

TO SEE IS TO KNOW: POSTCARDS FROM FRENCH WEST AFRICA AND THE
PRESENTATION OF COLONIAL PROGRESS, 1900-1918

by

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Under the Direction of Joshua Cole

ABSTRACT

This study examined French colonial postcards at the turn of the twentieth century. The postcards provided the French with a vivid illustration of the progress of the “civilizing mission” of Europeans abroad. Europeans generally believed Africans were less civilized and needed European guidance to advance. These ideas dominated academia and permeated French popular culture. Africans entertained Parisians on stage, in ethnographic exhibitions, and at universal expositions. These exhibits displayed foreign people and featured their exotic qualities. Anthropology emerged as a science and began using photography to document cultures. Postcard photographers imitated anthropological photographers to increase the commercial appeal of their work, thus reinforcing common stereotypes. Postcards also showed the possibilities for urban renewal in Africa in an age of urban decline in Europe. Africans who viewed the postcards remembered the French presence and control in the region. The postcards ultimately served as a means of clarifying power relationships in Africa.

INDEX WORDS: Postcards, Africa, Colonialism, Photography, French popular culture, Colonial Railroads, Colonial Architecture

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INTRODUCTION

Postcards today are ubiquitous items that can be found anywhere, from metropolitan airports to rural stores. Immediately popular since their invention in the late nineteenth century they have been a constant presence ever since. Illustrations on both contemporary and early postcards depict images such as landscapes, landmarks, and attractions. They can represent almost anything, from commercial opportunities to political agendas for a particular region. This was particularly true of postcard images of European colonial possessions. Turn-of-the-century postcards from the French colonies in West Africa illustrated life in the colonies in addition to showing the viewer the economic potential of the region.

Supporters of French colonial policy fervently believed in the *mission civilisatrice*, which asserted that the French had a duty to introduce rationality and republicanism in their colonial populations.¹ The success of these policies depended upon their ability to create European infrastructures for the colonies. James C. Scott argued that states created internal order by implementing rational systems to organize the population and their resources. They accomplished this through the creation of regional maps, cadastral surveys, transportation networks, and engineering projects.² The rationality the French wanted to instill in Africans through the civilizing mission also came through in their project to render the colony a legible and comprehensible entity.

The French agenda in West Africa called for the creation of the same systems of organization. However, the distance between France and its colonial possessions made it difficult to educate the metropolitan population about France's colonial accomplishments. The state along with the other groups working in the colonies had to find a means of publicizing their

project in Africa. Various forms of media, such as travel literature and guidebooks, quickly became vehicles for the dissemination of the colonial project, but postcards from the colonies quickly became the ideal medium for the translation of colonial achievements for the French population.

While the French solidified their colonial position, changes in metropolitan France began to allow mass participation in the colonial project. According to historian William Schneider this participation came as the result of greater involvement in the French government. This occurred largely through the extension of suffrage and the popular election of representatives to the Chamber of Deputies. The popular classes also learned of colonial activities by gaining access to information that had not been available before. The late nineteenth century saw, mainly through compulsory education, the creation of a large audience for new mass media, especially the mass circulation newspapers.³

Schneider stated that, from 1870 to 1900, information about Africa came to the French through three sources: newspapers, the illustrated press, and the display of Africans in France. He argued that the newspapers offered the “broadest and most consistent description” of events from the African territories. *Le Petit Journal* and *Le Petit Parisien*, two early mass circulation newspapers, covered the creation of France’s colonial empire and their coverage increased as colonial activity increased. The metropolitan interest in images of Africans culminated in the ethnographic exhibitions available to the French after 1875. These exhibits allowed the French to see newspaper scenes depicted in person, thus adding a measure of reality to the images imported by the newspapers.⁴

While European powers worked to consolidate their colonial possessions, the postcard emerged as a cheap means of correspondence. Postcards were first suggested by Emmanuel

Herrmann, an Austrian economics professor. He proposed the new medium as a time saving device to substitute for short letters. He thought these short notes could be sent on small open cards at a cheaper postage rate. Herrmann convinced the Austrian government of this, and in October 1869 the first postcards went into production.⁵ Postcard production spread throughout the world by the mid 1870s.⁶ By the 1889 Exhibition in Paris the postcard was a fixture in European life. Postcards of the Eiffel Tower were some of the most popular souvenirs at the 1889 Universal Exposition.⁷

By the 1890s postcards were widely available throughout continental Europe. The postcards appealed to tourists looking for a souvenir of their travels abroad. Although travel was still largely limited to elites, it was becoming more accessible to the middle classes. Postcards gave these new travelers a means to share their journeys with their friends and family at home.⁸ Postcards became such a popular commodity that the period from 1895 to the end of the Great War is now considered the golden age of the postcard.

The popularity of postcards extended to postcards depicting images from European colonial possessions as well. While exact production statistics are unknown, historian David Prochaska estimated that postcard manufacturers in colonial West Africa produced, at a minimum, 7,210 different postcards between 1901 and 1918, 930 between 1919 and 1939, and 600 between 1945 and 1963.⁹ In the case of colonial Senegal, according to postcard expert Philippe David, three main groups of people purchased these postcards in the years before World War I. First among these groups were French civilians and military personnel in the colonies. The second group consisted of the colonial bourgeoisie, while the final and most rare group to purchase postcards was literate, vacationing colonial servants who sent postcards to their employers.¹⁰

These postcards from French West Africa held a curious place in the French culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These images, sent back to France from the colonies, provided a link between French colonial activities and French popular culture. The images from the colonies served as a means of reinforcing the notions the French held about Africa and Africans at the time. This type of image was already apparent in the French visual culture of the time. Many, if not most, of these images emphasized the differences between Africa and Europe and reinforced French ideas of their superiority over the colonial peoples.

Collecting postcards became fashionable soon after they found their niche in European life. According to Martin Willoughby, “being a bright, decorative object that could be gathered together in one place and easily stored, postcards became an ideal collectible. It would seem that no sooner had the first picture postcard dropped through its first letterbox onto its first doormat, than the first postcard album was produced to put it in.”¹¹ The postcard album was the natural successor to the albums that contained family photographs. Willoughby asserted that postcard albums reached across class lines appealing to both rich and poor alike, with even Queen Victoria starting her own collection.¹²

Postcard collections from West Africa served as spontaneous photographic archives of French practices and procedures in the colonies as well as native practices and customs. These collections created individual archives of colonial images that illustrated the French project in West Africa, Algeria, Madagascar, Indochina, and their other territorial possessions throughout the world. The images represented on the postcards reflected the French influence on the area through pictures of railway construction, busy ports and commerce in addition to depicting native customs and practices. These collections of postcards created a systematic means of viewing French colonial achievements. It is important to note that these postcard “archives”

came into existence unintentionally and without any prompting from the state. The spontaneous creation of this archive was merely a fortuitous occurrence for the agenda of shifting the popular conception of Africa from a spectacle to a resource. The postcard photographers were usually private businessmen rather than being employed by the state.¹³ Viewers of the postcards could see a version of the colonial reality that illustrated a variety of activities ranging from African customs and practices to French accomplishments in the colonies. These images also showed how the French administrators wanted to make the African colonies and the French actions there more comprehensible to popular French sensibilities. In so doing postcards reflected, for the people in France, the way the state worked to make life in their colonies rational and comprehensible.

The central goal of this project is to apply the notion of legibility and translation to the French colonial enterprise in Africa. The argument will be made that postcards from colonial West Africa were one means of translating the scientific and bureaucratic aspects of the French colonial project in Africa for the popular classes in France. Colonial postcards were one of many means of showing the people what the French were trying to accomplish in Africa. The postcards functioned alongside such varied media as travel literature, guidebooks, contemporary journalism and fiction to show the metropolitan populace how businesses, entrepreneurs, and the state rendered the colonies knowable and comprehensible through maps, surveys, population studies, cadastral surveys, transportation systems, and engineering projects. Postcards were important because they were an inexpensive, mass produced commodity available to all classes.

This study of colonial postcards focuses on the time period of 1900 to 1918 because the greatest numbers of colonial postcards were produced during this period. The first section examines the popular representation of Africans in France that predated the appearance of

postcards. The next section explores the role of photography in the new science of anthropology and how it affected colonial postcards. The final chapter considers how colonial postcards transmitted images of the French project in Africa back to France through images of the railroads and colonial architecture.

The first chapter argues that nineteenth-century racial theory and its manifestation in contemporary spectacles, like the ethnographic exhibitions and universal expositions, provided a framework for the French populace to see the necessity of the French project in Africa. It shows how scientific theories about race transformed into stereotypes about Africans that permeated French popular culture. The chapter begins with a discussion of the eighteenth-century ideas on race and how those transformed into nineteenth-century notions of race. The chapter then shifts to popular conceptions of race and how these theories were integrated into popular culture. This is illustrated through an investigation of the late nineteenth century's ethnographic exhibitions and universal expositions. The discussion of the universal expositions also probes the role of exposition postcards in the dissemination of popular racial notions. In discussing the universal expositions the role of exposition postcards is examined. In so doing this provides a transition to the second chapter, which explores the links between photography, anthropology, and postcards.

The second chapter argues that postcard photographers tried to replicate anthropological methodology to give legitimacy to their postcards in the same way that scientifically based entertainment did in the metropole. This section begins with an examination of photography's role in the emerging science of anthropology. Photography allowed for the easy measurement, classification, and categorization of newly encountered and seemingly less developed peoples. Photography took individuals and created general "types" for study by anthropologists as well as creating a spectacle for voyeurs. The photographic experience involved roles played by the

photographer, the subject, and the viewer. The viewer imparted meaning on the image while the relationship between the photographer and the subject was more complex. Subjects often exhibited subtle resistance to colonial rule while the photographers often attempted to depict European superiority. Postcard photographers were no exception to these relationships between the photographer and subject. As a result postcards could be very telling of the colonial rule in a region. Postcard photographers were also subject to market forces that anthropological photographers did not encounter. They had to create images that would appeal to their audiences. This often resulted in the perpetuation of stereotypes about the colonies and their peoples.

The next chapter argues that the French created legible societies in the colonies by imposing infrastructures and social structures in addition to the creation of maps and transportation networks. They ultimately instilled the rationality they sought through the architecture and urban design in the colonies. Postcard images of colonial architecture showed their audiences the progress of the civilizing mission in West Africa. They also showed the French the possibilities for urban reform in France that could erase the sense of urban degeneration that was present at the time. These images also demonstrated for the elite African audience the power structure the French established in the region and reiterated the French control of the region.

The final chapter focuses entirely on postcard images of the railroad in West Africa. These images of the railroads and their construction showed their audiences in France the progress of the civilizing mission. The French were convinced that the railroad was essential to installing legible and rational rule in the colonies. Images of the railroads and their apparent civilizing influence were illustrated by postcards of the railroad in Africa. These images also

illustrated for the Africans the French dominance of their territory and the increasing encroachment of Europeans and their technology in Africa. The power implied by the railroad reinforced the French control of the region.

More than one thousand postcards comprised the research base for this study. Most of the postcards were found in Philippe David's *Inventaire Générale des cartes postales Fortier* and André and Afo Guenneguez's *Repertoire de la Carte Postale Ivoirienne en Hommage Aux Fondateurs de la Côte d'Ivoire*. Additional postcard images were found on the Internet at the Centre Edmond Fortier, Cartes Postales d'Afrique, a section of UNESCO's WebWorld website. The Centre Edmond Fortier is a Dutch website devoted to sharing Fortier's work among scholars, postcard collectors and museum personnel.¹⁴ Cartes Postales d'Afrique is part of the UNESCO website. Its purpose is to collect and publish African postcards from the sixteen nations of the Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique Ouest in the period 1890-1930.¹⁵

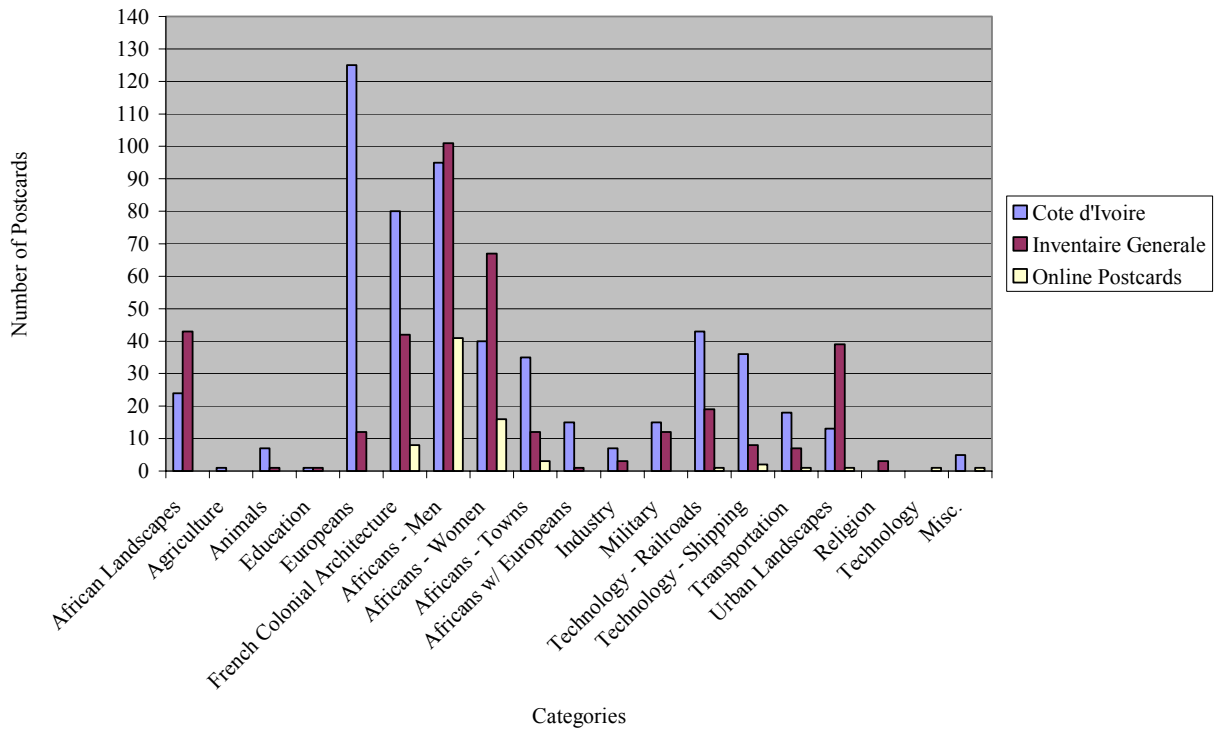
Edmond Fortier was one of the most important and prolific postcard producers in West Africa in addition to having the largest collection of postcards in the colonies. Fortier expert Philippe David divided Fortier's work into five series. The first, notated as *Fortier Dakar* on the postcards, contains 31 postcards issued from 1901 to 1902 and depicted mostly scenes of Dakar and its inhabitants. The second series, *Fortier Photo*, was comprised of 845 postcards printed between 1901 and 1904 and mainly depicted Dakar but also included images of Saint-Louis, Rufisque, and Sine-Saloum. The next series was labeled as the *Collection Fortier* and contained 246 postcards of which 240 were reprints of earlier cards. The fourth series, the *Collection Générale Fortier*, contains 2,850 postcards which were printed between 1905 and 1910. These postcards included images of Dakar, Gorée, trips to Guinea and Mali in 1905 and 1906, Senegal, the Conakry-Niger railroad, Rufisque, the Ivory Coast, and Lagos.¹⁶ This set of images also

included the “310 ‘*études*’ of women and young girls; the visit of Minister of Colonies Milliès-Lacroix in 1908 to Senegal, Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire, and Dahomey; the visit of Governor-General Merleau Ponty in 1908 to Guinea; and principal buildings in Dakar.”¹⁷ The final series of 3,512 postcards consisted entirely of reissued images.¹⁸ Philippe David collected and organized these postcards into his three volume *Inventaire Générale des Cartes Postales Fortier*, which was published in the mid-1980s.

André and Afo Guenneguez’s *Repertoire de la Carte Postale Ivoirienne* celebrated the centennial of the creation of the Ivory Coast. The postcard images in the catalog chronicled the history of the Ivory Coast from its establishment in 1887 until the work’s publication in 1987. This catalog included postcards from various producers, including Fortier, and showed the development of the colony into an independent nation. The postcards were organized by their producers and chronologically with tables that allowed for the discernment of the time periods of each group of postcards.

This body of research was organized into several broad categories that reflected the themes that were most prominent in the postcards. These categories include colonial architecture, Europeans, Africans, transportation, and urban images. Images of Africans outnumbered any other category by far by representing 24 percent of the images – nearly one quarter of the whole sample. These were followed by postcards of Europeans and colonial architecture with each representing 12 to 13 percent of the postcards. The dominance of the African images illustrates the claim of Christaud M. Geary and others that postcard photographers were bound to the laws of supply and demand and that these images of Africans were those that were most popular. The following table illustrates the division of the postcards and shows which categories were dominant.

Table 1 Postcards



It is important to note that the table only illustrated tendencies rather than real proportions. This sample only represents a slice of the colonial postcard production in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, the sample does allow one to draw certain conclusions about the subjects that were most important to the French in the African colonies. The high percentage of postcards of Africans suggests the French desire to see the people in the new territories. What they tended to see, as will be shown in chapter two, were images of Africans that conformed to stereotypes already present in French society.

While images of Africans reinforced stereotypes, images of architecture and the railroad showed the postcard audience the French accomplishments in West Africa. The images of architecture and urban design showed the French the possibilities the colonial cities offered for urban renewal and the progress in the colonies. These images also illustrated the colonial power

structure for the Africans buying the postcards. The imposing buildings and orderly boulevards showed them the French controlled the colony. Images of the railroad reinforced this power structure by showing the dominance of engineering and technology over the African jungle. Postcards were an important medium for the dissemination of colonial images for several reasons. First, they provided access to illustrated contemporary scientific ideas about race and European cultural superiority to the mass public. Second, by taking advantage of the revolutionary new medium of photography, the postcards were themselves an example of how the European technologies could literally capture life in the colonies. Finally, through the spontaneous phenomenon of postcard collections, these small and inexpensive images allowed Europeans living at home in the metropole to appropriate images of colonial success in Africa and make it their own.

