

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Photography is a very common in modern society today. Many people practice photography as a hobby, a profession, and also an art form. The advancement of technology has made photography easier to practice. Photography is no longer limited to the use of cameras that require skills, understanding, and a considerable amount of time to create a photographic work. Today's digital technology makes it possible to practice photography using a mobile phone with great ease. This ease has made photography a common activity that anyone can do.

Photography is also often used as a medium of expression on personal social media platforms. For instance, with the phenomenon of selfies, anyone can take self-portraits using a mobile phone anytime and anywhere, whether to share stories with others or to document an event they are experiencing. Photography has thus become a supporter of lifestyle and daily patterns (Wibisono, A. & Artanto, A., 2018). Selfies are often considered a form of self-expression on popular social media platforms. This cannot be separated from the development of digital technology, particularly social media, which often influences and creates new cultures in society. Cahyono, A.S. (2016) states that the presence of social media has influenced the social life of society. Such social changes can be observed around us, such as the selfie phenomenon, which is also a form of photography.

Meanwhile in the professional field, photography has high market demand across various sectors such as wedding photography, journalism, product photography, event documentation, and many more. As a result, the number of photography practitioners has increased along with the times. Today, photography has become very common and is no longer considered something exclusive. In the modern era, photography is much easier to learn compared to the early days of its invention. Initially, photography was a new and rather difficult skill to study and practice, mastered only by the elite. (Brian C. Arnold, 2020).

Photography has a fairly long historical journey before reaching Indonesia. It was first introduced to Indonesia by the Dutch in the early days of photography's

invention in 1839-1841. Since its introduction to Indonesia, photography has developed alongside the history of the Indonesian people. In terms of photography, Indonesia can be said to be on par with other countries, because it did not take long for photography to enter Indonesia after its invention. This was also a consequence of Dutch colonialism, which facilitated the introduction of photography to Indonesia. Thus, the arrival of photography in Indonesia has its own long historical path, from the time of its invention to its entry into the archipelago.

The history of photography began with the observation of an optical phenomenon related to light. In science, light is categorized as a wave and has several properties, such as propagating without a medium, traveling in straight lines, penetrating transparent objects, being reflected, and being refracted. From these properties, light can create an optical phenomenon called *obscura*. This phenomenon was first observed by a Chinese scholar in the 5th century AD, who noted that light passing through an aperture would continue and form an image according to the shape of the opening. From this observation, the concept of photography began. In the 10th century AD, an Arab scholar of optics and chemistry, Ibn al-Haytham, conducted deeper investigations of the same phenomenon. His findings revealed that the image formed would appear sharper and clearer when the aperture through which the light passed was smaller, whereas a larger opening would produce a blurred image. This phenomenon became known as the *camera obscura*, where light entering a dark room through a small hole produces an inverted image of the outside scene on the opposite wall. From this phenomenon, the concept of the *camera obscura* was developed a box-shaped device with a small hole on one side that allows light to enter and form an image.

In the 19th century, photography in Europe experienced rapid development. The *camera obscura* was equipped with lenses and mirrors so that the projected images would not appear inverted as in the original phenomenon. Two brothers from France, Nicéphore Niépce and Claude Niépce, succeeded in recording images onto a medium using a type of asphalt, although the results were not yet perfect. Nicéphore Niépce later collaborated with Louis-Mandé Jacques Daguerre to print the recorded images. After Niépce passed away, Daguerre continued the work alone and produced the *daguerreotype* as the first photographic method, which he then published.



Image 1 Niepche First Photo

(Source: <https://cool.culturalheritage.org/byorg/abbey/an/an26/an26-3/an26-307.html>, 2024)

The year 1839 is considered the year photography was discovered. Since the invention of the camera obscura, various image storage media, and the development of the daguerreotype, many scientists competed to conduct research on photography, resulting in numerous new discoveries in this field during that year. The camera obscura had undergone modifications, being equipped with lenses as well as storage media, and a new type of camera was invented with storage that was more efficient than previous discoveries. These major breakthroughs in photography made 1839 recognized as the year of the invention of photography. (Seri Lawasan: Potret, 2012).



