The Centre Cannot Hold

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Sous la direction de
Michael Falser

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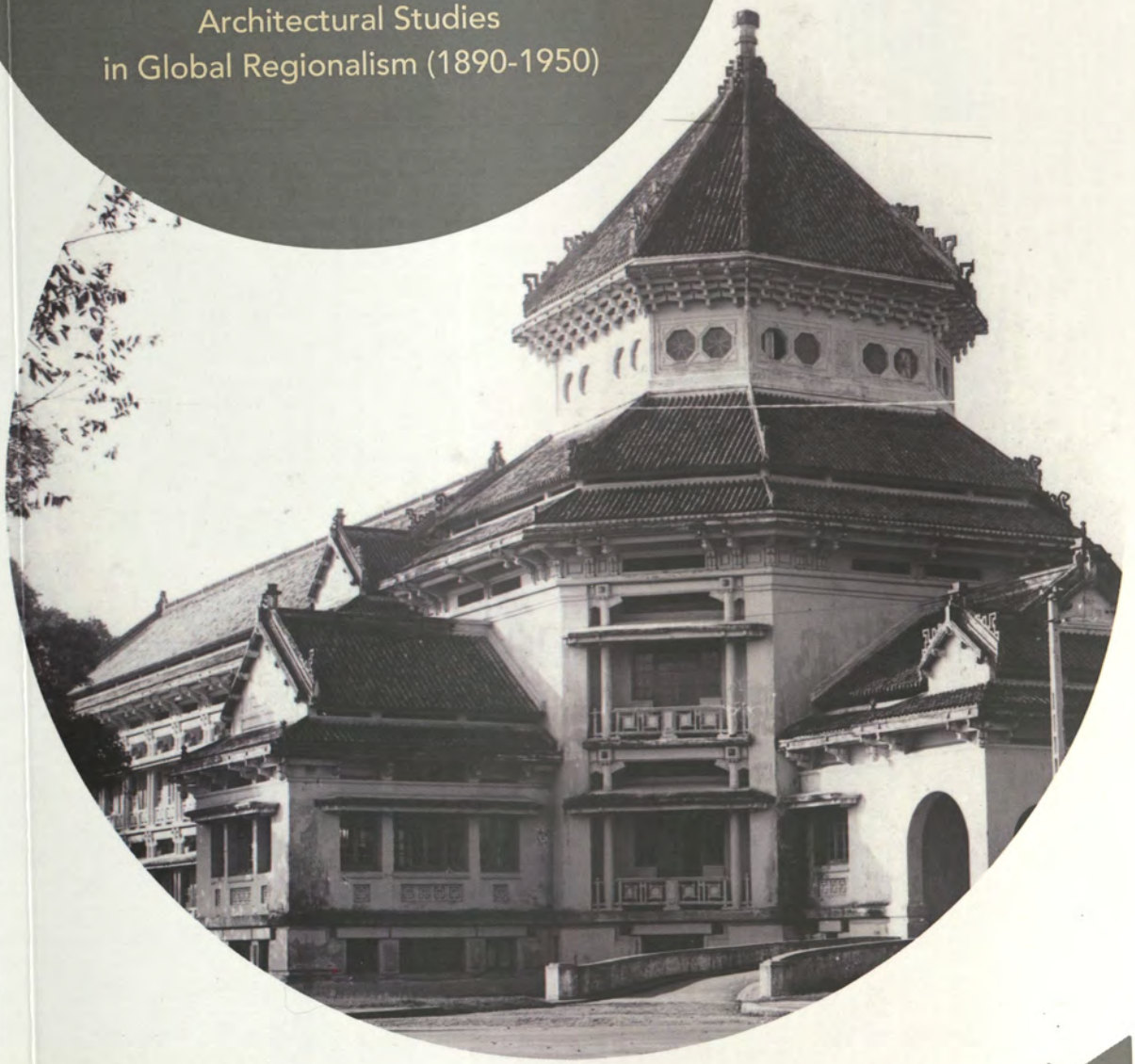

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Introduction
Histoires architecturales du régionalisme mondial

Michael FALSER

LE RÉGIONAL ET LE MONDIAL : UN ANTAGONISME ARTIFICIEL

■ Le marché Santa Caterina de Barcelone a été construit au XIXe siècle. En 2005, il a été réhabilité par les architectes Enric Miralles et Benedetta Tagliabue. Eux-mêmes ont décrit l'objectif du projet comme la conception d'une toiture censée évoquer, par métaphore régionaliste, un océan coloré de fruits et de légumes. Quelques années plus tard, en 2012, une photo de ce projet (***pl. 1***) a fait la couverture d'un ouvrage : *Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization. Peaks and Valley in a Flat World* de Liane Lefaivre et Alexander Tzonis (Lefaivre et Tzonis, 2012). Dans le résumé de la quatrième de couverture, les auteurs évoquent un « antagonisme » supposé entre régionalisme et mondialisation, le citant comme leur hypothèse de départ dans leur approche conceptuelle :

> « *De tous temps, mondialisation et régionalisme ont existé en antagonisme.* La *mondialisation* tend à "aplanir" les obstacles, transformant un monde de barrières et de régions insulaires en un "monde plat". Celui-ci permet de faire place à une créativité et à un niveau de profits sans précédent, mais est également la cause de grandes inégalités, de la perte de ressources gaspillées, et d'une véritable destruction écologique. Le *régionalisme*, en opposition, encourage la singularité, l'autonomie et l'identité distincte de chaque région, renforce les différences qui les diversifient et contribue à un monde "de pics et de vallées". Cependant, il peut aussi confiner et déchirer des sociétés, ainsi que promouvoir un tourisme consumériste et destructeur » (ma traduction, mes italiques).

