

## Japan in Early Twentieth-century European Picture Postcards

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More than twenty years ago, I was browsing through a book on the history of the Meiji period (1868–1912) when a particular portrait caught my eye in the chapter on the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). It was an image of General Nogi Maresuke (1849–1912), the famous commander-in-chief of the Japanese armed forces at the Siege of Port Arthur from August 1904 to January 1905. What caught my attention, however, was a postcard next to the portrait. The caption stated that the card had been sent to General Nogi by the German emperor Wilhelm II (1859–1941), who offered his congratulations on the Japanese victory. The card had been sent from Germany and was simply addressed “To Field Marshal Nogi, War Theater, Asia” (*Kriegsschauplatz, Asien*). I marveled at how effective the postal service in those days must have been. Even with this vague address the message praising the General’s military actions seems to have been successfully delivered. The postcard had subsequently found its way into the Nogi archives, and was later added to the collection of the Chōfu City Museum in Yamaguchi Prefecture. Nogi’s hometown was Chōfu.

However, when I considered the origins of the postcard further, a number of questions came to mind. Why would the German emperor send a *postcard* to General Nogi? Would he not instead have had a formal letter delivered to Nogi through the Foreign Ministry or the Ministry of War? Would he have dispatched a message in this manner in the first place? After all, Wilhelm II was the cousin of the Russian tsar, who opposed the Japanese in this war, and the Kaiser’s hostile attitude toward Japan was no secret. But these questions were soon answered when I examined the postcard more closely. The sender was, in fact, not the Kaiser himself, but the “Kaiser-Wilhelm-Freundeskreis,” a circle of “fans” of the Kaiser. Perhaps this fan club had been enjoying themselves over a few glasses of beer or wine and decided to dispatch a message to the celebrated Japanese commander?

After I informed the museum of the true identity of the sender, it lost some of its presumed “importance.” Nevertheless, the card is still a meaningful historical source because it demonstrates European perceptions of Japan at a time when popular interest in the country peaked. This popular interest was in part due to the great media coverage the Russo-Japanese War received. In addition,



FIGURE 7.1 “Here is a dear little Jappy girl who wants to join your collection of pretty cards,” from the series Japland. Published by Raphael Tuck & Sons, London. Printed in Germany and posted in Newcastle, England, August 14, 1901.

the anecdote highlights the prominent role of postcards and picture postcards in early twentieth-century society, and the role they played in spreading images of Japan in Europe.

### Postcards as a Vehicle of Communication and as Carriers of Images

Postcards are mass-produced consumer goods, and as a result they have not been accorded a high academic value (fig. 7.1). Libraries and museums rarely collected them. Their value as historical sources has similarly been slighted, with their coverage primarily the domain of non-academic publications, mostly written from a rather nostalgic perspective (Hosoma 2006; Tomita 2005). The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston is one of the few institutions to hold a significant collection of picture postcards; it has organized exhibitions and published catalogues on the subject (Nishimura Morse et al. 2004). Apart from this institution, postcards from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are mostly in private hands.<sup>1</sup>

1 Unless otherwise stated, this study draws from the postcards in the author's collection.

Although today the postcard has been replaced by more expedient methods of communication, it is still primarily used to send messages from scenic holiday destinations such as seaside and ski resorts. A report by the Austrian union of publishers, for example, indicated that more than thirty million picture postcards had been printed and sold to tourists in Austria in 2012 alone (Anonymous 2013).

A century earlier, when other media and forms of communication were not yet available, the significance of the postcard was even greater (Pantzer 1985; 2000). At that time, people used this popular invention in large numbers and with growing enthusiasm. Ōmura [Omura] Jintarō, a Japanese observer in Berlin at the turn of the century, testified to what he called the “cult of picture postcards” in his book *Tokyo–Berlin: Von der japanischen zur deutschen Kaiserstadt* (Tokyo–Berlin: From the Japanese to the German Imperial Capital). Ōmura described dozens of shops selling postcards in the streets of the German capital:

The consumption of picture postcards amounts to millions. There is a special industry dedicated entirely to producing these cards. Instead of writing a letter, one buys such cards, adds the address, and sends them out to remind others of one’s existence. A splendid institution! (Omura 1903: 225)

Picture postcards were a common form of media from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries, and as such they shed light on modes of communication in modernizing societies. Postcards also reveal the cultural images held by people of a country, including the images of different countries and peoples.

