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Framing the photograph: Discussion about the informative value of a series of photographs, taken at a wayang beber performance in 1902
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Framing the photograph

Discussion about the informative value of a series of photographs, taken at a wayang beber performance in 1902



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Table of contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	5
Chapter 2 The <i>wayang beber</i> performance	7
2.1 What are we looking at?	8
2.1.1 The location	8
2.1.2 The performance	9
2.2 An authentic representation?	10
2.2.1 Authenticity of the performance	11
2.2.2 Authenticity of the photographs	15
2.3 Conclusion	17
Chapter 3 The people	19
3.1 The audience	19
3.2 Kassian Cephas	20
3.3 Cephas and the audience	21
3.4 The <i>dalang's</i> assistants	22
3.5 The <i>dalang</i>	22
3.6 Two anonymous men	23
3.7 Godard Arend Johannes Hazeu	23
3.8 Conclusion	27
Chapter 4 Conclusion	28
Illustrations	31
Credits illustrations	38
Bibliography	39
Archival material	39
Literature	39
Websites	41

Chapter 1 Introduction

“Unlike the world a photograph has edges, by including something within the edges the photographer can change the photograph’s meaning.” (La Grange 2005, 23)

Today, photographs are found anywhere: from newspapers, books, magazines, advertising brochures and billboards to websites and social media pages. While photography plays a prominent role in contemporary society, the constant exposure to this medium, at the same time, seems to make us look less critically and attentively at photographs. We tend to scroll quickly from one post to the next and browse rapidly through our newspapers. According to photographer and writer Hans Aarsman, who analyses news photographs as if he were a detective, this is a pity. He argues that we can take much more information out of a single photograph, when we look closely at the details, make associations with things that we have already seen before and ask the right questions (Hulsman 2021).

Much has already been written about the medium of photography. In *Basic Critical Theory for Photographers* (2005), La Grange presents summaries and explanations of several key works, including among others Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* (1972), Szarkowski’s *The Photographer’s Eye* (1966), Shore’s *The Nature of Photographs* (1998) and Sontag’s *On Photography* (1977). While many of these works are already several decades old, more recent theoretical publications about photography, such as Van Alphen’s *Failed Images: Photography and Its Counter-Practices* (2018), also exist. One of the most important arguments that is made in various of these works is that photographs are not objective. Although we are aware of the possibilities to edit photographs, we still seem to forget sometimes that even photographs that have not been “photoshopped” do not provide true representations of reality. After all, as Szarkowski explains, the subject of a photograph is selected. The photographer decides which elements to include within the frame of the photograph and which elements to exclude (La Grange 2005, 18). In his discussion of Shore’s work, La Grange adds: “by including something within the edges the photographer can change the photograph’s meaning” (La Grange 2005, 23). Closely related to this idea of selection and meaning making is the notion, referred to by both Van Alphen and Sontag, that photography isolates spatial fragments and temporal moments (Alphen 2018, 14), as a result of which new relationships are created, while at the same time much contextual information is lost (La Grange 2005, 33-34). We do not know what happened just before or after the photograph was taken or what was going on outside the frame of the photograph.

In this thesis, I will focus on a series of photographs that was taken in the Dutch East Indies in 1902. Between the introduction of photography in the archipelago in the middle of the 19th century and the independence of Indonesia in 1945, thousands of photographs have been taken. Many of these are still housed in the depots of Dutch museums, archives and university libraries. Various books have been written about these collections of photographs, including for instance *Toekang Potret: 100 Jaar fotografie in Nederlands Indië 1839-1939* (1989), *Photographs of the Netherlands East Indies at the Tropenmuseum* (2012) and *Een verborgen geschiedenis: Anders kijken naar Nederlands-Indië* (2019). While these

publications contribute to our understanding of photography in the Dutch East Indies, the large number of photographs that is included in them limits the amount of attention that is paid to individual photographs. As a result of this, a particular element of a photograph is usually highlighted, while other elements are ignored.

Inspired by Aarsman's close look at pictures, I believe that much more information may be taken out of a photograph, when we take the time and space to approach and describe it from various perspectives. Therefore, this thesis will present a case study that consists of only five photographs (fig. 1-5), all of which were taken in the context of a *wayang beber* performance that was organized in Yogyakarta in 1902. Some of these photographs, particularly fig. 1 and 2, have already appeared in publications about various subjects, such as *wayang beber* (Suharyono 2005, 296) and its conservation (Bakhri, Sakamoto and Fajri 2018, no page numbers), the photographer Kassian Cephas (1845-1912) (Fontein 1991, 50; Knaap 1999, 87-88; Setiawan 2019, no page numbers) and the history of photography in the Dutch East Indies (Groeneveld 1989, 27-29). In most of these publications, however, the photographs seem to have been used more as illustrations than as sources of information. Most authors who have included one or several of these photographs in their work only identify some of the represented persons and mention the place and time of the performance without further describing the photographs. The only exceptions seem to be Knaap (1999, 20, 86-88) and Groeneveld (1989, 27-30), who provide a slightly more elaborate, but still limited, discussion of some of the selected photographs. In the following chapter, I will have a look at what these authors have written about the photographs, compare and question their observations and explore which elements of fig. 1-5 have not yet been described. Through this analysis, I hope to find an answer to the following question: What information do the selected photographs contain and what are the strengths and limitations of these photographs if one wants to use them as a source in contemporary research?

Unfortunately, I was not able to trace the original order in which the photographs were taken. Therefore, the photographs have been numbered based on the order in which they are discussed in this thesis.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. In the following chapter, I will discuss the main subject of the selected photographs: the *wayang beber* performance. What did this performance look like and how has it been represented in fig. 1-5? Subsequently, chapter 3 will be dedicated to the people who are portrayed in these photographs. Who were they and how have they been represented? Throughout the analysis of the selected photographs, it will become clear that these pictures can both be useful and problematic sources of information. In the conclusion of this thesis, I will further reflect on the strengths and limitations of photographs with regard to their informative value.

Chapter 2 The *wayang beber* performance

In order to find out what information can be taken out of the selected series of photographs, it may be useful first to have a look at what others have written so far about these pictures. Take for instance fig. 1, which has appeared in various publications (See: Groeneveld 1989, 27-29; Knaap 1999, 87). This photograph has been most elaborately described by Groeneveld in a book that was published on the occasion of the exhibition *Toekang Potret: 100 Jaar fotografie in Nederlands Indië 1839-1939*, which was organised in the *Museum voor Volkenkunde* (currently *Wereldmuseum*) in Rotterdam in 1989. Although Groeneveld also seems to refer to fig. 4 and 5 of the selected photographs, only fig. 1 has been included in her book. In the caption of the photograph, she writes:

“The *wajang-bébé*r, traditional picture display, rarely performed still by 1900. Special performance for the linguist G.A.J. Hazeu in the Sultan of Jogjakarta’s palace, 1902” (Groeneveld 1989, 27).

In the accompanying text, which is included in a chapter about scientific photography in the Dutch East Indies, Groeneveld further explains:

“[I]n 1902, Kassian Céphas was commissioned by Dr G.A.J. Hazeu to make a photographic study of the *wajang-bébé*r, a traditional Javanese display of pictures. A *dalang* (*wajang* player) came specially to Jogjakarta where he gave a performance which did not go entirely as it was supposed to. The *dalang* forgot the sequence, since he had not played for a long time, and there was no gamelan orchestra. Céphas made no attempt to render the performance fully and only took photographs of the two most beautifully painted pictures. It is clear from this that even photographs made with no commercial intentions for the benefit of science could still represent things incorrectly. [...] these photographs [taken outside of the original context] fail to provide an authentic representation of the *wajang-bébé*r [...]” (Groeneveld 1989, 27-30).

While the observations of Groeneveld help to interpret this photograph to some degree, many questions still remain. Who were Kassian Cephass and G.A.J. Hazeu (1870-1929)? Why was there no gamelan orchestra? Why were only the two most beautifully painted pictures photographed? What does an “authentic” representation of a *wayang beber* performance look like? Is there even such a thing as an authentic performance or an authentic representation?

Throughout this thesis, I will try to find an answer to these questions and to the other questions that may arise when exploring what various authors have written about the selected photographs. Taking fig. 1 and Groeneveld’s description of it as a starting point, this chapter will focus on the *wayang beber* performance and the way in which it is represented in fig. 1-5.

2.1 What are we looking at?

When looking at fig. 1, one sees a group of people of different ages and genders. The people are sitting on the floor around something that looks like an elongated wooden block. One man, who is sitting behind the wooden block, is holding a painted picture. Some people in the audience are looking at this painted picture, while others seem to be distracted by the camera of the photographer. In front of the wooden block, there are several dishes and bowls, which are filled with something that looks like food.

