



Exploring Colonial Photographs Potential as a Historical Source on Reconstructing Buleleng Maritime History

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Abstract: *This article explores a possible way to use historical photographs archives and their untapped potential as invaluable historical sources. Focusing on the maritime history of Buleleng from 1920 to 1940 AD, this study explores the multifaceted digitized photos. These photos offer insights into the maritime landscape of Buleleng, shedding light on its pivotal role as a thriving center of maritime commerce and cultural exchange in Bali during the early 20th century. Through a visual history approach and critical analysis of a diverse range of photographs, this research shows the potential of photographs as historical sources to reconstruct the maritime past of Buleleng. The analysis in this article showed that historical photographs could provide varied information, such as different types of boats, commodities, activities, and daily life of people in the maritime-led life of Buleleng.*

Keywords: *Buleleng, Colonial Photograph, Maritime History, Visual History.*

Menggali Potensi Foto Kolonial Sebagai Sumber Sejarah dalam Merekonstruksi Sejarah Maritim Buleleng

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengeksplorasi tahapan dalam menggunakan arsip foto sejarah dan potensinya yang belum dimanfaatkan sebagai sumber sejarah yang sangat berharga. Sumber data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah foto-foto kolonial yang terkait dengan sejarah maritim Buleleng pada tahun 1920 hingga 1940 M. Foto-foto ini memberikan wawasan tentang lanskap maritim Buleleng, menyoroti peran pentingnya sebagai pusat perdagangan maritim dan pertukaran budaya yang berkembang di Bali pada awal abad ke-20. Melalui pendekatan sejarah visual dan analisis kritis terhadap foto-foto tersebut, penelitian ini menunjukkan potensi foto sebagai sumber sejarah untuk merekonstruksi sejarah maritim Buleleng. Analisis dalam artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa foto-foto sejarah dapat memberikan informasi yang beragam, seperti berbagai jenis perahu, komoditas, aktivitas, dan kehidupan sehari-hari masyarakat maritim Buleleng.

Kata Kunci: Buleleng, Foto Kolonial, Sejarah Maritim, Sejarah Visual.

INTRODUCTION

The historical photographs used in the writing of Indonesian history should be more noticed. These photographs, usually from a colonial context, have received little attention



(Buckley, 2005) and are only used as a complementary and 'decoration' to fill the books, where more data is gathered from other verbal sources, such as journals and reports. Images convey more complex and encrypted messages than oral or written history, explicitly conveying information such as names, numbers, dates, and records. However, as mentioned in a proverb, a picture is worth a thousand words, and the potential of images, especially historical photographs, as a data source in history writing is limitless. These images now became the focus of more historians who try to incorporate more analysis in images to complete the past. This approach, called visual history, perceives that all images are expected to become historical significance at some point in the future (Bleichmar & Schwartz, 2019). Hence the need to put more effort into this study to yield more data from historical photographs.

These photographs first appeared in Indonesia after the Dutch introduced the camera to the colony in the 1840s. The colonial authorities introduced and operated these cameras to help their interests (Hom, 2013; Protschky, 2014; Purnawibawa et al, 2021). These photographs usually recorded landscapes, monuments, people, and aerial maps that benefited Dutch colonial for governing their colony. At the end of the nineteenth century (Purnawibawa et al, 2021) and early twentieth century, with the introduction of more modern printing technology and the emergence of commercial photography studios in bigger cities, photographs experienced democratization and more differentiation (Protschky, 2014).

Photographs captured and developed in the period above are often referred to as colonial photographs. Colonial photos are often difficult to work with; these photographs often shows propaganda, race discrimination, and power relation between colonial with local community (Suyadnya et al, 2023). However, the documents left by the colonial (including photographs) are contained a dimension of evidence, even though covered by bias and political agenda. As a reader of the photographs, we have to see appropriations of colonial history infused with colonial agendas and select which is eligible for narrative writing in postcolonial society and which is not (Stoler, 2002).

As problematic as it could be, the colonial photographs, with the proper approach, could provide a glimpse of Indonesia's past. The work of Meriless (2021), Haks and Wachlin (2005) on curating early to mid-twentieth-century of Indonesia through

photographs on postcards proved pivotal in providing us with images of *kampung* life, daily activities, and landscape of the past. Raap's work on images of postcards also provides us with an understanding of the diversification of works in Java around the 19th and 20th centuries (Raap, 2013). In comparison, the work of Suyadnya et al (2023) discussed the depiction of the landscape and daily life of the Balinese of Tenganan Village in 1920-1940 with great detail.