As the popularity of postcards increased, people questioned their pros and cons, as well as the morality of their use—that is, short informal texts versus the longer, at that time more socially acceptable, texts of letters. Some worried that issues of privacy would be compromised because the messages written on postcards could be easily seen and read. Others believed that the emergence of the postcard would sound the death knell for traditional letters because if a small rectangular piece of paper was sufficient to transmit messages, why would anyone continue to use letter-writing paper and compose letters? Eventually, the market regulated itself, and the fear that paper mills would lose money as a result of the popularity of postcards lasted only a few years.

Initially, in the 1860s, postcards were completely plain. One side was reserved for the address and the other for the message. But eventually the idea of printing pictures on one side of the card—the “*picture postcard*”—became fashionable. Perhaps one reason for the popularity of the new format

was that it made it easier for individual expression: senders could compose a short, concise message without feeling that they had perhaps not written enough.

Postcards are today typically employed for only a few occasions, such as holidays, business trips, birthdays, or season's greetings. Yet, at the time of their invention in the late nineteenth century they were also utilized for other purposes, and on a daily basis (fig. 7.2). Postcards allowed fast, efficient communication almost around the clock. In larger cities, letters and postcards were delivered four to six times a day, and the addressee could be reached within hours, proof of which can be seen on the postmarks on postcards from the period. This was especially useful in an era without telephones or mobile phones. Sending a message in the morning meant that it would arrive before or around noon, and a reply to the sender would often arrive by the early afternoon. It was not unusual that an invitation for dinner sent in the morning resulted in a reply saying "Yes, I will attend" or "No, unfortunately today I have a previous engagement," and that this reply would still be early enough to allow necessary preparations to be made for the same evening.

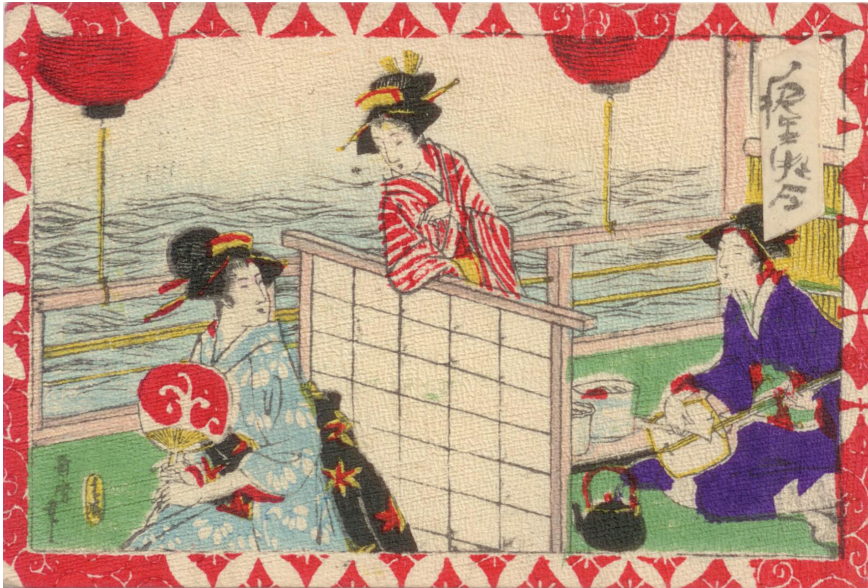


FIGURE 7.2 *Untitled. A small sheet of paper attached to the picture in the upper right is inscribed with characters intended to look "Japanese." The female sender opened it and wrote inside "Marie Supantschitsch in 3 Posen (in three poses)"; sent from an Austrian town to Munich, July 22, 1900. The image is a creped print (chirimen-e) with a design signed Utamaro hitsu (Brush of Utamaro); it was most probably produced in Japan by order of a German company because on the address side and next to the Japanese print is the German description "Correspondenz-Karte."*