According to Groeneveld, this photograph represents a *wayang beber* performance or “a traditional Javanese display of pictures” (Groeneveld 1989, 27). Based on her description of fig. 1, we may identify the man that is seated behind the wooden block as the *dalang* or *wayang* player. Knaap, who has included this same picture in his book about the photographer Cephas, confirms that this man is indeed the *dalang* and adds that his name is Gunakarya (Knaap 1999, 87). In his description of fig. 1, Knaap writes:

“Wayang beber performance at the home of Wahidin Sudirohusodo. A wayang beber is a theatre of pictures. By 1900 there was only one such theatre left in Yogyakarta, namely the one at the village of Gelaran in the district of Gunung Kidul. The owner and player of the wayang beber set, Gunakarya, is seated at left, while G.A.J. Hazeu, who intended to make a study of it, is on the right.” (Knaap 1999, 87)

Although Knaap’s description of fig. 1 is short, it nevertheless provides some important information. Knaap, for instance, identifies the man with the moustache, beard and white blouse as Hazeu, the person for whom this performance was organized. Moreover, while Groeneveld already stated that *wayang beber* was rarely performed at the beginning of the 20th century, Knaap provides some more details by explaining that this particular *wayang beber* set, which was kept in the village of Gelaran, was the only one that was left in the region of Yogyakarta. Interestingly, while Groeneveld claims that the represented *wayang beber* performance took place in the palace of Yogyakarta’s Sultan, Knaap states that the performance was held in the house of Wahidin Sudirohusodo (1852-1917). Let us first have a look at this issue of location, before discussing the performance itself.

2.1.1 The location

While scholars seem to agree that fig. 1-5 were taken in Yogyakarta, disagreement exists about the exact location of the performance. In 1902, Yogyakarta was divided in three parts: the sultanate, the Pakualaman, which was an autonomous principality, and the Dutch territory. The sultanate was ruled by a sultan and a *patih* (a chief minister), who was responsible for the day-to-day administration of government (Knaap 1999, 1). In an article that he wrote about the performance that is represented in fig. 1-5, Hazeu explains that it was the *patih* who commissioned the *wayang beber* for him (Hazeu 1903, CLV-CLVI). Since the commissioner of the *wayang beber* performance was the chief minister of the sultan, Groeneveld seems to have concluded that the performance must have taken place in the

sultan's palace (*kraton*) (Groeneveld 1989, 27). Probably following the same argumentation, Suharyono states that the performance did not take place in the *kraton* itself but in the *kepatihan* (Suharyono 2005, 296), the complex that housed the residence and the offices of the *patih* and that was located approximately one kilometre from the sultan's palace (Knaap 1999, 3). However, while Hazeu mentions that the *patih* commissioned the *wayang beber* for him, he does not say whether the *patih* invited the *dalang* to the *kraton*, the *kepatihan* or any other location. Some scholars have suggested that the performance took place at the house of a man named Wahidin Sudirohusodo (Knaap 1999, 87-88; Bakhri, Sakamoto, Fajri 2018, no page numbers). This assumption is probably based on a photograph in which Hazeu, Cephas and Sudirohusodo are, together with some other people, posing in front of Sudirohusodo's house (fig. 6). According to Knaap, "this portrait was taken at the time the *wayang beber* from Gelaran was being studied by Hazeu" (Knaap 1999, 86). However, while fig. 1-5 were, only a month after their creation, donated to the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences (*Notulen* 1903, 101), fig. 6 does not seem to have originally been part of this series of photographs. This makes one wonder if fig. 6 was indeed taken on the occasion of the *wayang beber* performance or on some other occasion.

Unfortunately fig. 1-5 do not show much of the space in which the *wayang beber* was performed, as a result of which the photographs do not give much more clarity about the location of the performance. Hazeu himself only once refers to the place where the performance took place, when he writes that "the *dalang* sat down in the *pringgitan* [gallery] with his face towards the house" (Hazeu 1903, CLVIII).¹ Interestingly, Hazeu is talking about "a house" and not about "a palace" or "a *kepatihan*". Did the performance then indeed take place outside the context of the *kraton*? Is the house that Hazeu refers to the home of Sudirohusodo?

2.1.2 The performance

In order to gain a better understanding of what is represented in fig. 1-5, it is useful to have a closer look at Hazeu's description of this *wayang beber* performance. According to Hazeu, the *wayang beber* set that is represented in these photographs consisted of seven scrolls, each of which was made from beaten tree-bark paper and was 50 centimetres high and 2 to 2,5 or 3 meters long. These seven scrolls were painted in two different styles. Hazeu writes that two of them "showed very beautiful, bright colours and a fine drawing", while the other five were "duller in hue," "less fully painted" and showed characters with a "less graceful shape" (Hazeu 1903, CLVII).² With these seven scrolls, the *dalang* illustrated his narration of the story of Raden Remeng Mangunjaya, who secretly leaves the palace where he lives to practice asceticism. In the period that follows, Raden Remeng Mangunjaya experiences all kinds of adventures. Then, one day, he is told to quite his asceticism and go to Kediri to

¹ Translation of Dutch original: "[D]e *dalang* [had zich] neergezet in de *pringgitan* met 't gezicht naar 't huis toe".

² Translation of Dutch original: "Twee der platen vertoonden bijzonder mooie, heldere kleuren en fijne teekening [...] de vijf overige waren doffer van tint en ook minder druk, minder vol beschilderd, terwijl ook de figuren [...] minder geacheveerd, minder sierlijk van vorm schenen".

compete in a contest that has been announced by the ruler of Kediri to find a husband for his daughter, princess Candrakirana. Raden Remeng Mangunjaya wins the contest and marries the princess (Hazeu 1903, CLX-CLXI).

When one reads the article of Hazeu and looks at fig. 3, it becomes clear that the elongated wooden block, which has such a prominent place in fig. 1 as well as in the other photographs, is in fact not a solid piece of wood but a box with two compartments: a small and a large one. In fig. 3, the *dalang* has raised the lid of the box, as a result of which one can see its interior. According to Hazeu, the small compartment of the box contained offerings, while the large compartment housed the illustrated scrolls. Inside the box, the scrolls were wrapped with cloth. Peacock feathers (*wulu merak*) were put between the scrolls to protect the paper from being damaged by insects (Hazeu 1903, CLVI-CLVII). In fig. 1-5, the scrolls have been unwrapped and, together with some peacock feathers, been taken out of the box and put on a cloth on the ground next to the *dalang*. Besides the scrolls, a *cempala* (wooden stick) and a small container filled with *boreh* (a kind of cream) were also kept in the large compartment of the box. The first was used by the *dalang* to hit the box during his recitation. The second was used to rub the ends of the *seligi* (the wooden sticks that are attached to the scrolls) before a scroll was shown to the audience (Hazeu 1903, CLVIII-CLIX).

As can be seen in fig. 7, which is a photograph of the same *wayang beber* set that has been taken in 1926, two pairs of wooden tubes (*ceblokan*) were attached to the back of the box. During the performance, the *dalang* unrolled the scrolls scene by scene (fig. 1). As the *dalang* unrolled the next scene, he immediately rolled up the previous scene, as a result of which only one scene at the time was visible. When the *dalang* had unrolled a scene, he put the *seligi* into the wooden tubes to keep the scroll in an upright position (fig. 2). Hazeu explains that the two pairs of tubes allowed the storyteller to unroll and attach a new scroll to the box before removing the previous scroll, as a result of which the *dalang's* face remained hidden during the performance (Hazeu 1903, CLVI-CLIX).

Hazeu further tells that, before unrolling the scrolls and narrating his story, the *dalang* first performed a ritual, which consisted of the burning of incense, the offering of food and the covering of the ends of the *seligi* with *boreh* (Hazeu 1903, CLVIII). According to Hazeu, the offerings or *sajen*, which were placed in front of the box, as can be seen in fig. 1-5, consisted of *tumpeng robyong* (a pile of cooked rice), *sega wuduk* (rice with coconut milk and salt), *tukon pasar* (goods from the market that were bought for the ritual), *gantol* (sirih leaves that have been rolled up and tied with a thread), *jenang abang putih* (dough or porridge) and *kembang urab-urab* (various flowers mixed with finely chopped pandanus leaves)(Hazeu 1903, CLVIII; Hazeu 1904, 132). After the ritual, the *dalang* unrolled the scrolls one by one and scene for scene, while narrating his story. According to Hazeu, this performance lasted about 1,5 hours (Hazeu 1903, CLVIX-CLX).

2.2 An authentic representation?

Now that one has hopefully gained a somewhat better understanding of the represented *wayang beber* performance, I would like to return to Groenvelde's description of fig. 1 that

was presented at the beginning of this chapter. Groeneveld argues that Cephas's photographs "fail to provide an authentic representation of the *wajang-bébér*" (Groeneveld 1989, 30). To reach this conclusion, Groeneveld presents a short argumentation that seems to be based on two different layers of "authenticity", which we may respectively refer to as "the authenticity of the performance" and "the authenticity of the photographs". With regard to the first, Groeneveld seems to argue that authenticity is lacking, because of three reasons. First, the performance that was commissioned by Hazeu took place outside of the original context of *wayang beber*. Second, a *gamelan* orchestra was missing. Third, the *dalang* forgot the sequence of the scrolls (Groeneveld 1989, 27, 30). With regard to the second layer of authenticity, Groeneveld seems to argue that the photographs themselves do not provide an authentic representation of the performance, because the photographer did not represent the complete performance but rather made a selection with regard to the scrolls and moments that were photographed (Groeneveld 1989, 27). In this section, I would like to further explore the observations of Groeneveld and question whether the performance and the photographs that were taken of it are indeed not authentic. Is there, with regard to both *wayang beber* and photography, even such a thing as "authenticity"?