Ce principe a conduit les auteurs à présenter un programme double. D'un côté, leur ouvrage devait servir à « retracer les nombreux tournants de l'évolution du conflit entre mondialisation et régionalisme dans une perspective historique critique liée à la conception de l'environnement créé par l'Homme ». Dans les douze chapitres qui suivent, cette analyse de l'architecture "régionaliste" (bien que ce terme ne soit apparu dans le langage qu'au cours des dernières décennies) s'étendait sur plus de vingt siècles, de l'antiquité gréco-romaine à

"The Centre Cannot Hold"

Dutch Architectural Culture and the Dutch East Indies in the 1920s

Herman van BERGEIJK

> "Even in his most rational procedures, the balanced person allows a place for the irrational and the unpredictable: he knows that catastrophe and miracle are both possible" (Mumford, 1951, p. 191).

INTRODUCTION: ENGAGING WITH ARCHITECTURAL REGIONALISM IN A COLONIAL CONTEXT

■ For many years, regionalism in architecture has attracted much attention. Several critics have tried to assess the importance and breadth of this notion (Umbach, 2005; Lejeune, 2010) and many synonyms have been used. However, in my view it has not been discussed exhaustedly and very convincingly until now, in spite of the many publications that deal with the relationship between vernacularism and architecture. This is mainly due to the fact that there is considerable uncertainty as to how regionalism arises within architecture, how it informs the object, and how it presents and determines itself in the final product. Certainly, the attempts that have been made are interesting from philosophical or theoretical point of views, but those have always been partial and often too ideological. The issue of how to assess the topic of regionalism through its combined, stylistic, materialistic and idealistic factors has hardly ever been addressed. The main question remains: how do we 'read' architecture and the environment in which it takes place? Are we capable of reading something that does not really belong to the specific culture that we are part of and, in the end, remains foreign and thus strange to us? This is something that cannot be assimilated quickly, but must develop over years of education, learning exercises and experience. This goes against the current trend for haste and fleeting attention to the superficial that is characteristic of our society, and has been a pivotal element in the idea and production of 'modernity' in architecture and town planning since Georg Simmel, and others, both in the West and the East (Frisby, 2001; Houben, 2008).

In this regard, the Dutch architect H.P. Berlage's attempts to read and understand the culture of the Dutch East Indies in 1923 may give us some useful insights, especially because of the various ways in which he documented his trip and the large amount of information that still exists about his voyage to the East. During his three-month long trip, he studied the relationship between the colony and the motherland—the Netherlands—and was clearly of the opinion that the latter could not be seen as the core of the relationship. Despite the urgent matters that needed to be addressed, he was aware of the need of cultural independence for the colonial society. The relationship between the two was rapidly shifting. The colony had different problems and the Netherlands did not constitute a role model.

Influences from beyond Dutch Borders and Berlage's Work before his Trip

■ In the Netherlands, a lively exchange of ideas had existed between the country and its Asian colony since the publication of *Max Havelaar: Or the Coffee Auctions of the Dutch Trading Company* in 1860. Under the pseudonym of Multatuli, the author (Eduard Douwes Dekker) had severely criticised the unbalanced and exploitative colonial situation. This had led to a change in perception of the colony: from a peripheral province used only for monetary gain to a land of inspiration and a cultural centre in its own right. Artists born in the Dutch East Indies, for instance Jan Toorop, and architects such as the theosophical K.P.C. de Bazel—later architect of the formidable, temple-like office building for the Dutch Commercial Bank in Amsterdam, built in 1923 with oriental-like ornaments (***fig. 1***)—started to discover the importance of the Far East, while politicians were also striving for change.

Fig. 1.
K.P.C. de Bazel, building of the Nederlandsche Handels-maatschappij, Amsterdam, 1923 (Source: Het Nieuwe Instituut [HNI], Photo Collection).

In September 1902, the reform-minded old Governor General Alexander Idenburg declared that "the aim of colonial rule was not to expand possessions but to encourage the advancement of indigenous people" (Schmutzer, 1977, p. 16). Indenburg was one of the main advocates of the so-called 'ethical policy' in which more emphasis was given to the proper education of the population in the colonies (Gouda, 1995; Bloembergen, 2009). This also meant that in the future more responsibility would have to be given to non-Dutch residents.

The architect H.P. Berlage became a pivotal figure between East and West after his Stock Exchange in Amsterdam, completed in 1903, brought him international recognition. Toorop, the famous symbolist painter of Dutch East Indies origin, had participated in the realisation of the iconographic programme. Three years previously, during the construction of the Stock Exchange, Berlage had completed his first building outside his own country. In Surabaya (Dutch East Indies), he had designed an office building for the life insurance company 'De Algemeene' (***figs 2a-b***), a company that had already commissioned the architect several times in the Netherlands and for which he would also design and build an office building in Leipzig (Bergeijk, 2011; Lukito, 2016).