### Japanese Motifs on European Postcards: The “Japanese Girl”

It is possible to determine the frequency and speed with which postcards were sent and received from their stamps and postmarks—cards were postmarked both at their place of origin as well as at the post office responsible for their delivery. The many possible uses of postcards resulted in an enormous demand. Publishers had to meet the challenges of providing interesting, diverse motifs and designs to guarantee continued consumption. In the search for an ever-increasing repertory of motifs for the picture postcard, “exotic” locations such as Japan became increasingly popular. Japan-related motifs became a favorite in postcard imagery and were employed for a variety of different occasions. One card sent from regional Bavarian town of Ansbach to Munich, for instance (fig. 7.3), depicted the cast of the comic opera “The Mikado,” which was composed by Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900), written by W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911), and performed for the first time in London in 1885). Set in Japan, “The Mikado” met with great critical acclaim; the first German performance was in Munich in 1886.

Cards featuring Japan-related images were marketed throughout Europe, and the most commonly encountered Japanese subjects were Japanese



FIGURE 7.3 *Gruss aus Ansbach* (*Greetings from Ansbach*), illustrating three “little maids,” thereby making a connection to the town where the card was posted. October 30, 1899.

women, followed by children. Such stereotyped images cast the Japanese identity as feminine, child-like, cute, and lovely. The variations on this theme were endless: girls with fans, with umbrellas, with paper lanterns, with flower baskets, with a pet or playing music, or depicted writing some kind of greeting for nearly every occasion. Whether or not this Japanese imagery was “realistic” seemed of little concern to the designers producing them. For them and their audiences, the imagined was far more attractive and essential than any notion of accurate portrayal (figs. 7.4–7.7).

Japanese themed representations were employed for almost any purpose and occasion, including season’s greetings. For example, it was not rare to find a German postcard illustrating a Japanese woman extending a New Year’s greeting (fig. 7.8). The fact that the New Year holiday was also a significant holiday in Japan only made the image more concrete in the minds of many Germans at the period. Another postcard depicted a young woman dressed in kimono holding mistletoe in her hand, pointing at horseshoes and clover leaves. Some postcards even featured Japanese women wishing “Fröhliche Ostern” (Happy Easter), “Frohe Weihnachten” (Merry Christmas), and even “Fröhliche Pfingsten” (Happy Pentecost) (fig. 7.9). Compositions such as these might be seen as pure kitsch to us as twenty-first century observers, but at the time they had a wide appeal, and were printed and sold in their thousands.

### Where Are the Men?

While portrayals of Japanese women on early twentieth-century picture postcards abounded, those limning Japanese men were scarce. The almost total absence of Japanese men as a postcard subject is enough to make a contemporary observer wonder whether it was not Japanese men who suffered the greater discrimination by being ignored on European postcards. The images of Japanese men that did appear show them in the company of wives or girlfriends; they are seen as harmless, obedient, and domesticated (fig. 7.10).

European postcards illustrating Japanese men alone are rare. The only single images of men that I have unearthed were part of a series issued by the reputable English publishing company Raphael Tuck & Sons, and circulated throughout Europe. This series illustrated of male heads, their faces assuming various facial expressions. Next to each head on the card was a speech bubble with a line that corresponded with the facial expression, such as “Es ist zu spät” (It is too late) or “Ich weiß sehr wohl” (I know very well). The sender would then add the remainder of the message.



FIGURE 7.4–5 Two untitled postcards: Berlin to Reinickendorf, April 11, 1901 (left) and within Munich, December 31, 1900 (?) (right). Both postcards were sent and delivered the same day.



FIGURE 7.6-7 Two untitled postcards from Cilli (present-day Celje, Slovenia) to Baden near Vienna. February 27, 1900.





FIGURE 7.8 Glückliches Neujahr! 1903, from *Theresienstadt* (present-day Terezín, Czech Republic) to *Krems an der Donau*. December 31, 1902. Design by Alfred Mailick (1869–1946).

One exception to this dearth of the Japanese male image on European picture postcards was the depiction of the Japanese soldier. The emergence of this image was most likely due to the increased attention Japan received after its military successes in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), the Boxer War in China (1899–1900), and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Postcards also showed portraits of Japanese troop commanders and famous statesmen (see Inaba and Saaler 2005).



