

Familiar Distance

Picture Postcards from Java from a European Perspective,
ca. 1880-1930

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This paper examines the cross-imperial production and reception of picture postcards from the Dutch East Indies. As travelling agents of colonial knowledge, picture postcards helped to circulate and promote the political demands of the Dutch colonial empire. At the same time, the layout and the iconography of these postcards expressed contemporary visual standards and fulfilled European expectations of a successfully governed colony in Southeast Asia. With the focus on one particular set of postcards that was sent from Java's largest harbour city Soerabaja (present-day Surabaya) to the Swiss entrepreneur Adolf Feller in Switzerland in 1924, this paper follows the practices of making, buying, sending and receiving these postcards. The analysis reconstructs the cross-imperial business initiatives by diverse actors from the Netherlands and of Chinese heritage in Soerabaja, from Armenia, England and Switzerland and shows how Swiss individuals participated and supported Dutch colonial propaganda as part of a European culture of colonialism.

Dit artikel behelst een onderzoek naar de transimperiale productie en receptie van prentbriefkaarten vanuit Nederlands-Indië. Deze Ansichtkaarten, die als 'reizende dragers' van koloniale kennis kunnen worden beschouwd, droegen bij tot de verspreiding en promotie van het Nederlandse koloniale rijk en diens politieke behoeften. De opmaak en de iconografie van deze prentbriefkaarten voldeden aan eigentijdse visuele standaarden en beantwoordden aan Europese ideaalbeelden over een succesvol geregeerde kolonie in Zuidoost-Azië. Aan de hand van een specifieke set van Ansichtkaarten die in 1924 vanuit Soerabaja (vandaag Surabaya), Java's grootste havenstad, naar de ondernemer Adolf Feller in Zwitserland werd verstuurd, worden in dit artikel de praktijken inzake de productie, de aankoop, het verzenden en de receptie van deze postkaarten bestudeerd. Daarbij worden de transimperiale ondernemersactiviteiten van actoren uit Armenië, Groot-Brittannië en

Zwitserland, alsook van Nederlandse en Chinese afkomst in Soerabaja zelf gereconstrueerd. Het artikel toont aan op welke wijze Zwitserse individuen deelnamen en steun gaven aan Nederlandse koloniale propaganda en legt op deze manier een bredere Europese koloniale cultuur bloot.

Introduction¹

Picture postcards from the former Dutch East Indies were sent millionfold around the globe since the late nineteenth century, as large archival holdings in the Netherlands and other European archives prove.² Through their travels, they connected senders and addressees located in the colony and the metropole, as well as in several other countries, such as Switzerland, the starting point of this paper. Through their production and consumption, postcards created cross-imperial networks of photographers, printers, publishers, correspondents, and *philcartists* who shared technical, theoretical, and artistic skills beyond national boundaries.³

Accordingly, it is not surprising to find picture postcards from the Dutch East Indies in a Swiss archive today.⁴ The image archive of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich houses more than 400.000 digitised photographs and picture postcards. From this vast collection, a total of thirty-four pictures are tagged with the keyword 'Java'. Ten of these pictures are postcards from Soerabaja, Java's largest harbour and trade city around 1900, showing city sights and landmarks.⁵ They combine photographs of official

- 1 I would like to thank the two anonymous readers for their constructive and helpful comments as well as Bernhard Schär, Marieke Bloembergen and all the participants of the workshop *An Empire of Demands and Opportunities: Relocating the Dutch East Indies in European History, c. 1800-1900* that took place at the ETH Zurich in August 2018.
- 2 Photographs and picture postcards from the former Dutch East Indies can, for example, be found in the British Library in London, the archives of the Museum der Kulturen in Basel and in the photo collection of the Übersee-Museum in Bremen.
- 3 Renate Brosch, 'Migrating Images and Communal Experience', in: Sarah Säckel, Walter Göbel and Noha Handy (eds.), *Semiotic Encounters: Text, Image, and Trans-Nation* (Amsterdam and New York 2009) 51-63, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789042027152_005.

- 4 The Swiss findings used in this article mirror first and foremost the accessibility of archival materials for the author of this article who is based in Zurich. In the Netherlands, large holdings of postcards tagged with the keyword 'Soerabaja' can be found in the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam (IWI doos 51) and the KITLV collection at Leiden University Libraries with more than 750 postcards. A smaller number is part of the collection of the Nederlands Fotomuseum in Rotterdam. All three institutions have postcards from the set that is discussed in this paper. See, for example, inv. no.144391, 1404512 and 1404450 in the KITLV collection.
- 5 Only one of the ten postcards from Soerabaja is tagged with the keyword 'Java' in the ETH collection. In order to find the set of postcards, a separate keyword search was necessary. The ten postcards from Soerabaja can be found here: http://ba.e-pics.ethz.ch/#1550823893486_3. Accessed 22 February 2019.

buildings, European quarters, and parks, printed as black-and-white halftone reproductions, with a short caption and the name of the publisher: the print shop H. van Ingen (1852-1935), which refers to the shop of the Dutch printer Henri François Jean van Ingen who worked and lived in Soerabaja (figure 1).

These postcards were sent to Adolf Feller (1879-1931), a Swiss sales manager and director of the Feller AG, a business for electro-technical products in Horgen by Lake Zurich that still exists today. The postcards were all stamped on 29 March 1924 in Soerabaja and carry postage stamps with a value of five cents.⁶ The backs of the cards are divided in half, indicating the space for the address on the right and a personal message on the left side. All ten postcards carry the same typewritten inscription: the address of ‘Adolf Feller Esqu., Horgen, Switzerland’, and the sender, a certain ‘K.’, who numbered the postcards from one to ten (figure 2).

Based on these Swiss findings, this paper focuses on the exchange practices bound to the production and reception of picture postcards from the Dutch East Indies. As agents of colonial knowledge, the set of postcards from Soerabaja promoted colonialism as a Dutch national enterprise and reveals how Swiss individuals participated and supported Dutch colonial propaganda as part of a European culture of colonialism.⁷ Besides Adolf Feller and ‘K.’, several individuals in Soerabaja and Horgen were connected by the economic and personal opportunities the postcard set sent to Switzerland in 1924 offered them. This paper follows their practices of making, buying, sending and receiving postcards from Soerabaja.

In accordance with theoretical approaches of ‘new imperial histories’ in recent years, this paper wants to overcome methodological nationalism of colonial histories, as well as of the history of photographs from the Dutch East Indies.⁸ It questions an intra-imperial approach towards the production and reception of images from the Dutch empire and examines instead the complex

6 The postcards are stamped with different stamps ($\frac{1}{2}$, 1, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$, 3, 4, 5 cent) from the Dutch East Indies.

7 Patricia Purtschert and Harald Fischer-Tiné, ‘Introduction: The End of Innocence: Debating Colonialism in Switzerland’, in: Patricia Purtschert and Harald Fischer-Tiné (eds.), *Colonial Switzerland: Rethinking Colonialism from the Margins* (New York 2015) 7, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9781137442741_1; Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrmann, ‘Introduction: Empires, Boundaries, and the Production of Difference’, in: Harald Fischer-Tiné and Susanne Gehrmann (eds.), *Empires and Boundaries: Rethinking Race, Class, and Gender in Colonial Settings* (New York/London 2009)

12, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203890653>;

Bernhard C. Schär, *Tropenliebe: Schweizer Naturforscher und niederländischer Imperialismus in Südostasien um 1900* (Frankfurt 2015).

