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A Scientist's and Tourist's Touch – The Haptic in Travelogues about the Island of Java (M. Siedlecki and E.R. Scidmore)

Abstract. The article explores the haptic aesthetic of selected Polish and Anglophone travelogues about the island of Java: *Jawa – przyroda i sztuka* (1913) by a Polish biologist named Michał Siedlecki, and *Java, the Garden of the East* (1897) by the American writer Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore. A comparison of texts coming from different literary traditions should yield a deeper insight into the various aspects of conceptualising the haptic in travel writing. Java's tropical environment provided travellers with new sensory experiences, consequently scrutinising how writers represented what they touched and felt, along with how descriptions of haptic sensations were associated with the ideological and aesthetic dimension of travel writing, can shed new light on how travel writing works and how multi-layered it is.

Keywords: Anglophone travellers, haptic, Java, Polish travellers, sensuous geographies, touch, travel writing.

Introduction

According to Sarah Jackson (2020: 222), “accounts of the tactile remain largely overlooked by both authors and critics of travel writing,” a statement that seems to be confirmed by two travellers who are the focus of this article, a Polish biologist named Michał Siedlecki (1873-1940) and the American journalist and writer Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore (1856-1928). Their travelogues are dominated by descriptions of visual sensations; furthermore, they summarize their stays on Java using expressions based on

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seeing. At the end of her travelogue, the American writer remarks that Java is “the ideal tropical island, the greenest, the most beautiful, and the most picturesque and satisfactory bit of the tropics” (Scidmore 1922: 334), which “is certain soon to loom larger in the world’s view” (336). The Polish traveller explains his travel goals in the following way: “To get to know directly this world of disparate colours, life and concepts, to see as much as possible and to learn a lot from it” (“Poznać bezpośrednio ten świat barw, życia i pojęć odmiennych, widzieć jak najwięcej i nauczyć się dużo.”²) (Siedlecki 1913: IV). Even in his autobiography Siedlecki referred to travelling to Java in visual terms: “it is almost indispensable for a biologist to have a glance at the tropical world” (“jest biologowi niemal niezbędnie potrzebne rzucenie okiem na świat tropikalny”) (Siedlecki 1966: 68).

Siedlecki’s and Scidmore’s focus on sight is not surprising, despite the fact that it is difficult to imagine experiencing the world without touch and haptic sensations in general (more on relations between those terms in the section 3); nevertheless, they are often neglected. “Touch lies at the heart of our experience of ourselves and the world yet it often remains unspoken and, even more so, unhistoricized” (Classen 2012: xi). Why is it so? One of the reasons has been pointed out by Paul Rodaway (1994: 48): “In the everyday experience of the able-bodied adult, the haptic dimension to geographical perception is often overlaid by visual and auditory information and thus tends to be overlooked”. Another issue is that while sounds and images can be recorded, tactile sensations are elusive: “most immediate and evanescent of human senses, touch could only be preserved in memory and through language” (Das 2005: 114). Following this line of reasoning, it can be claimed that travellers focus on what they see and hear because visual and auditory sensations are more attention-grabbing and provide more concrete information about the visited environment. Yet this immediacy and evanescence of tactile sensations – which are impossible to record directly and can be only suggested with words – makes the haptic in travel writing an interesting research topic. Travel experience is of course much richer than just visual consumption (Podemski 2005: 9–10), and analysing literary representations of haptic phenomena makes it possible to overcome the ocularcentric paradigm (Jay 1993; Urry & Larsen 2011; Wieczorkiewicz 2012: 133–138).

The tropics provided travellers with an abundance of new sensory experience, such that scrutinising how different writers described what they touched and felt while staying on the island of Java, along with how descriptions of haptic sensations were associated with the ideological and aesthetic aspects of travel writing, can shed new light on how travel writing works and how multi-layered it is. I will focus on Michał Siedlecki’s book *Jawa – przyroda i sztuka* (‘Java – nature and art,’ 1913) and on Eliza

2 All translations into English are my own, unless stated otherwise.

Ruhamah Scidmore's *Java, the Garden of the East* (1897). Both authors came from different literary traditions and dissimilar backgrounds: Siedlecki was a male scientist and university professor; Scidmore was a female journalist and world traveller. However, both visited the Dutch colony in the same period, i.e., around the turn of the 20th century, which provides an opportunity for an analysis of similarities and differences in their accounts and should yield a deeper insight into the various aspects of conceptualising the haptic in travel writing.

I will approach this topic in four steps. Firstly, I will briefly present Siedlecki's and Scidmore's works and biography in the context of scholarly reflection on travelogues about Southeast Asia. Secondly, various methodological concepts and definitions regarding touch, tactile sensations and the haptic will be introduced. That will be followed by a detailed analysis of travelogues, using concepts presented in the previous sections. Finally, in the concluding section I will show the main contrasts and analogies between both travel accounts: a scientist's (Siedlecki) and tourist's (Scidmore) touch.

Scidmore and Siedlecki and the travel writings about Southeast Asia

Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore was an American traveller, journalist, writer and photographer, the first female member of the Board of Trustees of the National Geographic Society.³ Born to an upper-class family, already as a teenager she came into contact with political and diplomatic circles and attended the prestigious Oberlin College in Ohio. She journeyed widely in America, Europe, and Asia, which was partially facilitated by the fact that her brother, a career diplomat, served on various posts in Asia during the years 1881-1922, mostly in Japan. She published travelogues in *The National Geographic* and *The Century Magazine*, later turning her accounts into book-length literary travel accounts and guidebooks.⁴ Her travel can be delineated as leisure trips undertaken to fulfil curiosity, while her writing represents the sensibilities of a well-informed and intellectual tourist who used opportunities created by Western expansion into colonial Asia.

3 Biographical information about Scidmore is based on Parsell (2023) and Mayumi (2017). Mayumi's book was criticized by Diana Parsell (see comment on <https://www.amazon.com/Eliza-Ruhamah-Scidmore-Japan-Washington/dp/1973413736>, accessed 18.09.2022), the author of Scidmore's new biography.

4 Scidmore's books include: *Alaska, Its Southern Coast and the Sitkan Archipelago* (1885); *Westward to the Far East: A Guide to the Principal Cities of China and Japan* (1891); *Jinrikisha Days in Japan* (1891); *Appleton's Guide-Book to Alaska and the Northwest Coast: Including the Shores of Washington, British Columbia, South-eastern Alaska, the Aleutians and Seal Islands, the Bering and the Arctic Coasts* (1893); *Java, the Garden of the East* (1897); *China, the Long-Lived Empire* (1900); *Winter India* (1903); *As The Hague Ordains: Journal of a Russian Prisoner's Wife in Japan* (1907).

