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Magic Lantern And Christen Missionaries In Kashmir

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Abstract:

This research paper delves into the utilization of Magic Lantern projections as a tool for the propagation of Christian ideals and faith by missionaries in Kashmir during the latter part of the 19th century. Projected images illustrating Biblical episodes and events in Jesus Christ's life through the magic lantern played a pivotal role in promoting Christian pedagogy in colonized lands. European Christian missionaries stationed in India during colonial times also introduced the Magic Lantern to convey biblical messages through visual imagery to new converts and natives. In the early 20th century, E.G. Hull, a Christian missionary and medical practitioner associated with The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (CEZMS) stationed in Kashmir, similarly employed a Magic Lantern as a means to disseminate the ideals of the Gospels among the Kashmiri people.

Key Words: magic lantern, Christen missionaries, Kashmir

Introduction:

Throughout the history of Christianity, images have been instrumental in conveying, preserving, endorsing, and disseminating the ideas and values associated with the Christian faith. In the early centuries, particularly amid persecution, Christian adherents expressed their religious convictions through symbolic images like the ichthys,[1] Chi-Rho,[2] anchor, dove (symbolic of the Holy Spirit), and the sacrificial lamb (symbolic of Christ's

[1] The fish symbol (ichthys), formed by amalgamating the Greek letters ΙΧΘΥΣ in a backronym/acrostic conveying "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior," found significant presence in Eucharistic and baptismal contexts. See Rasimus, Tuomas. "Revisiting the Ichthys: A Suggestion Concerning the Origins of Christological Fish Symbolism." *Mystery and Secrecy in the Nag Hammadi Collection and Other Ancient Literature: Ideas and Practices*. Brill, 2012. 327-348. See also, Hassett, Maurice. "Symbolism of Fish." Herbermann, Chales (ed.) *Catholic Encyclopaedia.* New York, Roberrt Appleton Company, 1913.

[2] For Chi-Rho symbol and its usage in the Christianity, see Arce, Javier, and Burkhalter, Fabienne. *Bronces Y Religión Romana*: Actas Del XI Congreso Internacional de Bronces Antiguos, Madrid, Mayo-junio, 1990. Italy, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1993

sacrifice). Simple artistic depictions and decorations in Roman catacombs conveyed religious themes and served as expressions of faith, strengthening Christian conviction during periods of persecution.[3]

In the Byzantine Empire, religious iconography reached a high level of development, with icons serving as aids for prayer and devotion, imparting theological truths to a largely illiterate population.[4] In the medieval period, cathedrals adorned with intricate religious art, such as stained glass windows, sculptures, and paintings, depicted biblical stories and Christian teachings, acting as a visual Bible for the illiterate. Judith Martin's work on medieval parish Churches in Sweden highlights the significance of frescos and stained glass paintings in educating newly converted Christians about Christianity.[5] As the Catholic Church replaced traditional Nordic deities in Sweden, these visual elements in churches played a crucial role in teaching and issuing moral warnings to the congregation.[6] Monks and scribes in the medieval period crafted illuminated manuscripts with intricate illustrations, serving as essential tools for religious education in monasteries, schools, and churches. During the Renaissance and Reformation, artists like Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo created exemplary works portraying biblical narratives, contributing to the advancement of Christianity.

With the advent of the printing press in the Renaissance, figures like Martin Luther harnessed printed materials, including visual representations, to proliferate their ideologies and challenge prevailing religious customs. In the 19th century, aligning with the enduring tradition of promoting Christian ideals through visual representations, the Magic Lantern emerged as a pivotal instrument for religious education. Christian clergy in both Europe and America adeptly utilized this device to project biblical images and narratives, establishing it as a potent medium for communicating the Christian message.

A brief history of Magic Lantern

The magic lantern, an early precursor to contemporary image projection devices, finds its roots in the 17th century. The attribution of the invention and development of the magic lantern is uncertain; nonetheless, it is frequently credited to the Dutch scientist Christian Huygens. Around 1659, Huygens envisioned an early version of the magic lantern, which included essential elements like a light source, often a candle, a concave mirror for focusing light, and a small image or illustration on a glass slide. Following this, the image was projected through a lens onto a surface, whether it be a wall or a screen. Huygens' groundbreaking design signaled the beginning of a device that would go on to be widely used for various purposes, ranging from entertainment and education to religious instruction. While the term "magic lantern" was coined later, Christian Huygens laid the foundation for this device around 1659.