Colonial photographs of Bali are significantly abundant compared to other areas. After the fall of Buleleng due to Dutch military expeditions in 1846, 1848, and 1849, the colonial decided to employ scholars to understand better their new colony to govern. R.F. Friederich was the first scholar to publish a detailed report on rajas, rajadoms, religion and culture, and customs of Balinese, then followed by many government agents and missionaries. After implementing Dutch Ethical Policy in Bali in 1908, more Westerners showed genuine interest in understanding Bali culture, this pioneering ethnology, anthropology, and archaeology in Bali (Hanna & Hannigan, 2016).

Buleleng is one of two areas fully controlled by the Dutch (another one was Jembrana), especially well-documented in the early 20th century. As the main port of Dutch trade and activities in Bali, Buleleng was an entrance gate to Bali. The authors find these trades and people movements activities were well-documented. Many photographs were also taken as a promotional part of Bali tourism and packet expedition by *Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij* (KPM), the Dutch shipping company. These photographs indirectly provide information about Buleleng's maritime landscape, activities of people, commodities, and more, which helps reconstruct Buleleng's maritime history.

Thanks to the development of the internet and digital archiving, many research institutes, such as libraries, universities, and other organizations, actively preserve historical photographs and provide open access to these photographs. Most of these colonial photographs can now be accessed through *Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (KITLV). The KITLV housed large collections of digitized archives from the colonial period in Indonesia, particularly from 1890 onwards. While there are different collections, such as drawings and maps, photographs are the most abundant. There are at least 173 photographs sorted in the directory using the keyword 'Boeileleng,' and mostly

more photographs could be found using different keywords such as 'Singaraja,' 'Singaradja,' or 'Buleleng.'

However, this massive amount of photographs could only contribute to developing history studies with proper approaches. This article explores this issue and provides a practical and straightforward way to analyze photographs and extract information to support other data types, such as oral stories and written documents.

METHOD

In this study, the authors adopt the post-positivist approach from Rowe (2002) to propose a way to interpret photographs systematically. This approach utilises the information and context within photographs, particularly details such as where, how, by whom, when, and why, and employs this information to construct interpretations of the images. Two concepts from Rowe are employed in this research, namely photographs as evidence and the use of interpretation for constructing narratives. *First*, concept highlighted photographs as evidence. Photographs are objective and factual, capturing images and information in their descriptions that are considered as documents and serve as primary data. In this study, two variables deemed to contain information are the photographs themselves, supplemented with the image descriptions or captions recorded by the photographers.

Second, concept is the use of interpretation for constructing historical narratives - the limited information a photograph provides requires the author to deduct based on the available data and corroborate it with other sources. In this research, other sources used for comparison include documents, records, and previous studies. On the other hand, the authors also used a technique deployed by Zinkham (2006) to technically analyse the photographs, which involved three stages; observation, inference, and questions (in this study, questions were adapted as 'verification'.) The primary photograph analysed was one with code KITLV 55158, which showed the complex life of maritime activities in Buleleng. Other photos were then analysed as a cross-reference to verify the information inferred from KITLV 55158. Only qualified photographs were selected from the KITLV collection.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

How to read colonial photographs

Reading a photograph was a challenging task. There were always challenges, such as the scarcity, quality, and information regarding the photographs. In this case, one obstacle of visual history related to photographs is finding the photographs themselves. Even when one particular photograph is found, it usually loses all related information, such as date, location, photographer information, and general description of the event or subject of the photos. However, all photographs digitalised by KITLV contain relatively complete information. This information was a tremendous help in understanding the context of the place, period, and event recorded in the photographs.



Figure 1: Information on digitised photographs provided by KITLV

Source: KITLV 55158 (1939)

For example, in every photograph (see Figure 1), KITLV provided information such as (I) the title of the photograph, (II) the preview of the photographs, (III) the related photographs, and (IV) metadata, which usually contain information of location, date, and

involved person, as well as a general description. Using all this information is also beneficial for authors to find specific images, for example, using keywords such as 'Buleleng,' 'Boeleleng,' 'Singaraja,' and 'Singaradja' and combined with targeted words such as 'maritime,' 'boat,' 'trade,' and 'KPM..'