8 Stephen Conway, *Britannia’s Auxiliaries: Continental Europeans and the British Empire, 1740-1800* (Oxford 2017) 10; Remco Raben, *Wie spreekt voor het koloniale verleden? Een pleidooi voor transkolonialisme*, Inaugural Lecture, 28 September 2016, University of Amsterdam; Susan Legêne and Martijn Eickhoff, ‘Postwar Europe and the Colonial Past in Photographs’, in: Chiara de Cesari and Ann Rigney (eds.), *Transnational Memory: Circulation, Articulation, Scales* (Berlin and Boston 2014) 287-311; Jörn Leonhard and

cross-imperial exchange relations. By following the circulation of picture postcards from Soerabaja, this paper discusses the question of access and control of colonial visual knowledge in the Dutch East Indies and in Europe.⁹

While research on colonial photography has focused on local adaptations and transnational production networks¹⁰, the history of picture postcards in particular has often been written as a success story of individual nation states around 1900.¹¹ A useful exception is Saloni Mathur who states that, with regard to postcards from colonial India, ‘postcard production around the turn of the century was an international business, encompassing many large national firms and even more tiny, local operations.’¹² In accordance with Mathur and others¹³, this paper focuses on the joint efforts around 1900 to create and circulate an image of the colonial city Soerabaja. While the production networks in Soerabaja can be reconstructed, it is more difficult to make statements about the reception of the picture postcards. As travelling media, the postcards sent to Adolf Feller transgressed geographical and formal political borders. Following Arjun Appadurai’s thoughts on the reception of moving images, the postcards reached audiences with different cultural and historical imaginaries, as can be proven by their travel routes and by the multilingual inscriptions on their backsides.¹⁴

Ulrike von Hirschhausen, ‘Beyond Rise, Decline and Fall: Comparing Multi-Ethnic Empires in the Long Nineteenth Century’, in: Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen (eds.), *Comparing Empires: Encounters and Transfers in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Göttingen 2011) 9-34.

9 For a nationally framed approach see Rick Honings and Peter van Zonneveld (eds.), *Reizen in Insulinde, 1800-1950: Een tint van het Indische oosten* (Hilversum 2015) or Ulbe Bosma and Remco Raben, *Being ‘Dutch’ in the Indies: A History of Creolisation and Empire, 1500-1920* (Singapore 2007).

10 Important research on local adaptations has been done by Christopher Pinney (*Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago/London 1997)) and more recently by Luke Gartlan (*A Career of Japan: Baron Raimund von Stillfried and Early Yokohama Photography* (Leiden 2016)).

11 See, for example, Marcel Bonneff and Stephen Grant, ‘“Bons baisers de Batavia”: Cartes postales des Indes Néerlandaises’, *Archipel* 47 (1994) 53-85, <https://doi.org/10.3406/arch.1994.2968>; Naomi Schor, ‘“Cartes Postales”: Representing Paris 1900’,

Critical Inquiry 18:2 (1992) 188-244, www.jstor.org/stable/1343782; Huib Haverkate, *De geschiedenis van de Nederlandse prentbriefkaart: Deel II, periode 1900-1918* (Amsterdam 1987); Ludwig Hoerner, ‘Zur Geschichte der fotografischen Ansichtspostkarte’, *Fotogeschichte* 7:26 (1987) 29-44.

12 Saloni Mathur, ‘Wanted Native Views: Collecting Colonial Postcards of India’, in: Antoinette Burton (ed.), *Gender, Sexuality and Colonial Modernities* (New York 1999) 100.

13 Recent research on picture postcards discusses the history of the medium, its colonial contexts and the specific text-image relation. See, for example, Eva Tropper, ‘Bild/Störung: Beschriebene Postkarten um 1900’, *Fotogeschichte* 30:118 (2010) 5-16; Irene Ziehe and Ulrich Hägele (eds.), *Gedruckte Fotografie: Abbildung, Objekt und mediales Format* (Münster 2015); Felix Axster, *Koloniales Spektakel in 9 x 14: Bildpostkarten im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Bielefeld 2014).

14 Appadurai introduced the term ‘deterritorialized viewer’ of moving images that do not address one particular or homogenous audience but a global



SOERABAJA, Roode Brug

Uitg. N.V. v/h. H. VAN INGEN, Soerabaja



Figure 1: Soerabaja, Roode Brug, ed. H. van Ingen, picture postcard, halftone print, before 1924. © ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Bildarchiv / Fotograf: Unbekannt / Fel_034745-RE / Public Domain Mark.

As Deborah Poole has argued, nineteenth-century *cartes-de-visite* answered shared desires and sentiments of a global bourgeois – and in the case of small and inexpensive picture postcards even larger mass-audiences that did not belong to the bourgeois milieu only – and circulated through channels much broader than immediate networks of friends and acquaintances.¹⁵ The postcards' visual language and their status as mass-produced and standardised commodities bridged distances, languages, and national and social boundaries. Thanks to photo-mechanical printing processes like collotype or halftone, these small format image objects took the world by storm and reached mass audiences in different parts of the globe.¹⁶ Postcards served as souvenirs for travellers and also as objects to show to close friends and family in order to underscore one's travel experiences with visual representation. From images showing architectural and historical sites to the exoticised and staged photographs of certain stereotypes of peoples, postcards helped shape an overall image of foreign cultures and territories that would otherwise have not been comprehensible nor visible to the so-called 'armchair traveller'.¹⁷

Representations of familiar distance: Soerabaja on the postcards

The ten picture postcards discussed here represent a common repertoire not only of the city of Soerabaja but also of colonial city views around 1900.¹⁸ With their standard iconography, composition, and layout, postcards shaped colonial imagery that fulfilled general European expectations of a colony. They show the train station, a Buddha statue in the Kroesenpark, European quarters and shopping streets like Passer Besar, the Chinese quarter, and the Red Bridge over the river Kali Mas – all famous landmarks in the city centre. During the first decades of the twentieth century, these photographic representations were reproduced countless times on postcards, in illustrated travel guides, and in magazines. It can be argued that they constituted a validating canon of Soerabaja's place-image by applying European visual knowledge that was most common around 1900.

All the photographs on Feller's postcards were taken from a distant camera standpoint which creates a visual style evoking distance as well as

number of recipients. Arjun Appadurai, 'Here and Now', in: Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis 1996) esp. 4-6. While this paper focuses on the reception of picture postcards sent to Switzerland, it is worth mentioning that these postcards were not only received by European individuals, as their inscriptions on the backside in Dutch, Javanese and Malay show.

15 Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton 1997) 111-112.

16 Axster, *Koloniales Spektakel*, 36.

17 Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill 2007) 162.

18 Brenda S. A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space: Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment in Colonial Singapore* (Oxford and Singapore 1996) 3-4.

