Postcards and Propaganda: Cartographic Postcards as Soft News Images of the Russo-Japanese War

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Postcards are an important resource that has been largely overlooked in mainstream research on historical events, political attitudes, perceptions, propaganda, and communication. Accordingly, this article expands the relevance of the postcard from social artifact to historical document embodying social and political messages. In particular, the article examines the images and representations used in cartographic postcards during and after the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Not only is this relevant to the study of political propaganda, but also for the study of historic media, popular consumption of political messaging, and as an additional tool with which to study the history of international politics and communication. The political history leading up to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War is briefly covered. Images of cartographic postcards are examined in context of the conflict, with the goal of gaining a greater appreciation for postcards as a form of early “soft news” visual mass media. As such, this is a means by which imperial attitudes and public opinion were shaped. Recommendations are made to broaden the use of postcards as primary documents, especially as these cards are enjoying an online renaissance (e.g., collecting, displaying, discussing). They are valuable in augmenting a variety of research agendas and are fruitful for the study of early modern mass media, social history, public discourse, and political messaging with regard to soft news and public opinion.

Keywords soft news, visual media, social communication, propaganda, Russo-Japanese War, postcards, infotainment, war media

Cartographic postcards are only recently being regarded as worthy of serious study within the cartographic scholarly community. This attitude is changing as postcards are recognized as important documents for the social historian, and consequently for related fields of study such as history, media studies, popular culture, and political science. Because of their small size, relative affordability as items of historical interest, and ease of digitizing the images, postcards are becoming easier to collect, share, and study. Yet cards as objects have not been the subject of much broader inquiry, even within the realm of communication.

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Postcards can serve a number of overtly sociopolitical purposes, including political satire and propaganda, and therefore provide a valuable window into the mentality and perceptions of the age in which the cards were produced and used.

I assert that the study of postcards offers two ready avenues of intellectual traction for the study of political communication. First, postcards may be viewed as a form of “soft news” (Baum, 2002, 2003). Accordingly, postcards—like modern infotainment programs—bring foreign policy issues to the attention of an otherwise inattentive public, often as a “byproduct” of their use. Consumers follow foreign crises as entertainment, and as a result absorb information about the crisis/entertainment, even if uninterested in the foreign policy aspect of the crisis. Thus, we may extend the treatment of soft news historically to include crises from the turn of the 19th–20th centuries. Like medieval mappae mundi, cartographic postcards include important nongeographic information, which is an especially relevant characteristic of cards from the early 1900s (see Barber, 1995). I argue that in looking at an admittedly narrow range of cards (e.g., cartographic cards from the Russo-Japanese War) we can gain added insight into our understanding of historical soft news. Why were people so enthralled with the happenings of a war in which their country was not actively fighting? Why are most of the cards of neither Japanese nor Russian origin? It was precisely because of the entertainment aspect of that war. Certainly there are strategic concerns for elites, but the masses viewed the Russo-Japanese War as grand theatre. Postcards provided information on characters, places, events and helped flesh out the drama.

Second, precisely because many postcard consumers were middle to lower classes in a newly emerging, semiliterate urban proletariat, Baum’s (2002, 2003) soft news “byproduct” approach to foreign policy information consumption and its relevance to foreign policy awareness allows us to gain leverage in the debate on public attitude formation. MacKenzie (1984) asserts a very active process behind the manipulation of British public opinion, and explicitly references postcards as “vehicles of imperial propaganda” (pp. viii, 15–38). For our appreciation of the instigatory role of the postcard, MacKenzie (1984) further notes, “the democratisation of the visual image was undertaken by the postcard, and it must be seen as a central element in the ephemera boom of the period,” representing “something of a mass craze in Europe, the United States and the British Dominions,” reflected by the “expansion of companies producing them, the millions purchased and posted each year, and the mania for preserving and collecting them” (p. 21). Postcards carry the messages of empire and were readily consumed by an information-craving public. In contrast, Porter (2004) differs in his assessment of the impact of imperial thinking on British domestic history and ephemera, arguing that scholars such as MacKenzie (1984) and Said (1993) overstate the embedded nature of imperialism in British culture and society.

A soft news “byproduct” approach suggests a middle ground here, and not just with regard to British attitudes toward imperial or foreign policy. All issues of public interest are manifest in postcard form; they are the tabloid newsmagazine shows of the period. As Baum argues (2003), news information is often passed to an “accidentally attentive” public, as the public is able to “piggyback” more detailed political information onto the consumption of entertainment-oriented “soft news” (pp. 30–32). Thus, the public often consumes political information as an aside, or incidental product. In this manner, consuming media as entertainment also primes (see Iyengar, 1990; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987) individuals to an issue and frames (see Ansolabehere, Behr, & Iyengar, 1993) these political issues for further consumption by otherwise inattentive individuals. Common frames that are readily recognized by most individuals include “us versus them,” “powerlessness,” “economic,” “morality” (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992), and “injustice” frames (Powlick & Katz, 1998). Postcards provide a figurative and literal frame for understanding issues,
and cartographic cards, as playbills to morality plays or maps to foreign crises, supplement our understanding of this dynamic model of information consumption.

Scholars should be stimulated to treat postcards as a valuable resource that applies in a variety of wider settings, and this work is meant to be suggestive of future research. Not only does it apply to representations of “other” and images of imperialism (see Doty, 1996), but the “soft news” approach allows scholars to reassess public opinion consumption of foreign crises. Of particular interest during the postcard craze era, additional work on wars of the period such as the Boer (1899–1902), Spanish-American (1898), Philippine-American (1899–1902), Mexican-American (1916–1917), and Italo-Ethiopian (1895–1896) wars or more in-depth treatment of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) would be merited. Other public events of the era, such as the second trial of Captain Dreyfus in 1899, are also played out in postcard venues to a truly international audience, with more than 6 million cards produced in several languages (Fraser, 1980, p. 40). This directly reflects a similar public preoccupation with high-profile court cases in today’s “infotainment” media environment.

Political parties regularly issued series of cards lampooning opponents; in Britain the Conservative Party’s records reflect the use of 2,844,590 cards in the general election of 1910 (Fraser, 1980, p. 40). These cards were the Sunday morning talk shows of the day. Representations of race (see Hunt, 1987; Krenn, 2006) and gender (see Hunt, 1987; Hoganson, 1998) in foreign policy could also be supplemented by postcard analysis, as could any social movement of the time. For example, Fraser (1980) notes that the struggle for women’s suffrage was portrayed in postcard form. Suffrage movements issued many cards, “unfortunately of an uninspiring nature,” while “commercial postcard companies published many anti-women’s suffrage postcards, often with quite vicious cartoons, which were of a far more lively kind” (Fraser, 1980, p. 40). Any issue of the day is summarized in postcards for public consumption.

From a scholarly standpoint, the purpose of postcards varies depending upon the level at which they are analysed. Initially, the cards are a forum of expression for the artist and publisher, reflective of their own political worldviews. Implicitly this worldview is an agreed upon one, at least from the standpoint of the publisher, or else the postcards are unlikely to be published. Yet beyond this agreement the publishing of a card is a risk taken, dependent upon a receptive audience. One notable exception to this is the advent of the picture postcard and the ability of individual photographers to publish photos as postcards, in large part due to the introduction of the Eastman Kodak camera in 1888. Especially during times of conflict, advances in photo and publication technology led to photographers selling photo cards directly to soldiers (often with themselves pictured) as an item to send to loved ones at home. As such, photo cards also provide a valuable pictorial history of events during the early postcard era, such as the Mexican Revolution (see Vanderwood & Samponaro, 1988) or the Boer War (see McDonald, 1991).