Michał Siedlecki was a biologist, a graduate of Jagiellonian University, who also conducted research and additional studies in Berlin, Paris and Naples⁵. He represents a rare synthesis of a natural scientist, a literary writer, and an activist-organizer. On the one hand he published numerous research studies on protozoology, adaptations to tropical life and marine biology, on the other he also had friendly relationships with the most important figures of the Polish modernist movement (*Młoda Polska*, 'Young Poland'). Later in life, he became a professor at Jagiellonian University and served as president of the newly re-established Stefan Batory University in Vilnius, and was also a member of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea in Copenhagen. His writings include not only scientific papers, but also several works which can be branded as popular science, including the Verne-inspired science-fiction story *Głębiny* ('The Depths'). Among them, the most prominent is his book on Java. Brilliantly written, it is a personal travel narrative that also contains plentiful remarks on natural science as well as on culture. This work is supplemented by a book of fiction *Opowieści malajskie* ('Malay Stories') (Siedlecki 1927), in which motifs and themes present in *Jawa. Przyroda i sztuka* serve as a basis for short stories. To sum up, Siedlecki travelled as a researcher and in his travelogue scientific topics play a primary role, although it also reveals his deep artistic sensibility.

According to the biographical data, the two travellers never met and their trips to Java were separated by more than 10 years (Scidmore visited the island in the 1890s, the first edition of her book was published in 1897, while Siedlecki stayed there during the years 1907-1908). There are, however, several connections between them; for example Siedlecki includes Scidmore's book in his bibliography. Even more significant is that both often refer to earlier works; the names of Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826), Franz Wilhelm Junghuhn (1809-1864), Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913) are recurrent in the analysed travelogues. Both Scidmore and Siedlecki were intellectuals and skilful writers; however, there is one crucial difference between them: the American traveller wrote as a tourist, the Pole as a scientist. Of course, this divergence is not absolute, for instance Scidmore quotes scholarly literature and her book has an index and, while Siedlecki was travelling not only for research, but also for the personal pleasure. Nonetheless a scientist/tourist dichotomy helps to characterize different ways of experiencing the world and writing about it.

How can their accounts about Java be localized in the wider context of scholarly reflection on 19th- and early 20th-century travel writings about Southeast Asia? Due to the comparative dimension of this article, it is worth mentioning an inspiring study about three (British, German, and Chinese) travellers (Ng 2002), which uses the concept

⁵ Biographical information about Siedlecki is based on Fedorowicz (1966); Siedlecki (1966).

of habitus to explain differences in the portrayals of Southeast Asia. There are also works devoted specifically to travel writings about Java, examining the position of the island within colonial tourism in the mid-19th century (Toivanen 2019a) and the role of travelogues in the transnational politics of imperial knowledge management (Toivanen 2019b). In two books, Victor R. Savage discusses the image of Singapore in Western narratives, including travel accounts (2021); and representations of the natural world of the region (1984), analysing, among many other Western authors, also Scidmore's travelogue. One section of the latter book is devoted to the senses, even though it scrutinizes only sounds, smells and tastes (203-217). Susan Morgan (1996) examines writings about Southeast Asia by female travellers of the Victorian period, but Scidmore is referred to only twice, and is wrongly called a missionary (34, 44-45). Scidmore's book on Java is also summoned incidentally as a historical source, including in articles written by Indonesian scholars (Cribb 1995; Sunjayadi 2008; Goss 2011; Bender 2017; Nurwulandari & Kurniawan 2020). The American traveller features prominently in the articles by Julia Kuehn (2007, 2008); however, these are devoted to China, not Southeast Asia.

The aforementioned works focus on sources written in Western European languages from the perspective of colonising nations. Because the main goal of this article is to compare one American and one Polish travelogue, it is important to introduce the point of view of non-imperial nations. Central European visitors to Southeast Asia in colonial period were a subject of an international workshop *Escaping Kakania* held in Singapore in 2021 (publication upcoming). Jan Mrázek (2013, 2017, 2022) discussed Czech accounts about colonial Southeast Asia, including their sensuous aspects. Polish narratives about that region, including Siedlecki's work, have been an object of a comparative analysis that focused on representations of nature (Ewertowski 2022b) and images of the island of Java (Ewertowski 2022a). Due to the importance of Siedlecki's *Jawa*, which was the first Polish book devoted to the tropical island, it keeps attracting scholarly attention even now (Wacławek 2014; Wiatrowski 2014). Siedlecki is also seen as a pioneer in the reception of Javanese music, art and theatre in Poland (Tenorowicz 2014; Martin 2016).

As this short survey shows, travel writings about Southeast Asia have been analysed using a wide range of concepts. Of utmost importance are topics connected with colonialism, since most of travellers visited the area because of conditions created by the European expansion (like Siedlecki and Scidmore); some were even participating in imperial activities. Colonialism is also an important context for the analysis of sensory perceptions. Ideas derived from postcolonial theory feature prominently, but issues such as representations of the natural world, a traveller's habitus, gender studies, bodily experiences and even linguistic analysis are present, too. Themes associated with the senses have also been investigated, for example, sensory perceptions of natural phenomena (Savage 1984), descriptions of fruits (Bender 2017), the body in relation to experiencing and knowing (Kuehn 2008), and linguistic representations of sensory

impressions (Wiatrowski 2014). However, such forays into the realm of sensuous scholarship were rather sideline activities, hence touch was not analysed in detail. Therefore, in the next section I would like to introduce the main concepts that will form the basis for the analysis of haptic aesthetics.

The haptic in the humanities

In European culture, touch is indicated as one of the five senses, although this classification was criticized from an intercultural perspective, which claims that various cultures have dissimilar approaches to sensory impressions (Low 2019: 621–625). Furthermore, contemporary anthropology suggests that Greco-Roman tradition is far too reductive and arbitrary (Rodaway 1994: 28). While customarily seeing with the eyes is characterized as the sense of sight and contact with the hands is associated with the sense of touch, that approach is obviously too simplistic. Touch is not limited to the hand, as humans receive sensations through the whole skin and include the feeling of pressure, pain, cold and warmth. What is traditionally recognized as the sense of touch is also labelled as part of the haptic system, which includes more than cutaneous (skin) impressions. Mark Paterson, referring, among others, to James Gibson (1966), distinguishes between tactile – “Pertaining to the cutaneous sense, but more specifically the sensation of pressure (from mechanoreceptors) rather than temperature (thermoceptors) or pain (nociceptors)” – and the haptic that includes not only tactile but all cutaneous sensations (including pressure, temperature and pain) as well as kinaesthesia (the sense of movement), proprioception (the sense of bodily position), and the vestibular system (the sense of balance) (Paterson 2007: ix, 2009: 768–771).