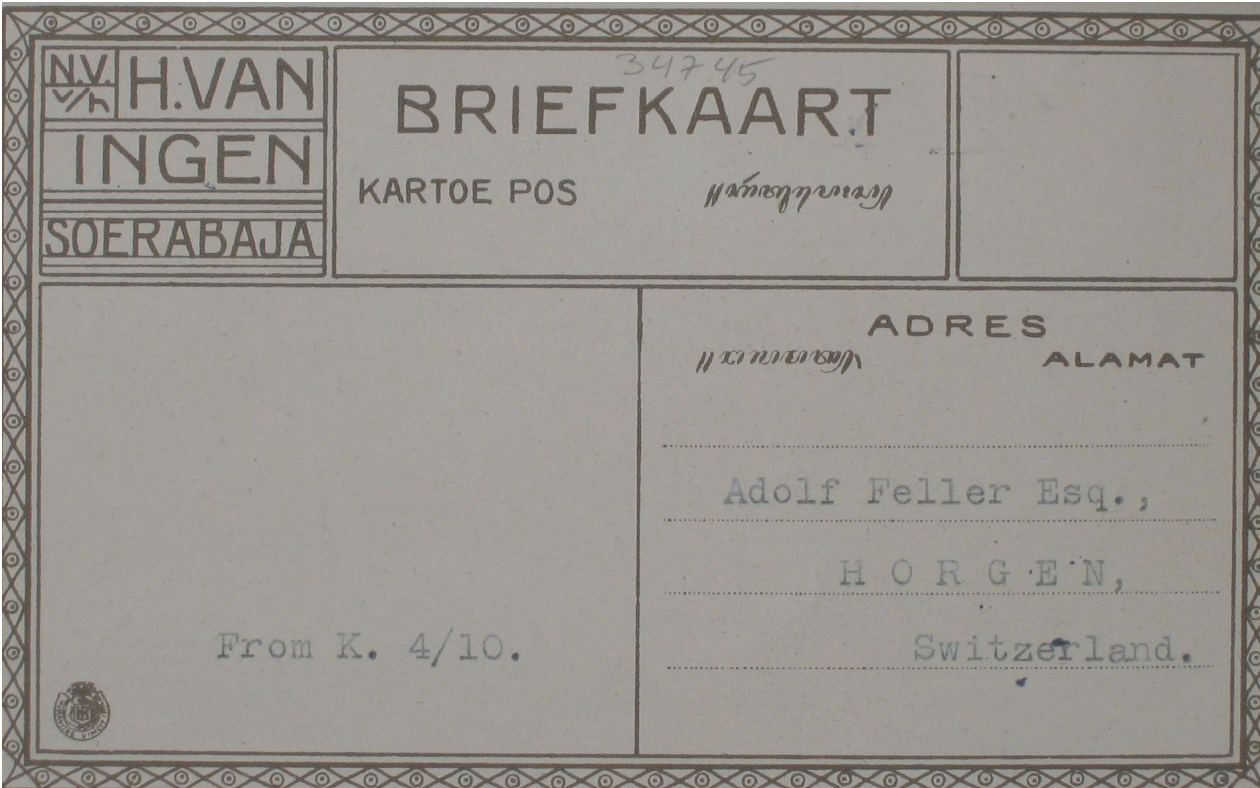


Figure 2: Soerabaja, Roode Brug, ed. H. van Ingen, picture postcard, backside, halftone print, before 1924. © ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Bildarchiv / Fotograf: Unbekannt / Fel_034745-VE / Public Domain Mark.

familiarity. Figure 1 depicts the Red Bridge from a panoramic perspective. The photograph is taken from the riverside promenade, far away from the city centre marked by the European architecture behind the bridge and shows the famous landmark only in the back. The centre of the image is occupied by the river, an open space that is formally framed by the promenade on the left and the horizontal bridge in the background. There are no ships or canoes on the smooth water surface while the Red Bridge is crowded with people, carriages, and automobiles crossing between the European part in the west and the Chinese and Arab quarters in the eastern part of the city. However, this lively hustle is difficult to make out in the back of the photograph. Instead, the bustling city is represented here in the far distance while the empty space in the foreground of the photograph gives the impression of Soerabaja as a calm and controllable place. The composition of the photographs thus promised a feeling of security for European recipients; encounters with the Indonesian population were not represented.

The few Indonesians, who appear as small staff figures in most of the cityscapes from the Dutch East Indies, are incorporated into the European-dominated society as workers or servants. Their living environment, as well as their everyday and economic life, are forcefully eradicated in the pictures – a compositional characteristic that denied Indonesian agency since the Indonesian population was made invisible as inhabitants of the city. The distant standpoint of the camera and the panoramic view of the photographs were common features in the depiction of cityscapes around 1900.¹⁹ In the context of the representation of colonised cities, this compositional feature needs to be regarded in terms of official colonial image politics, especially since the photographs circulated for several decades.

The representations of Soerabaja do not differ much from photographs of other colonised cities like Singapore or Batavia (present-day Jakarta) that show the same distant views. Many photographs from these colonial cities delivered a standard view that needed captions or texts to identify the exact scenes and sights. This lack of specificity and a standard repertoire of recurrent subjects thus generated for Europeans a visual familiarity of this unfamiliar place and confirmed European expectations of a colony (figure 3).

The common framework of the postcard layout – the small format, the black-and-white print and the combination of picture and caption – further emphasised this familiarity by overwriting the inequality of the colonial space.²⁰ The comprehensive representation of colonial space distances the postcard's imagery from the specific locality; only the captions

19 This observation is, amongst others, based on the panorama representation of cities as different as Singapore and Winterthur in Feller's postcard collection, see ETH Image archive, inv. no. FEL-043146 and FEL-000846.

20 See also Brian Larkin, 'Making Equivalence Happen: Commensuration and the Architecture of Circulation', in: Patricia Spyer and Mary Margaret Steedly (eds.), *Images That Move* (Santa Fe 2013) 241.

give us information about the depicted places. This representational style was not reserved for photographs of colonial cities only. On the contrary, the iconography of emptiness, the composed distance and the clear space in the foreground of the images, were used to represent European cities as well, as several picture postcards from the Feller collection show.²¹ The depiction of European architecture takes on a civilising function and evokes a European atmosphere that visually diminished differences between colony and metropole.²² The representation of Soerabaja thus promised safeness, sameness, and the comforts of home, presenting the colonial city as a modern European place where Europeans could settle and feel like home.

Finally, this familiarity was supported by the perpetual use of the photographs. Pictures of Soerabaja, like the ones Henri van Ingen reproduced, do not show cars, electric trams and street lights that marked Soerabaja's status as a modern city in the 1920s. While descriptions of Soerabaja in travel guides emphasised the bustling character and the modernisation of the city²³, the reproduced photographs show a historic image of the city from the time around 1900 that Van Ingen still circulated in 1924. Photographs of the city's modernisation did circulate at that time, they can be found in illustrated journals and on a small number of picture postcards in the consulted archives.²⁴ Publishers such as Van Ingen, however, chose the 'old images' that sold best on the postcard market, namely quiet impressions that gave European recipients a feeling of security, as they were not confronted with the political conflicts in Soerabaja during the 1920s and 1930s.²⁵ The postcard

21 See for example the postcard no. 846 from the Feller collection showing the Swiss city of Winterthur.

22 Roberto Zaugg, 'Zwischen Europäisierung und Afrikanisierung: Zur visuellen Konstruktion der Kapverden auf kolonialen Postkarten', *Fotogeschichte* 30:118 (2010) 19.