Using this method, the authors found 23 photographs related to maritime activities. All images have fulfilled these indicators; the first indicator (I) is the title; the title must relate to maritime activity, such as boats, beaches, ports, or related activities. The second indicator (II) is the image itself; it must contain information on maritime activities, such as a depiction of transportation, loading and unloading activities, maritime landscapes, and the depiction of boats. Another indicator (IV) used was the observation of the metadata of photos, which describes the photo and mentions keywords related to maritime activities. After that, on the website, there is an option (III) to navigate to related photographs, which helps find more related maritime photographs.

Due to its complex nature, the KITLV 55158 photograph was chosen as the primarily analysed data. The KITLV 55158 was taken in 1939 and is part of the KITLV A782 album. The photograph capture almost all elements of maritime history, including workers, type of boats, the activity involved and commodities transported. Other photographs were used as cross-references and supporting evidence to support the author's interpretation together with different written historical sources.

Observation

To analyse photographs, readers of photographs need visual observation skills by learning to determine or find key visual subjects. To help analyse, the authors selected specific subjects and described the photographs in detail, trying to summarise the content of the images. In this study, authors analysed the image to find essential information by dividing the image into separated subjects, depending on the keyword or element in focus. To help the analysis, we used image editing software such as Adobe Photoshop to isolate specific subjects. The isolation is done via editing, selecting the subjects, and reducing the transparency of other elements.

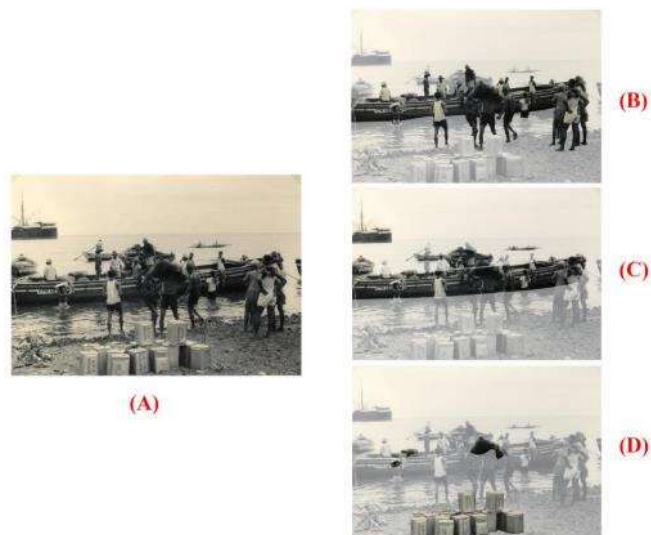


Figure 2: Detailed analysis of individual photographs

Source: KITLV 55158 (1939)

For example, in Figure 2, the photographs of KITLV 55158 in normal condition (A) showed the activity of unloading packets from the steamship to shore using sloops. In this picture, the authors isolate different subjects, for example, people and their activities (B), where people are kept at normal opacity and detail. At the same time, the other elements are reduced in transparency so that the readers of photographs can focus on selected subjects. The other findings are the type of boats (C) and different goods (D). There are different subjects in different photographs, such as landscape and architecture. Using this technique, authors can determine the information contained within selected photographs. A few key subjects that were repeatedly found are labourers or workers, types of boats, and commodities. Architectural features in maritime landscapes were present while scarce.

Inference

Inference could be defined as a (temporary) result of observation, a general assumption based on observed subjects. The early developed assumption in photographs analysis is only sometimes correct. This assumption will be challenged and tested in the next step of the research, using cross reference or verification. In this study, the authors found abundant information from early observation. For example, Figure 3, an image of the isolated subject of KITLV 55158, shows the two groups of workers. The first group (marked by red rectangles) are workers wearing white hats and shirts, maintaining boats, and not

showing heavy activity. While the second group (marked by yellow rectangles) wore different clothes, even only shorts, and did heavy work while taking turns, waiting their turn to unload cargo from a sloop. The first group of workers observed manning a sloop with 'KPM' written on the hull. Which confirmed belonged to the KPM by the description of the photograph. They were probably KPM workers, signified by the identified sloop and their uniform. The second group, probably workers, paid hard labourers on the shore, known as coolies (*kuli*).