2.2.1 Authenticity of the performance

Original context

Let us first look at the authenticity of the performance. According to Groeneveld, the performance that is represented in fig. 1-5 took place outside the original context of *wayang beber*. What does she mean by original context? On which occasions was *wayang beber* usually performed? While Groeneveld does not provide an answer to these questions, the article of Hazeu gives us some impression of the uses of *wayang beber*, both in his own days and in earlier periods. Hazeu writes that when he lived in the Dutch East Indies, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, *wayang beber* was still performed during festivities in the *kraton*, such as the celebration of the circumcision of the crown prince of the Sultanate of Yogyakarta in 1889 and queen Wilhelmina's accession to the Dutch throne in 1898 (Hazeu 1903, CLV). Moreover, *wayang beber* performances were also organized in villages (Hazeu 1903, CLXII). However, according to Hazeu both the amount of performances and the reasons to commission a performance had become limited in the early 20th century (Hazeu 1903, CLIV-CLV, CLXII-CLXIII). He explains:

"Nowadays, neither at weddings nor on any other festive occasions one wants to see a *wayang beber*, nor is it used for *ngruwat*,³ for asking rain or for anything like that. Anyone who currently organizes a *wayang beber* performance, does this only to fulfil a vow (*kaulan* or *nadaran*). One formulates such a *kaul* [vow] for instance

³ *Ngruwat* is a ceremony in which evil spirits are expelled and disasters and catastrophes are warded off (Kant-Achilles, Seltmann and Schumacher 1990, 21).

when one's child or cattle is ill, or if one has a '*perkara*' [lawsuit]" (Hazeu 1903, CLXII-CLXIII).⁴

According to Hazeu, the *wayang beber* set from Gelaran was worshipped as *pepunden*, a holy object with magical powers. The set was kept at a special place in the *dalang's* house and the box, in which the scrolls were kept, was only allowed to be opened by the *dalang*, who, moreover, first had to ritually wash himself. Every week, in the night from Thursday to Friday, incense was burned near the box with scrolls (Hazeu 1903, CLXII). Moreover, Hazeu explains:

"It has not been long since people used to offer flowers and *boreh* to *Kiai Remeng*⁵ in order to obtain its blessing, for a sick child etc. The *dalang* would place the offerings in the [...] square compartment of the *kotak* [the box], rub the lower ends of the *seligi* of the scrolls with some *boreh*, and give the rest of it back to the sacrificer, who could then put it on the body of the sick person" (Hazeu 1903, CLXII).⁶

Based on Hazeu's information about the reasons to perform *wayang beber*, the performance that is represented in fig. 1-5 and that was organised for purely scholarly reasons indeed took place outside of the original context of *wayang beber*. Does this make the performance less authentic?

Music (and changes in the performance)

The *wayang beber* set that is represented in the selected photographs⁷ still exists and is currently kept in the village of Bejiharjo (Gelaran, Gunung Kidul Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta) (Pretković and Škrinjarić 2017, 200).⁸ Throughout the last century, the performance and worshipping of this *wayang beber* set have been studied by various scholars, including Kant-Achilles, Seltmann and Schumacher, who studied the *wayang beber Gelaran* in 1964 and 1968, and Pretković and Škrinjarić, whose research was conducted around 2017. The results of their studies show that various changes took place in the *wayang beber* performance over time. One of these changes is related to the use of music.

⁴ Translation of Dutch original: "Noch bij huwelijk noch bij eenige andere feestelijke gelegenheid wil men tegenwoordig wajang-beber zien, en evenmin wordt ze gebezigd voor *ngroewat*, regen vragen of iets dergelijks. Wie thans nog een wajang-beber-voorstelling geeft, doet dat uitsluitend tengevolge van een gelofte (*kaolan* of *nadaran*). Men for muleert zulk een *kaol* bv. bij ziekte van een kind of ook van het vee, of wel als men een '*pěrkara*' heeft (*kenging pěrkawis*)".

⁵ This is one of the names that has been given to this particular *wayang beber* set (Hazeu 1903, CLXII).

⁶ Translation of Dutch original: "'t Is nog niet lang geleden dat men aan *Kjai Rěmėng* bloemen en *boreh* placht te offeren ten einde zijn zegen te verwerven, voor een ziek kind enz. De *dalang* legde dan de offergaven in het [...] vierkante bakje van de *kotak*, besmeerde de ondereinden van de *sėligi's* der platen met wat *boreh*, en gaf de rest daarvan aan den offeraar mee, opdat hij deze op 't lichaam van den zieke zou aanwenden."

⁷ This particular set is referred to by different names, including *wayang beber Gelaran*, *wayang beber Wonosari*, Mbah Remeng and *Kiai Remeng Mangunjoyo* (Suharyono 2005, 100).

⁸ Two more traditional *wayang beber* sets still exist. One of them is kept in the village of Gedompol (Karangtalun, Pacitan Regency, East Java) (Pretković and Škrinjarić 2017 (2), 200). The other is housed by Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, in the Netherlands (See: Collectie Wereldculturen, Inv. nr. RV-360-5254 up until RV-360-5259).

In her description of fig. 1, Groeneveld seems to argue that *wayang beber* performances normally included a *gamelan* orchestra (Groeneveld 1989, 27). This assumption is probably based on Hazeu's article in which he writes that:

“Musical instruments were completely missing; in contrast to what has been reported elsewhere, this *dalang* performed without any musical accompaniment, not even of a *rebab* [string instrument]; and he assured that neither he nor his predecessors ever admitted any musical instrument to the performance.” (Hazeu 1903, CLVIII)⁹

Although most *wayang beber* performances may have been accompanied by the playing of musical instruments, this does not necessarily mean that a *wayang beber* performance without musical accompaniment was less authentic. I believe that we should take the words of the *dalang* seriously and that we should conclude that some *dalangs* performed with musical accompaniment while others did not. Whether or not music was included in the performance and what types of musical instruments were used, seems to have depended not only on the *dalang* but also on the context and period in which the performance took place. Pretković and Škrinjarić have, for instance, argued that, in the past, performances in royal palaces were accompanied by a full *gamelan* orchestra, while only a *rebab* was used during performances in villages (Pretković and Škrinjarić 2017, 202). Moreover, while the *wayang beber Gelaran* was presented without musical accompaniment in 1902, contemporary performances seem to be accompanied by several musical instruments and female singers (*sinden*) (Pretković and Škrinjarić 2017, 214).

Changes also seem to have taken place in the ritual that precedes the performance. Kant-Achilles, Seltmann and Schumacher mention that, during the performances that they attended, the ends of the *seligi* were not rubbed with *boreh*. Moreover, they argue that, in the case of the 1964 performance, the preceding rituals had been simplified, consisting only of the burning of incense and the mumbling of some words, presumably a prayer. However, they also admit that this simplification of rituals may have been the result of their unannounced visit, which prevented the *dalang* from preparing any offerings in advance. Indeed, in 1968, when the performance of the *wayang beber* was planned beforehand, offerings were made (Kant-Achilles, Seltmann and Schumacher 1990, 100, 102-103).

Both Kant-Achilles, Seltmann and Schumacher and Pretković and Škrinjarić, furthermore, argue that a thanksgiving ritual (*kenduri*) was organized after the play, in which those that were present, including the audience as well as the *dalang* and his assistants, were invited to eat the food that was offered at the beginning of the performance (Kant-Achilles, Seltmann and Schumacher 1990, 199; Pretković and Škrinjarić 2017, 205, 212). Neither in fig. 1-5 nor in Hazeu's article about the performance is the *kenduri* represented or mentioned. Since it seems unlikely that Hazeu just forgets to mention the thanksgiving ritual

⁹ Translation of Dutch original: “Muziekinstrumenten ontbraken geheel en al; in tegenstelling met wat wel van elders gemeld werd, hield deze *dalang* zijn platen-vertooning *zonder éenige muziekbegeleiding*, zelfs geen *rebab*; en hij verzekerde uitdrukkelijk dat noch hij noch zijn voorgangers -*dalangs* ooit eenig muziekinstrument bij de voorstelling toelieten.”

in his otherwise short but nevertheless quite complete description of the performance, the *kenduri* may have been added to the performance in later years or may, for some reason, have been organized after some but not all *wayang beber* performances.