In the Dutch East Indies, the company had not been satisfied with the heavy European style of the original design by the local architect, Hulswit. The company did not wish to stand out as an old-fashioned European firm. They asked Berlage, who had become a dominant figure in the Netherlands, to come up with an alternative proposal. Berlage's design used traditional building methods of the Dutch East Indies, hoping to improve architecture by adapting it to local conditions. Several aesthetic and functional improvements were introduced. Eleven years later, he would also build another office building for another insurance company, De Nederlanden van 1845, in the rival city of Surabaya, Batavia (***figs 3a-b***). This company had also been a loyal client of the architect. He modified the design of the two buildings in the Dutch East Indies so as to allow cross-ventilation and deal with the hot climate. On the whole, however, they might have been built in the Netherlands and featured the same reduction of ornament. The architect had not oriented himself according to traditional buildings in the colony but wished to illustrate the potential of a more modern approach. A national newspaper in the Dutch East Indies even announced that thanks to this kind of building, Batavia increasingly resembled a modern *Groszstadt* (metropole), clearly adopting a European standard (*Nieuws van den Dag*, 1912). Surabaya was losing its colonial appearance, especially in the city centre.

Initially, Berlage was not very interested in developing an architecture that was rooted in a local culture: he was striving for a modern architecture based on functional and economical principles. He wished to get rid of all that was superfluous and strived towards a reduction of ornament while advocating a generic architecture. With his buildings, his town planning projects, his participation in exhibitions and other events, and his writings, he strengthened his central position on the architectural stage again and again. Indeed, he became

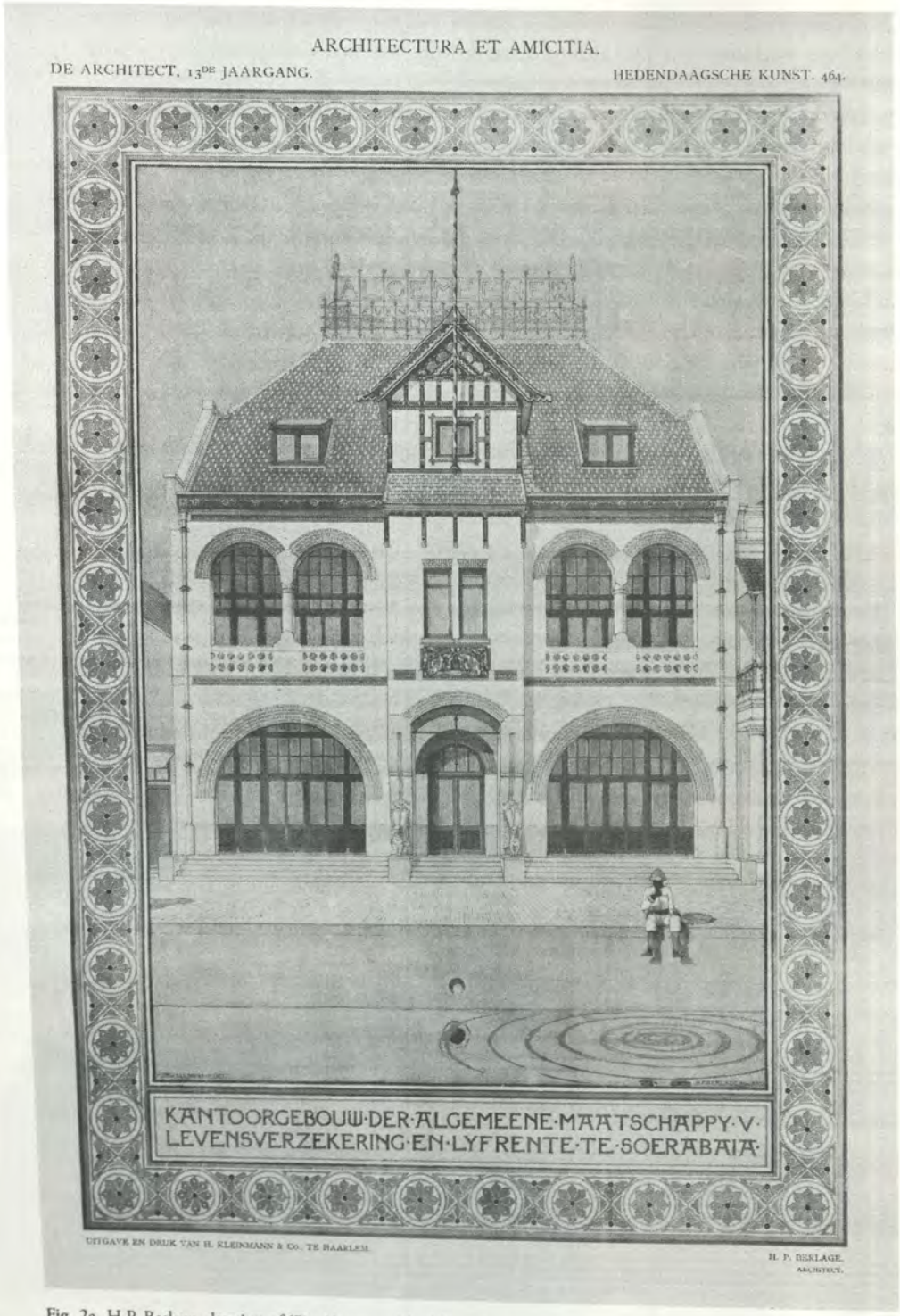
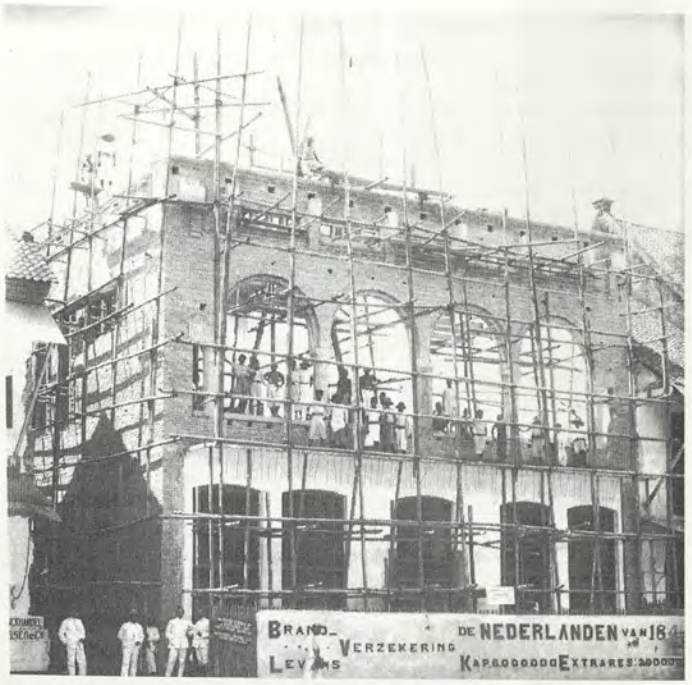