¹ Alice L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 2.

² James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 2. One of Scott's arguments in this book relates the tension between the state and their populations. He asserts that premodern states did not have ample information to understand the workings of their state. They did not have a means of measuring society that would allow for the creation of a "synoptic view" for the state. To better understand its society, the state created a "map" through a variety of means such as rationally designed cities, the implementation of permanent surnames, a standard system of weights and measures, cadastral surveys, censuses, standardization of language, and the organization of transportation.

³ William Schneider, *An Empire for the Masses: The French Popular Image of Africa, 1870-1900*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1982), 5.

⁴ Schneider, 5.

⁵ Frank Staff, *The Picture Postcard and Its Origins*. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 46.

⁶ Staff, 49.

⁷ Staff, 54.

⁸ Staff, 58.

⁹ David Prochaska, "Fantasia of the Photothèque: French Postcard Views of Colonial Senegal." *African Arts* 24(4) October 1991: 40.

¹⁰ Philippe David, in David Prochaska, "Fantasia of the Photothèque: French Postcard Views of Colonial Senegal," *African Arts* 24(4) October 1991: 42.

¹¹ Martin Willoughby. *A History of Postcards: A pictorial record from the turn of the century to the present day*. (London: Bracken Books, 1994), 10.

¹² Willoughby, 10.

¹³ The French state did fund some postcard publishers in Africa. For example, they supported the Neurdein Frères Photographic Studio and used their images for travel literature and historical records. See Rebecca J. DeRoo, "Colonial Collecting: French women and Algerian *cartes postales*," in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing race and place*. Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, eds. (London: Routledge, 2002), 159.

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- ¹⁴ Centre Edmond Fortier, <http://home.planet.nl/~kreke003/>
- ¹⁵ Cartes Postales d’Afrique, <http://www.unesco.org/webworld/mdm/visite/cartpafir/fr/present1.html>
- ¹⁶ Prochaska, 42.
- ¹⁷ Prochaska, 42.
- ¹⁸ Prochaska, 42.

CHAPTER 1

RACIAL THEORIES AND FRENCH POPULAR CULTURE

In the nineteenth century popular ideas of race began to emerge in French society. Racial theories originated in the Enlightenment, but they had their greatest influence in the latter half of the nineteenth century, especially during the age of colonial expansion. This chapter argues that racial theories of the nineteenth century and their manifestation in contemporary spectacles, like the ethnographic exhibitions and the universal expositions, provided a framework for the French populace to see the necessity of the civilizing mission in Africa. The new science of anthropology and its use of photography also aided in the reinforcement of these ideas by emphasizing the French agenda in the colonies and the racial stereotypes already present in contemporary thought. The scientific influence of photography also gave legitimacy to images of Africa, such as postcards, so viewers would accept the work of these photographers as the real image of the new territories.

The Enlightenment, the Great Chain of Being, and the Emergence of Anthropology

Nineteenth-century French conceptions of race and images of Africa and Africans had their roots in eighteenth century thought. Enlightenment thinkers believed man to be an essential part of nature, a link in the "great chain of being" that had existed since ancient times. They assumed this chain created a cosmic order that arranged all creatures from highest to lowest.¹ This view offered Enlightenment scholars a notion of a complete universe where all they needed to do was identify and understand the links in the chain.²

Scientists sought to find the "missing link" between man and animals in this great chain of being. Images of Africans and contemporary scientific thought suggested that Africans might

be that missing link. Enlightenment scholars believed the highest animal to be the ape which was linked to the black who they believed was the lowest form of man.³

Many Enlightenment thinkers believed in this superiority of Europe and Western society. One example was the French biologist Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon who was a contemporary of Voltaire. Buffon argued in his work, *Histoire Naturelle*, that mankind was a unified race that originated with the same species. This argument stemmed from the biological facts that “whites and blacks can procreate together: this fact already proves that they belong to one and the same species.”⁴ While all of mankind belonged to the same species, Buffon arranged it hierarchically. In order create this hierarchy Buffon ordered people based on their rationality and sociability, which he defined as the ability to submit to laws and rules.⁵ The presence of rationality and sociability allowed Buffon to create the poles of his hierarchy, which were “civilization” and “savagery,” and to order the people of the world accordingly. Ultimately he decided that “the nations of Western Europe are at the summit, the other Europeans just below; the populations of Asia and Africa come next, and the American savages are at the very bottom.”⁶ Arguments like Buffon’s helped reinforce the polar view of Europeans as civilized and others as savages.

Early descriptions of Africa created the opposition of civilization and savagery through a reinforcement of what Africa was not. The litany of negatives about Africans maintained that they had “no letters, no laws; no kings or magistrate, government, commonwealth, rule, commanders; no arts...no traffic...no money...no weapons...no clothes...no marrying...”⁷ These negatives were reinforced by descriptions of Africa as being wild and overrun by nature.⁸ In descriptions of Africa by explorers they tended to ignore the fact that Africans were even present. In narratives of African exploration the African people were only described as part of

the landscape or as an obstacle to the Europeans exploring the region.⁹ European scholars also forgot that Africa had cities and rich urban histories that could be older than Europe's.¹⁰

The modern social science of anthropology emerged as part of this determination to classify and categorize the universe. According to historian George L. Mosse, the science of anthropology originated from curiosity about distant lands and their inhabitants. One of their primary goals was the classification of races as a means of understanding the new people. The central inquiry for these early anthropologists was the seemingly timeless question of nature versus nurture or environment versus inheritance. Mosse maintained these questions were imperative because they determined the size of the gap between races: they needed to know if the differences were innate and unchangeable or if the differences resulted from environmental conditions which could be changed.¹¹ Enlightenment scholars began to argue that there was a link between biology and history. Anthropology was one means of describing and understanding that link.

Race in the Age of Empire

During the age of empire anthropologists redefined the term "savage." According to historian Jan Nederveen Pieterse, anthropology gave savagery a more specific meaning as one of the stages of social evolution. The anthropological division of the stages of evolution gave a map for the European management of colonial societies. As Pieterse described it, "an imperial panorama was transformed into a vision of history."¹² As the age of empire began, the image of Africans as the enemy emerged. This resulted from the first colonial encounters with Africans being bloody and violent, and this remained the status quo even after the colonial rule had been established.¹³ The violence of colonial encounters allowed for the creation of the image of the African as a warrior. The virtues that created the idea of the noble savage during the

Enlightenment were reassessed to signify the cruelty and savagery of the African in the nineteenth century. The nudity that scholars previously believed illustrated African purity was now one of the characteristics that condemned Africans to their pre-civilized state.¹⁴ These images quickly morphed into the dichotomy of European superiority and colonial inferiority.¹⁵

Many nineteenth century thinkers and scholars drew upon these anthropological ideas of categorization and race to form their own views of race and evolutionary hierarchy. Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1852) was one such example of these intellectuals. Gobineau synthesized his work by drawing on ideas from history, anthropology, and linguistics to construct his vision of race that explained everything from triumphs to disasters. Gobineau based his *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* on the combination of earlier scholarship and his observations during his travels and as a result the work explicitly detailed his hierarchical view of race.¹⁶ Race and the hierarchy it created were everything to Gobineau.

Gobineau divided humanity into three basic categories that each had its own civilization – black, yellow, and white. Unlike many of his contemporaries Gobineau did not rely on phrenology and physiognomy to make these distinctions. Rather he used a combination of empiricism, secondary reading and comparative linguistics for his analysis. Within his arguments, however, Gobineau inserted multiple analogies to conditions in contemporary France and in so doing he situated each race in the present.¹⁷

Gobineau gave the black race the characteristics that became the standard for racial thought. He saw this race as lacking intelligence but having heightened sense that imbued them with a primitive and frightening type of power. He ultimately saw blacks as a mob that was like a version of the *sans culottes* of the French Revolution. Gobineau believed the yellow race was dominated by a desire for material success but were not creative or innovative in how they

achieved it. He believed the yellow race did not have imagination or the ability to express themselves metaphysically. He concluded that the yellow race would ultimately only find success through commerce. Gobineau considered the white race to be ideal and the embodiment of nobility. Gobineau looked to linguistics to prove his theory. He likened the white race to Aryans because of the superior qualities he thought they possessed. Gobineau believed the Aryans opposed the materialism and primitiveness of the black and yellow races by representing the ideas of freedom and honor. He believed the Aryans would produce a ruling class that would rule through these virtues rather than by force.¹⁸ Gobineau's writing reinforced the belief that Africans were inherently inferior to Europeans. This belief was seemingly proven with the publication and acceptance of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution in the late nineteenth century.

Darwinian Evolution and Parisian Spectacle

The work of Charles Darwin was also integral to the inculcation of Africans into French popular culture. *The Descent of Man* was first translated into French in 1872, but was initially ignored because French scientists still clung to the idea of the great chain of being.¹⁹ This idea had been strongly supported by Cuvier at the Museum of Natural History. French scientists continued to support his views through the 1870s long after his death. Cuvier had so much power in the French scientific community that Darwinian evolution had a very slight chance of being accepted in France.²⁰

Darwin's work was officially accepted by the French Academy of Science in 1878 and from that point on, his notions of evolution became ingrained in French popular culture. Once Darwin was accepted in France, his work became a popular topic of conversation that brought out shock and hostility among the French people.²¹ Rae Beth Gordon argued that spectators were

awed by and sometimes afraid of exhibitions highlighting evolutionary theory in fairs and in café-concerts. The reflection of Darwin's influence on French popular culture was apparent from the incorporation of his ideas into popular entertainment. These forms of entertainment began labeling people that were previously seen as abnormal as Darwin's missing link.²²

When Darwin's work was officially recognized in 1878 wax museums had cannibals on display, the Folies-Bergère featured dancing Zulu warriors and epileptic singers had unprecedented popularity. Epileptic singers imitated the convulsive movements and contortions of epileptics while performing on Parisian stages.²³ The frenzied movements of the Zulu dancers resembled those of the epileptic singers and allowed the audience to link the abnormality of the epileptic with the African dancers. This link illustrated for the French populace the apparent truth of Darwin's theory of evolution.²⁴ The similarity between the epileptic singers and Zulu warriors provided a popular link between so-called less evolved people and Africans. The popular fascination with Darwin's theory continued throughout the end of the nineteenth century. During the final two decades of the nineteenth century Darwin's theories continued to dominate conversations just as epileptic singers continued to be the most popular attractions at the café concerts. Images of "evolutionary fantasies" quickly became topics of popular entertainment in the same way that hysteria and epilepsy entertained the French.²⁵ Ethnographic exhibitions provided an ideal outlet for the expression of these "evolutionary fantasies." These exhibitions displayed non-Western people so the French could watch them in a facsimile of their natural habitat.

Ethnographic Exhibitions: Colonial People on Display

People from other cultures had been put on display in Europe since the 1870s. In 1874, German promoter Carl Hagenbeck began displaying people in German cities. The exhibit

included the Saman-Lapps people along with their tools, weapons, and other possessions. By 1876 he expanded his exhibit to include Nubians and animals from Egyptian Sudan. These people were observed by more than thirty thousand people on their first day in Breslau. They subsequently toured other European cities including London and Paris. This new attraction quickly gained popularity that remained well into the twentieth century. Hagenbeck presented his exhibits to the German middle class with the purpose of instilling knowledge and culture and increasing their enthusiasm for colonial expansion.²⁶

Although ethnographic exhibitions began in earnest in the 1870s, these were not the first place where exotic people were put on display. In the 1820s Captain Samuel Hadlock, an American, toured Europe with a group of Inuit. One member of the troupe was a Maori chieftain he encountered in Great Britain. The Maori man's sudden death did not stop the attraction; Hadlock chemically preserved the Maori's head and had a model of his body built for continued display.²⁷ During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, exhibits of this type were framed in terms of science. The educational role of ethnographic exhibits came to be emphasized more strongly in the late nineteenth century. Historian Raymond Corbey observed that, in some ways, the exhibition of people had always been related to science and education. In the early nineteenth century Saartjie Baartmann, a Khoi-Khoi or "Hottentot" woman, was displayed in Europe. After her death, Cuvier dissected her body and then a model of it was put on display again and remained on display until recently at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris.²⁸

Around 1890 ethnographic exhibitions shifted back to their role of amusement and entertainment. Promoters began to emphasize the bizarre and unusual in order to increase profits. The ethnographic exhibitions began as a way to educate the public about distant places and people. The exhibitions, however, quickly returned to a form of amusement.²⁹ This

illustrated the cultural side of imperialism. The colonial project had to be presented to the people in such a way as to gain their support for the enterprise. The ethnographic exhibitions, universal expositions, and postcards provided a presentation of the French agenda that appealed to the popular classes.

The Jardin d'Acclimatation: Parisian Mass Spectacle and Educational Tool

The Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris provided an interesting example of how the ethnographic exhibition morphed from an educational tool into a mass spectacle. The Jardin d'Acclimatation was established in 1859 to popularize botany and zoology. It was originally created to study exotic animals and plants. Its charter also called for the popularization of these plants and animals among the popular audience.³⁰ The Jardin immediately faced the problem of remaining faithful to its scientific and educational mandate while creating exhibits that would attract enough visitors to assure an income. The Jardin tried to resolve the problem in 1877 with a series of ethnographic exhibitions. The organizers believed that it was only logical to display the people living among the exotic flora and fauna already present at the Jardin.³¹

These exhibits were immediately popular with the French populace and the increasing profits from the exhibitions made them the most lucrative attractions at the Jardin. While the increased income allowed the Jardin to expand, the exhibitions strained the Jardin's relationship with the French scientific community. French scientists worried that the representations and habitats presented at the Jardin were not actually representative of the inhabitants' lives at home. They argued that the people on display were transported to places where they could no longer behave naturally. The Jardin, wanting to continue earning the huge profits produced by the ethnographic exhibitions, severed ties with the French scientific community in 1886. This

allowed the Jardin to turn away from any pretense of scientific accuracy and cater to the desires of popular entertainment.³²

The end of the Jardin's collaboration with the scientific establishment signaled the end of the educational premise of the Jardin's exhibits. The directors of the Jardin d'Acclimatation began to share the ambitions of the private promoters who selected the people for the exhibits once they became dependent on admission fees for their profits. They primarily wanted to attract larger crowds even if it meant discarding the scientific accuracy of the exhibits. Schneider stated that when the first West Africans joined the exhibition in 1887, it had mainly become a circus-like spectacle with an emphasis on strange customs and apparent savagery. Schneider concluded that this new form of entertainment "presented Africans and other non-Europeans in much the same way as the mass illustrated magazines: in a setting of spectacle and sensation."³³

The Universal Expositions

Universal expositions and world's fairs served a multitude of purposes. They entertained, educated, and exposed audiences to new commercial possibilities. These expositions provided an international forum for exchanging information and technology from the mid-nineteenth century through the early twentieth century. The 1889 and 1900 universal expositions in Paris were especially important for the purposes of this study because they emphasized the otherness of the colonies while attempting to lure investors. The importance of the expositions began to decline after 1939 as new means of disseminating technology and ideas became dominant.³⁴ Historian Robert Rydell argued that they delivered contemporary values and mores as well as "extolling the virtues of industry and progress in rationalized urban society."³⁵ At the expositions, visitors observed, among other sights, technological marvels and colonial displays which included actual ethnographic exhibits of colonial peoples.

The display of colonized peoples at the world's fairs and universal expositions reinforced stereotypes already present in the popular culture. These displays worked like the ethnographic exhibitions at the Jardin d'Acclimatation and the presentation of Darwinian theory through popular entertainment at the café concerts. The exposition displays most resembled the ethnographic exhibitions in that they created habitats for the colonial people with their tools and other possessions. Burton Benedict argued that these ethnographic displays were essentially theater and could be analyzed as such. They included a setting, props, performances, and interpretations provided by programs and guidebooks.³⁶ The theatricality of the displays perpetuated the ever present stereotypes held about colonized people.

People native to Sub-Saharan Africa were popular attractions at the expositions. Their popularity stemmed from numerous factors. According to Benedict, their foreignness and strangeness were foremost among the characteristics that drew crowds to these exhibits. They were closely followed by the perceived primitiveness, barbarity, and savagery of the Africans. While emphasizing the savagery of the people on display, exposition organizers labeled them as chiefs or kings to show European power and that they could subdue African royalty to such an extent that they could be put on display.³⁷ They represented a type that allowed the expositions to perpetuate the common stereotypes of Africans as “primitive, savage, uncivilized, [and] animal-like.”³⁸ The universal expositions did not create these stereotypes but they did emphasize and promote them. These stereotypical images circulated on exposition flyers and pamphlets but were mainly spread by the large numbers of postcards sent by exposition visitors.³⁹ These images often emphasized ethnic stereotypes as a means of piquing the audience's interest.

Displaying Modern Marvels and Colonial Spectacles

Visitors to the 1889 Universal Exposition were lured to the colonial displays by the exotic experience promised by the exposition guidebooks. The *Guide bleu du Figaro et du Petit Journal* enticed its readers to go to the colonial exhibits with colorful descriptions of the display. The guide described the colonial section as

A true marvel...

On the left, the colonies and the protectorate countries in a delicious glow of color, in an exquisitely disordered confusion of silhouettes...

This whole corner of the Esplanade is still charming; gathered here are exotic types of construction, corners of colonial villages (Pahouin, Alfourou, Malgache), an Annamite theater, the Saldé tower from Senegal; here there is a suite of enchanting, animated sketches of African and Asian life.