FIGURE 7.9 Fröhliche Pfingsten (*Happy Pentecost*). Unused, ca. 1900.

Picture postcards rendering military battles were vital in shaping the public's image of Japan and East Asia. The production of postcards with depictions of battle scenes would appear only a few days after newspapers and magazines reported on the battles in the Far East. These served as up-to-date pictorial reports, filling a gap created by the technical limitations of newspapers that, during this era, could not yet offer printed and photographic visual depictions of the war. Illustrated weekly journals such as the *Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung* were available, but unlike postcards they did not issue images in color. The



FIGURE 7.10 *Untitled postcard from Stockerau in Lower Austria to Vienna. February 10, 1905. Mailed and delivered on the same day.*

postcard offered information in both text and image, and at the same time it played a communicative role, enabling the sender to demonstrate that they were au fait with current political events.

The postcard industry reacted swiftly to meet the demands of consumers and to take advantage of growing public interest. Postcards were also produced for export, and were circulated in countries like France and Britain. Success in exporting picture postcards was furthered by the fact that only minor differences existed in the European attitudes toward Japan, apart from Japan's enemy in the 1904–1905 war, Russia, and, to a certain degree, Russia's ally France (fig. 7.11). In order to make export easier, many postcards were produced in “multilingual” versions (fig. 7.12). Even the inclusion of satirical word play did not hamper postcards' cross-border appeal, since the cartoonist's illustrations were in most cases creative enough to traverse boundaries.

Many European countries sympathized with Japan in the Russo-Japanese War. Britain was Japan's ally under the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, and thus had mostly pro-Japanese views. Hungarian and Polish patriots, as well as socialists all over Europe, who all held deep-seated anti-tsarist sentiment, were united in their support for Japan. Only a minority held the view that Russia was standing up to defend Western Christian culture against the “Yellow Peril”—the perceived threat of a modernized Japan leading the populous countries of East Asia to war against the European powers (see the introduction and

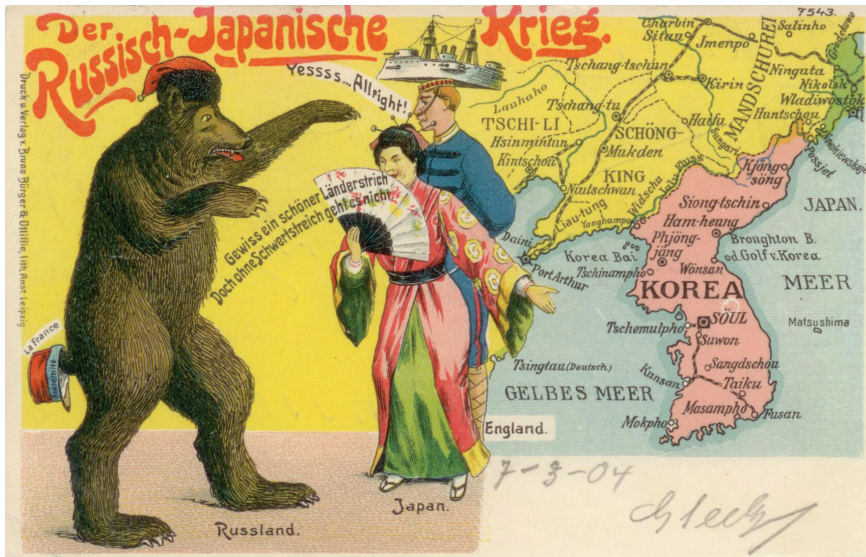


FIGURE 7.11 *Der Russisch-Japanische Krieg (The Russo-Japanese War), mailed from Leipzig to Brussels, March 7, 1904 (the war began on February 8, 1904). German picture postcard, printed in Leipzig (Druck u. Verlag Bruno Bürger & Ottilie, Lith. Anst.).*



FIGURE 7.12 *Les Japonais detruisent la voie ferrée en Mandchouri/Beschädigung der Mandchurischen Eisenbahn durch die Japaner (Damage to the Manchurian Railway by the Japanese). German picture postcard, printed in Breslau (Schlesische Lichtdruck-Anstalt). Unused, 1904. Design by Henri Edmond Rudaux (1870–1927).*



FIGURE 7.13  
*David und Goliath, unused, 1904. Published by Raphael Tuck & Sons (London), printed for circulation in Germany. Design by G. E. Shepherd (dates unknown).*

ch. 5 in this volume). As the Russo-Japanese war continued, the enthusiasm for Japan grew.