Image 2. Daguerreotype First photo.

(Source: <https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2015/08/the-gift-of-the-daguerreotype/401816/>,
2024)

Brian C. Arnold, in his book *A History of Photography in Indonesia: From the Colonial Era to the Digital Age*, explains that alongside the invention of photographic technology in Europe, the Dutch were developing printing press technology in the 17th century, which made the printing industry an important part of the socio-economic structure of the country during the 18th and 19th centuries. With this background, the Dutch easily embraced photographic technology, even though they did not significantly develop it. In 1841, photography was first introduced to Indonesia when a Dutch medical officer, named Jurrian Munich, was ordered to land in Batavia carrying a daguerreotype to document the natural environment of Indonesia. However, for the next 100 years, photography also became a tool to control colonial power in Indonesia. At first, photography was a privilege reserved for certain circles, as it required expertise, high costs, and a long time to master. Thus, photography remained dominated by European and American powers and was used as an instrument of colonialism.

At first, the Dutch used photography to document the natural and social conditions in Indonesia, as they regarded the country's diversity as the exoticism of cultural variety. Photography was still a privilege for the elite and was not easily disseminated, so that photography had the social power to differentiate between cultures and civilizations. Mastery of photography was still dominated by foreigners in Indonesia, making it difficult for the indigenous people to access photography (Brian C. Arnold, 2022).

Since photography was introduced to Indonesia and was still used as a propaganda tool, there were no records of native Indonesian photographers. It was not until 1860 that the name Kassian Chepas emerged, recognized as the first indigenous photographer. Kassian Chepas was born on February 15, 1844, to Kartodrono and Minah, who both worked for the Dutch. During his teenage years, Chepas was adopted by his parents' Dutch employer and was given the name Kassian Chepas. He initially worked as an assistant photographer at the Yogyakarta Palace. Over time, Chepas learned a great deal from the palace photographers until he was eventually instructed to replace the previous photographer. This marked the beginning of Kassian

Chepas' career as a photographer, eventually leading him to open his own photography studio (Seri Lawasan: Potret, 2012).



Image 3 Kassian Cephas

Source: (https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kassian_Cephas,2024)

However, due to Kassian Cephas's rather privileged background, he was able to gain access to photography. Some sources also question his status as the first Indonesian photographer. Gus Barok, the owner of the Kediri Photography Museum, in an interview with the author, also doubted whether Kassian Cephas could truly be regarded as the first indigenous photographer, since his close affiliation with the Dutch and his privileges cast doubt on his native status. In the 19th century, photography in Indonesia was dominated by foreigners such as the Chinese, Dutch, and Japanese, who began establishing numerous photo studios in various regions of Indonesia. One notable example was the Woodbury and Page studio in Batavia, which documented much of the natural scenery in Central Java. During this period, much of Indonesia's photographic historical archive was held by foreigners who extensively documented Dutch colonialism.

Towards the period leading up to independence, the Mendur brothers played a significant role in capturing the moments of Indonesia's Proclamation of Independence. The Mendur brothers were Alex Mendur and Frans Mendur, both born in Kawangkoan, North Sulawesi. Their interest in photography began when Alex worked in Batavia in the 1930s and learned basic techniques from European

photographers. Both later worked for Dutch East Indies newspapers, such as *Java-Bode*, before eventually joining the Japanese news agency Domei during the occupation. On August 17, 1945, Frans Mendur succeeded in capturing the historic moment of Indonesia's Proclamation of Independence with his camera, despite the threat from Japanese soldiers who attempted to seize the photographs. To safeguard the documentation, Frans buried the film until the situation became safer.