Postcards are indicative of public tastes within the geographic realm of the publisher, as they are an economic good that is consumed as one choice among many, are relics of particular local sentiments, and are “the visual currency of souvenirs” (Wong, 2002, p. 352). Since this period also corresponds to the expansion of voting rights through the middle class, cards also serve as a litmus test of the political sentiments of the time. Phillips (2000) observes: “If one were seeking the vernacular aesthetic of a period the postcard is where you will find it. Here the world documents itself in terms of the way it wishes to be seen. Because people vote for it with their small change its vision dare not risk losing the endorsement of the public in general. It is the least elitist form of artefact” (p. 10, italics added). Postcards are artifacts of the commons, of the middle class. Cards
are selected for use from an array of options—other postcard choices, alternatives such as letters, telegrams, or even competing visual media such as stereopticon cards—by a primary consumer who then adds an additional layer of meaning to the postcard. This meaning is carried not just in the conscious selection of the item itself, but in the literal layer of text that is added to the card by the purchaser. Postcards are then “read” by a secondary consumer to whom they are sent, often displayed in collections by recipients, and possibly read by others while in transit.3

Who uses and collects the cards is also interesting. Fraser (1980) notes that the kind of writing on most cards indicated widespread use among lower-middle-class and working-class people, while middle-class people were probably the greatest collectors. Phillips (2000) echoes this sentiment, noting significant use “below stairs” in Britain, as family members separated by service of employment used cards extensively, in no small part because of their ease of use and informality (p. 13). This also made cards attractive for messages of the new urban working class, as no great writing skills were required and the cost of cards and postage made it affordable. With up to five local mail deliveries a day, postcards were also an extremely fast means of communicating. For example, a husband could send a card in the morning to let his wife know if he would be late for afternoon tea. Postcards were the text-message or e-mail equivalent of the day.

Because of their implicit link to the foreign or exotic, cards were also often collected in parlor albums displayed to houseguests, and so serve this additional means of communication and entertainment. Postcard collecting had become widespread in Europe by the turn of the 20th century and it similarly “served as an inexpensive form of entertainment in almost every American home,” with the postcard album “a book second in importance only to the family Bible” (Bassett, 1997, p. i). O’Connor and Cohen (2001) observe that “the Japanese picture postcard became a common form of social communication as well as a medium of official messages in the years following the victory over Russia in 1905” and that “elaborate coloured and embossed cards produced for a local visit by the Emperor or an Imperial review usually went straight into an album without being used” (p. 56). These were collectable, visual representations of important events and people. As early postcards from distant locales were one of the few visual media easily available to the public for consumption, the images and unwritten messages that they contained were powerful political statements about the distant lands and events they embodied, and were eagerly digested by populations craving information. Postcards are “news as entertainment,” repeated entertainment if added to an album, and thereby easily fit the “byproduct” theory of soft news information consumption (Baum, 2002, 2003). Accordingly, postcards serve a final role as historical social artifact when they are interpreted—accurately or not—by academics, collectors or other tertiary consumers.

Postcards have even been overlooked in mainstream research on historical political attitudes, perceptions, and propaganda. While they have been used as a tool for political study—especially in the realm of public opinion research (see Hauck, 1969; Nichols & Meyer, 1966; Brown, 1965) or political mobilization (see Miller & Krosnick, 2004; Burgess et al., 2000)—postcards are rarely used as the object of study, generally being dismissed as ephemeral, commercial, and unscientific social jetsam. When postcards have managed to become an object of study, their treatment is usually very narrow or as a minor part of a larger topic. For example, Wiegel et al. (1983) study political postcards, but only those of Germany and Austrian origin during World War I (1914–1918). Wilson (1996) looks only at propaganda postcards of the Luftwaffe, and Killen (1985) uses postcards to examine the history of Ulster (from 1905–1985). Postcards have been frequently used by local historians, as numerous publications use postcards as a pictorial history of a particular
locale (e.g., Steiner, 2001; Davis, 2002; Hanley & Hanley, 1997; Heckman, 2002) or topic (Fisher, 2001), and are often quite effective in examining the dynamic representation of place (Kahn, 2000; Vaule, 2004).

More often, postcards are subsumed as part of a larger research topic such as humor (Spier, 1975) or propaganda (Taylor, 1980; Thomas, 1992; Menchine, 2000), and especially pictorial propaganda. While Fraser (1980) explicitly examines postcards and propaganda, in the realm of pictorial propaganda most attention goes to the postcard’s “sexier sister,” the propaganda poster (see Choko, 1994; Nelson, 1991; Cantwell, 1989; Landsberger, 1995; Stanley, 1983; Aulich, 2007; Bird & Rubenstein, 1998). Postcards primarily exist as a subset within studies of propaganda pamphlets, leaflets, wallsheets, and cartoons. Though more attention is being given to postcards as an independent visual medium (Ryan, 1982; Menchine, 2000; Phillips, 2000; Clairday & Clairday, 2002), the vast majority of postcard studies do not focus upon material prior to World War I (1914). Interestingly, postcards can often serve as a means of studying the public side of socially sensitive topics such as racism (see JBHE Foundation, 1999) or pornography (Sigel, 2000). Attention is also being given to postcards in cross-cultural anthropological study (Geary & Webb, 1998), a postcolonial context (Prochaska, 1991), or explicitly as social history (Evans & Richards, 1980).

I expand the relevance of postcards from the venue of social history to include the realm of international politics and communications. While historic postcards are relevant to current studies in the emergence of global media, international communication, and political imagery, they also provide an untapped source of information for the traditional study of international politics and history and how these events were communicated to and consumed by the public. To explore how cards can contribute to the understanding of events in the international political arena, I examine the Russo-Japanese War and some of the cartographic postcard images associated with it. There are several reasons for this seemingly obscure choice. First, as it was of short duration and relatively peripheral to mainland Europe, the conflict is more easily completed as an initial project. Simply, one is able to address the topic and sort through the material in an acceptable time frame, without getting overwhelmed by primary material produced surrounding a longer and larger conflict.

Second, as the first truly internationally observed multimedia covered war—one with numerous international military observers, “embedded” international newspaper reporters on all sides, in European capitals, and multiple news outlets feeding national home markets—there is a certain ease in gathering sufficient material and information. The advent of trans-oceanic telegraph cables meant the coverage of the war was much easier, too. The war was marketed by publishers as a tool for increasing newspaper circulation, especially as all of Europe was following the unfolding events.

Third, this builds support for the treatment of the Russo-Japanese War as entertainment-oriented “soft news.” If not, then why are there so many non-Russian and non-Japanese postcards? While each side did produce their own cards for official consumption (e.g., given to soldiers headed to the front), most of the cards here are of neither Russian nor Japanese origin. The war was entertaining, perhaps more so precisely because there was no direct, vested interest; it could be followed a bit dispassionately by the citizens of other countries as a curiosity, or as entertainment.