23 See for example Frank G. Carpenter, *Java and the East Indies* (New York 1923) 149-150; Jan van Bemmelen and Gijsbert Hooyer, *Reisgids voor Nederlandsch-Indië* (Amsterdam 1906).

24 Photographs of the modernisation of colonised cities in the Dutch East Indies can be found in the colonial press, for example in *Het Indische Leven* where 'old' and 'new' photographs of Batavia are juxtaposed (*Het Indische Leven* 2:5 (18 September 1920) 94). The Indonesian weekly *Pandji Poestaka*, that regularly used the printing matrixes of

Het Indische Leven, also printed photographs of modern buildings and cityscapes (*Pandji Poestaka* 2:23 (5 June 1924) 445). More research has to be done on the appropriation of these images in this journal. There are also examples of photographs of modern Soerabaja on picture postcards such as inv. no. 182541 in the KITLV collection. However, the medium of picture postcards was dominated by representations of timeless stereotypes of Java's landscapes, peoples and cities.

25 See Sophie Junge, 'Old Soerabaja – New Soerabaja? Circulating the Emptiness of the Colonial City', *PhotoResearcher* 30 (2018) 48-62. I have developed the reading of photographs of Soerabaja from 1900 as empty images in this article where I discuss the reception of photographs from Soerabaja taken during the 1890s in Gottfried Hariowald von Faber's book *Oud Soerabaia* (Soerabaja 1931).

representations thus made the Dutch colonial empire manageable and may very well have played into the hands of the Dutch colonial government's *rust en orde* policy, in which the maintenance of order was equated with the success of Dutch colonial rule.²⁶

Sending postcards from Soerabaja to Switzerland

The production and circulation of picture postcards created visual and personal networks beyond the borders of the Dutch empire. These cross-imperial bonds show how several individuals benefitted from the demands for visual representations of the Dutch East Indies from outside the Dutch territories. The postcards were sent from Soerabaja to Adolf Feller on 29 March 1924 by a certain 'K.' who had purchased the cards at the local print shop H. van Ingen in Soerabaja. 'K.' had bought the series of ten, typed his initial and a number on the left and Feller's address on the right side of the back of the postcard and had sent them to Switzerland. They were stamped on the same day and arrived in Horgen a few weeks later. To reconstruct their journey from Van Ingen's print shop in Soerabaja to Feller's postcard collection in Horgen brings together all the actors involved in the production of picture postcards within the Dutch empire: the Armenian photographer Ohannes Kurkdjian and his English assistant George P. Lewis, the Dutch stenographer Van Ingen, and his anonymous local workers as well as the Chinese picture postcard correspondent 'K.'

Little is known about this person 'K.', who sent the postcards from Soerabaja to Feller. However, these cards were not the only ones that Feller received from the Dutch East Indies. Twenty-seven of the thirty-four postcards from Java were sent to Horgen and signed by a certain 'K.', a 'Khouw', a 'K. K. Khouw' and a 'K.K. Khouw, Mr Cornelis' between 1920 and 1924. It is safe to assume that the postcard set from Soerabaja was sent by the same person, but who was 'K. K. Khouw' and how was he or she connected to Feller? The professional stamper on eleven cards from the Feller collection indicates that his or her business was located in Meester Cornelis (present-day Jatinegara), a suburb of Batavia.²⁷ Six cards were actually sent from Meester Cornelis as the postmarks prove; another thirteen were sent from Soerabaja and four from Weltevreden, another residential area in Batavia.²⁸ The systematic mailing

26 John Ingleson, *Workers, Unions and Politics: Indonesia in the 1920s and 1930s* (Leiden 2014) 11, <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004264762>; See also Steven Wedema, 'Ethiek' und Macht: Die Niederländisch-Indische Kolonialverwaltung und

Indonesische Emanzipationsbestrebungen 1901-1927 (Stuttgart 1998) 59-62.

27 On women as consumers and collectors of picture postcards see Mathur, 'Wanted Native Views', 86-97.

28 The other postmarks could not be deciphered.



II. No. 261 Stamford Road Singapore



Figure 3: *Stamford Road Singapore*, ed. M.S.N. Co., picture postcard, collotype, before 1923. © ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Bildarchiv / Fotograf: Unbekannt / Fel_043146-RE / Public Domain Mark.

of postcards on the same day, the fact that they were sent in series – as the numbering on every postcard indicates – and the missing personal message suggest that K. K. Khouw was not a friend but corresponded professionally with Feller.²⁹ While the identity of K. K. Khouw stays unknown to us to this day, he or she did leave a few historical traces. K. K. Khouw is mentioned on two passenger lists, arriving in Batavia from Singapore as the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* reports on 18 July 1916 and leaving Batavia by ship as noted in *De Indische Courant* on 7 May 1924, about six weeks after he or she sent the cards to Feller.³⁰ We further know that Khouw is the name of an influential and powerful Chinese family from Meester Cornelis. One famous family member was Khouw Kim An, the last *Majoor der Chinezen*, a high political rank that placed him at the same level as the native regent subordinate to the Resident of Batavia.³¹ While a family member with the initials K. K. could not be found in the sources, it is likely that K. K. Khouw came from a branch of this family.

Many Chinese people established photo studios in the Dutch East Indies in the 1920s and took portraits of the growing Chinese and Indonesian middle class.³² K. K. Khouw was likely part of such a photography and printing business, and likely acted as a picture postcards correspondent or agent who sent postcards to members of postcard clubs or subscribers of journals.³³ This argument is strengthened by the fact that the postcards from Soerabaja – as well as those from other series sent to Feller – are stamped with as many different stamps as possible amounting to the value of five cents. Feller must have appreciated the selection of foreign stamps, ranging from a half cent to five cents on the cards' frontside, as well as the postcards themselves.

K. K. Khouw purchased postcards from different publishers around Java. The postcard series from Soerabaja was published by Van Ingen, whose print shop was located at Passer Besar, Soerabaja's central European shopping street. The business was founded in 1887 by the Dutch stenographer Henri François Jean van Ingen who, besides producing thousands of picture

29 There are in total six (incomplete) series in the ETH collection.

30 Another, rather cryptic mentioning of Khouw can be found in the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* from 24 June 1914, where in the section 'Onbestelbare stukken' a certain K. K. Khouw, London, is listed as one addressee that could not be reached by post.

31 Mona Lohanda, *The Kapitan Cina of Batavia, 1837-1942: A History of Chinese Establishment in Colonial Society* (Djambatan 1996) 58. Khouw Kim An was appointed in 1910 and again in 1927.