The diverse colonial exhibitions laid out on the Esplanade des Invalides are, after the Eiffel Tower and the Gallery of Machines, the main attraction of the 1889 Exposition Universelle. The fidelity of their architecture, their picturesque qualities, their tone, and above the liveliness with which they are infused by the presence of colorfully dressed guests from all the colonies represented on the Esplanade, have attracted crowds from the very first day.

Therefore, let us give you some advice:

*For you visit to the colonial section of the exposition, choose a hot, sunny day.*⁴⁰

The section implored the reader to visit on a hot, sunny day so they would have an experience that would be similar to the conditions in the colonies. The reader was promised colorful displays teeming with the organized chaos they expected from the colonial bazaars. The colonial exhibits also delivered exotic architecture, facsimiles of African and Asian villages all in contrast to the main attractions of the Eiffel Tower and the Galerie des Machines.

While the universal expositions usually did reinforce stereotypes of others, their ostensible goal was to educate the public about technological advancements and the colonies. From the first exposition in 1851, they were meant by their planners to be educational tools. They originally directed their efforts toward the educated elite classes but shifted toward the

middle and working classes throughout the final years of the century. The ultimate goal of the government planners was to influence public opinion and make their agenda palatable to the public. This was necessary because of the Third Republic's implementation of universal suffrage. They had to sell the new technology as well as their colonial agenda to the electorate in order to remain in power. By the 1878 exposition, the public did not want a purely educational fair which caused a substantial loss of income. As a result, the funds for the 1889 exposition, rather than coming from the state, came from private banks and the city of Paris. This increased the pressure to generate a profit and as a result the exposition's planners consciously increased the amusements at the exposition to increase gate receipts.⁴¹

The 1889 universal exposition lasted from 5 May until 6 November 1889. The site of the exposition dominated 228 acres in central Paris. The fairgrounds filled the military parade grounds of the Champ de Mars, crossed the Seine to the Trocadéro Palace then followed the Seine to the Esplanade at the Hôtel des Invalides. More than 32.3 million people visited the exposition, which allowed for a net profit of around \$600,000.⁴²

Alongside the Eiffel Tower and the Galerie des Machines, one of the main attractions of the exposition was the colonial pavilions located along the Esplanade des Invalides. The colonial exhibits balanced the awesome feats of engineering and technology on display at the exposition. Rather than impress the visitor through their size, the colonial pavilions appealed to the visitor's senses with the exotic architecture, use of brilliant colors, ornamentation and foreign building materials.⁴³ Among the colonial pavilions, the 1889 exposition featured for the first time ethnographic exhibitions with indigenous people engaging in their everyday activities.⁴⁴ "In addition to watching Muslims kneel in prayer at the foot of the minaret of the Algerian pavilion, visitors could enter a Kabyle home to observe women weaving at their looms; watch a family of

New Caledonian Canaques prepare dinner over an open fire or poke their head into the tent of a nomadic desert family.”⁴⁵ These “everyday” activities suggested to the audience that the displays were not out of the ordinary and that the people on display always behaved in that way.

The exoticism of the colonial displays was heightened by the architecture of the colonies. This sense of exoticism resulted partly from concentration of multiple architectural styles in one place.⁴⁶ The exoticism increased when people could see this alien architecture next to traditional French buildings. This created a somewhat surreal effect as the two styles were generally separated by thousands of miles. “The effect was then heightened by the presence of diverse indigenous peoples in their brightly colored traditional dress. Add a variety of languages, sounds of drums and music, lush vegetation, dancers, and confusion of odors emanating from the exotic restaurants and noisy street markets, and it is easy to understand how nineteenth-century visitors could indeed have felt transported to another world.”⁴⁷

The *Exposition Universelle de 1900*: State Sponsored Exoticism?

The 1900 universal exposition in Paris had a goal and effect similar to the 1889 universal exposition. In the colonial section, the exposition’s planners tried to present an official view of the colonies as a place for commercial ventures rather than a region ruled by the exotic. The entire exhibition was larger than the 1889 exposition and covered 267 acres in central Paris. The exposition was situated on the Champs Elysées, crossed the new Pont Alexandre III to the Esplanade des Invalides, and ran down the Seine to the Champs de Mars and the Trocadéro Palace and Gardens. This exposition was by far the largest and most popular world’s fair ever. More than 50 million people visited during its six month existence as compared to the 27.5 million that visited the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition in 1893 or the almost 40 million people that attended the 1889 universal exposition in Paris.⁴⁸

According to William Schneider, the French government tried to impart on the exposition's audience an official image of the colonies as well as educating them on the colonies in general. This goal is most apparent in the Ministry of Colonies' pavilion at the 1900 universal exposition. This pavilion consisted of three main halls, the first of which served as a reception hall and library that contained the most current information on the colonies. The second hall contained a commercial information desk and the walls were decorated with maps and plans from the colonies. The third hall displayed examples of colonial products and merchandise that could be exported to the colonies.⁴⁹

While the French state tried to produce an image of the colonies as one of potential profit, Schneider argues that the visitor left the exposition with more of an impression of the exotic nature of the colonies. Maurice Talmeyer observed in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* that exoticism reigned supreme at the exposition. "It abounds, overwhelms and is seen at every step. Hindu temples, savage huts, pagodas, souks, Algerian backstreets, Chinese, Japanese, Sudanese, Senegalese, Siamese, and Cambodian quarters: it is a bazaar of climates, architectures, odors, colors, foods, and music."⁵⁰ According to Schneider, Talmeyer was especially disturbed by the inaccuracies and complete misrepresentations he found at the exposition. Talmeyer was most outraged by the fraudulent representations he discovered at the expositions. For example, he observed Cambodian dancers not dancing Cambodian dances and the presence of the Egyptian Theater that did not exist in Egypt.⁵¹ From Talmeyer's observations it becomes apparent that, while the goal of the exposition was to show the people colonial life, in reality only emphasized the exoticism and strangeness of the colonies.

The Dahomean exhibit provided an excellent example of the exoticism found at this exposition. The people of Dahomey had always been a popular attraction at the expositions

because of their reported militancy and savagery. Burton Benedict reported that stories of Dahomean savagery were abundant in nineteenth-century Europe. For example, the Dahomeans were reputed to sacrifice two thousand virgins at the death of a king. The Dahomean women were also supposed to be great warriors. Sir Richard Burton confirmed the militant role of women when he saw 2,500 female warriors who were wives of the king on his 1863 visit to Dahomey. Although people from Dahomey had been displayed at earlier fairs, the 1900 exposition was the first government-sponsored fair where they appeared. Benedict explained that the purpose of the exhibit was to show how the Dahomeans had been subdued and that they were on a path toward civilization.⁵²

Exposition Postcards: Representations of the French Colonial Enterprise

Souvenirs from the universal expositions served a unique purpose in that they illustrated the struggle between the European imperialistic intentions and the native peoples who sought to make sense of their rulers. Robert W. Rydell argued that this struggle was depicted pictorially through representations of villages in exposition publications, guidebooks, and postcards.⁵³ The postcards of the exhibition were the most effective medium for illustrating the French goals in the colonies. Rydell stated that by the end of the 1900 universal exposition postcards were an essential part of the exposition experience, just as the Ferris wheel, the Eiffel Tower, and ethnographic exhibits had become fixtures of the exposition. The postcard representations of exposition buildings and exhibits allowed the visitor to impose order on their visit by choosing the images they wanted to keep as souvenirs and send to their friends and family.⁵⁴

In addition to transmitting the typical “wish you were here” messages inscribed on the back of the postcard, the image on the front also contained implicit messages for their viewers. These images held meanings imparted by the photographers and official postcards transmitted

meanings approved by the exposition's sponsors. Since the French government sponsored the 1900 universal exposition, it is reasonable to assume that the images on official postcards were the image of the colonies that they wanted to convey to the populace as their official image. Rydell stated that while fairgoers might write their own messages on the postcards, "those messages were framed by images carefully chosen to represent underlying principles of the fairs."⁵⁵

These images ultimately served three purposes. First, they were a tremendously profitable enterprise for publishers who aided in the commodification of imperial images. Postcard producers greatly contributed to the commodification of empire once they realized that visitors to the expositions wanted souvenirs of their experience. In so doing they displayed and evaluated the colonial people in terms of the economic potential.⁵⁶

Postcards also served to reinforce the scientific nature of the exhibits. While not being inherently scientific objects themselves, the views they presented reflected the anthropological conventions in colonial photography. The presentation of colonial people often mirrored the scientific basis of the colonial pavilions. The postcards delivered the same views of the colonial people that ethnographic exhibitions offered their audiences. These views stemmed from Enlightenment notions of the great chain of being and Gobineau's ordering of the black, yellow, and white races in the nineteenth century. The emerging social science of anthropology codified these ideas into a coherent discipline. Rydell pointed out that, at the turn of the twentieth century, anthropologists often organized summer classes around the ethnographic displays at the expositions. They referred to the people on display as "living specimens" and "as proof of their theories about human and cultural evolution." Postcard publishers happily supplied these

courses with postcards to be used as visual aids.⁵⁷ By using postcards as visual aids, they imbued the postcards with the authority of this academic discipline.

Finally, exposition postcards reflected the European methods for controlling the colonies. The representations of colonial people on postcards functioned in a manner similar to the colonial displays and reflected the French methods of control in the colonies. Postcard images showed the ideologies behind the colonial displays that heralded imperialism. Postcards were only one component of mass culture that attempted to show the audience the justifications for the imperial project.⁵⁸

By the end of the nineteenth century, popular conceptions of race emerged in French culture. These theories on race, which had their origin Enlightenment thought, and their manifestation in contemporary spectacles provided a framework to show the French the necessity of the civilizing mission in Africa. The ethnographic exhibitions and universal expositions displayed colonized people and showed their apparent lack of civilization to the French. Exposition postcards also reinforced this idea when providing souvenirs for the exposition's visitors. The use of postcards to disseminate this message illustrated the influence photography held as a representation of reality and as a tool in the education of the French populace.

¹ George L. Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism*. (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 1.

² Mosse, 1.

³ Mosse, 4.

⁴ Tzvetan Todorov, *On Human Diversity: Nationalism, Racism, and Exoticism in French Thought*. Catherine Porter, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 97.

⁵ Todorov, 98.

⁶ Todorov, 99.

⁷ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 35.

⁸ Pieterse, 35.

⁹ Pieterse, 67.

¹⁰ Pieterse, 36.

¹¹ Mosse, 17.

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- ¹² Pieterse, 37.
- ¹³ Pieterse, 78.
- ¹⁴ Pieterse, 79.
- ¹⁵ Pieterse, 88.
- ¹⁶ Mosse, 51.
- ¹⁷ Mosse, 52.
- ¹⁸ Mosse, 53-54.
- ¹⁹ Rae Beth Gordon, "La Parisienne Dances with Darwin, 1875-1910," *Modernism/modernity* Vol. 10, no. 4 (November 2003), unpublished draft, 2.
- ²⁰ Gordon, 2.
- ²¹ Gordon, 2.
- ²² Gordon, 3.
- ²³ Rae Beth Gordon, *Why the French Love Jerry Lewis: From Cabaret to Early Cinema*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 14.
- ²⁴ Gordon, "La Parisienne Dances with Darwin, 1875-1910," 3.
- ²⁵ Gordon, 3-4.
- ²⁶ Raymond Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930," *Cultural Anthropology* Vol.8, Issue 3 (Aug., 1993), 345.
- ²⁷ Corbey, 352.
- ²⁸ Corbey, 354.
- ²⁹ Corbey, 357.
- ³⁰ Corbey, 345.
- ³¹ William Schneider, *An Empire for the Masses: The French Popular Image of Africa, 1870-1900*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 126.
- ³² Schneider, 126, 134-35.
- ³³ Schneider, 203.
- ³⁴ Shanny Peer, *France On Display: Peasants, Provincials, and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 5.
- ³⁵ Peer, 5.
- ³⁶ Burton Benedict, "Rituals of Representation: Ethnic Stereotypes and Colonized Peoples at World's Fairs," in *Fair Representations: World's Fairs and the Modern World*. Robert W. Rydell and Nancy Gwinn, eds. (Amsterdam: Vu University Press, 1994), 30.
- ³⁷ Benedict, 36.
- ³⁸ Benedict, 42.
- ³⁹ Benedict, 36.
- ⁴⁰ Palermo, 285.
- ⁴¹ Lynn E. Palermo, "Identity under Construction: Representing the Colonies at the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1889," in *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France*. Sue Peabody and Tyler Stovall, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 290.
- ⁴² Palermo, 285-86.
- ⁴³ Palermo, 286.
- ⁴⁴ Palermo, 291.
- ⁴⁵ Palermo, 291.
- ⁴⁶ Palermo, 293.
- ⁴⁷ Palermo, 293-94.
- ⁴⁸ Schneider, 175.
- ⁴⁹ Schneider, 180.
- ⁵⁰ Talmeyer in Schneider, 190.
- ⁵¹ Schneider, 190.
- ⁵² Benedict, 37-39.
- ⁵³ Robert W. Rydell, "Souvenirs of Imperialism: World's Fair Postcards," in *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards*. Christaud M. Geary and Virginia-Lee Webb, eds. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 52.
- ⁵⁴ Rydell, 52.
- ⁵⁵ Rydell, 52-53.

⁵⁶ Rydell, 55.

⁵⁷ Rydell, 55.

⁵⁸ Rydell, 58.

CHAPTER 2

ANTHROPOLOGY, PHOTOGRAPHY, AND COLONIAL POSTCARDS

Photography was invented around the same time in the nineteenth century that Europeans established settlements throughout the world. The invention of photography allowed for the documentation of this conquest in a way never seen before by Europeans. Photographers captured a variety of images from Africa. They photographed tourists in Egypt, missionaries at work, the Suez Canal, archaeological excavations, and many other sights from the continent.¹ In addition to recording events photography served many social purposes. It aided in surveying the new territories and in military operations. Photography was also useful to police and criminologists because it helped with the identification of criminals and the documentation of crime scenes. Photography was also useful to the emerging science of anthropology because it allowed for easy classification and categorization of people. Anthropology and its mission to organize, compare, and classify cultures helped Europeans make sense of the people in the newly conquered territories. By the end of the nineteenth century the postcard was a popular means of communication as well as being the ideal souvenir from one's travels. Postcards were also the way most people encountered photography, with the possible exception of portrait photography, before the invention of the instant camera in the mid twentieth century. Postcard producers used the same conventions as scientific photographers in the hope of gaining credibility for their images. Unfortunately, these images often confirmed and reproduced common stereotypes about Africa and Africans.

Photography and Anthropology

In the late nineteenth century people began to accept the idea of evolution and acknowledged a relationship between biology and culture. This led to the contemporary understanding that culture was biologically determined. Non-white peoples that seemed behind Europe technologically were seen as being in a child-like state. Michael Adas argued that this belief in European superiority provided the justification for imperial domination. Kenneth Pomeranz made a different argument in *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World*. He argued that Europe and China were nearly equal in terms of the potential for industrial development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but European resources like silver from earlier colonial exploits allowed the technological jump ahead of the East. Regardless of the reasons for Europe's sudden industrial progress in the nineteenth century, contemporary Europeans believed that theirs was a more advanced civilization.²

Thinkers speculated about anthropology since the time of the Greeks and defined it as the comparative study of peoples and cultures. Contact with alien cultures in the nineteenth century fueled the European curiosity about the new peoples. Anthropological societies formed throughout Europe around mid-century and consisted of doctors, scientists, and adventurers. These early anthropologists speculated on the reasons for the apparent differences between Europeans and colonial people. They eventually concluded that the physical structures of each group had to be different. The comparative nature of anthropology gave scientific credibility to the racism of the age since it seemed to support the notion that the newly encountered groups of people were inferior to Europeans.³

Anthropology offered an ideological justification for colonial expansion. Anthropologist Christaud M. Geary argued that “the relationship between the anthropologist and the other is

inherently problematic, for anthropology has always been part of the existing power structures. . . . It is not surprising, therefore, that during the age of European colonialism in Africa, anthropologists maintained close ties with colonial administrations.”⁴ While this relationship is problematic for current scholars, the presence of anthropologists in the colonial milieu gave academic and scientific credence to the oppressive and unequal relationships of imperialism.⁵

Within the framework of anthropology, photography provided a modern means of reproducing the reality of distant places and for illustrating the colonial power structure. According to anthropologist Elizabeth Edwards, photography was an excellent symbol for this colonial relationship. The physical presence of the camera represented European technological superiority that was linked to their belief in the European ability to harness and control “the physical world, whether it be boundary surveys, engineering schemes to exploit natural resources, or the description and classification of the population.”⁶

Anthropologist Joanna C. Scherer argued that photography resulted from the technological revolutions in Europe during the nineteenth century when science, innovation, mass production and consumption began to dominate Western Society.⁷ The mechanical nature of the camera allowed people to believe that a photograph was a direct representation of reality. The apparent reality of a photograph gave it the illusion that it represented the “truth.”⁸ Elizabeth Edwards argued that “a photograph is an analogue of seen ‘reality,’ for what was in front of the camera.”⁹ She described the photograph as an analogue rather than a copy of reality because the selective nature of the photograph takes its subject out of its natural context.

Photography helped illustrate the abstract idea of the anthropological “type.” It allowed for the creation of the racial “type” because of its ability to seemingly mirror the observable reality.¹⁰ The photographer transformed a specific image into a general image of the group

which allowed for the creation and perpetuation of stereotypes.¹¹ In so doing the structure of the photograph suggested its own meaning to the audience.

People in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries believed photography embodied objectivity. They thought photographs were mirror images of reality. Near the end of the century photograph began appearing in more publications and gradually replacing drawings as illustrations. The apparent reality of photography made it the preferred medium for showing Europeans foreign and exotic places. Photographs gave them the information they craved about the recently colonized areas of the world. Rather than creating new perceptions of the other, however, photography perpetuated stereotypes of colonial peoples.¹²

Geary argued that illustrations had always played a role in anthropology's effort to show the other. Photography was especially useful in their quest to describe and inventory the other.¹³ Photographing racial types was a companion to the study of human evolution. Photography was also useful for taking inventories of new cultures, which was an element of colonial exploration.¹⁴ By creating racial types anthropologists invented a system for classifying colonized peoples. This system allowed them to then make an inventory of the people in the newly conquered territories.

