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## **The recording industry and 'regional' culture in Indonesia : the case of Minangkabau**

Suryadi,

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**Author:** Suryadi

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# THE EARLY DAYS OF RECORDING TECHNOLOGY IN INDONESIA

Modern sounds, especially those produced by sound reproduction technologies, such as regional cultural repertoires stored on Indonesia's cassettes and VCDs – the focus of this study – have long been filling Indonesia's air.<sup>14</sup> In this chapter I will recount how the phonograph Thomas Alva Edison invented in 1877 in New Jersey, the United States, and the replicated sound it produced were initially encountered by people in the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia). The aim of this chapter is to look at how people living in the Dutch East Indies, including Natives, responded to the phonograph and the replicated sound it produced. I also survey the early path of the representation of Indonesian local cultures using this technology in Java, the principal island of the Dutch East Indies, after which time recordings of such local repertoires spread to ethnicities living in the outer islands, including Minangkabau in West Sumatra.

It is no exaggeration to say that the invention of sound recording technology in the nineteenth century was a modern miracle. Making possible the storage and preservation of sound across time and distance, which previously could only be dreamed of, this invention contributed significantly to the developing entertainment world. Thomas Alva Edison first realized this dream in 1877 (Chew 1967) when he invented the tin-foil phonograph, which then inspired other scientists to perfect and develop his invention. 'Of all my inventions, I liked the phonograph best,' he said.<sup>15</sup> Edison mentions that this invention that most impressed himself allows its users 'to store up and reproduce automatically at any future time the human voice perfectly' (Edison 1989:444). During the last two decades of the 1800s, sound recording machines were exhibited outside the United States of America, first in Europe and then in Australia and Asia. In Europe the machine was first demonstrated at the Academy of Science in Paris on 11 March 1878, where a French professor named Bonjour accused Edison of cheating. He stated that Edison was a ventriloquist.<sup>16</sup>

The adoption of sound recording technology in Asia went through three phases, which applies to other modern media invented in the nineteenth century as well. The first phase was a period of exhibition in which a recording machine was demonstrated to the public in venues such as theatres and clubs, in the form of shows for which people had to buy tickets. In the second phase, people purchased sound playback machines and records, which became objects of prestige and status. In the third phase, European and USA recording companies appointed local agents in Asian cities and then established local recording facilities, usually in collaboration with local entrepreneurs.

14 This chapter is based on Suryadi 2006a with some additional data.

15 Thomas Alva Edison; quoted from <http://www.thomasedison.com/edquote.htm> (accessed 14-9-2004).

16 *Pedoman Masyarakat*, 12 January 1938, p. 36.

Focusing on the period of exhibition (phase one), this chapter investigates the initial experiences of the people of the Dutch East Indies with the early generation of recording machine inventions like the phonograph, graphophone and gramophone. The period covered is the last two decades of the nineteenth century. I describe important aspects of the exhibition of the 'talking machine' in the Indies: how demonstrations were carried out, the pioneer exhibitors and their motivations, the towns and venues exhibitions were held, the repertoires that were first recorded and presented to audiences, and the audiences' response. I aim to identify the Dutch East Indies colonial society reactions, especially in Java, to the 'talking machine' exhibitions and their perceptions of this invention in the colonial environment, and especially in the urban entertainment world that was emerging in the nineteenth-century Dutch East Indies, including in major towns in Java.

#### THE FIRST DEMONSTRATIONS OF EDISON'S TIN-FOIL PHONOGRAPH IN JAVA

The first exhibition of the recording machine in the Indies was carried out by a Dutchman named A. de Greef. This name was mentioned in 1892 by Pieter Brooshooft in an article about the phonograph in the Semarang Dutch daily *De Locomotief*.<sup>17</sup> De Greef was in fact an artist. He was the director of a *Fransch Opera-gezelschap* (French opera company) which first came to Batavia in 1865, and after that he went back and forth between Europe and Asia. In early February 1879 he arrived again in Batavia with a phonograph after sailing from Marseilles. He gave phonograph exhibitions in Batavia for about three weeks before continuing to Semarang on 22 February, then to Surabaya, Solo, Magelang, Purworejo, and Ambarawa.<sup>18</sup> In Batavia De Greef gave phonograph exhibitions in the Schouwburg (Batavia Theatre) and also for the Governor General in his palace at Buitenzorg (Bogor).<sup>19</sup> Quoting the Batavia press, a Singapore newspaper reported De Greef's exhibition as follows:

On Saturday evening, the phonograph of Mr. de Greef was exhibited in the Theatre here, and proved a success. Those who have read the scientific descriptions of the phonograph in European scientific periodicals, and are aware of the peculiar imperfections of that machine must acknowledge that Mr. de Greef's instrument was an excellent one. The phonograph uttered a feeble sound like the voice of a ventriloquist, but the rising and falling of the voice, the stress on some of the syllables and difference between the vowels, all these were faithfully reproduced. The consonants were audible but formed the weak side of the instrument. What was spoken, whenever reproduced by the phonograph, was, however, very intelligible, and the perfect fidelity with which it repeated the intonation of the spoken words, the pauses between them, and the stress on some syllables awakened repeatedly great laughter from its comic nature. By means of a paper speaking trumpet attached to the mouthpiece, the sound was very audible in the crowded hall of the theatre.<sup>20</sup>

17 P.B. [Pieter Brooshooft], 'De nieuwere phonograaf' (*De Locomotief*, 3 June 1892). Brooshooft (chief editor of *De Locomotief*) wrote this article to welcome Professor Douglas Archibald, who visited Java to demonstrate the more recent phonograph perfected by Edison.

18 Java-Bode, 22 February and 5 May 1879. I thank Matthew Isaac Cohen for bringing several sources dealing with De Greef's trip in Java to my attention.

19 Java-Bode, 22 February 1879. At that time the Dutch East Indies Governor General was Johan Wilhelm van Lansberge.

20 Straits Times Overland Journal, 1 March 1879, p. 5. A note says that 'the following items of intelligence are

As the Singapore Straits Times Overland Journal writes: ‘M. DE GREEF, [...] was the first person to introduce the phonograph to the East. [He has spent a couple of months in Java with the phonograph,] giving exhibitions of this wonderful invention, one of the marvels of the age, and has been very successful in his practical illustrations of the working of the instrument.’<sup>21</sup> The newspaper also reported De Greef’s plan to visit Singapore where he would hold an exhibition in the Town Hall, and ‘no doubt, many [there] will be curious to see such an extraordinary invention at work’.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, I did not find any evidence that De Greef held a phonograph exhibition in Singapore as he had planned. Perhaps the machine developed a defect during De Greef’s tour around Java, forcing him to cancel his trip to Singapore.

It is quite astonishing that just two years after Edison invented the phonograph, the machine, thanks to De Greef, reached the Dutch East Indies. Described as ‘an instrument in the shape of a cylinder whereby any sounds may be recorded and reproduced exactly, at pleasure, merely by turning the cylinder’,<sup>23</sup> the machine soon become a spectacle for the elite ruling class of the colony. Evidently the phonograph demonstrated by De Greef was Edison’s tin-foil phonograph, which as a prototype was not yet perfected and had a poor recording quality.<sup>24</sup> Around six years later, in a report in the vernacular press issued in Semarang written by someone with the initials P.B – I suspect it is an abbreviation of Pieter Brooshooft – it is mentioned that a couple of years earlier he (P.B.) had paid 3 guilders for a ticket to watch a show about a new technology named the *Fonograaf*, which, I think, refers to De Greef’s show in 1879 at Semarang, which one can assume was also attended by Brooshooft because he was an important person in town due to his position as editor-in-chief of *De Locomotief*, the most influential newspaper in Semarang. P.B. mentions that the show was attended mostly by European *tuan-tuan* and *njonja-njonja* (lords and ladies) and one or two Javanese and Chinese notables.<sup>25</sup> At that time P.B. was already thinking about the benefits of the phonograph for the art world in the Indies (Java): 1) to record aloud the voice of a female dancer (*tandak*) so that her fans can listen to her recorded voice any time they like; 2) to record a funny puppeteer (*dalang*) so that his fans can enjoy his voice whenever they want; 3) to record the voice of a good reciter of Javanese poetry (*pembaca tembang*) so that people can enjoy it before sleeping.<sup>26</sup>

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translated from the N. I. Journals for the Straits Times’, and at the end it says: ‘Batavia Dagblad, 3rd Feb.’

21 Straits Times Overland Journal, 20 May 1879, p. 6.

22 Straits Times Overland Journal, 20 May 1879, p. 6.

23 Straits Times Overland Journal, 20 May 1879, p. 6.

24 In his essay, Brooshooft mentions a book entitled *De natuurrkunde in onzen tijd* by B.C. Goudsmit (Zutphen: Thieme, Batavia: Kolff, 1896) which describes the technical workings of Edison’s first phonograph. Originally this book was published as *Physique populaire*, Paris: Marpon et Flammarion, 1891, by Émile Desbeaux; see also *De Locomotief*, 31 May 1892.

25 ‘Doeloe saja soedah membajar f 3 dapet satoe kartjis aken melihat satoe termasa, orang bilang *fonograaf* namanja. Maka jang dateng di tempat itoe hanjalah toewan-toewan dan njonjah-njonjah dan ada satoe doewa orang djawa dan tjina bangsawan djoewa adanja’ (Tjahaja India, 16 April 1885).

26 ‘Sehandeinja kita orang djawa pekakas jang demikian ini 3 perkara goenanja pada kita; 1e. saorang tandak jang njaring soewara-nja kita soeroeh gending satengah malem dalem trompet itoe, habis kaloe kita panggil sobat-sobat aken makan minoem, jang itoe sobat soeka soewara tandak, maka *Fonograaf* laloe kaloewarken soewaranja. 2e. Saorang dalang jang loetjoe kita soeroeh dalang moeloetnja dalem trompet itoe, habis kaloe kita panggil sobat-sobat jang soeka wajang maka kita kaloewarken soewara dalang dari *Fonograaf* itoe; 3e. saorang pematja tembang jang baik, kita soeroeh pematja dalem trompet itoe[.] Kaloe kita maoe tidoer kita kaloewarken soewara itoe’ (Tjahaja India, 16 April 1885).

But all this was merely wishful thinking (*aken tetapi ini perkataan semoewa pertjoema*), because the price of a phonograph at that time was 3,000 guilders.