The difference between the tactile and the haptic was also emphasized by Marta Smolińska (2022: 21–23) from the perspective of art history, the former refers to art works which are experienced via touch while the latter describes various ways of activating the haptic system, not necessarily by touch itself. Moreover, Smolińska distinguishes the “classical haptic” from the “extended haptic.” The former was discussed by the art historian Alois Reigl (1858-1905) as triggering memories of touch via looking (20). The latter is defined as the somaesthetic modality of many senses which activates the haptic system (62). Smolińska’s emphasis on multisensory perception of art is also very useful for the analysis of travel writing. Sensuous experience is processual, corporeal, based on activating many senses simultaneously (Rodaway 1994: 11–12). In writing, a singular perception may be isolated and deliberated on, still it is important to read travelogues with a multisensory character of human experience in mind, because “all of the senses can be, and have been, thought of as having tactile dimensions—even sight involves eye movement” (Classen 2012: xiv). Even though writers paid more attention to the visual, the extended haptic still managed to enter their narratives. Referring to Vladimir Gvozden’s (2011: 171) concept of aestheticization in travelogues – that is,

literary and cultural codes used to transform the material experience into a literary work – we can talk about the haptic aesthetics denoting the way in which haptic sensations are described in travel accounts.

In literature studies, such a detailed description of the haptic system has been adapted to topics ranging from the First World War literature (Das 2005: 20–21) to the political dimension of Michael Ondaatje’s writings (Marinkova 2011: 6) or an interpretation of modernist writers (Garrington 2013: 17). When looking at travel writings from a linguistic perspective, representations of sensory perceptions have a few functions: they emphasize the individual experience of the writer, stress his or her position as a reliable witness, help engage readers in a story (Temmerman 2021). Such an explanation corresponds with the remark that Siedlecki’s detailed descriptions and rich sensuous vocabulary were crucial for a suggestive image of Java (Wiatrowski 2014). Among other important concepts, “the haptic sublime” (McNee 2014) can be singled out. It refers to the way in which 19th-century mountaineers experienced the sublime through bodily contact with the mountains and indicates that visual appraisal and haptic sensations were interconnected. Discussions on pedestrianism in travel writing are also significant (Dziok-Lazarecka 2021), for the reason that the haptic includes kinaesthetic, proprioceptive, and vestibular sensations, experienced while walking. Finally, because both Scidmore and Siedlecki travelled to Java during the colonial period, the studies over sensuous dimensions of the imperial presence of Europeans and Americans in Asia provide a number of valuable insights (Rotter 2011; Low 2019: 627–631).

The array of concepts forms a conceptual framework for the interpretation of Siedlecki’s and Scidmore’s works in the next section.

Dimensions of the haptic

Touching with hands

The most obvious dimension of the haptic in Siedlecki’s and Scidmore’s travelogues is references to touching with the hands. Garrington (2013: 18) stresses that the “human hand plays a central role in touch experiences,” while Connor (2006: 106) calls the hand “the active power of the skin,” which suggestively shows the importance of grasping and manipulating objects with the hands. For example, the Polish traveller described how he was touching stones while exploring volcanic areas: “I want to pick up one of them, and it crumbles and breaks into pieces like moist loam and shows in the point of break veins of small shiny crystals of iron sulphide or pyrite” (‘chcę podnieść jeden z nich, on zaś rozkrusza się i rozpada jak il wilgotny i okazuje na miejscu przelomu żyłki z małych błyszczących kryształków siarczku żelaza czyli pirytu’) (Siedlecki 1913: 63). Grasping objects with a hand is a way of exploring the world. He reports also that the ground was so hot that “it was almost impossible to touch it with the hand” (‘dotknąć go ręką prawie

niepodobna') (64). In another place he writes how with a stick he investigated holes in a botanical garden, looking for animals: "if you put a stick there, you can feel it being grabbed and pulled by the claws of a scorpion" ("a jeśli tam zapaść patyczek, to czuje się, jak chwytają go i ciągną szczytce ogromnego niedźwiadka, czyli skorpiona (Heteromefrus javanicits') (128). In Scidmore's travelogue, the most attention-grabbing are remarks about touch sensations associated with opening tropical fruits, for instance: "The spiny shell [of rambutans] pulls apart easily, and discloses a juicy, half-transparent mass of white pulp around a central core of smooth stones" (Scidmore 1922: 83). On the market in Solo she looked for traditional blades, *kris*, and made a comment on the way they can be handled: "the boatshaped wooden hilts having only enough carving on the under part to give the hand a firm grasp" (259). Another example of touch exploration is turning pages of rare books from the collection of a Javanese aristocrat: "we had only time to turn its leaves, see the more remarkable pages, and obtain a general dazzling idea of its quality" (299).

Descriptions of touching have a diverse character, for they use subject-oriented verbs ("I want to pick up") as well as object-oriented verbs ("shell pulls apart easily"). Sometimes actions and feelings of the author are emphasized ("we had only time to turn its leaves"), sometimes the subject's experience is generalized ("it was almost impossible to touch it"); in other cases the qualities of objects are at the forefront ("to give the hand a firm grasp") (Temmerman 2021: 86-89). Handling objects provides extensive information: "we get to know through touch alone – or at times in close conjunction with vision or sound – size, texture, temperature, weight, hardness/softness, viscosity, depth, flatness, movement, composition and space" (Das 2005: 21). The multisensory character of human perception is emphasized by the fact that often in one sentence there are references to several senses (Scidmore's description of rambutans). Furthermore, while analysing representations of clutching or grabbing, a crucial difference between Siedlecki and Scidmore emerges: the Polish traveller describes touching as a way of acquiring information, his is a scientist's touch; the American writer enjoys tactile sensations and the experience of novelty they bring, hers is a tourist's touch. In such a way, the importance of a travel type and habitus manifests itself in travel writing. This distinction will be revisited in my later analysis.