Stereotypes

Just as the ethnographic exhibitions and universal exposition reinforced stereotypes of Africa and Africans, photographs served the same purpose. People in seemingly unindustrialized cultures were perceived as being inferior and less evolved. This apparent lack of civilization allowed the Europeans to assume that Africans needed their help to develop their cultures to European standards. This form of "help," however, usually implied coercion on the part of the Europeans.¹⁵ Images from Africa merely confirmed these ideas as they illustrated the

unindustrialized cultures. The verisimilar nature of photography and the objectivity it seemed to hold served to reinforce stereotypes of Africa and Africans as being true.¹⁶ In the case of photography from Bamum in Cameroon Geary stated that photographers arrived with certain expectations of King Njoya and his people. Their photographs tended to reflect their own views of Bamum. Their customers, the viewers in Germany, also had expectations of these images from Bamum.¹⁷ These expectations held true for images from all of Africa as is apparent in the commercial photography from the continent.

Commercial photographers often had to cater to the desires of the public when taking photographs of Africa. The work of the commercial photographer was dictated by the whims of his audience; he had to produce photographs that looked good to the populace and would be profitable for him. Because of these market demands the photographer often posed the subject in postures that implied racial types and used clothing and accessories to reinforce this idea.¹⁸ Photographers often relied on these exotic images for advertising in Europe. Photographic portraits of exotic people from distant places were a staple for commercial photographers in Europe. Their advertisements often referred to the availability of images of “native types” from which the customer could choose.¹⁹

Postcard producers faced the same market driven pressure as commercial portrait photographers. As a result many of the postcard images from Africa conformed to the stereotypical images of the continent and the indigenous population.²⁰ “Like other photographic formats (in particular *cartes-de-visite*, cabinet cards, and stereographs), postcards construct, disseminate, and perpetuate stereotypical images of non-Western peoples.”²¹ This construction and dissemination of stereotypes is apparent in postcards produced by major international

publishers like Fortier in Dakar and J. Audema in French Central Africa. Their postcards often displayed colonial notions of Africa and reiterated contemporary stereotypes.²²

The Photographer, Subject, and Viewer

According to Geary when analyzing photographs one must consider the roles played by the photographer, the subject, and the viewer.²³ The viewer plays an important role in this relationship because he or she gives meaning to the photograph. The viewer, with his or her preconceived notions and knowledge of stereotypes, imparts a meaning onto the image.²⁴ She argued that a photograph is a document that illustrates the photographer's biases and allows for speculation on the subject. Often in colonial photography the viewer knew little about the relationship between the photographer and subject; they really only knew that the photographer was able to convince the subject to sit for the photograph.²⁵

This relationship between the photographer and subject is critical to understanding the power structure in the colonies. The relationship between the photographer and the subject – and by extension the colonizer and colonized – must be considered. These photographs often suggested through the subject's expression that they were coerced into sitting for the photograph. The subject often became an object for study and lost any sense of individuality in the process.²⁶ Geary argued, however, that this relationship was not completely one dimensional and the subjects were often involved in the photographic process.²⁷

Geary's research on pre-World War I photographs of King Njoya of the Bamum region of Cameroon illustrated the interaction between the German photographers and the king. She observed that several themes dominated these photographs. Most prominent among them was the theme of "Njoya, the powerful and intelligent king." It successfully combined Njoya's desire to present himself in photographs and German expectations of the regal, the exotic, and

the foreign.”²⁸ Another theme depicted in these images was that of Njoya as the dutiful German ally. Geary argued that the relationship between the Germans and Njoya was much more complicated. King Njoya was always considering ways to maintain the autonomy of Bamum when dealing with the Germans. The actions the Germans perceived as accepting their rule often originated in this desire for continued autonomy rather than a desire to accommodate the Germans. This showed how the intentions of the subject and photographer often countered each other and how each interpreted the project differently.²⁹

The Camera as a Cannon: Fear of Early Photography

The power relationship involved with photography was most apparent in the early accounts of the fear associated with the photographed. Anne McClintock pointed out that not only did photographers have the ability to manipulate representations of distant places but there was also an element of implied violence in photography. While on his mid-nineteenth-century journeys through Egypt and Palestine with Gustave Flaubert, Maxime du Camp noted the power his camera gave him while photographing a reluctant subject. He stated that, “I told him that the brass tube of the lens jutting out from the camera was a cannon that would vomit a hail of shot if he had the misfortune to move – a story that immobilized him immediately.”³⁰ Other photographers also noted the power the camera seemed to hold in Africa and used it to their advantage. According to one photographer, “I frequently enjoyed the reputation of being a dangerous necromancer and my camera was held to be a dark, mysterious instrument that combined with my naturally, or supernaturally intensified eyesight gave me power to see through rocks and mountain, to pierce the very souls of the people and to produce miraculous pictures by some black art.”³¹

While photographers often lamented the fear of their subjects in their writings, the relationship was not always one of fear and coercion. The photographic encounter did not always result in the degradation and dehumanization of the subjects, although that was generally the end product. The relationship between the photographer and the subject depended on multiple factors that ultimately affected the photograph. This relationship depended largely upon the individuals involved in the photographic process in addition to their historical and cultural milieu.³²

This sense of fear originated in the initial belief that the camera was a weapon. This is evident in du Camp's observation to his reluctant subject. The fear of the camera was not limited to North Africa either. Many photographers observed that their subjects were not always willing to pose for photographs. This unwillingness often caused the resulting photograph to appear stilted and unnatural.³³ The fear of the camera gradually dissipated in Africa. Nicholas Monti related that, near the end of the century, colonized people began to welcome and appreciate photography. According to Gilbert Carter, the British governor of Lagos: "I was much struck at the way they composed themselves to submit to this ordeal, and seemed to understand precisely what was required of them: I noticed the younger ones especially arranging their clothes, and even the old gray gave an additional touch to a kind of turban which she wore upon her head."³⁴

Postcard photographs from the turn of the century also suggested the acceptance of photography in French West Africa. The people in the portraits, while some do not appear to be enthusiastic, do not appear to be afraid of the camera either. In fact, some of the subjects seemed to enjoy having their picture taken. This was apparent in many of Fortier's etudes. The subjects usually smiled and posed for the camera in such a way as to suggest that they did not fear the camera at all.

Poses

The way in which a photographic subject was posed suggested much about the way the photograph would influence contemporary stereotypes. In the case of anthropology, photography proved very useful because it rendered people as objects which allowed for easy sorting and organizing.³⁵ Anthropologists standardized the methodology for photographing racial types. This methodology resembled the procedures Alphonse Bertillon developed for criminal photography. The similarity of procedures suggests the classificatory nature of anthropological photography and in some ways equates colonized peoples with criminals in terms of being less developed and less intelligent.³⁶ This method of photography required at least three photographs of each subject.

The person was placed in front of a plain background, often a blanket, and taken in frontal, three-quarter, and profile poses. The entire person had to be photographed, in the nude if possible, from the front, the side, and the rear. The standardization of the camera angle and poses allowed anthropologists later to take measurements directly from the photographs.³⁷

These images ultimately created the racial ‘types’ studied by physical anthropologists. Not only did scientists measure the people in these photographs but they also “measured and photographed the skeletons and skulls of people from far-flung colonized areas of the world. From these photographs physical traits were gleaned and ordered so that different ethnic groups could be classified according to common characteristics.”³⁸ If scientists could take their measurements from photographs it suggests that anyone could learn the proper method for taking these photographs for scientific use. The scientific photographs, in addition to displaying the colonies dehumanized and objectified colonial people by taking away their individuality.³⁹

The combination of exoticism and science gave postcard photographers a means to place their work under the rubric of scientific inquiry, just as the ethnographic and universal

expositions did. This lent them credibility in reproducing stereotypical images from the colonies. These images were the most profitable for them in addition to having tenuous links to the realm of science. The most obvious use of this type of photography was apparent in Fortier's "études." These images were a group of more than three hundred postcards of West African women. The subjects were most often semi-nude and posed either directly facing the camera or in a three-quarters view just like in the anthropological photographs. Fortier, while still objectifying the women in the postcards with the captions, was not as careful as anthropologists were in labeling them. "Thus the same model may appear as Lébou in one postcard or as Wolof in another. As such liberties with captions indicate, the *raison d'être* for these cards was not to create an accurate, systematic overview of races, but rather to form a body of commercial work that would satisfy the desires of Western voyeurs."⁴⁰

Captions

Postcards played an important role in creating an image of Africa for Europeans. "They entered European homes and became cherished collector's items. Postcards disseminated stereotypical imagery and influenced the perceptions of the many people who purchased, received, or collected them."⁴¹ The text accompanying a postcard or photograph suggested a meaning for that image. According to Susan Sontag, "captions do tend to override the evidence of our eyes. . . The caption is the missing voice, and it is expected to speak for truth. But even an entirely accurate caption is only one interpretation, necessarily a limiting one, of the photograph to which it is attached."⁴² Edwards argued that the text with a photograph is particularly important to anthropology because the text is often what legitimates an image within the scientific community.⁴³ The contrast of the caption and the image allow for the creation of scientific "types" where the individual comes to represent the general group.⁴⁴ The caption

controls the interpretation and meaning of the photograph. The caption must provide a textual cue for the viewer to completely understand the meaning the photographer was trying to convey.⁴⁵

Captions on postcards reinforced stereotypes about the continent. The images and captions on postcards constructed Western views about Africa and Africans. The postcards helped perpetuate and codify contemporary conceptions about Africa and in so doing appealed to Western audiences.⁴⁶ The caption on the postcard played a large role in constructing the meaning of the image. “By inventing and re-inventing meanings, captions prescribe a way for the viewer to ‘read’ or interpret an image.”⁴⁷ This is evident in the case of Fortier’s postcards from West Africa. David Prochaska reported that Fortier published the same image multiple times using different numbers and captions. By doing this he profited from the manipulation of reality with the increased sales from the reprinted postcards.⁴⁸ The differing captions would allow the viewer to glean two or three different meanings from the photograph on the postcard.

Colonial Postcards: Accepting and Resisting French Rule

Postcards sought to show their viewers the acquiescence of colonized people to French rule. This was apparent in the postcard of Columbia, an Inuit woman displayed at multiple world’s fairs and expositions since her birth at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition. (Appendix, Figure 2.1) The photograph featured on the 1909 postcard from the Seattle Alaska-Yukon-Pacific International Exposition, showed her smiling for the camera. By smiling in the photograph, according to Rydell, she refuted the claims that the Inuit were mistreated at the exposition in addition to submitting to colonial rule. When the subject looked at the camera and smiled, the viewer could infer that the subject has acquiesced to the colonial situation.⁴⁹ The photograph also reinforced stereotypes of the child-like nature of the Inuit. Photographic

conventions at the time only allowed for children to be photographed while smiling. This convention, when combined with images of smiling colonial subjects, reinforced the stereotype of the Inuit's childlike nature.⁵⁰

This idea of the confirmation of the inherent child-like qualities of indigenous peoples carried over to postcards from Africa. The same sorts of smiles were in both postcards from the Ivory Coast and in Fortier's *Collection Générale*. The first of these images was one from late nineteenth-century Ivory Coast which depicts a Dioula woman smiling candidly for the photographer. (Figure 2.2) She was dressed in an almost European manner with a shirt and skirt, although both appear to be made of some sort of African textile. The image suggested the same ideas that the postcards of Columbia did: she accepted French rule by letting the photographer take her picture with a smile and that, because of the current photographic conventions, she was considered to be like a child. The same type of images appeared in Fortier's *Collection Générale*. For example, eight of the images contained in the second volume of Philippe David's *Inventaire Générale Fortier* depict African women smiling in the photograph. The same inferences could be made from these images as from the image of Columbia or from the *Femme Dioula* from the Ivory Coast.

Rydell also suggested that the image of Columbia showed resistance to the stereotypes prevalent in the images. "Columbia looks squarely into the photographer's camera lens. Conceding that she was posed as a type, a gem of the frozen tundra, her smile can be read as a 'weapon of the weak.' Her welcoming expression is so disarming that it forces the viewer to acknowledge the presence of another – not merely an 'other' – human being."⁵¹ This sort of resistance can also be inferred from the postcards from West Africa. Postcards from the *Collection Arkhurst* also showed a different type of resistance at work. The images from this

collection mainly showed portraits of African women dressed in dresses and seated in front of European type backgrounds. (Fig. 2.3-2.6) While the women directly face the camera, unlike the contemporary convention in European photography, none of them were smiling. This suggested to the viewer that they did not accept the French presence in the colony and that they were, in some way, coerced to be in the photograph. Their posture also suggested the lack of acquiescence to French rule. Many of them were slightly slumped and nearly all were sitting with their legs apart. This would allow for the assumption that while the photographer could place them in European-type scenes, they would not submit by sitting in the manner European ladies did.

Postcard photographers often used scientific conventions in their work. They hoped this would give their work the same credibility with metropolitan audiences that the scientifically based entertainment held. In using these conventions, however, their work only tended to reinforce the stereotypes already present about Africa and Africans. These stereotypes were reinforced through means like the captions on the postcards and the poses used in the images. While conveying stereotypes, however, postcard images also relayed a subtle resistance to colonial rule. This was visible through facial expressions, such as smiles. Colonial postcards, while conveying conventional colonial themes, also showed that the colonized people were not as docile as the photographers wanted the viewer to believe. The photographic subjects often had their own intentions for the photograph as was seen in the images of King Njoya in Cameroon.

¹ Nicholas Monti, *Africa Then: Photographs 1840-1918*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 24.

² Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence: Europe, China, and the Making of the Modern World Economy*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), Jared Diamond,

Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), E.L. Jones, *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies, and Geopolitics in the History of Europe and Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

³ Thomas X.F. Noble, Barry S. Strauss, et al, *Western Civilization: The Continuing Experiment*. Vol II: Since 1560 Third Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002), 798.

⁴ Christaud M. Geary, *Images from Bamum: German Colonial Photography at the Court of King Njoya, Cameroon, West Africa, 1902-1915*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 10-11.

⁵ Elizabeth Edwards, "Introduction," in *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920*. Elizabeth Edwards, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 6.

⁶ Edwards, 6.

⁷ Joanna C. Scherer, "The Photographic Document: Photographs as Primary Data in Anthropological Enquiry," in *Anthropology and Photography, 1860-1920*. Elizabeth Edwards, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 33.

⁸ Scherer, 33.

⁹ Edwards, 7.

¹⁰ Edwards, 7.

¹¹ Edwards, 7.

¹² Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 10.

¹³ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 11.

¹⁴ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 11.

¹⁵ Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, "Introduction: Photography, 'Race', and Post-Colonial Theory," in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing race and place*. Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, eds. (London: Routledge, 2002), 4.

¹⁶ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 35.

¹⁷ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 48-50.

¹⁸ Monti, 71.

¹⁹ Monti, 70-71.

²⁰ Christaud M. Geary and Virginia-Lee Webb, "Introduction: Views on Postcards," in *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards*. Christaud M. Geary and Virginia-Lee Webb, eds. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 4.

²¹ Geary and Webb, 9.

²² Christaud M. Geary, "Different Visions? Postcards from Africa by European and African Photographers and Sponsors," in *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards*. Christaud M. Geary and Virginia-Lee Webb, eds. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 150.

²³ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 11.

²⁴ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 28.

²⁵ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 11.

²⁶ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 35.

²⁷ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 11.

²⁸ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 50.

²⁹ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 53.

³⁰ Maxime du Camp in Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest*. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 126.

³¹ McClintock, 126.

³² Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 35.

³³ Monti, 71.

³⁴ Gilbert Carter in Monti, 71.

³⁵ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 32.

³⁶ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 32.

³⁷ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 32.

³⁸ Hight and Sampson, 3.

³⁹ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 32,34.

⁴⁰ Geary, *Delivering Views*, 163.

⁴¹ Geary, *Images from Bamum*, 12.

⁴² Susan Sontag, *On Photography*. (New York: Picador USA, 1973),108-109.

⁴³ Edwards, 11.

⁴⁴ Edwards, 11.

⁴⁵ Edwards, 11.

⁴⁶ Geary, *Delivering Views*, 150.

⁴⁷ Geary, *Delivering Views*, 150.

⁴⁸ David Prochaska, "Fantasia of the Photothèque: French Postcard Views of Colonial Senegal." *African Arts* 24(4) October 1991:44.

⁴⁹ Robert W. Rydell, "Souvenirs of Imperialism: World's Fair's Postcards," in *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards*. Christaud M. Geary and Virginia-Lee Webbs, eds. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 58-60.

⁵⁰ Rydell, 60.

⁵¹ Rydell, 60.

CHAPTER 3

POSTCARDS OF ARCHITECTURE AND THE DEMONSTRATION OF POWER AND URBAN POTENTIAL

While postcards from Africa served to reinforce stereotypes about the colonies they also served a larger purpose. This purpose was educational in nature and showed colonial West Africa as more than a place that confirmed the stereotypes the French held about the region. These images delivered to their audience the possibilities and economic potential of West Africa. They showed how the French could create a legible and rational society in the colonies by imposing a recognizable infrastructure and social structure. All of this was accomplished by creating maps and transportation networks, by surveying the territory and ultimately through architecture and urban design. Images of architectural works found in postcards delivered two messages to their respective audiences. For the French these images served as a positive visual report on the colonial enterprise. For the Africans these images stated that the French controlled the colony.

Remembering the Audience

David Prochaska stated that postcards were generally purchased by three groups of people: French civilians and military personnel, the educated African elite, and literate African servants on their vacations. One can assume, then, that the audience for the postcards was divided into two general groups: the French and the Africans. Each group would have inferred their own meanings from the colonial images represented on the postcards. For the French, images of architecture in colonial postcards served a dual purpose. First, these images gave the French populace an assessment of the French enterprise in West Africa. The second effect of the

colonial images was to show the possibilities for urban improvement in France. Cities in France at the time were quite shabby and dreary and municipal officials were looking for improvement plans. Historian Gwendolyn Wright argued that the French generally believed the colonies could be seen as a laboratory for improvements within France.¹ Urban images in the colonial postcards showed people in France the possible improvement for French cities.

