THE SPECTACLE HAUNTING EUROPE: COLONIALISM, COMMERCIALISM, AND

EVERYDAY IMAGES OF AFRICA IN IMPERIAL GERMANY

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THE SPECTACLE HAUNTING EUROPE: COLONIALISM, COMMERCIALISM, AND
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ABSTRACT

This study examined the simultaneous creation of a visual, consumer, and

colonial culture in a rapidly industrializing and newly formed German nation-state

from 1884-1914. By juxtaposing state policies and German colonial activity in Africa

with images of Africa created by a burgeoning consumer media, I delineated the

selective construction of a general, active, and mass disseminated German

worldview. Utilizing 122 commercially-produced collector's card images alongside

the works of German colonial and visual historians, this thesis explored how

domestic socioeconomic transformations and global state-sponsored activity were

both presented to and also designed to create the everyday Modern German public.

The rationalizations of Modern German society such as national identity, industrial

production, scientific thinking, commercial markets, and consumer culture enabled

mass society by creating a standardized gaze. Imperial Germany witnessed an

alignment of national and commercial interests that encouraged a common way of

seeing that decontextualized and dehumanized in the name of objectivity, progress,

unity, and pleasure. Because colonial mastery, establishing national superiority, and

early forms of visual product promotion each relied on this same authoritarian

discursive technique, it is here argued that colonialism be seen not as a separate

entity or phenomenon from nineteenth century European Modernity. Instead,

colonial thinking was foundational to a modern German identity that was

increasingly nationalistic, commercial, scientific, and rationalized into a popularized

mass utopia. Furthermore, it was mass visual images in particular that constructed

this collective experience, communicated social norms, and regulated social

belonging through reflexive associations. This reexamination of the birth of

Germany's mass media, national consciousness, and consumerist fantasies holds

greater implications for Germany's eventual fascist imagination and her

contemporary consumer economy.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences have examined a thesis titled "The Spectacle Haunting Europe: Colonialism, Commercialism, and Everyday Images of Africa in Imperial Germany," presented by Joseph Paul Jones, candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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To my favorite critic and companion, Katie Baker Jones, the spry little light that illuminates my way

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Starting May of 1884, Otto von Bismarck—the first Chancellor of a united

Germany— reversed his position on the annexation of overseas colonies. Though he

denied state support petitions from the Rhenish Missionary Society, Bismarck

agreed to hoist the German flag in South West Africa at the request of Bremen

merchant Adolf Lüderitz. Deceiving the Africans about the actual size of the coastal

strip he was purchasing, Lüderitz paid a bargain price for land he believed rich with

gold and diamonds.[1] Cameroon and Togo were similarly brought under Berlin's

protection as leading firms such as C. Woermann and Wölber & Brohm called for

assistance in ending the local African trade monopoly. German rule was firmly

established in December of 1884 when Navy units "set fire to four villages and

staged a massacre of the inhabitants."[2]

When entrepreneur and ardent nationalist Karl Peters received colonial

status for East Africa from Berlin but failed to negotiate with the areas main power

broker—the Sultan of Zanzibar—a fierce native resistance followed. The Reichstag,

under the guise of ending the slave trade, commissioned an expedition to pacify the

natives. Months of brutal warfare followed ending when the Reichstag passed

credits worth over 3,000,000 Deutsche Mark to pay off the Sultan.[3] The following

years—from 1885 to 1918—were a tumultuous, ambivalent, and often violent

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[1] Helmuth Stoecker, ed., *German Imperialism in Africa: From the beginnings until the Second World War* (Atlantic Highlands (New Jersey): Humanities Press International, 1987), 27.
[2] Ibid., 28.
[3] Charles Miller, *Battle for the Bundu: The First World War in East Africa* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1974), 8.

period. German colonial firms, governments, and settlers aggressively attempted to establish dominance in a foreign land now claimed their own. This violently disrupted the social, economic, political, and cultural lives of numerously diverse African peoples. The material and social relationship between the self-claimed colonizer and his supposed subjects was fundamentally transformed.

In this same period, German society witnessed a flood of visual imagery as advancements in technology and the transition into a modern consumer culture allowed for the production and display of illustrations, pictures, posters, and eventually photographs on an unprecedented scale. Prominent among this novel flood of visual depictions were scenes of the German colonies in Africa and so-called "colonized" Africans. Advertisers, magazine illustrators, children's books authors, the designers of product packaging, creators of postcards, and producers of trading cards disseminated their visual wares to a mass German audience eager for the exotic. While colonial agents and governments were forging a new material relationship between German state and business interests and recently conquered Africans, the German public was encountering the African "Other" through a newly expanding field of visual media.

This study seeks to examine the visual relationships with African Others established in German print media and contextualize these images within changes in German society and the treatment of Africans in German colonies. This comparative approach will juxtapose official state policies, structural transformations of German society, and the needs of a visually-based mass media to reveal the multiple sources and cites for the exercise and negotiation of individual identity, cultural influence,

and social control. The tendency of previous literature to treat colonial politics and the cultural consequences of colonialism as separate entities is here complicated by investigating the similarities in colonial conquest abroad and lifestyle changes which led to a colonial outlook at home. As social relationships took on a decisively visual form through a newly forming mass media, this study proposes to look at how Germans saw themselves by how they pictured those they considered different.

This analysis will primarily focus on 122 commercial trading cards with colonial themes produced between 1884 and 1914. Starting in the 1870s but reaching full popularity by 1900, commercial entities released small-serialized trading cards or stamps with their mass-produced consumer goods, one with each purchase. The themes on such cards ranged from moments in Ancient and European history, to world landmarks, to scenes from famous plays. This study selected colonial themed cards circulating in Germany during its period of official colonialism. The cards were a widely distributed and highly visible media throughout German households.[4] Similar to other historical works on colonial imagery in contemporary advertisements, magazine illustrations, stamps, and postcards, the trading cards show many common themes and methods in their portrayals of Africans and the colonies. Analyzing these images as a whole reveals larger cultural patterns and demarcates an overarching visual milieu of race and Africa present in turn of the twentieth century Germany. At issue here is how depictions of Africans and the colonies were both images that resembled or referred

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[4] Joachim Zeller, "Harmless 'Kolonialbiedermeier'? Colonial and Exotic Trading Cards," in *German Colonialism, Visual Culture, Modern Memory*, ed. Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer. (New York: Routledge, 2010).

to something that supposedly existed and also icons—images with connotations or associations created by a community to mean something specific.[5] Historic contextualization, art history, and Barthian semiotics provide a framework to understand African images created by a novel and burgeoning mass German media. Mass media illustrators drew from popular tropes and according to prevailing contemporary trends and ideas. They also used visual techniques such as contrast, symmetry, scale, and object placement to generate consistent and unmistakable social meanings in their images. By exhaustively investigating the what, how, and why of card illustrator's creations, we can see how the multiple needs of a rapidly changing German society greatly determined the symbolism surrounding everyday portrayals of Africans and colonization.

Theoretically speaking, this study is both a microhistory and an exercise in the history of ideas. By focusing on one particular everyday source, this intellectual microhistory makes larger inferences about collective attitudes, not just of elite thinkers but of the "common sense" assumptions of an otherwise heterogeneous German population. The slice of life images created by card illustrators are both contextualized within the grand narratives of previous histories and also approached from a phenomenological or ego-centered perspective. Commercial artists created and utilized intertextual meanings and scrutinizing such meanings reveals the attempted rationalizations or modes of agreement between a socially, politically, and economically divided Germany. These cultural presuppositions, while negotiated and appropriated by the individual German, were used by various

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[5] W.J.T. Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want ?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

institutions and outlooks in modern, Wilhelmine Germany. Employing a common set of social and discursive practices, colonial, commercial, nationalistic, and scientific agents constructed a series of larger interconnected cultural meanings, each one reinforcing the legitimacy of the other.

Historians have detailed the social role colonialism played for the larger German public. Gender historian Lora Wildenthal, for example, revealed how issues of mixed marriage in the colonies shaped the discourse and definitions of citizenship law in Germany itself. This research showed that the metropole was not impervious to events in the colonies. Other historians such as Suzanne Zantop and Sara Lennox explored how the larger collective interest of Germans was captivated by both overseas encounters and fictional portrayals of foreign lands. They argued that, although the occupation of German colonies was itself short, the "symbolic constructs" of colonial relationships played a decisive role in the construction of modern German identity. Colonialism and contact with foreign cultures provided everyday Germans with a common opportunity to imagine and define Germany's, and thus their own, relationship with exotic others. This collective definition of national interest and desire, although heterogeneous, acted as what Jacqueline Rose has called a social "psychic glue" and showed how "Germanness has always been constituted in relationship to non-German others."[6] Contributors to *The Imperialist Imagination* traced this process of collective identity negotiation throughout German history in political discussion, popular novels, colonial rhetoric, travel writing, theater casting, photography, academic debate, film, and other forms of

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[6] Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Suzanne Zantop. "Introduction." in *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 6.

discourse. The colonial-themed trading cards are part of this larger trend of popular exoticism and nationalism. Created in the wake of a newly formed German nation-state and during a period of state-sponsored colonialism, the trading cards offered viewers a chance to witness German identity in action, juxtaposed to a clearly demarcated Other.

Postcolonial scholars have argued that modern European imperialism involved "a process by which the empire [defined] itself against those it colonizes, excludes, and marginalizes."[7] Imperial agents, in order to justify their domination, built their understandings of the colonized based on distinctions dictated by the colonizer's needs. Edward Said's groundbreaking work *Orientalism* was among the first to identify this colonial strategy of establishing hegemony by essentializing an other's identity. Examining the careers and works of primarily British and French 19th and 20th century anthropologists, philologists, geographers, colonial diplomats and officials, Said showed that Western Oriental studies had never been a matter of objective scholarship but had instead functioned to reinforce stereotypes in the service of colonial politics. In Foucauldian fashion, Said exposed the connection between knowledge produced about the East and power relations. Said argued that this knowledge created by the West was used to tame the Orient. It was not objective but based on "a set of structures inherited from the past, secularized, redisposed, and reformed."[8] Moreover, European colonizers of the Orient since Napoleon had used geographers, philologists, and government officials alongside

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[7] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffen, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 158.
[8] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), 122.

armies to conquer places such as Egypt. These knowledge-producers, however, worked within their preexisting categories of understanding the East and thus approached the Orient as it "existed as a set of values attached, not to its modern realities, but to a series of valorized contacts it had with a distant European past."[9] From this position, Said was able to show how early Orientalists were not representing the East; they were in fact creating it. To Said, the discipline of Orientalism, as practiced in Britain and France, was less about the actual Orient and more about European values.

While Said's study on French and British colonialism pointed to specific policies and discursive practices that propagated colonial othering, recent work on German colonial imagery has suggested a visual form of othering more ubiquitous, subtle, and broadly persuasive. David Ciarlo, in his monograph *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany*, detailed the qualities of this optical othering and the resulting visual colonialism it produced. By examining German advertising and product packaging, Ciarlo was able to trace the contours of a visual language through which the mass media constructed German cultural and racial superiority through practices of consumerism. The everyday images of advertisements or product logos became not only saturated with but also codified and popularized racialized images of colonized peoples, most notably black Africans. Ciarlo shows how the colonial and consumer "gaze" involved a kindred logic where visual techniques to subordinate the *uncivilized* African became crucial to the success of creating a *modern* consumption-oriented German. In his reading of newly

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[9] Ibid., 85.

created advertising manuals, books written for the novel profession to legitimize their practices and offer practical advice, Ciarlo discussed the advertising technique of "command and flatter." This was an ads attempt to grab the attention of viewers without offending their sensibilities, then offering subtle compliments to create positive associations. Here, advertisers could use black Africans as a counterpoint to define modernity while praising the taste and level of civilization of German consumers. By caricaturizing or abstracting Africans, juxtaposing their "savagery" with a superior modern commodity, and using numerous visual techniques to otherwise denigrate Africans in order to promote European products, these ads invited everyday Germans to share in the spoils of colonialism by involving them in the "visual constellations of power."[10] Even a brief consumer's gaze could thus affirm white supremacy and black difference without the complications of firsthand experience or critical thought. And if visual hierarchies of race could be used to get Germans to use more toothpaste or buy new products like margarine, then all the better for a quickly expanding consumption-based society. Stereotypes were thus driven by commercial needs, and German notions of racial superiority were crucial for commercial success. Here then is a prime example of colonialism taking a visual form, entrenched in German society through its connection to the watershed projects of modern consumption and the consolidation of modern national identities.

In his analysis of postcards circa 1900, Volker Langbehn found a similar alignment of visual culture with larger trends in German society resulting from colonialism and modernity. Langbehn held that Western Europe's encounter with

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[10] David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 304.

other exotic cultures caused a self-perception defined by "an interdependent binary structure between identity and alterity."[11] Postcards supplied popular images of alterity and were thus central to identity-formation as they helped demonstrate a self in juxtaposition with an other. Langbehn analyzed two postcards containing black children, which initially do not appear related to colonialism but betray the German stance towards people with different skin color. He finds, however, that both images—using pictorial strategies such as contrasting light and dark—contained colonial themes. Utilizing the long popular trope of the *Mohrenwäsche* (washing of the moor), Langbehn showed how these postcards displayed ideas about the impossibility of civilizing the savage and the threat to tradition different races posed. These images, according to Langbehn, thus "nourish an imaginary colonialism" in the viewer.[12] Such instances of popular cultural exclusion could thus support or encourage the larger project of political and national exclusion inherent in colonialism.

Langbehn offered further evidence of colonialism's active presence in the visual field in the edited collection, *German Colonialism, Visual Culture, and Modern Memory*. In the introduction, he described the late nineteenth century as "an explosion of the visual image."[13] Langbehn illustrated the implications of this perceptual change by examining the ideological nature of satire magazines and their role in racial profiling. Analyzing a cartoon of recognizable but satirized

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[11] Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer, eds. *German Colonialism and National Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 90.
[12] Ibid., 95.
[13] Volker Langbehn, ed. *German Colonialism, Visual Culture and Modern Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 3.

German politicians dropping a black boulder labeled "200,000,000 Mark" onto overtly racialized Africans, Langbehn showed how humor "contributed to the dissemination of racial hierarchies."[14] The racial order was further established, according to Langbehn, rather unassumingly as it was achieved through ironic distancing. Visual culture could thus legitimize the colonial project even when its intention was to entertain.

The same conclusion could be drawn for Joachim Zeller's contribution as he analyzed the effects of colonial trading cards on domestic views of colonization. As corporations selling coffee or bouillon cubes issued these cards, Zeller claimed, they were considered politically neutral and unaffected by ideology. But their portrayal of an "antagonistic world with a clear division of role," Zeller argued, created an othering in which the "dehumanized image of the Other formed the necessary precondition for consolidating and safeguarding the superior European identity."[15] The cards often showed a paternalistic image of the benevolent white man, thus masking the economic interests of colonists. Meanwhile, "the black man mutated into a caricature in the Western imagination, serving all pejorative prejudices and xenophobic clichés."[16] Langbehn showed that colonialism, even through a supposedly politically neutral medium, took on a visual form as popular image-makers—consciously or inadvertently—contributed to justifying its greater project.

Using visual analysis to address issues of colonialism is part of the "pictorial turn" in cultural studies, suggesting images are a vital constituent of the human

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[14] Ibid., 118.
[15] Ibid., 74.
[16] Ibid., 76.

environment. Like the "linguistic turn", however, there are seemingly endless

variations of what pictures mean or how they operate. Martin Jay, one of the

prominent commentators on the field, exclaimed "we have a welter of competing

interpretations of the meaning and implications of vision and visuality. Choosing

among them moreover is no easy task, as it is not clear what would count as

evidence for or against one or the other."[17] Like words, pictures have a multitude of

possible interpretations and can mean different things to different people. Ciarlo,

Langbehn, and Zeller, however, discovered that cultural tropes and consistencies in

cultural messaging could codify a set of images and set guidelines for how an image

was socially understood. To interpret the colonially themed trading cards then, it is

important to consider both the specific purpose and intent of the cards' creators as

well as larger cultural trends. Viewed as a group, the cards' patterns of portrayal

will show how individual creators drew from socially defined concepts to

communicate unambiguous cultural meanings.

Trading card designers conveyed their ideas by not only what they portrayed

but also how they portrayed. Cultural theorist Roland Barthes—in his work on

semiology, *Image-Music-Text*—devised a useful approach in discerning how an

image delivered its message. Applying his explanation of symbols to a diverse range

of topics from film to education, Barthes also investigated the "rhetoric of the image"

and provided interpretative strategies and insights for "reading" pictures. The mass

image, Barthes argued, worked by an interplay of connotative and denotative

elements where iconic messages bound in perception and irrespective of larger

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[17] Teresa Brennan and Martin Jay, eds. "Introduction." In *Vision in Context* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 10.

social codes were intertwined with cultural messages. In other words, the basic visual elements such as color, shape, texture, depth, etc. were fused with culturally specific tropes, themes, and motifs to communicate cultural meanings through subtle yet effective and easily understandable depictions.