[3] Grabar, André. "Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins." United States, Princeton University Press, 2023. P.136
[4] Gelan, Cristina. "Ideology, Symbolism and Representation through Byzantine Art." *Anastasis Research in Medieval Culture and Art* 1 (2018): 130-145.
[5] Martin, Judit. "*Swedish Medieval Church Painting.*" United States, Terrestrius Press, Limited, 2020.
[6] Ibid.

Initially met with skepticism, the magic lantern evolved during the 18th and 19th centuries, becoming a versatile tool for both entertainment and education. Advancements in optics, light sources, and projection techniques propelled its widespread use, marking it as a precursor to modern multimedia projection. Initially confined to private spaces, improved light sources like limelight and gaslight facilitated its shift to communal venues such as theaters and churches, contributing significantly to visual communication before the era of motion pictures.[7] During the nineteenth century, the popularity of magic lantern exhibitions increased significantly in Europe and North America. Secular and religious institutions alike began utilizing this visual medium as a powerful tool to disseminate their values and ideologies.

Magic Lantern and its religious use in the Europe and America

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the magic lantern evolved from simple drawings to sophisticated shows, captivating audiences with lifelike depictions and enhancing realism through darkness, smoke, and sound effects.[8] With the integration of photography, the magic lantern gained popularity for entertainment, education, and travelogue presentations.[9] Recognizing its versatility, Christian organizations in Europe and America utilized the magic lantern to disseminate gospel teachings. In France and Belgium, where secularism gained prominence, lantern slides were employed for both secular and religious education.[10] The Catholic Church responded by establishing its projection initiatives, presenting the magic lantern as a continuation of Christian traditions.[11] This integration spread rapidly, with dioceses publishing journals and establishing projection services.[12] In Britain, charitable organizations and Baptists embraced magic lantern presentations for moral, material, and missionary support.[13] In the United States, the magic lantern became a prominent tool for religious instruction, engaging audiences and fostering contemplation well into the 20th century.[14]

The Introduction of Magic lantern in Colonial India

Similar to its role other parts of colonial world, the magic lantern emerged as a prominent pedagogical tool employed by Christian missionaries for evangelistic endeavors in India. Missionaries representing various denominations utilized this optical device to propagate Christian doctrines and ideals among the local population. Notably, the Church of Scotland, active in the North-Eastern region of India with its headquarters in

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[7] Schaefer, Sarah C. "Illuminating the Divine: The Magic Lantern and Religious Pedagogy in the USA, ca. 1870–1920." *Material Religion* 13.3 (2017): 275-300.
[8] Wynants, Nele. "Spectral illusions: ghostly presence in Phantasmagoria shows." *Reframing Immersive Theatre: The Politics and Pragmatics of Participatory Performance* (2016): 207-220.
[9] Thompson, T. Jack. *Light on Darkness?: Missionary Photography of Africa in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2012. 209.
[10] Kessler, Frank, and Sabine Lenk. "Projecting Faith: French and Belgian Catholics and the Magic Lantern Before the First World War." *Material religion* 16.1 (2020): 61-83..
[11] Kessler, Frank, and Sabine Lenk. "Fighting the enemy with the lantern: how French and Belgian Catholic priests lectured against their common laic enemies before 1914." *Early Popular Visual Culture* 17.1 (2019): 89-111
[12] Ibid.
[13] Smith, Karen E. "'The Word Became Image': The Use of Magic Lanterns in Mission and Evangelism by British Baptists." *Baptist Quarterly* 53.4 (2022): 167-178.
[14] Schaefer, Sarah C. "Illuminating the Divine: The Magic Lantern and Religious Pedagogy in the USA, ca. 1870–1920." *Material Religion* 13.3 (2017): 275-300.