P.B.'s report in *Tjahaja India* is useful for what it tells us about the social significance of recording technology's introduction to the Dutch East Indies society in the 1880s. It even tells us something about the social structure of Dutch East Indies colonial society. P.B. wrote that to test the performance of the machine, a Dutch spectator was asked to speak into its horn (*trompet*), then a rich Chinese man, who spoke loudly and full of self confidence into the machine's horn, and finally a Javanese nobleman. Apparently, the Javanese was a bit ashamed and embarrassed, a common condition experienced by the Native's first encounter with Western technological inventions, hence the spectators laughed at him. The machine successfully replicated the voices of the first two people. But the replicated sound of the Javanese nobleman was not so clear. Whether coincidental or not, this difference accurately reflects the relative levels of prestige of the Dutch, Chinese, and Javanese languages in Dutch East Indies society at that time.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, it suggests that sound technology contributed to cultural meaning and contestation of identity in the context of Dutch East Indies colonial society. P.B.'s comment that such a miraculous invention was God's gift to its inventor, after fifteen years of experimenting, suggests the people's disbelief about the invention. And P.B. predicted that the successors of the machine would be able to record even the quietest sound, such as the sound of the fall of a mosquito's wing.<sup>28</sup>

By 1889 Edison and his engineers had succeeded in designing a new and better phonograph, which employed wax as its recording material. Edison had worked hard and put much money into his experiments, and hoped that the new phonograph would reach a world market.<sup>29</sup> Wax was first used as a recording material by Charles Summer Tainter and was then adopted by Edison. Because Tainter had a patent on this, the Edison Company had to pay 25 guilders to Tainter for every one of the new-style phonographs it sold.<sup>30</sup> Then, on 25 April 1889, the new Edison Company phonograph was exhibited at the Academy of Science in Paris.<sup>31</sup>

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27 'Kaloë orang mengisi soewara itoe: dimoeka deket trompet itoe. Maka bersama toewan jang poenja itoe pekakas Fonograaf berkata keras didepan dekat trompet itoe, katanja: "Mijnheer Fonograaf kan goed Hollandsch". Maka laloe dikaloewarkan soewara itoe dari dalem pesawat itoe ia ini: "Mijnheer Fonograaf kan goed Hollandsch". Sjahdan maka laloe sa'orang Tjina bangsawan berkata keras didepan trompet maka dikaloewarkan djoega soewara itoe kombali oleh Fonograaf itoe. Pengabisan sa'orang Djawa bangsawan djoega berkata didepan deket trompet itoe dan pengabisan perkataannja jang djaoeh, laloe ditambahi sorak dan ketawa. Sreta dijkalowarken (sic), maka segala perkataan dan ketawa itoe kaloewar kombali samoewa, dengan napasnja jang ada keras itoe djoega kadengeran kombali aken tetap[i] soewara itoe samoewa misih koerang terang adanja krana soewara itoe seperti soewara dalem dada adanja' (*Tjahaja India*, 16 April 1885).

28 'Adapoen itoe pekakas kata orang, orang Amerika jang mendapetken. Maka dia mentjari akal itoe 15 tahoen lamanja bahroelah toewan Allah mengoerniai dia. Maka sekarang saia ingin melihat pekakas aken mengerasken soewara, jang djatoehnja satoe sajak sa'ekor njamoek bolih kadengeran, terlaloe terang adanja' (*Tjahaja India*, 16 April 1885). P.B.'s predictions seem to have become reality in our contemporary modern world.

29 *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 21 May 1892; *De Locomotief*, 23 May 1892.

30 [Brooshooft] (*De Locomotief*, 3 June 1892).

31 [Brooshooft] (*De Locomotief*, 3 June 1892). For more about how Europe welcomed the 'talking machine', see Gelatt 1956:69-79.

In the same year, a British professor, Douglas Archibald, who claimed to be Edison's 'classmate and intimate friend' – a fact that would have enhanced his credibility – travelled around the world in order to introduce and exhibit the new Edison phonograph.<sup>32</sup> In the middle of May 1892, he arrived in Java, where most people at that time regarded the recording of sounds as impossible.

## DEMONSTRATIONS OF THE NEW EDISON PHONOGRAPH IN JAVA

On 16 April 1892, the steamer *Nerbudda* left Calcutta and sailed for Singapore via Rangoon. Among its passengers were the Irishman Douglas Archibald and his wife, with a new 'miracle' machine in their luggage.<sup>33</sup> Archibald claimed he was a representative of Thomas Edison's National Phonograph Company from the United States. The Indies was the last leg of the Archibalds' world trip, which had begun in 1889.

In early April 1892 the couple appeared in Calcutta, at that time a prominent city under British colonial control, which had become an important gateway in Asia for white travellers sailing from Europe. Apparently, Archibald had already visited some European cities and Australia before he arrived in India. He was one of many nineteenth-century European travellers with new technology departing from London, Amsterdam, or Paris – which at that time was well-known for its exhibits and promotion of all the new technologies – heading for the Orient to seek luck and fortune. In Calcutta Archibald demonstrated the new phonograph.

Apparently, Archibald had visited Asia previously. Born at Hampstead, England, in 1851, Douglas Edmund Archibald was the son of a judge, Sir Thomas Dickson Archibald, and Sarah Smith. He attended St John's College, Oxford University, from which he obtained a BA in 1874 and an MA in 1879.<sup>34</sup> He then went to India, and taught mathematics at Patna College in Bengal from 1877 to 1881. Returning to England, Archibald was principal of Grosvenor House, a private school at Tunbridge Wells (Fig. 1.1).<sup>35</sup>

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32 *De Locomotief*, 6 May 1892.

33 *The Straits Times*, 4 May 1892, p. 265.

34 In the academic system at Oxford University there is a tradition as follows: a bachelor's degree graduate is eligible, after seven years from matriculation and without additional study, to purchase for a nominal fee an upgrade of his bachelor's degree to a MA degree (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University\\_of\\_Oxford#History](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_of_Oxford#History); accessed 12-3-2011). Archibald seems to have followed this system, so it is indeed possible that he got an MA from Oxford University in 1879, even though two years before he got that title, he had already left for India.

35 This information was obtained from Prof. Allan Everett Marble of Halifax, Canada, who is writing a book on the Archibald family, to which his grandmother belonged. Marble was unaware of Archibald's association with Edison's phonograph exhibitions in Southeast Asia. Marble mentioned that Archibald had married twice and had four children. One of his granddaughters, Prof. Isabel de Madariaga, aged 86, now lives in London (Marble, email, 18 and 21 September and 20 October 2005). Madariaga presented me with additional information about her grandfather (Madariaga, email, 24 October 2005). She mentioned that her grandmother (Archibald's first wife), Janet Helen Finlay (born at Glasgow, 1850), was the daughter of a wealthy cloth manufacturer in Glasgow. She was very badly treated by Archibald (he had other women) and she left him taking her four children soon after they settled in Grosvenor House, and went to live near her family in Glasgow. Archibald married again to a lady whose first name was Effie, probably short for Euphemia, a typical Scottish name, but she left him almost at once because of the same problem Finlay had had. It is uncertain whether it was Effie or



Archibald also claimed to have been a visiting professor at the University of Calcutta for three years.<sup>36</sup>

In early May 1892 the Archibalds arrived in Singapore, where they remained for approximately one week and gave phonograph demonstrations. The first was held on the evening of 8 May 1892 at the Singapore Town Hall. *The Straits Times*, the prominent Singapore weekly, reported that Archibald had spent the preceding two or three years travelling around the world with a phonograph. The exhibition was preceded by a lecture in which he described the various efforts that had been made in the recording history of the world to capture and mechanically preserve sound. The lecture was closed with a brief recital of Edison's past achievements and present ambitions. Furthermore, *The Straits Times* writes:

Following the lecture came a number of phonographic recitals (if they may be so styled). Edison's Phonograph is a small instrument, regarded in connection with the volume of sound which it produces, and it may be noted that all genuine Edison phonographs are of similar size and pattern, that they are not on the market, and that this is the first phonograph that has been in the East, all other alleged phonographs being of the phonautograph class, and as inferior to the phonograph as the German concertina is to a grand organ. The selection last night comprised a cornet solo, by Levy (played in 1891); a masterly banjo solo, by Vane (1890); a remarkable bassoon solo, played in London in 1891 by E.F. James, of the Royal Italian Opera; a tin-whistle solo by an amateur, with various amateurisms fully accentuated; comic and sentimental songs; a Parsee song, which was remarkable for clearness; orchestral and brass-band selections; a typical specimen of Salvation Army 'worship'; a speech by Sir John Forrest (premier of Western Australia); and an extremely pretty xylophone and piano duet. Mr. Archibald also spoke into the instrument, which reproduced his utterances with wonderful fidelity immediately afterwards. A gentleman from the audience also sang into the funnel, but as he occasionally threw his voice outside the orifice of the instrument, the reproduction was not so clear. The entertainment was of reasonable length, and was thoroughly interesting in character. Professor Archibald's exhibitions are under the patronage of H.E. the Governor, who is expected to attend to-night; last night the Hon'ble W.E. Maxwell was present.<sup>37</sup>

The second demonstration was held on 9 May in the same building. A number of new selections were presented, and the entertainment was again very satisfactory. The third and last exhibition was to be the following evening. It was also reported that Archibald would proceed shortly to Java, where he would be represented by Allan Hamilton as his manager.<sup>38</sup>

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another woman who travelled with Archibald to Asia in 1892, but it certainly was not Finlay. Madariaga does not think her grandmother went with her grandfather to Asia, because her mother (Finlay's daughter), who only met Archibald (her father) once after their separation, never told her anything about it. Finlay died in 1908. However, Allan Everett Marble recorded that Prof. Archibald married just two times: first in 1876 to Janet Helen Finlay and second on 6 August 1908 to Frances Elizabeth Dunn, daughter of Major Dunn (Marble 2008:261-3).

36 *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 14 June 1892. See also *De Locomotief*, 31 May and 2 June 1892.

37 *The Straits Times*, 10 May 1892, p. 274. This report was quoted in *De Locomotief*, 13 May 1892 and *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 16 May 1892.

38 *The Straits Times*, 10 May 1892, p. 274.





**Figure 1.1:** Photographs of Douglas Archibald. Left: Archibald as young man. The inscription below the picture indicates that it was made sometime during the years Archibald studied in Oxford before he obtained an MA from the University in 1879. Right: Archibald with his first wife, Janet Helen Finlay (1850-1908). The picture was taken between 1881 and 1889, when Archibald and Finlay were living in Tunbridge Wells, near London (Courtesy of family of Isabel de Madariaga in London).

In the second week of May 1892, Archibald and his wife made preparations to leave Singapore; their next destination was Surabaya in the Dutch East Indies. However, they had to delay their departure, probably due to lack of transportation, because only two vessels weekly served the Surabaya–Singapore route at that time. As a result, Archibald gave two additional demonstrations in Singapore on 10 and 11 May.<sup>39</sup> These were held at the regimental theatre in Tanglin district, the elite European compound and the British soldiers' base camp in Singapore (near the current Orchard Road) (Makepeace *et al.* 1921, 1:489; Isma'il 1924:17). Apparently, Archibald's demonstrations in the regimental theatre were mainly intended for government officials, soldiers, and their families. The media released no reports about them.

Archibald's phonograph demonstrations in Singapore, primarily attended by and intended for the white ruling class in the colony, support Jonathan Sterne's notion that 'sound-reproduction technologies represented the promise of science, rationality, and industry and the power of the white man to co-opt and supersede domains of life that were previously considered

39 The Straits Times, 10 May 1892, p. 276.

to be magical' (Sterne 2003:9). Based on *The Straits Times* reports, Archibald's demonstrations in Singapore were attended by upper-class white people. There is no indication that these demonstrations were attended by Natives or other Asian-race spectators. In those days, watching exhibitions of new technological inventions like the phonograph in the European colonies in Asia was a prestigious luxury reflecting the socio-economic and political segregation between the colonizers and the colonized subjects. As Michael Adas (1989) has shown, Europeans in colonial settings viewed technical differences as evidence of the superiority of Western over indigenous cultures, thus reflecting racist ideologies.