Barthes illustrated his approach to semiotics and mass imagery by referring to a printed advertisement for Panzani brand pasta. From the photograph, Barthes derived three levels of "signification." Since this was a visual experience, the significations or messages, were experienced simultaneously. One signification was the linguistic message—the brand—which by its very name signified "Italianicity."[18] A second message Barthes referred to as the "non-coded icon message" or simply the "pure images" of the objects in the advertisement. In this case they are bags of Panzani pasta, a Panzani-labeled tin, a bag of Panzani Parmesan, tomatoes, onions, mushrooms, and peppers spilling out of a netted bag. The other message is the "coded iconic message" represented by the arrangement and types of objects. The vegetables suggest freshness and the spilling out of the ingredients demonstrate a return home from the market for domestic preparation. The colors of the objects again signify "Italianicity" as do the ingredients if one's culture holds certain tourist stereotypes. The conglomeration of products recommends themselves to a complete meal as if Panzani was all one needed and aesthetically the picture is one resembling the painting of a still life. So simply from objects and "knowledge bound up with our perception," we are able to receive a symbolic message built upon a "message

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[18] Ibid., 33.

without a code."[19] The mass image thus functions by detaching and reattaching the literal and the symbolic, a viewer simultaneously receives a perceptual and a cultural message. Barthes has here described how the arrangement of objects and their connotative and denotative associated themes can create webs of meaning both explicit yet subtle, implicit but well defined. Mass images were simple, effective at communicating, and widely understood within their cultural context.

Barthes described a process were photographs designed for mass viewership delivered a "message without a code" simply by drawing on widely circulating ideas or clichés and arranging recognizable objects. The trading cards operated by the same rules of mass communication, utilizing general assumptions and placing people and objects to relay a widely understandable message. Being hand-drawn, however, the illustrators' code or design is quite identifiable. Card creators were not limited to tangible objects and had a large degree of choice in their subject matter and its presentation. Needing to create positive associations for their brands, how they decided to lay out a scene revealed larger notions of what was socially acceptable or believable. This combination of operating from a relatively blank slate and also adhering to general social expectations meant trading card illustrators had to carefully craft their depictions. Like a photograph, the message in an illustration was clear. Unlike a photograph, the intentions and conscious choices of the creator are much more visible.

Many practitioners of visual studies have argued that visual imagery does not merely reflect social motifs or passively relay cultural messages. Instead, pictures

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[19] Roland Barthes, *Music-Image-Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 36.

are active parts of the human environment as they communicate social meanings in

their own straightforward, accessible, and seemingly effortless way. It is not just the

social construction of the visual that should be examined but also the exploration of

what art historian W.J.T. Mitchell labeled "the visual construction of the social

field."[20] In *What do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*, Mitchell

anthropomorphizes images and asks what it is they demand of viewers. Covering

various topics on images, objects, and the media from Byzantine icons to science-

fiction movies to sheep cloning, Mitchell persuades readers to consider the question

backwards from the image's perspective. Barthes has already shown that images

contain their own "rhetoric" and we have witnessed Ciarlo and Langbehn

successfully claim the effectiveness of a picture's visual logic, so Mitchell's

approach—while seemingly strange at first—proves extremely fruitful when

considering the ability of images to communicate social and cultural meaning. One

way to discover what a picture wants, according to Mitchell, is "an inquiry into what

it says and does, what rituals and myths circulate around it."[21] An image, according

to Mitchell and using Durkheim's terminology, could be a "totem of the mind" as a

"self-consciously articulated 'collective representation' of ideas, communities, and

objects."[22] Here, Mitchell cites the Golden Calf of the Israelites as an example. The

image could thus be an emblem of the community, regulating social belonging and

identity. That same image could be idolized and fetishized, demanding worship or

some other kind of deference. When humans endowed images with the power of

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[20] W.J.T. Mitchell, *What do Pictures Want ?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 345.
[21] Ibid., 189.
[22] Ibid., 190.

meaning, those images could consequentially regulate social behaviors. Images, along with their symbolic attributes, could have material consequences.

The trading cards could also be approached as an active agent in the construction of the social field. To use American philosopher Nelson Goodman's term, images do not merely reflect the world but are "ways of worldmaking." The question then becomes: what kind of social world would these images have created? At issue are the image producers' intentions and the social conditions in which the images circulated. Why did trading card illustrators choose the arrangement and types of images they did and what social messages did this encourage? How did the German mass-consumer media use visual portrayals of colonialism to serve their specific needs? What kind of colonial world did this produce? A comparison between this visual colonial world and the policies of German agents in the colonies themselves exposed any differences and similarities in the construction of these supposedly separate social arenas.

To this end, the first chapter is a brief overview of Germany's major socioeconomic transitions well underway during its period of colonization, 1884-1914. Not least among these changes was a shift towards the popularization of knowledge once held strictly by elites. The new field of Anthropology challenged the traditional humanities and argued for a more empirically based understanding of man. Insights regarding the human condition were no longer confined to men of learning and the high arts, as quotidian individuals could use their own powers of observation to discover more "objective" truths. While academic anthropology strictly differentiated itself from amateurs or the "untrained" gaze of the masses,

there was a clear social embrace of Anthropology's empirical approach, evidenced by the rise of museums, people shows or human zoos (*Völkerschauen*), popular ethnography, and the trading cards themselves. This section provides historical context for the card illustrators and the environment in which their work was received.

The next chapter offers a diverse literature review on German colonialism, specifically in Africa. Colonialism was such a multifaceted affair, utilizing scholarship with a wide range of topics and approaches is, short of exhaustive primary source analysis, the best means to measure such a complex and contested concept. German colonialism in Africa followed many of the same general patterns as the other European powers. There were key differences, however, originating from Germany's unique domestic situation. In the German colonies, aristocratic and militaristic Prussian interests aligned with newly emerging industrial and commercial ventures. This alliance proved powerfully persuasive against the faint liberal and progressive voices present in the state colonial administration. State funding for colonial projects came nothing close to Britain and Germans quickly realized they could not spread their culture and language as readily as France. Generally seen as short-lived and a relative failure, German colonialism was nevertheless wholeheartedly pursued by specific German interests. It was also a formative episode during the establishment of a larger German national identity. This look at colonial policy and activity highlights the intentions and imaginations of colonial agents as well as the material outcomes.

The third chapter focuses specifically on the colonial-themed trading cards. Here, patterns are discerned in thematic content, visual styling or ways of portraying, and the various visual techniques such as object placement, contrast, sizing, etc. The consistencies in these images reveals the larger socioeconomic and culture framework in which the individual illustrators both operated and reinforced. Encoded in these messages, but plain for all to see, were visions of what it meant to be a civilized modern German as they juxtaposed the opposite archetype of the uncivilized primitive African. These images provided a widely disseminated world of alterity while, through the act of looking, allowing a mass performance of German identity. The trading cards were one of the many everyday visual sources that brought the mass German identity into being. How this process was achieved provides the bulk of the concluding chapter as colonial images in the trading cards are compared to German colonial ventures. Both projects—one an early effort at branding and establishing repeat customers, the other an imposition of authority and order based on strictly national lines—used similar methods of approaching and engaging the non-German. This common way of seeing and treating the "African" Other, presented their beliefs as self-evident, rational, and objective. While the success of German interests necessarily involved the denigration or disadvantaging of an African this, according to the shared perspective, was the natural order of things. The ubiquity and uniformity of these illustrations and policies revealed the alignment of commercial and national interests to encourage a way of seeing that dehumanized, decontextualized and otherwise saw what it needed in order to

massage the ego of the viewer or justify an aggressively established socioeconomic order.

While the individual viewer ultimately chose how to interpret or appropriate the trading cards, the consistency of illustrator's visual arrangements guided possible interpretations. Commercial artists were not merely depicting or describing the colonial world, they gave it meaning. Card illustrators attempted to deliver unambiguous messages and achieved this through visual strategies that used an image's empirical nature to draw conclusions for the viewer. By design, the trading cards allowed the modern consumer control over colonial subjects. In the cards, the one African could stand for the many of his kind, correctly categorized into the correct grouping through objective measures. The African was also clearly inferior to the German, in posture, appearance, possessions, way of life, and relative action. This contrast was utilized to promote the brand and construct a consumer ego. By comparison, the cards also allowed for a cognition or understanding of the product. It was an item where the one commodity could stand for the repeatable qualities of the many. The merchandise could be correctly categorized as superior, to both the inferior lifestyle pictured and in quality. Colonial mastery, establishing national superiority, and early forms of visual product promotion and branding were all dependent on using the other as a means to an end and exercising a self-serving prejudice to justify this usage as a matter of fact. In the trading cards, we can see that this social technique was not just colonialism's influence on popular culture or a dissemination of the colonial mentality to the wider German public. This method of approaching and appropriating the Other was instead an underlying

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attribute of multiple facets of modern German identity-national, commercial, and scientific.

CHAPTER II

GERMAN STRUCTURAL TRANSITIONS

Coinciding with Germany's colonial and visual media relationship with

Africans from 1884-1914, other social transformations were fundamentally shaping

the attitudes and lifestyles of the German public. National unification created new

opportunities for identity while industrialization and urbanization meant changing

definitions of work, social relationships, and consumption. Overarching economic

changes both organized and amplified social stratification and German society

splintered into well-defined and often antagonistic political-economic groups.

Scientific reasoning—with its empiricism, classification, and appeal to objective

certainty—was firmly established in academia. Everything from sexuality to

linguistics to history was directly influenced by some form of positivism. The

German public also participated in popularized versions of scientific discourse.

Amateur scientific societies and museums grew in popularity, while widely

circulating magazines provided non-specialist entries on topics like botany,

geography, and ethnography. Germany's structural changes both unified the

population around general notions like national identity and objective knowledge

while economic shifts also segmented German society into largely class-based

political factions. German mass and commercial media, needing to reach the largest

audience possible, avoided overt political statements. Trading card illustrators

thusly utilized only the most widely agreeable motifs and socially unifying grand

narratives.

Issues of German identity were perhaps the most prominent and all-inclusive social issue of the era. Having recently obtained statehood in 1871, Germans could now recognize themselves as a unified collective and contemplate the universal traits of a German national identity. Germanist scholar Kirsten Belgum held that the end of the nineteenth century was "when national identity in Germany most needed defining."[1] Colonial ventures offered ample opportunity to elucidate and announce the German nation. Germany could win prestige against her competitors and define her virtues against those she ruled. The German nation was founded in a highly globalized world and its citizenry negotiated their identities in a context of increasing capitalist competition. Conceptions of national worth and prestige were tied directly to global issues. Historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler illustrated how ardent nationalists and proponents of Social Darwinism called for the establishment of a German colonial empire in order to earn Germany international recognition and their "place in the sun."[2] The comparative and competitive nature of European national identities meant the everyday German came to define her nation's worth through the global contest of civilizing the world's peoples, exploiting worldwide resources and establishing a modernizing colonial rule.

The German cultural entitlement to civilize or modernize those they colonized was expressed in certain German intellectual traditions. While Nineteenth Century Germany had a rich literary tradition steeped in the cosmopolitanism of Romanticism, Germans that supported colonization could selectively interpret Romantic authors to justify their views. Colonial enthusiasts also looked to

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[1] Kirsten Belgum, *Popularizing the Nation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), xi.
[2] Hans Ulrich Wehler, *The German Empire: 1871-1918* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1985), 64.

practitioners of Germany's newest academic disciplines for a rationale of their colonial domination. Writing in the late eighteenth century, Johann Gottfried von Herder, a forerunner of modern linguistics and anthropology, defined nations as groups of people who shared a unique set of cultural characteristics including customs, rituals, language, and a common folklore.[3] Individuals and their worldviews, according to Herder, were thus the result of a specific national character. A person was shaped by their cultural upbringing and their essence could be understood through an examination of daily routines and shared beliefs on a group level. While this opened the way for a radically open-minded view of cultural relativism, Herder only considered the larger Ancient civilizations and modern Europeans as possessing national characters worthy of admiration. The central figures of modern philosophy Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, and Friedrich Nietzsche likewise excluded non-Europeans from serious consideration believing Europe to be humanity's highest expression and the zenith of character, consciousness, progress, and potential. Leopold von Ranke, a founder of modern historiography, judged most peoples outside of Europe to be lacking any real culture and unworthy of historical inquiry. Ranke held that the majority of non-Europeans did not contribute to the progress of history but instead existed in a primitive or natural state untouched by change over time. These German intellectuals—while expressing a radical reevaluation of values and establishing such forward thinking concepts as perpetual peace, the dialectics of history, and document-based reasoning—could also be appropriated by colonial supporters. As intellectuals dismissed the Extra-European

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[3] Michael Forster, ed., *Herder: Philosophical Writings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

world, they contributed to narrower definitions of peoples and nations. Colonialists could thusly argue that those outside Europe lacked the necessary attributes of a "true people."[4] At the very least, colonialists viewed the peoples of the world as fundamentally different and stunted compared to the developed, standard-setting European.

The mushrooming field of Anthropology reinforced these Manichean views and founded an entire discipline on the study of *Naturvölker* or natural peoples. Though the discipline eventually evolved and adapted to changing conditions, initially anthropology was established as "a natural science to study natural peoples."[5] As opposed to traditional Humanism that used subjective and literary methods to understand classical cultural peoples, Anthropology proposed an objective and empirical study to investigate humanity through people closer to nature and lacking the complexities of culture. Because their subjects supposedly lacked the supplement of culture, early anthropologists believed empirical observations of *Naturvölker* revealed universal human truths. In this manner, anthropologists approached their human subjects as if they were objects.

The verifiable and empirical method of Anthropology challenged traditional forms of scholarship that depended on elite knowledge or insight. The newly formed discipline exemplified the era as modern more "rational" institutions confronted aristocratic systems based on privilege. While academic anthropologists differentiated themselves from amateur practitioners, they still recognized the

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[4] George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 44-45.
[5] Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 38.

common project of empirical knowledge accumulation present at all levels of

anthropological pursuit.[6] Like rock collecting, botany, chemistry, or other popular

sciences, anthropology allowed and even thrived on wide public participation. This

universality of knowledge along with urbanization and the growth of the middle

class led to what historian Andrew Zimmerman called the "democratization of the

sources and locations scientific knowledge."[7] Magazines, museums, photographic

collections, freak shows, popular exhibits, and even trading cards included with the

purchase of a brand name commodity could all participate in modernity's

anthropological and scientific discourse.

Throughout this period of burgeoning national unification, colonial

enterprise, and the scientization of society, Germany's economic structure was also

changing in a profound manner. While a more detailed retelling reveals the

inconsistent and uneven nature of economic growth in imperial Germany, Wolfgang

Mommsen described an "extraordinary transformation" in the German economy.[8] In

the second half of the nineteenth century, Germany went from being an industrial

backwater to one of the most internationally prominent industrial nations. Such

rapid growth fundamentally altered the once primarily agrarian German way of life.

It was not just the growth in factory jobs, but white-collar jobs, high-skilled

positions, and small business opportunities also expanded. During this period,

Mommsen held, Germany increasingly became a bourgeois society where middle-

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[6] Ibid., 118.
[7] Ibid., 4.
[8] Wolfgang Mommsen, *Imperial Germany 1867-1918* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009), 102.

class and bureaucratic values displaced the influence of the aristocracy.[9] While

differing from region to region, industry and commerce became central to an

increasing number of people's daily lives. As historian Ralf Dahrendorf put it,

German industrialization was "late, quick, [and] thorough."[10] The period in question

thus involved a German people increasingly tied to a market in which they made

more, bought more, and used significantly more goods than before. This demand for

resources and raw materials partly drove public support for German colonial rule.

Certain businessmen, politicians, and private citizens believed in the economic

advantages of empire, either as a source of materials, an untapped market, or an

economic "safety-valve" to absorb German emigrants.[11] More importantly, the

growth of the modern market economy created stratified social classes,

nevertheless united in both their dependence on commercial activity and also their

reliance on consumer goods. As changes in trade and production divided people into

classes and interests, the common fate of an intertwined market and participation in

novel consumer practices created new outlets for social cohesion.

Trading card illustrators designing for mass commercial promotion

participated in the collective articulation of these social, cultural, economic, and

political changes. Utilizing colonial themes, commercial artists operated within a

worldview that essentialized group identities and associated a people's nature with

relative levels of culture or advancement. Furthermore they drew with an air of

authority, providing as they were empirical observations of foreign peoples and

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[9] Ibid., 116.
[10] Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1967), 34.
[11] Wehler, 106.

lands. Created by numerous individuals, the cards were nevertheless colored by the historic context of a nationalistic, colonial, increasingly scientific and rapidly industrializing and commercializing Germany. As illustrators reached for mass consensus, they created a specific form of social consciousness. Drawing a colonial Africa differentiated from Germany along clearly demarcated lines, card designers communicated the values needed to both establish and also maintain the nationalistic, imperial, rational, and consumption-orientated modern German identity. Before examining the colonial world created by commercial artists, let us first examine the colonial world according to the historian.

CHAPTER III

THE CONSTRUCTS AND CONCLUSIONS OF GERMAN COLONIAL HISTORIANS

Bernhard Dernburg's 1907 appointment to the head of the German Imperial

Colonial Office ushered in an era of colonial reform. Dernburg outspokenly

dissociated himself from previous colonial practices and claimed, "Europe is in

Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes and of the native races in

their progress to a higher plane."[1] Excerpts from a 1909 German school curriculum

for African children demonstrated the decisively German and industrial definitions

of indigenous progress. History and geography lessons consisted of identifying the

states and capitals of Europe, learning Germany's major rivers and mountains, and

studying the wars and advisors of emperor Wilhelm I. One writing assignment asked,

"What good things have the Europeans brought us?"[2] Arithmetic consisted of

calculating export percentage increases. One word problem asked about the relative

value of pork laborers could have bought had they not purchased brandy. For

colonizers, improving the native meant making the native think like a German—or

in a way useful to Germans—civilizing the diverse peoples of Africa through German

definitions of culture, economic priority, labor, living, and consumption.