32 Karen Strassler, *Refracted Vision: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java* (Durham and London 2010) 131. See also Liesbeth Ouwehand, 'Chinese Photographers and their Clientele in the Netherlands Indies 1890-1940', *Wacana* 18:2 (2017) 315-342, <https://doi.org/10.17510/wacana.v18i2.587>.

33 Anett Holzheid, *Das Medium der Postkarte: Eine sprachwissenschaftliche und mediengeschichtliche Studie* (Berlin 2011) 240-252. Unfortunately, I have not yet found out how Feller was personally connected to K. K. Khouw.

postcards, published photo albums and books such as *Nieuw Soerabaia* (1936), the second volume of the history of the city, written by Gottfried Hariowald von Faber. Van Ingen arrived in the Dutch East Indies in 1885 to work at the print shop Van Bisschop in Semarang. Two years later he opened his own print shop in Soerabaja and added a book store to the business in 1889. We know that Van Ingen not only sold but also printed postcards in his shop because the *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad* reported on 14 March 1887:

‘As if there were not already enough print shops, Mr. Van Ingen, brother of the shopkeeper W. van Ingen, currently the company owner of Albrecht & Co and a typographer by profession, will set up a large print shop with numerous steam-driven presses. The brothers Gimberg & Co will move to the camp, two houses away from Tan Tjoen Gwan, and will continue the competition there à outrance.’³⁴

In 1901 Van Ingen and his family officially moved back to the Netherlands and settled in Bussum, North Holland. He, his wife Maria Magdalena Trappen and their three children registered at the local community, as an entry in the communal archive from 26 July 1901 shows. From this time onwards, Van Ingen travelled back and forth between Soerabaja and Bussum. With these travels documented in countless published passenger lists, Van Ingen himself became a connection between metropole and colony, in the same way his photographic products were. In the Netherlands, Van Ingen did not pursue a profession and was registered as director of his print shop in Soerabaja until his death in 1935. While he tried to run the business from Bussum, he needed a shop manager to take control over orders, employees, and machines during his absences, as an advertisement in the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* proves.³⁵

It is difficult to gather any information on Van Ingen’s employees in Soerabaja. A photograph of his staff tells us at least how many people worked at the store before 1906, which is the date written on the frontside of the card (figure 4). The image shows the shop’s two-storied building at Passer Besar with Van Ingen’s staff sitting and standing on the stairs in front of the shop. The photograph is printed on a picture postcard that was used as a receipt and order form by Van Ingen. It is taken from the other side of the street so that we cannot identify the people in the image because of their small size. Four or five men sit on the steps in front of the building, two of them dressed in a white shirt, dark sarong, and a turban. In typical Javanese attire and darker skin

34 *Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 14 March 1887. ‘Alsof hier nog geene drukkerijen genoeg zijn, komt de heer Van Ingen, broeder van den tokohouder W. van Ingen, thans procuratiehouder van Albrecht & Co en typograaf van zijn vak, hier nog een groote opzetten, met tal van snelpersen en door

stoom gedreven. Gebr. Gimberg & Co gaan verhuizen naar de kamp, twee huizen af van Tan Tjoen Gwan en zal daar de concurrentie à outrance doorzetten.’ (English translation S. J.).

35 See the ad in *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 29 July 1918.

tones, they appear to be Indonesian. In the centre of the image, a European-dressed, lighter-skinned man stands with his hands on his hips and his legs apart, looking straight into the camera. His pose expresses self-confidence and a claim of ownership. Could this be Van Ingen himself? A second European man with a white sun helmet is photographed in profile looking over the stairs into the store. A carriage, pulled by a white horse, is placed in the image's left corner, where the animal is resting in the shade of a large tree. The confident poses of the Europeans and their position in front of the Indonesians on the stairs do not necessarily have to be read as representations of colonial power relations. The composition of the people in the photograph could even so confirm social hierarchies within the colonised city. In any case, mentioning the local Indonesian employees who are unknown yet visible in the photograph complicates the one-sided success-story of European postcard producers in the Dutch colony.

A bit more information about Van Ingen's employees can be gathered from written sources. In an obituary in *De Indische Courant* from 1928 we learn about the Dutchman H. van den Dries, who started working for Van Ingen around 1898 before he transferred to the administration of the *Nieuwe Soerabaia Courant*.³⁶ Less is known about the local Indonesian employees who were actually producing postcards and other printed materials at the store. While hardly any written sources refer to their working conditions, two chance discoveries give us some information. The *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* reports about a strike at the Soerabaja-based print shops Fuhri, Polyroom, Plantijn and Van Dorp, where local employees fought for better working conditions. The *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* further states that Van Ingen's employees did not come to work on one Wednesday morning without notice – an inexplicable behaviour according to the *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, since the working conditions at Van Ingen's 'leave absolutely nothing to be desired. The eight-hour working day has been introduced for the staff, while they are being paid extra for overtime'.³⁷ While the colonial press clearly takes the side of the Dutch employers, this report can at least indirectly be read as evidence of the exploitative working situation at those print shops in Soerabaja during the 1920s. Furthermore, the local workers' skills and knowledge seemed necessary enough that they could demand better working conditions and overtime compensation. Even though the Indonesian employees were anonymous in these sources, the report of the strike indicates that Dutch businesses would have had a hard time succeeding without them.

While Van Ingen's name is printed on all his products, it is unknown who took the reproduced photographs of Soerabaja's sights. The

36 *De Indische Courant*, 7 April 1928.

37 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 26 February 1921 noted that: De werkomstandigheden bij Van Ingen 'laten absoluut niets te wenschen over: Voor het

personeel is de acht-urige werkdag ingevoerd, terwijl voor overwerk extra betaling werd gegeven'. (English translation S.J.).

Stoom- Boek- en Steendrukkerij.



Algemeene Boek en Kunsthandel
H. van Ingen Soerabaja.

Soerabaja 6/7 1906

M. M.

Hierbij deel ik U beleefd mede,
dat Uw bestelling, vervat in Uw
geacht schrijven d.d. 3/7 06
j.l. door mij ontvangen en in
behandeling genomen werd.

Hoogachtend,

Uw Dw, Dnr.,
H. VAN INGEN.



Figure 4: Stoom-, Boek- en Steendrukkerij. Algemeene Boek en Kunsthandel H. van Ingen Soerabaja, ed. H. van Ingen, picture postcard, collotype, before 1906. © Leiden University Library, KITLV 1404550.

photographers are not mentioned on the postcards even though photographs were explicitly mentioned in the Dutch copyright since 1912.³⁸ It seems probable that the photographers must have sold their images or given permission to reproduce them on picture postcards. In fact, it is difficult to determine the body of work for one specific photographer because they often made and reproduced identical images of buildings, European quarters, parks, and bridges.³⁹

Nevertheless, it is possible to identify one photographer of the Soerabaja postcard series as Ohannes Kurkdjian who was born in Russia in 1851, and died in Soerabaja in 1903. His name is written under the photograph of the station on another picture postcard in the collection of the Leiden University Libraries.⁴⁰ On this particular card, which was also published by Van Ingen, the name 'Photo-Atelier Kurkdjian Soerabaja' is mentioned, which indicates that the photograph was taken before 1901 when Kurkdjian changed the name of his studio. It is thus safe to assume that Van Ingen used the photograph of Soerabaja's station for decades (figure 5 and 6).