Fourth and perhaps most telling, the choice of the conflict was practical. I had access to the postcard collection at the British Library while doing related research and was able to find some interesting historical pieces that still tell a surprisingly compelling story. As the collection of postcards to which I had access only deals with cartographic postcards (being in the Map Library), one should recognize that postcard samples of political,
propaganda without a cartographic element are not included. Looking at such postcards is likely to be a valuable avenue of future research.\textsuperscript{6}

Fifth, from a military-strategic standpoint, the war itself is relevant because it offers considerable tactical and technological insight into the coming conflagration that would consume Europe, so one may ask why no strategic “lessons” were learned from it. Towle (1998) notes that the “British armed forces made greater effort to observe and learn from the Russo-Japanese War from 1904 to 1905 than they had ever made to watch any other foreign military campaign” (p. 19). This is largely because of British anxiety regarding their under-performance during the then-recent Second Boer War (1899–1902). Furthermore, Nish (1985) describes the foreshadowing offered by the Russo-Japanese War for conflicts of the 20th century: “Although it was confined to two countries, it was significant because of the vast number of those who took part in it: the Russian forces in the area starting at 100,000 troops and growing in 1905 to 1,300,000 and the Japanese starting with 300,000 and growing in 1905 to roughly triple that strength” (p. 2). The human toll was similarly large: “The lengthy siege of Port Arthur ended with a loss of 58,000 killed to the victorious Japanese and 31,000 to the Russians, while the immense battle of Mukden is estimated to have caused the casualties of 85,000 to the Russians as against 70,000 to the Japanese” (Nish, 1985, p. 2). The use of fortified trench networks would be repeated 10 years later across the fields of Europe, resulting in a similarly devastating loss of life. All of this would come to pass despite the significant numbers of international observers present—on the ground and at sea—during the conflict. Perhaps part of the explanation lies in the widespread public awareness of the war and the consumption of its events as mere entertainment, not strategic lesson.

Sixth, the Russo-Japanese War continues to be relevant in the international arena. It was a watershed event that marked Japan’s rise as a world power, it mirrors today’s concern with the “reopening” and rise of China, it marks the growth of global visual media, and it serves as an excellent case study of international political maneuverings in Asia.

Seventh, as the period of the war ran from 1904–1905, this study marks an effort to push back the temporal curtain of pictorial propaganda studies to include material prior to 1914, which runs coincident with the “Golden Age of Postcards” (1905–1915). Similarly, this may also be viewed as an attempt to historicize the notion of “soft news” and similarly extend research along these lines.

Eighth, the use of postcards to visually enhance historical events may be translated to the classroom. This study might serve as an example of how an instructor can incorporate research and add a visual element to the classroom experience to “spice up” a potentially dry historical topic, while giving students an opportunity to analyze or collect primary documents first-hand—especially if related to local postcard representations.

Finally, postcards are also an interesting “bridge” medium within the study of visual communication. Because they are popularly consumed, one finds similarities with other contemporary visual media. For example, political cartoons find an extended life remade as postcards, stereopticon images were complemented by the advent of photo postcards and their ready dissemination, posters and accompanying governmental messages are translated easily into the smaller format of the postcard, and—conveniently for my initial purpose—maps also found their way into the format as means of situating events geographically.

So, against the backdrop of a traditional explanation and description of war as a historical event, I use the images provided by contemporary cartographic postcards to bring the event to life. In doing so, I use postcards as an additional “text” to be read (literally and figuratively), and parse the meaning of the images included with the maps on the cards.
This adds to current research on foreign policy attitude formation via soft news, and also gives leverage to our understanding of imperial ideology and representations. For example, one can question the use of certain national images instead of other potentially viable ones (e.g., Japan as a geisha girl, but not as a samurai warrior) and give proper attention to the important nongeographic information that is included in the postcard image. In summation, this approach to studying past political events—while unusual—has the potential to be a valuable source of information that has previously been overlooked in the scholarly fields associated with international politics and political communication.

The Russo-Japanese War: Brief Context and Background

The outbreak of war between Russia and Japan had its roots in two earlier uprisings in the Asian-Pacific: the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the Boxer Rebellion in China (1900). By the late 1800s, both Russia and Japan had expansionist desires to establish “spheres of influence” in the region to mirror the spheres held by the European powers, primarily at the expense of the crumbling Chinese empire. This brought the two emerging nations into conflict with one another, as access was tightly controlled by the Chinese government, venues of possible expansion were limited, and the European powers with interests in China (viz., Britain, France, Germany, Austria, and Italy) wanted to maintain their oligopolistic hold on entree to the Middle Kingdom.

Japan’s war with China in 1894 grew from a desire to open the closed kingdom of Korea, over which China claimed suzerainty. The situation came to a head in the form of the Tonghak Rebellion. The Tonghak party (“Learning of the East”) was a secret organization that rose against government corruption and oppression of the Korean people. At the suggestion of the Chinese, the ruling Korean regime appealed for help from China. In turn, China saw this as an opportunity to reassert control over the peninsula and recover political standing that had been lost to the Japanese. Per a Korean “request,” China agreed to send troops to support its “tributary state.” After receiving notice of this troop movement, Japan also dispatched forces (over Chinese objections as to size and disposition), claiming that under the Korean-Japanese convention of 1882 Japan had the right to determine the scope of Japanese military involvement. It was in this environment that war broke out between the two nations, ending in Japanese victory over China. The resulting Treaty of Shimonoseki assured the absolute independence of Korea from China, opened four Chinese cities to foreign trade, provided the right for foreigners to engage in manufacturing enterprises in China, and ceded the Liaotung (Liaodung) Peninsula—with the key naval station of Port Arthur, Formosa (Taiwan), and the Pescadores—to Japan along with a severe war indemnity. Japanese military and financial success in Korea provided an incentive for more ambitious imperial aspirations.

The European powers had no objection to the Chinese war indemnity, but did not feel that Japan should gain Port Arthur, especially as the Europeans had their own imperial prospects. Russia thus persuaded Germany and France to apply diplomatic pressure on Japan, which resulted in Japan relinquishing the port to China. Within 2 years, Moscow pressured China into leasing Port Arthur and the Liaotung (Liaodung) Peninsula to Russia, which provided Russia with an important ice-free naval station in the Far East to supplement operations at Vladivostok. This action also served to antagonize Japan, which felt that a strategic region that it had legitimately gained through military conquest was now in the possession of an imperial rival.

As with the Tonghak Rebellion of 1894, the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 served as a mechanism for Japanese ambition in China. This also engaged the interests of the Russians,
who were solidifying claims to the north Pacific seaboard and who now had more proximate interests in China due to Russian possession of Port Arthur and the peninsula. As a result of the Boxer Rebellion, the European powers, the United States, Russia, and Japan sent troops to China to suppress the rebels and protect their “interests.” The aftermath of the rebellion saw the institution of an extended “Open Door” policy, which allowed for equal foreign access not just within the existing spheres of influence, but all parts of China.