Although German state-sponsored colonialism was relatively short-lived

from 1884-1918, historic literature on the topic covers a range of topics and

approaches. In general, historians describe an encounter that permanently changed

both the so-called colonizer and colonized. Following the basic patterns of other

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[1] W.O Henderson, *The German Colonial Empire 1884-1919* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1993), 100.
[2] Bruce Fetter, ed., *Colonial rule in Africa: Readings from Primary Sources* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1979), 128-29.

nineteenth century European colonial powers, Germans participated in the partitioning of foreign lands. In these inhabited and distant locales, a variety of German interests attempted to recreate a German social order or at least a socioeconomic environment conducive to German enterprises. Both state and private funding and initiative were crucial for this project's success. Colonial governments, private citizens, and a range of commercial, industrial, and agricultural companies, all worked to carve out a foreign space beneficial to German needs. This establishment of a new social order involved disrupting established social networks such as native trade monopolies, production methods, and political or ethnic organization. Many native lifestyles were also restructured to meet German labor and resource demands. This colonial period was marked by a severe and often violent imposition of German administration, economic rationalization, and order.

Much of the historic literature showed that colonial policy and German exploits did not always produce the desired results. By German standards, the colonies were in fact largely a failure. Overall and especially for the state, the colonies were not profitable. Only a handful of specialized economic interests found the colonial relationship economically beneficial. Despite popular aspirations, the colonies did not act as a social "safety-valve" and absorb a substantial amount of German emigrants. In 1913, the over 1,000,000 square miles of colonial territory had a population of little more than 24,000 German settlers.[3] Even the German language failed to take hold amongst the local populace. Meanwhile, the German

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[3] Arthur Knoll, ed. *Germans in the Tropics: Essays in German Colonial History* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 3.

taxpayer shouldered the bulk of colonial costs with little return. Opponents of German colonial ventures were numerous and vocal including Social Democrats, the Catholic Center Party, Protestant missionaries, and other moral objectors. Public opinion was swayed by reports of German colonial atrocities against local populations. These actions contradicted the commonly held notions of a civilized and Enlightened Germany. While German colonialists had clear-cut ideals and ambitions, social realities abroad and domestic public relations proved much more complex and volatile.

German historians characterize an aggressive yet socially divided and unsuccessful German colonial empire. To effectively compare this historical image to trading card illustrators' colonial depictions, it is necessary to approach colonial history as a historiography—to examine how historical facts are selected and presented. Colonial historians provide different narratives and draw a diverse range of conclusions. Examining how different historical approaches yield particular results will inform the analysis of commercial illustrators' colonial images. Where do historic methods, facts, and narratives overlap with commercial artists' colonial creations? Where is there disconnect between a colonial world crafted for German consumption and the material/social circumstances of those colonies? As historians describe the rapid rise of an industrial, imperial, and multifaceted German nation, card designers and commercial entities mass produced rational, objective, and practical images for that modern community.

The first historians of German colonialism discussed colonial structures and actors such as governments, politicians, policies, private interest groups,

bureaucratic decision-making procedures and the available resources in a given

area. Historians then drew conclusions about a colony's "success" based on the

satisfaction or shortcomings of these German institutional demands. During the

First World War, Great Britain anticipated their takeover of German colonies. To

prepare for any upcoming negotiations or changes in administration, the Foreign

Office of the British government appealed to "trained writers on historical subjects"

to provide them with a history of the German colonies.[4] Albert Calvert's *German East*

Africa detailed the German acquisition of the colony, the colony's physical features,

and the successes of German plantation cultivation. Calvert also detailed the mining

industry and minerals available, while highlighting certain German failures when it

came to "organizing" labor. The German education system for the natives was

commended and Calvert showed that the cost of these was bore by the German state

and missions. The pupils were unwilling to pay and according to Calvert, was

evidence that the native population was "unconstituted to appreciate" German

Kultur.[5] Overall Calvert applauded German colonizers for the "application of first-

rate German systems to a fifth-rate negro race."[6] In these narratives the colonized

African had failed to meet the colonizing German's needs. By only investigating the

metropole' s actions, goals, and actors, historians drew conclusions based solely on

the colonizer's demand and use of her newly claimed territories.

Further removed from the actual colonial period, the 1987 edited collection

Germans in the Tropic: Essays in German Colonial History provides a look at German

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[4] British Foreign Office, Historical Section, *German African Possessions* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1920), No 114, p. 18.
[5] Ibid., 97.
[6] Albert Calvert, *German East Africa* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1917), xix.

colonial historians' diverse topics and arguments. Some historians maintained

similar conclusions to the original colonial histories. The work opens with Lewis

Gann's detailed economic and political analysis. Gann examined the two main

domestic motivations for colonialism: the desire to achieve *Weltmacht* through the

accumulation of resources and bourgeois-inspired notions that colonies could act as

a socioeconomic safety valve. Gann showed how the colonies failed to make profits,

provide adequate resources, or attract 'surplus' German emigrants. Despite the

failure of its ideals, Gann maintained, German colonialism did have the long-term

effect of establishing political boundaries and traditions in four eventually

independent African states. German colonialism, according to Gann, while not

central to German history itself, did transmit new methods of production, literacy,

and methods of economic and political management to another people. By

examining the economic and political efforts of Germans but downplaying the

importance of colonialism for Germany, Gann portrayed a selfless colonizer simply

spreading a superior way of life.

Other authors of the same volume also analyzed the complexity and

consequences of colonial institutions and their actions. Richard Pierard focused on

one organization, the German Colonial Society. Originating as a pressure group

lobbying the government for overseas expansion, the organization soon evolved into

a more general interest group, viewing itself as the "colonial conscious of

Germany."[7] Besides lobbying the government, the group's main focus was to raise

public awareness and appreciation of the colonies and to directly sponsor colonial

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[7] Knoll, ed., 28.

development and settlement. The Society organized public lectures, distributed literature, founded libraries and supported charities. One of the Society's programs subsidized the travel of females to Africa in an attempt to improve the "moral" level of the colonies. The group's membership included military and naval officers, government officials, judges, merchants, shopkeepers, small manufacturers, teachers, physicians, and entrepreneurs. While these professions were present in other patriotic groups of the Second Reich such as the Pan-German League or the Society for Germandom Abroad, the German Colonial Society had the most noticeably elite membership. It did not attract working class support. Despite this class bias, Pierard described an organization that was eventually dominated by "moderates" as the group began to downplay its rhetoric of radical nationalism. Germany's premier civil advocate for empire, Pierard argued, was more focused on the success of particular colonial projects than promoting abstract notions of nationalism. Even as a moderate colonial conscious, the German Colonial Society supported projects founded on nationalistic principles with nationalistic aims, namely the advancement of German enterprise at the expense of all non-German endeavors. As the popularity of colonialism in Germany waxed and wane, its most consistent supporters were those most rationalized in the modern German order.

Historian Arthur Knoll's contribution analyzed the process of decision-making in the German African colonies. Knoll described a "tri-colored rivalry" between domestic bureaucrats, colonial officials, and private interest groups.[8] At the center of state bureaucracy was the Colonial Section (later Colonial Office), whose

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[8] Ibid., 132.

director—the constitution stated—was supposed to report directly to the Chancellor. Knoll used three case studies, however, and showed Berlin's colonial directors were forced to negotiate with the multiple interests of the German Senate and a host of junior players attempting to dictate their own colonial policies. The Senate had to approve colonial budgets and each colony had to report an itemized receipt of all costs. This meant fiscal decision-making was slow and funding for projects was never guaranteed. And because private investors were reluctant empire builders, colonial governors and directors found themselves continually frustrated and constrained by a multifarious *Reichstag*'s shortsighted oversight of colonial budgets. Knoll also examined how the military in East Africa, a concession company in Togo, and settlers in Southwest Africa all attempted to circumvent the Colonial Section and influence the Chancellor's colonial policy. The German Imperial Navy had direct authority over German troops abroad but colonial directors and governors did not want an unchecked military pursuing campaigns across their jurisdiction. In 1895 this issue came to a head when a new governor of German East Africa, Hermann von Wissman, proved "unstable, sick, and sometimes addicted to drugs; he did not inspire the confidence of the military."[9] With the military and its supporters in the *Reichstag* essentially ignoring civil authorities in the colonies, the Colonial Director Paul Kayser used political tactics and his access to the Chancellor. Among other things, he threatened resignation, and eventually persuaded the Chancellor to reorganize the military. Colonial Soldiers (the *Schutztruppe*) now reported directly to the Colonial Section and army regulars replaced local

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[9] Ibid., 135.

adventurers as the colonial officer corps. Though he resigned immediately after, Director Kayser ensured the colonial military only carried out policy and did not have a hand in creating it.

Knoll described a similar victory of Berlin's civil authority over a concession company in 1910 Togo. Because funding from the Senate was often difficult to obtain, the Colonial Section granted contracts to concession companies and encouraged them to economically develop areas. The land speculation company *Deutsche Togo Gessellschaft* (DTG) was founded in 1897 and for a number of years enjoyed unchecked access to land ownership in Togo. In 1910 Governor August Köhler finally decided the DTG had gone too far. The Governor claimed locals now did not have enough land for their own agriculture and many were tricked with liquor or grossly underpaid. The company also had a practice, the Governor argued, of posing as government officials and many locals had been misled in thinking they were dealing with local administrators, not a land speculation company. The *Reichstag* reviewed the situation but only examined land treaties and these they ruled fair and legal. German missionaries working with the Ewe sided with Governor and sent a questionable DTG treaty to the *Reichstag.* When socialists, known opponents of imperialism, saw the land in the treaty was the same area being debated in the *Reichstag* as a proposed Railroad route, they denounced the treaty and the DTG. Drawing on the general unpopularity of colonialism at the time and the popular moral outrage at other colonial abuses, socialists spearheaded a

commission that forced the company to return more than 50% of its land to the Togolese.[10]

The Colonial Section was not able to maintain its position of decision-maker in Knoll's third case study of settlers in German South-West Africa. Settlers managed to appeal to their conservative supporters in the *Reichstag* who continually challenged the decisions of then Colonial Director Dernburg. The same unpopularity of colonialism from the left and center parties which had forced the DTG in Togo to return native lands was also turned towards the Colonial Section. In 1910, facing a unified opposition from the *Reichstag*, Dernburg resigned and settlers won a number of concessions including the eventual reinstatement of their local decision-making body, the *Landesrat.* If the *Reichstag* could support the Colonial Section when it was politically convenient, the case of German South-West Africa showed the *Reichstag* could just as easily oppose the same body in the same year according to the needs of domestic politics. These three cases revealed the multiple interests at work in the German colonies and a decision-making structure whose civil leaders were forced to function as reactionaries focused on resolving domestic conflicts as opposed to innovators actively implementing new measures.

Donna J. E. Maier's study on slave and wage labor in German Togo examined official colonial policy but also looked at how that policy was implemented. Slavery was illegal in the German colonies. Maier showed, however, that the German colonial government knowingly ignored and even participated in certain forms of slavery. The slave trade actually increased in Togo the first fifteen years of German

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[10] Ibid., 138.

rule and proved to be a growth industry. German authorities had deemed slavery

illegal but did not try a single case from 1885 – 1898.[11] In an effort to redirect trade

routes, colonial officials turned a blind eye towards the continued use of slave labor

by German companies and powerful local traders. The colonial government in Togo

also enacted policies allowing them to demand from locals as much unpaid labor as

needed. Officials ordered taxes be paid in labor and by 1907 all Togolese adult males

had to work a minimum of twelve unremunerated days for the government. These

unpaid work days were in addition to so-called "special projects" as colonial officials

stipulated unpaid local labor for roads and government property. Recruitment for

this labor was delegated to indigenous elites who could spare their family and

friends by sending members of their community more than once. When the colonial

state actively "liberated" slaves from owners, they ordered the debt of the individual

be paid off with unpaid labor to the German state, often as domestic servants for

colonial officials. The colonial government also redirected some of the labor owed

by locals to German plantation companies. These companies needed unpaid labor to

compete with successful local producers. African entrepreneurs had well-developed

networks of palm oil and rubber production. German businesses were eager to take

advantage of the growing market demand for these products. The overall effect of

colonial labor policy was a mass exodus of labor. Fines were continually raised for

emigrating. British accounts described abandoned villages and local oral sources

lamented Germans flogging and their imposition of hard, uncompensated labor.

Maier argued that, although the legal status of slavery ended, there was no adequate

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[11] Ibid., 75.

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wage-labor to take its place. The infrastructure was built with slave labor, and there was a net loss of human capital. The continued impoverishment of former slaves and the lack of wage-labor enterprises, Maier maintained, contributed to Togo's underdevelopment. In this sense, Maier nuanced the conclusions of Gann and other historians who argued for the positive impact of German colonialism by examining how those outcomes were achieved. Colonial labor policy was explicitly detrimental to local populations. As opposed to neutrally transferring improved or enlightened methods, colonial policy was designed to discourage indigenous initiative and influence. If German colonialism was civilizing or modernizing African society, it was also designed to forcefully place Africans in the lowest social and economic positions.

Helmuth Stoecker's essay similarly examined colonial policy and its ramifications for the local populace. Analyzing the legal and social position of Africans in the German colonies, Stoecker began with a brief look at the intellectual traditions prevalent in German colonial thinking. He discovered that civilizing or uplifting the native was noticeably absent from official colonial policy, the discourse of the missionaries holding little sway over colonial administrators. Chancellor Bismarck himself expressed the priority of German merchants' needs over native interests. German liberals and socialists were not involved with colonial policy as Stoecker pointed to the decisively Prussian—aristocratic and militaristic— constitution and style of colonial officials. As evidenced by their policies, these men were influenced by the race-based concepts of Friedrich Nietzsche, Joseph Gobineau, and Houston Chamberlain. This line of thinking argued that culture was linked to

race. Whites were held as a superior race who should rightfully dominate others.

Social Darwinists and their pseudo-biological arguments viewed blacks as the

lowest human race destined for servitude. This claim of racial inferiority was

written into the very laws of the colonial legal structure. From the beginning, local

blacks were legally classified as "natives" to be subjects of Empire but not citizens.[12]

"Natives" lacked the right of free movement and had a different penal code than

Europeans and Arabs. While no corporeal punishment existed for the latter groups,

natives could be caned, flogged, forced to perform hard labor, or put to death. While

Stoecker claimed corporeal punishment was normal throughout all European

African colonies, he argued that it was an everyday occurrence in the German

colonies rivaling the Belgian Congo for cruelty. Physical punishment was inflicted

for "laziness", "disobedience", or leaving work "without reason."[13] When incidents of

women being flogged and executions by flogging began circulating back in Germany,

there was a visible public outcry. In the *Reichstag*, Social Democrats objected and

reasoned that flogging had been abolished in Germany so it should not be allowed in

German colonies. Those on the ground protested, especially German farmers and

planters who insisted on their need to whip servants and workers. Stoecker pointed

to other historians who described a culture of "unrestricted flogging" and Dernburg

himself observed in Dar es Salaam that "nearly every white man walks around with

a whip…and almost every white man indulges in striking any black man he chooses

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[12] Ibid., 121.
[13] Ibid., 123.

to."[14] Legal codes sanctioned views of racial superiority and allowed local colonizing agents a means to violently assert that dominance.

Legal demarcations, Stoecker argued, also created inequalities in other spheres of life including leadership and decision-making bodies. By law, no natives were allowed on advisory boards. Native courts that had been allowed to rule on local customs and traditions were eventually taken over by German officials. Many colonists favored segregation laws, as they abhorred every day or social contact between Africans and Germans. One instance saw the expulsion of an entire people, the Duala of Cameroon, from their hometowns. When Duala chiefs rightfully argued that this dispossession violated an 1884 treaty, the district commissioner claimed the act legitimate because of the achievements and importance of the white race. The commissioner believed that the very presence of the Duala threatened white success because this contact would lead to "social and political equality with the natives."[15] Whites had done too much to risk sharing colonialism's benefits with the locals. Africans, except on rare exceptions for missionary pupils or chief's sons, were not allowed to travel to Germany. The Colonial Office justified discrimination against Africans because they could argue the "cultural level" of Germans was far superior. Stoecker showed race-based laws did not allow this "cultural level" to change. Culture was thus inextricably linked to race. Germany approached her African colonies as a producer of raw materials to serve the metropole, Stoecker held, and so needed the African to act as subservient peasant. The militaristic character of German colonial rule achieved this goal by ruling through fear and inferiority. In

[14] Ibid., 125.
[15] Ibid., 126.

German colonialism racial-cultural visions found legal expressions which, in turn, reinforced those very ways of seeing race.

Winfried Baumgart closed out the collection with a broad overview of German Imperialism. Starting with Germany's profound and sudden population and economic growth of 1870-1900, Baumgart contextualized colonial ventures as attempts to achieve "world power" status. Policies for this end, he argued, known as *Weltpolitik,* were a haphazard conglomeration with no clear goals besides stifling the British. German colonial acquisition exemplified this aimlessness as in 1898, Germany augmented her main colonial holdings in Africa with tiny holdings spread throughout the Pacific. The new territory represented .1 percent of the colonies Germany owned and would spread the navy to its limits.[16] Improvised and lacking a clear focus, Germany's pursuit of colonies was nothing more, Baumgart argued, then an abstract quest for power and prestige.