The Archibalds left Singapore after the second phonograph demonstration in Tanglin and sailed for Batavia on the *SS Godavery*, arriving there on 17 May. They soon continued their trip by steamer to the capital of East Java, Surabaya, on Wednesday morning, 18 May, arriving in the afternoon.<sup>40</sup>

As *The Straits Times* reported, Archibald's phonograph show during his trip to Java was organized by Allan Hamilton, a professional manager from Surabaya.<sup>41</sup> Hamilton, who sometimes appeared in newspapers with the title 'Professor' attached to his name, apparently was a freelance manager who was often contracted by foreign entertainment troupes to arrange their performances during their tours of the Indies.<sup>42</sup> Archibald needed a professional like Hamilton: the machine was absolutely novel and just beginning to be incorporated into the urban entertainment world and it was unfamiliar to the public of Java. With Hamilton's assistance, Archibald could hope that many spectators would attend his demonstrations.

Archibald probably chose Surabaya for his first phonograph demonstration in the Indies because it was the largest and most prominent city of the colony at the time and because urban entertainment was increasingly evident there. In fact, urban entertainment blossomed in Surabaya more than in other cities of Java. In the late nineteenth century, it was 'a major theatre city. Surabaya theatre, located at Komediëplein, hosted touring English music-hall companies, Italian opera, French troupes performing *opéra comique* and *opéra bouffe*, and Dutch ensembles enacting farces and melodramas' (Cohen 2001:325). Opera and chamber music were enjoyed regularly by military and society clubs. Military music was often presented in the town square for public entertainment. Many European, Chinese, and Native performance groups, such as *wayang potehi*, *wayang kulit*, and *komedi peranakan*, performed in Surabaya frequently. Groups performing *bangsawan* theatre – an adaptation of the Parsi theatre of South

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40 *Nieuws- en Advertentie-blad voor Probolinggo en Omstreken*, 18 May 1892.

41 *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 19 May 1892. The professional manager who could be contracted to organize art performances seems to have emerged together with the rise of urban entertainment in major Javanese towns in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. For the emergence of urban entertainment and popular culture in colonial Indonesia and Malaysia, see Milone 1966 and Wan Abdul Kadir 1988.

42 *De Locomotief*, 31 May 1892. In the weeks before he signed the contract with Archibald, Hamilton organized a tour of the European operetta troupe Ada Maven's Folly Company, owned by Frank Maven. The troupe travelled to the Orient, including Singapore and the Dutch East Indies, to perform dances, songs and comedy acts. On 6 May, Hamilton completed his contract with this group and announced that he would organize Archibald's phonograph demonstrations upon his arrival from Singapore. See *De Locomotief*, 6 and 23 May 1892; *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 9 May 1892.

Asia – travelled from the Malay Peninsula (Penang, Johor, Singapore) to Java, Borneo, and Sumatra (Cohen 2002a). Likewise, other Asian performing groups, such as Komedi India and Komedi Jepang, performed in Surabaya on their tours around the Indies. The musical box or *orgel*, which was developed in Switzerland before the phonograph (Mosoriak 1943; Clark 1979), had also been demonstrated to the European upper classes in Surabaya and other major towns in Java. Western circus groups on their tours to the Orient always stopped in Surabaya. Often there were two entertainment groups conducting performances in the city at the same time. The first *komedie stamboel* group, a popular genre of urban theatre in the Indies, was established in Surabaya in 1891 (Cohen 2001:331-6), one year before Archibald's arrival. While the first commercial projections of moving pictures had been appeared in Surabaya on April 1897, brought by a French photographer based in Batavia by the name of Louis Talbot (Ruppin 2014:6). Undoubtedly, Surabaya could be expected to be receptive to the promotion of new media technology like Edison's phonograph.

Archibald's demonstrations in Surabaya were announced in promotional wording in local newspapers two days before he arrived: 'in the week ahead the *nieuwtje* ('novelty') and *laatste uitvinding* ('latest invention') the phonograph will be demonstrated in Surabaya'.<sup>43</sup> In advertisements in the Surabaya and Semarang press, Archibald stated that he had been directly asked by Edison to introduce his phonograph around the world. Archibald also claimed to have been the first to introduce the machine to the public in England, Australia,<sup>44</sup> New Zealand, Ceylon and India. He claimed his demonstrations had been attended by some 500,000 spectators in the preceding three years. Archibald's world tour aimed to make the wonderful invention better known and to inform the Edison Company about how it was received in the press. The announcements referred to his collection of clippings from 150 English, Irish, Scottish, Australian, New Zealand, British-Indian and Ceylonese newspapers which, almost without exception, expressed their admiration for the instrument.<sup>45</sup>

To Archibald himself Java was not unfamiliar, because he had been a member of the Krakatoa Committee of the Royal Society of London, for which he had conducted extensive research on the impact of the Krakatau eruption in the Sunda Strait in 1883. In fact, he is on record as one of 13 members of this committee, which published a report on the impact of the eruption:<sup>46</sup> chapter 4 (313 pages) of this thick book was mostly written by Archibald. He also wrote other scholarly works, published in London and Calcutta.<sup>47</sup> Actually, his expertise was

43 Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad, 9, 11, and 14 May 1892.

44 Archibald visited Australia in 1890. His phonograph demonstrations at the Athenaeum theatre in Melbourne, just six months after its American debut, were attended by many spectators and were enthusiastically received by the local press (<http://www.exero.com/mastergate/secured/collectibles/edison.htm> ; accessed 28-10-2004).

45 See, for example, *De Locomotief*, 1 and 2 June 1892.

46 Symons 1888. See *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 14 May 1892; *De Locomotief*, 31 May 1892; *Java-Bode*, 12 July 1892. Symons et al. (1888) wrote Archibald's name as 'Douglas E[dmund] Archibald' – without 'professor'. As I describe below, his professorial title became a subject of debate in the local press following his confrontation with H.E. Eijssell, chief editor of *Soerabaija-Courant*.

47 I want to express my thanks to archivists Joanna Corden and Clara Anderson of the Royal Society, and Graham Barlett, library information manager of the British National Meteorological Library and Archive, for their useful information about Archibald's scholarly career in England and his scholarly publications (Corden, email, 13 September 2004; Anderson, email, 24 September 2004; Barlett, email, 15 and 20 September 2004).

in meteorological science, and he was a fellow of the British Royal Meteorological Society. In this connection he conducted observations in 1885 and 1886, for example, on the aerometer, and in 1888 he succeeded in an experiment with a kite which 'will have an important bearing on the future of [...] the science of military ballooning'.<sup>48</sup> Archibald also claimed to be a member of other scientific organizations. His book, *The story of the earth's atmosphere* (first published in 1897), for example, was reprinted several times between 1898 and 1918. In view of his academic work, it is clear that Archibald was not just a white adventurer promoting magical new European technology in the Orient in order to seek his fortune, as was common in the nineteenth century. Rather he seems to have been a scientist. Archibald's advertisements in the press stressed his academic credentials, and this was apparently meant to create the impression that the instrument he would demonstrate was a sophisticated technological product and, therefore, most appropriate to be appreciated by rational minds belonging to the educated classes.

The press in Surabaya and Semarang wrote enthusiastically of the new instrument that would be demonstrated by Archibald. 'For the first time people in Java can hear the recordings of Gladstone, the British Prime Minister, the famous singers Adelina Patti<sup>49</sup> and Stanley'.<sup>50</sup> This suggests that early phonograph recordings made in the 1880s and 1890s also recorded what Richard Bauman and Patrick Feaster (2005) call 'oratorical performance' of the world's leading politicians. Following the practice of foreign entertainment troupes at that time, which often went along the railways, shipping lines, and main roads connecting the main Javanese towns, Archibald prepared a road show. His next destinations would be Pasuruan, Probolinggo and Semarang, other important towns on the north coast of Java. The editor of the daily *De Locomotief* in Semarang, Brooshoof, wrote a long article entitled 'De nieuwere phonograaf' ('The newer phonograph') in which he described in detail the characteristics of the instrument that Archibald was to demonstrate. Brooshoof encouraged the public to see the exhibition in the following weeks at the Semarang Schouwburg. He also described the distinguishing features of the new type of phonograph and compared it with the one that had been demonstrated in Java previously by De Greef. He mentioned that the earlier instrument had had a lot of shortcomings; it was only a parody of the real voice (Brooshoof 1892).

The first advertisement of Archibald's phonograph demonstrations was in *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad* on 11 May 1892, less than one week before his arrival, and it was published continually throughout the week (*Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 11 to 21 May 1892, 'Advertentie' section; Fig. 1.2). The daily *Soerabaija-Courant* and Thieme's *Nieuw Advertentieblad* published the same half-page advertisement in their issues from 11 to 20 May. These advertisements announced that the newest Edison Company phonograph, 'the miracle of the nineteenth

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For Archibald's scholarly publications available in the British National Meteorological Library and Archive, see record numbers 801391, 787570, 801394, 801390, 801393, 801392 and 801395 of the Library's collections.

48 See report 'Aerostatic experiment in Tunbridge Wells' in *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 18 May 1888, in which Archibald was called Professor. Thanks to Isabel de Madariaga for sending me a copy of this newspaper.

49 The Italian Adelina Patti was a famous singer in the late nineteenth century, particularly in England and the United States (Moore 1976:97-102). Patti, who studied with Gioachino Rossini, was a favourite of Queen Victoria (Gaisberg 1946:90-1).

50 *De Locomotief*, 6 May 1892.

century' (*wonder der 19e eeuw*) would be demonstrated by Professor Archibald in Surabaya on Friday 20 May and Sunday 22 May, and that the instrument was appearing 'for the first time in Java'. The demonstrations would begin at 9:30 p.m. in Surabaya's theatre, with admission between one and three guilders depending on the kind of ticket. The Surabaya public were reminded that Archibald would give only two demonstrations in their town and that he would be travelling in Java for only one month.

## SCHOUWBURG TE SOERABAIA.

*Met toestemming van den Resident*

Voorloopige aankondiging  
**IETS BUITENGEWOONS**  
**VRIJDAG en ZONDAG 20 en 22 Mei**  
*Aanvang te 9.30 iederen avond precies*  
**EDISON'S**  
**LUID SPREKENDE PHONOGBAAF**  
 die op de meest verschillende punten van den  
 schouwburg, duidelijk kan gehoord worden.

**Professor Douglas Archibald**  
**M. A. F. R. S.**  
 heeft de eer het Publiek te Soerabaia te be-  
 richten, dat hij zal geven:

**TWEE VOORSTELLINGEN**  
 met  
**de nieuwste Phonograaf van**  
**EDISON'S VINDING**  
 Bekend bij allen die hem gehoord hebben als het

**WONDER DER 19e EEUW**  
 De meest aantrekkelijke en unieke ontspanning  
 die immer aan het publiek werd aangeboden  
 en die door ruim

**250.000 Personen**  
 in **Australië, Nieuw Zeeland u**  
**Indië** met verwondering werd aangehoord.  
 Meer bijzonder's in ons nummer van morgen

**PROFESSOR ARCHIBALD**  
 zal slechts **TWEE** voorstellingen  
**IN SOERABAIA GEVEN.**  
 Ten gevolge van zijn a. s. vertrek in Juni a.s.  
 naar de tentoonstelling te **Chicago**

**Entrée:**  
 f 3.— f 2.— f 1.—

Bespreken van plaatsen kan aan der Schouw-  
 burg geschieden op en na den **19 Mei.**  
 De Ondernemer voor  
**PROFESSOR ARCHIBALD** } **Allan Hamilton,**

**Attentie**  
**Het zal Mr Hamilton**  
 aangenaam zijn met de *Directies van Socie-  
 teiten* uit steden in den omtrek in onder-  
 handeling te treden.