Image 4. Reading of Proclamation Photo

(Source : <https://www.antaraPhoto.com/id/view/1950228/proklamasi-kemerdekaan-indonesia>, 2024)



Image 5. Frans Mendur (left) and Alex Mendur (right)

Source: (<https://www.tvonenews.com/berita/nasional/61145-mengenal-mendur-bersaudara-photographer-yang-mengabadikan-momen-proklamasi-17-agustus-1945,2022>)

In 1946, the Mendur brothers founded IPPHOS (Indonesian Press Photo Service), the first press photography agency in Indonesia, which played a crucial role in documenting major events after independence, including the Round Table Conference in The Hague in 1949 and the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955. Their legacy as photographers who captured historic moments has made their work an important part of the visual history of Indonesia's struggle for independence.



**Image 6. IPPHOS founder
(Indonesia Press Photo Service)**

Source:
(https://id.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berkas:Ipphos_founders_in_front_of_their_office.jpg,2024)

Photography in Indonesia continued to develop alongside the nation's historical journey even after independence. Many historic events, such as the reading of the Proclamation text and the first raising of the Red and White flag, were successfully captured by photographers, allowing us today to witness those moments through photographs. These images also reveal the key figures who fought for independence. Behind these historic photographs are also stories of the photographers' struggles to capture such significant moments. This demonstrates that photography

has played an important role in Indonesia's history. According to Feridansyah (2020), photography is deeply connected to and significant in the history of Indonesia's independence. The photographs of the Mendur brothers, for instance, became a medium of propaganda and part of the Indonesian government's strategy during the physical revolution period to defend the nation's independence.

However, historical literature on photography in Indonesia remains limited and is mostly confined to journals and lengthy text-based books. Imam Mubarak, the owner of the Kediri Photography Museum, stated in an interview with the author that Indonesia does not yet have a photo archive database for historical documentation. This is because, from the very beginning, photography in Indonesia was considered a privilege and an expensive practice, accessible only to the elite. As a result, the indigenous population at that time had little to no access to photography, while the colonial powers exploited it as a tool of propaganda. Consequently, most of Indonesia's historical photographic archives come from foreign sources.

This is in line with what was stated in a video interview with the Indonesia Photography Archive on Riski Trestianto's YouTube channel in 2019, which mentioned that there is still very little written work on the history of photography in Indonesia. Most of the available data comes from foreign authors and is written in foreign languages, and there has not yet been the development of other media to introduce this history, such as documentaries or other visual media. This indicates that the role of photography in Indonesia's history has not been widely explored or presented through creative visual media such as comics.

Data from an online questionnaire conducted in October 2024 with 60 respondents showed that 87.2% were engaged in and interested in photography. Meanwhile, 63.3% did not know about the history of photography's introduction in Indonesia, and the rest had only limited understanding. This validates that literacy regarding the history of photography in Indonesia is still low. In addition, 90% of the total respondents stated that visual media helped them in understanding history. Through creative visual media, the history of photography in Indonesia can be introduced in formats such as comics, which are effective in increasing young people's interest in learning history (Narestui, in Najih et al., 2021). Thus, comics can serve as an alternative solution to introduce the role of photography in Indonesia's history.

Comics are a form of illustrated storytelling and a popular medium in the modern era. Comics are considered “sequential art”, an art form that combines images arranged in sequence to convey a story or idea. The essence of comics lies in the sequential arrangement of images that depict events over time, thereby creating a coherent narrative (McCloud, 1993). Comics encompass a wide variety of artistic styles, themes, and genres with engaging stories. There are two main types of comics: print and digital. Print comics appear in physical book form, while digital comics are commonly presented in the format of webcomics.

Based on the explanation above, it can be agreed that the history of photography in Indonesia has had a long journey and plays an important role in the nation’s history. However, literature on the history of photography in Indonesia remains limited and has not been widely explored in visual media such as comics. By utilizing engaging storytelling and appealing illustration styles, this project aims to design a comic book about the role of photography in Indonesian history, presented from the perspective of photography as an introduction and a means of instilling historical values through the medium of visual comics. The author hopes that this project can serve as a source of historical literacy as well as a reference for further research in the future.