The German pursuit of international recognition through colonial ventures, according to Baumgart, occurred in three stages. The initial phase from 1884-1890, saw Bismarck acquire the African colonies but then fail to attract private investors and avoid burdening the taxpayer. Though overall the colonies failed to turn a profit, by the second stage of German colonialism from 1890-1906, it was an accepted fact that owning colonies was simply part of being an advancing World Power. Baumgart described these years as a period of "pacification" which witnessed the firm establishment of German rule.[17] Traditional ways of life were completely transformed, and the period culminated in East Africa's Maji Maji rebellion and the

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[16] Ibid., 155.
[17] Ibid., 161.

Herero War in Southwest Africa. By the third phase of German colonialism marked by Dernburg's 1907 appointment, social systems of discrimination and stratification were firmly entrenched. Social Darwinist-minded "white masters" ruled over a much larger number of "uprooted, badly paid and maltreated black subject(s)."[18] Still, Baumgart concluded, there were perhaps brighter, more positive aspects of German colonialism. Agreeing with Lewis Gann, Baumgart argued that German colonialism, as violently transformative as it occurred, was preferable to pre-colonial forms of existence. Germans after all, the historian argued, introduced industry and science. If colonialism took the form of political and social enslavement then this imposition of order, according to Baumgart, was a necessary step in the spiritual emancipation of the African, liberating him into the world of modernity.

    Germans in the Tropics shows the diverse conclusions drawn by historians approaching German colonialism from the view of the colonizing power. Supporters of German colonialism came predominantly from a diverse political right, including the landed Prussian aristocracy, members of the military, government bureaucrats, merchants, manufacturers, businessmen and professionals such as doctors, lawyers, judges, teachers, and clergy. In practice, German colonialism lacked unity and focus. A host of German interests from liberal-minded politicians to reactionary colonial settlers vied for control. Because federal colonial administrators were dependent on a slow, fickle, and often hostile *Reichstag* for funding, independent interest groups largely determined colonial actions. These included the German Navy, private adventurers, and a host of companies including land, mining, rail, and agricultural

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[18] Ibid., 163.

concerns. German settlers, often plantation owners, and colonial governors—

sometimes strong-willed and professionally second rate—also determined the day-

to-day operations of German colonialism. German colonial agents used labor

practices and legal codes to clearly demarcate German and non-German interests.

These everyday conventions were designed to assign Non-Germans, most notably

the so-called African native, the lowest place of a rigid socioeconomic order. This

social arrangement was achieved by purposefully underdeveloping indigenous

populations and creating seemingly insurmountable obstacles to improvement, let

alone equality. Still, some historians argue that the painful application of German

colonial rule was a necessary step to modernize world's peoples. Card illustrators

utilized and communicated this one-sided view. Some historians contest the

characterization of German colonialism as necessary and progressive. These

historians examine the implementation of the colonial system and the disruption of

indigenous populations.

      W.O Henderson's study *The German Colonial Empire 1884-1919* also

examined colonialism from a largely German perspective but more willingly

engaged preexisting local agents. Henderson's narrative was largely driven by "great

men", not only their deeds of founding the colonies or pacifying natives, but also

their biographical details and how they came from Germany to the colonies. He

described a host of colonial personalities from *noveau riche* and romantic merchants,

to megalomaniacal bureaucrats, to nationally minded aristocratic adventurers, idle

in their wealth and seeking to prove Germany's equality with Britain. Henderson

also discussed their African counterparts, men like Samuel Maharero or Hendrik

Witbooi, local leaders said to represent the populations impacted by German colonizers. The resulting history was one of German actions and indigenous reactions, an image much akin to the trading cards' visual narratives.

Like Baumgart's history, the colonial period was described in three stages: founding, pacification, and attempted reform. Unlike Baumgart, Henderson named specific indigenous groups and listed prominent local power brokers. German colonizers were not operating in a social vacuum or imposing their will on a blank slate of passive receivers. Instead they competed with diverse social networks as they attempted to reorient entire regions with well-established ways of life. While Henderson described the careers of colonial figureheads such as the Bremen merchant Adolf Lüderitz or the Hamburg shipping magnate Adolph Woermann, he also discussed the indigenous peoples effected by and resistant to their actions. When German companies in East Africa interrupted long-standing and highly profitable commercial networks such as the collection of tolls on caravan routes, Arabs and Swahili peoples revolted. Expeditions in Cameroon were likewise ambushed and many German warehouses were abandoned. In 1893, Dahomey troops hired by Germans to pacify Cameroon mutinied against their employer. Germans responded to the conditions in Cameroon by burning native villages to the ground—such as the Miange people—and destroying their crops. In South West Africa Hendrik Witbooi and the Hottentots attacked German ranches. German reaction was swift and harsh, but in the end Witbooi was allowed to keep his arms and given an annual tribute for his future loyalty. The cost of establishing German rule was bore by the state and the actions of German colonizers were highly

criticized back home. Allegations arose in Cameroon, for example, of German troops mutilating prisoners. As costs rose and conduct was increasingly questioned, Henderson argued, the German-African colonial relationship often ended with resentment, disillusionment, and a sense of failure from both sides.

The conflict that punctuated the German founding and pacification of African colonies culminated in two major uprisings from 1904-1907. In South West Africa the Herero, traditionally large-scale herdsman, revolted in 1904 as their grievances against Germans mounted. Despite the colonial government's orders, German settlers and companies had seized native lands without payment, often cutting off pasturelands the Herero had utilized for generations. Many Herero were also forced to work on German farms and white traders gained a reputation for using brutal methods to collect debts. The uprising was sudden, violent, and organized as the Herero only targeted German farms and property while sparing Boer and English settlements. The German response was ruthless as General von Trothe initially pursued a policy of total extermination. The Hottentots in the Southern part of the colony also rose up against German rule and it took many expensive campaigns to completely quell the rebellion.

Henderson had more difficulty explaining the reasons behind the Maji Maji Rebellion in East Africa. In 1905, natives attacked Germans as well as Arabs, Indians, and Swahilis. Forced labor seemed like an adequate reason, but Henderson pointed out that some of the more warlike tribes abstained from rebellion. The rebels targeted government stations, plantations, mining properties, telegraph wires, and even the missions. Germans employed a scorched-earth policy and burned to the

ground entire villages along with their crops. Livestock was also confiscated and those that did not die at the hands of the German military were subject to starvation and disease. As in South West Africa, Henderson reasoned, German authority was reestablished without mercy, asserting their dominance in a manner incongruous with native resistance.

The same year that the last of Maji Maji rebel leaders defeated, 1907, also witnessed Germany's first genuine attempt at enlightened imperialism. Henderson used the careers of German colonial officials to illustrate a supposedly new approach to colonial administration. Using policies directed from-above, the German Colonial Office and certain colonial governors sought to improve the treatment of local populations. Originally a banker, Bernhard Dernburg promised to administer the colonies with a sense of fiscal responsibility and aimed to make the colonies profitable. He believed securing good relations with the natives was crucial for commercial success. To that end, Dernburg believed natives should work their own land or at least paid decent wages and spared the whip when working on plantations. These modest ideals proved impossible to enforce, unpopular as they were amongst settlers and concession companies. Governor Theodor Seitz in Cameroon was equally unsuccessfully at improving the welfare of the natives. Dr. Seitz respected the authority of local chiefs and decided they should have a say in local decision-making, including the spending of taxes. The colony's advisory council turned down his decision and the Governor was likewise unable to stop planters, merchants, and construction firms from exploiting the natives. And while he was appreciative of their grievances, Dr. Seitz could not stop the violation of an

established treaty and the expulsion of the Duala people from their homes. In his

term as governor of South West Africa, the progressive Seitz still had to enforce

decrees that forbade natives to own land and made them carry identity cards.

Despite their intentions then, colonial reformists ran into definitive limits including

the now established practices of settlers and other private groups operating in the

colonies. Colonial officials seeking a progressive treatment of natives were further

constrained by their own ideologies. When the welfare of non-German populations

conflicted with German interests, even the most idealistic colonial officials

ultimately chose the nationally driven dictums of colonial thinking.

Historian Woodruff Smith offered another work that considered the African

viewpoint in his empirically driven study on the German colonial political economy.

Smith outlined the two main ideologies behind German colonialism: redirecting

German emigration into settler colonies and making a profit. This united the

agrarian traditionalists and the modern industrialists traditionally at odds in

Wilhelmine Germany. Finding common cause in the colonies, each pursued their

own aims under the shared practices of colonial policy. Smith then detailed the

colonial politics behind the most noticeable result of German colonialism: the

economic exploitation of the natives. Smith showed how colonial policy makers used

tactics such as a hut tax, railway projects, indirect rule, forced labor recruitment,

and the imposition of *Volkskultur* to monetize a vulnerable primitive economy and

use the labor force for their own ends. Smith then gave account of the Maji Maji

Rebellion of 1905 and argued for its socioeconomic causes. Previous studies had

dismissed the rebellion as a result of "native superstition" or a violent expression of

an unruly people. Smith showed, however, that the rebellion started "when the men of Kibata refused to work on an exemplary cotton farm," and further argued that the rebellion was a result of socioeconomic grievances.[19] By considering the effects of colonial policy from the native's point of view, Smith offered a more balanced approach to German colonialism, and gave a more empirical and complete account of its social and historical consequences.

Cynthia Cohen conducted a comparative study on the German education system for natives in South West and German East Africa. She found that while comparatively German East Africans seemingly enjoyed a system of education that made them valuable to Europeans, this apparent advantage was largely the result of white settler population density. The large amount of white settlers in South West Africa meant natives were not needed for minor administrative posts and indeed their education could prove to make them overly competitive with the whites. Even mixed or "colored" peoples were categorized and placed into an education system that taught them only the most menial jobs such as how to be good porters or domestic servants. The small amount of white settlers in German East Africa meant the native population was needed to supply minor administrative labor, but Cohen shows that these educations were specifically designed to help the African help the European. By comparing the types of instruction and hours devoted to particular subjects given to whites and Africans, Cohen was able to show two completely different educational programs. Whites received a much more sophisticated and career-oriented education while Africans were indoctrinated with religious studies

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[19] Woodruff Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 106.

and subjects that instilled a European work ethic. The education for Africans was tailored toward low-end jobs, constantly worked to reinforce obedience, and only allowed greater education when whites were not available. Cohen argued that "the effects of this entrenched discriminatory tradition, commenced by the Germans, were to have far-reaching consequences on the country's skilled human resource potential."[20] By extending the historical narrative beyond economic and administrative policy and by examining the social consequences of colonial policy on the natives, Cohen uncovered more viable arguments about German colonialism's long term aftereffects.

Thaddeus Sunseri offered another recent example of historic work that took account of the native population. In his "Reinterpreting a Colonial Rebellion: Forestry and Social Control in German East Africa 1874-1915," Sunseri recognized the importance of understanding the natives as active historic agents. In this article, Sunseri attempted to nuance the traditional understanding of the Maji Maji Rebellion that, as Smith here argued, was said to be the result of forced labor policies. Historians of Tanzania pointed to the Maji Maji Rebellion as the first moment of united ethnic action against German rule and appropriated its story to paint a picture of frustrated national aspirations. By examining the historic changes brought on by colonial forestry policy, however, Sunseri showed that the Maji Maji Rebellion was more likely the result of colonial environmental controls that dramatically changed traditional ways of life. In the years leading up to the rebellion,

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[20] Cynthia Cohen, "'The Natives Must First Become Good Workmen': Formal Educational Provision in South West and East Africa Compared" in *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 19, No. 1 (Mar, 1993), 134.

access to forests and forest products were heavily restricted which interfered with rural "commercial networks, subsistence economies, and cultural life."[21] Furthermore, colonialists mandated hunting restrictions that brought the prosperous ivory trade to an end and resulted in outbursts of native farm destroying crop pests. A year before the rebellion, colonial officials implemented the most restrictive forestry rules yet and relocated many natives. The policies further worked to separate the natives from needed fruit trees, ancestral shrines, and hunting grounds.[22] Sunseri used these arguments along with accounts from colonial officials about some of the leaders of the rebellion (elephant hunters, subsistent farmers, women angered at the proliferation of wild pigs destroying their crops) and concluded that the rebellion was not simply a united ethnic front or a sign of displeasure with the forced labor system. The rebellion, according to Sunseri, actually had deeper roots as it showed a more pervasive dissatisfaction with colonial policy in general and an annoyance with the ability of colonists to use environmental laws as social control. Like Cohen and Smith, Sunseri exhibited a willingness to engage marginalized historic factors and actors, and provided a more complete picture of historic consequences beyond the projected values of a "developed" economy or Western ideas of rational administrative organization. By examining the effects of the colonization on the native population over time, Sunseri allowed an understanding of native experiences closer to something "on their own terms," and not just from the calculating perspective of Europeans.

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[21] Thaddeus Sunseri, "Reinterpreting a Colonial Rebellion: Forestry and Social Control in German East Africa 1874-1915," in *Environmental History* Vol. 8, No. 3 (Jul 2003), 431.
[22] Ibid., 433.

This brief overview of German colonialism in Africa showed the range of interests and actors in this ad-hoc, poorly funded, and often economically unsuccessful undertaking. This historical image contrasts sharply with the clear cut and triumphant colonial world created by commercial artists. Historians showed the predetermined place at the bottom of the socioeconomic structure designed for non-Europeans. The trading cards represented this station for Africans as natural. By law indigenous populations were considered third-class citizens, able to be forced from their lands and made to do German bidding. Former property owners and entrepreneurs before the Europeans became wage earners, servants, and near slaves under colonialism. Africans were relegated to the most menial of roles and, with the design of the education system, were given no chance of improving their lot. These historians, by allowing local agency and acknowledging the pre and post forms of native existence, provided a more empirically complete account of German colonialism's form and consequences. The trading cards most decidedly ignored this more thorough account of German colonial activity.

It is clear then, that while Germans built administrative posts, communication lines, railroads, and schools, it was not a simple matter of spreading civilization or transmitting better methods of management. Germans established these institutions and structures for resource extraction and other self-serving German needs. German colonialism did not just introduce entirely new ways of life as many of the diverse local populations were well acquainted with trade, farming, husbandry, craftsmanship, industry, and political organization. Some of these local methods, such as rubber and palm oil production in Togo or trade regulation in

Tanzania, proved superior to German ways and were thusly co-opted by German interests. Instead, German colonialism was an entirely new order that reoriented a region's resources, social networks, and acceptable rules and roles of behavior. The legal, economic, and political framework was completely redesigned and Germans carved out social, cultural, and physical space by displacing and actively marginalizing local inhabitants. The absence of this German intentionality and African agency in the trading cards' narrative and its replacement with a world of naturalized disparity was a telling trait of this uniquely modern phenomenon.

CHAPTER IV

GERMAN COLONIAL TRADING CARDS AND THEIR PATTERNS OF PORTRAYAL

In 1872, executives of the Liebig's Extract of Meat Company, a transnational

corporation founded by a German chemist, discovered a novel way to differentiate

and promote their products. They employed commercial artists to draw scenes from

European history, famous plays, exotic landscapes, or other broadly appealing and

pan-national themes. Liebig's managers began printing and packaging one serialized

collector's card (*Sammelbilder*) with each of their household commodities. Printed

on light cardboard and usually no bigger than 11 x 7 cm, or the size of a typical

business card today, these trading cards offered buyers and their families

pleasurable or entertaining illustrated scenes and encouraged the continual

purchase of the same brand.

Other mass producers of quotidian commodities such as soap, chocolate,

coffee, toothpaste, margarine, shoe polish, cookies, and more soon followed suit. By

the turn of the twentieth century, far more than 100 million collector cards were

circulating throughout Western and Central Europe. Contemporary commentary on

the cards attested to their popularity. The "collecting mania" surrounding the cards

caused some organizations, such as the German Examining Board for Youth

Literature (*Jugendschriften-Warte*), to question "the childrearing influence of this

flood of images."[1] Popular among card manufacturers were also illustrations with

colonial themes. Nation-states across Western Europe were expanding and

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[1] Joachim Zeller, "Harmless 'Kolonialbiedermeier'? Colonial and Exotic Trading Cards," in *German Colonialism, Visual Culture, Modern Memory*, ed. Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 71.

formalizing their colonial rule, so this particular motif was both cross-cultural and a prevalent issue in politics and popular presses. Colonial imagery took advantage of the surging sense of nationalism in late 19th early 20th century Europe and appealed to a broad range of a country's consumers. Card makers could also easily tailor the colonial theme to target markets or simultaneously promote their products in many different Western European states. By utilizing colonial topics, commercial artists reached a broad audience and complimented that viewership's modernity or superior way of life.

This chapter examines commercial artists' pictorial styles, thematic choices, and drawing techniques when visually associating their parent company's goods with colonial lands. Card illustrators ultimately looked to create positive connotations and build trust for their brands. To this end, they utilized exotic or colonial scenes as a command and flatter advertising technique with nationalistic appeal. The colonial setting proved an ideal setting for showcasing the commodity's modernity and usefulness. It also simultaneously reinforced the nation's—and by association the viewer's—superiority. The visual consistencies across card creators created a clear-cut colonial world, one where the colonizer and commodity were always correct.