**PROF. ARCHIBALD**  
**ZAL SOERABAIA**  
 verlaten op den **25n Mei.** en zal zijn  
**Eerste voorstelling .**  
**TE SEMARANG**  
**GEVEN OP DEN 5n JUNI.**  
*Brieven enz te adreſseeren*  
**ALLAN HAMILTON,**  
*Hotel des Indes, Soerabaia,*

714

Figure 1.2:  
 Advertisement for  
 Archibald's exhibition  
 in Surabaya (Source:  
 Soerabaiasch Handelsblad,  
 14 May 1892)

In the middle of June Archibald was to sail for the United States to participate in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The recordings to be presented were described as 'reproductions of every conceivable kind of sound from all parts of the world', including, as in Singapore previously, instrumental and vocal music as well as speeches by prominent politicians and religious leaders, especially British ones.

### 'PRESS STING' IN THE NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES

On Wednesday evening, 18 May 1892, soon after Archibald and his wife arrived in Surabaya, Hamilton arranged for them to meet some twenty persons in the coffee room of the Surabaya



Schouwburg in Komedieplein.<sup>51</sup> The meeting was to introduce Archibald to a number of distinguished guests, all high Dutch colonial officials and their wives, and journalists, while demonstrating the phonograph for them. The daily *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad* reported that:

Mr. D[ouglas] himself spoke into the tube and a few moments later the words came to us clearly. A sample [test] by Mr. H[amilton] from Surabaya failed because the sound of this gentleman was dull. After the end of the official performance a few gentlemen sang a song into the phonograph that was reproduced clearly as well. We confidently, therefore, recommend a visit tomorrow or on Sunday.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile the *Soerabaija-Courant* drew attention to national identity by writing that Thomas Alva Edison, the inventor of the newest phonograph, was of Dutch ancestry. The writer mentioned that the performance of the phonograph was very impressive and wished Archibald success during his trip in the Indies.<sup>53</sup> Welcoming Archibald's first demonstration for the general public, to be held on Friday 20 May, H.E. Eijssell, chief editor of *Soerabaija-Courant* (Termorshuizen 2001:228-33, 329-30) wrote:

*Edison's phonograph.* I was notified that Mr. Hamilton (of the Phonograph Company Limited as I almost said) would honour my office with a visit this morning, to inform me, and with me my readers, that tonight at ten thirty in the Schouwburg, the first show will be held. A great many seats are already reserved, and therefore it looks like Archibald will have every reason to be happy that he did not bypass our city. The next performance will be given on Sunday and this will certainly be the last public show held here, because of previously made engagements.<sup>54</sup>

The first public phonograph demonstration by Archibald was attended by Dutch and, not surprisingly, British immigrants of Surabaya. Apparently, the British were curious to hear the voice of William E. Gladstone, the leading politician and orator of their country of origin which, according to the newspaper reports they had read, could be heard here in Java through this new 'miracle' machine. Apart from that, the fact that the machine was to be demonstrated by a fellow British citizen surely attracted them. Unfortunately, the demonstration was not as successful as that of 19 May because of technical problems. The sound of the recordings of music and speeches it played was not clear, and the machine itself broke down after being turned on for one hour. This lack of success was caused by the fact that the machine was a crude model, so that it could not yet generate an ideal reproduction where 'the loudness of the reproduced sounds should be within the range at which the listener is accustomed to hear the original sounds' (Wilson and Webb 1929:15). As Archibald had only one phonograph with him, it was most unfortunate when it broke down. A member of the audience named F. de Hertog sent a letter to the editor of Thieme's *Nieuw Advertentieblad* (21-05-1892) in which he expressed his dissatisfaction.

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51 For more about the Surabaya Schouwburg (with interior and exterior pictures), see Faber 1931:333-7.

52 *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 19 May 1892.

53 *Soerabaija-Courant*, 19 May 1892.

54 *Soerabaija-Courant*, 20 May 1892.

The second public demonstration was held on Sunday evening, 22 May. Alas, the machine was again defective. The several hundred spectators showed their disapproval, including Archibald's fellow British citizens in Surabaya who 'don't hesitate to call him "a real swindler"'. The spectators were charged 'one guilder extra on top of the entrance fee of three guilders – none too reasonable in itself – just for presenting Gladstone's voice and speech which, according to many Englishmen's feelings, quite literally doesn't have "anything like the Grand Old Man's voice"'. They had bought expensive tickets just to watch 'less than an hour and it showed not even one sixth of all the things in the programme'. Archibald was verbally abused during the exhibition and became the object of ridicule by Eijssell as reflected in his report published a few days later in *Soerabaija-Courant*. 'It would be wise for him not to return [to the Dutch East Indies] in the next 25 years, with or without phonograph or any other miraculous instrument to show', he said.

We are the kind of good-natured people who allow themselves to be cheated regularly year after year and to be taken in, in the worst possible way, by all kinds of exotic showmen, and 'professors', swindlers, and jokers, who relieve us of our money, with which they travel, laughing at us. But there will come a time when it all comes to an end, and that's what is happening right now. This Mr. 'Professor' can pride himself on having spoiled things here for many of those who come after him.

He can be sure that the audience won't put their trust in the good faith of such 'learned' gentlemen before having seen proof of it.

No title of 'Professor' or any learned, mysterious-looking letters like M.A. and F.R.S. after a name or on a card or poster will be of any help.

So we gladly call out a well-meant 'Adieu' to Mr. Professor, under the explicit condition he won't take it for an 'Au revoir'. We also hope that Mr. Allan Hamilton will take care from now on and won't pledge his word anymore without knowing the 'patron' well and having seen good and very trustworthy testimonials.<sup>55</sup>

The tumult that took place on the occasion of this gathering of educated people was indeed unusual. The incident to a certain degree reflects the different characters of the British and other (white) groups of spectators in the colonies. But we should go further and consider what triggered this incident: a *phonograph* – a technology recently invented, which could reproduce sound and preserve it for all time – caused great amazement. To quote the press: it could 'speak', it was 'a miracle' and 'unbelievable!' The unpleasant incident could only happen because the audience's high expectations were disappointed: the words 'real swindler' suggest the audience's impression that the phonograph was just a conjurer's tool, and Archibald's performance was nothing more than an ordinary magic show; the technological and real capabilities of the machine, so strongly emphasized in the advertisements, were undermined by technical problems.

After reading the *Soerabaija-Courant*'s negative report on him, Archibald and his wife visited Eijssell in his office at Huis Kali-Asin No. 429. Apparently there was a fracas between Archibald and Eijssell during the visit. Archibald gave Eijssell what was called an *Amerikaansche*

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55 *Soerabaija-Courant*, 23 May 1892, as quoted in the Surakarta newspaper *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 27 May 1892.



argumentatie: he hit Eijssell on the head, which resulted in bruising. Archibald's attack on Eijssell became hot news in the media of Java, and was even reported by the Singapore press.<sup>56</sup> For Archibald himself, the incident disrupted his tour. The demonstration for the Surabaya branch of the Concordia Military Club, which was booked for 25 May,<sup>57</sup> had to be cancelled. According to the media report, the engagement was cancelled because Archibald had received information that certain people intended to damage his phonograph during the demonstration:

We called Mr. Hamilton to find out what caused this [cancellation]. The answer was: Prof. Archibald had heard from different sources that there would be riots that night. It seemed that the 'Chinese church' [rumour] has done its duty? Prof. Archibald stayed away because he feared for his instruments.

We assured Professor Archibald that the visitors of Concordia are decent people. Because of the presence of ladies, they would not allow anything to happen.

But too bad, it was too late. The instruments were already removed. What a pity for the large number of ladies and gentlemen who showed up.<sup>58</sup>

The cancellation gave Eijssell a further chance to criticize Archibald, and more harshly than before. Eijssell mentioned the physical injury he had received from Archibald. He accused Archibald of swindling the citizens of a Dutch colony, defrauding the public of Surabaya. 'Collegiality among the servants of the Queen of the World [Batavia] is rare, yet here every other feeling should have been pushed aside to make way for very justified indignation about an insult to the independent leader of public opinion who warned his fellow citizens of swindling,' Eijssell exclaimed.<sup>59</sup>

The Archibald case led to a polemic in the press.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, while scrutinizing the press for news about himself, Archibald continued his trip to two other East Javanese towns, Pasuruan and Probolinggo. His manager had booked demonstrations in these towns on 26 May and 27 May respectively.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, the public there were not so interested in seeing Archibald's phonograph demonstrations. This seems to have been due to the *Soerabaija-Courant's* negative reports of his unsuccessful shows in Surabaya, which were also published in the Probolinggo and Pasuruan newspapers.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, Archibald's phonograph demonstrations in these towns had a low attendance, resulting in a financial loss for Archibald.

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56 *Soerabaija-Courant*, 24 May 1892; see also *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 27 May 1892; *The Straits Times*, 21 June 1892, p. 370.

57 *Soerabaija-Courant*, 24 and 25 May 1892.

58 *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 27 May 1892.

59 *Soerabaija-Courant*, 27 May 1892.

60 See, among others, *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 27 May 1892; *De Locomotief*, 4 June 1892; *Soerabaija-Courant*, 7 June 1892; *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad*, 7 June 1892.

61 Archibald's programs in Pasuruan and Probolinggo were advertised in *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad* for three days, from 23 to 25 May 1892 and in *Soerabaija-Courant* on 24 and 25 May 1892.

62 *Nieuws- en Advertentie-blad voor Probolinggo en Omstreken*, 25 May 1892.