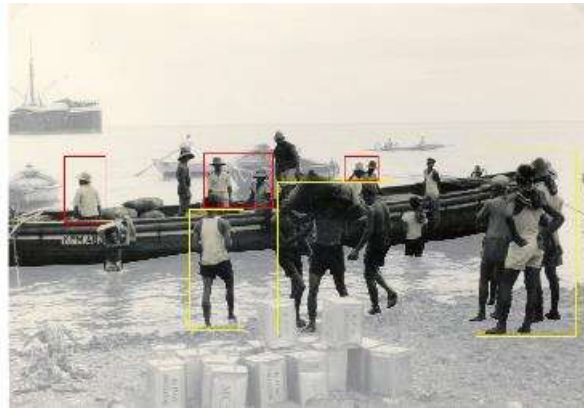


Figure 3: Different types of workers based on image observation

Source: KITLV 55158 (1939), with modification

Another important assumption inferred from KITLV 55158 was the presence of different types of boats in Buleleng. As we know, boats held essential roles in the trade and sailed across the Indonesian archipelago. The different types of boats usually served different purposes. For example, boats specialized for shore fishing will differ from boats for moving cargo from a ship to the shores since their shapes will influence its function and vice versa. Figure 4 shows different types of boats operated in Buleleng during 1939. In the background, we can see the steamship, assumed from KPM, as the shipping company which operated in Indonesia around that time. The other types of boats are sloop or *sekoci*, which workers use to transfer the cargo to the shore, and *sampan*; a small boat propelled using oar or bamboo poles used by local fishermen in North Bali until today.

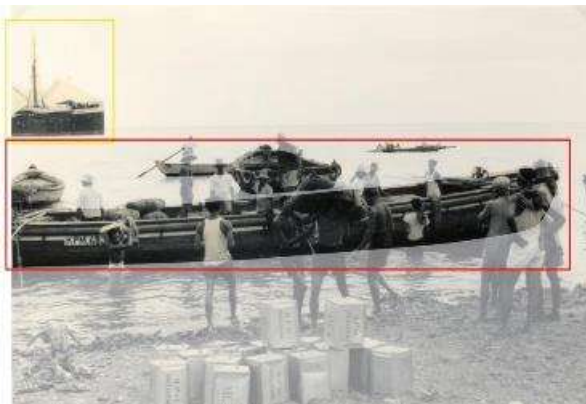


Figure 4: Different types of boats based on image observation

Source: KITLV 55158 (1939), with modification

The authors also found the cargo loaded on the picture significant. Figure 5 shows the cargo sent by KPM to Singaraja (capital city of Buleleng). The cargo was packed in boxes or sacks, while the contents were unknown; on boxes observed, the text 'BPM' was written on the packet. BPM could be an acronym for *Bataafse Petroleum Maatschappij* or Batavia Oil Company.



Figure 5: Packets and related companies based on image observation

Source: KITLV 55158 (1939), with modification

Verification

This study found from photograph KITLV 55158 that there were several key pieces of information related to three subjects: KPM (*Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij*), workers, and boats. The image of KITLV 55158 was described as 'unloading goods by the Van Der Hagen of the Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij on the beach in the Buleleng' with the written date 1939. From this information, we understand KPM operated a

steamboat named Van Der Hagen to transport packets in Buleleng in 1939. Further information on the KPM operation at Buleleng can be found in KPM information for travellers (KPM, n.d). The authors employed several historical sources and images to verify this information.

Historical Verification on KPM's operations, workers and boats

On its company review, KPM stated that by 1921, they operated 112 vessels for their business. These numbers are detailed as follows, 65 passenger ships, 43 cargo ships, three sternwheelers for river service, and one tug-and-salvage steamer. Annually the KPM deliver 2.7 million tons of cargo and 884.058 passengers via 53 regular routes (KPM, n.d). There are two different routes of KPM to reach Buleleng; the first one was the cargo route Singapore - Surabaya - Buleleng - Ampenan - Sumbawa - Makassar line, which is challenging to establish due to political dispute between companies and power struggle (Campo, 2002). The second was Singapore - Surabaya - Bali (Buleleng) - Surabaya (KPM, n.d), which served tourists route, usually using better steamers such as T.S.S Melchior Treub and Rumphius.

To support their operation, KPM was required to employ many workers—including European, Native and Chinese- for different roles. Before KPM started, around 1850-1890, the packet service was dominated by the government navy, with the crew as follows; civil servants, officers, troops, and forced labour crews. Forced labour crew usually drafted from Ombilin coal mining in Sumatra. After 1891, the packet service business growth was expanded. Most officers and engineers were Europeans, while the rest of the crews were Indonesians, such as Maduranese, Javanese, Manadonese, and Ambonense. Crews were mostly recruited from Surabaya, while labourers (mainly Bajau/Bajo people) were taken from Makassar (Campo, 2002).