Fig. 2a. H.P. Berlage, drawing of 'De Algemeene' building, Surabaya, in *De Architect* (Source: *De Architect*, vol. 13, 1902, plate 464).

Fig. 2b. H.P. Berlage, building for 'De Algemeene', Surabaya, 1900 (Source: Het Nieuwe Instituut [HNI], Photo Collection).

one of the main propagandists of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright in Europe after a trip to the United States and published a written account of this visit. In his view, architecture had to be democratic.

Nevertheless, he was looking for a more secure position and in 1914 started working for the capitalist Kröller-Müller family, at a time when less work was available as a result of growing world conflicts. For this family, he built a seminal office building in London clearly demonstrating modern American influences. In 1917, after a dispute with Helene Kröller-Müller, he took his leave and began to work again as a private architect. Besides becoming involved in the debate about mass housing in 1918, he occupied himself with the design of the Municipal Museum in The Hague. This "mighty monument", as Jan Wils called it, would have been the crowning glory of his *oeuvre* but was dismissed as too expensive (Wils, 1921). Berlage, with his optimistic attitude, considered it a "temple of culture".



Figs 3a-b.
H.P. Berlage, building for De Nederlanden van 1845 (Batavia 1911), during and after construction (Source: HNI, Berlage Archive).

The domed building (***pl. 28***) revealed an interest in oriental-like architecture similar to that found in the work of expressionist architects (e.g. Bruno Taut).

Yet in 1922 the economy ground to a halt and building activity shrunk. Berlage, whom many architects approached, looking for work or financial help, also became a victim of this new situation: he had almost no work.[1] He decided to take advantage of this and make a trip to the Dutch East Indies, a long-standing, ardent wish triggered by the many colonial exhibitions that had been held in the Netherlands and abroad, as well as by the many books on colonial culture (Bergeijk, 2011; cf. Vletter, 2006).

The move of the Colonial Museum from Haarlem to Amsterdam in 1910 gave the museum's collection greater visibility. The exhibitions, with their exotic products, such as the one in Deventer in 1912, left their traces in Dutch culture, especially in the work of the architects of the so-called Amsterdam School—a group who found Berlage's work too sober, too austere and not spiritual enough, and gave their fantasy and expressive imagination more freedom. This is particularly evident in the work of Michel de Klerk, who often looked at the artisanry of Dutch colonies for inspiration, for instance in his covers for *Wendingen* magazine (Burkom, 2016) [***pl. 29***].

The first major product of this expressionist architecture was the *Scheepvaarthuis*, an office building for several shipping companies in Amsterdam built between 1912 and 1914. It was designed by Joan Melchior van der Mey; like De Klerk, he had worked at the architectural firm of Eduard Cuypers, one of the few Dutch architects with offices both in Amsterdam and the colonies (Norbruis, 2018). Cuypers gave young architects an incentive to 'inventiveness'. He also published his own magazine, an indication that he understood the importance of advertising his views in order to attract new customers. The bearing structure of the *Scheepvaarthuis* was of concrete but the brick façade was overloaded with ornaments and sculptural elements that allude to the shipping trade and the Dutch colonies (***pl. 30***). The colonial influence was limited to the surface of the building, however, and did not permeate its totality. It should be mentioned that in the years between 1917 and 1923 the movement *de Stijl* was creating a stir in Europe. During Berlage's trip, Theo van Doesburg and Cor van Eesteren were creating their famous models for an exhibition at the gallery *L'Effort moderne* in Paris.

The broad spectrum of architectural currents in the Netherlands after the First World War is clearly visible in the solutions that Dutch architects proposed at the international competition for the Chicago Tribune building in 1922. Whereas Jan Duiker and Bernard Bijvoet came up with a project inspired by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright—illustrations of whose buildings had just been published in an issue of *Wendingen*, together with the famous cover by El Lissitzky and an appreciative essay by Berlage—Dirk Slothouwer drew on his memories of the architecture of Java, where he was born. His entry was not regarded as representative of modern architecture. Berlage himself did not enter the competition, since at the time he was preparing his trip.