De Locomotief published Archibald's self-defence against Eijssell's accusation and advertised his scheduled demonstrations in Semarang (Fig. 1.3). Archibald clarified that his title was not false:

Note. The *Soerab[aia]-Courant* unjustifiably attacked Prof. Archibald and the merits of the phonograph last May 23. Prof. Archibald thinks that he, being a stranger who displayed *one of the greatest inventions of this century*, only needs to appeal to the Semarang public in order to obtain an *unbiased opinion* about the merits of the latest invention of the genius Edison. Looking back at the personal attack by the *Soerab[aia]-Courant*, Professor Archibald deems it necessary to state that Lord Salisbury, England's Prime Minister in 1875, granted him the title 'professor', for which he still has evidence.<sup>63</sup>

In De Locomotief Archibald complained that he had suffered losses from the 'personal attack' (*persoonlijken aanval*) by Eijssell and subsequent negative reports in the press. He had lost his credibility, and as a result the public had no interest in attending his demonstrations.<sup>64</sup>

Apparently, Hamilton continued to make efforts to counter the negative publicity about Archibald generated by the *Soerabaija-Courant*. For example, he mentioned that Archibald had received letters of praise from the board members of the Phoenix Club in Kediri on 31 May, signed by 'Messrs. Schram, Bodemeijer, Noothout, Wijzelaar and Wolvekamp', which expressed their admiration for the new phonograph demonstrated by Archibald in Pasuruan and Probolinggo. They were satisfied, mentioned that the machine operated smoothly, and strongly recommended an acquaintance with this wonderful instrument.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, Eijssell's negative reports about Archibald in the *Soerabaija-Courant* had spread everywhere, even to Batavia.<sup>66</sup> Eijssell continued to publish harsh criticism of Archibald. From his place of recuperation in Malang, he commented that a 'professor' from abroad who committed acts of physical violence was disgraceful. 'Here in the Netherlands Indies,' he wrote, echoing the sensibility of upper-class Europeans in the colony's social hierarchy, 'it is only among the common people that such actions occur often.' Furthermore, Eijssell raised the question 'whether a dignitary like "Professor" Douglas Archibald could be touched by our law?' Satirically, he wrote: 'Poor, poor Yorick, alas! We must be careful! Soon we will get an English squadron here that will demand our professor and shoot us down! To be the boss in one's own home and to remain so with regards to the stranger who violates our laws, has already become an international crime!'<sup>67</sup> – a sarcastic comment suggesting national sentiment and rivalry between the English and Dutch colonials.

Surakarta's *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden* covered the Archibald affair by citing reports published by the *Soerabaija-Courant*.<sup>68</sup> The *Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad* attempted to take a more neutral

63 De Locomotief, 31 May 1892.

64 De Locomotief, 4 June 1892.

65 De Locomotief, 2 and 3 June 1892.

66 Java-Bode, 23 June 1892.

67 Soerabaija-Courant, 7 June 1892.

68 De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden, 27 May 1892.

*Met toestemming van den Resident,*  
**Semarangsche schouwburg**  
 voor enkele avonden slechts  
 aanvangende  
**Zondag, 4 Juni a. s.**  
*'s avonds 9 uur precies.*

**Het wonder van de 19e eeuw!**  
**PROFESSOR**  
**Douglas Archibald**  
**M. A.**  
 zal een vertooning geven van  
**EDISON'S**  
 Luid sprekende phonograaf,  
 die duidelijk in al's gedeelten van de zaal  
 hoorbaar is.  
 „Enige uren en heeren zullen uitge-  
 duld worden in het instrument te spre-  
 ken of te zingen wat oomiddelikt zal worden  
 weergegeven.  
 De aandacht van het Semarangsche pu-  
 blik wordt gevestigd op de volgende bijzon-  
 derheden.  
 1e Deze **WONDERY LEE** machine is  
 direct van **EDISON** afkomstig.  
 2e Prof. **ARCHIBALD** was de eerste, die  
 deze machine in Engeland, Australië, Nieuw-  
 Zeeland, I. d. d. en Caylon bekend maakte; in  
 welke landen zij door meer dan  
**500.000 personen**  
 werd gehoord, in de laatste verlopen drie  
 jaren.  
 3e Prof. **ARCHIBALD** is door **EDIS** N  
 speciaal belast deze machine te vertoonen en  
 geen andere gelijksoortige machine heeft ooit  
**EDISON'S** werkplaatsen verlaten, om ten-  
 toongesteld te worden.

**Aanteekening.**  
 Een zeer o. blijkz. aanv. is gedaan door  
 de Soerab. Courant van 23 Mei, op prof  
**ARCHIBALD** en op de verdiensten van  
 de phonograaf. Prof. **ARCHIBALD** is een  
 uit hij, als vertooning van de grootste  
 uitvindingen van deze eeuw vertoonende,  
 slechts een beroep heeft te doen op het  
 Semarangsche publiek, tevens een om-  
 bevooroordeelds opinie te verkrijgen omtrent  
 de verdiensten van de laatste uitvinding  
 van den geniale **EDISON**.  
 Nog eens terugkomende op den meest on-  
 waardigen persoonlijke aanval door de Soer.  
 Courant gedaan, vindt Prof. **ARCHIBALD**  
 het noodig te verklaaren, dat hem „den titel  
 van „PROFESSOR“ is verleend door Lord  
 Salisbury, Engelschlands „eersten minister“ in  
 1876, waarvan de bewijzen zich in zijn  
 bezit bevinden.  
 Prof. **ARCHIBALD** wenst ook mede  
 te deelen, dat hij door het Kon. Genootsch.  
 van Gr. Brit. speciaal belast was, een Engelsch  
 verlag te geven van de gedenkwaardige uit-  
 barsting van de Krakatau.

**Entréeprijzen f.3. f.2. f.1.**  
 Militairen, alleen in de derde rang;  
 tegen half prijs  
 Plaatjes kunnen besproken wor-  
 den op Zondag morgen, in den schouw-  
 burg, tusschen 9 - 12 uur.

3085

standpoint. It gave a balanced account of the Archibald-Eijssell affair, as reflected in the opinion article issued on 27 May 1892 under the title 'De roeping der pers' ('The vocation of the press') written by its chief editor, H.G. Bertelds. He criticized the unfavourable report written by Eijssell and deeply regretted that Archibald had resorted to violence after being represented negatively in a short newspaper column (entrefilet). He also wondered why Archibald did not make use of his right to respond in the press. Furthermore, Bertelds warned readers that the Soerabaija-Courant reports about Archibald might be coloured by the individual point of view of its chief editor.

The letters to the editor that rolled off the press in Surabaya and other towns caused serious trouble for Archibald. His demonstrations for the Yogyakarta Club on 1 and 2 June and then in Solo on 3 June all had to be cancelled.<sup>69</sup> On Saturday, 4 June 1892, Archibald arrived in Semarang to give phonograph demonstrations in the Schouwburg. But Eijssell's sharp pen seems to have been effective: just a couple of hours after Archibald arrived in Semarang, the police arrested him. He was detained in prison overnight, and the next morning (Sunday, 5 June) he was taken back to Surabaya under police escort:

Mr. Douglas Archibald was taken by fast train to Surabaya on Sunday morning, under the escort of Wijber, the bailiff [schout], in a second-class carriage. It was the bailiff's task to treat the prisoner courteously and politely as far as was possible, while keeping an eye on him. Mrs. A[rchibald] accompanied her husband, but she had to pay for herself.<sup>70</sup>

After being confined to a prison cell at Surabaya, Archibald came to court on 28 June 1892.<sup>71</sup> Archibald was accused of assaulting Eijssell resulting in physical injury. The British consul in Surabaya, Warren, was drawn into the

Figure 1.3: Advertisement for Archibald's exhibition in Semarang with a clarification of his controversial professorial title. The exhibition was later cancelled (Source: De Locomotief, 31 May 1892)

69 De Locomotief, 28 May 1892; De Locomotief, 30 May 1892.

70 De Locomotief, 7 June 1892; see also Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad 7 June 1892; De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden 8 June 1892; Nieuws- en Advertentie-blad voor Probolinggo en Omstreken, 11 June 1892.

71 Soerabaija-Courant, 27 June 1892.

case. He, together with a lawyer named Mounier, assisted the defendant. Two eyewitnesses, who seem to have observed the disturbance between Archibald and the British spectators, were presented at court. One was an Englishman named Weber, the other a Javanese individual whose name was not noted. Furthermore, an expert witness who had treated the victim, Dr. Fischer, also gave evidence. There was a sworn translator (named Versnel) arranged for Archibald because the defendant did not speak Dutch.<sup>72</sup>

Consul Warren tried to get the defendant out on bail, but was unsuccessful, as the law of the land did not admit bail for such cases. He argued that his client's action had been unpremeditated. Considering that his client had been detained prior to the trial, Mounier asked the judge to commute the sentence.<sup>73</sup> Citing the Indies press, *The Straits Times* reported the decision of the Surabaya court:

The other day Professor Archibald was arrested at Semarang for having, so it was alleged, assaulted the editor of the *Surabaya Courant* who had adversely criticized his phonograph show. The case came before the Court of Justice at Soerabaya on the 28th of June and the public prosecutor urged the infliction of the penalty of two months imprisonment and costs. The counsel for the defence pleaded absence of premeditation, and, while acknowledging that the defendant's conduct called for some punishment, argued in favour of the lightest possible penalty, taking into account the long detention under arrest he had gone through.<sup>74</sup>

After a heated exchange of arguments and counterarguments during the last session, on 30 June, the court delivered its verdict: 'The court could not assume that the act was premeditated and considering [that] the defendant had already spent three weeks in prison, the court sentenced Professor Archibald to a fine of 100 guilders.'<sup>75</sup>

#### ARCHIBALD'S TRIP TO WEST JAVA

After the court of Surabaya decided his case, Archibald quickly left this town, apparently to continue his tour of Java. First, he wanted to return to Semarang, to give a phonograph demonstration in the Schouwburg, which had originally been advertised for the first week of June, but had now been rescheduled by his manager for Monday, 11 July, at 9:30 a.m.<sup>76</sup>

Both Hamilton and Archibald with their wives travelled by the steamer *Van Diemen*, which left Surabaya on 9 July for Batavia, passing through Semarang. However, when the vessel transited in Semarang port, Archibald did not stop, and once again the phonograph demonstration in Semarang was cancelled. This second cancellation was announced in *De*

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72 *De Locomotief*, 29 and 30 June 1892; *The Straits Times*, 21 June 1892, p. 370; *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 1 July 1892.

73 *Nieuws- en Advertentie-blad voor Probolinggo en Omstreken*, 29 June 1892.

74 *The Straits Times*, 19 July 1892, p. 429.

75 *The Straits Times*, 19 July 1892, p. 429; see also *Soerabaija-Courant*, 27 June 1892; *De Telefoon*, 30 June 1892.

76 *De Locomotief*, 7 July 1892. This was the last advertisement of Archibald's demonstrations placed in this newspaper.

*Locomotief*, and attributed to the professor's health.<sup>77</sup> It seems that Archibald feared he would be unable to attract spectators after the trouble in Surabaya, which had become widely known through press reports.

So, together with their wives, the two men continued their trip to West Java on 10 July on the same vessel, arriving in Batavia on 11 July.<sup>78</sup> 'Professor Douglas Archibald, who arrived from Semarang yesterday, will show Edison's phonograph on Thursday 14 July at Buitenzorg and Tuesday 19 July here, with all the improvements that the famous inventor has applied so far', the *Java-Bode* wrote to welcome Archibald to Batavia.<sup>79</sup> The ticket price was decreased. Archibald was also to appear in Bandung and Sukabumi.<sup>80</sup>

There are no reports about these demonstrations except the one in Batavia. Possibly the others were cancelled. Generally, the West Java press was not so enthusiastic about Archibald's tour. Apparently, the media's interest in Batavia was now focused on Filli's Circus from Italy, which gave performances in various parts of this city (including Koningsplein and Glodok) during most of July 1892. Almost every day, the prominent Batavian newspapers reported the circus's programs and performances.