Taking into account the various changes that seem to have occurred in the performance of the *wayang beber Gelaran*, we may conclude that this storytelling tradition is, just like any other tradition, constantly evolving and adapting to current contexts. One may wonder, then, whether there is such a thing as an “authentic” performance.

Sequence of the scrolls and story

With regard to the authenticity of the performance, or rather the lack thereof, Groeneveld finally points at the *dalang* who, according to her, forget the sequence of the scrolls (Groeneveld 1989, 27). Once again, this statement is based on the article of Hazeu, who writes that:

“Although some scenes were very clear, it was not always possible for us to see the connection between a scene that had just been unrolled and the story of the *dalang*: now and then there was definitely no connection. The fault was the *dalang*’s, who did no longer remember the story well: in recent years he is rarely, and less and less, summoned, even in his own environment (sometimes half a year or more passes without him having the opportunity to perform *wayang beber*), and in the seduction of his village he neither finds a book nor contact with other ‘experts’ to refresh his memory every now and then; men can imagine that under such circumstances the ‘finesses’ of the story and the correct sequence of the various scenes are no longer entirely clear to this *dalang*, who is probably the last keeper of a tradition that is slowly becoming extinct.” (Hazeu 1903, CLIX)¹⁰

It is impossible to verify whether the *dalang* indeed did not remember the story well and forgot the right sequence of the scrolls or whether it was Hazeu himself who was not able to make sense of what he saw and heard. If there really was a lack of correspondence between the narration of the storyteller and some of the scrolls, this situation may have another cause than the ones that are suggested by Hazeu. Although Hazeu only mentions seven scrolls, later researchers have argued that the *wayang beber Gelaran* in fact consists of eight scrolls. The last of these scrolls is not allowed to be opened, since it is believed that this will bring bad luck (Suharyono 2005, 104). The story goes that the eight scrolls may have originally belonged to various *wayang beber* sets, which were dedicated to different stories. Four or five scrolls are believed to belong to the story of Remeng Mangunjaya; one or two

¹⁰ Translation of Dutch original: “Hoewel sommige dier tafreelen zeer duidelijk waren, was het ons toch niet mogelijk voortdurend verband te zien tusschen een juist ontrold tafereel en het verhaal van den *dalang*: nu en dan was er beslist *geen* verband. De fout lag bij den *dalang*, die het stuk niet goed meer kende: in de laatste jaren wordt hij zelden, en al minder en minder, ontboden, zelfs in zijn eigen omgeving (soms gaat er een half jaar en langer voorbij zonder dat hij gelegenheid heeft *wajang beber* te vertoonen), en in de afzondering van zijn *desa* vindt hij noch een boek noch omgang met andere ‘deskundigen’ om nu en dan zijn geheugen op te frisschen; men kan zich voorstellen dat onder zulke omstandigheden de ‘finesses’ van ‘t verhaal en de juiste opeenvolging der verschillende tafreelen dezen *dalang*, waarschijnlijk laatsten bewaarder van een langzaam uitstervende traditie, niet volkomen duidelijk meer voorstaan.”

scrolls are thought to be part of an incomplete set of scrolls depicting a story titled Joko Tarub; and one scroll is said to represent the story of Syeh Bakir (Kant-Achilles, Seltmann and Schumacher 1990, 110, 197; Pretković and Škrinjarić 2017, 211; Suharyono 2005, 103-104). If the scrolls really belonged to different stories, this may explain both the difference in style that was noticed by Hazeu (Hazeu 1903, CLVII) and the lack of correspondence between some scrolls and the *dalang*'s story. However, something strange is going on. According to Suharyono, two sets of scrolls were put together by Ki Cremoguno. One of these sets, depicting the story of Remeng Mangunjaya, were given to him by Pangeran Kajoran. The other scrolls, depicting the stories of Joko Tarub and Syeh Bakir, were gifted to him by Joko Pengalasan, who had received the scrolls from his grandfather, Ki Ageng Giring Panderesan. Since Joko Pengalasan was not a *dalang* and since the *wayang beber* set was incomplete, he decided to give the scrolls to Ki Cremoguno. Subsequently, Ki Cremoguno put all eight scrolls into one box and passed this box with scrolls that had once belonged to different sets and stories on to his descendants (Suharyono 2005, 103-107, 130). Hazeu mentions that Ki Cremoguno was the great-grandfather of Gunakarya (Hazeu 1903, CLVI). When Gunakarya presented the *wayang beber Gelaran* to Hazeu, the scrolls that originally belonged to various sets had already been passed on as one *wayang beber* set for several generations. One may then expect that a new story would have been created or an old story would have been adjusted to include all scrolls and not only those that present the story of Remeng Mangunjaya. Unfortunately, we will not know for sure what the *dalang* really said during his performance and to what extent his story corresponded with the scenes of the scrolls that he presented.

2.2.2 Authenticity of the photographs

In 1902, when photographs 1-5 were taken, the Dutch scholar Godard Arend Johannes Hazeu, who was born in Amsterdam in 1870, lived in Batavia, where he worked as Javanese teacher at a training school for colonial officials (De Hoop 1992, 4-5). Throughout his life, Hazeu seems to have been interested in Javanese theatre. His dissertation, titled *Bijdrage tot de kennis van het Javaansche toneel*, which he finished in 1897, was the first extensive study of the stories and performances of various types of *wayang* (Kuitenbrouwer 2014, 125). In this dissertation, Hazeu already dedicated several pages to *wayang beber* (Hazeu 1897, 67-73). However, only after he had moved to the Dutch East Indies in 1898, he got the opportunity to study this storytelling tradition more thoroughly. About the 1902 performance, Hazeu writes:

“During my last visit to Yogyakarta in September, at my request, the *Rijksbestierder*, Kanjeng Raden Adipati Danureja, had the kindness to have this *wayang beber* summoned for me, so that the well-known photographer Cephias

was able to take some photographs of it and I could attend a *wayang beber* performance in optima forma.” (Hazeu 1903, CLV-CLVI)¹¹

With the photographs and the accompanying article, Hazeu seems to have tried to document the *wayang beber* performance and to keep the memory of this storytelling tradition, which seems to have been vanishing at the beginning of the 20th century, alive for future generations. Hazeu explains:

“Since it will certainly not happen often anymore that a European will attend a performance of this almost unique – in any case extremely rare – *wayang beber* under such favourable circumstances, it may be useful to share some of the notes that I made during the performance, these notes may also serve as an explanatory text to accompany the photographs that were presented to the Society [Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences]” (Hazeu 1903, CLVI).¹²

At first glance, fig. 1-5 seem to do exactly what they were intended to do, namely documenting the *wayang beber* performance that was commissioned by Hazeu. Through the photographs, the viewer gets an impression of the different elements of which a *wayang beber* set consisted and of the way in which these were used during the performance. In fig. 1 and 2, one sees how a scroll is unrolled scene by scene by the *dalang* and put into the tubes that are attached to the wooden storage box to keep the scroll in an upright position. Subsequently, fig. 3 shows the interior of the wooden box and gives an impression of the way in which the scrolls were stored. Moreover, fig. 1-3 also show who attended the performance and what kind of offerings were made. Of these five photographs (fig. 1-5), the aim of documentation is probably most clearly visible in fig. 4 and 5, both of which depict a completely unrolled scroll. During a *wayang beber* performance only one scene at the time would be visible to the public. Since the scroll would never be completely unrolled during the performance, fig. 4 and 5 must have been staged. Probably, the *dalang* was asked to unroll these scrolls completely in order to give the viewer an impression of the sequence of scenes, size and painting style of the scrolls.

While Cephass, at first glance, seems to have managed to provide a quite complete picture of the *wayang beber* performance in only five photographs, a close look at the images reveals that Cephass’s documentation of the *wayang beber* set and performance is not that complete after all. Groeneveld already mentioned that: “Céphas made no attempt to render the performance fully and only took photographs of the two most beautifully painted pictures” (Groeneveld 1989, 27). The “photographs of the two most beautifully

¹¹ Translation of Dutch original: “Tijdens mijn laatste verblijf te Jogjakarta in September j.l. had op mijn verzoek de Rijksbestierder, Kandjeng Raden Adipati Danoeredja, de welwillendheid die éénige wajang-beber voor mij te doen ontbieden, zoodat de bekende photograaf Cephass in de gelegenheid was eenige photo’s ervan te nemen en ik een wajang-beber-vertooning in optima forma bijwoonde.”