The factory-reproduced illustrations of the widely disseminated trading cards were only a single unit of a multifaceted visual universe born in a big bang of new technologies and novel attempts at mass production and distribution. In the latter stages of the nineteenth century and especially accelerating in the 1890s, the average German found her everyday life more and more inhabited by pictures. This

new visual world was made possible by advances in technology like chromolithography, the halftone process and eventually photography. The economic advantages of large-scale printing also allowed for an unprecedented increase in the number of pictures in everything from magazines, books, and newspapers to children's toys, advertising posters, and stamps. German historian Volker Langbehn described this phenomenon as an "explosion of the visual image" and social historian Gary Beegan characterized this era as the birth of illustrations' mass audience.[2] Coloring this new world of visual depictions was Germany's recent unification as a nation-state and the centralizing of German identity through its growing industrial economy, thriving mass media, achievements in colonial ventures, and the now scientific and objective state of her intellectuals.

Illustrators across Western Europe drew in their own specific regions and political environments, but they all worked towards mass commercial promotion in a common milieu of changing cultural practices. This meant, German, Belgian, Dutch, French, and English firms could all utilize colonial, nationalistic, and scientific themes when marketing in other European markets. Ever expanding forms of industry and commerce created the very conditions for a consumer class. At the close of the nineteenth century in Germany, blue-collar factory jobs in the city soon outpaced agrarian jobs and lifestyles.[3] With working-class growth, came an increase in white-collar managers, high-skilled technical workers, and the demand for small business owners and artisans.[4] Increased wage earning and specialization meant

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[2] Volker Langbehn, "Introduction: Picture Race" in Ibid., 3.
[3] Hans Ulrich-Wehler, *The German Empire 1867-1918* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1985), 45.
[4] Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany 1840-1945* (Princeton: University Press, 1982), 389.

economic interdependence and the growth of consumer markets. The

rationalization of economic activity, state bureaucracies, academic disciplines, and

other institutions created ever clearer and more rigid social boundaries of proper

belief and behavior.[5] Turn of the century Europe was increasingly a land of

specialists and professionals who believed in best possible practices and expert

knowledge. Trading card illustrators operated in this atmosphere of growing

divisions of labor, economic interdependence, and non-ideological professional

information. They articulated the proper roles for Africans in the socioeconomic

order and presented their choices as rationally, naturally, or objectively derived

(Figures 1, 4, 7 ,8, 10, 12-15, 18, 23, 25, 26, 30-32).

The centralization and establishment of large-scale nationalism was also a

common project throughout Western Europe. Nationalism was further driven by

increased colonial competition and the establishment of definitive colonial borders,

spheres of influence, and nationally differentiated colonial practices. Across

products and regardless of whether the parent corporation was housed in France,

Germany, England, or Belgium, these trading cards share many common visual

styles, optic techniques, and themes in their portrayal of distant lands, foreign

peoples, and the European's proper relationship to each. Yet German mass markets

in particular were forming in the context of an abrupt industrialization and a novel

German nation-state. Commercial artists cemented commercial identities along

national lines and consistently portrayed the German colonizer as a magnanimous

agent imposing his superior will on an underdeveloped, backwards, and readily

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[5] Max Weber, *The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

receptive world. The colonial relationship was presented as natural. It was the indisputable outcome when an industrialized, scientific, and cultured people encountered a supposedly cultureless people who lived "closer to nature." Thanks to the common marketing goals of trading card illustrators as well as the shared milieu of large-scale political and cultural identities, trading cards became a relatively stable component of the new visual universe. Commercial artists endorsed and validated the nation-state, utilizing the new community of a unified Germany to construct an idealized realm of consumer pleasures.

Trading card illustrators continually delivered similarly structured scenes to sell their wares. With this consistency they created a clear-cut world of white or German superiority. This supremacy was communicated in two distinct ways. First, the theme of the image—its subjects, objects, and actions—always showed Germans in positions of authority or triumph (Figures 5-14, 24, 26, 30, 38). More subtly, the design of an image—its styling, the placement of objects, and use of drawing techniques—also offered viewers a visual reinforcement of German rationality and correctness. Colonial peoples were presented as secondary to Europeans/Germans, either in direct visual contrast or as backwards, state of nature types lacking technology, culture, and distinct personhood (Figures 1-4, 6-20, 22-32, & 34-38).

Drawn with these two uniform and unchanging methods of portrayal, card images were presented as non-ideological reflections of the way things were. This supposed objectivity made trading card portrayals of African archetypes a matter of fact. With constant repetition and empirical authority, commercial illustrators codified and normalized the proper roles, performances, and types of Africans. The

full range of card designers displayed visual agreement, suggesting the cards merely pictured the natural roles of Africans. Providing a scientific rationale for German superiority, card illustrators created a colonial world or discourse that justified the use of Africans. Included with each commodity purchase, Wilhelmine German citizens were shown the advantages of nationhood, the distinctive differences of non-cultured peoples, and the common-sense preference for the industrial and consumer way of life.

When viewed diachronically, the collection of colonially themed cards dating from 1884 to 1914 exhibit a consistent visual method. The primary difference between cards produced in the beginning of the period and those at the end was the expansion of subject matter. The cards initially consisted of explorers and tropical landscapes. But as the German interest and presence in Africa grew, the cards' visual subjects expanded to include German colonial governors, soldiers, buildings, and ships along with native appearance, customs, and material culture. This relative lack of variation over time showed the trading cards reflected the needs of Germans more than they revealed anything about Africa. As Germans experienced the transformation of their political organization, economic means, and methods of approaching knowledge, trading cards reassured the everyday German that these changes were rational, proper, and inevitable.

Each card was drawn utilizing one or a combination of two approaches. Card illustrator's either depicted a scene straight from the colonies, showing people and events as they were supposedly occurring; or they presented a conglomeration of exotic people and objects. These were displayed as typical examples of a colony or

distant land's inhabitants. Either way, cards were not presented as fictitious

scenarios or mere fantasy. They were portrayed as reliable representations,

conveying the realities of a faraway land. The German viewer could thus learn of

German colonial activities and peoples from the comfort of their own homes, streets,

clubs, or classrooms.

Like Figure 1, the aesthetic of many cards was kitschy, fairly simple, and
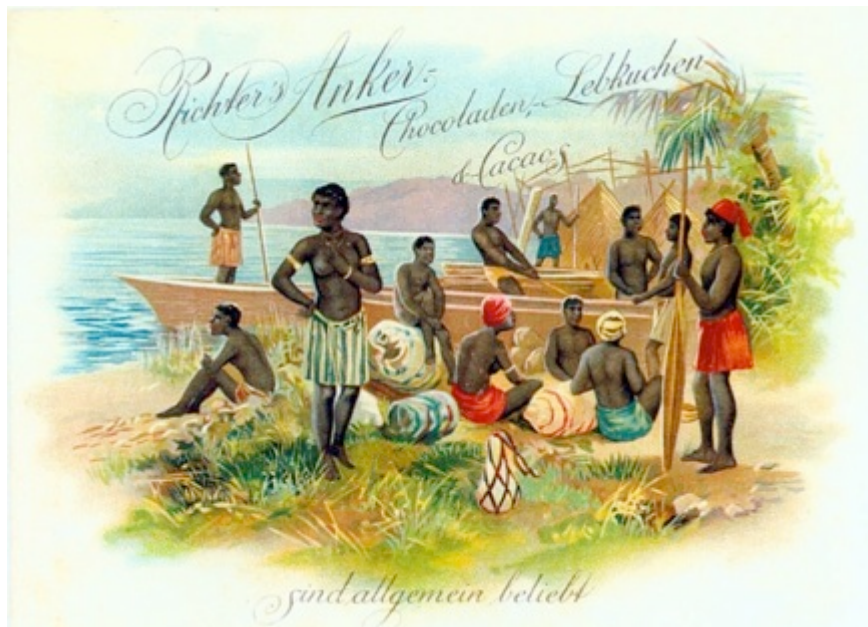
Figure 1. Richter, East African dwelling natives

cartoon-like. There was the occasional card series, such as Figure 2, that attempted

more detail by imitating ethnographic photographs or because they were

attempting to be more realistic. Yet the majority of card images were pleasantly

uncomplicated, depicting the colonial world with amusing caricatures or plainly

drawn and vaguely featured humanoids (Figures 3-10, etc.). Designed for mass

appeal, the cards were meant to be enjoyable, accessible, and not the least bit confrontational or challenging.

Drawing cartoonish abstractions for mass recognition, card illustrator's depended on other visual cues, contexts, and props for proper placement of a scenes location and its characters' identities. Consider Figure 1 from Richter & co., a company that produced a range of goods. This card promoted their line of cookies in a series on East Africa. It oriented viewers using a single piece of tropical vegetation, a mountain, a large body of water, and an abstract caricature of swarthy men and women. These "locals"—languidly dwelling amongst wooden boats—were dressed in an array of colorful shorts, wraps, and exotic headwear. One individual was drawn without clothes, huddled to conceal his provocative parts. A female in the foreground, clearly discernible as such by her hair and armbands, stands casually bare-chested. In this rough depiction, the exaggerated red lips became a prominent feature and provided an effective mark of exoticism in addition to the dark skin, posture, degree of technology and dress—or lack thereof. Because they were trying to reach the largest audience possible, card designers utilized the most exaggerated forms of difference. They both established then continually employed recognizable stereotypes. According to card illustrators, Africans were always barefoot and often lacked European ideals of good posture.

As opposed to showing a colonial scene, Figure 2, brought to you by Liebig, showcased a variety of people and objects found in Africa. Each individual represented a typical example of a certain African people in dress, appearance, and possessions. The Sphinx and pyramids were the scene's central figures along with a

Figure 2. Liebig's Meat Extract (bullion), The Earth and it's peoples - Africa

large-scale container of the sponsoring bullion. Egypt loomed large in the German Orientalist imagination and these landmarks represented what Germans saw as the limited signs of civilization in Africa. Individuals were posed either in their "natural" state as they existed in everyday life or were placed in the foreground for inspection and proper categorization. The illustrators for both cards, while differing in mode of presentation and degrees of detail, associated their brand with Africa by positioning Africans as non-threatening, passive and easily observable objects.

German commercial artists did not have any firsthand experience from which to draw. They instead blended ideas from their own imaginations and the limited depictions of colonies and "typical natives" circulating in other forms of visual media. Without direct knowledge of African features, some illustrators simply combined generally known racial differences with projections of European countenances. The man in the forefront of Figure 3 was a blend of dark skin, curly hair, and a distinctly European style of face in-line with the Renaissance Cherub or Putto. Illustrators utilized pre-existing visual stylings and worked within known artistic traditions. From Renaissance aesthetics to the Impressionism of Figure 15 to the scientific or
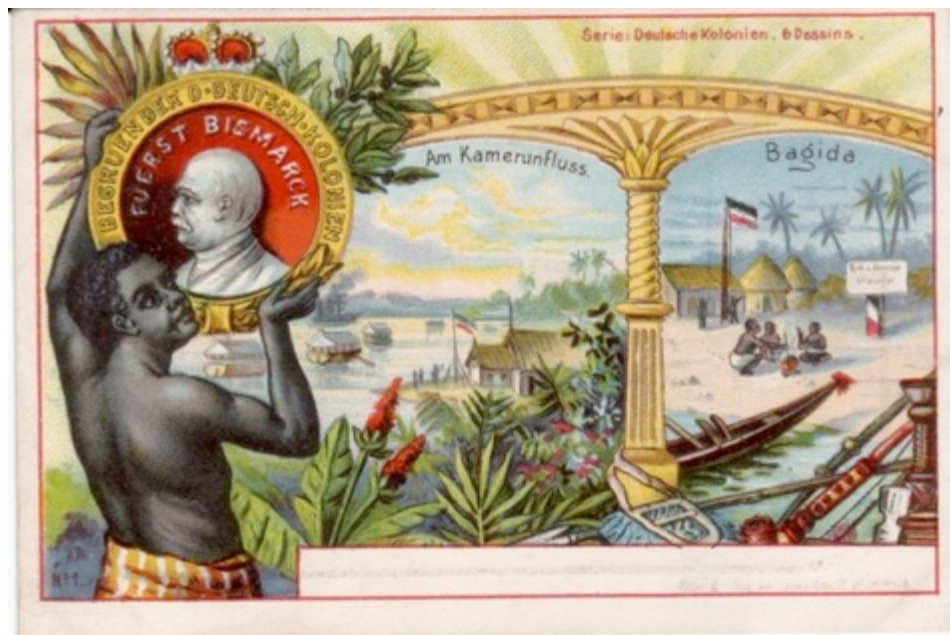

Figure 3. Liebes Teichtner, cherub faced, colonized and closer to nature

museum-style presentation of Figure 16, card designers employed a range of visual

conventions to communicate similar meanings about foreign lands, which they had never themselves visited.

For the purposes of the card, natives were meant as visual props or metonyms of an exotic land—differentiation and specificity were unnecessary. Commercial illustrators did not name Africans, as they did name German characters, and avoided giving colonial peoples individual identities. A card series titled "From the Colonies" sponsored by Sarotti's Chocolate showed six different scenes. The specific colony was indiscernible and indeed irrelevant. Two of the six cards portrayed German sailors and ships; three cards pictured dark-skinned, barefoot locals performing physical labor; and Figure 4 provided a generic colonial scene. The colonial setting was recognizable by a palm tree in the background, the administrative structures such as the building and train, and the state of the locals. All of the dark-skinned men were barefoot and each provided an example of local dress. The Wilhelmine viewer witnessed a distinctively foreign land with exaggerated differences and without concern for its specific identity.

Card designers were able to set foreign scenes and make colonial associations using the most general, simple, and easily recognizable markers of visual difference. In Figure 4, the illustrator used rolled up pants, brown skin and bare feet to mark the African identity of the man performing porter duties. The men in the foreground provided the most telling visual proof of this scene's colonial location. The artist placed those individuals who wore shorts and skirts most prominently, and one of them was bare-chested. Each donned a different example of exotic headwear, and their caricaturized faces and bright red lips were animated by

Figure 4. Sarotti Chocolate, exotic men

a discussion that took place over their indigenous cargo. This included a reoccurring

prop of exoticism in the trading cards—the elephant tusk. When a commercial

illustrator was explicit about the identity of their subject, it was either as a marker

to set a particular scene for the viewer—such as the Herero War—or to claim their

depiction a typical example of a group of people (Figures 2, 3, 7, 15, 17, 18-20, 24, 27,

37). In any case, whether they were being abstract, specific, or informative, card

illustrators drew colonized Africans and foreign peoples as symbols. These symbols

were not designed to be seen as just themselves but always as representative of

something else. Like colonial agents, card designers used an objectified, non-

humanized conception of Africans towards their own ends.

When associating their employer's product with an exotic or non-European

setting, commercial artists employed a common set of themes regardless of the

company for whom they worked, the kind of commodity they were selling, or when

in this period they were working. In addition to natural landscapes, each of the 122

cards depicting a colonial setting and circulating throughout Germany between 1884 and 1914 contained one or a combination of three themes: colonial ships and buildings; German-dictated action or rationalizing discipline; or supposedly typical natives, either as exotic-racial abstractions or specific and categorizable "kinds" of Africans. These themes came in various forms but remained strictly limited to the clear-cut presentation of accomplished Germans and the simple, unsophisticated indigenous population. German figures, when present, always directed the action of a scene or remained slightly above or removed from the situation, occupying a position of oversight and authority (Figures 5-14, 24, 26, 30, 38). The exceptions were two card series depicting the Herero War where Germans were portrayed as helpless victims to African savagery (Figures 35 & 36). Native peoples were juxtaposed with Germans. They were either the receivers of German directives or actions, or displayed for their odd contrasts to German culture. Wilhelmine consumers were continuously shown images of their unquestioning socioeconomic, technological, and cultural superiority.

Along with visual markers of difference and themes, the drawing techniques of card illustrators and the visual logic of their cards changed little over time. Using basic visual elements like tone, contrast, size, color, placement, and balance, card illustrators provided unmistakable optic cues to communicate a consistent cultural meaning. Like Barthes' "message without a code," card illustrators actively encoded their illustrations with connotations.[6] While images normally have multiple subjective interpretations, illustrators could attempt to limit this range through the

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[6] Roland Barthes, *Music-Image-Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 36.

arrangement and style of visual elements. This visual logic, by blending basic visual

elements bound in perception with larger cultural symbols, could effortlessly and

instantaneously communicate an easily recognizable and understandable common

social message. Figure 5 pictured Hendrik Wibooi's encounter with Major Leutwein.

Figure 5. Hildebrand, Witbooi gives himself up to Leutwein

While Witbooi was able to keep his arms and paid an annual tribute by the German

government, the cards visual arrangement made clear Leutwein was the dominant

victor. On the left, Leutwein stands perfectly straight, wearing his hat with his right

arm outstretched and pointing downwards. From the top of his legs, his sword

extends forward into the ground. On the right is Witbooi, slightly bent towards

Leutwein in deference with hat doffed. Witbooi's left and right hands are formed to

receive the gestures made by Leutwein. Witbooi's left hand is lower than Leutwein's right and open palmed and receiving. Witbooi's right hand is holding the open part of his hat, horizontally aligned with the Leutwein's phallic sword. From posture, gesture, dress and visual alignment this image placed Leutwein in complete control of the scene. With their particular interplay of visual characters and their arrangement to create connoted meaning, these trading cards attempted to limit the possibilities of individual interpretation. Card designers spelled out their messages and created unambiguous scenes of German dominance and the preeminence of the industrial capital way of life.

