

**History and Photography: Visual Signifiers and Social Meaning****Sujith Kumar Parayil****Abstract**

This paper will give a conceptual outline to explore the social and cultural meaning of photographs. The primary question is to explore what ways in which one can use the photograph as research material to delineate the social and cultural reality of a period. However, the methodological sophistication of contemporary social science and humanities practice makes it a challenging task to analyze photographs. The paper, therefore, while bringing various conceptual and theoretical insights on the photograph will explore a composite and critical readings on the facets associated with the photographic text—which is being mediated by social and technologically determinisms. The paper argues that the photographic text is discursively formulated and, as a source, can be used to understand the eminence of modern consciousness and mentalities as well as the entrenched social relations of the society. The paper explores possibilities within the semiotic, discourse and power analysis and the ‘history of mentalities’ to develop a methodological lens to interpret social and political uses of this medium as well as the desire and the identity of the subjects both within and outside the photographic frame.

**Between History and Photography**

The questions of the imbued reality of any photograph lead attention to the relationship between photography and historical reality. In other words, when we narrate history through photography, tensions are already generated by the juxtaposition of ‘history’ and ‘photography’. The question that emerges concerns the kind of reality that can be articulated by photography. Conceptually, we can say that historical knowledge is not free from the time and space within which the historian is located. A historian’s lifetime and the prevailing acquired knowledge shape his craft. Each historical paradigm produces its own knowledge. It is human beings who are activated by the constituting elements of the prevailing social system and facilitate the meanings of the practice of history. The historical reality, in this context, depends upon this temporally and spatially constructed knowledge, as well as the historian’s engagement with the past and photography, as a product of reciprocal relations between subject and the photographer. It would foreground cultural meanings and their historicity. As Barnouw rightly puts: ‘[M]odern historiography demonstrates an awareness of the historians’ temporally (and culturally) mobile self and identity’ (1994, 9). Both historical (historian’s) reality and photographic (photographer’s) reality are socially constructed. Photography records the spatial outline of people, conditions and events from every possible perspective. The historian and the photographer consider only what is given in a spatial or temporal continuum; here, the perspectives of historian and photographer coincide. Like historians, ‘the spatial continuum from the camera’s perspective pre-dominates the spatial appearance of the perceived object’s history’ (Kracauer 1993, 432).

Kracauer tried to visualise historical knowledge through the photographic context. According to him, historiography’s responsibility to ‘historical reality’ and photography’s dependence on ‘camera reality’ define the epistemological ‘anteroom’ that they share (Barnouw 1994, 12).<sup>1</sup> Both share a common interdependence within the space of human reality, which is manifest in the matter of the content of both photography images and historiography.

For Kracauer, in artwork, 'the meaning of the objects takes on spatial appearance, whereas in photography the spatial appearance of an object is its meaning.' (Kracauer 1993, 434). The truth content and the reality of photograph according to Kracauer, depend on nature and its correspondence with the respective state of consciousness of the period. Each mode of production developed its own consciousness about nature (culture) and meaning of reality. 'The totality of all photographs must be understood as the general inventory of the nature that cannot be further reduced' (ibid, 435). This nature opens up the new vistas of historical reality. A photograph captures only those moments of the images that have 'history' (within time and space).

The reality effects of the photographs and their images have been fleshed out at various levels, which include discussions about the penetration of photography as a distinctive technology to reproduce the factual knowledge; the subjective relationship between the photographed subject and the time, and the ideological context in which it is situated. Walter Benjamin emphasises that the photograph, as mechanically reproduced art form, progressively contributed to the displacement of the 'cult value' and the 'aura' of tradition that was attached to a work of art within a given time and space where it was produced (Benjamin 1968, 224–26). Therefore, photographic technology is inherently democratic because of its potential for mass reproduction. Once photographs are democratised from the fabric of tradition of art and became a cheaper and flexible technology to serve the desire of image construction, the camera was able to penetrate into the web of realities that consists of fragments and layers of the society.