¹² Translation of Dutch original: “Aangezien het zeker niet dikwijls meer zal voorkomen dat een Europeaan onder zulke gunstige omstandigheden een voorstelling van deze bijna unieke – in allen geval uiterst zeldzame – wajang-beber bijwoont, kan het van nut wezen het een en ander uit mijn bij die gelegenheid gemaakte aantekeningen mede te deelen, tevens als verklarende tekst bij de aan het Genootschap aangeboden photo’s”.

painted pictures” that she refers to are fig. 4 and 5, which represent the two scrolls of which Hazeu wrote that they had “very beautiful, bright colours and a fine drawing” (Hazeu 1903, CLVII). Although it becomes clear from Hazeu’s writing that he has seen five more scrolls, which he describes as being “duller in hue,” “less fully painted” and presenting characters with a “less graceful shape” (Hazeu 1903, CLVII), these other scrolls do not seem to have been photographed by Cephass.¹³ Only one scene from one of these five scrolls has been represented in fig. 1 and 2. However, rather than for the aim of documenting what is represented in this particular scene, this scroll only seems to have been photographed to give the viewer an impression of the way in which the *dalang* unrolled and presented the scrolls to the public. While it should be taken into account that Cephass may originally have taken more photographs of which only a part has been handed down, it cannot be a coincidence that the two surviving photographs of completely unrolled scrolls only show the two most colourful and densely painted scrolls. A selection was clearly made between elements of the performance that had to be included in the photographs and elements that could be left out. Apparently, an impression rather than a complete documentation of the performance and the scrolls was considered to be sufficient, which seems quite strange if Hazeu really wanted to present a complete picture of this performance.

2.3 Conclusion

With her statement that Cephass’s photographs “fail to provide an authentic representation of the *wajang-bébé*” (Groeneveld 1989, 27), Groeneveld touches upon an important characteristic of the medium of photography. Just like any other photograph, the pictures that were made during the *wayang beber* performance isolate spatial fragments and temporal moments (Alphen 2018, 14). Since a photograph has edges and can only catch a very short moment in time, it can never provide a true or “authentic” representation of reality. After all, a photographer always has to make a selection with regard to the elements that are included in, or rather excluded from, the frame of the photograph (La Grange 2003, 18). With the help of written sources, such as Hazeu’s article with a description of the *wayang beber* performance, it is sometimes possible to trace some elements that have been excluded from the photographs. In the case of fig. 1-5, one for instance knows that not all scrolls have been photographed by Cephass and that also the moment of offering and the moment of rubbing the *seligi* with *boreh* have not been represented in the pictures. In other cases, however, one may not be able to trace what has been left out of the pictures, simply because documentation about what was going on outside the frame of the photograph or about what happened just before or after the photograph was taken may be lacking. This makes the medium of photography as a source of information about a particular event somewhat “dangerous”, or at least less objective. After all, a photographer can easily create

¹³ To get an impression of the other scrolls in this *wayang beber* set, one may have a look at the book *Wayang Beber: Das wiederentdeckte Bildrollen-Drama Zentral-Javas* by Kant-Achilles, Seltmann and Schumacher (1990), which includes photographs of 28 scenes from this *wayang beber* set. Only the eight scroll, of which Hazeu not even mentioned the existence and which is not allowed to be opened, has not been photographed by the authors of this book.

a new “reality” by including some elements within the frame of the photograph and staging them in a particular way, while excluding other elements (La Grange 2005, 23). The photograph that results from this selection and staging may subsequently influence the viewer’s interpretation of the represented event.

Chapter 3 The people

Both Hazeu and other authors who have included one or several of the *wayang beber* photographs in their work have paid little attention to the people who are represented in fig. 1-5. While this is not completely surprising, since the main aim of the photographs was to document the *wayang beber* performance, one cannot deny that the represented people attract quite a lot of attention. This chapter will therefore be dedicated to them. Who were these people and how have they been represented?

3.1 The audience

Looking at the people in photographs 1-3, one may notice that they seem to be more or less divided into two groups. The first group consists of the *dalang*, Hazeu, two anonymous men and Cephas. These persons are sitting on a mat and close to the *wayang beber* set. In contrast to the other people in the audience, they have been given some drinks, as can be seen in fig. 2-5 in which several cups and a teapot are visible. Apparently these persons were the special guests of the performance. Before discussing more elaborately who these people were, let us first have a look at the second group of people that is sitting around the mat at a slightly greater distance from the *wayang beber* set.

With regard to the men, women and children in the background of fig. 1-3, Hazeu only mentions that they were “Jogja’sche Javanen” (Javanese people from Yogyakarta) (Hazeu 1903, CLX). This leaves us wondering where they exactly came from and why they were attending this *wayang beber* performance. Maybe, they were just curious neighbourhood residents. Pretković and Škrinjarić wrote in the context of the *wayang beber* ceremony that they commissioned in 2016: “Since this kind of event rarely occurs, many people from the village – mostly men – were interested in viewing the scrolls together with us that afternoon” (Pretković and Škrinjarić 2017, 211-212). Could a comparable situation have taken place more than a century earlier, in 1902, when Hazeu commissioned a *wayang beber* performance? If this *wayang beber* performance took place in the house of Wahidin Sudirohusodo, one may also think of another scenario. Sudirohusodo was a very popular doctor (Suryaningrat 1922, 10-12) and a promoter of Javanese culture (Van der Meer 2019, 513-514). Could it be possible that the people in the audience were the clients of Sudirohusodo? Did he, perhaps, personally invite them to attend the performance?

Interestingly, these “Jogja’sche Javanen” attract quite a lot of attention in fig. 1-3. Partly, this effect is created by the people themselves, many of whom look into the camera, as a result of which the viewer gets the impression that these people are looking at him or her. Mostly, however, it is the angle from which the photograph was taken that draws the eyes of the viewer towards the audience. Due to the photographer’s position in relation to the pillar, the mat and the *wayang beber* set, a pattern of lines is created that encourages the viewer to look at the people who are seated around the pillar. They form the vanishing point of fig. 1-3.

The centrality of the audience in these photographs raises some questions. First of all, one may question to what extent Hazeu, as commissioner of the performance and photographs, had influence on what was photographed and how it was photographed. Did he give detailed instructions to Cephass or did the photographer get the freedom to make his own choices? Was it Hazeu or Cephass who decided the angle from which the photographs were taken? Why was the audience portrayed in such a prominent way? In order to answer these questions, it may be useful to have a look at the life story of the photographer and at his position in colonial society.

3.2 Kassian Cephass

Cephass was born in Yogyakarta on 15 January 1845. While different scholars seem to agree that the mother of Cephass was a Javanese woman named Minah, it is not completely clear who Cephass's father was. Based on the stories of his descendants, the idea has been raised that Cephass had a Dutch father, probably Frederik Bernard Franciscus Schalk. Knaap, however, mentions that Cephass's marriage certificate names the Javanese Kartodrono as his father. Whether or not Cephass was of entirely Javanese descent or rather of mixed descent, he is often presented as the first professional Javanese photographer (Knaap 1999, 1, 5-6).

Cephass was probably trained as photographer by Simon Willem Camerik, the court painter and photographer of the Sultanate of Yogyakarta, in the 1860s. After Camerik left Yogyakarta in 1871, Cephass seems to have taken over his job (Knaap 1999, 7). As court photographer, Cephass made various portraits of Sultan Hamengku Buwono VII and his family. Besides working for the Sultan, he also produced photographs for the commercial market. Particularly his photographs of Javanese women, which were also distributed as postcards, were very popular among European immigrants and travellers (Jongmans 2012, 122-123). Over time, Cephass, moreover, developed himself as scientific photographer. Especially in the late 1880s and early 1890s, Dutch researchers regularly asked him to photograph the archaeological sites and Javanese dances and rituals that they were trying to document. In this period, Cephass photographed the Lara Jonggrang temple complex at Prambanan and the hidden foot of the Borobudur. He also contributed to several books about court rituals and performances at the *kraton* of Yogyakarta, which were written by the court physician Isaac Groneman. Especially Cephass's contribution to the archaeological research and preservation projects did not remain unnoticed. In recognition of his archaeological work, he was appointed "extraordinary member" of the Batavian Society in 1892 and member of the Royal Institute in 1896. In 1901, he, moreover, received the gold medal of Orange-Nassau (Knaap 1999, 7-8, 15-20).

Cephass had a quite ordinary position in Dutch colonial society. In 1891, he and his eldest sons, Sem and Fares, were granted the legal status of "equivalent to Europeans". According to Knaap, this meant that "Kassian and his sons remained indigenous, but obtained the right to be subject to European laws and regulations rather than indigenous ones" (Knaap 1999, 17). Despite his European status, however, Cephass seems to have always

remained proud of his Javanese descent. Reverend Lion Cachet wrote about the photographer, whom he met in 1891:

“The court-photographer Cephas is not an ordinary man. In the eyes of the law equal to Europeans, and, both by natural talent as well as education, entirely at place in the best European circles, in which he moves, he nevertheless takes great pride in his Javanese descent, rather than boast about his European rights.” (quoted by Knaap 1999, 17)

Around the time that fig. 1-5 were taken, Cephas still worked for the *kraton* in Yogyakarta, where he eventually became *ordonnans*. In this function, he acted as intermediary between the Sultan, the Resident and other officials. In 1905, he was even appointed *hoofd-ordonnans* or chief of the Sultan’s official messengers. Together with his wife Dina, Cephas moved to the *kraton*, where he lived until his death in 1912 (Knaap 1999, 21). In the *kraton*, Cephas probably came into contact with Kanjeng Raden Adipati Danureja, the *patih* or chief minister of the Sultanate of Yogyakarta of whom it is known that he commissioned the *wayang beber* for Hazeu (Hazeu 1903, CLV-CLVI). Maybe, it was this *patih* who introduced Cephas to Hazeu. After all, although Cephas had already made name as photographer, it is not unlikely that Hazeu, who lived in Batavia rather than in Yogyakarta, did not know the photographer personally.