In the end, Berlage's journey yielded some financial profit: he was paid for the five letters that were published in *Het Vaderland*, a Dutch newspaper, for the many lectures he gave in the colony about the architectural situation in the Netherlands, for the town planning work in Batavia that he managed to obtain and with which he made a plea for regional planning and also, probably, for the report that he wrote for the Dutch government on the restoration of the temple complex of Prambanan.[2] He visited the complex with Thomas Karsten, for whose town planning work he had the greatest respect (Coté, 2014, 2017). Karsten, who was one of Berlage's main sources of information on the architectural situation in the Dutch East Indies, was of the opinion that town planning needed to be addressed in a harmonious way in order to be able to integrate various conflicting components. In *Djawa* magazine he, as well as Henri Maclaine Pont, would often formulate his views: "Without tradition no emancipation, but also no emancipation without tradition" was one of his slogans in an article of 1924 (Karsten, 1924, p. 74). Through his report, Berlage intervened in a debate that had been going on for some time on the issue of the restoration or reconstruction of architectural heritage. In order not to upset any of the involved parties, this was done very tactfully. In the end, he made a plea not to reconstruct too much.

Berlage also had another, more private task: during the trip, he lobbied for a job for his son, a cosmologist. He met the influential Karel Albert Rudolf Bosscha, his nephew, an administrator of the Malabar Plantation in Bandung and sponsor of the Observatory in Lembang, during his stay. He exchanged a couple of letters about this matter with Bosscha after his return to the Netherlands.[3]

A year before, at the end of February 1923, Berlage had left for the Dutch East Indies, the eminent writer Louis Couperus had made the same voyage and published many letters describing his impressions and experiences in a magazine, the *Haagsche Post*. His book *De stille Kracht* (in English: *The silent force. A story of modern Java*), published in 1900, had already provided reflections on his childhood in the Batavia of the 1870s (***pl. 31***). Couperus had family ties with the colony and had already visited the East twice. He had a keen eye for other cultures and noticed that westernisation had left its mark on the country. Even traditional architecture had changed—modern houses were starting to resemble European villas, inasmuch that a storey was added above the ground floor. His observations concerning various towns were similar to those made by Berlage the architect. Despite the economic crisis, even a city like Medan (on the island of Sumatra, far away from the main island, Java) was still "new", "with fresh white buildings". This city was "modern and European, with an English *flair*" (Couperus, 1924 [1975], p. 261). All buildings, amongst them the *Javasche Bank*, were the result of "a memorable Western effort". Berlage would probably have shared this opinion, but would not have favoured westernisation. In his eyes, there should be more respect for the traditions of native populations. This became clear in the drawings that he made during his trip (see ***pls 32 and 33***). Like Couperus, he was aware of the mystic or spiritual element in the local culture that westerners, including himself as an outsider, found hard to grasp.

The entirely different rules of the country were difficult to comprehend and he did not pretend to understand what lay below the surface. His attitude remained aloof but he did criticise the growing use of corrugated metal sheeting for roof architecture in the East which, as he admitted, had economic reasons.

TOUCHING GROUND AND MEETING OTHER ARCHITECTS

■ One may wonder to what extent Berlage considered himself to be an ordinary tourist. A photograph in Berlage's archive shows that the Dutch architect arrived in the colony after an ocean crossing lasting several weeks as a tourist *cum* colonist dressed in an immaculate white suit with a tropical helmet (***fig. 4***).

We know that he had prepared himself long before the voyage, and also during it while on the Dutch ship *Grotius*. Several friends had advised him on the literature to read about the foreign country, its architecture and its culture in

Fig. 4.
H.P. Berlage arriving in the Dutch East Indies, 1923 (Source: HNI, Berlage Archive).

general. Shortly before he left, an unknown writer, Johan Koning, had already noted in Eduard Cuypers' magazine that there existed "a close relationship between the spiritual and economic needs of a society and the places where the people of this society live and work' (Koning, 1922/1923). He predicted a beautiful future for the colony, which was slowly evolving towards an architecture of its own. Although it is unknown whether Berlage had read this, he had corresponded with many local people—mainly architects of Dutch origin—who expressed an interest in meeting him, and who were willing to accommodate him and show him around in various cities. Invitations came from all over, and many were anxious to meet the famous Dutch master. Most of the people who had invited him were proud of the colony and the position that they had acquired. A small minority were less happy with this position; one of them calling the country ironically, but with some affection, the "land of the monkeys". Berlage showed great interest in the colony's past and desired to immerse himself in the local culture, while many had a different view of his journey's purpose. When he arrived, he was received as the internationally acclaimed hero from the motherland who could give direction to modern architecture in the Indies and put an end to existing disputes.[4] Much was expected from him: after all, he was considered to be the father of modern architecture in the Netherlands, someone who could strengthen the ties between colony and motherland. However, as soon as he was off the gangway and on steady ground, he became aware of the fact that his rationalistic thinking would not suffice. He had definitely entered a different world.