The Boxer Rebellion also benefited Russia and Japan. When the fighting ended, Russian troops were occupying much of Manchuria—having mobilized to protect a Russian railway project—and Japan had extended its involvement in Korea. To solidify its position, and partly due to a shared desire to see Korea and China remain independent, Japan entered into an alliance with Britain in January 1902. The terms of the treaty stated that if either Japan or Britain were to go to war against a third party, the uninvolved nation agreed not only to remain neutral, but also use its power to keep the conflict from widening. Only if an additional power became involved would the uncommitted nation come to the other’s assistance. By March 1902, a Franco-Russian declaration mirrored the principles of the Anglo-Japanese treaty, but it reserved the right to intervene if disturbances in China recurred. In April, a treaty between Russia and China was signed in which Russia reaffirmed China’s independence and agreed to eventually withdraw from Manchuria. Once the railway was completed in 1903, however, Moscow presented Peking (Beijing) with a list of seven demands for concessions before Moscow would live up to its promise. The Chinese government, with encouragement and support from Great Britain, the United States, and Japan, rejected the demands as unwarranted interference in its domestic affairs (Connaughton, 1988; Nish, 1985).

By 1903 the diplomatic situation was tense. Britain and Japan were allied, France and Russia were allied, and all parties essentially agreed that a limited regional war was acceptable but promised to get involved only if the war widened. Furthermore, Russia and Japan had signed an agreement in 1898 guaranteeing the independence of Korea, with Russia also promising not to hinder Japan’s development of trade. However, Moscow’s refusal to withdraw from Manchuria combined with increased Russian commercial activity in northern Korea made it clear that Russia intended to expand down the peninsula, which conflicted with Japanese goals. By January of 1904 in a tacit *quid pro quo* diplomatic move, Japan formally recognized Manchuria as being outside its sphere of influence and was waiting on the return of a similar statement relating to lack of Russian interest in Korea. This was not forthcoming, and Japan formally declared war on February 10, well after preemptive strikes against the Russian fleet had already taken place over the preceding several days (Connaughton, 1988; Nish, 1985). This is another strategic lesson left unlearned from the Russo-Japanese War.

After more than a year of fighting, Russia signed the Portsmouth Treaty on August 23, 1905. Japan acquired the Russian lease on the Liaotung Peninsula—including Port Arthur and Dalny—and received control of the southern section of the Manchurian railway and the southern portion of Sakhalin Island. Russia also agreed to recognize the “permanent political, military and economic interests of Japan in Korea,” with both countries agreeing to withdraw troops from Manchuria. Significantly, Russia had to pay no indemnity to the now nearly bankrupt Japanese, and the Russians were able to regain the northern part of Sakhalin Island (Connaughton, 1988, p. 273).

**Mapping the War: Cartographic Postcards**

So how did both producers and consumers of the cards envision the conflict in contemporary postcards? Since all major European powers were tacitly involved through their
alliances with either Russia or Japan, in addition to the imperial European interests in China, there was considerable public interest in the conflict. Governments worked with private publishers to produce numerous series of cards on all aspects of the conflict. Leading postcard cartoonists “executed limited editions of their cards, numbering them like prints,” and “maintained almost weekly comments on events” (Fraser, 1980, pp. 41–42). Picture postcards also held immediate visual appeal that was easily appreciated, especially by that sector of the public that was minimally literate. As the region was not one immediately familiar to the general public, however, some of the earliest postcards were necessarily adaptations of contemporary maps. Essentially, these basic map cards served as a playbill by which the public could know the actors and the locales involved in contemporary news accounts.

Several examples of map postcards-as-playbills quickly appeared, as by 1904 John Walker & Company published a card with a map of the region centered on Korea and showing Russian territorial holdings, including Port Arthur (see Figure 1). While a standard part of the “Geographical Series,” the postcard tapped into popular desire for information about the scene of the war. The handwritten inscription gives additional insight into the consumption pattern of the card: “A small map showing the seat of the Russo-Japanese War,” signed “A particular friend.” Also of note, the key at the bottom of the map lets the reader know that treaty ports (i.e., those open to foreign trade) are underlined, but no information specific to the conflict is included. Instead, the card serves the very basic purpose of a portable map, with no accompanying social commentary on the war.

Almost immediately, a specialized map card unique to the war was published. This card, specifically titled “Johnston’s Russo-Japanese War Map,” was issued and used directly because of interest in the war. Like the first image, this postcard serves as a basic source of geographic information for the conflict, yet additional details emerge from a closer inspection. The map includes the key railway stretching north from Russian-held Port Arthur, across Manchuria, to Russian territory on the Pacific and “Vladivostock”;

Figure 1. “Map of Japan” (1904), John Walker & Co. Ltd., No. 873 Geographical Series, author’s image, original located at the British Library, Map Library. Shelfmark: Maps C.1.a.9(126) (figure is provided in color online).
includes several submarine telegraph cables; and designates European possession where appropriate (e.g., German possession of “Kiao-Chau” and British occupation of “Wei-hai-wei,” in addition to Russian control of Port Arthur). The shading also carries a message, though perhaps inadvertently: Japan and the British holdings are both shaded red, perhaps indicative of their status as allies. All in all, this postcard carries a great deal of information but is still a standard map being disseminated by mail.

Yet the Johnston War Map was very quickly adapted by the media and serves as a good example of the responsive link between postcard publishers, the news media, and a public eager for information. Due to its publication in Edinburgh, the postcard soon showed up with an “overprint” run produced especially for the *Dundee Courier* (Figure 2). The cards were mailed to prospective subscribers as an advertisement for the newspaper’s unique ability to keep the reader “thoroughly informed as to the progress of the great struggle between Russia and our Japanese allies.” Here, the recipient was being solicited to take the *Courier’s* “exclusive war service” into consideration, while the complimentary “Handy Map” makes a convenient reference. One is also reminded that the *Courier* has “double the circulation of any morning paper north of the Forth”—a meritorious statement, indeed.

Another example of a standard map-style postcard is available in French (Figure 3). While not as elegant or colorful as the preceding images (which also indicates that it was easier and cheaper to produce), this postcard is more tightly focused on the theatre of the war and not external areas that appear on the other plain map cards.

Here one sees French support for Russia, as evidenced by the banner in the upper left reading simply “France Russie.” Again, this postcard is published (in Blois, France) precisely to address popular interest in the war and is titled appropriately, translating as “Theatre of the Russo-Japanese War.” Relevant geographical information is included and treaty ports are designated with an anchor symbol, though designations for European possessions are surprisingly absent. Perhaps this is because the focus of the card is on the war itself, and it is not an adaptation of an extant map that is then used as a postcard. Nevertheless, it sets the scene of the war and is explicitly created for that purpose. “Mandchourie” is shaded in an attempt to draw attention to a key region of contestation.

On a lighter note, one can turn to Figure 4, “Originale-Japanische” from 1904. Again, this is a good cartographic representation of the region, but one without the dramatic color of the standard map cards. Not much is indicated as to the publication location and date of the card, but the postmark on the reverse situates the card in 1904, and the language is a phonetic stylization of a regional German dialect, possibly Bavarian. The point, allegedly, is humor. The “place-names” are common phrases in a southern dialect that roughly correspond phonetically to the actual locales that they are used to represent, or are merely hyphenated to appear “exotic.” For example, “Do-san-ma” translates as “here we are” and “Kehr-ma-um” as “let’s go back.” Additionally, European possession is indicated for the Russian holdings around Port Arthur and the German enclave at “Ui-do-schau” (Kiao-chow). No designation is given to the rival British possession of “waih-au-waih” (Wei-hai-wei/Wēihāi), which is a pun on the word for “to weep” and is a childish expression of minor pain, akin to “waaah.”

