

Portrait of Dutch East Indies Everyday Life in Woodbury & Page's Photographic Works

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Abstract

This study using photographic analysis as ethnohistory method try to compared portrait photographs of native and european communities in the Dutch East Indies from the work of photographers Walter Bentley Woodbury and James Page. Woodbury and Page were one of the important photographers in the history of Dutch East Indies photography. In their short time in the Dutch East Indies, Woodbury and Page collaborated to create a Woodbury & Page photography company that produced a variety of photographs including family photographs and portraits of native and european people living in the Dutch East Indies. Through the Woodbury & Page photography archive which is now belong to Leiden University library archives, this research tries to describe the social relations between native peoples and european communities in Dutch East Indies. Portrait photos in the 1850-1870s were still dominated by portrait painting style. Nevertheless, the body language and expressions emitted by the subject of photos when posing formally facing the camera illustrate various things. By analyze many photos from many kind of peoples there and with helped by historical records, this paper try to describe the social life in Dutch East Indies at that time.

Keywords: *body language, ethnohistory, photo archive, portrait.*

1 Introduction

A year after Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre published his findings in 1839, which was also the starting point for the development of modern photographic technology, the Dutch East Indies colonial government immediately adapted this technology to record Javanese natural and cultural features. Jurrian Munnich was the first photographer sent by the Dutch Colony Ministry in 1840 to photograph natural and cultural objects in Java [1, pp. 739–741]. Although Munnich's expedition was deemed unsuccessful, the Dutch East Indies government sent several other photographers to continue his work. Several names such as Adolph Schaefer, Isidore van Kinsbergen, and Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn have worked to documenting various kinds of natural and cultural objects as well as typical Dutch East Indies scenery.

At its first decade in the Dutch East Indies (between 1840-1850) photography was only used to documenting colonial areas. Starting 1850s its uses shifted towards commercial. During this time traveling photographers began to appear, offering photography services, especially family portrait for european families in Batavia [2]. Apart from orders for family photos and individual photos, photographers also making *carte-de-visites*, which are a type of postcard that usually contains a series of photographs of indigenous people, their everyday life, and local custom [3]. Many of the photos were made for commercial purposes or belonged to individuals (photographer's

customer). However, these photos have now been archived by Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Landen Volkenkunde / Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV). Since it was first established in 1851 KITLV has a mission to develop collections and management, research and publishing academic works, especially regarding the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) and the 'Dutch' Caribbean [4].

Photographs of human subjects in the KITLV collection have different backgrounds. Some are government-ordered photos, the others are private orders, and the rest are photographer's personal work. The purpose for which they were made is also varied, e.g. for research purposes, for private collections, for tourism promotion, etc. The difference in background and purpose will certainly produce a different story even with the same photo subject. However, in the subject of human photos, when someone poses in front of the camera, there is a paradox between posing as an attempt to create a fake identity and a void in oneself that happen in a fraction of a time camera's shutter opened that is inevitably part of the "self". So according to Ertem, every effort to reveal the identity of the subject is possible because of this emptiness, because what was called "self" is developed by the dynamics of presence and absence [5, pp. 133–140].

This paper will analyze everyday life of the Dutch East Indies peoples in the photographic work of Woodbury & Page as one of the early photographers in the Dutch East Indies who in his short time on the island of Java had captured various kinds of anthropological photos of various layers of the Dutch East Indies society, especially Batavia. This paper is using photographic analysis as ethnohistory approach. When analyzing photographic text within ethnohistorical framework, another text is needed to reveal what actually happened when the photograph was made [6]. A photo can mean anything or nothing, depending on the accompanying text, context, and discourse [7, pp. 38–46].