1.2. Problem Identification

Based on the background described above, it can be concluded that photography has contributed and played an important role in the course of Indonesian history. During the colonial era, photography was used as a tool of propaganda, yet at the same time it served as documentary evidence of the struggle. However, literature on the role of photography in Indonesian history remains scarce. The presence of creative visual media such as comics would help in understanding and introducing the role of photography in Indonesian history.

1. The lack of literacy regarding the role of photography in Indonesian history.

The results of an online questionnaire conducted in October 2024 with 60 respondents showed that 87.2% were engaged and interested in photography, yet 63.3% had no knowledge about the history of the introduction of photography in Indonesia.

2. The limited availability of literature sources on the history of photography in Indonesia.

Most literature on the role of photography in Indonesian history still originates from archives or foreign authors, as Indonesia does not yet have comprehensive photographic archives. Consequently, much of the available literature is presented in foreign languages.

3. The absence of visual media as a medium for conveying literacy on the role of photography in Indonesian history.

A search conducted by the author through online search engines revealed no visual media addressing the role of photography in Indonesian history. Further observation at the Photography Museum in Kediri also found that available sources are still in the form of text-based physical books, largely authored by foreign writers.

1.3. Problem Formulation

How to design a comic book about the role of photography in Indonesian history?

1.4. Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is needed to narrow down the objectives of the writing so that it becomes more focused and achieves more specific goals. The limitations of this study are as follows:

1. The historical scope examined is the role of photography in Indonesian history, particularly in Java, with events related to the proclamation and the story behind the proclamation photos.
2. Highlighting figures who played a role in the history of photography in Indonesia, such as Kassian Cephas, Walter Woodbury, Alex Mendur, and Frans Mendur.
3. The target audience is teenagers to young adults aged 15-30 years.
4. This design will produce an output in the form of a black-and-white physical comic book.

1.5. Design Objectives

To introduce and provide education about the role of photography in Indonesian history to teenagers and young adults through the medium of comic books.

1.6. Benefits of the Design Outcomes

1.6.1. Benefits for the Author

- a. To broaden knowledge and understanding of the role of photography in Indonesian history.
- b. To enhance the writer's skills in comic design.
- c. To serve as motivation for the writer to continue growing in creative work.

1.6.2. Benefits for the Society

- a. To increase the interest of teenagers and adults in history.
- b. To broaden understanding of the role of photography in history.
- c. To introduce important figures in the history of Indonesian photography.
- d. To raise public awareness of the value of history.
- e. To provide innovation in delivering history through digital media.

- f. To contribute to the development of historical literacy.

1.6.1. Benefits for the Study Program

This design can later be utilized as a reference source for similar writings to support the development of knowledge in the future.

1.7. Design Framework

The design of this comic book on the role of photography in Indonesian history begins with an in-depth study of the subject, namely the history of photography in Indonesia, from its introduction, its role during the colonial era, up to the independence period. The author conducted research through literature studies from books, scientific journals, and online video platforms.

Next, the author identified the problems and found that historical literacy on photography is still minimal, making it little known even among photography enthusiasts. Moreover, the history of photography has not yet been fully explored or presented through creative visual media such as comics.

Based on the results of research and problem identification, the author then determined keywords, which were further developed into a design concept. The concept was adjusted to the target audience, based on the questionnaire results, namely teenagers to adults aged 15-30 years who are engaged in photography.

The next step was to design a comic book based on the story that had been written based on scientific research from books, journals, and online media. The author hoped that this design could become a medium for learning about the role of photography in history through attractive visual media so that the public would be interested and learn about the role of photography in Indonesian history.