While formally allied with Russia, Germany was not actively involved in the conflict, though concern about the Franco-Russian axis (and growing Franco-British entente) was emerging. Germany was certainly interested in the war, though it may have been in a better position to view the unfolding events with a bit of humor. Belying the subjective nature of humor, however, the postcard bears a distinctly derogatory tone. In the map key the city designations are all “nests,” indicating a view of the region’s inhabitants as less...
than human: “Haupt Nest” (“main nest”), “Gewoehnliches Nest” (“ordinary nest”), and “Sau Nest” (“pig’s nest”). Curiously, while the map is titled “Original Japanese General Map,” the region included is not Japan but only Korea, reflecting Japanese desire to control the peninsula, or at least Japanese claims to it.

From a political communication standpoint, the “Original-Japanische” card is notable for a few reasons. The mere fact that the card is written in dialect, rather than High German, indicates the crucial role such cards played in communicating foreign affairs to the newly enfranchised voting public. While the state was administered exclusively in High German, postcards very purposefully spoke the language of the masses—or in this

Figure 2. “Johnston’s Russo-Japanese War Map” (1904), W & A. K. Johnston Ltd., Edinburgh & London, author’s image, original in author’s personal collection (figure is provided in color online).
case a phonetic punning of a regional, local form. As I am not fluent in German, much less the southern dialects from the early 20th century, I admit to feeling rather left out of the joke. But that is exactly the point of such a specifically target-marketed card.

A more accessible image, and one more insightful for the historic and political standpoint of the war, is Figure 5, “The Situation in the Far East.” While tentatively given a publication date of 1904, because it was sent in July of that year, the graphic itself is prewar. No overt reference to the war is made, yet there is reference to the Anglo-Japanese alliance. This card embodies the close relationship postcards—particularly propaganda postcards—have with political cartoons in newspapers and magazines. Many newspaper and magazine publishers regularly produced postcards of their political cartoons, and artists often made additional income by issuing topical postcards offering political commentary.

This postcard is adapted from an earlier cartoon published in October 1900 (Figure 6), in response to Russian activity during and after the Boxer Rebellion. The cartoon appeared in the Sydney-based *Australian Town & Country Journal*, yet the postcard was published in Hong Kong. Significant differences are that none of the four Chinese characterizations appear in the original, there are no flags, the bulldog is sitting rather than active, and the bear is emblazoned with “Conquest” on the forehead. Comparison of the two images illustrates the flexible role postcards play with regard to visual media. Here the card extends the shelf life of a cartoon as well as its geographic reach or exposure. This “expansive role” is beyond the role of postcards as a “bridging media” for other visual forms of communication such as maps, posters, photographs, or stereopticon images.

Still, the postcard in Figure 5 was likely published prewar, as heightened tensions are reflected in the similarity of characters and continued reference to the “situation” rather than “conflict,” “war,” or use of other wartime language. At first glance, the card appears to be a standard political cartoon superimposed on a map, but closer inspection reveals
additional layers of information. The picture is rife with detail to anyone slightly familiar with the unfolding events, though that is not requisite to understanding the card. The card primes and frames the situation for consumption, as there are six main elements and several minor ones within the design that are relevant to the impending war.

The most striking element of the postcard is the figure of the bear lurking dark and menacingly against the light background of Siberia. If there was any confusion as to what the “Bear” represents, the artist includes a royal Russian crest on its forehead. However, a few more important facts are revealed upon closer inspection. The bear is clearly situated with its interest directed toward China, with two front feet planted firmly in northern regions of Chinese territory and a third foot edging into northern “Corea.” Meanwhile, several images are associated with China, all of which apparently are oblivious to the menacing encroachment of...
the bear. The central image is that of an older Chinese mandarin reclining and apparently dozing while the bear is immediately behind. Elsewhere a young couple—possibly representing the Chinese merchant class—eats, drinks, and make merry, equally oblivious to the outside world. The marginal image of Tibet stands alone, back toward everyone. In the upper left, we again are presented with an image of China as old and studied, with a nomadic Mongol horseman doing the labor. Both appear to be supported by a hammock, whose strings are held by the mandarin. If anything happens to the mandarin, the events will be felt elsewhere.

In contrast to the somnolent, hoary and oblivious China, the third main national caricature is the vigilant Rising Sun of Japan. Indeed, the sun’s rays are used to reinforce the
Japanese gaze of interest across the Korean Peninsula directly onto the soporific mandarin of China. Reinforcing this is the caption reading “John Bull & I Will Watch the Bear.” Clearly, the bear needs watching, yet only Britain and Japan are aware of this; others either do not care or are asleep. Furthermore, the figure of the Rising Sun literally has a toehold around a stake in “Corea,” reflecting Japanese interests there, and the sun is tied to

Figure 6. “The Situation in the Far East” (cartoon) (1900), Australian Town & Country Journal, author’s image. Cartoon originally published by Tse Tsan Taio (July 1899), Hong Kong.
Formosa to the south, which Japan gained in the war with China in 1894–1895. Reinforcing the connection, both are shaded red.

A fourth key ingredient in this card is the British bulldog. Again, a national flag is included to remove any doubt as to what the “Bulldog” represents. The image stretches across China, looking as if it is “on patrol,” with its tail on the British holding at “Weihaiwei” (Wei-Hai-Wei) and its head toward Hong Kong (though the bulldog’s interest also seems to be focused on the French frog reaching toward Hainan). The bulldog’s tail also seems to wrap around the minor figure of the “German Sausage Ambition,” replete with flag, while the text on the bulldog itself makes reference to “The Open Door.” China seems very much to be the bulldog’s backyard, which it is protectively patrolling against intruders coming through any unlatched gate.

The fifth and sixth main figures are the American eagle and ever-classic French frog. America is poised on its newly acquired Philippine Islands, and looks ready to fly from its perch into China. Reference to likely American support for Britain is evidenced by the partially legible phrase “Blood is thicker than water” inscribed on the eagle’s neck. Color again plays a role here, as the Philippines are red, as is Japan, which was a common cartographic representation of Britain and British holdings, echoing the imperial colors of British “redcoats.” The French frog is quite interesting, especially as France had long been a key European rival for Britain. Not only is the “Frog” portrayed as stealthily encroaching on China from French-held Indochina, grasping one webbed hand toward Hainan and stretching another far north across Yunnan province toward “Seechuan,” but in case this imagery is not obvious enough, the frog is emblazoned with the phrase “Colonial Expansion” and the reminder of “Fashoda.” The Fashoda Crisis of 1898 was fresh in the minds of the public, and would have raised concern over French evangelical and colonial activities in southern China.

A remarkable amount of information is included in the image on the postcard, with little of it needing to actually be text. This promotes the notion of cards being used as “soft news” for consumers of the era. All of the relevant political actors are present, and any reasonably aware person would be able to “decode” the meanings behind the images. It is quite an accurate and concise statement about the international political “situation” in the region, replete with tension, potential for impending conflict, and the possibility for the situation to escalate to involve powerful states beyond Russia and Japan.