The most defined, prevalent, and unmistakable icon of the illustrated colonial world was the paternal, actively superior, white male leader. White in this instance referred not only to skin color but also to the white clothing and the distinctive white pith helmet or hat. The illustrator of Figure 6 pictured a dancing native for not only the viewer but also the white-skinned, white-clothed, white-capped European seated on the left. White in this case signified and distinguished authority. The only other character wearing white was the partially Europeanized native, and this level of dress indicated his superiority to the other natives. His dark skin, bare feet, and red hat that highlighted his bright red lips, were enough to visually testify his secondary status to the seated European. This technique of using white hats was effective as white attracted the eye as a central focal point in a sea of chaos, color, and the exotic.
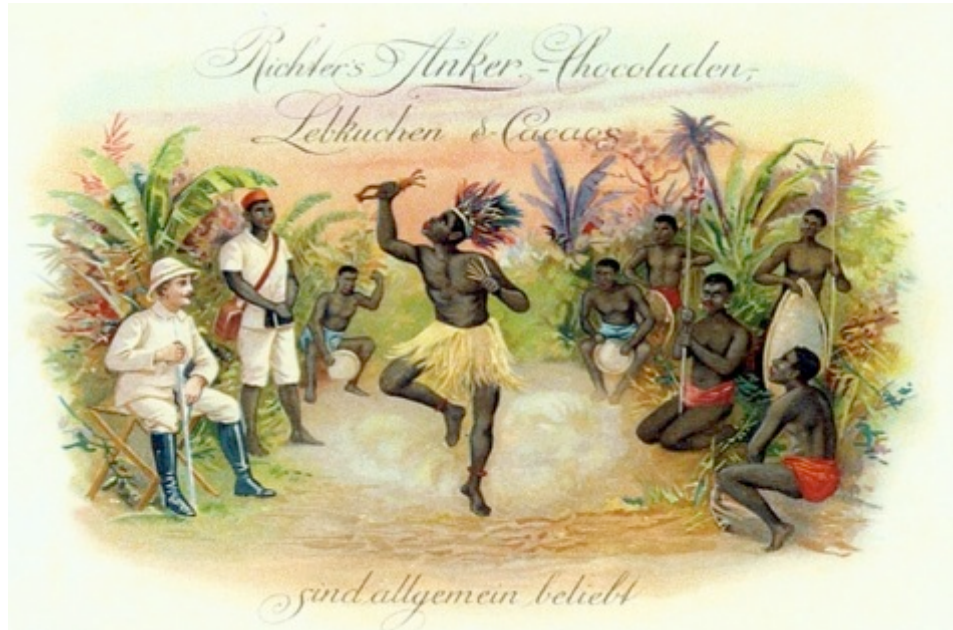
Figure 6. Richter, dancing native

Commercial illustrators used white to direct the actions or flow of a picture and many central authority figures are either dressed entirely in white or don white headwear. A card from Hildebrand Chocolate, seen here in figure 7, posed famous explorer Hermann Wissmann controlling dozens of Africans with the simply motion of his arm. The disciplined natives to his right lacking the white hat are still and calm, while those to the left of Wissmann's gesture are enthusiastically doing as commanded. In figure 8, another chocolate company pictured three European or

Figure 7. Hildebrand, Wissman leading the troops

Figure 8. Hartwig & Vogel, Dernburg's first visit to East Africa

perhaps German males, all clad in white, being rickshawed by barefoot locals. The text informed the viewer it depicted the first visit of Dr. Bernhard Dernburg, the reformist-minded head of the German Colonial Office, to the German colony in East Africa. Card viewers always witnessed white European males in leadership roles or treated like royalty.

Not just famous, but anonymous dressed-in-all-white German males were also consistently drawn in both the image's most commanding role and as the visual focal point controlling its direction. In figure 9, the two other people in the image

Figure 9. Richter, elephant showdown

are placed behind the white-hat European. He is also the only figure to have his gun raised to face the threat of the menacing elephants. Figure 10 has a European in a

Figure 10. Liebig's Meat Extract, precious cargo under white leadership

Figure 11. Wesenburg Soap Powder, governor's tent in East Africa

white pith helmet directing a number of laboring natives. Both the European and their dramatically large commodity are drawn above the toiling Africans. In figure 11, the soap-powder company Wesenberg showed the viewer a governor's tent in East Africa. White-dressed Germans were pictured under their flag next to a smaller, poorly drawn, and naked native huddled underneath a leaf propped up by a stick. The trading cards created visual contrasts in two ways: in terms of drawing technique, the formal composition of the image such as the size and placement of objects; and in terms of the pronounced and recurring relational motifs between white/black, German/African, and colonizer/native. These visual contrasts indicated the othering that stood at the heart of imperialism.[7] By providing seemingly innocent denotative elements to connote global power relations, this visual rhetoric subtly yet non-ideologically communicated the correctness of German dominance. Consumers were invited to observe visual and thematic contrasts, thus witnessing the rationality of white authority, German nationalism, and industrial-commercial production.

Here trading cards operated differently than many other forms of contemporary visual culture such as illustrated magazines. Because of the relative lack of text or captions in most trading cards, images had to stand on their own. For this reason, commercial illustrators consistently communicated the matter-of-fact superiority of the German colonizer through both thematic content and visual form. In Figure 1, the so-called Cameroonian man is reverently holding up the bust of the founder of the German colony, Prince Bismarck; meanwhile, the imperial German

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[7] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978).

flag sits high above a diverse heap of local vegetation, some distant natives, huts, and other strewn about examples of local levels of technology. The primitiveness of the colony was further highlighted through the Greco-Roman architecture framing the scene, offering the viewer a degree of separation amongst an encroaching otherness. By framing the colony with these elements, the card designer communicated the gratefulness of stunted natives. These Africans lived amongst wild vegetation with inferior forms of technology, as people of nature. The image showed their appreciation for German culture and rule. The now German public was shown a much less advanced people in awe of German greatness.

Another drawing technique favored by card illustrators was a large and up-close picture of a German person's head superimposed onto a colonial scene and often next to a disproportionately large portrayal of the packaged product. In figure 12 illustrators from the Cibilis bouillon cube company placed an up-close depiction of explorer Hermann Wissmann casting an overlooking eye towards a campsite of natives employed by the expedition. Wissmann and the promoted product took up a third of the picture. Packages were situated throughout the campsite suggesting a relationship between the bouillon cubes, exotic exploration, and German tutelage. In addition to the close-up headshot, Figure 13 used a visual axis to communicate the dominant figures of power and authority. The extended arm from the centrally placed explorers aligned with the laboring native's body so that it appeared as if the white pith-helmeted Europeans was propping up the African his cargo. Consumer images were designed to minimalize misinterpretations and encouraged standardized beliefs about German mastery.

Figure 12. Cibils Meat Extract, Wissman oversees the expedition

Figure 13. Liebig's Meat Extract, Emin Pascha in inner Africa

Illustrators from Richter's Gingerbread also used visual techniques to communicate white superiority. Figure 14 contained crudely drawn and disingenuously dressed natives. Even though the scene mainly consisted of supposed natives from German East Africa, there were still visual cues to let the viewer know the central authority figures. The German flag and white clothes marked the bringers of civilization to otherwise bumbling and primitive Africans. On the right, flustered, stumbling, and fleeing natives dressed in turbans and loincloths were being routed by Western-dressed—but still barefoot—natives rallying under the German flag. The furthest advanced figure from the left into the group of defeated natives is an all-white clad German. This visual cue indicated the active leadership of the German colonial agent that was guiding the scene.

Figure 14. Richter, routing the Indians

Shared visual and thematic practices across trading cards helped codify the normative relationship between the European/German and the colonized other. Other trading cards from coffee companies to canned corned-beef distributors depicted Germans as sailors, soldiers, hunters, or governors. Illustrators of these cards likewise used focusing functions of visual techniques to place these white male German colonizers in positions of superiority as giant superimposed heads or as active focal points guiding the direction and action in an image. By continuously portraying Europeans in superior roles and using visual techniques to affirm this position, commercial illustrators created a self-reinforcing visual common sense. This way of portraying made non-ideological empirical claims while presupposing the cult of industrial, scientific, and economic progress. The images were easy to understand and appealing across divisive social, political, and economic lines. Wilhelmine consumers were encouraged to see themselves as a community of Germans: rational, modern, and in command as a scientifically, industrially, and commercially advanced nation-state.

This visual culture encouraged a "great men" interpretation of colonialism. German women were entirely absent from the cards. By contrast, social relationships were entirely dictated by one or two central figures. On the one hand was the German male colonial figure taming the wilderness, disciplining the native to make him productive, and bringing civilization. The African, on the other hand, did the German's bidding, performed his labor, or was positioned to stand behind him for protection and assurance. In almost all of the examined trading cards, Africans were always drawn without shoes. Even when dressed in Western clothing

they still remained barefoot. This visual motif suggested the inability of colonized

Africans to be fully civilized and assimilated. No matter what the colonized person

did or how they dressed, they still remained outside the colonizer's culture and

below his level. With bare feet, the indigenous African was closer to nature and in

need of European tutelage. Significantly, this German male centered depiction of the

colonial world obscured the context in which these figures operated, as if Africa had

no history or society; rather it was a realm created through the heroic exploits of

sharply defined European men. As the earliest written histories, the trading cards

excluded indigenous context and exclusively presented a colonial world created by

and for the use of Europeans.

Commercial illustrators suggested their cards were an objective, faithful

representation of the colonial world in multiple ways. Many shared a distinctly

anthropological visual perspective. The trading cards were replete with pictures

whose styles mimicked turn-of-the twentieth century anthropologist's ethnographic

photos. These photographs would pose individuals with their possessions for

inspection, up close and organized for the all-encompassing, empirical,

"summarizing" gaze of the trained specialist.[8] (Figures 2, 15-20, 22, 24, 25, 27, 31,

32) The trading card in Figure 15 imitated such an ethnographic photo as a group of

people were positioned outside of their dwellings and facing the viewer. This

particular scene is labeled a market in Togo. A few bags of goods were strewn about

lackadaisical and obscurely featured locals. Recent scholarship has found a

"colonizing camera" in the works of state employed photographers, bureaucrats and

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[8] Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 175.

scientists. Many pictures were posed in the same style and created consistent

packages of knowledge, from which to document, categorize, and control others.[9] In

the case of Figure 15, locals were arranged in a similar manner and placed in front

of straw huts built amongst trees. Although they do not have distinguishable faces,

Figure 15. Hildebrand, palm wine market in Togo

this group of people was supposed to be a typical example of people living in Togo.

The illustrator created their identity and difference to German viewers by visual

cues such as dark skin, draped or non-cut and sown clothing, encroaching

vegetation, primitive housing, and slack posture. By utilizing anthropological visual

styles, trading card illustrators mimicked trusted professionals and presented their

scenes as realistic renditions and justifiable facts. While providing their household

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[9] Wolfram Hartmann, et al., *The Colonizing Camera: Photographs in the Making of Namibian History* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1999).

with a chosen and now needed good, the citizen consumer also introduced an informative—yet commercially colored—visual world of life outside Wilhelmine Germany.

The similarities between the tropes of commercial artists and anthropological methods, ideas, and ways of looking and portraying extended beyond visual style. Many trading card designers whole-heartedly believed in their ability to provide instructive objective knowledge to their audiences. The trading cards were part of what Andrew Zimmerman described as "new mass spectacles," adapted from "urban culture," which allowed for a "democratization of the sources and locations of scientific knowledge."[10] Sarotti Chocolates, in Figure 16, could just

Figure 16. Sarotti Chocolates, museum display

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[10] Zimmerman, 4.

as easily have represented a collection of indigenous material culture as found in a museum. The card illustrators also pictured natural landscapes and "typical" natives to complement the objects' exoticism and authenticity. To be sure, contemporary anthropologists probably considered the trading cards mere *Schaulust*—or a public voyeurism always in need of the new. Still, commercial illustrators participated in a popularization of knowledge that often shared the same values, approaches, and presuppositions of the burgeoning academic field.

Both card illustrators and anthropologists employed a summarizing gaze where *Naturvölke*r could be understood by their appearance and the objects they possessed. Like anthropological objects, the peoples of Africa were not subjects in need of interpretation; they were objects with an empirical thereness that spoke for itself. By the close of the nineteenth century, anthropology had been established as a modern academic discipline, free from the influences of the *ancien regime*, and founded on so-called objective principles. Trading card designers could also provide objectivity, giving non-European people and lands visual and thus empirical form. Card viewers were provided a privileged transparency, given visual access to a colonial world normally reserved for missionaries, merchants, and adventurers. Upon purchasing soap, chocolate, cookies, or coffee, the consumer could witness German colonialism in action and as it supposedly occurred.

The standardization of African images in the trading cards was often accomplished using the same approach as nineteenth century anthropology. These shared social tropes centered on the presumed "natural" state of the subjects in question. Trading card illustrators pictured the stunted, backwards colonies to

emphasize the modernity and reliability of their brand. Like the peoples of Africa, the product could also be understood as an essence with objective qualities. The factory-produced item was always the same where the one commodity represented the attributes of the many. It was also consistently useful, providing a level of convenience unavailable in a primitive, more natural society. The novel mass commodity was sold as something reliably consistent, rational, and advanced.

Though they employed anthropological-style knowledge, the trading cards practiced an amateur or armchair version of ethnography at best. In Figure 17, the
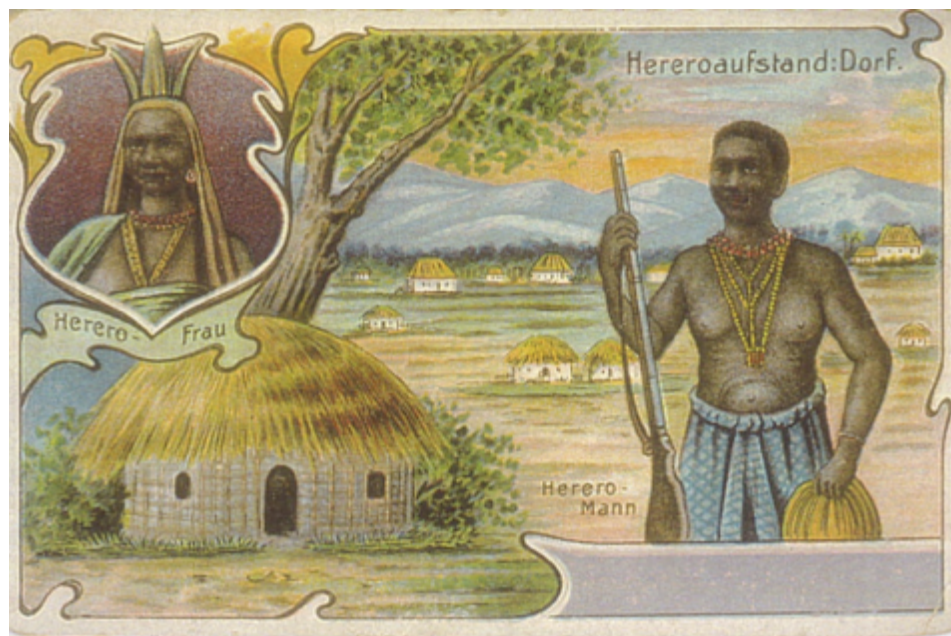

Figure 17. Erkel Soaps, Herero man, women, and village

artists employed by Erkel Soap depicted these crudely drawn individuals as typical enough to represent the group. Because of this lack of detail, ethnographic subjects were often presented with their indigenous tools or housing. This posing was self-

reinforcing. Objects and dwellings served as props of authenticity, indicating the depicted individual was whom the artist claimed. These objects also revealed essential attributes about those that possessed them. In the cards, this particularly meant the more "natural" state of Africans. With this watered-down version of Anthropology, card illustrators could command interest with exoticism, flatter with presentations of inferior technology and dress, and highlight the modernity of the advertised product. Commercial card illustrators used the visual fetishization of people to encourage commodity fetishization. Families from Schleswig-Holstein to Bavaria, as they consumed quickly becoming common place products, were invited to gaze upon those not advanced, cultured, or German enough to obtain such modern goods.

In the trading cards, names and individuality were exclusive to Germans. Natives did not need differentiation as individuals because they were either representing a type or used as a metonym for the exotic. The individuals in Figure 17 were simply labeled "Herero Man" and "Herero Woman." Like Figure 17, Figure 18 also illustrated the common practice of posing natives in the foreground with props of authenticity. They were also removed from their immediate surroundings for ease of examination. Here, the superimposed African's head was located in the middle of the scene and was immediately flanked by that recognizable marker of the African exotic, the elephant tusk.

Figure 18. Pfund-Dresden, East African caravan

Illustrators for Palmin margarine designed a series of what appeared to be
ethnic mug shots. In this series the racial features of a typical man from each of the
German colonies could be closely studied and categorized. Figure 19 was
supposedly representative of Cameroonian natives while Figure 20 was an
archetype of natives from South West German Africa. Both figures were removed
from any kind of environment and put on display for the viewer. These techniques
of visual fetishization, divorcing individuals from all context except props of
authenticity or signs of technological inferiority, illustrated the consequences of
armchair ethnography. Indigenous peoples were presented not as persons but as
human curios. Africans were portrayed as strange and curious objects both in

Figure 19. Palmin, ethnic mug shot - Cameroon

Figure 20. Palmin, ethnic mug shot – German South West Africa

appearance and also because they supposedly lacked the refinement, sophistication, and ability of a properly cultured people. Objectivity had made people into objects.