Nevertheless, he tried to understand as much of it as possible. He met almost all of the prominent architects of the time, of whom many had studied—but never built—in the Netherlands, as well as many high-ranking civil servants and other dignitaries. He wrote down his reflections about the trip in a diary, alongside beautiful loose drawings that he made almost every day and wished to exhibit on *passepartout* after his return to Amsterdam (***pls 32 and 33***).[5] He also collected several photographs of the landscape and ancient monuments that he used for lectures during the trip and afterwards. In the later lectures, he expressed his opinion on the development of architecture in the Dutch East Indies. The drawings, however, were both an exercise in drawing and a way of catching an impression of the local colour. Objective knowledge was continuously confronted with his subjective response, in the same way that culture and nature or, more importantly, science and magic coped with each other and tried to find an equilibrium (Berlage, 1931, p. 142; Lippard, 1997).

In Bandung, or 'the Paris of Java' as it was called, he would visit the newly founded Technical University (***fig. 5***; compare ***fig. 3a*** and ***pl. 8*** in the introduction to this book), whose buildings—with their high pitched roofs—were designed by architect and archaeologist Henri Maclaine Pont in a hybrid language to reflect regional and vernacular elements from the Dutch East Indies (Sandick, 1920; compare with Voskuil, 1996). One of the most important stylistic references came from the Minangkabau building tradition, of which Berlage had photographed some examples during his travels across Sumatra (***fig. 6***).

Fig. 5.
Henri Maclaine Pont's *Technische Hoogeschool te Bandoeng* (Technical University of Bandung) [Source: Sandick, 1920, plate 2].

Fig. 6.
Photograph from Berlage's picture collection of Minangkabau houses (Source: HNI, Berlage Archive).

Pont, who unlike his rival C. P. Wolff Schoemaker, never became a university professor, was very interested in both indigenous architecture and the use of imported materials. He tried to investigate the architecture of Java through its religious and social background and practices. He was in favour of a 'local modern architecture', an architecture that would not bluntly repeat European models but try to meet modern needs with a local vocabulary of forms. Schoemaker, on the other hand, remained loyal to the European approach; even in his well-known lecture on the role of aesthetics in modern architecture, he stated that although

there were some notable changes to local architecture of the Dutch East Indies, it did not constitute a distinct direction (Wolff Schoemaker, 1920, p. 24). Even though Maclaine Pont had built the Technical University's beautiful buildings, Berlage announced that Bandung had to be called the "city of Schoemaker", owing to the many public buildings that the latter had designed (Berlage, 1931, p. 103) [see ***pl. 56c*** in the conclusions of this book].

The foundation of the Technical University was not to prove easy. Contrary to the architectural engineer and Delft professor J.F. Klinkhamer, who was of the opinion that all architects in the Dutch East Indies should be trained in Delft, Berlage believed that the colony should be less dependent on institutions in the 'homeland' and had endorsed the founding of the school in 1920. Later, he again professed that "a genuinely Indo-European architecture can only then arise when the Javanese not only can autonomously exercise the profession of architecture, but also can get their education wholly in the Indies". He widely discussed the conflicting opinions of Karsten, Maclaine Pont, and Wolff Schoemaker about the possibility of the birth of a locally determined building style, and took a stand in favour of the first two, who believed in the possibility of a synthesis of styles, even if, in accordance with his character, he was careful not to offend any of the involved architects too much. He wished to remain outside this ongoing discussion and was certainly not someone to ever take a radical position on any issue. He manoeuvred carefully and did not favour anyone in particular, but the school in Bandung was clearly oriented towards practices in the Netherlands. This became apparent when Schoemaker was appointed as a professor of architectural design in 1924. He taught in the same manner as in Delft. Local influences were only slowly introduced, and even then were combined with other 'ingredients'. As Jacques van Doorn pointed out in 1983, the country became "a synthesis of interests and ideas to be borne by an increasing number of archipelago's residents, a synthesis, therefore, neither 'Indonesian' nor 'Dutch,' but a combination of what all the participants had to offer" (Doorn, 1983, p. 11). This did not always lead to convincing results.

The architect J. Gerber who, like most architects, had studied in Delft, accompanied Berlage on many of his architectural visits in Bandung (Roosmalen, 2007). During his trip, Berlage did not reflect on his recent impressions but gave a lecture on "The Bridge as Work of Art", of which the manuscript can still be found in the architect's archive. The topic appeared innocuous but was well chosen because it was a major theme in the construction of the colony's new infrastructure. Bridges, in Berlage's view, should slot harmoniously into the landscape and not stand out as foreign objects (*fig. 7*). He stressed that a bridge is not only a technological problem, but also a meaningful aesthetic one that could act as a distressing factor in its surroundings.

In another lecture, which was given, like most of the other lectures in the Dutch East Indies, to one of the local architectural clubs, Berlage was more specific about the situation in tropical cities and admitted that he found himself most at home amongst those buildings that could have stood in any Dutch city.

Fig. 7. Photograph of a bridge in the Dutch East Indies, collected by Berlage (Source: HNI, Berlage Archive).

But he knew that this approach was outdated. In it, he detected "a hardness, a cruelty, narrowness and shortcoming of feeling that we cannot yield to anymore". He said that we "should have trust in the Indian himself, in the education of the same, to be capable of developing his own architecture, that sprung from his own soul, and historically was the result of his own old architecture, but supported by and enriched with the highly developed technique of the westerner?" (*Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 1924). Berlage showed great interest in this ancient architecture; he had an eye for the various religious temples and for the way in which craft was executed in an environment that was not yet spoiled by industry and could be considered a celebration of the individual. He understood the beauty of the natural setting and the various landscapes, but in searching for the sensitive soul of Indonesian culture, so different from rational European culture, he could not tie it to the *genius loci*. The spirit of the place eluded him despite his attempts to understand it and analyse what he was seeing. His vocabulary was not adequate and not sufficiently refined. Despite his knowledge, his goodwill, and his attention to, for example, the characteristic *pendopo* construction, his attitude was distant. The West remained the West and the East the East.