2 Woodbury & Page Photo Studio

Walter Bentley Woodbury and James Page are two photographers from England who met in Melbourne Australia. Both were born and raised in England, before separately starting new lives in Australia. After meet in Australia, at 1857 they decided to try their luck by moving and opening a photography service in the Dutch East Indies. They started a photography studio in Weltevreden Batavia by offering photo services at a fairly high price. But this did not matter because the customers were mostly European Batavia and almost all of them were high-class traders or businessmen. The middle and lower classes who are usually workers are usually Chinese or Malay. According to Woodbury, Batavia was a lazy city, because a lot of work was done by servants. Woodbury's working hours in Batavia are between half past 8 and 10 or 11am. 12 o'clock is lunch time followed by nap time. At afternoon Woodbury finishes his morning photo work, reading, drawing, or anything else until 5pm, then continue taking a shower and get ready for dinner. After dinner time the evening is usually continued by driving somewhere, then going home and sleeping at half past 9. Usually after nap time and before bedtime is tea time. That was Woodbury's life in Batavia which was very different from busy Melbourne which everything was done by himself [8].

Recorded archival photographs with the names of the makers were Woodbury, Woodbury & Page, or Atelier Woodbury was made by the Woodbury & Page company and its decent. Registered photographers with the company include Walter Bentley Woodbury, Henry James Woodbury, James Page, and possibly an unnamed employee of the company. The first phase of the Woodbury & Page photo studio in the Dutch East Indies was in 1857 - 1859, that is, during their initial

arrival in the Dutch East Indies. At this time Woodbury & Page worked mostly on portraits of Batavian socialites, which is fashionable upper class Europeans [8]. The Woodbury & Page photo studio received many positive responses from both customers and the newspaper, *Java-Bode*. Apart from shooting in the studio, Woodbury & Page also intends to travel around the Dutch East Indies. Woodbury & Page is interested in Javanese exoticism, Javanese feudal culture, as well as temples and relics of the past. For several years Walter, Henry James and James Page traveled into the jungle, enjoying expanses of rice fields, views of towering volcanoes and the coast. They also stopped to set up a photo studio. The second phase, 1860 - 1864, began when Walter Woodbury back to Batavia after returning to England, and James Page left for England. The studio was renamed to Atelier Woodbury. During this period, the studio also had a permanent place for the first time after previously always renting a place in a hotel or the private residence of the people it visited. In 1861 Henry James opened a studio branch in Surabaya. The third phase of the Woodbury & Page studio was 1864 - 1870. At this time Walter Woodbury and James Page were no longer together. Ownership of the Woodbury & Page studio name is now under Henri James Woodbury, brother of Walter Woodbury. Started from Semarang, Henry James and his wife moved around the city and opened a temporary studio where they lived. The cities that Henry James lived in included Surabaya, Pasuruan, Probolinggo, and many other places in East Java. The fourth phase of the Woodbury & Page studio began in 1870 - 1882. The ownership of the name was held by Albert Woodbury, one of the six Woodbury brothers. During this time the Woodbury & Page photo studio was at its peak and had a large number of photographers. Woodbury & Page's final phase was in the period 1882 - 1908, when Albert Woodbury sold the ownership of the Woodbury & Page name to Adolf Constantine Franz Groth. The early days of this period the studio still continued its heyday, marked by receiving jobs from the government. The fall of Woodbury & Page began after Adolf Groth's death and ended in a lengthy process of acquisition by Busenbender & Co. through the auction after the studio had suffered more losses than profit in Mrs. Groth's hands.

Although through several phases and coming from many different hands of photographers, the way Woodbury & Page's photo studio works and styles have arguably not changed much. The shoots always using indoor or outdoor set with a plain or bamboo background as the Dutch Indies style. Woodbury & Page has produced many photo from their interpretations of indigenous everyday lives. Many of these photos are anonymous and intended to attract European peoples to come to Dutch East Indies. Even though it is based on Woodbury's interpretation which is not indigenous, usually the photos are made using the original set, for example the photos of the traders milling about in Batavia. The traders were invited to the studio to be photographed [8].

2.1 Woodbury & Page Photo Studio Technic, Technology, Services and Products

The Woodbury & Page photo studio has always been using the latest technology of its day. In its early days, Woodbury & Page offered several photography products, including photo on glass, photo on paper, stereoscopic portraits, as well as small size photos. The photographic process used is ambrotype to produce stereoscopic photos and large photos. Ambrotype is a positive photo printing technique using a wet collodion process on glass and is made in a camera [9]. Woodbury also uses a wet-collodion process to produce negatives on the glass so that it can be used to reproduce photos later with the albumen printing technique.