This objectification of non-Europeans reveals the limits of objectivity. Both trading card illustrators and nineteenth century anthropologists operated from the shared premise that they were practicing an apolitical and empirically objective point of view; yet both also shared the presumption that their objects of study were so entirely different from Europeans that they did not possess a history. Trading card illustrators and late-nineteenth century anthropologists approached their subjects as *Naturvölker* who lived closer to nature without the trappings of civilization or an advanced culture. Nature was held as unchanging and so too were the indigenous people found in the colonies. By simply providing an empirical impression of a Tanzanian village in the trading cards or exact skull measurements

in late nineteenth century anthropology, both groups felt they were reporting facts that could speak for themselves. Anthropologists and card trade illustrators presented their findings just as a scientist would report his findings on nature.

The field of botany exemplified this overlapping of ideological presupposition between anthropology, science, and commercial artists. Zimmerman showed the shared practices of botany and anthropology, as many botanists were members of anthropological societies. German anthropologists further recognized their kinship with the plant-based science. Neither flowers nor the peoples studied by anthropologists complicated themselves with culture, as natural peoples were viewed as much a part of nature as plants. After providing up-close and isolated examples of people from each of the four German African colonies, the final card in the Palmin series is Figure 21, the brand's namesake. Just as the four men were

Figure 21. Palmin, palm trees

designed to be studied and observed for objective facets about their race and identity, so too did the card illustrator consider this a matter of objective natural categorization, akin to the studying of plants and the classifications of botany.

In this scientific pursuit and supposedly objective view, card illustrators were not simply utilizing a popular trend or piggybacking on anthropological portrayals. While they were appealing to prevalent beliefs, commercial artists' goals were also served by claims of an unbiased perspective. Just as the colonial world spoke for itself with clear-cut roles based on the objective observation of *Naturvölker*, so too did the promoted brand self-evidently stand on its own. Compared to life in the colonies, the commodity was advanced, useful, and signified an advanced culture. An emphasis on objectivity also meant this view of the product was self-evident. The commodity was just as it seemed. Without a history or social relations, the promoted product was a good in the most literal sense of the term. It was simply a useful, modern, convenient, and superior product and that is all one needed to know.

Commercial illustrators approached non-Europeans in the African colonies as *Naturvölker*. This natural state of Africans, according to the cards, objectively led to European or white-based dominance. Even if Germans themselves were not directly portrayed, the natural or pre-colonial world was found objectively wanting. The designer of Figure 22—employed by Seeligs, a coffee substitute company—used an ethnographic style of isolated racial features and prominently displayed local objects. A detached and noticeably red-lipped, bare-chested, and bejeweled male of an unidentified "German Colony" was displayed with a collection of his indigenous

Figure 22. Seeligs Coffee Substitute, chain of being

weapons. Just below him and drawn on a smaller scale, a lion pounced on an antelope in a field of tall grass. The viewer was simultaneously shown the hierarchy and violent ways of nature, while the upper torso and exotic appearance of an African hung sternly above. He was surrounded by weapons, the only means he had to confront such an aggressive, but naturally determined state of existence. With the purchase of a morning coffee substitute, the trading card delivered a look at nature's exotic chain of being, complete with plants, animals, and the unchanging natural man. The European consumer, sipping their coffee alternative, had clearly overcome such a pre-industrial and savage way of life.

The portrayal of Africans as *Naturvölker* expanded beyond overt anthropological visual styles, and was used extensively to promote both the modernity and non-ideological nature of the commodity. Figure 23 adapted the

Figure 10. Liebig's Meat Extract, market in an East African village

traditional anthropological perspective of posing of natives in front of their dwellings but modified this perspective to create an active marketplace. Here, the card presented a supposedly everyday scene from an East African village. The illustrator pictured a people who lived closer to nature by including multiple visual markers. There were animals and natives lying about, sharing the same lackadaisical posture. The scene was also set in front of straw huts surrounded by heavy vegetation; and like Figures 15 and 17, there was a giant tree in the living space. In the bottom left corner sat an enlarged container of branded bullion, enshrined and protected from the surrounding scene. Ornamentally set off and encased in design, the commodity's elegant isolation from the hustle and bustle of the scene could remind viewers that they did not have to buy their modern product of convenience in such a backwards and disordered place. The visual employment of *Naturvölker* could be used as a counterpoint to the lifestyle of a civilized people capable of true culture, production, and an rational organization.

This contrast between order and chaos helped foster political identities of nation and empire as well as commercial and scientific identities. Figure 24 from Liebig's Fleisch Extract, the trading card pioneers, offered a summarizing combination of visual techniques used to communicate the colonial landscape and its inhabitants. The largest and most domineering character in the image was the German soldier with a disciplined but relaxed stance. He had no need for a label as the text and setting tell the viewer this was the German entry of the European colonies series. The German Imperial flag was draped behind his head as he stood hand at his hip and gun at his side, towards and over villages in Togo and Cameroon.

Figure 24. Liebig's Meat Extract, European colonial powers – Germany , Cameroon village and man, East African woman, Loma

The dwellings were pictured within dramatic landscapes and surrounded by vegetation to indicate the natural state of their inhabitants. On the bottom right and at the forefront of the picture, removed from any backdrop for inspection, was a supposedly typical man from Cameroon, and—sitting in the grass—a slackly postured female representative of East Africa. In the furthest right hand corner of the card and similarly removed from a background to enhance recognition was the can of Liebig's bullion, ever reliable and always typical for its kind. Each image, from the people to the commodity, was supposedly representative of a larger group. Thinking in easily discernible and supposedly objective generalities, abstractions, and types encouraged and strengthened the public's increasingly positive image of itself as a national entity. This way of thinking also paved the way for commercial branding and the acceptance of brand-specific qualities in mass-produced

commodities. The individuals of the city-states and provinces of the German empire, simultaneously experienced the rationalizing discourse of national citizenship and modern consumption.

Trading card illustrator's created a clearly defined colonial world by repeatedly showing instances of European superiority and apparently objective observations of *Naturvölker*. The non-ideological quality of their portrayals allowed commercial artists to communicate the normal and proper performances or roles for African *Naturvölker*. Card illustrators communicated a supposedly natural and common sense view of the European-African relationship.

When Africans were not presented in relation to Europeans, they were portrayed as backwards, natural curiosities. Africans were presented as a strange wonder or exotic decoration to be observed and enjoyed. Figure 25 pictured loincloth and head feather-donning locals dancing near baskets full of raw coffee. Its

Figure 25. Aecht Franck Coffee, the native coffee harvest ritual

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voyeuristic point of view suggested the viewer had come across and was merely peering in on this native ritual. The illustrator for this card's distributors, Aecht Franck Coffee, used African natives as a visual cue to highlight both the modernity and exotic qualities of the advertised commodity. Here Africans were seen as people of nature, closer to the original state of man before civilization. Their proper place was to so serve as the harvesters of raw materials processed and properly put to use by modern Germans.

Figure 26 used a similar juxtaposition of savage African with modern product as the white-pith helmeted European enjoyed a cup of tea and watched half-dressed natives dance around and worship an oversized container of beef bouillon. The viewer of the card received unmistakable cultural messages through this visual

Figure 26. Liebig's Meat Extract, the fetishizing natives

arrangement. The exoticism of the scene, the scaling of the merchandise, and the

fetishization of the commodity by the Africans but not the European, all worked to

command the viewer's attention, offer subtle flattery, and promote the product.

Trading card illustrators also pictured their products with cultural norms

and practices Germans would have viewed as senseless or irrational. Figure 27

depicted the outdated practice of the Crocodile trial and also showed a gravesite
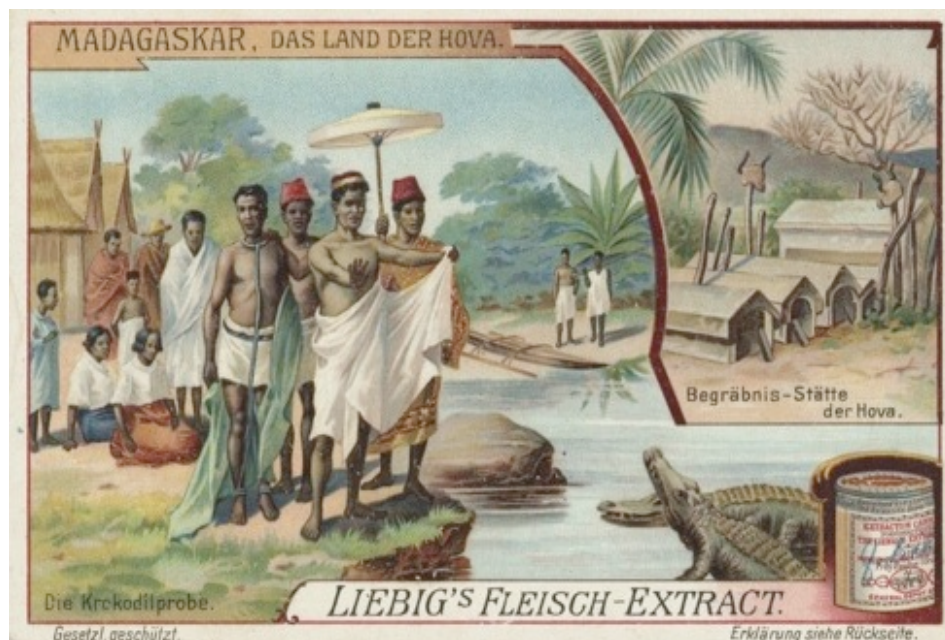
Figure 27. Liebig's Meat Extract, strange ways

decorated with skulls. The back of the card explained that, before recent political

changes and the introduction of Christianity, one form of Madagascan justice

involved the accused swimming across a river. If he survived, then he was divinely

proven innocent. The card also mentioned that Madagascans originally worshipped

astrology. Now that there was a belief in the continued existence of the soul, the

card continued, people in Madagascar built complex funeral homes and decorated

them with cattle skulls. In the bottom right corner of the trading card was a familiar

sight: a picture of the bullion can just purchased and the brand name sprawling

across the bottom. A modern, reliable product and brand was pictured with an odd

savage ritual and the strange cultural practices of a more primitive and natural

people. The card even provided text to explain the oddness behind the drawings and

the customs they were depicting. Additional text on the card described the

convenient uses for Liebig's Bullion and, like the large-scale partitioned can of the

product on the front, seamlessly tied the matter-of-fact presentation of exotic others

with the dependable superiority of the Liebig brand.

Humor and caricature were also an effective method to clearly demarcate

Naturvölker. Cards of this vein, however, were relatively few as humor and

caricature were more proportionately prevalent in larger print advertisements,

children's books, and magazines. Exaggerated, distorted, or grotesque physical

features often played a leading role in such images as otherness was approached

through laughter. The viewer would amusingly witness African attempts to be

European or odd African versions of European customs falling short of European

standards. According to such images, there was an unbridgeable gap of culture

between Africans and Europeans. Figure 28 showed a game of blind man's bluff,

where the person who was "it" confused a monkey for one of his racial peers. The

people's racial features were distorted and there was a hybrid yet failing attempt at

Western dress. Everyone remained barefoot, men with hats were shirtless including

a man with a medal pinned to his bare skin, and there was a naked man dancing in

Figure 28. Emmerlings, sports and games in Africa - blind man's bluff

Figure 29. Liebig's Meat Extract, the limits of civilization

the background. The Africans in Figure 29 also fall amusingly short of being fully civilized. Despite their attempt at posing for a photograph dressed in Western attire, they too remain barefoot and pictured with their pet baby lion—a further indication of their closeness to nature. These cards, like most others, used visual techniques and regular themes to indicate the boundaries of cultural belonging.

Another visual trope used by card designers to establish the identity of *Naturvölker* pictured native Africans performing agricultural labor. The text in Figure 30 told viewers they were witnessing African farmers plowing a field. Two colorfully dressed "Africans" leisurely trailed behind two oxen. A disorderly pile of their baskets and blankets—a material marker of their level of civilization—lay in the bottom right corner. Directly diagonally from the pile and placed just left and

Figure 30. Oehmigke Riemschneider, natives at work under proper supervision

slightly above the oxen were two well-postured and white-clad Europeans. It was under German or European tutelage that these once idle people and land were made productive.

Images of farming natives could also prove especially useful for companies that received a portion of their raw materials from the colonies. Unlike Zeller's observation that trading cards masked German economic interest, these illustrators utilized the very concept of economic organization. Commercial artists pictured scenes of harvest and created social messages of natural people made into productive workers. These now properly utilized *Naturvölker* worked for the good of the metropolitan consumer. These images showed the supposed social relations behind the commodity. Illustrators confronted commodity fetishism by using it to justify the supply chain. At the heart of production were cheerful natives, willfully handpicking the best they had to offer. Sarotti's Chocolate's figure 31 showed natives harvesting raw cacao and posed a generic and deeply red-lipped African holding a split sample of the raw product for the viewer. Figure 32 from Kappus Coffee combined a harvesting scene with anthropological visual styles and facts, labeling the image setting as Usambara, a mountainous region in Northeast Tanzania. The image also contained native housing amongst a lush tree-lined landscape and posed a native woman with a basket on her head to face the viewer. In the front of the picture lay the finished packaged product, the end result of willing labor from *Naturvölker* doing what they did best. Like the consistent portrayal of European/Germans superiority and the backwardness of uncultivated natives, the

Figure 31. Sarotti, the happy harvest

Figure 32. Kappus Offenbach, natives tend the coffee crop

visual motif of laboring Africans was used to endorse the colonial hierarchy,

illustrating the proper place of *Naturvölker* in the latest global economic order.

 When creating colonial images, card illustrators did not only utilize actively

superior white male leaders or helpless backward natives, but many cards also

pictured ships, governor's houses, or other large structures used in the

establishment or maintenance of colonialism. By showing German mechanical ships

in a tropical harbor or, like Figure 33, picturing a hospital in Togo complete with a

Figure 33. German Colonial Import Company, hospital and governor in Togo

German flag and a specifically named governor, the trading cards communicated a

positive image of German presence in a wildly natural and industrially-barren world.

Figure 34 showed a humble steamer surrounded by disproportionately sized

vegetation. The native African was made useful, given a smart sailor's uniform and

an oar, his body turned invitingly towards the steamboat. Visually, the African

Figure 34. Linde, In our Colonies

sailor was paralleled with a large specimen of local vegetation; the native was on

display as an exotic object, much like a piece of botany. The remaining wildlife and

vegetation communicated the natural state of the colony and made the steamboat

and the now helpful state of the native all the more impressive. The images in the

trading cards made clear that German colonialism was taming an otherwise

underdeveloped world.

The cards produced between 1904 and 1908 or those depicting the colonial

events of those years, revealed an underlying attribute of the new visual culture's

composition. These were years when violence and rebellion in the colonies was

most socially visible in the metropole. Three trading card companies took on the

task of providing social imagery to accompany the news stories and public

discussions on colonialism. These illustrators portrayed scenes of decontextualized

violence where unruly Africans rose up against their civilized masters. There was

also a trend to illustrate and name fictitious German victims. Sponsored by Erkel

Figure 35. Erkel Soaps, the Herero Rebellion and German victims

Soap, Figure 35 showed a large burning building as well as disproportionately-sized

and shadowy natives lurking nearby. The German victim above the scene was a

Farmer Lange, and the card simply stated that the Herero murdered him. Aecht

Franck Coffee created a thrilling tale with Figure 36, which the text stated was the

looting of Herr Gamisch's farm. It was a scene of blood, death, and destruction and

Figure 36. Aecht Franck, The Herero Uprising and the great escape

things looked pretty grim for the named Herr Gamisch. The back of the card,

however, narrated a scene where wild hordes had tied up the farmer, but overnight

rains had softened his bindings and allowed him to escape. While this story was

entertaining, no contextualization of the violence was given and Germans appeared

as the hapless victims of African savagery. These illustrators reinforced the cards'

sharply defined colonial world by creating sympathetic social roles for Germans and

recycling stereotypical tropes of the uncomplicated and wild African.

From 1904 to 1908, the founder of the trading cards, Liebig's Bullion, stayed

noticeably away from violent scenes and even the German African colonies

themselves. Instead, during this time of heightened colonial consciousness in the

metropole, Liebig either pictured humorously characterized Africans or focused on

non-German occupied African such as Ethiopia, Egypt, and Madagascar. By using regions with more established histories and outside German jurisdiction, card designers could avoid the complications involved with colonial politics and still associate their products with exotic lands.

Bintz Corned Beef produced a notable exception in this particular colonial card collection. An illustrator with the mass meat maker created an almost empathetic, albeit romanticized, series of Southwest Africa. Four of the six cards pictured natives carrying out their supposed routines of everyday life such as making food, spearfishing, or playing music while herding goats. Figure 37 from the same series then showed a scene of non-contextualized violence, but unlike other card series, it appeared the natives were the helpless targets of German force. Even though many of them were armed, the fleeing natives were no match for the oncoming Germans as explosions, blood, a few fallen bodies, and even a pregnant women retreating with a child marked the chaos and desperation of the scene. Balancing out the series, however, and perhaps so as not to appear too unsympathetic to the German cause, Figure 38 showed German soldiers using shovels to gather water from a noticeably harsh landscape. In the distance, natives traveling under the German imperial flag, walked toward the soldiers carrying packages one could assume were either supplies or gifts. Two of the soldiers were indigenous Africans under the supervision of a German officer. The card's message was clear. While other cards of the same series showed peaceful natives existing independent of Germans or as victims of violence, there were some indigenous people of Southwest Africa who welcomed and supported the German presence.