The next image (Figure 7) is also impressive in its summation of events, and came out during the war (c. 1905) simultaneously in French and German. The card was published in officially neutral Brussels (explaining the dual-market publication), and is not particularly sympathetic to the Franco-Russian cause. In part, this could be due to the large postcard market in Germany, but the card plays on nationalist sentiments of the time. Again there is the image of a bear, this time rampant and facing a demure geisha, who is quite literally backed up by a British sailor. The imagery is striking, not only for what is included, but also for the choice of images employed. The Russian bear is an obvious representation, and here we see the bear menacing a Japanese geisha even though the direction of the war appeared to favor Japan. France is represented by a kepi emblazoned with “Fraternité” dangling from the Bear’s posterior, with the caption “Ta Bouche bébé!” While literally translated as “Your mouth baby!” the connotative inference is a bit more crude. This is hardly a flattering depiction for France, and in a card published in French. But still, why the representation of Russia as an animal (albeit an animal with a hat) and not some other apt figure, such as a marauding Cossack? Because one does not reason with animals, but merely applies appropriate force. We are presented with an image of Russia as a beast that is a threat
to proper civilization, and one that needs to be dealt with appropriately. The issue is framed quite succinctly.

Why use the Japanese geisha? Certainly this image taps into the social requirement of aiding a woman in distress, which seems to be the framing intent here. However, it belies other, equally suitable representations for Japan. Why not an anthropomorphized Rising Sun as in the previous postcard (Figure 5)? Or another possibility would be to use a stylized monkey, which was a fairly common depiction in political cartoon representations of the “yellow man.”24 Why not the stereotype of the Japanese male, a Samurai warrior? Because the intent is to foster sympathy for Japan, and the Geisha image presents Japan as feminized and compliant, where a Samurai would be seen as independent and more capable of self-defense. A geisha is more “available” and likely to be “taken,” and is therefore in need of assistance from an honorable man, especially given the Victorian gender sentiments of John Bull. Translating the text accompanying the figure makes this more apparent: from the bear, “Viens Poupoule” (“Come here chick!”25) and a response of “T’en as un Oeil!” (“Nothing gets past you!”26) from the geisha, with a gesture toward Korea. Clearly, Britain is stepping in where a woman is the victim of uncouth and apparently unwanted come-ons, possibly facing a ravaging by an animalistic aggressor. This is essentially an Asiatic version of the damsel in distress, with Britain playing the role of the knightly hero.27

The figure of John Bull, or the British military figure, has several interesting characteristics. Britain is not only literally “standing behind” Japan, but by stating “Yessss . . . Alright!” is essentially saying “Enough!” to the untoward Russian behavior aimed at a feminized Japan. The choice of British headwear also intrigues, as it has a dual meaning that would have been apparent to the public at the time. It may most obviously be “read” as an overt reference to Britain’s naval dominance ultimately backing up any British authority (or perhaps that this power has “gone to Britain’s head”? ). However, it also has a more oblique reference to the Japanese navy: Japan spent the majority of the indemnity

Figure 7. “La Guerre Russo-Japonaise” (c.1905), Marco Marcovici, Brussels, #7543, author’s image, original located at the British Library, Map Library. Shelfmark: Maps C.1.a.9(181) (figure is provided in color online).
received from the Sino-Japanese War (£25 million in 1895 rates) in British shipyards, building the most modern warships available (Connaughton, 1988, p. 4). British-made warships bolster Japan throughout the conflict, not only through the spectre of possible future British military involvement per the Anglo-Japanese alliance, but also by being the most modern part of the Japanese navy.

The Spoils of War: Images of an Ascendant Japan

While the Russo-Japanese War did not end entirely favorably for Japan, it did signal the rise of Japan as a major Asian power. Japan became the first non-White nation to defeat a European country in war, which is in stark contrast to the almost universal subjugation of non-Whites to European dominance at the time. Japan also became recognized as a major naval power in the Pacific, thanks to the new ships purchased from Britain, partially prompting the U.S. to send the Great White Fleet to Japan in 1908. More importantly, Japan began to realize the benefits of being a colonial empire. The call of “Asia for Asians” was taken up, and the seeds of Japanese colonial expansion into Manchuria and China were on their way to fruition. This imperial goal was partially realized with the invasion of Korea in 1910 and the rather arbitrary assumption of German colonial interests during World War I.

In the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese War, Japan began to be welcomed into the society of great powers. Images focus on progress, Westernization, and the civilized—even Christian—aspects of Japanese society. Japan is effectively initiated as a non-European member of international society, especially by its wartime ally, Britain. Three postcards summarize this new trajectory of a “transformed” Japan as partially “Western” and certainly as a power on par with those of Europe.

The first, “Japan’s Evangelisation 1859–1907” (Figure 8), provides an effective synopsis of the religious history of Japan, at least from an evangelical Protestant perspective.

Figure 8. “Japan’s Evangelisation 1859–1907” (c.1907), Missionary Helps Depot, 13 Croxton St., Liverpool, UK, author’s image, original located at the British Library, Map Library. Shelfmark: Maps C.1.a.9(88).
It contains a remarkable amount of information and echoes the themes of progress, Westernization, and civilization for “the Land of Sunrise.”

In essence, the card marks Japan’s transformation to a more “Christian” nation, after the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries in 1859. The rays of the traditional Japanese Rising Sun symbol encapsulate the various stages of religious progress (or lack thereof) rather succinctly, and do serve as an apt frame for the symbolism of religious “enlightenment.” Notably, during the previous exposure to Christianity—albeit Roman Catholicism—in the period of 1549–1638, the “gospel light” is summarized as “Obscured light by rays of R. Catholicism 2,000,000 R.C. Christians then destroyed.” The following 200-year period (1639–1858) sees the renewal of the “old idolatry” of Buddhism and Shamanism, until the “rays of light” once again begin to brighten with the arrival of the first Protestant missionaries.

The four periods of Japan’s evangelization are summarized in the right-hand column, with some rather notable milestones that do mark the “Westernization” and Christianization of Meiji Japan. For example, Japan adopts the Gregorian calendar, the government adopts Sunday as a day of rest, Buddhism is disestablished, and edicts against Christianity are removed. While interrupted by a period of reversal from 1889–1900 wherein “commercialism, patriotism, and criticism” partially obscured the light of the gospel, the period from 1901 onward is identified as the “Period of Progress,” with “Purer Christianity and More Real Steady Progress.” Altogether, the card is an impressive history lesson and example of the impact of religious evangelizing. It also offers insight into the role postcards can play as historical documents. Considerable detail is provided regarding numbers of missionaries, converts, and baptisms (e.g., “1872 First Church formed of eleven members,” “In 1888 alone 7,700 Baptized—Whole Bible Translated”).

Interestingly, this card also illustrates the difficulty in dating postcards with complete accuracy. While it does include the date of “1907,” no events after the Boxer Rebellion (1900) are concretely described, and the Russo-Japanese War is not mentioned. This is peculiar because the war could be interpreted either as a Japanese victory over Russian Orthodoxy (i.e., non-Protestant Christianity, and a derivation of Roman Catholicism) or as a resurgent example of “patriotism” and non-Christian sentiment. Neither of these is brought up, and the war escapes mention. Yet the card is tentatively dated c. 1907, and it does capture the modernization, Westernization, and social elements of a resurgent Japan entering international society.