In his essay on 'Little History of Photography' in 1931, Benjamin further distinguished photography from other traditional art forms. He contends that like the painted portrait that had been a testimony of time, the art of the photograph goes beyond the testimony which fills you with an unruly desire to know what the subject is (1999, 510). Or in other words, photographic technologies give its products 'a magical value' and have an ability to instigate questions or our desire to know more about the subject in the frame (ibid). It can be said that the visualisation of multiple fragmented layers is connected to historical time, thereby, signifying the image's cultural environment. It may be suggested that any subject/object in the photographs has held a material causal connection with space and time or the cultural tropes within which it was generated. Nonetheless, Benjamin's analyses also open up a rather unnoticed, blurred and uncertain domain of the photography; an imperceptible correlation of material surface with history, temporality and instinctual unconsciousness which he called the 'optical unconsciousness'.

## **The Social and Cultural Signifiers**

In the cultural history of *longue duree*, photography visualises and grasps the 'moments' within historical time. Those moments have their own mobility within the social context in which the photographs have emerged. Susan Sontag (1979) has suggested that as a 'social rite' and as a 'neat slice of time' or a moment of history, photography is seemingly transparent truth and at the surface level, it seems to suggest the causal links between reality and the subjects. She argues that photography has canonised a superficiality of experience and contributed to the overvaluation of appearances to a point where the image has (subconsciously) replaced reality as reality. From a historical point of view, it facilitates the reading of the inner contradictions, hierarchical conflicts and other social perceptions. Sontag argues that photographic 'images are indeed able to usurp reality because first of all, a photograph is not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of real; it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask' (Sontag 1979, 154).

While pointing out the epistemological frame—‘that the thing has been there’—Roland Barthes explores photography’s relations with reality, memory, the symbolic meaning and its interpretations (1988, 76). This view stresses on things and their subjective relations with the world and, therefore, the relation with reality and past. The study of the consciousness of the sign in the photograph corresponds to certain moments of historical reflection, either individual or collective consciousness of time. For Barthes, there is a history of the sign, which is the history of its ‘consciousness’ (2000a, 212). Barthes’ work represents an important site of the intense debate about images and their role in the development of cultural theory and history by considering the meaning of photography through its relation to past realities. For him, images are part of a mental process, the result of an interaction between photographs and viewing subjects. Images are products of perception and thought, conscious and unconscious where the photograph encompasses a dualistic or ambiguous and discontinuous element in representation. It has enabled activation of signs of heterogeneous discourses as well as hallucination effects, such as the photographic presence (moment) which is absent from the present. Thus, ‘whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see’ (Barthes 1988, 6).

One crucial aspect of Barthes’ understanding of the photograph reveals that the meaning of the image is not only derived from the sign contents but the perception of the photographer and viewers are also stable factors to decipher technically conditioned pictorial realities of the past. Roger Scruton emphasised this by saying that the image becomes articulate when 1) the maker of the image can seriously address himself to the task of communicating through the image alone and 2) when the spectator can see and understand the image in terms of the process of thought which it expresses (1981, 597). He further asserts that a person studying an ‘ideal photograph’ is given an idea of how something looked. It relates to the knowledge of the causal relation between photograph and object and again relates to the knowledge of the object and its world. The appearance of the subject in the photograph may relate to the subject not only as he appeared at any one moment but also as he was. Here the represented subjects in the photographs have an ontological relation with the cultural practices and social behaviour. Therefore, according to Pierre Bourdieu, photographic practices are a ‘solemnising function’ and the camera captures the socially approved and regulated behaviours, that is, ‘behaviour that has already been solemnized’ (Bourdieu 1990, 24). Photographic practices, in this situation, allude to various social nexus—hierarchical consciousness and ‘cultural capital’ of the individual/family within the private and public domains.

It should be borne in mind that early photographic practice was intrinsically associated with elite classicism and, therefore, Bourdieu’s sociological survey enables him to argue that the different social classes encouraged the practice of photography differently according to their social and economic status in the society. The aesthetic value of photo image is again connected with its class consumption, norms and behaviour. However, he reiterates that the ‘social-ness’ and ‘realistic objective’ recording of the camera are made possible because of the combining of photographic vision with the canons of the traditional visions of the specific society and the ordinary practices and uses of photography (Bourdieu 1990, 74).