Being touched

It is often remarked that touch is the most reciprocal among the senses: "For touch is unlike the other senses in this, that it acts upon the world as well as registering the action of the world on you" (Connor 2006: 263). However, it is not always reflected in written representations of bodily sensations. The abovementioned descriptions of grasping emphasize the activity of the subject who is using his/her hands to manipulate passive objects. Generally, the tropical world is presented as being explored by

travellers, and only in some situations are the roles reversed. Siedlecki was researching animals, but sometimes he might become an object of their touch: “the beetle closes or opens its claws by moving its head, and can severely clench with them if you carelessly let it grab your finger” (‘Ruszając głową chrząszcz zamyka albo otwiera szczypce i może niemi tęgo ścisnąć, jeśli nieostrożnie dać mu się schwycić za palec’) (Siedlecki 1913: 152). But the most repulsive aspect of “being touched” by the tropics is an encounter with leeches:

it enters the sleeves or behind the collar and finally reaches the skin and settles around the waist. Now, with its thin and sharp jaws it saws through the skin and draws blood so gently that it cannot even be felt. Having worn itself out, it falls off and leaves a small but bleeding wound. (133)

wchodzi do rękawów lub za kołnierz, dostaje się wreszcie niepostrzeżenie aż do skóry i osadza się przy pasie. Teraz cienkimi i ostremi szczękami przepiłowuje skórę i ciągnie krew tak delikatnie, że nawet uczuć się to nie da. Nassawszy się, odpada i pozostawia małą, ale długo krwawiącą ranę.

Temperature and sultriness

As noted in section 3, cutaneous sensations associated with the sun and generally from experiencing the temperature are an important aspect of the haptic. Das writes metaphorically about “the sun’s touch” (2005: 159-62), Obrador-Pons (2007) comments on the pleasant sensations of being exposed to the sun and breeze on the beach, while Paterson (2009: 780), in commenting on Obrador-Pons’s article, remarks how the beach experience could include also unpleasant sunburn. Travellers in the equatorial environment of Java were obviously exposed to the sun, high temperatures and extraordinary humidity. In some areas, even the sunset was not a relief from the stifling humidity: “After the sun fell the air grew heavier and hotter, a stifling, sodden, steaming, reeking atmosphere of evil that one could hardly force in and out of the lungs” (Scidmore 1922: 304–305). Siedlecki, as a scientist, put haptic sensations into the context of general information about the climate: “This constant warmth, combined with the humidity, creates this sultry, hothouse atmosphere that can be tiring, exhausting and annoying, and for many people is simply unbearable” (‘Ta stała ciepłota, w połączeniu z wilgocią powietrza daje właśnie tę duszną, cieplarnianą atmosferę, która może męczyć, wyczerpywać i denerwować, a dla wielu ludzi jest wprost nieznośna’) (Siedlecki 1913: 77). “The sun’s touch” in the tropics can be deadly, so the head must be covered with a helmet, even on rainy days. It can be noted how via haptic aesthetics Siedlecki and Scidmore introduce the theme of deadly tropics (Arnold 2006: 42–73); however, in the American’s travelogue the “blessed tropics” is also present: “Life is so simple and primitive, too, in the

sunshine and warmth of the tropics” (Scidmore 1922: 42). Considering the frequent portrayals of fruits and lush vegetation, it can be concluded that the image of tropical richness is prevalent. Similarly, Siedlecki (1913: 80–81) stated that not only is it possible to adapt to the tropical heat, but later it even helps with enduring the European winters.

Above I referred to remarks from articles by Obrador-Pons and Paterson; to sum up the issue of temperature and sultriness, it is important to recall their conclusions as well. According to Obrador-Pons (2007: 138), haptic sensations can be a source of embodied pleasure that overcomes visual and political orders. Touch confers a sense of authenticity and it also has ethical potential, because the haptic brings a feeling of enchantment by the natural world, not mediated by political power, symbolic inscriptions or objectification. Paterson (2009: 780) criticizes Obrador-Pons not only for too optimistic a comment on beach experience, but also for methodological issues, namely, for capturing partially unconscious “somatosensory imagination” through a traditional interview method. For the analysis of travel writing, three important conclusions can be drawn from this discussion. Firstly, in literature studies all meanings are encoded in language, so we encounter only written representations of sensations, not the full richness of Paterson’s “somatosensory imagination.” Even if subjects experience the liberating sensations indicated by Obrador-Pons, in literature such feelings are expressed through literary conventions. Secondly, despite limitations of literary representations, Siedlecki and Scidmore, thanks to such rhetoric devices as comparisons, metaphors and rich epithets, can evoke an embodied experience of the tropics. Thirdly, Obrador-Pons’s remarks about the haptic being beyond political and symbolic order, although exaggerated, suggest that by analysing representations of such sensations in a literary work it is possible to find “cracks” in a seemingly uniform discourse (see Conclusion).

Walking

Walking involves kinaesthetic, proprioceptive and vestibular sensations, while its relative slowness exposes the body to the environment. In this way senses “ground the sentient body in material reality” (Dziok-Łazarecka 2021: 129). This, however, has also an unpleasant side, especially in a dense tropical forest. Scidmore’s willingness to climb the summit of Mount Papandyang (Papandayan, Papandjang) vanished quickly: “after pushing and tearing our way through bamboo-grass and bushes to the first ridge, we saw only other and farther ridges to be surmounted” (Scidmore 1922: 320). Siedlecki (1913: 99) makes an analogous comment: “to force one’s way through the rattan thicket is almost impossible, its thorns are so horrible and sharp” (*Przedrzeć się przez zarośla rotanu prawie niepodobna, tak straszne i ostre są ich kolce*). One more natural threat to which one is potentially exposed on strolls in the tropics is snakes, mentioned by Siedlecki and Scidmore, although they play down this danger. The volcanic nature of Java was responsible for another extraordinary pedestrian experiences: “The sulphur

coolies stepped warily along the paths between the pools; our shoesoles were not proof against the steam and scorch of the heaving ground beneath us” (Scidmore 1922: 319). “The ground on which I walk is soft and elastic; when struck, it responds like a vault over an empty cellar; in one place I poke a stick deeply into the soft ground; as soon as I pull it out, steam begins to gush from the hole” (‘Grunt, po którym chodzę, miękki i elastyczny, uderzony, odpowiada jak sklepienie nad pustą piwnicą; w jednym miejscu wtykam głęboko kij do miękkiej ziemi; natychmiast po jego wyciągnięciu zaczyna z otworu buchać para’) (Siedlecki 1913: 64). The dangerous potential posed by volcanic activity seems much more acute when experienced while walking.

