkunde, 1989), 49–120 at 49–74; Liesbeth Ouwehand, *Herinneringen in beeld: Fotoalbums uit Nederlands-Indië* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2009), 7, 13; Karen Strassler, *Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 13–15, 81–82, 85; Rob Jongmans and Janneke van Dijk, “Photography from the Netherlands East Indies: Changing perspectives, different views,” in Janneke van Dijk, Rob Jongmans, Anouk Mansfeld, Steven Vink and Pim Westerkamp, *Photographs of the Netherlands East Indies at the Tropenmuseum* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2012), 15–38 at 20.

6 The term “democratisation” has been used by Ariella Azoulay, *The Civil Contract of Photography*, transl. Reli Mazali and Ruvik Daniel (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 12, and Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination, 1885–1918* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 5.

7 For an overview of these developments in Europe, see John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 47–56. For discussions specific to the Netherlands Indies, see Ouwehand, *Herinneringen in beeld*, 15–16; Jongmans and Van Dijk, “Photography from the Netherlands East Indies,” 21, 25.

peoples engaged in colonial politics and culture. Yet there has been no sustained study of how the reform period was photographically envisioned. Instead, it has been the words and texts of Dutch elites involved in the formulation of the Ethical Policy that have determined historical understandings of the early-twentieth-century context in which the program was implemented and debated. It has become conventional, for example, to cite 1901 as the official commencement date of the Ethical Policy because in that year Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands gave official sanction to the reformist movement that had been gathering momentum for decades in her annual “speech from the throne” (*troonrede*) to the Dutch Parliament.⁸ Yet Wilhelmina’s oration was short and obscured more than it illuminated. Certainly, it outlined an inquiry into the “diminished welfare” (*mindere welvaart*) of Java’s people, decentralisation of the colonial administration and further “pacification” of an already occupied north Sumatra.⁹ However, only a few sentences of the queen’s whole address dwelt on the reforms, and nowhere did Wilhelmina use the words “Ethical Policy”, the phrase the liberal journalist Pieter Brooschooft coined in what was to become a renowned pamphlet on colonial politics published several months before the *troonrede*, in July 1901.¹⁰ Indeed, the significant impact of liberalism as a political ideology on colonial politics in the latter half of the nineteenth century is nowhere evident in the queen’s speech.¹¹ Instead, Wilhelmina used the opportunity to express her concern for the “natives” of Java in terms of Christian responsibility, a reflection of her own devout Calvinism and the political influence of the Dutch Anti-Revolutionary Party at the turn of the century.¹²

8 Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in fragmenten*, 176; De Jong, *Van batig slot naar ereschuld*, 325; Bloembergen and Raben, “Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië,” 8; Locher-Scholten, “Imperialism after the great wave,” 40.

9 Queen Wilhelmina, “Troonrede van 17 September 1901,” in *Troonredes, Openingsredes, Inhoudingsredes 1814-1963*, introduced and annotated by E. van Raalte (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1964), 193-4 at 194.

10 Pieter Brooschooft, *De ethische koers in de koloniale politiek* (Amsterdam: J.H. de Bussy, 1901).

11 Henk te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbesef: Liberalisme en nationalisme in Nederland, 1870-1918* (The Hague: SDU, 1992), 268; Siep Stuurman, *Wacht op onze daden: Het liberalisme en de vernieuwing van de Nederlandse staat* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1992), 375-6. It was a liberal government that introduced the bill to separate the Netherlands Indies’ finances from those of the Netherlands in 1900, but it was a government led by the Calvinist head of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, Abraham Kuiper, that enacted the legislation in 1903.

12 Wilhelmina, “Troonrede.” Wilhelmina reflects at length on her Christian faith in her autobiography, *Eenzaam maar niet alleen* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij W. ten Have N.V., 1959).