For the educated, elite African audience, the meanings behind the postcards were both simpler and more complex. The meaning was simpler in that there was only one inference to be made from the dominance of European architecture and urban design in these images. That dominance illustrated the power structure the French had installed in the colonies along with their architecture and their cities. The study of the postcards became more complicated when the dual nature of the audience was considered. These images were received by both the African elite and the vacationing servants. The African elite would see the images as an affirmation of their education and their acceptance of French methods. The servants, in sending these images to their employers, signaled their acquiescence to French authority in the region. They might not have liked the French intrusion, but they were not actively opposing it either. While West African elites saw a power structure in the postcards, the French saw a possible remedy to their problem of urban degeneration.

Nineteenth-Century French Urban Life

The French originally began urban improvements in the mid nineteenth-century when Napoleon III's Prefect of the Seine, Baron Haussmann, remodeled Paris in an effort to rationalize the plan of the city. This project meant to build large, straight boulevards, public parks, beautiful buildings, and innovative public works such as a water supply system and sewers. The new boulevards were the centerpiece of the emerging Paris.² There were two main purposes to the

new streets. They were places of commerce and a stage for affluent life.³ The new boulevards also played an integral role in the defense of the city. Haussmann's plan widened and straightened the boulevards so they could not be barricaded and so troops could move through the city. The narrow streets allowed barricades to be easily built and soldiers could not effectively fight an insurrection.

By the late nineteenth-century, however, the French intelligentsia began to notice the decline in France's cities. According to Gwendolyn Wright, "their cities indeed lagged noticeably behind those of England, the United States, and most distressingly, Germany. Many sectors of the urban economy appeared static and unproductive, although there was some promise in the new manufacturing of machine parts and automobiles on the outskirts of Paris."⁴ Wright stated that mortality rates in France soared past those of other European nations. There was also a general sense of discontentment and bitterness over the loss of Alsace-Lorraine in the Franco-Prussian War and the memory of the ensuing violence of the Paris Commune. Class antagonism grew as the *Confédération générale du travail* (CGT) and other leftist parties gained power and the numbers of strikes increased. The problem was compounded by the declining quality and availability of housing for the working class. The census of 1901 showed that more than half of Paris' population had inadequate housing.⁵

The provincial cities began improvements around the turn of the century but many dwellings still lacked the basic necessities of heat, running water, and electricity. Houses were often poorly constructed and contained few facilities, if any. Since candles were quite often a luxury, many people depended on their hearths for light as well as heat.⁶ People generally dressed in layers for warmth. Eugen Weber stated that "it is not surprising to find the less well-off wearing as many layers as they could to keep out the cold, which must have been as fierce

indoors as in the open.”⁷ While people could survive, for a while, without heat, they could not subsist without water. Wells were often polluted or fountains were inaccessible to the people. At the same time, disposal of dirty water was even more of a problem than trying to find unpolluted water. Large cities like Rouen and Bordeaux, in addition to smaller cities, had problems with the water supply almost until the turn of the century. Household waste was usually disposed of in the streets or gutters. Where sewers did exist, they emptied into local streams and rivers.⁸ Because of the pollution in the water, disease became a common hazard. Typhoid fever and cholera were just two of the epidemics associated with it. In the 1880s municipal governments were urged to “purify and filter water, improve drainage, (and) clean up streets” by the Ministers of War and the Interior.⁹

Colonial Cities: Laboratories for Metropolitan Improvement

Colonial cities offered the French an opportunity for escape from the urban malaise of metropolitan France. According to Wright these cities suggested “a setting for transforming the concerns of intellectuals and architects into policy, for putting theories into practice.”¹⁰ This was attractive to the intelligentsia since the colonial officials had to enact policies that would prevent “social unrest and encourage economic development.” They also observed that the colonial system gave municipal officials the authority to implement their plans unlike the governmental system in France.¹¹

Many people in France were fascinated by the possibilities of the colonies places to work out metropolitan social problems. Numerous French people at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries saw the colonies places where they could experiment with plans to invigorate France.¹² Both ends of the political spectrum embraced the *outré-mer* as

places to work out problems from the metropole – whether they were social, political, or aesthetic.¹³

Postcards played an important role in this theory of the colonial laboratory. These images showed the French the possibility for improvement in the metropolitan cities. Aesthetically they showed how French cities could be grand and beautiful again without seeing the crowding or inadequate public works. The grandeur implied in the urban images allowed the viewer to infer that these cities – Dakar, Saint-Louis, Abidjan, and others – did have working infrastructures. The apparent lack of civil unrest conveyed by the images also suggests that the French had sufficiently established political control in these areas. It is important to note, however, that the postcard images only suggested the potential improvements for French urban renewal. The colonial cities, according to Wright, were ultimately abandoned as a laboratory for urban reform. The French did not begin reforming metropolitan cities until the Vichy government and the post World War II years.¹⁴

Despite the ultimate ineffectiveness of the idea of the colonies as laboratories for urban reform in the metropole, postcards from the early years of the twentieth century showed the people in France the possibilities of urban reform and renewal. In these images, they would see beautiful municipal buildings and residences, straight boulevards, technology and industry, religious sites, statues, and Africans assimilated into this order and seemingly being accepting of it. An example of this type of image was found in the collection of L. Metayer. This image, entitled *Afrique Occidentale – Côte d'Ivoire 20. Grand-Bassam – Rue de France*, showed the viewer a straight boulevard with buildings constructed in French-style architecture on both sides of the street. (Fig. 3.1) The buildings did not appear crowded or dilapidated and the presence of Africans suggested that the French were in control of the city. Most importantly, the images

showed that order and harmony could be imposed on a seemingly disorganized and cacophonous space. It gave the French some hope for their overcrowded and inhospitable cities. In the postcards the viewer never saw overcrowding or a lack of amenities such as water. This made sense as people would not want to buy postcards illustrating urban decline like that found in France.

Sending Urban Images back to France: Architectural Postcards from the Colonies

A telling example of the possibilities for French urban design was apparent in the postcard entitled *La grande rue à Abidjan*. (Fig. 3.2) This photograph was taken from the center of the street near the intersection of another street. On the right side of the image the viewer saw a row of French buildings, while on the other side of the street there appeared to be a group of trees and a few buildings. The viewer saw the straight boulevard that reminded them of Haussmann's Paris and the grandeur it promised. They could link that promised grandeur with the reality of the colonial city and see the possibility for metropolitan France.

Postcards containing images of architecture and urban design also served as a means of reporting to the people in France the progress being made by French interests in the colonies. The collections of these images created by the recipients also served as personal archives of the progress made by the French mission in West Africa. These archives were similar to Alphonse Bertillon's compilation of criminal photographs collected in the interest of controlling crime in Paris. According to Allan Sekula, Bertillon created the first system to effectively identify criminals. Sekula stated that "his was a bipartite system, positioning a 'microscopic' individual record within a 'macroscopic' aggregate."¹⁵ The first step in this system was to combine on a card, or *fiche*, the subject's photographic and anthropometric details in addition to notes about the subject. Bertillon completed the system by organizing them into a "comprehensive,

statistically based filing system” or an archive.¹⁶ Bertillon’s archive contained not only photographs of criminals but also vital statistics that police relied upon to capture perpetrators. When organized into albums postcards from West Africa offered the viewer a similar type of organization that Bertillon’s archive offered police. His archive created the most systematic means of exploiting all the information a photograph offered the viewer. Postcard collections were not as systematic as Bertillon’s archive because of the lack of completeness but they allowed for the compulsion toward categorization and retrieval of information.

Postcards, particularly those produced by Edmond Fortier, also contained this type of archival information. In addition to the photograph, these images reported the location of the photograph and a description of the event or subject of the image. The postcards were also often numbered which could have suggested to the viewer that they were part of an overall organized system of images. For example, a random postcard from the *Collection Générale Fortier* provided all of this information to the viewer. This card contained the caption *Afrique Occidentale (Sénégal) DAKAR Palais du Gouvernement Général*. It told the viewer specifically where the image was in West Africa as well as the subject of the photograph. The viewer also learned that the postcard was part of the *Collection Générale Fortier* from the credit at the bottom of the postcard. Admittedly not all postcards contained this much information, but most at least described the location and the subject of the image. To take the analogy to an extreme, the postcards were also about the size of an easy to file card that could be easily organized into an archive like Bertillon’s. These individual postcard albums would be pieces of a larger and, in effect, virtual archive that would show the French the progress of the colonial enterprise in West Africa.

The French civilians and military personnel would presumably send multiple postcards to the same recipient, as they were a very cheap means of correspondence that allowed them to communicate easily. This ease of communication allowed for the assumption that the recipients would keep the postcards since they provided an inexpensive means of creating a collection of foreign postcards which would help increase their social status in Europe. According to Frank Staff, postcard collections, especially those containing foreign postcards, became status symbols in the years before World War I. Staff stated that “one’s social standing could be determined by the style and quality of the picture postcards in the album.”¹⁷ Architectural postcards and views of landscapes were deemed to be particularly respectable and foreign postcards with their exotic scenes added to a family’s prestige.¹⁸

By keeping these images families in France created their own archive whereby they could see the progression of the French mission in West Africa. These accomplishments were particularly visible in the architecture installed in the colonies. The viewer would first see early postcards with photographs of a single French building surrounded by the exotic African landscape or a photograph of a seemingly shabby African village. These images would soon be followed by postcards of a bustling European-type city with straight boulevards and Europeans and Africans interacting. This interaction and predominance of European architecture would suggest to the viewer that the French had nearly achieved their ultimate [at the time] goal of assimilating the colonized people into French society.

Power Structures Revealed in Postcard Images

For the African audience, architectural postcards described a definite power relationship between the French and the West Africans. Architecture and urban design were often used to establish who was in control of a city or region. According to historian Norma Evenson, when

planning New Delhi, the British debated how to design the city. Her text stated that, “if the political statement of New Delhi was to dramatize the power and permanence of British domination, a purely European style would be most effective. If it were to reflect a more moderate posture of intercultural reconciliation and cooperation, a stylistic compromise might be in order.”¹⁹ The same type of idea applied to the French in their control of West Africa. The postcards showed, however, that the French sought to display their dominance of the area through European style in the urban architecture.²⁰

The colonial architecture symbolized the French authority in the colony. The postcard images from West Africa functioned in a manner similar to that of urban postcard images from Algeria. According to historian Rebecca J. DeRoo the postcard entitled “*Alger – Le Boulevard de la République* shows the Immeuble Lescat, the site of municipal administration in the capital city of the colony. All the details demonstrate civic order: geometrically aligned streets, evenly spaced lampposts, and a mounted police officer on patrol represent not literal governing, but rather symbolic control of the colony.”²¹ (Fig. 3.3) The administration building “is a monument to the imperial dominance and ‘civilizing’ force of France.”²² In the case of sub-Saharan Africa, images of buildings like as the *Palais du Gouvernement*, *Palais de Justice*, and *La Poste* worked in a similar manner and reminded the Africans of the infrastructure the French established. This, in turn, reminded them of the new power relationships that accompanied the architecture.

Numerous postcards from West Africa illustrated the French control of the colony. Three of Fortier’s postcards were particularly descriptive of the colonial power structure. These images are: *Afrique Occidentale – Sénégal – Saint-Louis – Casernes Rogniat*, *Afrique Occidentale Française – Sénégal – 106. Saint-Louis – Place du Gouvernement et Caserne Rogniat*, and *Afrique Occidentale Française – Sénégal – 56. Dakar – Palais du Justice*. (Figs. 3.4-3.6) All of

these images depicted imposing colonial buildings housing governmental offices as well as the straight and orderly boulevards that symbolized French power in the region. The governmental offices reminded the viewer that the French bureaucracy and, by extension, the French governmental structure had been imposed on the colony. The orderly and rational boulevards would remind the viewer, who probably had the education to know about Haussmann's project to rationalize Paris in the mid-nineteenth century, that the boulevard was also an extension of the French power in the region. They would have known the wide boulevards were not meant to simply be aesthetically pleasing, but that they also served the purpose of being able to move troops quickly to areas of urban unrest.

This power relationship became even more interesting when one considered that the Africans buying and mailing these postcards were, according to David Prochaska, the educated African elite and African servants on their vacations. The servants mailing postcards to their employers present an interesting question about their employers. Were these employers French or were they part of the African elite? If they were French then to receive a postcard from an African employee signaled acquiescence to or, at the very least, a grudging acceptance of French rule in the colony. The same meaning would be present if the employer was African, but the power relationship would not be as pronounced as the one between the French employer and the African servant.

These images from colonial West Africa illustrated many aspects of the colonies and the French rule there. Before considering the images, however, the audience must be examined. It was determined that the audience consisted of two major groups: the French and the elite educated Africans. Each audience inferred their own meanings from the postcards. For the

colonized audience these photographs stated, through the French architecture, that the French were in control of the region. The French audience saw the possibilities for urban renewal in the postcards as the colonial cities were considered laboratories for metropolitan urban reform until after World War I. Fears of urban degeneration plagued the French during the fin de siècle and the colonial cities offered them a way to experiment with plans for metropolitan reforms. These images from the colonies also served to show the French the progress made in the civilizing mission. The progression of the images from the unmanageable forest to the modern rational cities described for the French the success of the civilizing mission in West Africa. This progression of images also illustrated the creation of the French power structure in the colonies. The installation of legibility and rationality was accompanied by the implementation of French control over the colonial peoples and environment.

¹ Gwendolyn Wright, "Tradition in the Service of Modernity: Architecture and Urban Design in French Colonial Policy, 1900-1930," in *Tensions of Empire*. Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 326.

² Howard Saalman, *Haussmann: Paris Transformed*. (NY: George Braziller, 1971), 14.

³ Saalman, 14.

⁴ Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 15.

⁵ Wright, 15.

⁶ Eugen Weber, *France Fin de Siècle*. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1986), 54.; Ann-Louise Shapiro, *Housing the Poor of Paris, 1850-1902*. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

⁷ Weber, 54.

⁸ Weber, 57.

⁹ Weber, 63.

¹⁰ Wright in Cooper and Stoler, 325-26.

¹¹ Wright, 326.

¹² Wright, 326.

¹³ Wright, 326.

¹⁴ Wright, 326.

¹⁵ Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 18.

¹⁶ Sekula, 18.

¹⁷ Frank Staff, *The Picture Postcard and Its Origins*. (NY: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), 64.

¹⁸ Staff, 64.

¹⁹ Norma Evenson, *The Indian Metropolis: A View Toward the West*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 104-105.

²⁰ With the predominance of European architecture in French West Africa the observer could see that the French wanted them to think they were firmly in control of the colony. This control originates in the Foucauldian notion of panoptic surveillance. Foucault based his idea of surveillance on the Panopticon, Jeremy Bentham's

prison model. It was a prison with the cells built in a ring around a central tower. One of the cell's windows faced the tower but the backlighting in the tower kept the prisoner from seeing the guard. The prisoner was forced to think he was being constantly observed which enforced good behavior.

Foucault takes the idea of the panopticon a step further by applying it to all aspects of society. He believed it would be beneficial for prisons, psychiatric hospitals, schools, and in the workplace. Foucault saw the panopticon as a machine for turning out perfectly docile workers, students, et cetera. In the case of French West Africa the colonial power structure was put in place by military conquest and economic ventures then inculcated into the people through educations and, later, through the French-style architecture in the colony. See Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish*. Alan Sheridan, trans. (NY: Vintage Books, 1977), 201.

Foucault's conception of panoptic power works in an idealized and theoretical setting but does not function in actual practice. Frederick Cooper argued that imperial power was not evenly diffused in the way Foucault envisioned it. He described it as being "lumpy"; it was often concentrated in urban areas and was sporadic in rural areas. See Frederick Cooper, "What is the Concept of Globalization Good For? An African Historian's Perspective," *African Affairs* Vol 100 (2001): 200-201.

²¹ Rebecca J. DeRoo, "Colonial Collecting: French Women and Algerian *cartes postales*," in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing race and place*. Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, eds. (London: Routledge, 2002), 162.

²² DeRoo, 162.

CHAPTER 4

COLONIAL POWER STRUCTURES IN POSTCARDS OF THE AFRICAN RAILROAD

While images of architecture and urban design illustrated the possibilities for metropolitan cities and the power structure in the colonies, images of colonial railroads showed the audience how the French implemented their regime in West Africa. The French considered the construction of the railroad to be one of the most important elements in their plan to bring Western civilization to Africa. The railroad would bring modernity to Africa and help unlock the region's economic potential.¹ Once the railroad brought modern life to Africa, the French could begin installing their rule in the region. Images of the railroads and their construction showed the French populace the process involved in railroad construction as well as the process of the civilizing mission.