Archibald's demonstration in Batavia was postponed: he appeared for the Harmonie Club on 25 July and was to appear at the Concordia Military Club Batavia branch on 26 July.<sup>81</sup>

The demonstration for the Harmonie Club seems to have gone quite smoothly, although the recording test with the audience was less successful. On the whole, the audience felt satisfied with the amazing recording machine. Regarding this demonstration, the *Java-Bode* wrote:

Last night, at the 'Harmonie', Professor Douglas Archibald demonstrated a phonograph, which spoke [sounded] very clearly, especially when it played music and songs. A number of gentlemen from among those present talked and sang into the instrument, but only 'Wien Neerlandsch bloed' [a patriotic Dutch song] came out well: the rest sounded either out of tune or were too short, so they could not be recorded on the cylinder recording. The demonstration was very surprising and enjoyable. We very much recommend that Concordia members visit Mr. Archibald's demonstration this evening.<sup>82</sup>

The secretary of Concordia, F.C. Proper, noted that 'the exhibition is prohibited for young members [of the club], as stated in the very last paragraph of article 29 of the Club's regulations'.<sup>83</sup> There are no reports on the demonstration of 26 July. I suggest that it was cancelled, as had occurred at this club's Surabaya branch previously. The members of the

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77 *De Locomotief*, 8 July 1892.

78 *Java Bode*, 11 and 12 July 1892; *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 11 July 1892.

79 *Java-Bode*, 6 July 1892.

80 *Java-Bode*, 12, 13, 15 and 16 July 1892.

81 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 25 July 1892; *Java-Bode*, 26 July 1892.

82 *Java-Bode*, 26 July 1892.

83 *Java-Bode*, 26 July 1892. I speculate that modern technology was considered top secret, and that young people could not be trusted to keep the knowledge secret.

Batavia branch of the Concordia Military Club may have been preparing for their annual general meeting on 29 August 1892, and have been too busy to attend the event.<sup>84</sup>

Apparently, then, the demonstration at the Harmonie Club was the only one Archibald gave in Batavia. No information indicates that he gave other demonstrations there. The failure of the only phonograph machine he owned to record the audience's voices in previous demonstrations had become a joke and may have led to the decision not to give more demonstrations in Batavia. Possibly, due to the long world tour and frequent use, the single phonograph machine he had with him had been irreparably damaged in Java. At the end of August 1892 Archibald disappeared from the Indies newspapers.

#### A PROFESSOR WITH A PHONOGRAPH FROM AUSTRALIA

About the same time, another professor, named G. Tesséro, arrived in Batavia from Melbourne, Australia, again bringing along an Edison phonograph. About one month before his arrival, the press reported his plans to visit the Dutch East Indies; his complete name was given as Giovanni Tesséro.<sup>85</sup> Tesséro's arrival following the disappearance of Archibald may have been coincidental 'moral support' for the Edison Company. Archibald and the Edison Company must have worried that the unfavourable criticism by the East Java press, and the legal trouble Archibald had encountered in Surabaya, would sully the reputation of the Edison brand in the Indies.

In Batavia, Tesséro's first demonstration at the Koninklijke Natuurkundige Vereeniging in Nederlandsch-Indië (Royal Association for Natural Sciences in the Dutch Indies) was free. He personally asked the Association's executive committee for permission to give a phonograph demonstration there (Notulen 1892:335). It was held on Friday, 26 August 1892 (Fig. 1.4).<sup>86</sup> Some high officials in Batavia, including the director of the National Botanical Garden in Buitenzorg (now Bogor), Melchior Treub, the first person in the Indies to own a phonograph privately,<sup>87</sup> came to see the demonstration. The *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* wrote:

After the demonstrations of Edison's phonograph by Mr. Archibald Douglas [*sic*] at this place, Mr. Tesséro, who just arrived here from Melbourne with a similar instrument, has timed his visit here badly. Immediately upon his arrival he was told that his shows would not attract many visitors.

So, Mr. Tesséro turned to the Board of the Koninklijke Natuurkundige Vereeniging to give a demonstration free of charge, with the aim of establishing a positive opinion of his instrument and the nature of its applications. After Mr. Figee and Mr. Onnen had written a very positive report on behalf of the Board about Mr. Tesséro's activities, the demonstration took place last night. This remarkable instrument is more fit for demonstrations with a small audience than for larger audiences. By using caoutchouc [rubber] audio-tubes the instrument is able to record the spoken word, which has a

84 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 30 July 1892.

85 *De Telefoon*, 1 July 1892.

86 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 25 and 26 August 1892; *Java-Bode*, 25 and 26 August 1892.

87 *Bintang Soerabaia*, 27 September 1892. See the picture of Melchior Treub in Chapter 2.



very surprising effect. Especially the declamation by Sarah Bernhardt,<sup>88</sup> which was recorded into the instrument in Melbourne, made a deep impression upon the audience. Also the nice tones by Very, the famous player of *cornet à piston* [trumpet], came out very clearly and cleanly.

We are of the opinion that the demonstration made a good impression upon all those present and we hope Mr. Tesséro's demonstrations at the [Masonic] Lodge, where he will also describe his instrument by using limelight [*kalklicht*] images, will attract large numbers of visitors.<sup>89</sup>

Tesséro's next demonstration, organized by his advance agent Ch. de Hart, was held at the Masonic Lodge (Vrijmetselaars Loge) in Batavia (Fig. 1.4).<sup>90</sup> It was very well attended. Tesséro opened with a speech in French about the workings of the instrument, which was accompanied by images using 'kalklicht'. Furthermore, some musical instruments and orchestral works, a declamation by Sarah Bernhardt, and finally a Dutch speech by Mr de Vick in Australia were played. All recordings were very understandable and could be heard very clearly.<sup>91</sup>

After Batavia, Tesséro continued his tour to Central Java, where his manager had scheduled demonstrations in Semarang and Solo. On the SS Van Diemen Tesséro left Batavia on 24 September 1892 for Semarang.<sup>92</sup> In Semarang he gave phonograph demonstrations at three local schools during an eight-day school holiday.<sup>93</sup> The schools paid for the demonstrations. Tesséro clearly attempted to attract educated people to his demonstrations. The Malay daily *Bintang Soerabaia* commented:

**KONINKLIJKE NATUURKUNDIGE VEREENIGING**  
in NEDERLANDSCH-INDIË.

**Vrijdag 26 Augustus,**  
des-avonds ten 9 ure  
in het lokaal der Vereeniging, Voorstelling met den  
**Phonograaf van Edison**  
te geven door den Heer G. TESSÉRO.  
Toegankelijk, persoonlijk voor de Leden der K. N. V.  
4081 De Secretaris, S. FIGÉE.

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*Met toestemming van den Resident.*

**Zondag 28 Augustus,**  
**EDISONS PHONOGRAAF**  
de MEEST geperfectionneerde, die nu de wereld bereikt,  
door **Professor Tesséro**  
vertoond in het lokaal der VRIJMETSELAARS LOGE.  
Van 's morgens 7 tot 's namiddags 12 vertooning der  
Phonograaf.  
**Entrée 1 gulden per persoon.**  
Van 's avonds 9 tot 11 voordracht, uitlegging der  
werking etc. etc. nadere verduidelijking door KALK-  
LICHT BEELDEN.  
**Entrée f 1,50 per persoon.**  
4104 Ch. DE HART, Advance Agent.

Figure 1.4: Advertisements for Tesséro's phonograph demonstrations in Batavia (Source: *Java-Bode*, 25 and 27 August 1892)

88 Sarah Bernhardt (c. 22 October 1844 – 26 March 1923) (see Neve 1885; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah\\_Bernhardt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Bernhardt); accessed 10-3-2011); in the nineteenth-century Indies press her name was spelled 'Sara Bernard' or 'Sarah Bernhart'. Sarah Bernhardt (born as Henriette Rosine Bernhardt) was a famous French stage performer and early film actress. News about her was often released in Dutch as well as Native newspapers in the Indies in the 1890s.

89 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 27 August 1892.

90 *Java-Bode*, 27 August 1892.

91 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 29 August 1892.

92 *Java Bode*, 24 September 1892; *De Locomotief*, 24 September 1892.

93 *De Locomotief*, 28 September 1892.



[...] this machine is not made into a show-like comedy or other spectacle, and hence is not street entertainment. Rather, it should be presented in respectable people's houses, where one may gather to see and listen to it. In short, if one wishes [to see it], one should discuss this with a number of friends, choose the house of one of them, and get about forty or fifty people to watch it. Of course it is a performance, but not a common performance. Its proper place is a gathering of respectable people in a house.<sup>94</sup>

Tesséro also conducted a demonstration for the members of the Semarang branch of the Amicitia Club on 28 September.<sup>95</sup> The concert room of Amicitia, however, because of noise from other activities like billiard games and traffic, proved unsuitable for the performance.<sup>96</sup>

Regarding this demonstration, *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden* reported that the audience was quite excited by the functioning of the machine.<sup>97</sup> The instrument worked well. De Hart showed Tesséro's testimonials to the audience, bestowed by Buitenzorg National Botanical Garden director Treub, Mr. Figee, director of the Meteorological Observatory, and Dr. Onnen, mathematics and science teacher in Batavia; they all praised the instrument highly. So, like Archibald, Tesséro in his demonstrations emphasized the phonograph's scientific aspects. For this reason, he chose to hold exhibitions for members of a scientific association, a Masonic Lodge, social clubs, and school students. Tesséro's lecture was again delivered in French (like Archibald, it seems he could not speak Dutch). A detailed explanation was designed to offer the audience a clear insight into the functioning of the machine.

Tesséro was in Semarang until 30 September 1892. He did not continue to Surabaya, but did go to Solo. No one in Surabaya was willing to invite him, presumably as a result of the Archibald–Eijssell affair.<sup>98</sup> In Solo, Tesséro gave a demonstration in the Harmonie Club on 2 October with an admission price of two guilders. The opening lecture by Tesséro was again delivered in French.<sup>99</sup> The spectators attending these demonstrations – just as was the case at Archibald's demonstrations – were people of the white upper-class minority. They were the type who became members of societies and clubs and usually spent their weekends in club buildings (*rumah bola*) with billiards, Western music, and alcoholic drinks. Below we will see that other phonograph demonstrations were attended by some noble-class Natives as well. Apparently there were certain spectacles which could be attended by both Europeans and Natives, each group seated in separate areas. Other performances, opera and chamber music for instance, were intended exclusively for Europeans. In the colony, the entertainment world reflected class segregation, which was enforced by colonial authorities.

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94 *Bintang Soerabaia*, 27 September 1892.

95 *De Locomotief*, 26–28 September 1892.

96 *De Locomotief*, 29 September 1892.

97 *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 30 September 1892.

98 *Bintang Soerabaia*, 30 September 1892.

99 *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 30 September and 3 October 1892.

As had happened with Archibald's demonstrations in the East Javanese towns of Probolinggo and Pasuruan in the hinterland, Tesséro was not successful in Solo. His demonstration at the Harmonie Club, for instance, was attended by only fifteen persons.<sup>100</sup>

On 4 October Tesséro gave a phonograph demonstration at the Masonic Lodge of Solo and at the Palace (Keraton) on 5 October.<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately, I have found no press reports of these demonstrations.<sup>102</sup> He then appeared in Yogyakarta, where he gave demonstrations at the club (*sociëteit*) on 7 October and at some schools on following days.<sup>103</sup> Afterwards there are no further press reports about him.

