

# WOODBURY IN LEIDEN

Gwen Sebus

Last February I read in my local newspaper that the Leiden University Library had obtained a donation to buy approximately 100 Woodburytype slides. The first shipment of thirty-nine had already arrived and contained thirty-eight slides about Java (Indonesia) and one of England. I quickly arranged for a meeting with Liesbeth Ouwehand, the Library specialist for Special Collections.

The Leiden University Library manages the collection of the KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies. The collection has the world's largest number of photographs and books about the former Dutch colonies (among them Java in the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia). The stunning Woodburytype slides of Java are a welcome addition to their collection.

In 1857 British photographer Walter Bentley Woodbury (1834–85) moved from Melbourne, Australia, to Batavia (now Jakarta) on Java. With the British photographer James Page, who he had met in Australia, Woodbury established the partnership of Woodbury & Page in Batavia. Woodbury & Page photographed in Central and East Java in 1859. After a year spent in England, Woodbury returned to Java in 1860 and during most of that year travelled with Page through Central and West Java.

The Leiden University Library's collection contains 2,300 photographs made by Woodbury & Page. They photographed not only people on commission but also landscapes, villages and the emperor of Java and his entourage on their own account.

The company was active between 1857 and 1910, long after Woodbury had returned to England following Page's death. The company was very popular in Batavia. A lot of people bought photographs of Java as a memento of their residence there.

With the help of Trevor Beattie's lecture at the 2006 Convention and his article 'Walter Bentley Woodbury and his Sciopticon' (*NMLJ*, vol. 10, no. 3) I could easily identify the slides by their masks as Type 1, 3¼ by 4¼ inches and (probably) produced between 1872 and about 1880, and Type 2, roughly dated by Trevor Beatty between 1876 and Woodbury's death in 1885.

But when exactly were the photographs made by Woodbury and/or Page?

I found 'Lecture on Java' in the slide readings library as part of 'Lantern readings original and selected 1 (1873)'. The lecture begins with:

**LECTURE ON JAVA,**  
By MR. WOODBURY, OF MANCHESTER,  
To accompany 48 PHOTOGRAPHS taken by him during his residence in the Island.

So at least the article's heading suggests that the photographs for the lecture were made by Woodbury himself. That would have been before 1863 when Woodbury returned to England and long before he invented the Woodburytype process.

Liesbeth Ouwehand and I were able to identify a few of the slides as part of the 'Lecture on Java' set, for example *Bride and bridegroom* (no. 8 in the lecture, no. 388 on the slide):

.... the bride and bridegroom sit motionless side by side, the bride has her eyebrows improved with paint and her hair gummed into points on her forehead, a long chain of white flowers dangles ungracefully from her hair, the bridegroom wears a sugar-loaf hat and his kriss or dagger is ornamented with flowers, the square box contains the sirie, which they help themselves pretty freely to, the wide-mouthed vessel between them is the 'Tumpat Leuda', or spittoon, which is always in great request, during the operation of chewing.

There were several stunning slides of the emperor of Java, the empress, the crown prince and the musicians at court. These slides are probably also part of the set 'Lecture on Java'. Woodbury had his own views about the natives of Java. At the end of the lecture he comes to the following conclusion:

"We have now had a peep at one of the most lovely and romantic Islands in the world, peopled by a nation whom to judge of by the ruins and relics of days gone by have once been great. We have been presented at court and seen something of the manners of an eastern Prince. We trust it has afforded both instruction and amusement, and now we can look back upon our own native land, and thank God we were born in Christian England with all its advantages and privileges, and that we are ruled over by a Princess who possesses the love and esteem of all her subjects, "and sing with heart and voice,"

**" God Save our Queen."**

There were also slides that were not in the lecture, such as slide no. 383 'Java Native Method of Travelling'. By chance I found a similar photo in the database of the University Library (albumen print no. 85088) in reverse: the same carriers and background, but another person is being carried.

Liesbeth Ouwehand showed me six Newton slides that were also in the Library collection.

We discovered that two of them were the same images as the Woodburytype slides we had just seen. One of them is 'Native travelling Java'. So Newton reused the images later. Unfortunately, I could not find a reading.

At the end we looked at the Sciopticon lantern that came with the slides. I am not sure if it is complete. It is an improved Sciopticon, so probably made in or after 1881.

Liesbeth Ouwehand has her work cut out, describing the slides before they are put in the database of the library: media-kitlv.nl. If you have more information for her, please write to: l.ouwehand@library.leidenuniv.nl

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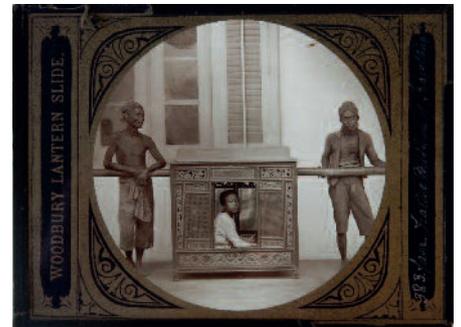
I look forward to seeing the second part of the Woodburytype slides!



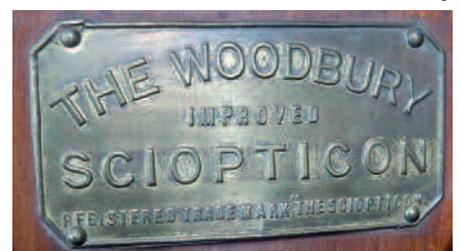
Slide no. 396 'Native Masquer', which seems identical to no. 41 in the lecture.



No. 383 'Java Native Method of Travelling'



Newton slide 'Java Native Method of Travelling'



Detail of Sciopticon lantern