One of the problems faced by KPM was the scarcity of labourers. In normal conditions, KPM prefers to hire local coolies to unload or load the packet onto the ship. However, in remote locations, the locals were not interested in working the hard labour. This situation forced KPM to recruit their coolies on board, with the supervision of a local foreman (Campo, 2002). The worker seen on Figure 3-5 using white uniforms most likely were the KPM low-ranking crews or coolies on board. However, the other groups of

labourers were unknown, and there are two possibilities between local coolies and KPM coolies stationed in Buleleng. KPM is known to transport their coolies to busy port as Priok (Batavia), Semarang, and Surabaya, known as Paketvaart village (Campo, 2002). Further investigation on more written sources is needed to answer this question.

Regarding the boat recorded in the photograph, the steamer recorded in the photograph was named Van Der Hagen, ordered by KPM in 1908 and registered in 1909. The boat has a gross capacity of 3033 tons and a net capacity of 1912 tons (Campo, 2002). Van Der Hagen was much bigger than the Chinese steamboat and traditional boat. The size of the steamer and topography of the beach in Buleleng prohibited Van Der Hagen from getting closer to shore, hence the need for the sloop to transport cargo from the ship to the shore and vice versa. Aside from the freight, Van Der Hagen also carried passengers and cattle.



Figure 6: The difference in the facility between cabin and deck passengers

Sources: left, KITLV 169711 (1936); right, KITLV 69902 (1939)

According to regulations of packet shipping (KPM, 1888), the type A steamer (up to 1200 tons) was to carry at least 12 first-class, 12 second-class, 40 third-class and 120 fourth-class passengers, and 120 tons of cargo. The first and second-class passengers were provided with a cabin, with the first-class cabin located at the stern and second-class located at the middle deck. The third and fourth classes were considered deck passengers. The first class was usually reserved for the European elite, while the second class was occupied by other Europeans, foreign Orientals (Chinese merchants) or Native with similar social status. The third and fourth classes are usually occupied by native and lower-status European soldiers with their families (Campo, 2002).

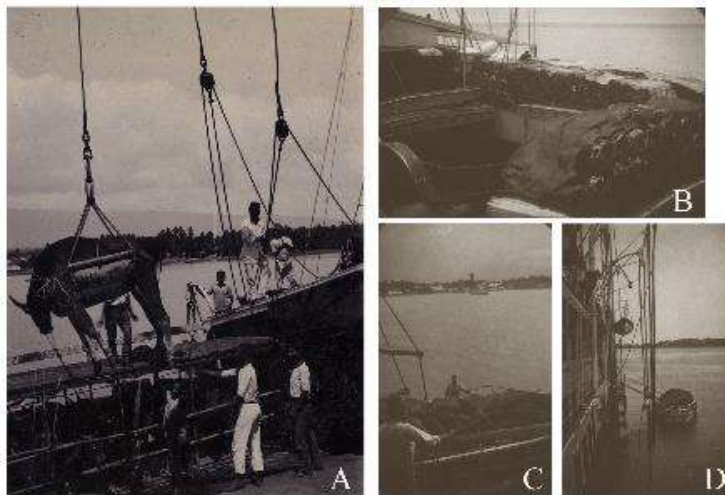


Figure 7: The transported cattle on a KPM steamer

Sources : (A: KITLV 32680, 1918; B: KITLV 81235, 1928;
C: KITLV 81237, 1928; D: KITLV 81236, 1928)

Van Der Hagen was also equipped with cranes to bring livestock to the upper deck (Figure 7 A). A report from 1906 mentioned the use of KPM steamers to transport cattle of livestock on the ship. The cattle cargo was particularly notorious since many passengers complained. The pigs were usually placed on deck, covered by bamboo cages and tarp (B), and often sprayed with water to reduce casualty, which caused a bad smell on the ship (Campo, 2002). To prevent complaints from passengers, the passengers needed to sign a declaration to accept such conditions before aboard the ship. Another means to bring cattle was using cattle rafts (C and D). This business brought many profits for KPM since demands for cattle were high. The Van Der Hagen was reportedly burnt by the Japanese air raid around Cilacap in 1942, then repaired and renamed as Haryashu Maru in service for the Japanese force. The ship sunk once again in 1945 after US America air raid. The ship was then salvaged and repaired by KPM in 1946 and used for its original purpose before being scrapped in 1952 in Hongkong (Campo, 2002).