Japan’s self-image as a full-fledged member of international society and as a regional power is confirmed in two additional Japanese-produced postcards, both from 1911. This is prior to World War I and prior to the full realization of the expansionist ambitions that would serve as a prelude to World War II. The first notes that Japan is “the Focus of International Communications” (Figure 9). The postcard is somewhat peculiar when taken in this context. Certainly the message is one validly believed by Japan, as the Imperial Government Railways published the card, but the unwritten message is incongruous.

Notably, Japan is shown with numerous lines of communication (e.g., submarine telegraph cables) passing through it. However, two unwritten messages undercut the claim that Japan is the center of international communications. The first is that the map projection used is Oblique Azimuthal, which shows distances and directions accurately from the center point, but distorts shapes and sizes elsewhere. Second, even given that the Oblique projection was used, Japan is placed at the extreme upper right corner of the image, not the center. This hardly indicates that Japan is the “focus” of communications, but rather a peripheral hub with Europe as the true focus. Nevertheless, this reflects Japanese
growth in status in the international community and as a locus of Asian hegemony; Japan is fully “connected” to the modern communication networks of the civilized world.

As a final image, we have a map of Japan published in 1911 commemorating the Crown Prince’s visit, coincident with the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and a year after the 1910 Japanese invasion of Korea (Figure 10). This final representation is

Figure 9. “Japan the Focus of International Communications” (c.1911), the Imperial Government Railways of Japan, Tokyo Printing Co., author’s image, original located at the British Library, Map Library. Shelfmark: Maps C.1.a.9(233) (figure is provided in color online).

Figure 10. “Map of Japan” (1911), published to commemorate the Crown Prince’s visit, no publisher details available, author’s image, original located at the British Library, Map Library. Shelfmark: Maps C.1.a.9(207) (figure is provided in color online).
notable because it encapsulates the prior two decades of Japanese territorial expansion and serves as a fitting place to leave the examination of Japanese representation via postcards and visual propaganda: before the more commonly studied era of World War I and before the well-known events leading up to World War II.

The image shows the shift in what is considered Japanese territory, as the Japanese-produced card goes to extra effort to include insets of Formosa (acquired in 1895) and the Liaotung (Liaodung) Peninsula (formally acquired in 1905). The southern tip of Sakhalin Island is shaded to indicate Japanese possession, as is the Korean Peninsula (annexed in 1910), though the northern border is obscured. Also of interest are the stamps used to frank the postcard; they too indicate the extent of Japanese control, with Korea very plainly claimed as part of Japan, since Japan had supplanted the Choson Dynasty’s rule the previous year. Formosa appears in the margin of the stamp, Sakhalin Island is to the north, and one may note that extra effort was made to shade the tip of the Liaotung (Liaodung) Peninsula to indicate the Port Arthur leasehold. Obviously, Japan is clear about its position in Asia, and also about how that position was acquired: additional territory through conquest, often in opposition to the wishes of European powers. In this light, events that unfold in the next several decades are not that surprising, were one to pay attention to the context of the Russo-Japanese War and its aftermath.

Conclusion

For scholars of political communication, this project is an attempt to historicize the notion of “soft news” to include the postcard craze of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Accordingly, as with modern “infotainment,” a widely disinterested and often apolitical public can gain insight into politics and foreign policy by following crises as entertainment. This is especially relevant in an era with a newly expanded electorate, when the “voting public” was semiliterate and increasingly of the middle or working classes. In this way, postcards—reflecting the scandal or crisis of the moment—may be viewed as a kind of pretelevision counterpart to “soft news,” with accordant priming and framing effects. Wars, scandals, trials, or other political issues are the historical analogues to modern “water-cooler” events, and they are all captured in postcard form. The Russo-Japanese War was followed for this reason, which also explains the prevalence of so many non-Russian and non-Japanese cards: The war was entertaining, and cartographic postcards served as playbills for the entertainment. Once consumers were primed to the event, additional information costs were minimized and a market for more cards created.

This work is also meant to be a suggestive piece. This brief examination of historic postcards is intended to provide a unique window into the events surrounding the Russo-Japanese War, its prologue, and the rise of Japan in its aftermath. Accordingly, this study should draw more attention to pre–World War I propaganda and popular communication and to the potential use of postcards as important social relics worthy of serious academic inquiry. Finally, this brief overview provides a suggestive “first-cut” at using postcards as an additional tool in understanding the context in which international events unfold and for interpreting historic events. It may serve as a model (good or bad) of how this type of research can be carried out and integrated in a larger “story” of political communication and public opinion formation. While this study is limited to cards of a cartographic nature, a valuable research agenda may be found in the examination of postcards of a wide variety. This is especially true if such efforts are undertaken in conjunction with contemporary studies examining the importance of soft news, visual media, political propaganda, and international politics.
Notes

1. Barber (1995) anecdotally notes, “The British Museum and British Library archives reveal that curators had been discussing the merits of collecting postcards, and agreeing in principle to do so, for decades. It had to await the acquisition of a large ‘foundation’ collection, however, and the Library only began collecting cartographic postcards in a systematic way in the late 1980s following the bequest of one such collection” (p. i). Online availability suggests that smaller, specific collections may now be more easily begun.

2. Fraser (1980, pp. 39–40) gives an impressive overview of postcard publishers and the variance between state and private publishing concerns. He also documents the staggering numbers of cards posted (e.g., the top 3 countries in 1913: Germany, 1,792,824,900; Japan, 1,504,860,312; United Kingdom, 903,180,000).

3. Thus, the practices of developing codes, private languages, mirror writing, and special signals (such as a specially angled postage stamp) were various methods used to signal endearments or avoid snooping, especially as the postcard fell into the natural province of courtship prior to the advent of the telephone. Simpler strategies such as writing the message upside-down in relation to the address also helped avoid perusal by nosy postmen (Phillips, 2000, pp. 12–14).

4. For example, the British Library has two such collections (one in Spanish and one in Portuguese), both from German sources during the war of 1939–45.

5. Notable exceptions are Ryan (1982), Killen (1985), Vanderwood and Samponaro (1988), and a cursory examination by O’Connor and Cohen (2001). See Killen (1985, pp. 10–17; cf. Phillips, 2000) for a discussion of the early postcard (first issued in 1865), the fall the post office’s monopoly (1893 in the United States, 1895 in Britain, 1900 in Japan), and the advent of the political postcard (c. 1900).

6. Finally, as the scholarly study of postcards is only recently emerging, existing collections tend to be limited in their scope. One notable exception is the truly impressive and quite artistic collection of Japanese postcards from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, available online through MIT’s Visualizing Cultures Program (http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027j/menu/index.html).

7. In accordance with the Tientsin Convention of 1885.

8. Presaging Japan’s military capability versus Russia, Japan fielded 120,000 men in two armies and five columns, not including naval support, and suffered approximately 1,005 battle deaths (but lost an estimated 16,866 men to disease).

9. The indemnity was approximately 200 million taels, which Connaughton (1988, p. 4) estimates at £25 million in 1895 valuation. This considerably exceeded Japan’s expenses incurred in the war, and the “profit was invested principally in a large contract placed on British yards for the most modern warships available” (Connaughton, 1988, pp. 5–6).