Kurkdjian was Armenian and came to Soerabaja in the 1880s, where he opened a photographic atelier. He was one of the European photographers in Soerabaja, such as the German Hermann Salzwedel, who established his studio in 1879 close to Van Ingen's shop at Passer Besar, or Kurkdjian's British assistant George P. Lewis, who took over the studio after his death in 1903.⁴¹ Kurkdjian offered *cartes-de-visite*, spectacular landscapes scenes of waterfalls, volcanos, and sunsets, as well as city views that circulated widely on postcards, in travel guide books, and photo albums that were often commissioned by departing Dutch government officials.⁴² In 1897, George P. Lewis became Kurkdjian's assistant and they changed the name of the atelier to 'Kurkdjian, O. & Co. Limited' and moved to Simpang, one of the new European quarters in

38 The copyright (*auteursrecht*) was installed in the Netherlands and the Dutch East Indies in 1882, however, photographs were not particularly mentioned in the law (Rimmer van der Meulen, *Boekhandel en bibliographie: Theorie en practijk* (Leiden 1905) 448-452). In the copyright regulation from 1912, photography is explicitly included in '§ 3. De werken, waarop auteursrecht bestaat'. See also Karin Walter, 'Die Ansichtskarte als visuelles Massenmedium', in: Kaspar Maase and Wolfgang Kaschuba (eds.), *Schund und Schönheit: Populäre Kultur um 1900* (Cologne 2001) 46-61, <https://doi.org/10.7788/ha.2004.12.1.146> and Monika Dommann (*Autoren und Apparate: Die Geschichte des Copyrights im Medienwandel* (Frankfurt 2014)) who discusses the history of the

copyright as an economic history of cultural and academic paradigms in Great Britain, Germany, France and the United States.

39 See, for example, the countless photographs of Soerabaja's landmarks such as the Red Bridge, Grimm's Restaurant, or the Chinese quarter in the digital collections of the Leiden University Libraries.

40 The postcard is part of the KITLV collection (inv. no. 1404403).

41 Steven Wachlin, 'Grootschalige fotostudio's en amateurfotografie', in: Anneke Groeneveld et al. (eds.), *Toekang Portret: 100 jaar fotografie in Nederlands Indië 1839-1939* (Amsterdam 1989) 123.

42 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 17 September 1900.



SOERABAJA, Station S.S.

Uitg. N.V. v/h. H. VAN INGEN, Soerabaja



Figure 5: *Soerabaja, Station S.S.*, ed. H. van Ingen, picture postcard, halftone print, before 1924. © ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, Bildarchiv / Fotograf: Unbekannt / Fel_034753-RE / Public Domain Mark.

Soerabaja. In 1900, the atelier was awarded ‘as the royal photographer licensed to bear the royal arms’.⁴³ It was the only photo studio that was allowed to bear the royal arms. About ten years later, the company was taken over by the pharmaceutical importers Helmig & Co. When Kodak acquired large shares of the Dutch East Indies market during the First World War, Kurkdjian’s atelier was Kodak’s sole agent on East Java, which shows the economic value of the studio during the first decades of the twentieth century.⁴⁴

While Van Ingen produced picture postcards at his store in Soerabaja, it was common practice from 1900 onwards to print picture postcards – or only a thin layer with the printed picture on it – in Germany, the leading producer of photomechanical reproductions at that time.⁴⁵ The layer would then be combined with the imprinted backside and a piece of cardboard in the middle to stabilise the thin papers. Whether Van Ingen also ordered reproductions in Germany is not clear. However, publications such as the Dutch-language photography journal *De Indische Lux*, which was first published in 1901 in Batavia⁴⁶, reveal such cross-imperial entanglements between Batavia and Berlin. In May 1905, the editor apologised for the missing reproduction in the issue, as the German print shop Meissenbach Riffahrt & Co. in Berlin had not delivered the requested halftone prints on time.⁴⁷

Another elaborate example for the complex production circuits is a so-called ‘Groet uit Java’-postcard series from 1899 (figure 7). I have written elsewhere about the network of six Dutch and German individuals, five of them mentioned on the card.⁴⁸ In Soerabaja, the photographer Herman Salzwedel sold the pictures for the collage on the postcards at his studio. In the German city Esslingen, the graphic designer Karl Fuchs and probably Ch. Schneider translated the photographs into drawings and combined them on the postcard. In Stuttgart then, the print shop Greiner and Pfeiffer printed Fuchs’s drawings as four-color halftone reproductions on the postcards and sent them back to Soerabaja where the bridal and fashion store F. W. Krapp sold them for ten cents each.⁴⁹

43 Het atelier werd bekroond ‘tot hofphotograaf met vergunning om het koninklijke wapen te voeren’. (English translation S. J.).

44 Since 1899 and until 1935 Kurkdjian’s photo atelier was located at Simpang 21 and Toendjoengan 60 in Soerabaja. Wachlin, ‘Grootschalige fotostudio’s’, 122, 163.

45 Hoerner, ‘Zur Geschichte’, 40.

46 The editor was J. A. F. van den Houte Willems, a pharmacist, chemist, and amateur photographer in Batavia.

47 ‘De firma Meissenbach Riffahrt & Co. in Berlijn moge op kunstgebied een prima firma zijn, van

overzeesche orders heeft zij blijkbaar nog weinig ondervinding. Ze schijnt namelijk de afstand en de communicatie tusschen Berlijn en Batavia even groot en even gemakkelijk te rekenen, als die tusschen Berlijn en Amsterdam’ (*De Indische Lux* 4:5 (May 1905) 100).

48 Again, the photographer Hermann Salzwedel is not mentioned on the postcard.

49 Sophie Junge, ‘Groet uit Java: Picture Postcards and the Transnational Making of the Colony around 1900’, *History of Photography* 48:2 (2018) 168-184, DOI:10.1080/03087298.2018.1500742.

Station te Soerabaja.



Photo - Atelier Kurkdjian, Soerabaja

Uitg. H. van Ingen, Soerabaja.



Figure 6: *Station te Soerabaja*, ed. H. van Ingen, Photo-Atelier Kurkdjian (Soerabaja), picture postcard, halftone print. © Leiden University Library, KITLV 1404403.

Taking the local postcard producers into consideration reveals the complex economic and artistic exchange relations that manifested in Soerabaja. Furthermore, not only actors from Europe like Van Ingen were involved in these networks but also anonymous local employees. An Armenian photographer and a Peranakan Chinese correspondent were part of the enterprise profiting from Adolf Feller's demands for postcards from the 'foreign colony'.