The Emergence and Spread of the Railroad in Europe

Nineteenth-century Europe experienced unprecedented industrial development that began in Great Britain and then spread to continental Europe. This rapid modernization largely resulted from the construction of the railroad. The first railroad opened in 1825 and soon rail lines linked all major British cities.² Railroads quickly became central to British life and changed nearly every aspect of it by stimulating the economy, bringing people closer together and by encouraging movement to urban areas.³ The new rail networks forced the expansion of older forms of transportation and made the transportation industry Britain's largest employer in the Victorian era.⁴

Nations in Western Europe saw the advantages the rail system brought to Britain and naturally wanted to imitate this system in their own countries. Belgium opened the first continental railroad in 1835 and Germany, France, and Russia quickly followed. By 1850 there were 2,000 miles of railroad track in France, and the German states had nearly twice as much while Great Britain had 5,127 miles of track.⁵

The emergence of the railroad encouraged the growth of both industry and the state in Western Europe. In the case of France Louis-Philippe's government presented a plan in 1842 for a railroad system that used private companies to construct the railroad with large amounts of government aid. In the first stages of railroad development the French government paid for over half the construction cost by providing essential elements such as land and bridges. They later switched to an arrangement that gave private companies a fixed return on their investment in the railroad.⁶ The growth of the railroad industry created a huge demand for iron materials which in turn helped hasten overall industrial growth.⁷ The expansion of the railroad system had a similar social effect in France that it had in Great Britain. Roads and rail lines connected culturally and economically isolated areas to the rest of the country and brought them into the modern market economy.⁸ Railroads in France, Eugen Weber argued, were a means of uniting isolated regions and of creating a unified national economy. The example Weber gave of the town Die described the transformation in rural France. Before the construction of the railroad the Alps isolated the region from the rest of France. The railroad connected the region to the rest of the country and allowed for the export of surplus goods.⁹ These changes helped make life more comfortable for the people in the region.

Railroads in the Colonies

The railway was extremely useful to Europeans as they began looking to Africa for their new empire. The railroad opened huge areas for settlement and economic exploitation. Historian Michael Adas argued that the railroad opened areas to Europeans that remained untouched during the initial age of exploration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Earlier exploration, with the exception of the New World, centered on coastal and island territories. The construction of the railroad allowed for the stationing of colonial officials in inland posts as well as allowing for the quick movement of troops to areas of unrest. In so doing the railroad served a dual purpose: it represented the colonial presence in addition to reminding the colonized people of the European power in the region.¹⁰

The creation of railroads and other transportation infrastructures served an even grander purpose in French West Africa. According to historian Alice L. Conklin, one of the themes of the civilizing mission during the *fin de siècle* was that colonization would “free Africans from nature’s tyranny through the use of modern science and technology – which together would unlock the earth’s resources, promote new commercial exchanges, and thus help create a better standard of living for both French and Africans.”¹¹ Leaders in the Third Republic completely believed the economic potential of Africa could only be tapped through the application of science and technology in the colonies. This fervent belief led to the creation of the Government General in order to establish the railroad in West Africa. The French contended that a modern communications network was essential to their success in Africa. They saw that other countries had been able to implement their own form of the civilizing mission without the railroad. French officials, however, believed the railroad was necessary to organize West Africa because it was isolated and little progress had been made without the railroad.¹²

The French sincerely believed it was their duty as a civilized nation to bring that civilization to what they perceived as backward Africa. This conception of the civilizing mission manifested itself in late nineteenth-century France in an obsession with science and technology and “its power to provide progress for all.”¹³ According to Conklin, even though the July Monarchy and Second Empire flirted with the railroad, it was during the Third Republic that it began to have a real dominance in French life. Conklin reported that the Third Republic’s obsession with science and technology was so fervent that, in 1889, they built two huge monuments to modernity: the Gallery of Machines and the Eiffel Tower.¹⁴ Conklin also observed that even before these structures were conceived, “the Third Republic had committed itself through the Freycinet plan to building railroads throughout rural France in a conscious attempt to integrate another group of ‘savages,’ its own peasants, into both the marketplace and the nation.”¹⁵

This belief in the civilizing potential of the railroad seemed to be a universal idea among colonizing nations. Adas related the idea of Fred Shelford, a consultant for the British Colonial Office, which stated that the improvement of Africans’ technical skills contributed to a general improvement in their condition. Shelford believed that the railway in Africa was the catalyst for beginning Africans’ education. Not only did he see it as the catalyst for education but he saw it as essential to it. Shelford argued that Africans did not have the ambition to work beyond the production necessary for subsistence. The construction of the railroad was in part a means of breaking that sense of malaise.¹⁶ This occurred because the African worker was enlisted to do the manual labor required for the railroad construction. According to Shelford, the Africans were forced to do hard work like “assist[ing] in surveying, clearing of forest upon a large scale,

excavation of cuttings in earth, and blasting of cuttings in the rock” among other tasks to force them to want to work beyond subsistence agriculture.¹⁷

Postcard Images of the Civilizing Mission

The theme of the civilizing influence of the railroad was apparent in many of the postcards from the colonies. André and Afo Guenneguez’s *Repertoire de la carte postale ivoirienne en hommage aux fondateurs de la Côte d’Ivoire* presented, among the *Collection ETWC*, an interesting series of eight postcard images that chronicled the construction of the railroad bridge across the N’zi River at Dimbokro. When considered as a whole, these images provided the viewer with a visual report on the progress of modernizing the colonies. It is reasonable to expect that these postcards would have been collected and organized into personal archives by their owners. The personal archive allowed the audience, either in Europe or in Africa, to see the process of the construction of the bridge. In so doing they saw the process of the civilizing mission in Africa. At the same time huge numbers of people were collecting these images. By the end of the nineteenth century collecting postcards became a nearly universal pastime and images of transportation, especially railroads and trains, were quite popular.

Martin Willoughby argued in *A History of Postcards* that postcard collections were the next step after the postcard craze began at the turn of the twentieth century. “Being bright, decorative objects that could be gathered together in one place and easily stored, postcards became the ideal collectible...From the richest households to the poorest, postcard albums were eagerly filled the world over. Even Queen Victoria decided it was time to start a royal collection.”¹⁸ Images of trains were particularly popular in postcard collections. Willoughby stated that postcards of trains and railroads were produced in far greater numbers than other images and were found much more abundantly in postcard albums.¹⁹

African Images and *The Bridge Builders*

This series of images illustrated the progress of the construction of the railway bridge over the N'zi River in the Ivory Coast. The first card in the series, entitled *Voie ferrée provisoire de la N'zi à Dimbokro*, depicted the nearly completed bridge supports, themselves being supported by a complex network of scaffolding and pilings. (Fig. 4.1) The next three postcards chronicled the bridge as it was being built. The first of these images showed the viewer the first span of the bridge while the next two showed the fifth and sixth spans respectively. The next postcard displayed the equipment and workers necessary to construct the bridge. The final three postcards illustrated the nearly completed bridge from a variety of distances and perspectives. The French had a context for understanding these images that came through Rudyard Kipling's 1898 short story, *The Bridge Builders*.²⁰ The first French edition of the story was published in 1902 and, according to William B. Cohen, Kipling particularly appealed to the French sense of adventure.

This story is the tale of the construction of "the great Kashi Bridge" that the British built over the Ganges River.²¹ The story opens with the British civil engineer, Findlayson, surveying the nearly completed bridge. According to Kipling's text:

With its approaches, his work was one mile and three-quarters in length; a lattice-girder bridge, trussed with the Findlayson truss standing on seven-and-twenty brick piers. Each one of those piers was twenty-four feet in diameter, capped with red Agra stone and sunk eighty feet below the shifting sand of the Ganges' bed. Above them was a railway-line fifteen feet broad; above that, again, a cart-road of eighteen feet, flanked with footpaths.²²

The story focused on the flooding of the Ganges by Mother Gunga, the goddess of the river. The goal of the flood was to destroy the bridge in order to stop the British encroachment in India. The flood was ultimately unsuccessful as the bridge remained largely unharmed by the flood. Mother Gunga wailed to the other gods that "they have made it too strong for me. In all this

night I have only torn away a handful of planks. The walls stand! The towers stand! They have chained my flood, and the river is not free any more...”²³

The story signaled the assured success of the bridge because of the issues of gender raised by Mother Gunga’s femininity. Her femininity indicated to the European audience her weakness in comparison to the male engineers and workers building the bridge. In the case of Africa, Europeans often saw the relationship between white men and indigenous women as symbolic of the colonizer and the colonized.²⁴ The survival of Findlayson’s bridge reaffirmed this relationship for the story’s Western audience. It illustrated the dominance of Western technology over traditional beliefs.

The images of the N’zi River Bridge in the Ivory Coast would have conjured the recollection of this Kipling tale for the French. Contemporary literature was one of the influences that helped lure young men into colonial service. The French were particularly drawn to the works of Daniel Defoe and Rudyard Kipling.²⁵ According to André Maurois, ““from 1900 to 1920 Kipling influenced French youths as few French writers have been able to do. His mannerisms became French mannerisms. His legends and stories (*Just So Stories, The Jungle Book*) inspired the games and shaped the thoughts of French children.””²⁶ Maurois argued that Kipling’s writing appealed to the French because of the “heroic conception of life” that embodied his stories. ““His heroes, no matter what their nationality or their job, conquered disorder by overcoming laziness, envy, ambition, and desire.””²⁷

In the first image, *Voie ferrée provisoire sur le N’zi à Dimbokro*, the viewer possibly imagined the French equivalent of Findlayson and his assistant, Hitchcock, surveying their achievement from the trolley line on the right side of the photograph. (Fig. 4.1) This image was essentially the visualization of the work the reader imagined when reading the opening

paragraphs of *The Bridge Builders*. The bridge supports were situated diagonally across the left side of the image while the viewer saw on the right the workers and engineers necessary for the construction of the bridge. The entire series of postcard images showed the audience the process and the details involved in building a railroad bridge. While seeing this process, the viewers saw how the French tried to implement the civilizing mission.

The next three postcards emphasized this process by presenting the progression of the bridge's construction across the N'zi River. The first of these images, *Viadue métallique sur le N'zi – Montage de la 1^{er} travée*, showed the viewer the nearly completed first span of the bridge and the continuing work of the engineers and riveters who were actually constructing the bridge. (Fig. 4.2) The photograph was taken from a perspective that allowed the viewer to see not only the first span of the bridge but also the edge of the river bank, the workers on top of the bridge and the pilings still supporting the structure. The next two images, entitled *Viadue métallique sur le N'zi – Montage de la 5^e travée* and *Viadue métallique sur le N'zi – Montage de la 6^e travée* respectively, were two very similar photographs. (Figs. 4.3-4.4) The first of the two images was taken from a greater distance than the second. In both photographs the viewer could see the completed spans of the bridge so they knew the engineers were making progress on the bridge's construction.

The fifth postcard of the series, *Viadue du N'zi – Grue de Montage*, focused on the European knowledge and technology required to build the bridge. The image depicted workers working on the fifth span of the bridge. (Fig. 4.5) This image, however, placed the crane and the French workers in the center as a focal point of the photograph rather than the bridge itself. The caption on the postcard also drew the viewer's attention to the crane by identifying the image as one of the "grue de montage" – the crane that was essential to the bridge's construction.

The presence of the crane in the postcard seemed to serve the purpose of reminding the viewer that the bridge was a French accomplishment, built using French tools and equipment that were wielded by French engineers. The image showed the process of the French conquest of West Africa. The viewer saw that the French dominance of the region did not occur immediately. While they could read about this in the newspaper, the image gave them tangible proof of the project in Africa since they believed so strongly in the verisimilitude of photography. The report of the bridge's progress could be exaggerated in a newspaper article but the photograph on the postcard showed the audience what they believed to be the real situation.

The next postcard, *Viadue du N'zi – Installation pour riveuses mécaniques*, was even more suggestive of the European triumph over West Africa. (Fig. 4.6) The photograph was taken closer to the nearly completed bridge so that it is the only part of the landscape visible in the photograph. The proximity of the photographer to the bridge suggested to the viewer that he wanted to reinforce the European aspects of the image to remind the audience that the bridge was a piece of European technology in the colonies. This postcard of the bridge also reminded the viewer of Kipling's tale. The caption in particular brings *The Bridge Builders* to mind. The description "installation pour riveuses mécaniques" suggested that the French were installing a new and modern system to replace traditional and natural ways. This returned to the main theme of *The Bridge Builders*. The Indian gods, especially Mother Gunga, tried to force the British out by attempting to destroy the bridge. Ultimately, however, the bridge withstood the deluge from Mother Gunga, which signaled to the Indian deities that the British and their contraptions were there to stay. The French would have known this story and would remember the triumph of the British bridge over the Ganges River. They would have seen the demonstration of the conquering power of technology in Kipling's story and therefore knew the bridge would

inevitably be successful. The installation of the railroad in West Africa also signaled to the French that they were making progress in their mission to bring Western civilization to Africa.

These images were not the only representations of the French technological success over West Africa. In the collection from the Ivory Coast, L. Metayer also included a postcard of the bridge over the N'zi River. (Fig. 4.7) It is an image of the completed bridge with two Africans standing by it. There are many other similar images, whether they are of railroad bridges, tunnels, or trains working on these shrines to modernity. One of the most interesting aspects of these images, alongside the technological achievements, is the Africans in the photographs. They appeared to be welcoming the changes rather than resisting them.

Other Images of the Colonial Railroads

The postcards of railway construction presented an idealized image of the actual work involved in building the railroad. In reality railroad construction was extremely hard work and African workers often had to be forced to work on the railroad. For example, in 1921 the French began building the railroad from Brazzaville to Pointe-Noire in the French Congo, which was completed in 1933. For each year of its construction more than ten thousand Africans were transported to the site and forced to build the railroad. At least one quarter of the work force died annually from disease and starvation.²⁸ This form of forced labor was often used in African construction projects.²⁹

Despite their idealized representation of African railroad construction, the remaining railroad postcards from this sample allowed the viewer to discern a progression in the images from the African territory from its least civilized to a nearly complete domination by French customs and mores. The viewer first observed the apparent beginning of the railroad as it cut through unsettled areas. The viewer also saw haphazardly constructed train stations that

suggested hastily built structures in order to begin bringing Western civilization to Africa. Many of these postcards depicted railroad tracks and the exotic landscape surrounding them.

One of the most telling examples of this came from L. Metayer's collection of postcards documenting the *Chemin de fer de la Côte d'Ivoire*. This image, entitled *Abidjan – Vue du Plateau (côte est)*, was a good example of the beginning of the French project in West Africa. (Fig. 4.8) In the image, the railroad tracks were displayed prominently across most of the photograph with a few European style buildings visible in the background. The landscape figured prominently in the image as well. It dominated the area of the photograph where the railroad tracks and buildings did not. This could have been to remind the viewer that constructing the railroad was only a first step in bringing Western life to Africa and that there was still much work to be done. This image represented a theme repeated many times throughout the postcards from this era.

In a continuation of this theme of the installation of Western institutions in Africa, several of the postcards that illustrated the railroad showed the viewer images of hastily constructed stations. This gave the viewer the impression that the French, in their haste to organize Africa, were willing to build quickly to claim territory and begin rationalizing it as soon as possible. Images like this presented an interesting contrast when they contained these apparently haphazard structures alongside trains. This contrast was amply illustrated in the *Collection ETWC* postcard from the Ivory Coast entitled *Gare provisoire de Dimbokro – Arrivée de trains*. (Fig. 4.9) This image prominently featured two locomotives stopped at the apparently hastily constructed station. The shabbiness of the station suggests to the viewer that the railroad – the locomotives and track – were more important initially than grand stations to impress and transport people throughout the colony.

These impressions were reinforced by another *Collection ETWC* postcard that depicted the new and completed station at Dimbokro. This postcard, entitled *Chemin de fer de la Côte d'Ivoire – Dimbokro – La nouvelle Gare*, showed the viewer a typically European train station and train tracks. (Fig. 4.10) When compared with the postcard of the provisional station the viewer saw the necessity of the locomotives in that image. If it were not present in the image then the viewer would not know the photograph on the postcard was of a train station.

Many of the postcard images of the railroad served as a means of reinforcing the civilizing mission and the French agenda in West Africa. Some images, such as the example *Bâtiment des Agents du Chemin de fer* from L. Metayer's Ivory Coast collection, illustrated little French presence in the region. These images suggested to the viewer that there is still much to be accomplished in West Africa before the colony could be considered "civilized" by French standards.

Other images illustrated the progress made toward assimilating Africans into French social and business structures. This was apparent from postcards such as the *Collection ETWC's Groupe de Sous Officiers du Génie détachés au Chemin de Fer*. (Fig. 4.11) This photograph was a group portrait of the railroad officers in the Ivory Coast. The most interesting feature of the postcard was the fact that six of the eleven men in the photograph are Africans. This suggested to the audience that Africans were being integrated into French industries and customs.

Social Structure: French Notions of Social Advancement in the Colonies

Postcards representing images of the railroad also served to illuminate the social structure the French set up in the colony as part of their agenda to organize Africa. Service in the Corps of Colonial Administrators offered young men who did not have the proper education or who failed the *baccalauréat* an opportunity for professional and ultimately social advancement. The job of

a colonial agent was not highly paid but Cohen asserted that it served as a stepping stone into the upper levels of the French bureaucracy.³⁰ While colonial careers allowed for social advancement for some, they also served as a way of maintaining a family's social standing. According to Cohen, the Corps of Colonial Administrators provided prestigious careers for sons of middle-class families who failed to acquire the *baccalauréat*.³¹

Service in the colonies also offered Frenchmen a significant increase in social status while in the colonies. Cohen related the example of an officer who, while serving as *commandant de cercle* in the Sudan in the 1890s, was treated like a king because of his rank. "According to custom the local inhabitants killed a hippopotamus and presented it to their new ruler, the *commandant de cercle*: 'These Bambaras, enormous men with brutish heads, were deeply impressed by the presence of the big white chief; they had a terrible fear; for them I was like a god.'"³² The colonial administrator had his high social standing as a result of his rank in the colonial bureaucracy and his race rather than because of his ability or familial ties.³³

Social Relationships Revealed in Postcards

Postcards from the colonies in French West Africa provide an interesting medium for the illustration of these social relationships. In the case of the *Collection Général Fortier*, David Prochaska argued that most of Fortier's postcards of Senegal are panoramic views of the region.³⁴ When people were included in the postcard images, most of Fortier's work is segregated into two main categories: images of Africans and images of Europeans. Fortier rarely photographed the French and Africans in such a way as to describe the power dynamic in the colony.³⁵ When the postcards are viewed collectively, however, a colonial power relationship and social hierarchy emerges. In fact, the images suggest a complex array of social interaction and hierarchy in the French colonies.