## **Photograph and the discursive structure**

It is John Tagg (1988) who has discussed the relation of photography to reality within the discursive context of its production and consumption. Drawing on the work of Foucault on the role of vision and surveillance (panoptic regime) and Althusser’s theory of ideological state apparatuses, Tagg argues that photographs as a material product of a particular ideology (in his case capitalist) and its own specific context, force and define its purposes. It requires a history

that will deliver the essence of the photographic meaning. Tagg rejects the notion of the mere documentary tradition of photography and points to photography as a new means and mode of representation within the structure of the modern institutional apparatus. Tagg locates the image within the discursive structure of the capitalist mode of production and the state's surveillance strategies that control the 'regime of truth' through its material operation of ideological apparatuses, where photography as a technology make visible various realities. Photographic reality thus generates meaning within the new institutional space. The photographic meaning, truth and reality as inseparable from the surveillance, power and control of the society operate under these institutional domains. Hence, the relevant codes are outside the photograph and inside the social structure. 'Photography as such has no identity'; it will produce knowledge within the discursive historical fields (Tagg 1988, 63). In this context, the use of photography as 'evidence' arises with motives and institutional interests.

By bringing new dimensions and approaches to 'read' historical meanings of photographs, scholars in India engage with the above mentioned theoretical formulations to interpret photographically embodied representational practices and multiple realities of the past and the present (see Gutman 1982; Karlekar 2005; Pinney 1997, 2004; Ryan 1997; Srivatsan 2000). Ryan argues that visions and spatial index of the photographs are imbued with the discourses of imperial surveillance. He explores the place of photography in big game hunting as part of the larger imperial work done by photography in surveying the land, enumerating and classifying the natives, waging military campaigns, opening the colonies to British explorers, travellers and traders, and enhancing the pedagogic uses of photography. Ryan's reading of colonial photography suggested that the power of photographic visibility is foregrounded within the power of institutionalised political surveillance. It is also important to note that apart from convincing us that photographic representational practices faithfully reproduce reality, the circulation of the image/picture in any discourse arrests the spectator's eye and evokes a desire or it activates our consciousness and imagination. This, according to Srivatsan (1993), results from the thought process of the viewer interacting with the encoded and decoded meanings of any iconic or symbolic image in the commodity culture.

While looking at the aesthetic style and conventions, Judith Mara Gutman (1987) points out that while organising the image in a traditional Indian way, such as painting on photographs, Indian photographers used the camera to reflect and extend an 'Indian conception of reality'. Malavika Karlekar's (2005) 'reading' of Bengali experience with photography puts forward multiple possibilities of interpreting photographic reality within the social and family history of the region. Photographic stories reveal the consumed ideal images of the groups and family where the image 'visually formalised familial hierarchies and patriarchal dominance' (ibid, 167). The interplay between layers of subjectivities, distance and intimacy in emotional relations of the family is historicised by the camera. Furthermore, she says that presentation of the self in photographs sometimes takes an effort to 'make believe with the world of fantasy' (ibid, 168).

Christopher Pinney (1997) dwells on the complex 'indexical idiom' of official colonial photography, photography of 'persona' or physiognomic categories of elite photographs and the contemporary aspirations of the popular ideal image construction. While focusing on these three 'moments' of Indian photography through analytical strategies of semiotics and social history, Pinney stresses that official ethnographic photography was interested not in Indians as individuals, but as specimens of 'types' where direct traces of the subject's physical appearance or external bodily sign became the identity of caste and tribe. In this situation, the indexical function of the photographs sought to serve the colonial administration for ethnographic classification and surveillance. Pinney identifies two rather different visual idioms that emerged

in India: a 'salvage' paradigm and a 'detective' paradigm (Pinney 1997, 45–46). In the 'salvage' paradigm, the aesthetic of primitivism is dominant to record the fragile tribal communities before their extinction, where individuals are reduced to cultural specimens. The 'detective' paradigm 'stressed the value of anthropological depiction and physiognomic observations as future identificatory guides' where the native body was 'scientifically' measured and classified (ibid, 45)..