The perception in Austria and Germany was generally neutral. Aside from the familial relationship between the German emperor and the Russian tsar as cousins, neither Germany nor Austria was involved in the armed conflict in the Far East or allied to either side. The depictions of the war in these two countries were neither overly heroic nor derogative. However, with the growing number of reports about Japanese victories and Japanese advances during the war, sympathy gradually turned toward Japan and her brave, courageous soldiers. Russia was the Goliath to Japan's David, the plucky underdog who became the crowd favorite (figs. 7.13 & 7.14).

Also noteworthy is the manner of rendition. Rather than simply illustrate battle scenes or fighting soldiers, many postcards chose to portray the war



FIGURE 7.14 “Japanese Army” Infantry, date illegible (ca. 1904). Addressed to Ruthin in north Wales. Published by C. W. Faulkner & Co, London.

humorously. Although this might initially have been a way of avoiding bias, eventually, and more usually, the Japanese side was depicted in a more favorable light. Hugo Hantsch (1895–1972), a history professor at the University of Vienna, recounted a personal anecdote in one of his lectures to students that confirms this trend to see Japan more positively. As a boy, he said that instead of playing “cops and robbers,” boys played war “Russians and Japanese.” And, he recalls, everyone wanted to be on the Japanese side (figs. 7.15 & 7.16).

The general public likewise seems to have been attracted to more comic depictions of the situation vis-à-vis politics and international relations in the Far East. One example is seen in the set of five French cards, three of which were mailed from Paris to Lisbon on July 25, 1904, entitled “Œufs brouillés” (Scrambled Eggs), in which the Russians and the Japanese begin by tossing raw eggs at each other (“Face à face”; no. 1) and end with their complete exhaustion, with both factions submerged in a yellow (!) sea of broken eggs (“Après la bataille”; no. 5) (figs. 7.17 & 7.18).

Depictions of belligerents could also border on the shocking and grotesque. One postcard showed a Japanese soldier swallowing a Russian enemy, with half of the body already in his mouth. Artists used such caricatures in an attempt to make complex political situations easier for average viewers to comprehend and to avoid showing clear bias. Another postcard that illustrated this was from Austria, designed in 1904 by the versatile painter Ludwig Koch (1866–1934). It



FIGURE 7.15 Korea, China, Japan, and Russland. *Untitled postcard (no. 5) from a series of six, 1904 (Austria?). Mailed in Vienna December 1, 1904.*

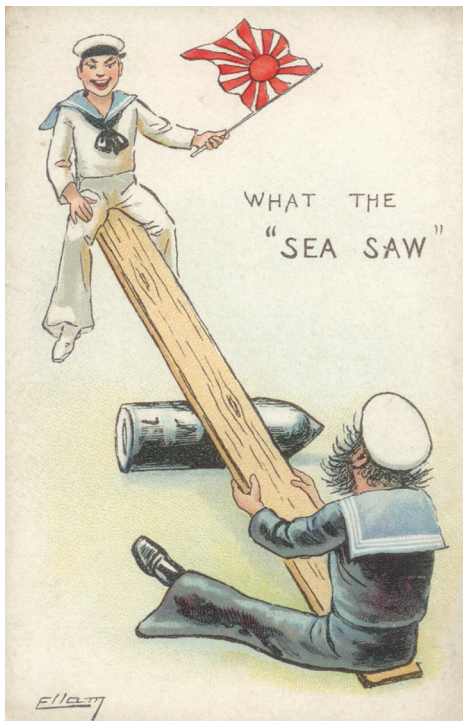


FIGURE 7.16 What the "SEA SAW", *unused, 1904. S. Hildesheimer & Co., London & Manchester; printed in Saxony. Design by William Henry Ellam (1858–1935).*