There is some indication that Tesséro wanted to sell his phonograph. When he was in Semarang Tesséro advertised that he would sell his phonograph if the ruler of Solo or Yogyakarta was interested in buying it, as reported by the vernacular newspaper *Selompret Melajoe*:

Because none of this newspaper's readers here invited him [to give a phonograph demonstration], he [Tesséro] wants to depart for Solo the day after tomorrow. Therefore, it is to be deeply regretted that nobody wants to listen [to the machine], because if one tries to listen just once, one certainly wants to listen again, because the machine is so very strange. Last night we were requested to listen for a short while, and now we must say that this machine is not just an ordinary plaything. We were also presented with music which had been played some months before in America; it sounded as if it was still new. Additionally, Sundanese *tembang*, which had been performed perhaps one month earlier, was presented, with audible lyrics. What makes this machine even more useful is that anyone who has been given a demonstration just two or three times should be able to maintain and operate all its components. If a person of standing in Solo or Yogyakarta wants to buy [this machine], he [Tesséro] will certainly sell it [Hanja djika pembesar di Solo atawa di Djogja hendaq membeli tentoe sadja didjoealnja].<sup>104</sup>

The article suggests that *Selompret Melajoe* readers, who were mostly of Chinese descent or indigenous locals, were not very interested in inviting Tesséro. Perhaps this was due to Archibald's unsuccessful phonograph tour in East Java and the disgraceful court case he had faced. Besides, the phonograph demonstration, from the outset, had been closely associated with the colony's white upper class, while the Natives had had little access. Nonetheless, like

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<sup>100</sup> *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 5 October 1892.

<sup>101</sup> *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden*, 3 and 5 October 1892.

<sup>102</sup> The media seemed more interested in the *Sekaten* celebration in Solo, which began the same day (5 October): in the evening Sri Padoeka Kandjeng Goesti Pangeran Adipati Anom and Queen Kandjeng Ratoe Anom were pleased to attend the celebration. But bad luck for the queen, she lost a diamond pin worth 3,000 guilders when the royal chariot passed through the crowd. This scandal was broadly reported in the media (for example, *Bintang Soerabaia* 3 and 8 October 1892). Regarding Tesséro's demonstration in the palace at Solo, Nancy K. Florida has suggested to me that it was probably noted in the palace diary entitled 'Ngrengreng serat babad pemut ing Nagari Surakarta, angka XI, awit cariyos 1 Sura Je 1822 dumugi cariyos 26 Rejeb Je 1822' [= July 1892 – February 1893] (Florida, email, 25 September 2004). Florida (1993:105) identified this as 'History of the Keraton Surakarta (July 1892 – February 1893)'. Unfortunately, I have had no access to this source.

<sup>103</sup> Mataram, 10 October 1892.

<sup>104</sup> *Selompret Melajoe*, 27 September 1892.

the Europeans, the Natives were astounded by the wonderful machine, as suggested in the *Selompret Melajoe* journalist's comment quoted above: 'kerna djika mentjoba sekali sadja, tentoelah ingin mendengar lagi, sebab anehnja ietoe soedah tiada boleh dikata lagi' ('because if one tries to listen just once, one certainly wants to listen again, because the machine is too strange for words').

The above article also informs us that Tesséro recorded a fragment of an Indonesian traditional genre to show the capability of this technological miracle to the public, namely the Sundanese musical genre *tembangan pasoenda* (*tembang Sunda*; see Van Zanten 1989). Thus, Sundanese music seems to have been the first Indies local repertoire recorded for the 'talking machine'.<sup>105</sup>

#### A FAMOUS MAGICIAN AND A FEMALE ENTERTAINER WITH A PHONOGRAPH IN JAVA

There is no indication where Tesséro went after giving his demonstrations in Yogyakarta. In the second week of October 1892 he disappeared from the newspapers. The press instead reported on another European entertainer travelling around Java with Edison's phonograph, a man named J. Calabressini. And a couple of years later a female entertainer named Miss Meranda also appeared in Java with a phonograph.

The earliest evidence that Calabressini was travelling in Java with a phonograph dates from 3 October 1892. In an article about Tesséro's demonstration in Surakarta, *De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden* mentioned that 'those who expected to see an instrument [Tesséro's phonograph] exactly the same as Calabressini's were mistaken'. Clearly, Calabressini with his phonograph (apparently an earlier version) was well known in Central Java at that time. It is unclear where and from whom Calabressini obtained his machine.

It seems that Calabressini had travelled across Java sometime after 1870. It is not known when he first left Europe for Asia, or which Asian countries he visited before his arrival in the

<sup>105</sup> Sundanese genres were again recorded on phonograph disc for the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 (see Johnson 1897-1898). In this exposition the Dutch East Indies was represented by 'The Java Village', which was sponsored by E.J. Kerkhoven and G.C.E.W. Mundt from the Java-Chicago Syndicate, who had also participated in the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1889 (Cohen 2010:15). Visited by some 82,000 people during the exposition, the site exhibited a replica of a Sundanese village from the Priangan regency of West Java. The performances presented were dance troupes and a set of *gamelan* instruments from Parakan Salak near Sukabumi, West Java. Ethnomusicologist Benjamin Ives Gilman recorded the Parakan Salak *gamelan* during the Exposition in Chicago. With his colleagues Jesse Walter Fewkes, Frans Boas, John Comfort Fillmore, and Alice Cunningham Fletcher, Gilman made 101 wax cylinder recordings of the world's exotic music at the exposition (see Carter-De Vale 1977:91). The Java Village's music recordings (cylinders 11-44) with other recordings are now kept in the Archive of Folk Song of the Library of Congress, Washington D.C. (Carter-De Vale 1977:91-99, 255-67 [Appendix K]). The Sundanese genres recorded on the cylinders are the standard classical Sundanese dance form *tandak* (cylinders 13-16), *wayang topeng* (cylinders 16-26), and singing by a Sundanese woman (cylinder 40) (Carter-De Vale 1977:93-4). Previously, a set of *gamelan* instruments from Parakan Salak had also been exhibited at the Amsterdam International Exposition (1883) and the Paris International Exposition (1889) (see Bloembergen 2006 on the expositions). There is no evidence that this *gamelan* was recorded on the 'talking machine' on any other part of its European tours.

Indies. Nor is there evidence that he went on an international tour like Archibald and Tesséro. He seems to have worked only in Java; in his magic shows he combined conjuring tricks with a demonstration of recently invented European technologies. Quoting Surakarta's *De Vorstenlanden*, Anthony Day (1982:217, 266) mentions that Calabressini astounded his colonial audience with his electricity, galvanism, and magnetism at a *soirée amusante* held at the Surakarta Komedi (theatre) on the evening of 26 December 1870. On 29 June 1883 he held magic shows in Surabaya.<sup>106</sup> One month later he again held shows in this town: on 7 and 8 July he played at the Rumah Komedi Besar (theatre) and again between 13 and 16 July in the *alon-alon* (town square). Admission was one guilder for first class and fifty cents for second class. The highlights were European card tricks (*permainan kartu Ollanda*) and 'a horrific beheading'.<sup>107</sup> Calabressini's performances at the Rumah Komedi Besar were attended by some 200 to 250 spectators, both Native and Dutch.

Apparently Calabressini, although he had adopted the title 'professor' following the trend at the time (Cohen 2001:327), was widely known in the Indies as a magician (*goochelaar*). Unlike Archibald and Tesséro who, in their phonograph demonstrations, presented themselves as scientists and attempted to cultivate close relations with the colony's white upper class, Calabressini seems to have been on close terms with local Indies entertainers and often conducted magic shows with them jointly. This must have influenced spectators' perceptions of the recent European inventions demonstrated in his shows, including the phonograph. In August 1891, for example, together with Yap Gwan Thay, Calabressini gave a magic show of 'conjuring, magnetism, and metempsychosis' in the Kapasan Schouwburg, Surabaya. He gave a magic lantern show in this same Schouwburg in March 1892.<sup>108</sup> In July Calabressini appeared in Surabaya with a sensational night show called 'Metempsychose of zielsverhuizing' ('exchange of souls'), or 'pengganti jiwa' in Malay (Cohen 2006:151). There is no indication that he had a phonograph at that time. At the end of that year he was on the scene in Batavia with some technological instruments, like a magic lantern and Edison's phonograph, and gave magic shows in various parts of the city.

From Batavia, Calabressini and his manager, Molbylasini, sailed on the steamer *Speelman* to Cirebon.<sup>109</sup> As a prominent urban town on the north coast of West Java, Cirebon was regularly visited in the nineteenth century by local as well as foreign entertainment troupes (Cohen 2002b). Calabressini arrived there on Saturday, 3 December 1892, coinciding with the celebration of the *Sint-Nicolaas feest* (Feast of Saint Nicholas, a traditional Dutch holiday).<sup>110</sup> Calabressini's first magic show in Cirebon, which welcomed 'young and old, straight and bent, beautiful and ugly' and was not exclusive like Archibald's and Tesséro's demonstrations,

106 *Bintang Timor*, 9 July 1883.

107 *Bintang Timor*, 7 and 14 July 1883.

108 Cohen 2006:151. Calabressini's magic lantern, which was regularly used in magic lantern shows for children in 1892-1893, was purchased by Yap Gwan Thay for 600 guilders (Cohen 2006:34). Apparently urban entertainers bought and sold equipment from each other.

109 *Tjerimai*, 26 November 1892.

110 *Tjerimai*, 3 December 1892. In the colonial period, Saint Nicholas Day came to be a public festival celebrated in the Dutch Indies by both Natives and Europeans (see Helsloot 1998, 2006).

was held on Tuesday, 6 December, at the Schouwburg (Fig. 1.5).<sup>111</sup> He demonstrated Edison's phonograph. Using a magic lantern, the show also presented portraits of the Dutch royal family, Stanley's expedition in Africa in forty colourful images displaying the sophistication and superiority of white men vis-à-vis wild African tribal groups, some tricks with cards and eggs and quick-fingeredness, and hypnosis. There were only thirteen spectators, including two children. The weekly *Tjerimai* commented about the phonograph: 'Then Edison's truly famous instrument was allowed to speak; she turned out to be in particularly good form (she was a bit hoarse) [...]. It was enjoyable to hear this instrument discourse [*redeneeren*].'<sup>112</sup>

Calabressini and Molbvasini's second show was held on 8 December in the *sociëteit* (club) of the town from 9 p.m. to midnight. It was visited by more people than the previous show, probably due to the reduced entrance fee (adults paid 1.50 guilders, children 0.50). Everybody listened attentively to Edison's phonograph, and it received lots of applause. Calabressini also showed sensational images of the beheading, which caused many in the

**J. CALABRESSINI.**

De bekende vriend der Kinderen,  
alhier gearriveerd, zal op  
**Dinsdag den 6 den December**  
in het Societeitsgebouw alhier eene goochel-  
voorstelling geven. Geheel nieuwe kunsten.  
**Drie bedrijven goochelkunst.**

**De Phonograaf van Edison**  
Zeer interessant voor iedereen.

**De Sciopticon Voorstelling.**  
werkende door middel van kalklicht.

Na vooraf ons Vorstelijk Huis te hebben voorgesteld,  
**De Stanley Expeditie**  
door de wildernissen van Afrika in 40 tafereelen met een breed-voerige voordracht.