Through the convergence of colonial aesthetic forms and traditional Indian motifs and concerns in picture-making, the Indian camera offered a new visual sensibility which is a 'highly complex "modern" attempt to formulate visual identities under specific historical and political conditions' (Pinney 1997, 96). This is visible in the case of studio 'portraits', which shared the Western precepts of ideal moral physiognomy and self. However, it was concerned with 'the individual members of an elite within which markers of ethnicity were downplayed' (ibid, 97). His interpretation contributes to a different way of looking at the image but associated within the tradition of Indian philosophy. He suggests a distinction between outer (*vyaktivva*) and inner (*charitra*) in the depictions of portrait images where indigenous photography is largely characterised by the former (ibid, 198–99). However, the inner attribution of the subject is reflected through the subject's culturally familiarised outward bodily expressions within the legitimised moral norms of the society. This points out yet another complex area of the Indian visuality which is largely associated to the practice of frontalality and forms of iconic narrative structures involved in the process of image-making and practices of seeing. This specific organization of vision has been crucial in identifying the overall grounded aesthetics of the photographic images. The appropriated grounded aesthetics and dominant signifiers of the studio and family photographs were in turn embedded with the legitimate moral order of the tradition, and often connected to the popular religious imaginary and practices of Hinduism. This function of iconic forms and its related enactment of reciprocal gaze have been further elucidated with the notion of darshan, which is one of the significant tropes used to analyse the popular visual culture practices in India. <sup>2</sup>

Pinney's study shows that postcolonial popular photographic practices operate within the inter-ocular field where different possible technologies, traditional styles, fictive and imagined props and backdrops were used to appropriate the ideal and desired image as well as its identity, leading to the invention of a new horizon of reality and plausibility. The photographic image thus refused the earlier emblem of the individual as a 'type' for the colonial rationality and surveillance and instead the refashioned image and its 'visual economy' travels across the boundaries of physical locality, identity and time (see Pinney 1997, 2003). As a derivative of this, Pinney argues that the spaces 'inside' the picture (the virtual space behind the picture plane) and the space between the surface of the image and the viewer were intensely fuelled by the political and religious struggle of Indian public culture, where image and social reality become more apparent (Pinney 2004, 179–80). The *Coming of Photography in India* (2008), a fascinating work by Pinney, draws how early photographic practices address the multiple cultural anxieties of the Indian, that is, a 'multiplicity of sameness, and a singularity of excess', or in other words through its different appropriations and discharge, photographic technology irreducibly creates a tension of the 'aesthetic of the same' through its cultural visibility. In the case of 'singularity of excess', Pinney extends Partha Chatterjee's argument on official nationalism and says that 'it is photography's excessive data ratio which produce a surplus and profane realism which exceeds the requirements of a narrow national iconography. 'Photography has too many meanings for any efficacious nationalist instruction' (Pinney 2008, 49; Chatterjee 2011, 155-162). Photographic surface produces a blurred visibility of

unnoticeable and sometimes unanswered tensions between image, culture and politics of the time.

## **Photographic archive**

Each photograph adds much to our historical understanding ‘and any photograph, under certain circumstances, can be used to break the monopoly which history today has over time’ (Berger and Mohr 1982, 109, cited by Mcquire 1998, 133). Photographs are open to a new outlook for historical reference. Most studies on photography deal with photography as an institution and also elaborate the idea of the aesthetic value of photographs, which are embedded in the image or frame. These studies make use of various theoretical strands to decode the subject and frame within a broader historical or aesthetical context. The analyses are based on an elusive causal relation drawn between the image and historical time. These studies do not treat photography as a socially and culturally generated product with its own historicity by which it has been moulded. They have also failed to address photography within the context of social relations of power, the ways in which subjects enact their supplemented reality and counter imaginary. These gaps in the study of photography have led to the emergence of new approaches where the genre of photographs is analysed within its social meaning and the interplay of power and historicity within a discursive context. Irrespective of the purpose of image construction, I intend to discuss historical photographs as cultural products and show historically practised and inhabited cultural norms and social-consciousnesses at play when a photograph is taken. There is a subjective causal relation between the photographed subjects and their situated cultural world, between the photographer and his image, and between the spaces of the background/foreground and the subjects.

Conventionally, the archives of photography are used as illustrations and hence subordinated to the written text or employed as elements for verification in researches on cultural history. But if the ‘photographic archive’ is examined as a single entity from a ‘textual’ angle, new knowledge can be generated in a definite manner. In order to generate particular meanings out of a ‘collection of photography’, it becomes necessary to ‘recontextualise’ them. In this manner, it is activated as visual history and source and as research materials for the genre of popular communication. But this ‘recontextualisation’ process should be well supported by relevant documentation and the contextual information about the portrayed person or things; even though each unit of the collection can produce its own abstract meaning. While interpreting a photograph, one has to bear in mind the relation between the image and what it represents in order to understand the inherent dual capacity of the cultural construct and the natural unconstructed image. Put in a nutshell, photography is simultaneously a technically conditioned picture of reality as well as a culturally conditioned pictorial reality (Reiakvam 1993).