Over subsequent decades the Ethical Policy came to entail a much wider set of reforms than Wilhelmina outlined in her *troonrede*, encompassing changes to the colony's financial relationship to the Netherlands, and programs that offered welfare, education, improved economic opportunities and nominal forms of political representation for indigenous people. Contrary to the perceptions of many of her contemporaries, besides her 1901 speech Wilhelmina actually accomplished little else to deserve her lasting association with the Ethical Policy.¹³ Yet the queen's words, together with the debates and manifestos of key Dutch journalists, colonial governors and politicians – all of them drawn from the Dutch or colonial elite – comprise a textual canon that has come to define historical understandings of the reform period.¹⁴

The canon certainly has its place. As Elsbeth Locher-Scholten points out in her last word on the Ethical Policy, the program was not a populist movement, it was the concern of an educated ruling class.¹⁵ That *ethici* (proponents of the Ethical Policy) rarely questioned the premise of Dutch rule, merely the nature of its execution, does not, as the sociologist J.A.A. van Doorn observed, necessarily preclude the historical significance of their views, for Eurocentrism is “a perspective that opens a particular field of vision, not a preconception that misrepresents reality”.¹⁶ However, confining understandings of the reform era to an elite “field of vision” that has, moreover, been conceptualised predominantly in verbal terms arguably overlooks important alternative sources on and insights into histories of late-colonial Indonesia.

To that end, this volume examines photographic sources from a variety of genres that sample some of the key modes in which the camera was used

13 On Wilhelmina's limited claim to the status of *ethicus*, see Maria Grever, “Colonial queens: Imperialism, gender and the body politic during the reign of Victoria and Wilhelmina,” *Dutch Crossing: A Journal of Low Countries Studies* 26:1 (2002): 99–114 at 108. However, on her contemporary association with the Ethical Policy, see Te Velde, *Gemeenschapzin en plichtsbefef*, 147, 151–152; Berteke Waaldijk and Susan Legêne, “Ethische politiek in Nederland: Cultureel burgerschap tussen overheersing, opvoeding en afscheid,” in *Het koloniale beschavingsoffensief: Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië, 1890–1950*, ed. Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2009), 187–216 at 197–201; and Susie Protschky, “The empire illuminated: Electricity, ‘ethical’ colonialism and enlightened monarchy in photographs of Dutch royal celebrations, 1898–1948,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 13:3 (Winter 2012): http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_colonialism_and_colonial_history/v013/13.3.protschky.html

14 The works listed in endnote 1 all rely chiefly on textual sources written in Dutch for their primary sources.

15 Locher-Scholten, “Imperialism after the great wave,” 41.

16 J.A.A. van Doorn, *De laatste eeuw van Indië: Ontwikkeling en ondergang van een koloniaal project* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1995), 15.

by and for Asian as well as European viewers in late-colonial Indonesia: photographs taken by amateurs at home, by professionals in studios, circulated as advertisements, school posters and postcards, published in books and used as official reportage. In doing so, the essays in this collection investigate how a broader selection of the Indies population – Chinese, women, middle-class Javanese, people of mixed descent (Indo-Europeans), junior Dutch officials – selectively engaged at the local level with ethical discourses and articulated diverging visions of the present and future. This line of inquiry has been largely neglected since the Dutch historian Elsbeth Locher-Scholten first raised it three decades ago in her foundational study, *Ethiek in fragmenten* (1981).¹⁷

In its form and function, as a collection of essays and a work that looks at the Ethical Policy from multiple viewpoints, this collection extends Locher-Scholten's approach to a topic that has arguably been conceived "in fragments" ever since. Her volume, which examined the Dutch reforms in the Indies through five essays on significant figures and texts that shaped the conceptualisation and implementation of the policy, was structured thus to emphasise that, while certain individuals dominated discussions about reforms in the Netherlands Indies, no single voice articulated the full detail, scope and purpose of the program.¹⁸ Similarly, the latest work on the Ethical Policy, Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben's *Het koloniale beschavingsoffensief* (2009), collates essays by various authors who interrogate the "colonial civilising offensive" underpinning the reforms from a range of perspectives. The theme of fragmentation re-emerges here as a variety of "paths toward the new Indies" (*wegen naar het nieuwe Indië*) that were debated in the first decades of the twentieth century.¹⁹

The handful of studies on the Ethical Policy published in the thirty years that separate these landmark works all concur over significant contradictions and tensions characterising the reform period, adding a further dimension to how the program has been conceived as "fragmented".²⁰

17 Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in Fragmenten*, 8.