CONCLUSION: TRACES OF A TRIP

■ In the detailed account of his journey, published much later, Berlage touched upon many facets of the local culture, comparing it continuously with his notions of what was happening in the Western world. He wrote: "The city, once the centre of a culture with a 'soul', has grown at a rapid speed into a monster, for which one has no solution. Because the traffic that accepts no limitations goes through it with an increasing fury" (Berlage, 1931, p. 77). Changes formed the backdrop for his observations but, as his sketches show, he was fascinated with the exotic, pristine nature and with the traditional life of the local population. In particular, the majestic waringin (banyan) tree and abundant vegetation captured his imagination (***fig. 8***). He was struck by its impressive appearance and the way it was used in towns as a meeting point.

Although he went to see many new buildings, they hardly feature in his writings. There is no doubt that he intended to publish his travel account from the beginning: he was in constant correspondence with his publisher (Brusse) in Rotterdam about the matter. Yet he was only able to publish his travel book *Mijn Indische Reis* almost eight years after the event. Its subtitle, "Thoughts about culture and art", would indicate that he was writing with this particular relationship in mind. He had a genuine interest in the culture of the Dutch East Indies and was not looking for a way to implement his findings in his own work, as members of the famous *Forum* group (e.g. Aldo van Eyck and Joop van Stigt) would do in the Sixties. In the spirit of the Javanese architect Soerjo Winoto, who wrote that the more one penetrates a foreign art, the more one becomes aware of the beauty of one's own art, Berlage's reflection also centred on Dutch culture and the way it was developing (Winoto, 1919, p. 143).[6] Even though it took a long time to publish the book, he did manage to give lectures in the Netherlands about traditional Dutch East Indian architecture and to exhibit his drawings on several occasions.[7] They were widely shown and what was particularly interesting was that they paid little attention to modern buildings. In a sense, they expressed an interest in rustic architecture, something that we can also witness in the work of conservative architects such as Jan Verheul, Herman van der Kloot Meijburg and Jan Jans. Jan Verheul played a key role in recording rural buildings and other local curiosities in the neighbourhood of Rotterdam, but when it came to building, he often took references from history. The latter two architects were advocates of an architecture that was strongly informed by local tradition. Jan Jans worked mainly in the eastern part of the Netherlands, far away from modern metropoles, and published books on local architecture, such as farms. In the history of modern Dutch architecture, these architects have not been suitably recognised, despite the existence of a Jan Jans Foundation. They are still mainly ignored and viewed as 'provincial', even by mainstream historians who today are fully involved with the 'vernacular' and 'critical regionalism'—but hardly look for historical precedents. Within movements that look for regional characteristics and local identities, however, they are considered of seminal importance. The drawings of a master like Berlage

Fig. 8. Photograph of waringin trees, collected by H.P. Berlage during his stay in the Dutch East Indies (Source: HNI, Berlage Archive).

were encouraging and inspirational to those who worked outside of conventional standards and did not aim for an art historical pureness.

The book did not have an immediate impact when it was published, but Berlage's encounter with a foreign culture and his fascination with a different kind of living, where life outside, on the street, was dominant, are still worth reading—if only to show how something that he did not and could not understand fully had an impact on his reflections about culture in a changing world. Certainly, Berlage was idealistic and is a perfect example of an architect who is aware of the effects that his travels might have on his own work. From the beginning of his career to the end of his life, his travelling was documented extensively by sketches and drawings and, often, also by a diary or reflective notes. The manuscript of his first trip to Italy, which I published in 2010, shows his deep interest in local culture, the mores and customs, or *adat* (Schefold, 2003). In Italy, where he stayed for a year and a half, it was the confrontation between the classical tradition of the Renaissance and the baroque that occupied his mind, while in the United States it was the birth of a new orientation, and in the Dutch East Indies the discovery of architecture as a product of culture. He saw a world that was bound to disappear rapidly owing to the strains of an imperialistic, capitalistic world. The Dutch East Indies had to adapt and they had to do so in a sensitive way. He was convinced that this was possible without blindly following Western trends.

Berlage's trip to the Dutch East Indies left hardly any traces in architecture. Other architects never adopted his architectural style; his town planning proposals were modified and were nothing more than indicative (Roosmalen, 2008). The final question is whether his trip left any traces in his own built work. Yet it is hard to give a convincing answer. In his 1920s design for the Municipal Museum in The Hague, Berlage used an unusual architectural language that configured the museum as a grand temple complex, similar to those that he later saw in the Dutch East Indies. In the final project, however, this had radically changed, not only because the budget had been cut drastically, but also because his architecture had evolved. Berlage, who did not favour a purely functionalistic approach, had chosen a design that was more reminiscent of the style of the famous architect W.M. Dudok. Together with the sculptor H. van den Eynde, Dudok—who was enormously influential in the world, including in Dutch colonies—built a monument to a nowadays contentious general and governor, J.B. van Heutsz, in the Dutch East Indies (it was, significantly enough, demolished after the war). The Municipal Museum can thus be seen as a temple complex but it is debateable whether this is due in any regard to Berlage's fascination with the Indies.