In Barthes’ point of view, even though a photograph gives the impression of directly confronting reality, it implies at the same time an inherent knowledge invented by it (1988). The quick incision in the axis of time, that is, the photographic preservation of a second, implies and creates a ‘discontinuity’. The images in a photograph do not exactly represent what was present either before or after the constituting moment of the photographic event. With this discontinuity, the photographic image is removed from the historical context and disconnected from time. But through a process in time, meaning is generated from photographs and communicated. The contextualisation of ‘discontinued moments’ into discursive sequences, revealing the photographic meanings of various images of a certain historical time, can be interpreted as a visual testimony of that time. An interpretation of the world in a different dimension is possible when the photograph is restored to its narrative and iconographic context (see Reiakvam 1993).

The existing knowledge system imposes its own power\ knowledge on any art form or any of its external expressions. When it comes to taking a photograph, existing knowledge with all its power intricacies (visible or hidden) intrudes into it.<sup>3</sup> At the same time the photograph emits a particular meaning from within. The photograph and its image inevitably visualize this knowledge and the relation of power within which it is located. Reconsidering this image of the photograph helps us to reveal the social ordering process through positioning, framing and looking at photo images. This again inextricably connects images to a causal relation with the world. It conveys that age-old values, customs, rituals and hierarchical caste and class positions control the subject's action and behaviour, by constructing and ordering his social knowledge (the structure of existing knowledge system). It is in this situation that I use the notion of discourse and power/knowledge to address the intricacies behind the social production of photography, its instrumental use as a technology to disseminate knowledge and control the 'docile subjects' and the knowledge that shaped worldviews of the subject to exhibit social differences and subjective refashioning.

The appearance of images in the photographic text is to be connected with the natural and cultural environment and therefore does have power and implied meaning. To photograph is to appropriate the things photographed, it means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge, and therefore like power (Sontag 1979, 4). This causal relation between subject and his/her worlds (knowledge) is controlled and conditioned by the ordering/discipline principles operated by society. The determined forces of this construction of individual consciousness might be dependent upon social or cultural norms like custom, rituals and traditional values. Functional institutions like caste, class and economic and occupational status etc. provide for the mental landscape of people. It underlines the fact that even the photographs of a particular period considered 'frozen social moments,' and shots taken (un) intentionally, are not apolitical or value neutral and also, open up the inner recesses of power dynamics operating in the society. On the other hand photographs have an inclined relationship with the institutional technology operated through its various power/knowledge systems. It has been deployed in many fields for racial categorization, as evidence of law and criminality, and regulation of social behaviour by bureaucratic institutions of the state (Stuken and Cartwright 2001, 96-98). Along with this, another theoretical strand that that can be used to analyse photography is the notion of the "History of Mentalities." Mentalities here stand for 'visions of the world' as Michel Vovelle (1990) has argued. The notion of mentality is applied here to understand how the subjects in the photographs and a society are being tentatively ordered and disciplined by internal or external influential forces. In the colonial period this ordering of selves directly comes from both knowledge of colonialism and tradition and also had its own power strategies for dominance and representation. The colonial intervention within the cultural practices of the societies, and the initiatives of social reform as well as the material development through the institutional setup and the related knowledge system, creates a new mentality within the historical discourse of colonialism. For instance, new socio-religious reform movements and the claim for new social status and honour could be treated as modern 'events' which created a rupture in the existing social relations and practices. It is the interrelated discussions, dialogues, debates and movements, and interventions that create the signified moments and events within history. Events (social, political, and economic) and related forms of knowledge in turn produce new sensibilities and mentalities for the people within the parameters of 'social spaces.' Social space is the space where inter-subjective communication and negotiations is made possible for the subjective refashioning and invention of modern self. The emotional histories, whether they are rational or imaginative, which shaped the perceptions of the people, also came under the field of the history of mentality (Ginsburg 1980; Febvre, 1989). It is in this context that the analyzes of mentalities will help us to understand not only the visual reality of

the subjects in the different photographic genres but also a supplemented reality or an imagined reality which is made possible only through the photographic practices.