18 Locher-Scholten's five studies examined P. Brooschoft, a Dutch journalist; J.P. Graaf van Limburg Stirum, Governor-General of the Indies (r. 1916–21); and *De Stuw* and *Kritiek en Opbouw*, two periodicals that published extensively on ethical debates.

19 Bloembergen and Raben, ed., *Het koloniale beschavingsoffensief*.

20 While historians agree on the premise that the Ethical Policy was riven by disagreement, the nature and causes of those disputes remain contested: Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in fragmenten*, 181; De Jong, *Van batig slot naar ereschuld*, 285; Van Doorn, *De laatste eeuw van Indië*, 164–5; Hans van Miert, *Bevlogenheid en onvermogen: Mr. J.H. Abendanon en de Ethische richting in het Nederlandse kolonialisme* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1991), 16; Bloembergen and Raben, "Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië," 9, 17, 21.

Historians generally interpret this lack of consensus among proponents of the Ethical Policy as symptomatic of a failure to deliver on the reformist agenda – and not long after its official inception. By 1920, for example, colonial authorities had begun retreating from the promise of sharing power (“Association”) with Indonesian elites. In the 1930s, implementing ethical reforms became a lesser governing priority for the Dutch in the Indies, subordinate to the more pressing tasks of maintaining colonial rule in response to a growing nationalist movement. The Japanese occupation in 1942 and, more definitively, the revolution that ended with an independent Republic of Indonesia in 1949, put an end to Dutch authorities deciding any aspects of their former colony’s policy.²¹

The nature of Indonesian decolonisation – the fact that its independence was gained not through an orderly transfer of power, but recognised only grudgingly by the Netherlands after a protracted war and under sustained international pressure – has left a pall of ambivalence over the efficacy of the Ethical Policy, one that thickens when the rhetoric of the reform era is weighed against practice. The assumption widespread among *ethici* that the Indies would remain forever Dutch engendered a ponderous pace and patronising approach to implementing reforms – particularly those requiring a devolution of power to indigenous authorities – that left many Indies people disenchanted with a process they saw as urgent and vital.²² Moreover, the violent expansion and repression of political dissent that characterised the early twentieth century was not coincidental and in tension with the reforms; it was intrinsic to their implementation, for enforcing *rust en orde* (“peace and order”) in secured territories was widely regarded by Dutch authorities as the necessary precursor to implementing the more advanced aims of the Ethical Policy.²³ In sum, the combination of liberal-Christian moral philosophy, political developmentalism, Eurocentric historicism

21 Locher-Scholten, *Ethiek in fragmenten*, 181; Van Miert, *Bevlogenheid en onvermogen*, 137; Robert Cribb, “Introduction: The late colonial state in Indonesia,” in *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies 1880-1942*, ed. Robert Cribb (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), 1-10 at 7-8; Waaldijk and Legêne, “Ethische politiek in Nederland,” 190.

22 Cribb, “The late colonial state in Indonesia,” 6.

23 H.W. van den Doel, “Military rule in the Netherlands Indies,” in *The Late Colonial State in Indonesia: Political and Economic Foundations of the Netherlands Indies 1880-1942*, ed. Robert Cribb (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), 57-78; Henk Schulte Nordholt, “A genealogy of violence,” in *Roots of Violence in Indonesia: Contemporary Violence in Historical Perspective*, ed. Freek Colombijn and J. Thomas Lindblad (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2002), 33-62 at 36-42; Bob de Graaff, “Tegenbeeld en evenbeeld: Westerse interventies in falende staten toen en nu,” in *Het koloniale beschavingsoffensief: Wegen naar het nieuwe Indië, 1890-1950*, ed. Marieke Bloembergen and Remco Raben (Leiden: KITLV

and colonial authoritarianism that inflected the reform program not only complicates ethical rhetoric; it also undermines Dutch mythologies of the Netherlands as a progressive exception in the pantheon of European imperialist nations.²⁴ Further, taking for granted the Ethical Policy's imperfect realisation as an endpoint to a story of Dutch colonialism arguably stages as inevitable the defeat of idealistic but overly cautious reforms at the hands of nationalists.²⁵ Such an assumption produces teleological narratives of revolution – the rise of the late-colonial state and its dissolution in favour of an independent Indonesia.