It is probable that what did have an effect on the architecture of this project was the subtle way of showing structure that he had seen in the colonies. Some of his drawings showed his affection for a clear concrete structure. But he was also interested in leaving space for spiritual interpretation: the walls were given a special texture and ornamentation was applied. In the use of latter, he saw the importance of creating meaning that could be interpreted and understood by those who were familiar with the language used. We are able to recognise the same intent in his building for an insurance company, De Nederlanden van 1845, on the Raamweg in The Hague (*pl. 34*). This structure shows some influence of the work of Thomas Karsten, especially his building for the trade association or his Nillmy building in Semarang. It is thus not strange that in the clash between representatives of the Amsterdam School's expressionistic architecture and functionalistic architects, Berlage took the side of the first—to the dislike of the more radical modernists. For he was not willing to completely renounce ornament. The significance of such elements for the existence of culture became ever more apparent to him during his trip to the Indies. Although Berlage seemed to favour the expressionist architecture of the Amsterdam School, he was well aware of the fact that the economic situation would constrict all of the exuberance of this movement.

As for regional styles in the Netherlands, Berlage had no particular interest at all. They were of no importance for his way of looking at architecture. He did not belong to those few architects who were seeking inspiration in regional and rural farmhouses, especially in the east of the country, where architects such as the aforementioned Jan Jans were combating what they saw as the negative 'tarnishing' of the country by modern, and thus foreign, architecture. Although they knew that Berlage had also designed cottages in a rural style in the middle of the country, they never considered him a standard-bearer of their

own intentions. Fundamentally, Berlage believed in development and progress in the arts; within this idealistic belief, there was little reason to integrate local traditions.

Since the seminal book *Max Havelaar*, generally considered a turning point in Dutch culture, many writers and artists have tried to cope with the otherness of a culture that was once considered to be of a lower and, therefore, secondary status. They have continuously searched for ways and words to describe their views. Words such as 'domestic', 'vernacular' and '*Heimat*' were applied in the past. Yet in the cities of the contemporary world, architecture has lost its traditional importance as an instrument for investigating local culture; increasingly, it is viewed as the product of a global approach. Foreign, unfamiliar, and other elements that have uprooted traditional identity have all had a disturbing impact.

The complexity of the phenomenon of 'global regionalism' becomes especially apparent when examining Berlage's trip to the Dutch East Indies, during which he tried to grasp what he was witnessing at several levels in an open-minded and responsible way. He struggled to maintain a clear view of what he was seeing and experiencing. In the end, all levels taken together only provide a partial understanding of his lessons on a colonial periphery as an architect coming from a metropolitan centre.

Notes

1. Especially moving is the letter of Herman Walenkamp, who asked for work, in the Netherlands or in the Dutch East Indies. See: HNI (= Het Nieuwe Instituut), Berlage Archive, letters 1922.
2. He was asked to write some articles after his return by the weekly *De Amsterdammer*, but Berlage kindly refused.
3. See: HNI, Berlage Archive, 1923.
4. In a letter of the Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond in the Dutch East Indies, he was hailed as someone who could bring together divergent viewpoints found in the East and West, lead to a reconciliation between the various groups, and give advice. See: HNI, Archive Berlage, letter of 27 March 1923.
5. It is unclear whether he had taken any sketchbooks with him. In his archive at the HNI in Rotterdam, they are not to be found. He published his diary as: H. P. BERLAGE, *Mijn Indische Reis. Gedachten over Cultuur en Kunst*, Rotterdam 1931. The drawings would be published in a box and with an introduction in Molenaar, 1991. Many of them were of townscapes, a subject that Berlage had addressed in the journal *Winterboek* 1922/1923.
6. As regards the underlying problem, see: BAUMEISTER, LEE, 2007.
7. In the first issue of the review *Bouwen* in 1924, drawings of Berlage's voyage were published in the hope that they would bring more attention to developments in the colonies.

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Modernités pittoresques
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Picturesque Modernities
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Sous la direction de
Michael Falser

Une méthodologie novatrice se met ici en place pour la discipline émergente qu'est la *Global Architectural History*. En se concentrant sur le passage du haut impérialisme européen autour de 1900 à l'ère coloniale tardive des années 1940, l'ouvrage étudie les liens entre les métropoles et les colonies. Plus précisément, il propose une nouvelle lecture de la dénomination architecturale, formelle et stylistique du « régionalisme mondial », tout en le conceptualisant, pour la première fois, comme un outil effectif dans la formation et la stabilisation des états-nations et des empires. Les auteurs internationaux analysent les enchevêtrements entre les États-nations (la France, la Grande-Bretagne, les Pays-Bas, l'Allemagne, l'Union soviétique et les États-Unis) et leurs périphéries continentales avec leurs colonies et territoires sous mandat (l'Afrique du Nord et l'Indochine, l'Iraq, les Indes occidentales néerlandaises, Deutsch Ost-Afrika, l'Asie centrale et New Mexico). Il s'agit d'offrir ici une nouvelle perspective conceptuelle sur la place du régionalisme dans l'histoire globale de l'architecture. Elle sera utile aux étudiants et aux chercheurs avancés.

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