However, moving around Java on foot means not just unpleasant sensations. It provides a deeper involvement with the material environment, creating opportunities for a special experience. Scidmore (1922: 187) describes how walking on sculptured terraces of the Borobudur temple was like experiencing a picture-Bible of Buddhism. A stroll from the train station to the Prambanan temples was a challenge because of the “deadly, direct rays of the midday sun, - at the time when, as the Hindus say, only Englishmen and dogs are abroad” (219-220); however, on the way Scidmore got a chance to witness an enchanting leisurely life in one village:

There was such an easy, enviable tropical calm of abundant living and leisure in that Lilliput village under Brobdingnag trees that I longed to fling away my “Fergusson,” let slip life's one golden, glowing, scorching opportunity to be informed on ninth-century Brahmanic temples, and, putting off all starched and unnecessary garments of white civilization, join that lifelong, happy-go-lucky, care-free picnic party under the kanari-trees of Brambanam. (220)

Likewise, Siedlecki emphasized that only through walking can one really experience the tropical rainforest: “But whoever wants to really benefit from the forest, whoever wants to thoroughly experience its lushness and beauty, he or she has to get off the paths and fight one’s way through the thick brushwood” (‘Ale kto chce naprawdę skorzystać z lasu, kto chce jego bujność i piękność poznać w całej pełni, ten musi zejść z ścieżek i przebić się przez gąszcz zarośli’) (Siedlecki 1913: 113). Referring to McNee’s haptic sublime, achieved through bodily contact with the mountains, we can talk about the haptic sublime of a tropical forest:

Through a path cut into its vegetation wall, I entered the forest for the first time. I was overwhelmed by a green gloom and swallowed by such a dense thicket of vegetation that at first I felt lost, stunned, in the midst of this veritable temple of luxuriant life. (Siedlecki 1913: 114)

Zapуściłem się po raz pierwszy do lasu przez wejście na ścieżkę, wyciętą w roślinnej jego ścianie. Ogarnął mię mrok zielony i pochłonęła tak zbita gęstwa roślinności, że w pierwszej chwili oszołomiony, wśród tej prawdziwej świątyni bujnego życia, nawet zorientować się nie mogłem.

Kinaesthetic, proprioceptive, and vestibular sensations

Haptic sensations are caused not only by walking. This is how Scidmore recounts a horse carriage ride from Yogyakarta to Borobudur: “We rocked and rolled through beautiful arched avenues, with this bare-legged boy in gay petticoat ‘gr-r-ree-ing’ us along like mad, people scattering aside like frightened chickens, and kneeling as we passed by” (Scidmore 1922: 175). It is worth noticing how the passenger’s experience is different from that of people passing along the way. Unlike walking, this means of transport isolates travellers from the immediate material environment, even if the carriage provides uncomfortable haptic sensations of rocking and rolling.

Railways on Java are favourably compared with the Indian railways due to a greater comfort, including more pleasant haptic sensations: “The railway service of Netherlands India is a vast improvement on, and its cars are in striking contrast to, the loose-windowed, springless, dusty, hard-benched carriages in which first-class passengers are jolted across British India” (Scidmore 1922: 50-51). While travelling by carriage, Scidmore enjoyed sightseeing, but reported also rocking and rolling; riding the train is not only more comfortable, but also provides a great opportunity for enjoyable views: “The hour-and-a-half’s ride from Batavia to Buitenzorg gave us an epitome of tropical landscapes as the train ran between a double panorama of beauty” (52). Among those observations, the following excerpt is of special importance: “Men and women were wading knee-deep in paddy-field muck, transplanting the green rice-shoots from the seed-beds, and picturesque harvest groups posed in tableaux, as the train shrieked by” (55). On the train, Scidmore of course experienced jolting and vibrations, but those sensations are not mentioned, having been overwhelmed by the visual input of seeing people working in the rice field. It leads to an interesting contrast: readers know much more about the haptic sensations of observed farmers than about the direct experience of the traveller, who seems to be reduced to a bodiless eye. The primacy of the visual goes hand in hand with characteristic features of the industrial transport technology. Scidmore’s writing can serve as an example of the “panoramic perception” analysed in the context of railway journeys (Schivelbusch 2014: 64).

For Scidmore, the train was a perfect environment to enjoy the views, but vibrations and jolts caused by modern machinery could be a nuisance (Schivelbusch 2014: 113-23; Smith 2018: 7, 147). Furthermore, the higher speed created a greater possibility for an accident. Siedlecki’s account on the trip to islands north of Java is full of admiration for the colourful beauty of coral reefs, but “suddenly the boat hit the underwater reef at full

speed; we were thrown like balls – some into the water, others to the bottom of the boat” (‘Nagle łódź w pełnym pędzie uderzyła o rafę podwodną; rzuciło nami jak piłkami – jednych do wody innych na dno łodzi’) (Siedlecki 1913: 273). The haptic put an end to the appreciation of visual sensations.

The extended haptic – touching with eyes and ears

“Sense perception is often a product of the interplay between cognition, knowledge, memory and language” (Das 2005: 35). Received sensations may remind of other experiences, so seeing, hearing, or smelling may help recall tactile and other sensations even in the absence of actual touch. Smolińska, in her work on the extended haptic, examines how contemporary artworks stimulate more than one sense, presenting a detailed analysis of how various senses have haptic potential.

For instance, haptic vision was already elaborated on by A. Riegel at the beginning of the 20th century, because sight could activate the memory of touching (Smolińska 2022: 34-49). The metaphor of “touch of the eye” (Garrington 2013: 7, 9, 20, 89) is often used in this context. The term “haptic visuality” allows one to distinguish a way of looking that is focused on textures and surfaces (Jackson 2020: 229). Many examples of such “touching looks” can be found in Siedlecki’s account. His descriptions evoke qualities of the surface like hardness/softness: “rocks, composed of grey and hard stones” (skały, złożone z głazów szarych i twardych’) (Siedlecki 1913: 52) or recall sensations of pain: after shooting down an ant nest, the traveller observes swarms of large ants and then reminds himself and his readers that such ants bite painfully (278). Scidmore, who visited Java as a tourist and not as a researcher with a shorter stay there than Siedlecki, seems to have been less grounded in the materiality of natural life of the island, so there are less examples of “haptic visuality” in her accounts, but her comments about ladies wearing “heavy silks and velvets of an Amsterdam winter” (Scidmore 1922: 34) convey such sensibility. There is also one example of an observed object arousing haptic sensations because of anxiety: “The rising mists and the solid blue vapors [sic] massing in the distances were so much actual, visible evil malaria almost in tangible form” (303). Finally, commenting on a boy climbing a palm tree, Scidmore writes: “[it] makes one rub his eyes doubtingly at the unprepared sight” (205), which is an example of how looking may cause a haptic reaction.