This volume proceeds not from an assumption of an outcome we already know. Rather, the essays here pursue multiple reflections on the present and future in Indies photographs from the early twentieth century, many of which envision neither a path to nationalist uprising nor a course in colonial progress, but explore other ways of conceiving what it was to be “modern”, “civilised” and engaged in civic participation. The contributors to this collection conceive of the reform era as one in which diverse visions of a progressive future for the Indies extended far beyond disagreements among and between *ethici* and indigenous radicals. Our volume thus demonstrates that the Ethical Policy evoked in studies of the textual canon bears only limited resemblance to how a broader, more diverse population of Indies peoples literally envisioned, through photography, prospects for social change in the early twentieth century. These photographic visions differ according to the photographer, their audience, and the interpretive strategies we use to view the images (both in their historical contexts and with critical hindsight).

The strengths and limits of photographs as historical sources – what they can and cannot illuminate about the past, whose visions they reveal, and how – are central to the methodological question of how the Ethical Policy might be revised or even challenged as a way to periodise early-twentieth-century Indies history. Not by chance, then, does the title of this essay, *Camera Ethica*, evoke two important works on photography and history: Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* (1980) and Christopher Pinney's *Camera Indica* (1997). Barthes' essay – a reflection written soon after the death of

Press, 2009), 321-8; Marieke Bloembergen, *De geschiedenis van de politie in Nederlands-Indië: Uit zorg en angst* (Amsterdam and Leiden: Boom/KITLV Press, 2009), 73-8, 91-103.

24 Maarten Kuitenbrouwer, *The Netherlands and the Rise of Modern Imperialism: Colonies and Foreign Policy, 1870-1902*, trans. Hugh Beyer, first published 1985 (New York and Oxford: Berg/St Martin's Press, 1991), 19, 258, 332; De Graaff, “Tegenbeeld en evenbeeld”.

25 Robert Cribb's study arguably falls into this category: Cribb, “The late colonial state in Indonesia,” esp. 3, 6.

his beloved mother on his attempts to recover her essence in photographs – mourned the limits of photography as a view into the past, particularly its failure to reconcile the “identification of reality (*‘that-has-been’*) with truth (*‘there-she-is!’*)”.²⁶ Much else in Barthes’ essay has subsequently been contested by theorists of photography, but this key observation (which he himself characterised as banal, even though its implications grieved him profoundly)²⁷ has endured. His lament defined a conceptual chasm – between photographic sources from the past and the nature of historical claims that can be made with and about them – that has produced much fine scholarship in the attempt to bridge it.

For historians of European colonialism in particular, Barthes’ observation that photographs contain traces of things past, but cannot relay history to viewers in the present repletely and unmediated, has instigated reinterpretations of photography in both its imperial applications and post-colonial uses, processes that have in turn revised historical understandings of European imperialism. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, photographs were widely used and received by Europeans in colonial settings as images uniquely vested with the power of evidentiary proof, particularly for supporting assertions of racial or civilisational difference among and between European and non-European societies.²⁸ From the 1980s onwards, critical studies of historical, scientific and anthropological photographs from the colonial era began to seriously interrogate the truth claims that Europeans had routinely made with such images. Postcolonial methods of viewing often assumed that a “colonial gaze” permeated European photography and *created* the categories of difference it sought to record through various processes of “othering” its subjects. Colonial

26 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, first published 1980 (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 113.

27 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 35.

28 For discussions of the Dutch context and the Netherlands Indies, see: Groeneveld, “Photography in aid of science”; Linda Roodenburg, *Anceaux’s Glasses: Anthropological Photography Since 1860* (Leiden: Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde, 2002); Linda Roodenburg, Anneke Groeneveld, Steven Vink, Janneke van Dijk and Liane van der Linden, “The view of the Other since 1850,” in *Dutch Eyes: A Critical History of Photography in the Netherlands* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2007), 291–340; Steven Vink, “Photography and science,” in Janneke van Dijk, Rob Jongmans, Anouk Mansfeld, Steven Vink and Pim Westerkamp, *Photographs of the Netherlands East Indies at the Tropenmuseum* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2012), 91–106. For discussions of colonial photography in the Anglophone world, see: Elizabeth Edwards, *Raw Histories: Photographs, Anthropology and Museums* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001); Christopher Morton and Elizabeth Edwards, eds, *Photography, Anthropology and History: Expanding the Frame* (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate, 2009); Christopher Pinney, *Photography and Anthropology* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011).