JONG en OUD, RECHT en KROM, MOOI en LEELIJK, worden *zeer bekeerd* doch *dringend* verzocht deze voorstelling bij te wonen; zoo iets ziet men niet alle dagen, dus;

**Profiteert van deze gelegenheid, al regent het keisteenen!**

Gereserveerde plaatsen te bespreken in de toko naast het hotel.

Entrée voor een Heer of Dame . . . . f 2.50  
    »    »    Kinderen . . . . . f 1.  
    »    »    Bedienden. . . . . f 0.50

De Directeur,  
**MOLBVLASINI.**

(367)

Met toestemming van den Heer Resident  
van Batavia.

**Theater National,**  
op Tanalapang Glodok,  
op Vrijdag avond den 11 Januari,  
Zaterdag 12 en Zondag 13.

**Eerste groote Voorstelling**  
van Goochel-Kunst, Magnetismus,  
Phonografen Animatograf. Levende  
Photographie en prachtige gezichten  
van de Wereld

te geven door den beroemden Prestidigitateur Illusionniste

**J. CALABRESSINI**  
en Zijn Gezelschap.

**Entree:**  
Eerste Rang . . . . f 1.—  
Tweede idem . . . . „ 0.50

**Aanvang ten 9 uur.** 198.

Figure 1.5: Advertisements for Calabressini's demonstrations in Cirebon and Batavia (Source: *Tjerimai*, 3 December 1892; *Java-Bode*, 10 January 1901).

<sup>111</sup> *Tjerimai*, 3 December 1892.

<sup>112</sup> *Tjerimai*, 7 December 1892.

audience to feel sick. The audience loved the dissolving views by Molbvlasini: the ‘kampong’ at the World Exhibition in Paris, Stanley’s journey through Africa’s dark jungle, and scenes of the Eighty Year War (which were not shown in chronological order) were viewed eagerly by both young and old.

Unfortunately, I have no evidence on where Calabressini went after the success of his magic shows and phonograph demonstrations in Cirebon. Possibly he left Cirebon and moved on to other towns in Java. Apparently, Calabressini had a long career as a magician in the Indies. This excellent and highly popular magician – as the press mentioned – was still travelling around Java until at least 1901: in January 1901 he performed a big magic show at National Theatre at Tana[h]lapang Glodok, Batavia. The show ran from 11 to 13 January, and demonstrated the art of conjuring and some new Western technology including magnetism, the animatograph, photography, and the phonograph (Fig. 1.5).<sup>113</sup>

Until the end of the nineteenth century, ‘talking machine’ exhibitions in the Dutch East Indies were mostly still held in Java. During the years of Calabressini’s demonstrations with the phonograph, there was a female entertainer who also held demonstrations with a similar machine. Her name was Miss Meranda. She travelled around Java in 1897 and 1898, conducting shows in various locations with a graphophone,<sup>114</sup> scenimatograph, and xylophone, combined with acrobatic and gymnastic presentations. The press reported that she was a British citizen who could speak German but not Dutch.<sup>115</sup> It seems that Miss Meranda started her shows in July 1897 in Surabaya and continued to Semarang, Yogyakarta, Batavia, Bandung, Tegal, and Cirebon. The characteristics of her shows are similar to Calabressini’s shows: they were intended for the general public, not limited to intellectual communities. In 1899 she turned up again in Batavia at the end of the year. Miss Meranda’s shows demonstrating European technologies other than the graphophone were successful in attracting spectators, as indicated by the extensive press coverage of her shows.<sup>116</sup>

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113 Java-Bode, 10 January 1901.

114 This was the name and trademark of an improved version of the phonograph invented at the Volta Laboratory established by Alexander Graham Bell in Washington, D.C. Developed by Alexander Graham Bell and Charles Summer Tainter, the graphophone substituted a layer of wax for the tinfoil covering the cylinder, and altered the design of the stylus that transmits sound vibrations onto the cylinder during the recording process (Tschmuck 2006:4). Its trademark was acquired successively by the Volta Graphophone Company, then by the American Graphophone Company, afterward by the North American Phonograph Company, and finally by the Columbia Phonograph Company (later to become Columbia Records), all of which either produced or sold graphophones. For a historical account of the invention and commercialization of the graphophone, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graphophone> (accessed 13-3-2011).

115 Advertentieblad Tegal, 11 December 1897.

116 See among others Soerabaija-Courant, 22 and 26 July 1897; Thieme’s Nieuw Advertentieblad, 22 and 27 July 1897; Soerabaiasch-Handelsblad, 27 July 1897; De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden, 2 and 6 August 1897; Semarang-Courant, 16 August 1897; De Preanger-Bode, 16 and 25 November 1897; Advertentieblad Tegal, 11 December 1897; Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, 10 December 1897, 30 November 1898. I thank Dafna Ruppin for bringing these sources to my attention.



## CONCLUSION

Rudolf Mrázek (2002:xv) talks about ‘incessant [European] culture invasions and innumerable combinations of resistance [in Indonesia]’. Exploring the first encounters of the people of the Indies with European recording technology, which a few decades later was to influence their lifestyle and beliefs, this chapter has focused on the initial phase of the invasion including the public’s reactions. Edison’s tin-foil phonograph, although only a crude model, went to Southeast Asia, to the Dutch East Indies in particular, very early in its history. This chapter has described the recordings, the figures behind the demonstrations, the audiences and their responses, the towns and venues of exhibition, and the procedure of the phonograph shows.

Involving male as well as female exhibitors, the phonograph demonstrations in the Dutch East Indies in the late nineteenth century can be put into two groups: first, those that emphasized the technological and scientific aspects of the machine; and second, those that emphasized its use to provide enjoyment and amusement. Each type of demonstration led to certain emotional effects in the audience and influenced how the public perceived the machine. To the first group belong De Greef’s, Archibald’s, and Tesséro’s demonstrations, which featured the phonograph exclusively, and which consisted of three parts: a lecture, just for adults, on the history of the machine and the technical procedure required to operate it, a presentation of recordings, and a test section in which either demonstrators or spectators were given the opportunity to speak or sing into the instrument (often with flawed results). In their exclusivity – admission tickets were quite expensive, the opening lectures were delivered in English or French, languages unfamiliar to most Natives, the exhibitions were held in venues like clubs which were closely associated with upper-class people – De Greef’s, Archibald’s and Tesséro’s demonstrations were well beyond the reach of the indigenous public. To the second group of demonstrations belong Calabressini’s and Miss Meranda’s shows, which welcomed Natives as well as Europeans, including children, and common people as well as the elite. Calabressini’s phonograph exhibitions and Miss Meranda’s graphophone shows were set up as part of a magic and entertainment show: there was no opening lecture as in Archibald’s and Tesséro’s demonstrations, and the phonograph was exhibited together with other European inventions alongside conjuring tricks. Consequently, spectators tended to view the machine as a miraculous rather than a scientific reality, as reflected in the Tjërimei reporter’s comment (7 December 1892) that ‘it was enjoyable to hear this instrument discourse’; as if it had its own soul, emotions, and ideas. As the entertainment shows of exhibitors like Calabressini and Miss Meranda were open to members of the non-European ruling class in the colony, such shows contributed significantly to the introduction of the prototype of recording technology to Indonesian Natives. The shows unlocked a small space for Indonesian Natives to become acquainted with the technology in its early years, and facilitated its introduction in Dutch East Indies colonial society at a time when European ‘high’ technological inventions were mostly accessible only to the colony’s white ruling class.



It is likely, furthermore, that the Natives' belief systems also influenced their acceptance of new European inventions like the phonograph.<sup>117</sup> The same thing applies, of course, to public reception of new inventions in the countries where they were invented. In nineteenth-century urban entertainment, European technologies like the magic lantern and galvanism were more often associated with magic and the supernatural than with rationality and reality. Acoustic technologies like phonography and telephony derived part of their meaning from nineteenth-century European spiritualism (Connor 2000). As Stephen A. Connor asserts, local beliefs in spiritualism contributed to the 'ghostliness' of these technologies, and they were linked with older traditions of the ventriloquial voice (Connor 2000).

Summarizing the Dutch East Indies colonial society's reception of the phonograph during the period of exhibition in Java, there were divergent reactions by the public to this new technological invention. The successful exhibitions of the phonograph aroused spectators' admiration. Conversely, unsuccessful exhibitions of the phonograph, because its early design was still far from perfect, drew criticism. The exhibitor Douglas Archibald even faced harassment and physical violence. As reflected in press reports, this new technology seems to primarily have given rise to amazement among spectators because for the first time they could see with their own eyes a machine that was able to record and immortalize sound, which previously had been no more than a human fantasy.

Although this historical account is not quite complete due to incomplete access to all contemporary newspapers, I have attempted to reconstruct the course of events of three European 'professors' who pioneered in introducing sound recording technology in the Dutch East Indies. It is expected that further research will expand or fill out what is still lacking. The story of De Greef and his phonograph demonstrations in Java in 1879 is far from complete. The disappearance of Archibald and his phonograph at the end of August 1892 is still a riddle. There is no indication that Archibald attended the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago as he claimed he would in the Surabaya press in May 1892. Likewise it seems that Tesséro, who appeared in Batavia at the end of August 1892, disappeared in early October. Calabressini appeared with his phonograph in Batavia around November 1892, but it is not known where he travelled to after his successful shows in Cirebon in early December; he was, however, in Java at least until 1901. Likewise many questions remain about Miss Meranda, who was still performing for the public in Java at least until the end of 1898.

Archibald returned to England for retirement after his voyage around the world with Edison's phonograph (1889–1892). In fact, journeys like Archibald's to the Orient were primarily intended to make money, not to settle there permanently. Archibald died in Middlesex, England, on 1 December 1913 aged 63.<sup>118</sup> After travelling in Java with the phonograph for around twelve months, De Greef seems to have returned to his initial career as head of

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117 On the magical and religious manifestations of the application of modern European technological products in Indonesia, media technologies in particular, see, for example, Snouck Hurgronje 1900 on the gramophone (sound recording). On the camera and photography, see Spyer 2001, Pemberton 2003, Strassler 2010, and also <http://hantu.blogdrive.com> (accessed 30-5-2005).

118 Allan E. Marble, email, 18 September 2005.

production of opera stages, and remained in Java. Sometimes he put on opera shows with a combination of local and foreign artists. His additional job was as a singing teacher, as often advertised in newspapers. Regrettably, I do not know what became of Tesséro, Calabressini, and Miss Meranda. Possibly they returned to their fatherlands, as every traveller wishes to do, but maybe they chose to live in the colony forever, spending their final hours there, because the colonies had captured their souls for good.

In the following chapter I will recount the expansion of the ‘talking machine’ and disc consumption in the Indies and their cultural significance due to the rising interest of Dutch East Indies society in this new technology. I will particularly recount what happened in West Sumatra, providing the reader with a historical overview of the first encounter of Minangkabau culture and society with sound recording technology.