Darjeeling, strategically employed the magic lantern for the simultaneous dissemination of secular and religious education.[15] The Baptist missions, predominantly active in the North Eastern regions of India, the Northern Frontier of Burma, Assam, and Odisha, have employed the magic lantern as a crucial tool for disseminating the tenets and principles of Christianity. The indispensability of magic lanterns in the proselytization endeavors of the Baptist missions is emphasized by their acknowledged utility. Charles Lacy, a Baptist missionary stationed in Orissa (now Odisha), highlighted this significance in a letter published in the General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer in 1844. In his communication to "Brother Stubbins" in London, Lacy explicitly requested the dispatch of a magic lantern for missionary purposes:

“I feel much obliged by your promise to send me anything useful, and hope you will succeed. Do allow me to mention a few things. A rifle; try to send me one; also a good Magic Lantern, fitted for useful purposes.…”[16]

The Anglican mission in Shimla, too, incorporated the use of the Magic lantern for its missions. An excerpt from a letter by Rev. Goolzar Shah of the Simla Mission to Mr. Baynes in London, published in the Missionary Herald on 1 October 1881, provides insight into the active utilization of the Magic lantern for missionary purposes. In the letter, Rev. Goolzar Shah makes a request related to this optical apparatus.

“a good magic lantern with views illustrating the life of our Lord, and some of the scenes in Old Testament.”[17]

In India, the American Methodists stood out as avid users of magic lanterns, surpassing other missionary groups in their efforts to engage and educate potential converts. F.J. Blewitt, affiliated with the Telugu Faith Mission in southern India, notably relied on the magic lantern, adopting this practice after receiving equipment from a fellow Australian missionary.[18] In his words, he reiterates:

“My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. We have much reason to thank the Lord for putting it into the heart of Sister Osborne to send us her Magic Lantern all the way from Australia. It is just the thing a missionary to the heathen can make good use of. The illustrations greatly aid the poor heathen, with such spiritually blinded vision, to understand the truth. We must not forget to note that this Magic Lantern was an answer to prayer. A few months before it came we began to pray the Lord to send us one or the money to buy it with”[19]

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[15] “The Magic lantern in the Mission-field, a good example” in The Church of Scotland Home and Foreign Mission Record. United Kingdom, Church of Scotland., 1892. 586.

[16] Excerpts from a Letter of Mr C. Lacey, January 18th 1844,’ in The General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer, Vol. VI, new series, 1844 (London: Sherwood, Gilbert and Piper, 1844), 211. Charles Lacey arrived in Orissa in 1823. Isaac Stubbins went to Orissa in 1837 and appears to have been in England on furlough at the time this letter was written. See, ‘List of English Missionaries to Orissa,’ http://freepages.rootsweb.com/~blanchec/ genealogy/missionaries.htm (accessed 30 November 2021).

[17] The Missionary Herald. United Kingdom, Pewtress & Company, 1881. 410.

[18] Ward, Charles B. “*Five Years of Faith Work in India: Or, A Brief History of the Telugu Faith Mission, Nizam's Dominions, India*.” India, Printed at the Anglo-Vernacular Press, 1884. 102.

[19] Ibid.

The Church Missionary Society, establishing a specialized loan department for providing magic lanterns and slides, actively utilized this technology in India. Similar to other missionary endeavors, they employed the magic lantern to convey Christian doctrines and principles to the native population of India.

Magic Lantern and the propagation of Christianity in Kashmir

The arrival of European Christian missionaries was not a novel occurrence limited to the colonial era; historical evidence reveals their presence in Kashmir during the Mughal rule. In 1597, two Portuguese Jesuits, Father Jerome Xavier and Benedict De Goes, visited Kashmir, documenting the baptism of infants during a famine.[20] In the early 17th century, Father Francis Corsi and Joseph de Castro visited during Jahangir's rule, although no historical records mention their proselytization activities.[21] European Jesuits, Father Freyre and Father Desderi, documented their visit to Kashmir in 1715 while en route to Ladakh with the intent of establishing a mission.[22] The early 19th century witnessed a notable increase in European travelers to Kashmir, exemplified by William Moorcraft's journey in 1822, who expressed:

> "I am convinced that there is no part of India where the pure religion of the Gospel might be introduced with a fairer prospect of success than in Kashmir"[23]