Figure 37. Bintz Corned Beef, a scene from German South West Africa
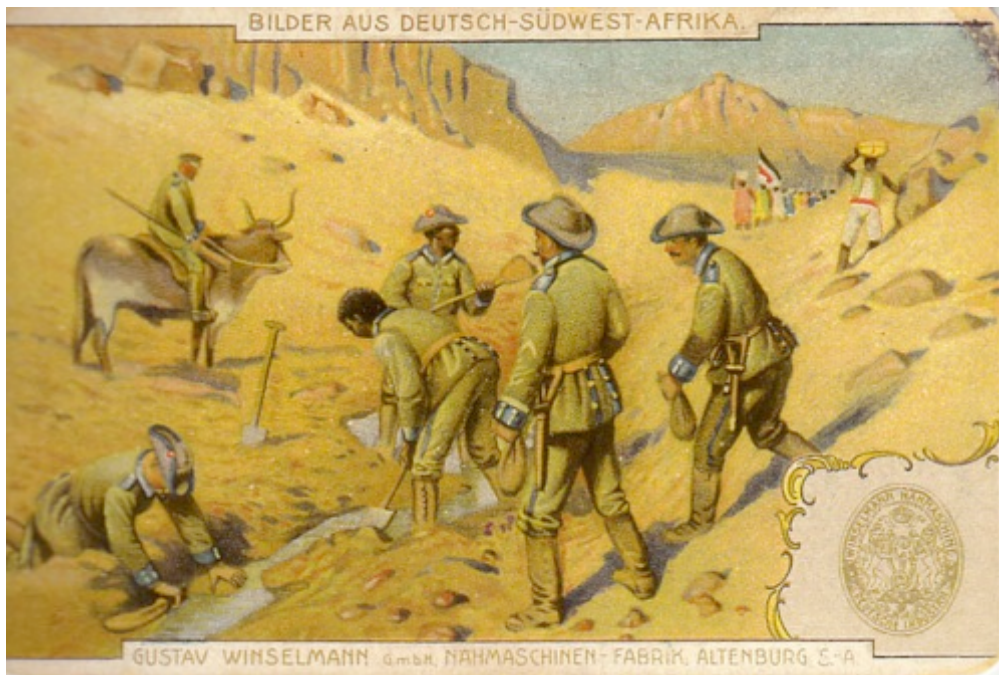

Figure 38. Bintz, struggles and gratitude in an unforgiving land

Yielding what little water they could from an unforgiving land, Germans were further developing previously untapped and underutilized resources. When seen in its entirety, the card series thus argued that the violence and disruption of native lifestyles was perhaps justified. Germans were there to develop the human and natural potential of an otherwise uncultivated peoples and land.

Discord in the colonies, then, did not dissuade illustrators from using Africa for commercial promotion. Card designers either embraced the much-publicized events in the colonies and continued along similar patterns of nationalistic and science-based command and flatter portrayals. Or illustrators found ways of circumventing politicized colonial topics through humor or the use of non-German African territories. Regardless of their topic, the cards produced between 1904 and 1908 clearly illustrated that card designers were more concerned with the domestic needs of Germany than they were interested in portraying anything objective about Africa in-itself. Card designers needed to maintain positive brand associations and they continued to act as disinterested flatterers.

Overall, trading card illustrators created a standardized gaze of Africans and German colonialism. Illustrators depicted exotic lands and peoples in-line with newly materializing commercial, national, and scientific or objectively based identities. As German mass markets were forming in the context of an abrupt industrialization and a novel German nation-state, commercial artists consistently portrayed the colonial experience and the German colonizer in a flattering light while presenting the African as a type, both naturally and objectively inferior. The inclusion of science justified the clearly demarcated cultural roles and meanings

assigned to primitive Africans, modern Germans, and their comparative ways of life. The current German–African colonial relationship, according to this view, was natural. This perspective enabled a mass consumer and political culture. It allowed individuals to participate in well-defined and widely shared group narratives of consumption, national identity, and superior ways of living.

These visual narratives of group ritual and belonging, while attempting to appear non-ideological, were designed with specific cultural needs in mind. Commercial promoters saw the colonial world as they needed in order to justify their opinions and utilize advertising techniques. Just as Said characterized European Orientalist scholars, card designers did not convey the colonial African world, they created it. In this instance of knowledge production, commercial artists used visual means to give a material substance social meaning, both the faraway colony and the recently purchased commodity. These meanings were designed for and helped create a specific cultural audience, the German public. Illustrators attempted to have the broadest possible appeal amongst this heterogeneous population, so trading cards were drawn according to the most widely held German values. They provided fetishized images styled as matter-of-fact. With factory-like efficiency, card illustrators churned out schemas and types, reifying racial and socioeconomic hierarchies. This industrialization of visual culture disseminated a self-assured standardized gaze. Styled as an empirical window to the world, trading cards provided a self-inflating while other-denigrating mirror. Illustrators used the African according to German ends while claiming this natural and in accord with the African's identity. In the end, commercial artists presented their own social

constructions as reality and delivered an unthinking, self-righteous interpellation of modern German selfhood.

As commodity producers circulated trading cards by the millions, one element of Germany's highly rationalized and bureaucratic society took particular exception to this mass distribution of unreflective visual ego. Concerned with the effects of commercial and postcard imagery on children, the United German Examining board for Youth Literature noted in 1900 that, "What lands in a child's hands is at most entirely worthless, neither made by artists, nor intended for education. The manufacturer merely wants to please, and knows the selection of goods is everything to his young clientele."[11] Still, trading card production continued until the 1940s and similarities with other visual media meant such modern imagery was not just designed for commercialism or children. The trading cards and other newly prevalent mass images were made for widest possible appeal. Popular image producers—in a rational response to an increasingly differentiated, specialized, and class-based audience—utilized the unifying grand narratives of the era: the nation-state, rational thinking, industrial/technological achievement, and increased consumption. The resulting standardized gaze also employed an egocentric visual logic, arranging others to gratify the viewer while presenting this as matter of fact. While, like colonialism, trading card and popular images could be appropriated and negotiated by individual users, also like colonialism, these mass images established the milieu, or standard discourse that one had to respond. As

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[11] Joachim Zeller, "Harmless 'Kolonialbiedermeier'? Colonial and Exotic Trading Cards," in *German Colonialism, Visual Culture, Modern Memory*, ed. Michael Perraudin and Jürgen Zimmerer. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 71.

dissenters in Germany condemned mass images and colonial ventures, the

dissemination of mass media intensified and colonial issues were further tied to

questions of national strength. Card creators established a visual logic that would

become even more prevalent in a German society that became increasingly

nationalistic, rationalized, and eventually commercial.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Commercial illustrators and German colonizing agents used similar tactics
and approaches when encountering the peoples of Africa. Both groups tried to place
the ethnically diverse natives into definitive and unchanging roles. Both card
designers and colonizers used Africans for German ends while justifying African
subordination to German interests. Because these two arenas were separated by
thousands of miles and carried out by vastly different personnel, their
commonalities revealed broader historic trends and underlying cultural
presuppositions of German worldviews circa 1900.

As people living in various localities began to speak of themselves as German
and others were encountered who were clearly labeled uncivilized and inferior, the
modern commodity also came into its own identity. Commercial firms differentiated
their products through branding. Factory production meant standardization and the
one branded item represented all others of its kinds. Firms promoted the stable
uniqueness of their mass-produced commodities using various advertising
techniques to create positive brand associations. Commercial promoters often had
consumers identify with a product by juxtaposing a commodity with an exotic and
otherized world. In this manner, the African archetype itself became a product to be
consumed. Commercial illustrators used Africa and Africans to build and feed the
German consumer ego.

National identity, colonial ventures, and the creation of a mass consumer
society were outgrowths of the European Enlightenment project and its version of

progress and modernity. Enlightenment modernity meant the displacement of the

old aristocratic and religious social order based on privilege and tradition, with

more rational, secular, and calculated social organization such as state

bureaucracies or the capitalist division of labor. European imperialism was an

attempt to apply this rationalized social order to the rest of the world, and trading

cards were an effort at creating a rationally organized mass society. Germany was

undergoing its own particularly telescoped episode of modernization. Other

European states had long since established their nation-state bureaucracies

necessary for the broader development of industry, commerce, and the

transformation of communities to national society. Even though German colonialism

itself was relatively short-lived and not as extensive as other European powers, card

illustrators utilized colonial themes and approaches to construct a rational society

for consumer citizens. The lateness of 1871 compared to 1789, 1688, or 1648 did

not hinder Germans from quickly rationalizing their identities and organization in

the form of nation-states, commercial markets, and a globally imperialist outlook.

The similarities between trading cards and German colonial policy showed

the selective application of Enlightenment ideals by commercial promoters, colonial

agents, and xenophobic nationalists. Some of the same thinkers that were used to

support German dominance and colonialism, such as Herder and Kant, also provided

arguments for just the opposite. The German Enlightenment, according to Kant, was

particularly universal. Kant believed this latest epistemological shift empowered

individuals and freed them from authoritative regimes. His writings instructed

individuals to have courage and "use one's own mind without another's guidance."[1] In the German colonial encounter, however, the Enlightenment principle of reason and rationalism was ultimately limited to national terms and overrode any potential of a more global universality. German colonialists and the illustrators of German colonialism only considered their own abilities to use reason. They did not recognize non-European capacities or forms of rational thought. German colonizers projected their own sense of what was proper and condemned others who operated differently or who had their own interests. By only considering their own views as valid, German colonizers justified their domination over non-Europeans. Germans saw their colonies as providers of raw materials and places to settle excess population. With a monopoly on reason and according to their own logic, German colonizers felt entitled to utilize non-European resources, labor, land, and people towards their own ends. Commercial illustrators, German colonial agents, and domestic supporters of the Wilhelmine Empire, employed a logic limited to themselves but rationalized as non-ideologically correct.

With a sense of objectively-derived entitlement and clear-cut goals, both trading card illustrators and German colonizers utilized a rationality that approached and saw the world as it needed in order to justify that very way of thinking. These particular forms of modern German rationality became institutionalized rationalizations caught in a circular reasoning that simply reinforced their own views. While colonizers designed schools, laws, and entire socioeconomic systems to create favorable conditions for their success, commercial

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[1] Immanuel Kant, "*An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment*" In *The Portable Enlightenment Reader*, 3, edited by Isaac Kramnick, 1784. Reprint, New York: Penguin, 1995.

artists constructed visual colonial worlds complete with their own set of rules. The consistency in commercial illustrator's colonial scenes—one included with each purchase—revealed the visual constitution of Wilhelmine Germany's emerging mass society. These unwavering patterns also revealed the limits of this political and cultural collective's social imagination. The visual construction of the social field confronting the everyday German, while still negotiated and appropriated by the individual, encouraged an overly simplistic and fixed view of the colonial encounter. Colonially-themed trading card designers utilized a way of looking consistent with the needs of commercial promotion, endorsing the colonial project, and cultivating an unreflective and exclusionary national hubris. This modern gaze was achieved through the careful arrangement of German and African materials and bodies, which idealized the German self while decontextualizing, denigrating, or misrepresenting the African other. Through the design of consumer culture, modern Germans were invited to agree with modernity's logic and conclusions. The German consumer was validated for their purchase and very way of life through a delightful look at an exotic peoples and lands.

This standardized gaze was disseminated with the efficiency that defined the German Imperial and Industrial Age. Just as factories mass-produced commodities, so did commercial artists mass-produce culture. Illustrators needed to create recognizable images to the politically-diverse German public. They thus provided viewers ready-made and already interpreted stereotypes. The common drawing techniques and consistent themes meant illustrators—whether consciously or unintentionally—attempted to discipline the viewer, drawing their conclusions and

providing a visual code that took little active decoding. Like the mass produced

commodities they promoted, illustrators attempted to make the viewer

interchangeable and communicated the same message regardless of the individual

viewer's background or predisposition. This standardization enabled a mass market

along nationally defined lines and was the foundation for a German mass society. In

this shared social space, people and places were portrayed as objects with an

inherent meaning irrelevant of social context. Firms mass-produced fetishized

images presented as non-ideological facts. Individuals in the various communities of

German localities were made to recognize a larger German society and witness its

supposedly objective or common sense superiority.

The trading cards marked a new age of social rationalization and

Weltanschauung. As Germans were adjusting their political identities and how they

produced, consumed, and otherwise reproduced their daily means of survival, larger

institutions were also establishing acceptable practices and ideologies. Businesses,

state bureaucracies, academic disciplines, and all manner of professions like

advertising underwent processes of rationalization. These social organizations

looked to establish certainty and order through rules, standardized definitions, and

demonstrable best practices. The rationalization of businesses meant an emphasis

on efficiency, predictability, and quantification. The trading cards, a specifically

market-driven production, also exhibited traits of rationalization. Designed for mass

appeal, they were a form of cultural rationalization that used larger social changes

in an attempt to create national social cohesion and increase the circulation of

commodities. The cards were an interpellation of larger social, political, and

economic ideologies and showed how changes in social structures became a part of everyday life.

Using carefully crafted images, card designers offered their German viewers an active performance of shared social values. With their consistencies, the cards helped normalize and justify the colonial relationship, the German national identity, scientific thinking, and commodity capitalism. Commercial illustrators reified abstract entities like brands, race, and national identities as objective facts. This visual social performance took the form of a self-deluding spectacle. There was a downplay or complete absence of social and political context. The cards displayed a self-interested and limited view of economic relationships. Ignoring material realities, designers preferred a decontextualized fantasy world made for the enjoyment of the modern consumer. This highlighted all that was curious, exotic, and delightful about colonial Africa, while suppressing anything that was contradictory, harmful, or socially unjust. Commercial artists constructed a standardized colonial world and mass society utilizing a strictly self-serving domestic appropriation of the exotic.

German colonizers and commercial illustrators did not approach non-Europeans objectively, that is, they did not recognize non-Europeans as independent subjects with their own history. Instead they only considered non-Europeans through their own subjectivity, seeing them only in relation to themselves. In Africa specifically, this meant viewing individuals as useable objects. The Wilhelmine Imperialist mindset recognized its instrumental use of Africa's various resources and peoples. Present in both colonial action and commercial

imagery, this form of social imagination justified its views by essentializing African identities according to German needs. Ignoring anything that contradicted their expectations, these Germans attempted to deny the fluidity of individuals, relationships, and other possible ways of life. They took a limited view at the consequences of their actions, choosing to consider that which supported their initial beliefs. German colonial, economic, and sociocultural rationalizations became self-reinforcing, its practitioners were righteous in their absolute correctness. Colonial mastery, establishing national superiority, and early forms of visual product promotion all depended on the same technique: use an other as a means to an end and exercise a self-serving prejudice to justify the relationship as a matter of fact.

In Wilhelmine Germany, marketers established commercial identities for products and consumers using the same authoritative methods as colonial agents and xenophobic nationalists. The opposite of a dialogue, German consumers were prompted to enter a visual social relationship entirely constructed according to their own interests. Left to gaze upon themselves through the degradation of African Others, the German public could feed their desire for progress by consuming an ever-increasing number of commercial products and images. Although historians may argue that official state-sponsored German colonialism was a relatively short-lived phenomenon lasting only thirty-four years, it is clear that the colonial imagination was a foundational part of modern German identity. The cards illustrated that colonialism was not a separate phenomenon that shaped the modern outlook. Instead, modernity itself was dependent on colonial thinking. As German

society splintered into classes and political parties, commercial promoters used colonial images and imperialist thinking to build a mass social consensus, reminding the German consumer that this was still the best of all possible worlds. Unifying diverse interests around a racial, nationalistic, and commercial spectacle, card designers announced the triumph of a self-righteous and unreflective modernity. Through the ease of images and practices of consumption, commercial illustrators implicated the greater German public with modern ideals. Germans, in the rituals and routines of everyday life, could thus learn of and reflexively confirm their rational way of life by dehumanizing and dismissing inferior groups or individuals.

In the case of Germany, the long term historical consequences of this standardized gaze would be easy to limit to National Socialism. While the extreme nationalism at the heart of World War I was clearly prevalent, sanctioned, and utilized in this widely disseminated outlook, it would be the historian's fallacy to then assume this led directly to the worldview of the Third Reich. Other European nations that practiced colonialism and circulated similar trading cards did not all end up becoming fascist dictatorships. Germany's inter-war years also witnessed the relatively liberal Weimar Republic, a cultural experiment that Peter Gay characterized as treating "the outsider as insider."[2] The modern German gaze, while laying the foundations for a successful National Socialist rhetoric, should not be exclusively understood in its implications for the coming Third Reich. Of greater consequence is its potential similarity to other industrializing nations' media and its continuity before, during, and after 1945.

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[2] Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1968).

The modern German utilized colonial thinking in numerous aspects of their increasingly changing lives including national selfhood, commercial activity, and their use of objectivity. Other industrializing nations were rationalizing along similar lines to Germany and the likes of Great Britain, Belgium, France, the United States, and even Japan had longer, more involved imperial ambitions. It was not until Germany turned her colonial gaze inwards toward Europe, that the industrial nations began rethinking their imperialism and moving towards decolonization. After the Nazis, two foundations of modern identity—extreme nationalism and direct colonial control—were challenged and lost credibility. No explicit challenge has yet been made to the colonial thinking inherent in modern commercial promotion or the use of objective rationalizations. In 2011, German owned Nivea, a global body-care brand, released an advertisement with a well-groomed black man posed to throw a severed black afro head. The text read, "Re-civilize yourself." Public outcry caused the advertisement to be immediately retracted. It is thus the task of our supposedly postmodern age to take responsibility for our images, recognize their gaze, and perhaps occasionally redirect them.

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VITA

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