10. Having gained the Philippines in the war with Spain in 1898, the U.S. hoped to promote an “Open Door” policy in China. This would benefit U.S. businessmen who now had a viable base of operations just 400 miles from the Chinese coast and who were, until this time, effectively shut out of the China trade. Thus, to “save” American missionaries and assert its presence, the U.S. sent 2,500 soldiers and marines with the international military force. Because of this participation, the U.S. took part in the diplomatic settlement.

11. Negotiated in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the conference was naturally commemo-rated with its own postcard series, and resulted in the first Nobel Peace Prize for an American, Teddy Roosevelt. The outcome engendered some ill will for the United States among the Japanese. Russia negotiated from a stronger position, as it continued to bring forward reinforcements, was in the process of shifting European troops eastward, and had high troop morale. Japan, in contrast, with depleted available manpower, was spending 53% of its annual revenue on the war, and the commitment of its troops was waning. Thus, while Russia had indeed “lost” the war, it ceded no Russian territory, agreed to withdraw from Korea (which the tsar wanted to do before the outbreak of war), and paid no indemnity. For Japan, the outcome was disastrous. The failure to achieve the valuable territories of Manchuria and Korea, combined with the lack of means of compensating the many families who lost a father and/or son (i.e., via a war
indemnity from Russia), resulted in “immediate, bloody, long-term rioting” (Connaughton, 1988, pp. 271–274).

12. This work is based only on cards with a cartographic nature, as it was originally undertaken at the Map Library of the British Library. As such, it is meant to be illustrative, not comprehensive, and excludes samples of postcards without a map element.

13. Further emphasizing the “postcard-as-playbill” metaphor, numerous series of cards were published featuring notable war figures (e.g., politicians and generals of each side), specific ships involved in the conflict, and other third-party “characters” of interest.

14. The overprint on the verso reads: “DUNDEE COURIER’S EXCLUSIVE WAR SERVICE. By reading the Exclusive War Service from the DUNDEE COURIER’S own correspondents in the Far East and in the Capitals of Europe you will keep yourself thoroughly informed as to the progress of the great struggle between Russia and our Japanese allies. This Handy Map, which you will find convenient for reference, is presented to you with the DUNDEE COURIER’S compliments. The DUNDEE COURIER is the leading advertising, financial, commercial and agricultural daily in Central Scotland, and has double the circulation of any morning paper north of the Forth. By Post Daily for Four Weeks, 2s.”

15. The postcard is unused, so there is no written inscription on the verso.

16. As indicated by a note accompanying the postcard in the Library collection. Many thanks to Sabine Axt for assistance in providing an initial translation of some features of this card.

17. The kaiser and the tsar were cousins and maintained a very close relationship (see Bernstein, 1918).

18. The handwritten text roughly reads: “Dear Frieder! Starting June 22 I will be in Rottenmann, Ibersleyer (?) Servus, Narze! (?) Your sister Marie.” On the side: “This map is to refresh your knowledge of geography!” (postmark on verso: June 7–8, 1904).

19. Relating international consumption, the postcard was of British origin (it was published in Hong Kong), yet consumed by the French.

20. The complete text is quite difficult to make out. Under close inspection, the best I can determine it appears to read is: “THE OPEN DOOR . . . THE . . . THE INTFU(?)_ OF CHINA.” Unfortunately, the text in the Library of Congress microfilm of the original newspaper cartoon is also illegible.

21. An encounter between French and British forces toward the end of the scramble for Africa centered on the small town of Fashoda on the Upper Nile. A French expedition reached the small village first, but was soon followed by the arrival of a larger British force. Both claimed Fashoda and the Sudan for their own countries, as France wanted to link colonial holdings in West Africa with French Somaliland and Britain wanted to be able to link Egypt with its holdings to the south. But after initial talk of war, diplomats eventually recognized the absurdity of fighting over a small African village and quietly settled the situation. Fashoda still remains a powerful symbol of the possibility of a great power struggle arising from conflict over colonial expansion (see Lewis, 1995). There are, naturally, a wide variety of postcards covering the crisis.

22. For comparison, the German postcard is part of an impressive online exhibit through MIT by John W. Dower, “Yellow Promise/Yellow Peril,” drawn from the Leonard A. Lauder Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027j/yellow_promise_yellow_peril/yp_core_01.html).

23. The postcard is unused, so there is no written inscription on the verso. Thanks to Doug Jones for help in discussing the connotative inferences of the translation.

24. Connaughton (1988, p. 167a, Plate 1) provides a photograph of a collection of derogatory postcards provided to the troops at the Russian front, which depict Japan as a monkey among other things. While the “Monkey” image would appear to be a derogatory representation to Europeans, the Japanese may well not be offended, as the monkey image ties in with Japanese mythology and a certain reverence for monkeys.

25. Or “chicky” or “honey,” depending on the context. Still, a noncomplementary way to address a woman, further painting a picture of Russia as uncouth and making unwanted advances.
26. Also “You don’t miss a thing” or “You’re very perceptive,” again depending on context. Here, however, the response seems to indicate that the geisha is trying to fend off the unwelcome advances of the bear. So, a translation with some sense of the futile is apt to be more accurate.

27. Hunt (1987) discusses similar image uses and interpretations in American public discourse of the Spanish-American War, wherein the United States plays the gentlemanly hero and Cuba is the comely maiden being ravaged by Spain.

28. There is no inscription on the verso.

29. The inscription on the front is “From Auntie Alice 29-1-11.” On the verso, addressed to “Master Bertie Rusell”: “My dear Bertie/So many thanks for your dear letter, also Grandmama’s, I was very pleased to get them, and glad to know the jersey fits. Are you still keeping well, and has your cough quite gone/Daddy does not get better and hope he will soon go into hospital/Lucy quite well and sends her love. Best Love to all.”

30. O’Connor and Cohen (2001, p. 57) include a postcard commemorating the first direct U.S.-Japan cable in 1907.

31. There is no inscription on the verso. Although it is one of a series of commemorative cards for the Crown Prince’s visit, which Crown Prince is visiting is unclear. Britain technically does not have a crown prince, either being referenced as the heir to the throne or the Prince of Wales. There was a scheduled visit by the German Crown Prince, which was cancelled due to widespread plague in China. The Korean Crown Prince moved to Japan in 1907, and Korea had been formally annexed, so that seems unlikely. It is most likely commemorating a domestic tour by the Japanese Crown Prince Yoshihito, who would become the Taishō Emperor in 1912. He has recorded visits throughout Ainu villages and other parts of Japan during 1911, and the card is of Japanese publication.

References


**Appendix: Postcards (by Year)**

1904: “The Situation in the Far East,” O. F. Ribaro, Hong Kong, China, Series No. 23


C. 1905: “La Guerre Russo-Japonaise,” Marco Marcovici, Brussels, #7543


C. 1907: “Japan’s Evangelisation 1859–1907,” Missionary Helps Depot, 13 Croxton St., Liverpool

1911: “Map of Japan” (to commemorate Crown Prince visit)

C. 1911: “Japan the Focus of International Communications,” the Imperial Government Railways of Japan, Tokyo Printing Co.

Note: The date of publication is often approximate and taken from the *Catalogue of Map Postcards* at the British Library, as are the “titles.” As official documentation is scarce surrounding the publication of postcards, the postmark date if present or a date included in a written message is generally used.