In the second phase of the Woodbury & Page studio, at 1860, the studio offered carte-de-visite. Carte-de-visite is a portrait photo printed on card / cardboard in small sizes (usually 6 x 9 cm, or

6.5 x 10.5 cm in the Woodbury & Page version) [1]. Woodbury & Page also offers a large version of the carte-de-visite which is 10.5 x 16.5 cm which is quite popular. Carte-de-visite is more popular because it produces multiple photos at a lower price. The technique is to use a camera with multiple lenses.

At first Woodbury & Page offered portrait photo services. But his interest in the exoticism of Java and the Dutch East Indies in general was also expressed in his works. Several books, carte-de-visite in the form of photographs of the indigenous people of the Dutch East Indies, and photographs of the natural beauty of Java are also offered as products of the Woodbury & Page photo studio. In the context of portrait photos, of course there will be different treatment in making portrait photos for clients and portrait of indigenous people.

3 Ethnohistory in Photographic Text: Visual Ethnography using Photographic Archives

In managing a photo studio, there will be employees who work either as laborers, models, or photographer assistants. The Woodbury & Page photo studio employs indigenous people as employees. Photo ideas, especially those in the form of interpretations, are certainly obtained from daily experiences in Batavia and traveling around Java Island. Because it is in the form of an interpretation, of course it is not accurate, however it cannot be said to be faking it or making it up. According to visual ethnography theory, Woodbury & Page acts as an ethnographer who approaches by experiencing, interpreting, and representing a culture and society in the form of portrait photographs [10, p. 22]. In this context, the research approach is to interview the results of Woodbury & Page's photographs. There is a slight difference because what a visual ethnographer does is to conduct interviews with the resulting photos themselves, which is by linking their personal experiences with the resulting photos. But doing visual ethnography can also be done by conducting interviews on the photos of informants, whether the photos were taken when the research started or before. In this context the Woodbury & Page photo studio can be positioned as an informant for research. Interviews were carried out on the photo and to the informant, namely the experience related to making the photo, the content in the photo, and the purpose of making the photo. In-person interviews were not possible because the Woodbury & Page photo studio had been closed for a long time and the photographers had ceased. Some historical sources can certainly be used to replace the presence of these photographers. By utilizing photo archive data and other companion data, it is possible to carry out research on a social society using an ethnohistory frame of mind [6].

There are several things that must be considered in ethnohistorical research, including content analysis of photos, understanding of the history and technology of photography, information of the photographer's background and the intention of making photographs, studies of ethnographic subjects, and studies of the history and use of photos by several parties [11]. It cannot be denied that there are many problems regarding the available photo archive data. First, regarding the completeness of the data. It is almost impossible to obtain complete photographic archival data of a particular society. Archival data that is completely compiled seems to tell a lot of things, even though the photos may be the result of choice and many things are not included in the photo. This is possible due to the many considerations of the photo archive provider. The second thing could be that many photos are damaged or lost because they are not archived from the beginning of the creation, but later on. The third thing that causes a lack of data could be because the initial intention of making the photos was not for anthropological archives but for other purposes. And

it cannot be denied that there were the photographer's subjectivity when choosing what should be in the photo and what should not [12]. Everything off camera is the proof that photos were made subjectively.

Working with photo archives has many problems, however, with an understanding of visual literacy and knowledge of photography, along with historical data and records, ethnohistory research can be carried out. The first step in ethnohistorical research is to collect archival data to be studied. In this study, the photographic archives that will be examined are portraits from the Woodbury & Page photo studio which are now owned by KITLV. The photo archive is accessed through the official website of the Digital Collection Leiden University Libraries: <https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/imagecollection-kitlv> [13].

4 Portrait Photography by Woodbury & Page

The first step in this research was to make a collection of Woodbury & Page's Works. In the early days of photography, portrait photos were made to create a reflection of subject. Nowadays photography theory find that portrait could also captures character or personality of a subject through a set of lighting, background, and pose [14]. Furthermore, a photographer can encode the subject personality in every elements of the photograph, meaning everything in the photo, including the subject, its pose and expression, the clothes used, the supporting objects and their arrangement, the background, the lighting, composition, even photo coloring can be used to encode a subject's character / personality. During the time of Woodbury & Page (19th century) photography was not used as it is now, but from the perspective of the photo viewer, especially for ethnographers or visual object researchers in general, all elements of a photo are code that can lead to a certain interpretation. Even according to Barthes, everything involved from the beginning of the creation until the audience of the photo is a part of the code that conveys a message [15]. In the context of portrait photos, the message must be related to the subject, its character or personality, which in a broader context is also an identity, as a personal and as a part of a society.