Another example is haptic hearing. From the perspective of contemporary neurobiology, sound can be treated as a specialized form of a haptic perception, since it depends on received sound waves, transforming them into vibrations within the ear and then converting them into nerve impulses. Smolińska (2022: 185–189), following Gilles Deleuze, writes about “haptic resonance,” emphasizing that sounds can transform the space, haptically impacting listeners. Additionally, sound can remind of specific body states associated with touch. In his book, Siedlecki devotes a whole chapter to “voices of

nature” and another to “Javanese music,” both of which contain examples of “touching with ears.” On Java there is a whole choir of nature: wind, swoosh of trees and voices of cicadas, crickets, bumblebees, birds, frogs, lizards fill the entire atmosphere (Siedlecki 1913: 231). As a biologist, he investigated the function of sounds for animals and commented on their perceptions: “for the cicadas’ sounds, even if not distinguished in detail but only perceived as air vibrations, could be a supplement for deficiencies of the olfactory system” (‘dla piewików głos, choćby nawet niezbyt dobrze w szczegółach rozróżniany, lecz tylko odczuwany, jako drgania powietrza, byłby uzupełnieniem braków aparatu węchowego’) (230-31).

While describing music, Siedlecki uses artistic language to show the multisensory impact of the Javanese gamelan: “Such music amazes at first, then it moves, and then the whole atmosphere becomes permeated with it and it penetrates the soul, so that mind melts in its overflowing sounds and one comes to a state existing beyond earthly feelings” (‘Taka muzyka z początku zadziwia, potem przejmuje, a potem zaczyna się nią przepajać cała atmosfera i draży ona do wnętrza duszy tak, że w przelewnych jej dźwiękach roztopia się myśl i przychodzi się do stanu, już poza ziemskim czuciem istniejącego’) (240). Figures of speech which would fit any sublime, mystical poem suggestively show the haptic impact of sounds. Another important example of linking haptic, audial and visual sensations is the scene of a Javanese dance, which must have been very important for Siedlecki, for he portrayed it twice, once in his travelogue, and then again in a short story from his collection *Opowieści malajskie*:

These hands wriggled and bent, giving her [the dancer] strange, chimerical forms; once straight and stretched, then bent in such a way that all the joints seemed to have been torn out of their bonds; these hands were writhing like two golden serpents, to the rhythm of the constantly recurring motifs of the music. At first the listeners stood mute, then the melody, growing louder and louder, and the image of the bent dancer began to entrance them; they began to clap their hands at steady pace to the beat of the cymbals, and then, at first quietly, and then louder and louder they were speaking and shouting one word to the beat of the clapping: *lekás - lekás - lekás - lekás...* (lively - lively)...

The crowd and music and dancer with a golden body melted together into one entity, vibrating with the same rhythm as the whole choirs of nature, rocking on this emerald island. (244-45)

Wiły się te ręce i gięły, nadając jej postaci dziwne, chimeryczne formy; to proste i wyciągnięte aż do palców, to przewijały się te ręce jakby dwa złote węże, w takt ciągle powracających motywów muzyki. Słuchacze zrazu stali niemi, potem potężniejąca melodia i obraz przegiętej tancerki zaczęły ich porywać; zaczęto równomiernie klaskać w dłonie w takt cymbałow, a potem, zrazu pocichu, a wnet coraz to głośniejsze mówić i

pokrzykiwać jeden wyraz do taktu z klaskaniem: *lekás — lekás — lekás — lekás...* (żwawo — żwawo)... Tłum i muzyka i tancerka o złotem ciele stopili się razem w jedną całość, drgającą rytmem tak, jak rytmem drgają całe chóry przyrody, bujającej na tej wyspie szmaragdowej

This exceptional passage displays how the rhythm of sound and dance awakens not only the audial and visual systems but the whole body. Kinaesthetic, proprioceptive, and vestibular aspects are stimulated, leading to a particular feeling of communion with the audience. Multisensory perceptions unite the crowd, turning it into an embodiment of the whole island, however, the narrator seems to stand apart.

Although large parts of Siedlecki's travelogue are composed from the vantage point of a scientist, he was much more sensitive to the haptic dimension of music than Scidmore and expressed his impressions in a more artistic way. The American traveller writes about Javanese melodies and instruments without Siedlecki's exhilaration, although she does so in positive terms, for instance: "all the singers and musicians of the full topeng troupe, lifted up their voices to the tinkling, softly booming, sonorous airs of the gamelan and delighted us with a succession of chants" (Scidmore 1922: 297) "tinkling, mild, and plaintive melodies reached us through the trees long before we were in sight of them" (322-23). Here, the spatial qualities of music are emphasized, but the haptic dimension is less evident than in Siedlecki's. The most noteworthy representation of the "touch of sound" is given by Scidmore in her account on the event she did not experience herself, but only heard about from others: the disastrous eruption of Krakatau in 1883. Scidmore admits she "had an insatiable appetite" for stories about it and recapitulates what she heard: "crashes and roars beyond those of the most terrific thunderstorms, the bang and boom of the heaviest artillery's bombardment, and the sound of frightful explosions filled the air, shook and rocked the ground, and rattled houses" (327). The haptic dimension of sound makes it possible to convey the horrifying impression of volcanic disaster.

The haptic in fauna and flora: lushness, struggles, and ruins

As noted by Wiatrowski (2014: 43), Siedlecki wrote very suggestively thanks to detailed descriptions that employed a rich sensuous vocabulary. It may be added that they include not only references to the Polish traveller's sensory experiences, but also to the sensorium of animals and even plants researched by him. In Siedlecki's travelogue, there are numerous excerpts which can be termed as "the haptic in fauna and flora," for instance:

the thin and limp vines embrace the support with such a strong grip that they crush its tissue and penetrate its living flesh; the support and the vines then overgrow each other. Some lianas hook their twisted shoots [to the support], others have long whiskers or hooked paws as grasping apparatus; once hooked to the base, the liana, growing unevenly, sometimes twists like a spring and draws itself to the base. (Siedlecki 1913: 103–104)

cienkie i wiotkie pnącza tak silnym uściskiem obejmują podpore, że zgniatają jej tkankę i wżerają się w jej żywe ciało; podpora i pnącza przerastają się wtedy nawzajem. Jedne liany czepiają się okręconymi pędami, inne mają długie wąsy lub łapy hakowate jako aparaty chwytne; raz zaczepiona o podstawę liana, rosnąc nierównomiernie, nieraz skręca się jak sprężyna i przyciąga się do podstawy

Using such stylistic means as personification, combined with ample references to the senses, makes it possible to create an image of dynamic reality and overcome subject-centered narrative conventions. It is not just the traveller, who is experiencing passive natural world, here plants are described by Siedlecki as active agents, touching, grasping, embracing and hurting each other. It brings Javanese reality to life for a reader.