An interesting example of this social interaction is apparent in Fortier's postcards of Saint-Louis, Senegal, in 1900. Two of these postcards, entitled *Rue Lebon (sud)* and *Une rue de Guet N'dar* respectively, demonstrate this dynamic in the colony. (Figs. 4.12-4.13) The first image depicts Europeans and Africans mingling on the street in the European section of the city. The second image sharply contrasts with the first as it depicts seemingly disheveled buildings, Africans in their native costume, palm trees, and no Europeans in sight. Before even looking closely at the images the viewer is struck by the differences in the captions of the images: the European influenced urban area is specifically labeled whereas the African streets are only designated by the area and an indefinite article describing the street. It allows the viewer to infer that the status of the people in the first image was more important than that of those in the second.

These hierarchical relationships were visible in Kipling's story, *The Bridge Builders*, and in the *Collection ETWC* postcards of the construction of the N'zi river bridge in the Ivory Coast. According to Michael Adas, *The Bridge Builders* also suggested "the hierarchy, based on degrees of technical expertise, that the Europeans believed their mission of technological diffusion necessarily imposed on colonized societies."³⁶ Adas points out that, in Kipling's story, the bridge was engineered by Europeans and two British engineers supervised its construction. Europeans were recruited for the necessary skilled work on the bridge, such as riveting. Finally, Europeans were foremen for the laborers but the actual labor fell to the Indians.³⁷

This system of hierarchy was also visible in the eight postcards documenting the construction of the N'zi River Bridge. The engineers and European supervisors were not as apparent or central to the images as they were to Kipling's story but the other groups were quite visible. In the image *Viadue métallique sur le N'zi – Montage de la 5e travée* the viewer

observed Europeans riveting the bridge as well as Europeans operating the crane that lifted materials from the riverbed to the bridge. The viewer also observed in this series of images Africans who seemed to fill the same role as the Indians in *The Bridge Builders*. It was not certain, however, because the postcards did not depict them as actually doing the hard work Kipling implied in the story.

Other postcards represented this hierarchical relationship in much stronger terms. In such images, the viewer explicitly saw Africans undertaking the hardest labor required to construct the railroad. This exploitation was most apparent in Fortier's postcard from Guinée entitled *Chemin de fer de Konakry au Niger – Au delà du Col de Koumi*. In this image the viewer observed Africans doing the labor required to build the railroad through Africa. There were some Europeans in the photograph but they appeared to be serving mainly in a supervisory capacity. These images of the division of labor in Africa appeared to be a common theme in Fortier's postcards.

Another good example of the African labor sources came from another of Fortier's postcards. This photograph from Guinea, captioned *Travaux du Chemin de fer – Une tranchée dans le roc*, showed Africans working to cut a path through rocks for the railroad tracks. (Fig. 4.14) The workers were composed of African men creating this pass through the rocky area. It is not explicitly clear if the supervisors in the photograph were Europeans. They could have been the African equivalent of European and Eurasian foremen pointed out by Adas in his examination of the hierarchy of *The Bridge Builders*.

These images of railroad construction in Africa showed their audience in France the process of modernization as well as illustrating for them the process of the civilizing mission.

The French believed the railroad was essential to the implementation of the civilizing mission in Africa. It opened vast amounts of inland territory to them and allowed them to quickly move men and supplies from one area to another. The railroad in West Africa was also a manifestation of the French power in the colony. These images worked with the architectural postcards to show to their audiences that the French firmly controlled West Africa.

¹ Alice L. Conklin, "Colonialism and Human Rights: A Contradiction in Terms? The Case of France and West Africa, 1895-1914," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 103, Issue 2 (Apr 1998), 431.

² Lynn Hunt, Thomas R. Martin, Barbara H. Rosenwein, R. Po-Chia, and Bonnie G. Smith, *Challenge of the West: Peoples and Cultures from 1560 to the Global Age*. Vol. II (Lexington, MA: DC Heath and Company, 1995), 749.

³ F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 46, 47.

⁴ Thompson, 47.

⁵ Hunt, et al., 749.

⁶ Gordon Wright, *France in Modern Times*. Fifth ed. (NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 150.

⁷ Hunt, et al., 749.

⁸ Eugen Weber, *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), 206.

⁹ Weber, 207.

¹⁰ Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 223-24.

¹¹ Conklin, 431.

¹² Conklin, 431.

¹³ Conklin, 432.

¹⁴ Conklin, 432.

¹⁵ Conklin, 432.

¹⁶ Adas, 229-30.

¹⁷ Adas, 229-30.

¹⁸ Martin Willoughby, *A History of Postcards: A pictorial record from the turn of the century to the present day*. (London: Bracken Books, 1992), 10.

¹⁹ Willoughby, 90.

²⁰ The first French edition *The Bridge Builders*, according to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, was published in 1902.

²¹ Rudyard Kipling, *The Bridge Builders*. In *Kipling's Fantasy: Stories by Rudyard Kipling*. John Brunner, ed. (NY: Tom Doherty Associates, 1992), 59.

²² Kipling, 59.

²³ Kipling, 76.

²⁴ Nicholas Monti, *Africa Then: Photographs 1840-1918*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 56.

²⁵ William B. Cohen, "The Lure of Empire: Why Frenchmen Entered the Colonial Service," *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 4, Issue 1, Colonialism and Decolonization (Jan. 1969), 113.

²⁶ Maurois in Cohen, 113.

²⁷ Maurois in Cohen, 113.

²⁸ David B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415-1980*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 396-397; Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1982), 166-67.

²⁹ Rodney, 209.

³⁰ Cohen, 105.

³¹ Cohen, 105.

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- ³² Cohen, 111.
- ³³ Cohen, 111.
- ³⁴ David Prochaska, "Fantasia of the Photothèque: French Postcard Views of Colonial Senegal." *African Arts* 24 (4) October 1991: 44.
- ³⁵ Prochaska, 44.
- ³⁶ Adas, 235.
- ³⁷ Adas, 235.

CONCLUSION

This study argued that despite their tendency to reinforce racial stereotypes about Africa, postcards from French West Africa served as a means of transmitting the French project in the colonies to the populace. French colonial policy at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries revolved around the idea of bringing the civilizing mission to the Africans. By implementing this plan the French fulfilled their duty of introducing rationality and republicanism to their colonial populations. In order to instill these essential qualities the French created infrastructure in each colony that allowed them to understand the region. This follows James C. Scott's argument that states ordered themselves internally through these systems to organize the population. This organization came about through the creation of maps, transportation networks, public works and urban design.

Since West Africa was so far away from metropolitan France, French enterprises had to find a way to show the population their project in the colony. These French enterprises, which included businesses and entrepreneurs as well as the state, utilized various forms of media, such as travel literature and guidebooks, to disseminate their colonial endeavors. Postcards from the colonies quickly became the ideal form of mass media to translate the colonial enterprises back to France. By the end of the nineteenth century postcards were widely available throughout Europe and the colonies as well as being one of the most popular forms of communication. They especially appealed to the growing number of tourists wanting to commemorate their travels.

While being ideal souvenirs, postcards also served a broader cultural and political purpose. Postcards from West Africa provided a means of linking colonial activities with popular culture. These images from the colonies served as a way of reiterating the racial

stereotypes the French had about Africans at the time. Images like those on the postcards were already present in the visual culture at the time. Ethnographic exhibitions and universal expositions displayed people from the colonies and the French interpretation of their culture unabashedly creating spectacles from ostensibly educational exhibits.

The first chapter of this study looked at these exhibitions and their origins in scientific theory of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It argued that these racial theories and their manifestation in popular culture gave the French a framework for understanding the civilizing mission in Africa. It showed how scientific theories of race emerged and how they transformed into stereotypes about Africans. The chapter then shifted to popular ideas of race and how these theories became integrated in popular culture. The chapter specifically examined ethnographic exhibitions and the universal expositions and their displays of colonized peoples. These spectacles put people on display in the same way postcards from the colonies did.

The next chapter argued that postcard photographers tried to replicate scientific methodology in their photographs to give their images the same sort of legitimacy that scientifically based entertainment had in metropolitan France. The chapter began by looking at the role of photography in the newly developed science of anthropology. Photography allowed for the easy classification of the seemingly less developed people of newly colonized territories. It also allowed for the creation of racial “types” that ultimately became a spectacle for armchair adventurers. The section argued that postcard photographers, while conforming to many of the anthropological conventions, also had to conform to the laws of supply and demand. They had to create images that would please their audiences. This ultimately led to the perpetuation of stereotypes because these were the types of images that people wanted to see.

The third chapter argued that, despite the tendency to reproduce and reinforce stereotypical images, postcards from West Africa served as a means of showing the French the progress of the enterprise in the colony and as a way of displaying their control of the colony. The French at the time were noticing a sense of urban malaise and many French scholars believed colonial cities could be used to experiment with urban planning. They hoped to find a way to reform metropolitan cities to alleviate overcrowding and the possibilities for disease and civil unrest. Postcards of colonial architecture offered the French images of cities that were clean and not crowded. At the same time architectural postcards emphasized for their African audiences the French control of the colonies. They saw the imposing buildings that housed the French bureaucracy and remembered the French authority over the colony. The rationally planned boulevards reinforced the power that radiated from French architecture by symbolizing French rule and their attachment to rational thought. The dominance of the French city over the African wilderness reminded the viewer of the French conquest of the region.

Postcards of the railroad in West Africa also demonstrated the progress of the civilizing mission in the colonies. They explicitly illustrated the French dominance of the region as the railroads encroached on the wilderness. Images of these technological and engineering feats in Africa provided a powerful rhetoric for the French to justify their mission in West Africa. These notions were heightened by the addition of Kipling's tales that demonstrated the British technological, political, and cultural dominance of India. The French considered the railroad an essential element of the civilizing mission as it was necessary to cut paths through the seemingly unorganized and irrational territory. Images of the installation of the railroad in Africa demonstrated the success of their civilizing mission.

How do contemporary African photographers grapple with the legacy of the colonial postcards? African photographers began working to reverse the pictorial objectification of Africans in the mid-twentieth century. This was most evident in the work of the Malian photographers Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé. Even though they were largely unknown in the West until the 1990s, Keïta and Sidibé had photographed people in Bamako since the 1930s and 1950s respectively.¹ Their photographs emphasized the community and family over the question of colonialism. They differed from colonial photographers, like Fortier, in that they allowed their subjects to choose their items clothing and accessories. This action allowed the balance of power between the photographer and the subject to be reversed and took away the objectification that was so apparent in colonial photography and postcards earlier in the century.

Christaud Geary argued that one of the most important issues to be considered in the study of colonial postcards was the differentiation between public and private images.² According to Geary, “local or ‘private’ images directly refer to the world of their purchasers by presenting familiar settings and subjects. ‘Public’ images, and by extension postcards produced for an international market, act as metaphors for their consumers, signifying something beyond the actual image to give visual form to Western discourses about Africa.”³ When these private photographs were printed as postcards they jumped from the private realm into the public realm where they became part of the “powerful discourse surrounding postcards.”⁴

The portrait photography of Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé returned images of Africans to the private domain. While colonial photography depersonalized and objectified their subjects, Keïta and Sidibé’s photographs remained in the “private realm of family, friends, and community.”⁵ Both Keïta and Sidibé worked on the local level in Mali’s capital city of Bamako. Western images of Africa tended to reinforce stereotypes already present in contemporary

popular culture. “Postcards widely distributed in Africa and Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries helped disseminate these stereotypes.”⁶ On the other hand, Keïta and Sidibé worked with their subjects to create images that had significance to the sitter, not an international audience. Their portraits were flattering to their subject and presented them in the best possible way.⁷ Postcard portraits were often created to merely illustrate the racial type rather than to make the subject look good. The photographs of Keïta and Sidibé were mostly “mementos of people, souvenirs of special moments and events. Small-scale prints were exchanged as tangible proof of friendship and love. Photographs were put in albums, tacked on walls, or framed.”⁸

Seydou Keïta was born around 1921 in Bamako. He trained to be a carpenter and by the age of ten was already making furniture. He got his first camera in 1935. It was a Kodak Brownie that his uncle acquired on a trip to Senegal and gave it and its eight exposures of film to Keïta. He began taking photographs of family but soon expanded to taking pictures of friends and customers. According to Keïta, “I was already known as a cabinet maker, and when people saw me with my camera hanging around my neck, they asked me to take a photo of them. That’s how I began.”⁹ In 1948 Keïta set his own studio in Bamako.¹⁰ In 1962, two years after Mali’s independence from France, Keïta was asked to be the country’s official photographer. Keïta recalled that, “it was prestigious for me to be asked to be a government employee. It is not something most people refuse.”¹¹ He was allowed to keep his studio open but was soon forced to close it. “In 1963 they put pressure on me to close down my studio completely, because someone working for the administration should not have other business apart from his work.”¹² Keïta remained the nation’s official photographer until his retirement in 1977.¹³

Malick Sidibé was part of the generation of African photographers that followed Seydou Keïta. Sidibé was born in Soloba, but attended school in Bougouni which is about 100 miles from Bamako. Sidibé entered the École des Artisans Soudanais (now the Institut National des Arts) in 1952 to study jewelry making.¹⁴ Upon graduation in 1955 Gérard Guillat hired him to decorate his store in Bamako. Sidibé later became Guillat's apprentice and started by "doing basic studio jobs and gradually learned photography by watching the photographers."¹⁵ Sidibé bought his first camera in 1956 and "began making portraits, mostly of Malian clients, for which Guillat gave him a share of the profits."¹⁶ In addition to his work for Guillat Sidibé occupied his time with reportage, which was photographing events for private clients.¹⁷ "Sidibé was hired by young people to photograph parties, club gatherings, and leisure activities including Sunday outings by the Niger River."¹⁸ Sidibé opened his own studio, Studio Malick, in 1960 and continued with reportage until the late 1970s. He also repaired cameras for local photographers throughout his career.¹⁹

Keïta and Sidibé met on Keïta's wedding day in Bougouni, but they did not develop a friendship until later in their lives. This was partly because of a fear of competition between the two photographers. In later years Keïta took his camera to Sidibé for repair and the two developed a casual friendship.²⁰ Once their work began to be exhibited internationally, the two photographers became better acquainted and Sidibé often represented Keïta abroad as the older photographer rarely traveled before his death in late 2001.²¹

The return of African images to the private realm and the subsequent unraveling of colonial objectification were apparent through the clothing and accessories used in Keïta and Sidibé's portraits. Unlike many postcard photographs where the subjects did not appear enthusiastic about wearing Western clothing, the subjects of Keïta and Sidibé's portraits wanted

to wear the new clothing. According to Keïta, “people living in the city began to wear European clothes, especially the men, the government workers and politicians who worked in offices. They liked to have their photo taken with stylish and fashionable clothes.”²² This idea also held true for the accessories chosen for the portraits. Often in postcard portraits the sitters seemingly had no idea how to hold the accessories or what to do with them. In Keïta and Sidibé’s portraits people brought the items they wanted in the photograph or, in Keïta’s case, chose from the clothing and props available in his studio. He had several European suits in his studio with a variety of ties and accessories. He also provided accessories and props for his sitters: “watches, fountain pens, watch-chains, plastic flowers, a radio, a telephone, a scooter, a bicycle, and an alarm clock. A lot of people liked to be photographed with this kind of thing.”²³ (Figs. C.1-C.2) The difference between the postcard photographs and the contemporary portraits was that now the subject could choose their clothing and accessories whereas colonial photographers often chose the items for their subjects.

Michelle Lamurière argued that Keïta and Sidibé may have adapted the poses found on postcards for their own use. One of these poses was that of the reclining woman. An example of this type of image can be found in the Fortier postcard titled *Jeunes Femmes Arabes de Tombouctou* which dates from 1905. (Fig. C.3) This image showed two semi-nude women with one of them reclining seductively on the right side of the photograph. Lamurière believed that these themes found their inspiration in North Africa when Western artists constructed images of the Orient for their audiences. These images of women were usually seen as being symbolic of “uncontrolled sexuality, serving in the Western imagination both to confirm the moral corruption of these ‘primitive’ cultures and to nourish lustful longings.”²⁴

Lamurière suggested that Keïta and Sidibé reinvented this pose in their portrait photographs. The fact that these were privately commissioned images meant for domestic display suggested that the subject was having the portrait made for herself rather than for the omniscient viewer that a postcard would have.²⁵ She argued that the women in the postcard were objects whereas Keïta and Sidibé depicted their reclining women as subjects. “Sidibé suggests that his representation was chosen by the woman for her own personal reflection.”²⁶ (Figs. C.4-C.5)

The portraiture of Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé returned African images to the private realm from the public image created by internationally disseminated images on mass media like postcards. They accomplished this through focusing their images on local subjects like family and their community. They also did not dictate the clothing worn by their subjects or the accessories included in the photograph. Keïta and Sidibé allowed their customers to choose the items rather than coercing them into holding objects or wearing clothing chosen by the photographer. In so doing Keïta and Sidibé turned the power relationship of African photography around so the subject was largely in control of the image, not the photographer. This allowed the subject to be transformed from the object of a postcard to the subject of a photograph. This transformation greatly aided the sundering of the colonial relationship and the assertion of African independence.

¹ According to Michelle Lamurière, “Since the early 1990s they have gained increasing recognition outside of Africa for, among other qualities, the formal strength of their photographs. Keita’s portraits were first brought to the attention of the art world in the 1991 exhibition *Africa Explores* at the Center for African Art in New York. Sidibé is best known for his lively images of Bamako youth at private parties and Sunday picnics on the banks of the Niger River, which were first seen in the West in 1995 at the Foundation Cartier pour l’Art Contemporain in Paris,” Michelle Lamurière, *You Look Beautiful Like That: The Portrait Photography of Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001), 11.

² Lamurière, 16.

³ Geary, *Delivering Views*, 150.

⁴ Geary, *Delivering Views*, 176.

⁵ Lamurière, 17.