Portrait photos were chosen because Woodbury & Page works has more portrait setup than everyday activities documentaries. At that time, spontaneous photos about everyday activities were still very rare, while portrait photos are shoots in predetermined or predicted lighting, and the subject is in a position that is not spontaneous / posed. One of the reason was due to the limited photography technology. In 1850s, largely shooting photos was done with a large camera set, using a tripod, and a long shutter speed, especially in poor or uncertain lighting conditions. Woodbury & Page's works mostly taken in a 'studio', with the subject posing and looking at the camera (or at the photographer). As for some studio works done with models who seem to be doing some activities, they can be distinguished from the real activities documentary by looking at the setting that has been set, not just what it is in the field. The Woodbury & Page photrography archive of human subjects are so diverse and biased that they are quite difficult to categorize. This research limits the photo categorization to portraits of local and European communities in the Dutch East Indies. In practice, categorization based on the race was very difficult because there were also foreigners from China, Arabic, and others, not to mention the mixed race /eurasians. Other categories that will also affect the interpretation of photos such as categorization based on gaze structure. In archival photographs with human subjects regarding the Dutch East Indies, there are at least three categories of photos, namely the dominated by photographer's idea, dominated by subject's idea, and the bargaining between the photographer and the subject in determining the content of the photograph [16].

4.1 Portrait of European Communities in the Dutch East Indies

The European portrait photographs produced by Woodbury & Page mostly use classic European-style clothing, although some are wearing Javanese clothing. Other clothing that is commonly used in portrait photos is official clothing / uniform to show the position or type of work of the person. There are various photos made, family photos, individual photos, photos with household helpers or bodyguards, etc.



Figure 1. Some portraits of European societies in the Dutch East Indies

4.2 Indigenous People Portrait Photos

The portraits of the indigenous people of the Netherlands Indies are more diverse. There are family photos, self-portraits, photos with households or bodyguards, besides that there are also typology of work in the Dutch East Indies, especially types of work that do not exist in Europe. The types of clothing used by indigenous people are very different from European societies. As for some the same with europeans usually the soldiers or generals uniform. Indigenous clothing is usually very traditional even for the jobs as shopkeepers or restaurant waiters, like uses of batik and javanese blouse (kebaya).



Figure 2. Some portrait photographs of the indigenous people of the Dutch East Indies.

5 Photo Analysis

After making a photo collection, next step is sorting. Sorting objective is to separate photos which are relevant and which are not. The first sorting research concerns the coverage area. As the title implies, the photos selected were only those of Woodbury & Page works in the Dutch East Indies region, mostly in Batavia. The type of photo chosen was only human photos which were done in an indoor and outdoor studio setting. Photographs taken outside the studio session, such as when Woodbury is traveling are not selected. This means that the selected photos is a portrait of the Dutch East Indies community in the Woodbury & Page studio set.

Using Burgin's gaze structure analysis instrument [17], the selected Woodbury & Page works can be divided into 2 categories, namely (1) photos of individual client orders (which are based on the domination of gaze of the person in the photo over the camera, finally over the photo viewer); and (2) photos by Woodbury & Page for sale in the form of souvenirs or postcards (which are made based on the domination of the viewer's gaze over the photograph). Almost all of the photo collections of the European community are orders from clients who usually want to make self-portraits or family photos. The photos of indigenous people are more diverse because there are photos ordered by clients and photographic works of Woodbury & Page for souvenirs such as books or postcards. Second category are photos posed by models (who are usually Woodbury & Page employees) or people they meet on the street. Some photo sets are clearly done in a studio (seen from the floor, furnitures, and background), some are done outdoors but use a studio set style (ground floor but with background sets and sometimes furnitures). These photos are Woodbury & Page's interpretation of local society. Even Sunjayadi said these photos were specially made to attract people in Europe to visit the Dutch East Indies [3]. Although the second category photos are Woodbury & Page's interpretation, who are immigrants from Europe, there is a lot that can be said by these photos, although there are also things that were made up not based on reality.