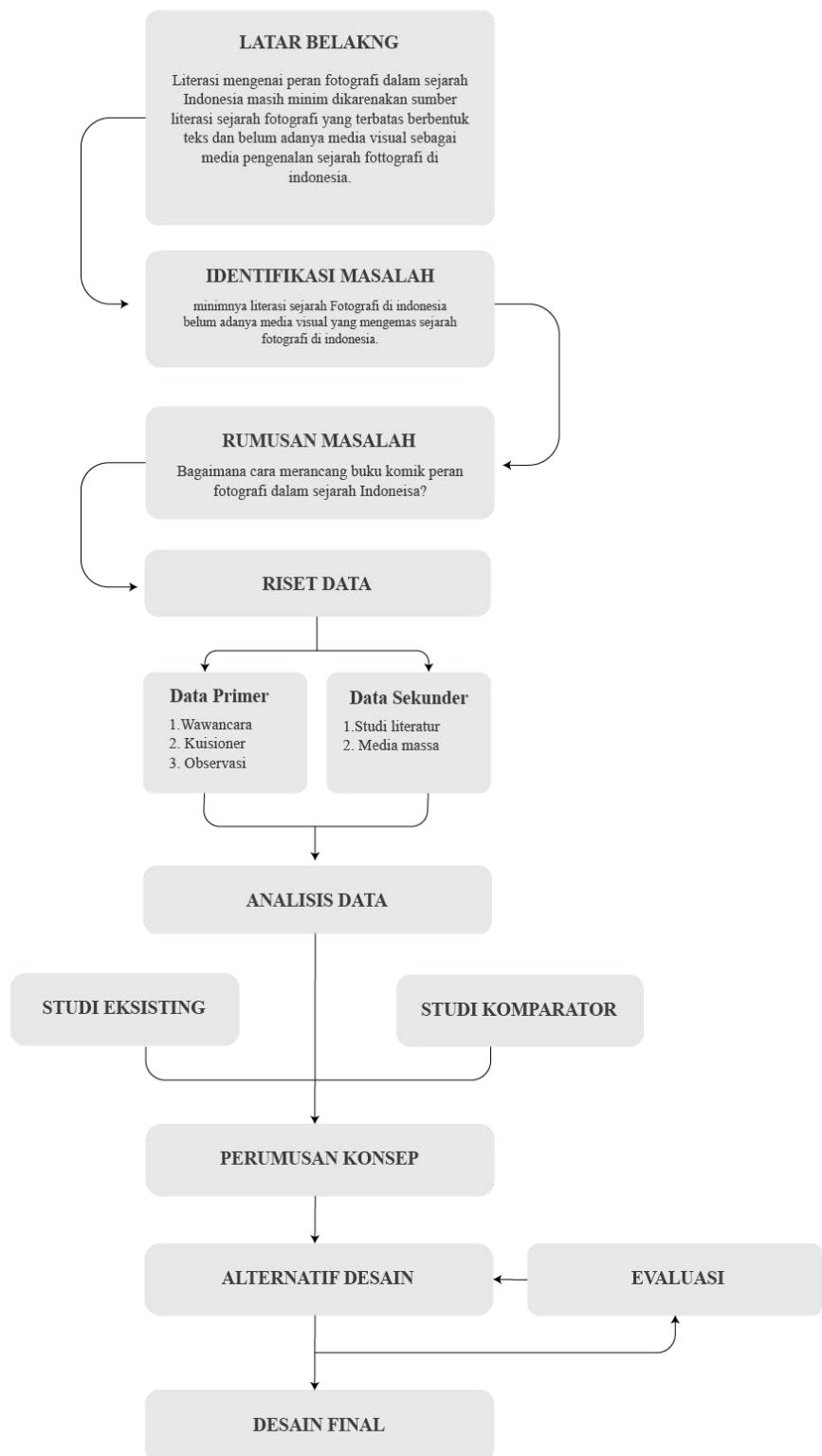


Image 7. Design formulation chart
(Source : Personal data, 2024)