The rapidity with which photography appeared and proliferated in the Netherlands East Indies in the 19th Century exemplifies the larger process of “modernization” that took place in colonial Southeast Asia. Though only invented in 1839 by the painter Daguerre working in France, governments, gentlemen-scholars, artists and private individuals were quick to take up the new technology as a “scientific revolution” in mimetic-representation of the world, of the self, and the Other. No less so in the Dutch East Indies, where the colonial government seated in Batavia (Jakarta) would commission dozens of photographers—some who considered themselves artists and others tradesmen—to produce through this new mode of visual representation, documentation of the colony, its geography, architecture, antiquities, and inhabitants. This paper will examine two central central figures in the local history of visual culture in the East Indies, Isidore Van Kinsbergen and the founder the firm of Woodbury & Page, Walter Woodbury. Through the work of these two photographers, a historical image arises of the forces of modernity as the worked upon and were localized by colonizers and the colonized in 19th Century East Indies.

**Keywords:** Indonesia, 19th Century, photography, visual culture, Isidore van Kinsbergen, Walter Woodbury, postcolonial theory.