Finally, the whole technical equipment for both photographers and print shops as well as the theoretical discourse on photography that determined the iconography of the photographs and picture postcards was imported from Europe. The colonial daily press and photo journals such as *De Indische Lux* promoted camera equipment, technical developments, printing papers, and postcards that had just arrived from Europe. Consequently, the journal's subscribers were introduced to the newest photographic products and the latest aesthetic trends from Europe. The journal also reprinted texts from mostly German and English photo journals and guidebooks about photographic practices and the artistic potential of photography, and offered its subscribers space for questions and comments in each issue.⁵⁰ The fast cross-imperial transmission of knowledge from Europe, the demands for photographic products in the Dutch East Indies, and the exchange of local amateur photographers, commercial studios, and printers in the journal reveal the photographic networks of individuals in the Dutch empire. Using these exchange relations, the picture postcards from Soerabaja were created and circulated through the initiative of several individuals. The Dutch colonial government must have approved of this business arrangement because it legitimated Dutch rule over Java.⁵¹

Collecting postcards from Soerabaja in Switzerland

This last section discusses how Feller benefitted from the Dutch colonial empire, particularly how his postcards from Soerabaja served his personal collecting interests as a Swiss individual while legitimising Dutch colonialism in a city as far as Horgen, Switzerland. The picture postcards from Soerabaja arrived in Horgen a few weeks later in 1924. At their Swiss destination they became part of Feller's extensive postcard collection, together with hundreds

50 See, for example, Wieger Idzerda, 'Het portret,' *De Indische Lux* 4:8 (August 1905) 259-263. The article was translated and reprinted from *Fotografie als Kunst*. Subscribers were mainly male amateur photographers in the Indies with enough time and financial resources to invest in photographic knowledge and equipment.

51 One of many examples of the Dutch official image politics is a souvenir album by Ohannes Kurkdjian with photographs of the celebrations of Queen Wilhelmina's enthronement in September 1898 in Soerabaja (album ALB-0433 in the Tropenmuseum collection).



▲
Figure 7: Groet uit Java, ed. F. W. Krapp and P. Demcker, picture postcard, four-color halftone print, 1899. Private collection of Sophie Junge.

of picture postcards from Switzerland and other places around the globe. Today, the Feller postcard collection contains about 54.000 items sent between 1889 and 1980 and is part of the ETH image archive.⁵²

Feller was born in 1879 into a rich Bernese farmer's family. As a young salesman, he worked in the Swiss city of Les Verrières, in Leicester in Great-Britain, and in Catania located in Sicily, and he travelled the world before purchasing the electro-technical business in 1909.⁵³ From his travels he brought back souvenir objects and thousands of postcards that he kept geographically sorted in albums.⁵⁴ Feller also received postcards from family members, friends, and picture postcard correspondents.⁵⁵ K. K. Khouw was not the only correspondent Adolf Feller received postcards from. Taking a closer look at the inscription of two other postcards from Java gives insight into the collecting practices at the time.⁵⁶ The first postcard was sent from Buitenzorg (Bogor) in 1929 and reads: 'Dear Sir, We are awfully sorry not to have been able to write before. Thanks very much for your card. What a nice place Horgen looks like! This stamps is an air mail one. We should to exchange stamps and cards further. Yours truly, Nora and (...)'.⁵⁷ Another card, sent from Malacca in 1914, reads: 'Dear Sir, It is quite a long time since we will [sic] last wrote to each other. I have sent you a selection of stamps which I hope has reached you in safety. Expecting a reply soon. I am yours, (...)'.⁵⁸

Obviously, Feller exchanged postcards and stamps with several correspondents ('Postkartenfreunde') from the Dutch East Indies. Collecting postcards and corresponding with collectors linked Feller to other 'armchair travelers' around the globe.⁵⁹ Annett Holzheid emphasises the specificity of picture postcard collecting, as it functioned as a private cult and a shared public activity at the same time.⁶⁰ Exchanging postcards helped them create a 'culture of international travel' which Kristin L. Hoganson defines as a 'culture permeated with reports and images of foreign travel, a culture ripe with *ersatz* travel experiences'.⁶¹ Picture postcards thus had the potential in contributing

52 After Feller's death his daughter Elisabeth Feller (1901-1973) continued to collect picture postcards. The collection was transferred to the ETH archive in 2008.

53 Adolf Feller, *Adolf Feller 1909-1934* (Horgen 1934) 11-18; Monica Burri, *The World in Pocket-Size Format: The Adolf Feller Postcard Collection* (Zurich 2011) 20-21.

54 I thank Nicole Graf from the ETH image archive for this information.

55 On postcard correspondence in British India see Mathur, 'Wanted Native Views', 102.

56 Only four postcards from the Dutch East Indies carry a personal note and were not sent by Khouw.

57 ETH Image archive, inv. no. FEL-050339.

58 ETH Image archive, inv. no. FEL-035128.

59 Jens Jäger, 'Globalisierte Bilder – Postkarten und Fotografie: Überlegungen zur medialen Verklammerung von "Ost" und "West"', *zeitenblicke* 10:2 (2011), http://www.zeitenblicke.de/2011/2/Jaeger/index_html. Accessed 18 August 2018.

60 Holzheid, *Das Medium der Postkarte*, 251.

61 Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium*, 195. See also Walter, 'Die Ansichtskarte'.

to the identity of individuals as participants of a global tourist mentality which ‘resulted in a sense of living in a time and place marked by mobility and touristic encounters.’⁶² Linked to speed, transportation and communication, picture postcards can be regarded as *chiffres* of modernity⁶³, as ‘the attributes of a new era’, next to ‘cars and the first bicycle’ as the Dutch illustrated monthly *Op de Hoogte* enthusiastically proclaimed in 1914.⁶⁴ Accordingly, Felix Axster has described the collecting practices in the German Empire as a sport that combined entertainment and the gathering of geographical and colonial knowledge.⁶⁵

In Feller’s case, the postcards created a connection between the personal spaces of the sender and addressee. Through its journey from Soerabaja to Feller’s residence in Horgen, the postcard had the ‘capacity [...] to serve as traces of authentic experience’, as Susan Stewart has pointed out.⁶⁶ They gained value by their material relation to the depicted location where K. K. Khouw bought and sent the set of cards. They transformed the exterior, the city of Soerabaja, into a pictorial object that could be appropriated and personalised.⁶⁷ This personalisation was further emphasised when the postcards entered Feller’s private home as collectible commodities.

Since all the cards sent to Feller were inscribed only with the initial ‘K.’ and a number, they did not function as a vehicle for a personal message but mainly as a commodity to collect and keep.⁶⁸ It was not uncommon to send postcards without a personal message, a practice that Eva Tropper has explained with their change of status from text to an image medium around 1900.⁶⁹ As photographic images, many of them were kept in albums, often next to personal photographs and prints bought from commercial photo studios.⁷⁰

The ‘postcard-mania’ that exploded around 1900 led to organised collecting activity, the foundation of clubs, magazines, and professional

62 Hoganson, *Consumers’ Imperium*, 155 and 165-166.

63 Felix Axster, ‘Die Welt sammeln: Strategisches Potenzial der Sportsemantik um 1900,’ in: Felix Axster, Jens Jäger, Kai Marcel Sicks, and Markus Stauff (eds.), *Mediensport: Strategien der Grenzziehung* (Munich 2009) 108.

64 Jan van Dokkum, ‘Een stukje geschiedenis van de prentbriefkaart’, *Op de Hoogte* (May 1914) 265. He speaks of ‘attributen van den nieuwen tijd’ next to ‘rijwielen en de eerste fiets’ (English translation S.J.).