3.3 Cephas and the audience

Keeping the life story of Cephas in mind when looking at fig. 1-3, what can be said about the centrality of the audience in these photographs? Did Hazeu give detailed instructions to Cephas about what to photograph and how to photograph it or did the photographer get the freedom to make his own choices? Was it Hazeu or Cephas who decided the angle from which the photographs were taken? Probably, Hazeu, as a commissioner, has given some instructions about which elements of the performance he wanted to be photographed. However, given Cephas’s many years of experience as a photographer, it is also quite likely that Hazeu had confidence in Cephas’s skills and that he, therefore, let the photographer do his job without interfering too much. If we assume that Cephas himself decided the angle from which the various photographs were taken, we may question whether he deliberately portrayed the audience in such a prominent way or whether this was a coincidence. Did Cephas only include the audience, because the attendees are, after all, part of the performance that he was asked to document? Did the photographer just try to catch as many aspects of the performance as possible in his photographs and did this happen to result in pictures in which the audience draws more attention than intended? Or did Cephas maybe want to convey a message through the way in which he represented the audience? While these questions cannot be answered with certainty, it seems quite likely that Cephas, as experienced photographer, will have thought carefully about what he wanted to portray and how he wanted to portray it. If one follows this way of thinking, the prominent place of the audience in fig. 1-3 may have been a deliberate choice rather than a coincidence. Maybe,

Cephas's decision to place part of the Javanese audience in the vanishing point of these photographs can be explained by the photographer's own Javanese descent and affinity with Javanese society and culture. Cephas probably not only wanted to show the viewer what a *wayang beber* performance looked like but also who the people were in whose society this storytelling tradition was created and passed on to future generations.

Whatever Cephas's intentions were, his decision to include the Javanese audience in the photographs has given these people a place in history. Even if we do not know who they were, the fact that they have been photographed makes it impossible to ignore their existence.

3.4 The *dalang*'s assistants

Before discussing the other people that are represented in fig. 1-3, I would first like to have a look at fig. 4 and 5. In contrast to the other photographs of the series, fig. 4 and 5 barely pay attention to the people who attended the performance. The few people that are represented in these pictures are not completely caught within the frame of the photograph and are only placed at the borders of the images. It seems that fig. 4 and 5 have been made exclusively with the aim to document the scrolls and that the presence of some persons in these photographs is more of a coincidence than a deliberate choice.

Hazeu has written that the *dalang* was accompanied by two assistants (Hazeu 1903, CLVI; Hazeu 1904, 130) about whom he, unfortunately, provides no further information. It is quite likely, however, that they are the ones who are holding the ends of the unrolled scrolls in fig. 4 and 5. In the previous chapter, it was shortly mentioned that only the *dalang* was allowed to open the box of the *wayang beber* and that the scrolls were believed to contain magical power (Hazeu 1903, CLXII). These facts, in combination with the comment of Pretković and Škrinjarić that they had to remain at a small distance from the box when attending a performance in 2016 (Pretković and Škrinjarić 2017, 212), make it seem unlikely that the *dalang* would just ask anyone from the audience to hold the scrolls. The scrolls are thus probably held by the *dalang*'s assistants.

Since very little is known about these assistants, it is unclear what their role in the *wayang beber* performance was. If they had a prominent role, one would expect to see them in more photographs. The assistant on the left, however, does not seem to be included in one of the other pictures. Whether the assistant on the right has been represented in other photographs is impossible to say, since we barely see anything of him in fig. 4 and 5, as a result of which we do not know what he looked like.

3.5 The *dalang*

In contrast to fig. 4 and 5, in which the *dalang* is seated behind the scrolls, as a result of which we only see the top of his head and one of his hands, Gunakarya is prominently present in fig. 1-3. While much information can be found about the lives of Hazeu and Cephas, less is known about Gunakarya's life. According to Suharyono, Gunakarya inherited both the storytelling tradition and the *wayang beber* set from his father, Ki Gunokromo. Like

his ancestors, Gunakarya then wanted to pass on the storytelling tradition and equipments to his offspring. However, Gunakarya and his wife could not have children. After the death of Gunakarya's parents-in-law, the storyteller and his wife took care of the youngest brother of Gunakarya's wife. Since this boy, who was named Santiko, was very interested in *wayang beber*, Gunakarya trained him to be a storyteller. However, after Gunakarya's death, the scrolls were not transmitted to Santiko. This decision was probably based on the fact that Santiko was not a direct relative of Gunakarya, while a *wayang beber* set is usually handed over to someone who is connected to the former storyteller by blood. The *wayang beber* set from Gelaran was therefore given to Wonodikromo, who was the son of Gunakarya's younger brother. Wonodikromo was a farmer, who had neither time nor interest to learn the storytelling tradition that used to accompany the scrolls. As a result of this, the owner of the scrolls was no longer a *dalang*. While Wonodikromo handed the scrolls over to his offspring, Santiko passed on the stories to his grandson Kardiyo, who eventually became amateur *dalang* of the *wayang beber Gelaran* (Suharyono 2005, 130-135).

3.6 Two anonymous men

In fig. 1 and 2, at the right, two more men are included of whom I have not been able to trace their identity. Both of these men have a front row position. They are seated on the mat, close to the *wayang beber* set and have been offered a drink. This all seems to imply that they were quite important guests at this performance. At the same time, however, only one of them has been clearly represented in the photographs. In fig. 2, he is attracting the attention of the viewer by looking right into the camera and in fig. 3 it is his posture that attracts much attention. While the other people in the audience seem to be distracted by the camera, this man, who is now sitting at the place where Hazeu sat in fig. 1, looks attentively at the interior of the wooden box. It almost seems as if the *dalang*, who is looking at the man's reaction, has opened the wooden box especially for him.

In contrast to this man, the man who is sitting next to him in fig. 1 and 2 and who also seems to be represented in the foreground of fig. 4 and 5 is never completely included in the frame of the photograph. While his front row position makes it very likely that he was an important guest, it seems that his role in this performance was not important enough to be recorded more clearly in either the photographs or Hazeu's article.

3.7 Godard Arend Johannes Hazeu

As was shortly mentioned earlier, Hazeu himself is represented in fig. 1. He is the man with the beard and moustache who is sitting close to the *wayang beber* set. Since this performance was especially performed for him, it is not surprising that Hazeu has a front row position. What is surprising, however, is Hazeu's posture. In the period in which fig. 1-5 were taken, the colonial society was legally divided into three racially-based categories that were subject to different laws and regulations. At the top of the social hierarchy were the Europeans. They were followed by a group called "Foreign Orientals", which included mainly Chinese, Arabs and Japanese. Finally, the indigenous people formed the base of the

hierarchy (Van der Meer 2019, 515). According to this legally based hierarchy, Hazeu had a higher social position in colonial society than the Javanese people who are surrounding him in the photographs. Interestingly, however, rather than highlighting his social status, Hazeu has literally lowered himself and seems to try to adapt to the Javanese audience. He is wearing a *sarong* rather than a European outfit and is sitting in the same way as the other attendees at the performance. By blending into the crowd and lowering his eyes, rather than looking into the camera, Hazeu seems to try to attract as little attention as possible. Does this posture represent Hazeu's real attitude towards the Javanese society or is it only staged for the sake of the photograph? In order to answer this question, it is useful to have a closer look at Hazeu's life and work.

When this series of photographs was made in 1902, Hazeu worked as Javanese teacher in Batavia. In 1898, a year after obtaining his PhD at the University of Leiden, he had moved to the Dutch East Indies, where he came into contact with the Advisor for Indigenous and Arabic Affairs, Snouck Hurgronje, who introduced Hazeu to colonial politics. In 1904, Hazeu was employed as Official for the Study of Indonesian Languages in preparation for his appointment as Advisor for Indigenous and Arabic Affairs in 1906, when Snouck Hurgronje returned to the Netherlands. As advisor, it was Hazeu's task to inform the Governor-General about developments in the colonial society and to respond to proposed government legislation. This function brought Hazeu into close contact with the colonized as well as with the government (De Hoop c. 1992?, 5-6).