Siedlecki was a biologist and devoted large parts of his book to elucidations of the natural world, while Scidmore's focus is different; that said, we can still find analogous passages. The most interesting example is a depiction of the damage inflicted on ruins by plants:

With the conversion of the people to Mohammedanism the shrines were deserted, soon overgrown, and became hillocks of vegetation. The waringen-tree's fibrous roots, penetrating the crevices of stones that were only fitted together, and not cemented, have done most damage, and the shrines of Loro Jonggran went fast to utter ruin. (Scidmore 1922: 227)

Via observations of the haptic in nature, both writers introduce the main topics associated with the perception of the tropics around the 1900s: lushness and plenitude but also cruelty of the Darwinian-Spencerian "survival of the fittest," as well as melancholy of ancient monuments reclaimed by nature (Savage 1984: 309-319; Tiffin 2016: 112-149).

The haptic in society: imperialism and hierarchy

As noted in section 3, colonialism also had its sensuous aesthetics (Rotter 2011; Low 2019: 627-31). Travellers' comments on the haptic in society reveal a lot not only about their position, but about colonial Java in general. As with Scidmore's observations on Javanese "wading knee-deep in paddy-field muck" quoted above, another one is a description of a tea plantation:

The tea-pickers, mostly women, gather the leaves only when the plants are free from dew or rain. They pick with the lightest touch of thumb and finger, heaping the leaves on a square cloth spread on the ground (...) There is great fascination in watching these bobbing figures among the bushes. (Scidmore 1922: 138)

The contrast between visual sensations of the traveller-observer and haptic sensations of the workers is very telling in that the colonial hierarchy is vividly manifested through it. The hard work of the Javanese is a source of profit for European planters and a colourful spectacle for the American tourist. A similar order of things is conveyed by the scene in which a Malay⁶ is climbing a tree in order to fetch Scidmore a coconut.

It had been my particular haunting dream of the tropics to have a small black boy climb a tree and throw cocoanuts [sic] down to me (...), one afternoon, the expression of the wish caused a full-grown Malay to saunter across the grass, and, cigarette in mouth, walk up the straight palm-stem as easily as a fly. The Malay toes are as distinct members as the fingers, and almost as long; and clasping the trunk with the sole of the foot at each leaf-scar, that Malay climber gripped the rough palm-stem as firmly with his toes as with claws or extra fingers. (91)

Again, we see a contrast between a tourist-spectator and the manual work of an inhabitant of Java. Remarks about “the Malay toes” have a racial overtone, suggesting biological difference between Malays and Americans. Furthermore, the formulation “my dream of the tropics” can be treated as an example of “the rhetoric of insubstantialization” (Spurr 1993: 142) that reduces foreign lands to a background of travel fantasies. Scidmore’s remark that the climber was rewarded well further contributes to the image of the world in which locals are paid to pander to rich Westerners’ dream; however, it can also be suggested that the whole scene is a depiction of a smart local taking advantage of rich tourists.

In Siedlecki’s case, we also observe a hierarchical relation between locals and Westerners, but in the field of science. This is how he characterizes his servant, paying attention to his haptic skills:

He had excellent knowledge of plants, he knew how to prepare skins from birds and mammals, he helped in the anatomical preparation, he had a sharp eye and knew how to follow animals – and above all he knew how to pack collections in jars and packs. From

6 Travellers often used the word “Malay” to characterize all the peoples of the Indonesian archipelago and Malay peninsula.

then on, he was my inseparable companion and an excellent helper in the laboratory and on trips. (Siedlecki 1913: 90)

Znał rośliny wybornie, umiał preparować skóry z ptaków i zwierząt ssących, pomagał sprytnie przy preparowaniu anatomicznem, miał wzrok bystry i umiał śledzić zwierzęta — nadewszystko zaś wybornie umiał pakować zbiory w słojach i pakach. Był on odtąd moim nieodstępnym towarzyszem a wybornym pomocnikiem w pracowni i na wycieczkach

Siedlecki is probably more respectful than the majority of scientists of this period, because he calls his servant by name (Nong-nong) and showers him with praises (although some comments are full of paternalism); still it was he who advanced his career with publications, not his servant, who supported the Polish scientist with valuable local knowledge. In colonial realities it was Siedlecki who profited much more from such interactions. Moreover, he remarks that Nong-nong's services were very cheap, because on Java foodstuffs for Malays were not expensive, thus reflecting his privileged position as a European.

The connection between race and the haptic, implicated in Scidmore's remark about "the Malay toes," is made openly by Siedlecki in his description of the Javanese dance. The version from *Jawa: przyroda i sztuka* was analysed above, here I will focus on the account presented in a short story from *Opowieści malajskie*. In Siedlecki's case, the divide between the different narrative genres is obscured, in his collection of short stories not only we find the same themes, but even analogical situations and phrases as in his travel book. The narrator, which can be identified with the Polish traveller, met the son of a German man and Javanese woman. In both books, Siedlecki (1913: 217, 1927: 64) remarks with some irony that although this person's skin had the colour of "well-baked bread", still there were hints of his German identity. But when they joined the crowd observing a Javanese dancer (depicted in the short story in a very similar way to the excerpt analysed above), there was a change in "the German":

The same twinkle of the eyes as all listeners had, the same gaze, staring at the dancer, and his lips (...) were moving to the rhythm, whispering quietly, shyly: *lekas, lekas, lekas...* His own true blood, his own race came to the fore! (Siedlecki 1927: 66-67)

Ten sam błysk oczu, jaki miał każdy ze słuchaczy, to samo zapatrzenie się w tancerkę, a usta jego (...) poruszają się w takt i szepczą cicho, nieśmiało: *lekas, lekas, lekas...* Zagrała własna, prawdziwa krew, własna rasa!