65 Axster, ‘Die Welt sammeln’, 107.

66 Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham and London 1993) 135.

67 *Ibid.*, 137.

68 Christraud M. Geary and Virginia-Lee Webb, ‘Introduction’, in: Christraud M. Geary and Virginia-Lee Webb (eds.), *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards* (Washington 1998) 4.

69 Tropper, ‘Bild/Störung’, 11.

70 See, for example, the photographs and picture postcards in Melchior Treub’s travel album ALB-0212 in the Tropenmuseum collection.

postcard correspondents all around the globe.⁷¹ With a large and growing collection which he kept as a sign of his worldliness and décor in his Swiss home, Feller took part in in this worldwide postcard enthusiasm. Collecting postcards from Soerabaja meant taking part in a growing consumer culture after 1900. However, images from the Dutch East Indies were by no means Feller's main collecting interest. Instead, the postcard set from Soerabaja was as good as any other to enrich his collection with postcards from far-away travel destinations. Feller did not have any personal connection with the Dutch East Indies, and it is safe to assume that his correspondent K. K. Khouw chose the set of pictures to be sent to Switzerland him- or herself. Owning postcards from the Dutch colony was mostly attractive for Feller to emphasise his global knowledge and networks as an interconnected Swiss businessman and to show off his personal taste as an image collector.

At the same time, sending, receiving and collecting postcards from Soerabaja in Switzerland helped to commodify the Dutch empire. Unlike recipients in the Netherlands, for whom postcards from the Dutch East Indies connected metropole and colony and visually confirmed the prosperity of their colony, Feller was not particularly interested in promoting images of the Dutch colony, as the relatively small number of postcards from the Dutch East Indies in his extensive collection can indicate. Nevertheless, he consumed the same images as Dutch recipients and was involved in the production of colonial knowledge systems.⁷² His practices of collecting brought Dutch colonialism into the private space of his Swiss household. Even though Feller's postcards were probably not consciously sent with any political agenda, they casually 'normalised' Dutch colonialism. By disseminating an image of the successfully colonised city of Soerabaja as part of a 'home-colonist culture'⁷³, the picture postcards helped to promote the imperial goals of the Dutch empire.⁷⁴ Adolf Feller became an active distributor of colonial propaganda on the Dutch East Indies. At the same time, Feller's collecting activity shows the degree 'to which countries that did not possess any overseas territories of their

71 Van Dokkum, 'Een stukje geschiedenis', 271. For an overview of picture postcards from the Dutch East Indies see Leo Haks and Steven Wachlin, *Indonesië: 500 oude prentbriefkaarten* (Rijswijk 2005).

72 On the significance of objects and collectibles in changing daily contexts see Anke te Heesen and Emma Spary, 'Sammeln als Wissen', in: Anke te Heesen and Emma Spary (eds.), *Sammeln als Wissen: Das Sammeln und seine wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Bedeutung* (Göttingen 2001) 12.

73 Axster, *Koloniales Spektakel*, 14 and Susan Legêne, 'Photographic Playing Cards and the Colonial Metaphor: Teaching the Dutch Colonial Culture', in: Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (eds.), *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London 2004) 96. See also Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York 1995) esp. 207-231.

74 Schär, *Tropenliebe*, 16.

own were nevertheless integrated into the colonial world order', as Christof Dejung shows in his recent publication with regard to the Swiss trading company Volkart.⁷⁵ The naturalness with which the postcards from colonised Soerabaja – as a 'repercussion of the overseas empires on Swiss society', as Patricia Purtschert and Harald Fischer-Tiné have described aspects of 'colonial Switzerland' – became part of Feller's extensive collection shows how Swiss culture was deeply enmeshed with colonial projects.⁷⁶ In the long run, the photographs from Soerabaja might have helped to consolidate this 'powerful colonial matrix that informed the ways in which white Swiss reacted to their non-white counterparts'.⁷⁷

Conclusion

The set of picture postcards from Soerabaja that are kept in the ETH image archive in Zurich today functioned as travelling agents of Dutch colonialism. Being sent to Switzerland, they promoted the success of Dutch colonial rule over the city of Soerabaja as a controllable and economically promising place, and served the consolidation of the Dutch empire with their choice of subjects, their Dutch-language depictions and the image of Queen Wilhelmina on the stamps. At the same time, their composition and iconography shared the contemporary visual standards and fulfilled European expectations of a successfully governed colony in Southeast Asia. Made, bought, sent, and received by actors from the Netherlands and of Chinese heritage in Soerabaja, from Armenia, England and Switzerland, these picture postcards were the result of cross-imperial business initiatives.

Circulating beyond geographical and formal political borders, the picture postcards from Soerabaja show that the Dutch empire was by no means a secluded entity.⁷⁸ Instead, the empire, materialised as the representation of *rust en orde* in the colonised city of Soerabaja on the picture postcard, reached the European hinterland as far as Horgen by Lake Zurich. Focusing on this particular set of postcards, this paper shows that the production and reception of colonial imagery was by no means restricted to official Dutch image politics.

In addition, the circulation and consumption of postcards from Soerabaja created financial opportunities for local businesses within the empire such as the photo studio of Kurkdjian, the print shop H. van Ingen, and the postcard correspondent K. K. Khouw, who profited from extra-imperial demands for picture postcards, such as Feller's enthusiasm for these

75 Christof Dejung, *Commodity Trading, Globalization and the Colonial World: Spinning the Web of the Global Market* (New York and London 2018) 1, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315646831>.

76 Purtschert and Fischer-Tiné, 'Introduction', 4-6.

77 *Ibid.*, 4.

78 Schär, *Tropenliebe*, 13.

souvenirs, and served the consumerist desires of this collector in Switzerland. All these actors helped to promote the political demands of the Dutch empire, namely to circulate and commodify an image of the Dutch East Indies that involved non-Dutch actors like Feller in the production of colonial knowledge systems.

Today, picture postcards from the Dutch East Indies are kept in different archives in the Netherlands and other European countries like Switzerland and Germany. As reproduced images, they are simultaneously accessible in different contexts which determine their political, national, and historical meaning.⁷⁹ Postcards in the KITLV collection at Leiden University Libraries mainly represent the country's colonial past. Feller's postcards from Soerabaja at the ETH image archive tell a different story of Swiss mobility and cosmopolitanism after 1900. Even more so, they express a Swiss colonial mentality. Without having colonies themselves, individuals in Switzerland like Feller took part in the networks of colonialism and supported colonial power structures in Southeast Asia from 'the margins of colonialism'.⁸⁰

The fact that the same images exist simultaneously in different archive collections questions the interpretation that these photographs of Soerabaja were perhaps taken solely for national purposes, as these images and their circulation urge researchers to undertake a transnational approach of photography from colonial Indonesia.

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79 Geoffrey Batchen, 'Double Displacement. Photography and Dissemination', in: Thierry Gervais (ed.), *The 'Public' Life of Images* (Cambridge 2016) 51-85.

80 Purtschert and Fischer-Tiné, 'Introduction', 7.