Throughout his political career, Hazeu was a strong proponent of the Ethical Policy. At the end of the 19th century, a Dutch civilization offensive had emerged. While certainly not supported by everyone, the idea was born that all people around the world went through the same stages of development. However, they did this at their own pace, as a result of which some had already reached a higher level of civilization than others. In the late 19th century, it was believed that the Dutch belonged to those societies who had already reached the highest stage of development, while the colonized were lagging behind. People like Kern (1833-1917), one of the teachers of Hazeu at the University of Leiden, believed that it was the duty of the colonizer ("the white man's burden") to help the colonized to develop and reach a higher level of civilization (Hoop c. 1992?, 8-9). Kern argued that the colonized could learn from the Dutch, just like the Dutch had earlier learned from other, at that moment, more developed civilizations, like the Romans (Kuitenbrouwer 2014, 80-81).

The feeling among part of the Dutch society that it had a moral duty towards the colonized seems to have emerged not only from the believe in "the white man's burden" but also from the realization that the Netherlands owed a "debt of honor" to the Dutch East Indies, since the Dutch had, especially during the period of the so-called Cultivation System, extracted much wealth from the colony without giving anything in return (Touwen 2000, 67, 70-71). Eventually, in 1900, the Ethical Policy was introduced. With the aim to increase the welfare and prosperity of the colonized peoples, without doing any harm to the interests of the colonizer (Touwen 2000, 67), the Dutch tried, for example, to enhance the

socioeconomic condition of the colonized and to improve the education, healthcare and infrastructure in the colony (Touwen 2000, 73; Van der Meer 2021, 54).

Hazeu's ethicist ideals can be clearly seen in his attempt to reform the colonial education system. In order to establish a modern society, Hazeu believed that it was needed to create more co-operation between the colonizers and the colonized and to abolish the segregation that was, for instance, visible in the colonial administration and education system (De Hoop 1992?, 11-13). Hazeu recognized that the separation between European education, which was mainly reserved for the European or Indo-European community, and indigenous education, which offered a simplified Western curriculum that was taught in Malay or the local language rather than in Dutch (De Hoop 1992?, 1), was not beneficial for the development of the indigenous community. Since the primary school curriculum of indigenous children did not prepare them well for European secondary and vocational training, most non-European pupils remained at the level of elementary education (De Hoop 1992?, 19). With the help of Governor-General Idenburg, who temporarily appointed Hazeu as Director of the Department of Education and Public Worship between 1912 and 1915, Hazeu tried to reform the colonial education system (De Hoop 1992?, 21).

After having worked for several years as Director of the Department of Education and Public Worship, Hazeu again became Adviser (and later Commissioner) for Indigenous and Arabic Affairs. Hazeu's ethicist ideas and particularly his support for the rising nationalist movement were met with increasing criticism. The situation escalated in 1919, when a Dutch resident ordered the police to shoot a Javanese farmer, who objected to the collection of rice. Hazeu investigated the case and concluded that there was no justifiable reason to shoot the farmer. When a commission of inquiry subsequently argued that the resident had acted correctly, Hazeu decided to resign and to return to the Netherlands, where he accepted a position as professor of Javanese at the University of Leiden (Kuitenbrouwer 2014, 127-128).

An enormous contrast is visible between the way in which Hazeu was depicted in the European colonial press and the way in which people wrote about him in the indigenous press. While the first heavily criticized Hazeu and celebrated his return to the Netherlands (Baltzerdt 1919), the second mourned his departure from the colony and praised him as a person in whom "the people of *Insulinde* [...] found [...] more than a father, more than a good friend, more than a faithful guardian" (Indonesiër 1920, 297).¹⁴

Scrolling through Hazeu's archive in the Leiden University Library, I suddenly stumbled upon a newspaper article, which may be helpful in interpreting Hazeu's posture in fig. 1. The article, which was published by *Het Nieuws van den Dag* in July 1919, reads as follows:

"The following amusing story has been reported to us by a very reliable source. A *regent* organized a party to which the gentlemen Dr. Hazeu and Van Hinloopen Labberton were invited. After several hours had been filled with *omong kosong*, it

¹⁴ Translation of Dutch original: "Dr. Hazeu verlaat heden 10 Maart 1920 Indië. Dat beteekent een rouwdag voor het volk van Insulinde, dat in hem heeft gevonden méér dan een vader, méér dan een goed vriend, méér dan een trouwhartig voogd."

was time for a meal. For the lower-class guests, a meal was presented on the floor, according to the indigenous custom, around which the guests sat down. The *regent* himself, however, ate in a European manner at a set table. Both European guests, however, kept the *regent* waiting, and when this lasted a little bit too long, the *regent* decided to take a look to find out what was actually going on. The gentlemen were found, seated among their brown brothers, while they hungrily ate the rice and other ingredients with their hands. This comedy provoked the indignation of the *regent*, who said to them: ‘Gentlemen, I love my people very much, but I do not think that it is necessary to sit with them on the floor and eat with my hands, like you both do.’ The *regent* then, while laughing, turned around and walked back to his table. Both *volksopheffers* stayed with their brothers! So far the story. We would like to add a few statements to the words of the *regent*. It is not only unnecessary to do what those two gentlemen did, it is above all ridiculous. And even worse. [...] Do these two Europeans, who are becoming like indigenous people, not understand that they are being laughed at behind their backs, and that their behaviour is being used by public leaders to ridicule ‘those crazy *Belanda*’? Each race has its own habits, and to renounce these, out of mere affection, for the habits of another people, is betrayal of one’s own race [...]” (*Het Nieuws van den Dag* July 31, 1919).¹⁵

The description of Hazeu at this party, where he sits down on the ground together with the lower class Indonesian people and follows their custom of eating with one’s hands, presents a striking similarity with the way in which Hazeu is represented in fig. 1. While it must be taken into account that the critics of Hazeu may have exaggerated the Dutchman’s friendly attitude towards the colonized, the loving way in which Hazeu is described in the indigenous press indeed seems to confirm that the Dutchman had a warm relationships with the colonized. Therefore, it is likely that Hazeu’s posture in fig. 1, in which he seems to reduce the social distance between himself and the Javanese audience by sitting down on the ground in the same way as the people around him, is not staged for the sake of the

¹⁵ Translation of Dutch original: “De volgende vermakelyke geschiedenis werd ons van zeer betrouwbare zyde medegedeel. Een Regent gaf een feest, waarop ook de Heeren Dr. Hazeu en Van Hinloopen Labberton waren uitgenodigd. Nadat de noodige uren met omong kosong waren doorgetracht, werd het tyd om aan het versterken van den inwendigen mensch te gaan denken. Voor de, tot lagere stand behoorende gasten, was naar Inlandsch gebruik een maaltijd op den grond aangericht, waarom het gezelschap neerhurkte. De Regent zelf at echter op Europeesche wyze aan een gedekte tafel. De beide Europeesche genoodigden lieten zich echter wachten, en toen dit een beetje al te lang duurde, ging de Regent eens een kykje nemen, wat er toch eigenlyk wel aan de hand was. De Heeren werden gevonden, zich [?] gezeten tusschen hun bruine broeders en met hun handen de ryst en de daarby behoorende ingrediënten naar binnen werkend! Welke comedie zelfs de verontwaardiging van den Regent opwekte, die hun toevoegde: ‘Heeren ik houd heel veel van myn volk maar ik vind het onnoodig om, zooals u beiden doet, met de menschen op den grond te zitten en met de handen het maal te gebruiken’. De Regent keerde zich daarop lachend af en liep naar zyn tafel terug. De beide Volksopheffers bleven by hyn broeders! Tot hiertoe het verhaal. Wy zouden aan de woorden van den Regent nog eenige krachtiger uitdrukkingen willen toevoegen. Het is niet alleen onnoodig om te doen wat die wat die beide Heeren dede, het is bovendien belachelijk. En nog erger. [...] En begrypen die twee, zich verinlandschende Europeanen niet, dat ze achter hun rug worden uitgelachen, en dat hun houding door de volksleiders wordt uitgelicht om te schimpen op ‘die gekke blanda’s’?. Ieder ras heeft eigen zoden en gewoonten en die te verloochenen uit louter aan stellery voor die van een ander volk, is verraad aan het eigen ras! [...]”.

photograph but really represents Hazeu's character and his affection for the Javanese people and culture.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have made an attempt to identify the various people who are included in fig. 1-5 and to discuss the way in which they are represented in these photographs. At this point, I would like to shortly reflect upon two questions: Why are all these people included in these photographs? And why are they represented the way they are?

The most straightforward answer to the first question is that these people are included in the photographs, because the audience forms a vital element of any *wayang beber* performance. In general, it would simply make no sense to organise a *wayang beber* performance if there would not be any attendees to listen to the stories of the *dalang* and to look at the painted scrolls. Since the audience is a vital part of the performance, a realistic documentation of *wayang beber*, therefore, needs to include the attendees in one way or another.

With regard to the representation of the various attendees, a distinction seems to be made in fig. 1-3 between the special guests, who are placed in the foreground, and the other guests, who are seated in the background. An interesting aspect of fig. 1-3 is that some people in the background, particularly those who are seated next to the pillar, attract quite a lot of attention, since they form the vanishing point of these photographs. It is not completely clear whether this was a coincidence or a deliberate choice. If the photographer, however, deliberately placed part of the audience in such a prominent position, this may have something to do with his own Javanese background. Maybe, Cephaz wanted to give the viewer a little impression of the people behind the storytelling tradition.

