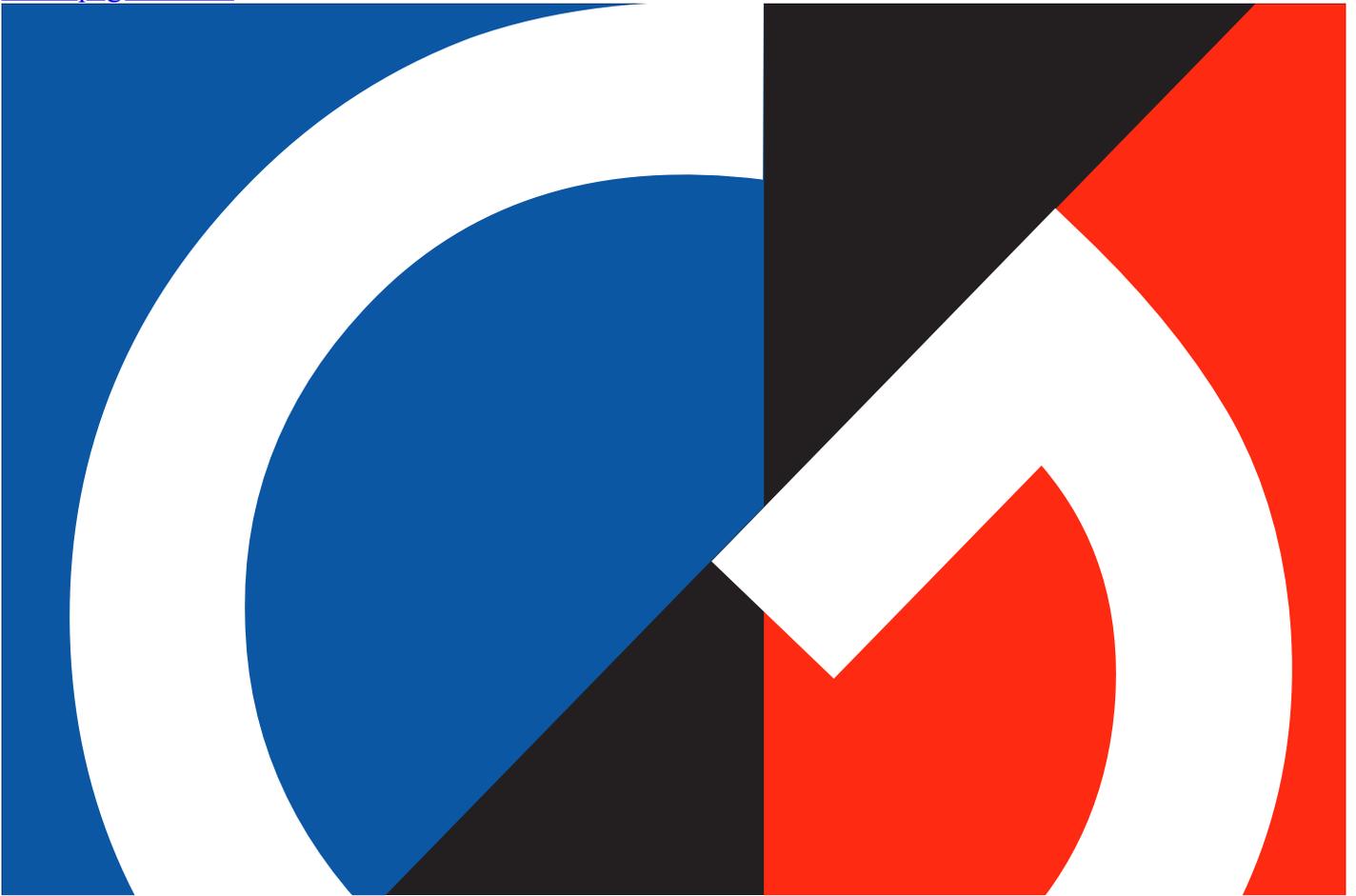




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## Pioneer photography from the Dutch Indies > Charles Kleingrothe



The German Kleingrothe established himself as photographer in Medan, on the east coast of Sumatra, in 1889. After two years, he formed a partnership with H. Stafhell. Stafhell and Kleingrothe mostly photographed portraits.

When this collaboration ended in 1901, Kleingrothe focused on the detailed photography of tropical agriculture. His photographs illustrate the different phases of the tobacco, coffee, tea, rubber and palm oil industries. He illuminated every aspect, from the tilling of the soil to the shipping of the final product.

Kleingrothe also photographed the newly constructed bridges and roads, the staff residences and the barracks where the farm labourers were sheltered.

In the early twentieth century, Kleingrothe often worked on commission for companies like the Amsterdam-Deli Company, the Senebah Company and the Deli Company. The work entailed the creation of photo albums that were used as a kind of annual reports.

Such commissioned photographs offer a one-sided view of life in the Dutch Indies. They show colonialists as they would like to present themselves: both modern and civilised. The photographs' main focus is on the link between the European presence in Indonesia and the country's progress. This legitimised their presence in the Dutch Indies.

From:

Peter Kors, Kleingrothe's Images of Technology, The reassuring view of the Indies, in *Toward Independence, A Century of Indonesia Photographed*, San Francisco 1991, pp. 53-57

Tukang Potrait, *100 Years of Photography in the Dutch Indies, 1839-1939*, Amsterdam (Fragment Uitgeverij) 1989

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