5.1 Analysis of European Community Portrait Photos in the Dutch East Indies

At first glance, portrait photographs of European communities in the Dutch East Indies doesn't reveal much about daily life in the Dutch East Indies. But by looking at so many photos in these category, there are several things that can be concluded. First, these many photographs is the evidence that the Dutch East Indies at that time was inhabited by many Europeans, especially in the cities. Even in the captions of these photos, there were many peoples categorized as Eurasian races, which is mixed race of European and local peoples. In addition, there are also many other races such as Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic. The Dutch East Indies in the late 1800s was a very diverse area. In several photos depicted Europeans side by side with indigenous people, in which composition it appears that these indigenous people are employees, aides, bodyguards, or assistants. There are even some photos of young European children carried by their Javanese caregivers in their distinctive clothes. The photo of the adjutant usually wears clothes looked alike their employer clothes. In addition to their typical Javanese face, they usually also wear regional attributes (for example batik). Another photos are European or Eurasian people with typical Dutch East Indies furniture, which is a mixture of Chinese and Javanese styles, using Javanese clothing.

These things show that at that time apart from the war between the Dutch East Indies government and the rebellion movements (at that time there was no Indonesian independence movement yet), people of various races mingled. The Dutch East Indies government in the late 1800s succeeded in making the Dutch East Indies region, especially the island of Java, as an overseas area for European citizens to seek new fortunes. There are many jobs opportunity in both government and private company. In addition, there are also many indigenous workers who can be recruited to do jobs, especially blue-collar jobs. The area had relatively low cost living expenses too [8]. These all make The Dutch East Indies in the late 1800s was an exotic tropic Europe, with a luxurious European-style lifestyle.

5.2 Analysis of Portrait Photos of Indigenous People in Dutch East Indies

Photographs of the indigenous people of the Dutch East Indies were much more diverse, both in terms of its usages and in the content of the photos. Complementing the portrait photographs of the European community to reveal daily life in the Dutch East Indies, the photographs of the indigenous people offer portraits of various social levels of society. From the client-ordered photo category, one can see the various styles of respected indigenous people. There were those who had a european lifestyle and those who still has strong javanese feudalism way of life which was more like thuggery [18]. In the photos of local officials or aristocrats with servants, it can be seen how the depiction of the power of the little kings of the local areas. Usually the master sat on a chair while the servants or bodyguards sat on the floor. In other photos where everyone is on the floor, usually the master is in the middle. Even from the clothes used, the master looks neater or more luxurious. Single portrait photos usually use european style pose. What distinguishes it from the europeans one is the shape of the face and the clothes used. There were so many respected indigenous people who live in modern cities such as Batavia having their photograph wearing European-style clothes. Those who occupy important positions in government or in the army also wear clothes like Europeans.

Photographs of women, usually mistress, usually posed sitting on a chair. Chair in portraits of those days represent a throne, a position. This means that people who sit in chairs usually have a higher degree than those who are standing or sitting on the floor. In the couple's photo, usually

the mistress sits on a chair while his husband is standing. This was the typical European style of the puritanical era, where women were formally placed on a higher rank than men. However, in carrying out work, women are usually not allowed to hold important positions (except for the Queen of the Netherlands). Whereas in Javanese culture, this has never been a problem. In some Javanese stories women appear more powerful both in battle or politics [19]. This prowess hardly appears in Woodbury & Page photographs. It is possible that at that time the role of women had changed compared to previous times, but it could also be because Woodbury did not have any references to a mighty woman. The mighty woman in the indigenous Woodbury & Page photo can be seen from the photos of manual laborers, such as laborers or domestic helpers. Some of them show gestures of motherhood, but many also show gestures of manual labor like men, except that they are female and dressed as a women. Although you can count fingers, there is also a photo of a woman who has the eyes of a leader, whose expression illustrates that the woman does not only think about domestic affairs but also the welfare and security of her people or at least her servants.