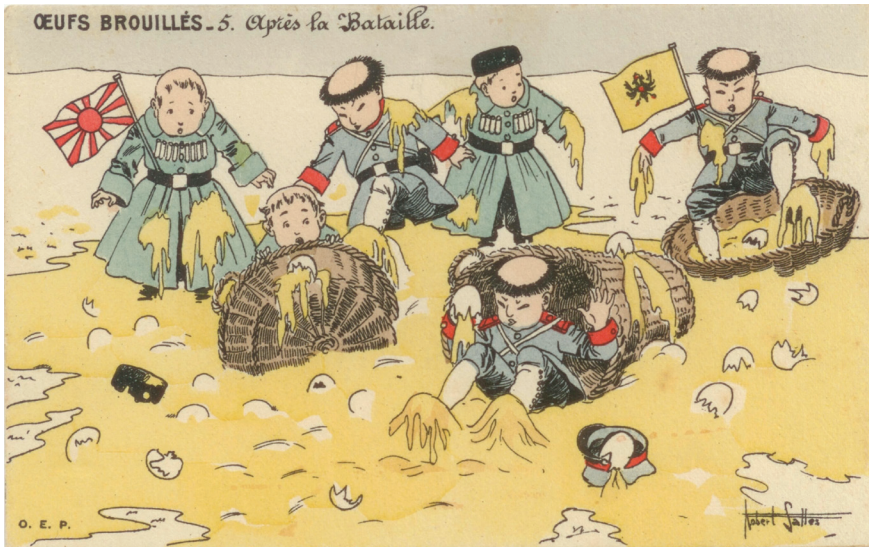


FIGURE 7.17–18 Two postcards from a set of five entitled *Cœufs brouillés*, 1904. Design by Robert Salles (1871–1929); publisher “O. E. P.” (Paris).





FIGURE 7.19 Postcard designed by Ludwig Koch; published by B. K. W. I (Brüder Kohn, Wien [Vienna] 1), no. 832–9.

pictures a Japanese soldier dancing with joy over his defeated Russian enemy who is prostrate on the ground (fig. 7.19). The caption reads:

Japaner jauchzt, berauscht von Siegen  
 Der Russe muss am Boden liegen! Doch wem dies Bildchen nicht gefällt,  
 Sieht hier uns Eck verkehrte Welt!"  
 The Japanese cheers, drunk from victory,  
 the Russian has to lie on the floor. But whoever doesn't like this image,  
 might turn it for a different view of the world.

Indeed, when the card is turned ninety degrees, the viewer sees a reversed scene: now the Japanese soldier is lying on the ground, clearly defeated, and the Russian soldier appears to be the victor.

### Back to Paradise

The image of the belligerent Japanese was short-lived. As soon as the war was over, picture postcards returned to themes of Japanese women, including geisha. Subjects drawn from the natural world, such as chrysanthemums, cherry

blossoms, and other kinds of flowers were also popular in the depiction of Japan on picture postcards. Often these themes appeared in combination with beautiful women, which were portrayed within natural settings to create the image of a paradisaical Japan (figs. 7.20 & 7.21).

It was above all a constructed image of a “traditional” Japan that was conveyed on picture postcards. Consumers of picture postcards illustrating Japanese themes wished to see representations that reinforced the image of a traditional Japan rather than accepting the reality of a modernizing country. Japan’s rise as a major power was seen as a disturbing development, and its technological advancements were seen to be a regretful shake-up of the status quo. The extensive use of picture postcards with themes and topics in quaint, pastoral settings clearly expressed this desire to see Japan in a nostalgic light.