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- ⁶ Lamurière, 13.
- ⁷ Lamurière, 13.
- ⁸ Lamurière, 13.
- ⁹ Seydou Keïta, “Seydou’s Story,” interview by André Magnin (Bamako, 1995-96), *Seydou Keïta*. André Magnin, ed. (New York: Contemporary African Art Collection, 1997), 9.
- ¹⁰ Keïta in Magnin, 9.
- ¹¹ Keïta in Magnin, 13.
- ¹² Keïta in Magnin, 13.
- ¹³ Keïta in Magnin, 13.
- ¹⁴ Lamurière, 25.
- ¹⁵ Lamurière, 25.
- ¹⁶ Lamurière, 25.
- ¹⁷ Lamurière, 25.
- ¹⁸ Lamurière, 27.
- ¹⁹ Lamurière, 27.
- ²⁰ Lamurière, 28.
- ²¹ Lamurière, 28.; Margaret Loke, “Seydou Keïta Dies; Photographed Common Man of Mali.” *The New York Times* 8 Dec. 2001. Vol. 151, issue 51961 p.D9.
- ²² Keïta in Magnin, 12.
- ²³ Keïta in Magnin, 12.
- ²⁴ Lamurière, 31.
- ²⁵ Lamurière, 31.
- ²⁶ Lamurière, 31.

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APPENDIX

CHAPTER 2



Figure 2.1 *Columbia, Inuit Queen*¹



Figure 2.2 *Femme Dioula*²



Fig. 2.3 *Colonie Française – Côte d'Ivoire – Femme Apollonienne*³



Fig. 2.4 *Colonie Française – Côte d'Ivoire – Femme Elminah*⁴

CHAPTER 3



Fig. 3.1 *Afrique Occidentale – Côte d'Ivoire – Grand-Bassam – Rue de France*⁷



Fig. 3.2 *La grande rue à Abidjan*⁸

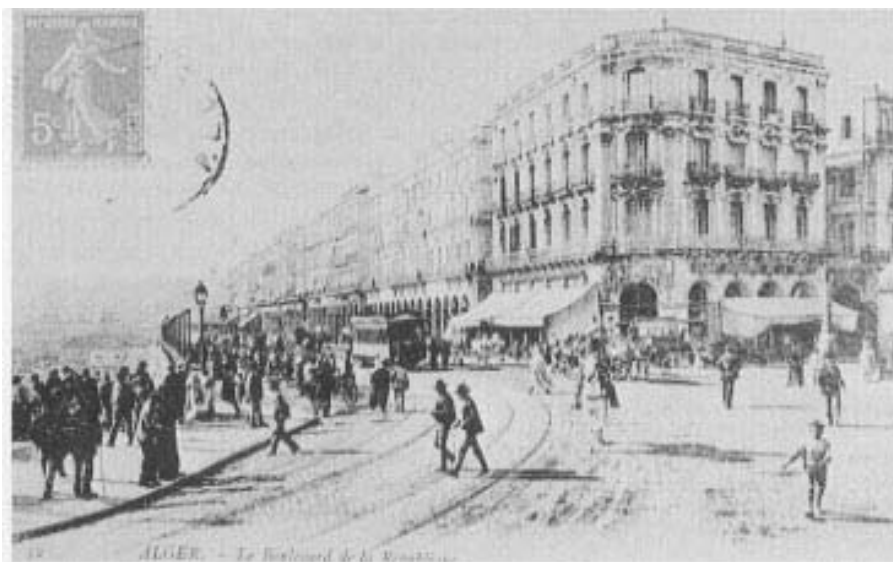


Fig. 3.3 *Algier – Le Boulevard de la République*⁹



Fig. 3.4 *Afrique Occidentale – Sénégal – Saint-Louis – Casernes Rogniat*¹⁰



Fig. 3.5 *Afrique Occidentale – Sénégal – Saint-Louis – Place du Gouvernement et Casernes Rogniat*¹¹



Fig. 3.6 *Afrique Occidentale Française – Sénégal – Dakar – Palais du Justice*¹²

CHAPTER 4



Fig. 4.1 *Colonie Française – Côte d’Ivoire – Voie ferrée provisoire sur le N’zi à Dimbokro*¹³



Fig. 4.2 *Colonie Française – Côte d’Ivoire – Viaduc métallique sur le N’zi – Montage de la 1^{er} travée*¹⁴

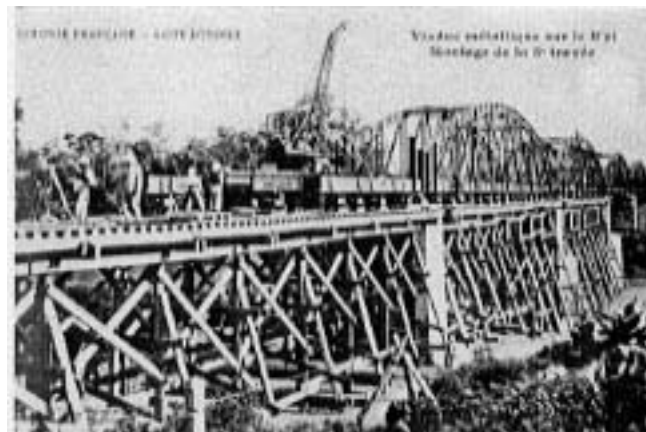


Fig. 4.3 *Colonie Française – Côte d’Ivoire – Viaduc métallique sur le N’zi – Montage de la 5^e travée*¹⁵



Fig. 4.4 Colonie Française – Côte d'Ivoire – Viaduc de N'zi – Montage de la 6^e travée¹⁶

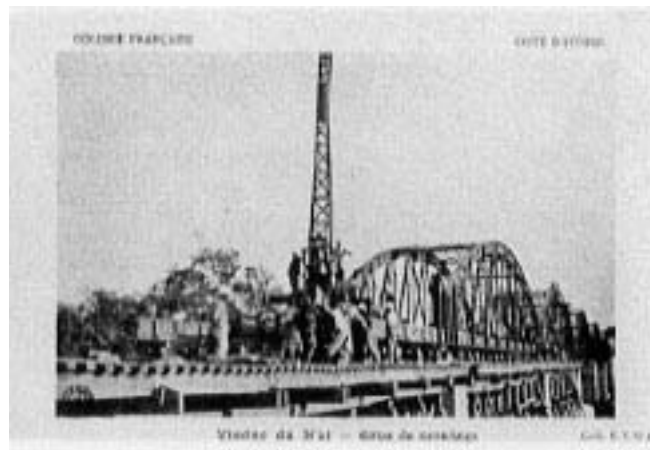


Fig. 4.5 Colonie Française – Côte d'Ivoire – Viaduc de N'zi – Grue de montage¹⁷



Fig. 4.6 Colonie Française – Côte d'Ivoire – Viaduc de N'zi – Installation pour riveuses mécaniques¹⁸



Fig. 4.7 *Colonie Française – Côte d'Ivoire – Viaduc du N'zi – Vue des 4 premières travées terminées*¹⁹

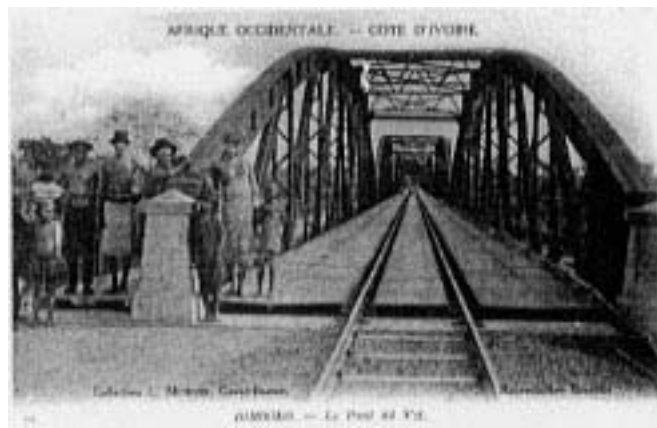


Fig. 4.8 *Afrique Occidentale – Côte d'Ivoire – Dimbokro – Le Pont du N'zi*²⁰



Fig. 4.9 *Afrique Occidentale – Côte d'Ivoire – Abidjan – Vue du Plateau (côte est)*²¹



Fig. 4.10 *Colonie Française – Côte d'Ivoire – Gare provisoire de Dimbokro – Arrivée de trains*²²

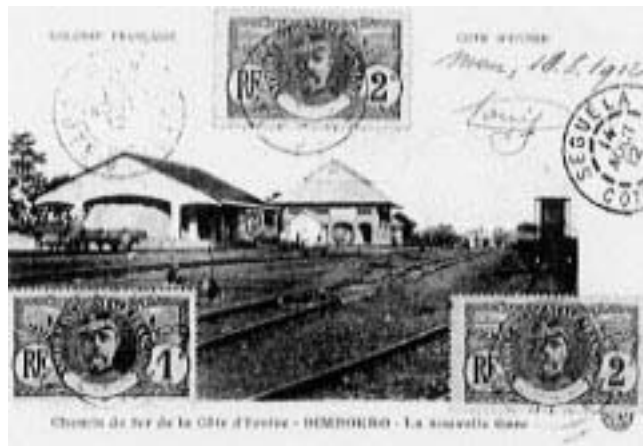


Fig. 4.11 *Colonie Française – Côte d'Ivoire – Chemin de fer de la Côte d'Ivoire – Dimbokro – La nouvelle Gare*²³



Fig. 4.11 *Colonie Française – Côte d'Ivoire – Groupe de Sous Officiers du Génie détachés au Chemin de Fer*²⁴



Fig. 4.12 Rue Lebon (sud)²⁵

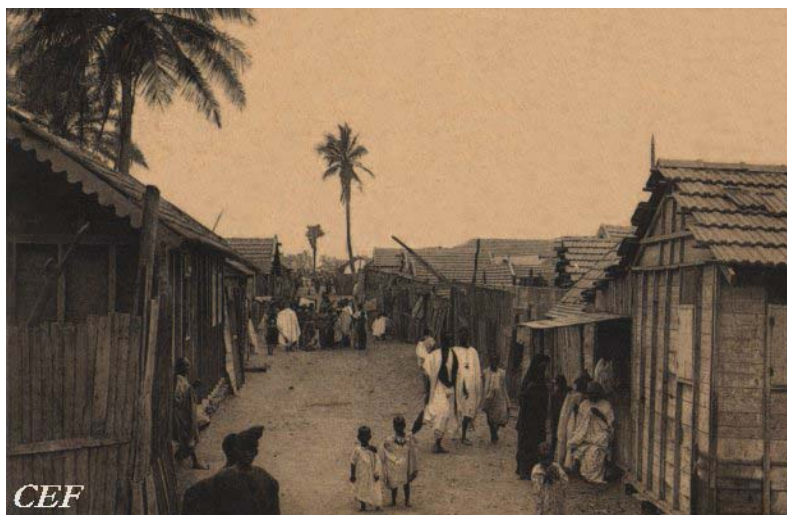


Fig. 4.13 Une rue de Guet N'Dar²⁶



Fig. 4.14 Afrique Occidentale – Guinée – Travaux du Chemin de fer – Une tranchée dans le roc²⁷

CONCLUSION

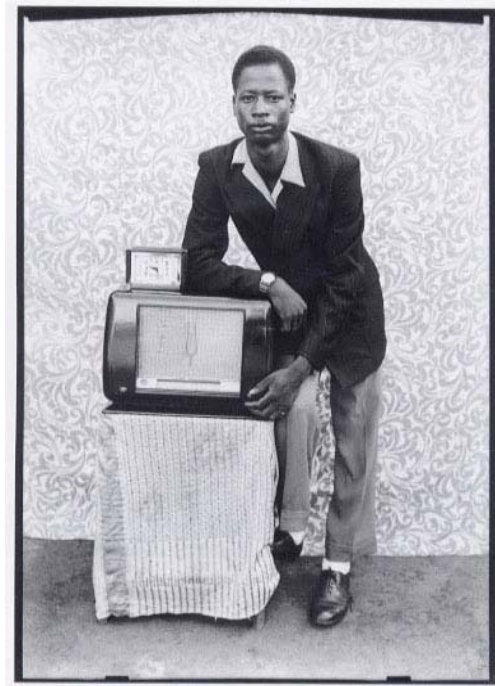


Fig. C.1 Seydou Keita, *Untitled*, 1956-57²⁸

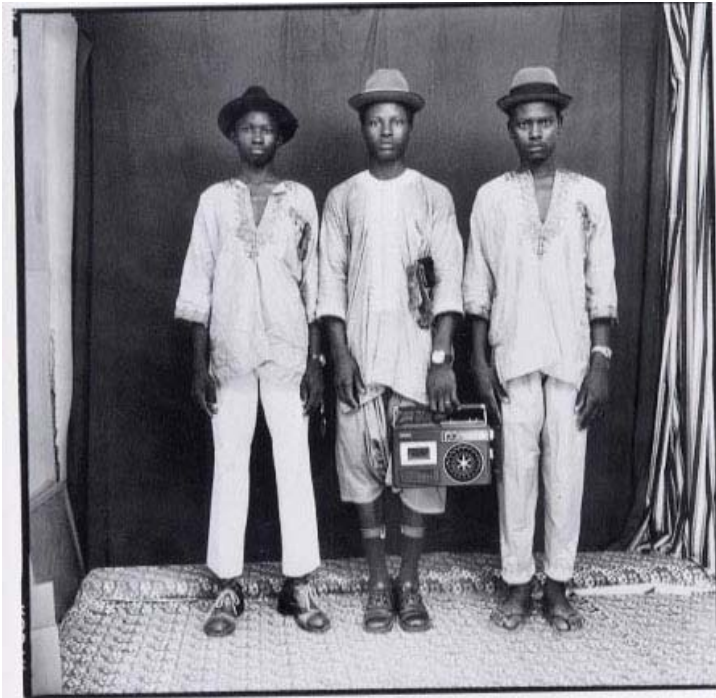


Fig. C.2 Malick Sidibé, *Les jeunes bergers, Peuhls*, 1972²⁹

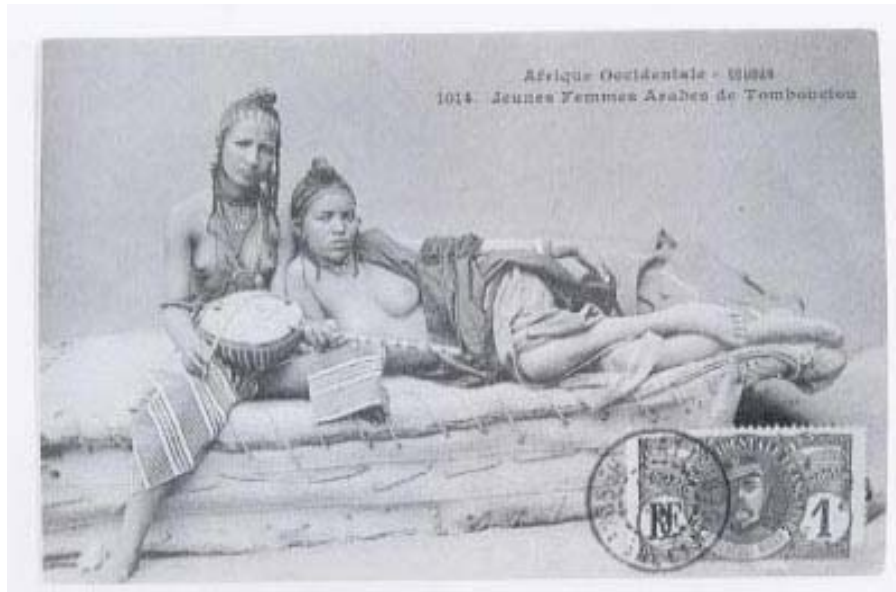


Fig. C.3 Edmond Fortier, *Afrique Occidentale – Soudan 1014. Jeunes Femmes Arabes de Tombouctou*³⁰



Fig. C.4 Seydou Keïta, *Untitled*, 1959³¹



Fig. C.5 Malick Sidibé, *Portrait*, 1969³²

¹ *Delivering Views: Distant Cultures in Early Postcards*, Christaud M. Geary and Virginia-Lee Webbs, eds. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998), 61.

² André et Afo Guenneguez, *Répertoire de la carte postale Ivoirienne en hommage aux fondateurs de la Côte d'Ivoire*. (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire: Art et Éditions, 1988), 49.

³ Guenneguez, 125.

⁴ Guenneguez, 125.

⁵ Guenneguez, 126.

⁶ Guenneguez, 126.

⁷ Guenneguez, 154.

⁸ Guenneguez, 108 bis.

⁹ Rebecca J. DeRoo, "Colonial Collecting: French Women and Algerian *cartes postales*," in *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing race and place*. Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson, eds. (London: Routledge, 2002), 162.

¹⁰ Philippe David, *Inventaire general des cartes postales Fortier*. 3 vols. (Paris: Saint-Julien-du-Sault, 1986-88), partie 2.

¹¹ David, partie 2.

¹² David, partie 2.

¹³ Guenneguez, 87.

¹⁴ Guenneguez, 87.

¹⁵ Guenneguez, 87.

¹⁶ Guenneguez, 87.

¹⁷ Guenneguez, 87.

¹⁸ Guenneguez, 87.

¹⁹ Guenneguez, 87.

²⁰ Guenneguez, 159.

²¹ Guenneguez, 157.

²² Guenneguez, 92.

²³ Guenneguez, 92.

²⁴ Guenneguez, 92.

²⁵ Centre Edmond Fortier, <http://home.planet.nl/~kreke003/>

²⁶ Centre Edmond Fortier, <http://home.planet.nl/~kreke003/>

²⁷ Cartes Postales d'Afrique,

<http://www.unesco.org/webworld/mdm/visite/cartpafr/fr/present1.html>

²⁸ Michelle Lamurière. *You Look Beautiful Like That: The Portrait Photography of Seydou Keïta and Malick Sidibé*. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001), 104.

²⁹ Lamurière, 105.

³⁰ Lamurière, 30.

³¹ Lamurière, 78.

³² Lamurière, 79.