Woodbury & Page depict the exoticism and uniqueness of indigenous people lifestyle photograph by setting up in studio and using models to set it up. There are various types of work, from chefs, waiters, various hucksters who selling coffee, soto, etc., carpenters, street sprinklers, dancers, all with their own attributes which are very different and don't even exist in Europe. All these attributes and types of work illustrate how advanced cities such as Batavia, Semarang, Surabaya, and even Yogyakarta were at that time.

5.3 Portrait of Daily Life in the Dutch East Indies

From the whole photos, we can see how wa daily life in the Dutch East Indies which was quite busy. It is different from Europe, but the European lifestyle has also become a lifestyle for the middle and upper class of the Dutch East Indies community, including for the natives. The differences between each person in the Dutch East Indies is the social class, which is formed from differences in economic capacity not refer to traditional feudal caste. However, this economic capacity linked to government rules, which more benefited the European community. So we could say that the Europeans in the Dutch East Indies already had the initial capital to live in mid to high class society even though they not from royal family. However, in everyday life there is no difference between Europeans, natives, or others, except from their economic capacity. This is seen in how Woodbury & Page does not differentiate between its clients. Both Europeans and natives are dressed properly in luxurious studio set and are always posed as a great / respected people.

Indigenous photos that had unique, exotic, or poor look photographed are illustrated portraits of everyday life in the Dutch East Indies, which Woodbury usually encounters on the streets, in markets, in restaurants, even during trips around the Dutch East Indies. If we look at native people photos from a collection of photos in this category, in fact we will only see one side of the life of the indigenous people of the Dutch East Indies. Because in fact there were even those with very high social class, even respected among Dutch East Indies officials such as the sultan. Photographs in this category are no less attractive than photos of client orders. These photos are the depiction of Woodbury's interpretation of the dutch east Indies lower class society. Woodbury depicts people's life by making portraits of various types of work, daily activities, daily clothes, and there are even photos of house designs with family members. It's not 100% accurate, but what's interesting is that they do exist. The activities of the lower class community include gambling, visiting and drinking tea, relaxing while smoking drugs, combing after bathing, and many more. This shows that at that time society had begun to be structured, live a new lifestyle, in a modern city, socialized

and worked with people of various races, with various kinds of jobs that were also new, not only farming and raising livestock.

6 Conclusion

The Woodbury & Page Archives Photo of the Dutch East Indies community provides many information about daily life in the Indies in the mid to late 1800s. However, if not analyzed carefully, the photos are tricky because almost all of them are interpretations and depiction of what Woodbury saw while in the Dutch East Indies. Because it is in the form of interpretation, with verbal language limitations and also cultural differences, many attempts at reconstruction are not quite precise, especially in detail. For example, a poor family portrait at the dining table. The indigenous family who owns the dining table is certainly a wealth family. Woodbury describes the family room as having a dining table as in Europe, it doesn't feel right for a portrait of a poor indigenous family.

The conclusion of Woodbury & Page's photographs during their times in Dutch East Indies is that in the mid to late 1800s, the Dutch East Indies were an interesting colony. It has a lot of eastern exoticism, has tropical climate, but also has fairly modern metropolitan cities. Another thing that can be obtained from Woodbury & Page's record of life is the relaxed life of the people of the Dutch East Indies, although this does not make it poorer than other areas in the east.

Before the independence movements of Indonesia, the Dutch East Indies was slowly forming a comfortable colony for all its citizens. Colonialism treat in the Dutch East Indies only applied to lower-class indigenous people, especially those who lived far from big cities. Both colonized by the locals, by businessmen, or by European governments who do business fraudulently, taking advantage but oppressing the field workers. The lower classes, both in the pre-Dutch East Indies era, during the Dutch East Indies era, as well as after independence, remained cheated and oppressed. During the Dutch East Indies era, fair rules also existed, but supervision was quite difficult because of the limited apparatus and mode of communication. IWoodbury & Page's photographs, that things is not visible, because cities life is more stable and safer, justice is more guaranteed than in plantation areas, forests, etc. So it is not wrong if the Dutch East Indies is said to be a comfortable and beautiful colony as depicted in the Woodbury & Page photographs.

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