Consumers often purchased picture postcards of Japan at events hosted to promote this very image of a traditional and quaint Japan. One such Japan-related event in Berlin was a social get-together called “Tokyo” organized by the Berlin Association of Book Printers and Type Founders (*Verein Berliner Buchdrucker und Schriftgießer*), on February 4, 1905. A “Japanischer Maskenball” (Japanese Masquerade Ball) was held in Vienna on January 22, 1907, and a “Riviera-Fest im Stadtpark” in a sanatorium and the surrounding Stadtpark in Vienna on May 19, 1913 under the patronage of imperial princess Zita of Bourbon-Parma (1892–1989). In February 1914, the Berlin Association of Book Dealers (*Verein Berliner Buchhändler*) organized a special steamboat trip, taking the guests to view cherry blossoms at a mock “Yokohama” located on the outskirts of Berlin.<sup>2</sup> Probably the most impressive festival of this kind was orchestrated by the socialite Princess Pauline Metternich (1836–1921) on three days in May 1901 in the former World Exposition building in the Vienna Prater. Five thousand visitors enjoyed a “Japanisches Kirschblütenfest” (Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival). An astonishing 50,000 picture postcards were sold during this festival, with some signed by the wife of the Japanese ambassador to the Habsburg monarchy, Makino Nobuaki (1861–1949). Women (and men!) at these social gatherings always appeared in what they assumed was a close approximation to a Japanese kimono. Although the clothes were usually either self-tailored or purchased in a Far East novelty store, newspapers of the day reported that the women’s male companions were impressed. Messages on postcards from the event also confirm this (figs. 7.22–7.24).

2 Postcard sent February 12, 1901 from Charlottenburg to Friedenau, “Winterfest des Vereins Berliner Buchhändler. Eine Sonderfahrt zum Kirschblütenfest in Yokohama mit d. Reichspostdampfer ‘Prinz Eitel Friedrich’ des Norddeutschen Lloyd Bremen.”



FIGURE 7.20–21 *Untitled postcards: mailed from Landshtut (Bavaria) to Geilenkirchen (near Aachen), February 7, 1906 (left); mailed from Netzthal (province of Posen) to Deutsch Krone (Western Pomerania), June 30, 1910 (right).*



FIGURE 7.22  
Chrysanthemem-Fest in Tokio,  
August 15–16, 1903. Warnsdorf,  
Austro-Hungarian monarchy;  
mailed from Warnsdorf/Bohemia  
(district of Teschen; present-day  
Děčín, Czech Republic) to  
Bautzen in Saxonia. It reads  
(in translation): “From the  
delightful festival . . . many  
cordial greetings . . .”

### Clouds Over Sunny Heavens

The cherry blossom viewing excursion to “Yokohama” near Berlin in February 1914 was not repeated the following year. War between Germany and Japan erupted in the summer of 1914. Japan, an ally of Great Britain, entered World War I and attacked Germany’s concession in China, Tsingtao (Qingdao) in Shantung (Shandong) province. Austria did not possess any colonies in Asia, and earlier, when Austrian ships visited Japan, they were welcomed as the ship’s band performed European tunes to the public while the vehicle was docked in harbor. However, with the outbreak of World War I the Austrian cruiser “Kaiserin Elisabeth”—at that time in East Asian waters—was ordered to join the German forces in Tsingtao. As a result of the conflict, the picture postcard image of a Japanese paradise, which had dominated German and Austrian postcards until 1914, disappeared almost overnight.



FIGURE 7.23–24 Riviera-Fest im Stadtpark. Vienna, May 19, 1913. Members of the Organizing Committee; edited by Postkarten-Verlag “Bediene dich selbst” (Brüder Kohn), Vienna (top); untitled postcard, mailed from Stolberg to Düren (both Rhineland), October 24, 1906 (bottom). This card was released on the occasion of a charity event; the money earned was donated to the sanatorium on the Austrian Riviera in the Mediterranean for children suffering from lung disease. The women participating in the “festival” had to dress in kimono.



FIGURE 7.25 *Au schau! Ich klau/mir schlau/Kiau-tschau (Oh, look! Cleverly, I steal myself, Kiaochow). Mailed from Berlin to Hamburg, October 21, 1914, with a private message from one woman to another. The content of the message is unrelated to the war in the Far East.*

After two and a half months of fighting, the German and Austrian forces in Tsingtao surrendered on November 7, 1914. “Kaiserin Elisabeth” fired a last salute to its fallen comrades before its crew of three hundred men joined a garrison of about 4,500 German soldiers and surrendered to the Japanese as prisoners of war (see Krebs 1999). Compared to the brutal war that would unfold over the next four years in Europe, Tsingtao was a rather minor episode. But the event did influence the mainstream German perception of Japan.