Historical Verification on Buleleng traditional boats

While the information regarding the steamer used by KPM was relatively straightforward, the information on the Buleleng traditional boat was the opposite. Traditionally, north Bali was the hub connecting Maluku with merchants from Malaka and

also held an important role in supporting local trade routes between the island in Lesser Sunda. North Bali was also often visited by Bugis boats and Chinese junks, both later settled in Buleleng with a report mentioned in the 1820s already established Chinese community in Buleleng (Salmon & Sidharta, 2000). In order to support the lively trade in North Bali, there are at least seven ports, namely Pengastulan, Temukus, Anturan, Buleleng, Sangsit, Kubu Kelod and Lirang (Pageh, 1998). However, historical sources rarely mention specific reports on North Bali boats.



Figure 8: *Perahu Jukung*, common Balinese traditional boat in Buleleng (left) and photographic record on traditional boat near Buleleng (right)

Source: left, Photographed by I Gusti Made Arya Suta Wirawan (2023);
right, KITLV 55161 (1939)

Reports on Balinese boats usually came from much more recent periods and focused on South Bali, most notably the Slerek boat in the Jembrana region (Santara et al, 2014) and the Jukung boat around Denpasar (Wangania, 1981; Sukendar, 1999; Wodjaja & Kadarusman, 2019). Currently, the jukung is considered the Balinese traditional boat. Jukung (Figure 8, left) is a small outrigger boat with a single sail and pronounced stern and bow. Since the size is relatively small, jukung is used mainly for fishing. Due to efficiency, fishermen use motors rather than sail for night fishing. The fishermen use small *sampans* with oars for fishing near the shore. Even though it became common recently, this jukung was absent in historical photographs of Buleleng. Instead, the authors found different types of boats.

Architecturally, the boats recorded in the photograph around 1920-1940s in Buleleng (see Figure 8, right) differ from what we found today. While the sloop used by KPM (see Figure 4; Figure 7D) is clearly different from jukung, it is probably due to their

origin being from other areas and brought by KPM on their voyage to transport cargo to the shore. The sloop probably originated from Lasem (Rembang), which in the early 20th century were dominated by European company such as Nering Bulge Company, Dunlop, and P. Berendsen with their boatyards around the Lasem River (Purnawibawa, 2020). Historically, the Buleleng were a hub for inter-island trading. The presence of Bugis sailors, Maduranese, Javanese and Chinese merchants could be the reason for the different shapes of the past boats (Figure 9) to the current ones.



Figure 9: Different traditional boats on Buleleng port with the steamers in the background

Source: KITLV 181147 (1936)

The Buleleng boats recorded in photographs slightly reminded the authors of the Maduranese *Golekan Lette*, which is structurally similar. Both were medium-sized wooden boats with pronounced stern and bow (*linggi*), complete with small cabins or room on the deck (*magun* in Maduranese). This cabin was used to store cargo, and the crews, Maduranese *golekan lette*, usually sailed with cargo such as salt, rice, beans, corn and dried foods (Wangania, 1981). However, most traditional boats in Buleleng were recently used for fishing, with some exceptions the motorized wooden boats used to trade between Sangsit (Buleleng) and Sapeken (Madura). This topic urgently needs more investigations to fill the gap in Buleleng traditional boat knowledge in recent times.

CONCLUSION

This study shows us the potential of photographs as historical sources. The analysis on KITLV 55158 shows us the vast aspects of Buleleng maritime history, from the activities, the people involved and the boats used in the past. The photo provided valuable

information on the KPM trade in Buleleng, the different classes of workers and passengers involved in the past, and the use of different boats in Buleleng.

The methods used for photograph analysis in this study are detailed and easy to replicate to help analyse other photographs. Selecting key subjects and isolating selected subjects helped the authors be more precise and detailed. While the crossreference on other data, such as records and photographs, helped us to understand the whole story. With the correct approaches, the photographs could provide more valuable information for the history writing of Indonesia's past. Considering the abundant amount of colonial photographs stored by different entities and the accessibility it offers everyone, more research with visual history is needed to explore more information and help historians write more complete stories of our past.

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