photographs were consequently found to reveal less about the societies they claimed to represent than what Europeans thought about themselves and their colonies.²⁹

Christopher Pinney's *Camera Indica* challenged this paradigm. His book, which has been influential in studies of India as well as the British empire, outlined historical changes in the photographic representation of Indians across the colonial and postcolonial periods, through European as well as Indian eyes. Importantly, Pinney sought not simply to compare and contrast British/colonial and Asian/postcolonial ways of seeing India. His work revealed that, already in the colonial period, photographs taken by and for Indians selectively engaged with both European and Indian aesthetic conventions, transforming local visual cultures in the process.³⁰ In framing his study as an account of continuities and change in *Indian* visual culture across a period that included but was not exclusively defined by British imperial ways of seeing, Pinney's critical examination of the "social life"³¹ of Indian photographs revealed novel encounters, exchanges, disjunctures and legacies shared between British and Indian visual culture that revised understandings of photography's trajectory in Asia. Pinney's work thus reversed the lens through which historians had been viewing India, from one that replicated binary world views ("colonial gazes") to one that revealed diverse, shifting modes of seeing.³²

The essays in this collection likewise aim to examine a period in Indies/Indonesian history through photographic sources that account for Asian as well as European perspectives. Following Deborah Poole, our volume

29 See, for example, Elizabeth Edwards, "Introduction," in *Anthropology and Photography 1860-1920*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards (New Haven and London: Yale University Press/The Royal Anthropological Institute, 1992), 3-17. In her subsequent works on photography and colonialism Edwards has moved away from the interpretive framework advanced in this early essay collection. For a more recent example of the same approach, however, 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. Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 1-19.

30 Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago, Ill.: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).

31 Pinney's book was influenced by Arjun Appadurai's notion of the "social life" of photographs – their progress from the time of their creation through subsequent contexts of display: Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the politics of value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3-63 at 34.

32 Nicholas Thomas, Introduction to *Double Vision: Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific*, ed. Nicholas Thomas and Diane Losche (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1-18 at 4-5.

conceives vision as a “problem of social actors and societies, rather than of abstract discourses, regimes of knowledge, sign systems, and ideologies”.³³ Further, in recognition of John Tagg’s cogent observation that, as a medium, photography “varies with the power relations which invest it”,³⁴ the essays are divided between two sections. The first discusses photographs that were made by and for Europeans and broadly reflect the concerns of a governing class. The second examines photographic practices in the Indies among a variety of local indigenous, immigrant and creole communities who might be conceived as sharing one important trait, namely that they constituted populations whom *ethici* presumed to govern, a contention that I shall develop in the final section of this chapter.

European visions of the Ethical Policy and their “margins of excess”

The essays in Part One are unified by their focus on photographs that were taken by and for Europeans between roughly 1900 and 1930. J.C. Lamster (1872-1954), an ex-military man with 15 years’ experience of the Indies, was commissioned by the Colonial Institute in Amsterdam to make motion pictures of “everyday life” in Java and Bali for potential European recruits to the Indies. G.L. Tichelman (1893-1962), a lower official posted in Dutch Borneo during the late 1920s, was a keen amateur photographer who filled a dozen family albums and many pages of his government reports with snapshots of his life and work. H.M. Neeb (1870-1933) was a medical officer in the colonial army who took a camera on military expedition to the Alas lands of Aceh (Sumatra) in 1904. Of the three men, only Lamster’s images might be said to constitute an explicit project to illustrate ethical reforms in practice. However, in his own way each photographer was a direct participant in implementing the Ethical Policy, whether as propagandist, civil servant or military officer. As such, the essays in Part One reveal unique insights into how European authorities envisioned the Ethical Policy as an ideal and a practice in the first decades of the twentieth century in ways that differ from studies based on textual and oratorial sources.

Jean Gelman Taylor’s essay (Chapter Two) examines the films of J.C. Lamster, made in 1912 and 1913 and screened in the Netherlands between

33 Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 9.

34 Tagg, *The Burden of Representation*, 63.