Photographs also show the interplay of social and cultural signs. The social-ness of the photographs can explore through a theoretical engagement with the 'encoded' social semiosis in the photographs. A photographic image is encoded with the political, social and economic significance of the three prominent signs: the 'iconic', 'indexical' and 'symbolic' signs.<sup>4</sup> Signs and the meanings carried by the image are interconnected with the subjects' cultural environment and practices that could not be separated from it. The interdependence of human beings and nature as well as the cultural conditions thus evolved determined the visible and corporeal expressions of the consciousness. This conscious representation of sign symbolically signifies its meaning and value/status within the dominant system of culture. Bourdieu's assertion that the background of the photographs acquires symbolic functions is significant to understand the studio and family frames. Different signs also signify the identity, social status of the person and the family within the imaginary social relations. Even the photographer intentionally produces his image and arranges and controls each frame within his aesthetics and his perception. Certainly there are a number of things, which lie outside his/her control. According to Roger Scruton, minutiae such as dust on the sleeve, freckles on a face or the wrinkles on a hand; will always depend initially upon the prior situation of the subjects (1981, 595).

Barthes's analysis of the photographic sign further stretches the image's inlaid social nexus and reality. For him, the photographic sign can involve denoted and connoted messages; photographs without a code and with a code (2000b, 196–97). The denoted message is literal reality and it is easy to decode the meaning of the sign by analogy or commonsense. The connoted meaning refers to a cultural and historical context. The reading of the code of connotation is always historical (here the readers knowledge is also significant). The study of the consciousness of sign in the photograph corresponds to certain moments of historical reflection, either individual or collective consciousness of time. For Barthes, there is a history of the sign, which is the history of its "consciousness" (2000a, 212). All images are both encoded and decoded. Stuart Hall (1993) has observed that preferred meanings of images that are cultural products, are encoded by the producer and then decoded by consumer. The interpretation of meaning only works when there is composite system of coded signs and symbols within a cultural context shared by producer and consumer/viewer. All these above mentioned theoretical and methodological insights will help decode the system and structures of connoted meanings produced in photography.

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<sup>1</sup> The 'anteroom' is the confronting area where both historiography and photography acquire an independent status. According to Kracauer, 'one may define the area of historical reality, like that of photographic reality, as an anteroom' (Kracauer cited by Barnouw 1994, 12). The notion of 'epistemological anteroom' is Kracauer's mode of understanding both history and photography, which accommodates the peculiar interdependence of both. That is, neither historian nor photographer is free from their determined knowledge that is formed within the vision of temporal, multi-layered world of everyday life. However, Kracauer emphasises the relation between historiography and photography within this composite anteroom (intermediary) area and claims the independent status of history. The composite perspectives of both historian (temporally) and photographer (visually) are interpretive and produce different shapes of objectivity (ibid, 201).

<sup>2</sup> The notion of darshan or darsana refers to a 'relation of perception within the public traditions of Hindu worship, especially in the temples... The practice signifies a mediated bringing to (god's) presence of the subject, who, by being seen by the divine image, comes to be included in the order instituted and supported by that divinity' (Prasad 1998, 75). Christopher Pinney, on the other hand, also noted the notion of *darshan* to the study of popular Indian images. According to him, 'seeing and by being seen' by a deity (image) involves a range of ideas relating to 'insight, 'knowledge' and 'philosophy' (Pinney 2004, 9). The notion of *darshan*- 'seeing but being seeing' is further extended by Ravi Vasudevan to his study of popular Indian cinema and argued that

seeing involved its own 'moral gaze.' According to him, the iconic image has power to return a divine effect of 'being seen' and that is apparently the paradoxical phenomenon of an image, which is quite a common one within Hindu visual culture (Vasudevan 2000, 112,119)

<sup>3</sup> Photographs, particularly the colonial photographs, stress the relation between visibility and power in its way of capturing the significant event or places. For instance, Christopher Pinney has observed that while Foucault never wrote on photography as a 'technology of power', the parallels between the surveillance eye and the gaze of the western photographer documenting its colonized 'other' is obvious. The Foucauldian framework of discipline and surveillance can be applied to the power of colonial photograph (Pinney 1992 ; 1997)

<sup>4</sup> The three kinds of signs are differentiated by the way in which the relation between the signifier and signified is understood. "In iconic signs, the signifier represents the signified by apparently having a likeness to it." In Indexical signs, "there is an inherent relationship between the signified and signifier. "Inherent" is often culturally specific." The "symbolic signs have a conventionalized but clearly arbitrary relation between signifier and signified"(Rose 2001, 78).