Conclusion: A scientist's and tourist's touch

In the previous section, haptic aesthetics in the travel writings of two travellers have been analysed. Firstly, I scrutinized sensations associated with touching, e.g., Siedlecki examining objects with his scientific hands and Scidmore enjoying opening fruits. The second subsection was devoted to reciprocity of tactile sensations, e.g., being “touched” by leeches. It was followed by remarks about bodily perceptions of tropical heat and humidity. Kinaesthetic, proprioceptive and vestibular sensations caused by walking and other activities were also explored. In this context the most important was the fact that they grounded the body in material reality. Besides touching with hands and other direct haptic sensations, examples of the extended haptic were examined, including “touching with eyes” and “teaching with ears,” for instance a synesthetic experience of music. Last but not least, in the final two subsections I paid attention to the wildlife and society. Accounts of observing haptic sensations among plants and animals demonstrate lushness, struggle for survival and the melancholy of ruins. Analysing travellers' comments on the haptic in society revealed how class and racial differences were encoded in descriptions of sensory experiences. As this short summary shows, different dimensions of the haptic in works of both travellers have been explored above. To conclude my analysis, I will now present the differences and similarities between Siedlecki's and Scidmore's experiences.

The most significant contrast is a result of the type of travel, length of stay, and the habitus. The Polish traveller was a researcher who stayed a lot longer in Java than the American, so haptic aesthetics in his account is dominated by a scientist's touch, while in the case of Scidmore the formula of a tourist's touch can be used. To demonstrate various aspects of this difference, I will elaborate using a few more examples.

It was shown already how the Polish traveller's scientific expertise manifested itself: he was exploring the tropical rainforest and volcanic areas on foot; he was able to give detailed information about the texture of rocks, and made precise observations of plants and animals. Siedlecki's account contains numerous other passages demonstrating how his research was inextricably connected with haptic experiences, for example: “Having knocked down several of these animals, I found out easily what kind of defence they had; they were spiders of the genus *Gasteracantha*, with a body equipped with short, sharp and hard spines” (“Strąciwszy kilka tych zwierząt, łatwo się przekonałem, jaką miały obronę; były to pająki z rodzaju *Gasteracantha*, o ciele opatrzonem krótkimi, ostrymi a twardymi kolcami”) (Siedlecki 1913: 102). The professional, scientific character of Siedlecki's touch is also manifested by the fact that he often uses some instruments to manipulate his specimens: “touched or grasped with pincers, it [a phyllium] falls immediately” (“Dotknięty lub schwycony szczypczykami za brzeg ciała, natychmiast upada”) (169). The touch of the scientist is thus mediated. Finally, worthy of note is how Siedlecki tells the story of his first stroll in the botanical garden in Bogor. He felt slightly

ashamed because he had hardly noticed any animals, while Javanese boys had collected many specimens for him (128–129). It shows again that in some situations Westerners were not involved in touching, as this time tactile contact was a domain of the Javanese. But it also exemplifies the importance of local knowledge, as recognized by Siedlecki. Not only Nong-nong, but also many other unnamed people helped him.

Scidmore's tourist touch is present especially in passages concerning the joys of travels, like her multisensory descriptions of tropical fruits. She pays attention to their appearance, taste and aroma, but also to tactile sensations accompanying the opening and eating: "we made up for all previous denials and lost pineapple opportunities as we tore off the ripe diamonds of pulp in streaming sections that melted on the tongue" (Scidmore 1922: 309). Sharon Halevi (2021: 324) remarked that in some American travelogues "the ingestion of the strawberries became yet another mode to incorporate the national landscape"; in the case of Scidmore the whole process of sighting, grabbing, opening and finally tasting is yet another mode of enjoying the treasures of tropical Java, for as she puts it: "Our veranda was a testing- and proving-ground, and there seemed to be no end to the delights and surprises the tropics provided" (Scidmore 1922: 80). She even writes about "a tourist's whole duty to specialties of strange places" (309). However, there is an interesting remark that shows how tourists were at the mercy of local guides, also in terms of touching fruits. It was a local servant who "gave us the name of each particular strange fruit, taught us the odd tricks and sleight-of-hand methods of opening these novelties of the market-place" (80). Enjoying exotic fruits requires haptic expertise, and here tourists became pupils of the colonised people.

Another example of Scidmore's tourist touch is her account about hotels, in which haptic sensations play a key role:

The bedding, as at Singapore, consists of a hard mattress with a sheet drawn over it, a pair of hard pillows, and a long bolster laid down the middle as a cooling or dividing line. (...) Pillows are not stuffed with feathers, but with the cooler, dry, elastic down of the straight-armed cotton-tree (...) The floors are made of a smooth, hard cement, which harbors no insects, and can be kept clean and cool. Pieces of coarse ratan matting are the only floor-coverings used, and give an agreeable contrast to the dirty felts, dhurries, and carpets, the patches of wool and cotton and matting, spread over the earth or wooden floors of the unspeakable hotels of British India. (58-59)

Tourism is often associated with comfortable, leisurely travel for pleasure, and comfort (or lack of it) is largely an effect of the haptic. The touristic aspect is reinforced by a comparison with Singapore and British India (see also her comment on railways, quoted above). Scidmore the globetrotter, who was also the author of tourist guides,

compares conditions of means of transport and hotels, providing information to potential visitors.

Despite differences between a scientist's touch and that of a tourist, several similarities can be pointed out. First, the haptic aesthetics is part of a general discourse on the tropics. In the analysed travelogues, the dominant aspect is tropical fecundity and lushness, embodied by tropical fruits enjoyed by Scidmore and the verdant wildlife explored by Siedlecki. Nonetheless, both travellers also touched the dark side of the tropics, for they recounted the extreme temperature and sultriness, possibility of a sun stroke, volcanos; for Scidmore, malaria was almost palpable in one place. It shows how the discourse on Java, the garden of the east, was streaked with an undertone of anxiety.

Another similarity relates to comments on colonial hierarchy and race connected to haptic sensations, for often Westerners were observing how the Javanese worked for them. In some situations, local embodied expertise leads to a partial reversal of hierarchy, for Scidmore had to be instructed on how to open fruits, while Siedlecki needed help in collecting plants and animals.

Therefore, the most important conclusion drawn from the comparison of two travelogues is that on general level both travellers were privileged foreigners and it determined their sensory impressions and consequently their writings. Apparently in colonial tropics a traveller's social class and origin – not occupation, gender, or the writing convention – were the most important factors shaping travel writing. Scidmore was peeling fruits, Siedlecki was catching specimens with pincers, but both were experiencing tropical abundance thanks to advantages given to European visitors by the colonial system; nonetheless they were also “in touch” with “deadly tropics,” exemplified by leeches, sultriness, volcanoes. Regardless of the expected divergence between a scientist and a tourist, both travelogues can be seen as examples of the haptic aesthetic of colonial tropics, constructed in accordance with dominant discourses at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, even though in some situations there were demonstrable cracks in them such as anxiety and unstable hierarchies.

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