Chapter 4 Conclusion

In the century between the introduction of photography in the Dutch East Indies in the 1840s and Indonesia's independence in the 1940s, many photographs have been taken that give an impression of life and culture in the colony. Up until today, a large number of these photographs is kept in Dutch museums, archives, libraries and private collections. Over the years, various publications have appeared in which parts of these enormous photographic collections have been researched and presented to the public. While each of the already published works contributes to our understanding of photography in the Dutch East Indies, the focus of many publications on a quite large number of photographs limits the amount of space that is dedicated to the discussion of individual photographs. Depending on the goal of the publication, one particular aspect of a photograph is generally highlighted while other aspects are ignored. Since more information may be taken out of each individual photograph, when one takes the time and space to approach and describe it from various perspectives, I limited the scope of this thesis to a series of only five photographs. The selected pictures were taken in 1902 with the aim to document a Javanese storytelling tradition known as *wayang beber*. Some of these five images have already appeared in several publications, varying from research about the photographer Kassian Cephas or the represented *wayang beber* set to discussions about the history of photography in the Dutch East Indies. In most of these publications, however, the photographs merely seem to be an illustration rather than a source of information. In this thesis, I, therefore, tried to have a closer look at the information that these photographs contain and made an attempt to find out what the strengths and limitations of these photographs are, if one wants to use them as a source in contemporary research.

One of the limitations that I immediately stumbled upon is that a photograph on its own can be very difficult to interpret. While looking at a photograph may provide an impression of the represented event, additional sources are needed to really understand what one is looking at. Take for instance fig. 1 and 2. One will probably immediately interpret the represented event as a performance in which the painted picture plays a prominent role. Moreover, one may conclude that the most important guests are sitting in the foreground, while the other attendees of the performance are sitting in the background. However, if one wants to know what story is represented on the painted scroll or who the people in the audience are, additional sources are needed. With regard to the amount of information that can be taken out of a photograph upon first glance, a series of pictures seems to have an advantage over an individual photograph. This advantage is related to the fact that a series of photographs represents various moments in time, as a result of which a kind of "movement" is created, which makes it easier to interpret what is going on. Take for instance fig. 1. If one only looks at this photograph, it may not immediately be clear how the painted picture is used. However, if one looks both at fig. 1 and 2, one may start to understand that the painted picture is, in fact, a scroll, which is unrolled and attached to the wooden block on the ground. When one subsequently has a look at fig. 3, the wooden block

turns out to be a kind of box with different compartments. While this short example shows that a series of photographs may already provide much more information than an individual photograph, additional sources are still needed if one wants to understand the details of the represented event. Therefore, the analysis of fig. 1-5 that I presented in this thesis quite heavily relies on written sources. These sources vary from the article that Hazeu wrote about the represented performance to a number of secondary sources, including works in which some of the selected photographs have been shortly described as well as publications about *wayang beber* more generally and about the lives of Hazeu and Cephas.

In chapter 2, I have discussed the *wayang beber* performance that was commissioned by Hazeu and the way in which this performance has been represented in fig. 1-5. When comparing the photographs with Hazeu's description of the performance, it became clear that some aspects of the performance are not represented in the photographs. Hazeu, for instance, writes that the performance started with a ritual, which consisted of the burning of incense, the offering of food and the covering of the ends of the *seligi* with *boreh*. Although the bowls and plates with offered food are represented in fig. 1-5, the moment of offering as well as the other rituals that preceded the performance are not visible in any of these photographs. One can, thus, conclude that a selection has been made with regard to the aspects of the performance that were included in these photographs. Such a process of selection does not only lay at the base of this particular series of pictures, but is indeed characteristic of the medium of photography in general. The need to select has everything to do with the fact that a photograph isolates "spatial fragments" and "temporal moments". The first of these concepts basically means that a photograph can never catch the whole scene but only a fragment of it, since a photograph is always restricted by its frame. The second concept refers to the fact that a photograph can only represent a very short moment in time. Because of these characteristics, a photographer always has to make a selection. Since the viewer does not know what was going on outside the frame of the photograph or what happened just before or after a photograph was taken, a photograph can be easily staged or "manipulated". It should be noticed that staging is not necessarily a bad thing. Take for instance fig. 4-5. During a *wayang beber* performance the *dalang* would unroll the scrolls scene by scene and only show one scene at the time to the public. Therefore, fig. 4 and 5, in which the scrolls have been completely unrolled, must have been staged. What is interesting, however, is that the staging in this case provides the viewer with extra information that would otherwise remain hidden, such as the size of the scrolls and the sequence of the scenes that are painted on them. The staging of a photograph may thus have advantages. At the same time, however, it should be kept in mind that staging is also quite "dangerous". After all, fig. 4 and 5 may give the viewer a wrong impression of the way in which the scrolls were unrolled during a *wayang beber* performance. A staged photograph may thus lead to an interpretation of the represented event that does not correspond with the actual situation. Since the medium of photography is based on selection and staging, a photograph can never be completely objective.

In chapter 3, I paid attention to the people that are included in fig. 1-5 and discussed the way in which they are represented in these photographs. Based on the analysis that was presented in this chapter, one may conclude that photographs, as sources of contemporary research, not only have their limitations but also some advantages. In fact, it may be argued that texts and photographs complement each other. While texts provide information that cannot directly be taken out of a photograph, such as the names and life stories of the represented persons, photographs can in only one shot depict a situation for which the author of a text would need many words to describe it. Take for instance the people who are represented in fig. 1-3. While one would need pages to clearly describe what they look like and how they are seated, a photograph can in only one shot give an impression of the number of people that attended the performance, of the appearance of these people, of the clothes that they were wearing, of the posture in which they were seated and of the way in which they were positioned in relation to one another. However, even if we combine the information that is contained in fig. 1-5 with the information that has been presented in written sources, many questions still remain. Particularly with regard to the majority of the attendees, the amount of information that is recorded about them is simply too limited, as a result of which they cannot be identified individually but only as a group of Javanese people from Yogyakarta. Who were these people? What did their lives look like? Why were they attending this performance? Even though next to nothing is known about most people in fig. 1-5, their inclusion in these photographs is very important, since it makes it impossible to ignore the existence of these people and to remove them from history.

To conclude, in order to interpret the photographs that were selected for this case study and to take as much information as possible out of them, one really needs additional sources. Even when using additional sources, many questions will still remain unanswered. Even though one may not find answers, however, asking questions about a photograph will already encourage one to look closer and to think more critically about what one is actually looking at.

Illustrations



Fig. 1. Kassian Cephas, *wayang beber* performance, Yogyakarta, 1902, gelatine silver chloride print, 14.5 x 23 cm, (Leiden University Library (Southeast Asian & Caribbean Images (KITLV)), KITLV 3953).



Fig. 2. Kassian Cephas, *wayang beber* performance, Yogyakarta, 1902, gelatine silver chloride print, 14.5 x 23 cm, (Leiden University Library (Southeast Asian & Caribbean Images (KITLV)), KITLV 3956).



Fig. 3. Kassian Cephas, *wayang beber* performance, Yogyakarta, 1902, gelatine silver chloride print, 14.5 x 23 cm, (Leiden University Library (Southeast Asian & Caribbean Images (KITLV)), KITLV 3955).



Fig. 4. Kassian Cephas, *wayang beber* performance, Yogyakarta, 1902, gelatine silver chloride print, 14.5 x 23 cm, (Leiden University Library (Southeast Asian & Caribbean Images (KITLV)), KITLV 3954).



Fig. 5. Kassian Cephas, *wayang beber* performance, Yogyakarta, 1902, gelatine silver chloride print, 14.5 x 23 cm, (Leiden University Library (Southeast Asian & Caribbean Images (KITLV)), KITLV 3952).



Fig. 6. Cephas (probably Sem Cephas), group portrait at the back of the house of Wahidin Sudirohusodo, Yogyakarta, 1902, gelatine silver chloride print, 17.5 x 24.5 cm, (Leiden University Library (Southeast Asian & Caribbean Images (KITLV)), KITLV 34594).



Fig. 7. Oudheidkundige Dienst in Nederlandsch-Indië, *wayang beber*, Wonosari, Gunung Kidul, Yogyakarta, 1926, 23.2 x 17.3 cm, (Leiden University Library, OD-07963).

Credits illustrations

Fig. 1. Downloaded May 31, 2021. <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:791198>

Fig. 2. Downloaded May 31, 2021. <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:782701>

Fig. 3. Downloaded May 31, 2021. <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:781898>

Fig. 4. Downloaded May 31, 2021. <https://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:782720>

Fig. 5. Downloaded May 31, 2021. <https://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:782388>

Fig. 6. Downloaded October 25, 2021. <http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:763762>

Fig. 7. Digital image received from Leiden University Library on September 27, 2021.

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