A number of “patriotic postcards” praising the conduct of the German defenders of Tsingtao were published during the conflict. By contrast, the Japanese side was portrayed in a very negative light. The alluring image of geisha and other women in kimono were quickly replaced with portrayals of the Japanese “enemy,” now represented by sly diplomats or brutal soldiers. One such example depicts a Japanese army officer in a way that expressed the perception of Japan as “untrustworthy” (fig. 7.25) and exemplifies German feelings of “betrayal” by Japan. This sentiment was particularly pronounced because Germany had made valuable contributions to Japan’s modernization, particularly in the military field.<sup>3</sup> In other postcards, Japan was vilified as a “Schuft”

<sup>3</sup> See the introduction and ch. 8 in this volume.



FIGURE 7.26  
 Hi-Hi-Hi grinste das Scheusal  
 (*Hee-Hee-Hee, Grinned This Monster  
 of a Man*), unused, Berlin, 1914.  
 From the series *Unsere Feinde*  
 (*Our Enemies*).

(Scoundrel) or “Der gelbe Strauchdieb” (The Yellow Thief), depictions that also reflect some of the racist sentiments of the time (figs. 7.26 & 7.27).

With the cessation of fighting in the Far East in November 1914, the aggressive anti-Japanese propaganda in Germany came to a halt, but in the interim publishers and consumers had participated in a short, yet intensive, propaganda war. However, once the High Command of the German military in Berlin realized that the colonial stronghold of Tsingtao—at the core of Japanese–German discord—would not be returned to Germany, the reason for reviling Japan disappeared. By the end of 1915, anti-Japanese and “Yellow Peril” propaganda on German picture postcards had gone, and in fact Germany had begun to harbor hopes for a separate peace treaty with Japan (Hayashima 1982). Although this never materialized, the anti-Japanese propaganda postcard remained just a short interlude in the history of German picture postcards imaging Japan. Shortly after the war, the cozy images of a paradisaical Japan resurfaced.

In Britain, developments took a different direction. During World War I, Japan was depicted as a trusted ally on British postcards. The image of a



FIGURE 7.27  
 Der gelbe Strauchdieb (*The Yellow Thief*), unused, Verlag J. Velten, Karlsruhe, 1914.

beautiful woman in a kimono with the design of the Japanese flag and a blossoming cherry-tree in the background was meant to send a strong message of Anglo-Japanese friendship (fig. 7.28). Yet, Japanese images in Britain would also change dramatically within a few decades. During World War II, following Japan's attack on British colonies in Malaya and Singapore, British images of Japan became extremely damaging.

### Conclusion

Picture postcards were crucial as vehicles of communication during the early twentieth century. While it is difficult to estimate the number of picture postcards then in circulation, it was clearly sizable. This is because postcards played a similar role in communication that the telephone would in later years. Moreover, picture postcards allowed the sender to combine short messages with personal taste, while also serving as the most efficient way of transmitting





FIGURE 7.28  
Greetings From One of Your Fair  
Allies, unused, Inter-Art Co., London,  
ca. 1914.

pertinent or interesting news, and they were also popular due to their visual nature and creative power. Printing companies quickly became aware of their economic value and their ability to reach a vast audience, while consumers benefitted from their low price and their convenience. At that time, the mail was delivered up to four or six times a day in larger communities. Many families also collected the cards they received and kept them in albums.

Picture postcards helped spread and solidify images of Japan in the popular European imagination. Japan occupied a key place within the diverse visual repertory created for the picture postcard. The encounter of Europeans with Japan in their daily life is an exceptional tale in the history of European-Japanese cultural exchange. Images of Japan featured prominently in the European consciousness and spread with astonishing speed. German (and European) picture postcards catered to the popular imagination by fulfilling dreams of visiting an exotic, paradisaical land, inspiring remembrances of childhood days, and depicting captivating beauties or the stereotypical image of

the geisha. They also glorified war heroes, and on occasion contributed to anti-Japanese war propaganda. The emerging image of Japan—be it positive or negative—was all too often superficial at best and usually clung on tightly to established stereotypes. But it is exactly these types of images that can help us better understand the intercultural encounters between Japan and the West during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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