Despite occasional visits by Jesuits during the Mughal era and the increased presence of European travelers in the latter half of the 18th and early 19th centuries, there was a notable lack of sustained efforts to establish a permanent Christian mission in Kashmir dedicated to propagating the Gospel. The initiative to establish such a mission arose in 1864 with the formation of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir by the British imperial administration in India. Reverend Robert Clark and Reverend R.W. Smith, affiliated with the Church Missionary Society (CMS), founded a permanent Christian mission with the goal of evangelizing the people of Kashmir.[24] Robert Clark first entered Kashmir in the summer of 1854, but it took a decade to formally establish a mission due to resistance against European Christian missionaries setting up churches for evangelization in Kashmir by its rulers. Faced with obstacles, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) turned to Western education and medicine as alternative means. They began establishing schools and dispensaries, viewing these institutions as key points for evangelization.[25] Before establishing his mission in Kashmir, Clark had already founded CMS missions in Punjab and initiated the CMS Afghan mission in Peshawar. According to Clark, one of the primary reasons for establishing a mission in Kashmir was:

[20] Maclagan, E. "The Jesuit Missions to Emperor Akbar." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, VOL. LXV*, *No. 1*, May 14, 1896. 72. See also, Maclagan, Edward. "The Jesuits and the Great Mogul." United Kingdom, Oates & Washbourne, 1932. 55.

[21] Kashmir. (1953). India: (n.p.). 66

[22] Maclagan, Edward. "The Jesuits and the Great Mogul." United Kingdom, Oates & Washbourne, 1932. 360.

[23] Moorcroft, William, and Trebeck, George. "Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab: In Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz, and Bokhara." United Kingdom, J. Murray, 1841.129.

[24] Clark, Robert. "*The Missions of the Church Missionary Society and the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society in the Punjab and Sindh*." United Kingdom, Church Missionary Society, 1904. 168

[25] Robert Clark has mentioned about the kind of obstacles and the aversion of Dogra ruler against the establishment of Christen mission in Kashmir, see Clark, Robert, 1904. 168-169.

"The valley is remarkably fitted for its geographical position, by its salubrious climate, and by its beauty and fertility, to become a great Christen missionary centre for the vast countries of Tibet, China, Yarkand, Afghanistan, and Turkistan, which lies around it. If only its people we won for Christ, they might become great evangelists in Asia, as they have in times past done much to form its destinies."[26]

After the CMS mission was set up in Srinagar, missionary activities were openly conducted in the city and its surroundings. Mrs. Clark, a skilled medical specialist and the wife of Robert Clark, played a crucial role in this effort. Introducing Western medical concepts to the valley, she established a small dispensary where she attended to as many as a hundred patients per day. This marked the beginning of the Kashmir Medical Mission.[27] Over time, the dispensary evolved into the focal point of missionary activities, with thousands of patients registering each year. In 1882 alone, eight thousand new patients were attended to, exceeding 24,000 visits. The mission performed over 1200 operations, accommodated 1000 in-patients in the wards, and supplied more than 16,000 meals. The Kashmir Medical Mission played a crucial role in assisting the local population during catastrophic events, such as the earthquake of 1885 and the severe famine and Cholera epidemic in 1888, which claimed the lives of 10,000 people in Srinagar alone.[28]

In a strategic endeavor to expand missionary outreach to include the female population of Kashmir, the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society (C.E.Z.M.), an Anglican Church offshoot, initiated operations in collaboration with C.M.S. E.G. Hull, the pioneering representative, played crucial roles in shaping the trajectory of this mission. The pervasive purdah system presented formidable obstacles for many Indian women, particularly those of high status, impeding their access to healthcare and resulting in avoidable suffering and mortality. Recognizing the urgency of addressing this healthcare gap, the women of the Zenana missions underwent training as doctors and nurses, gaining entry into the homes of Indian women in a manner that would not have been possible for men.[29]

The Zenana missions progressed from home visits to the creation of open mobile clinics in rural areas, exclusive women's hospitals, and girls' schools—all managed and staffed by women recruited from both Britain and India. Upon her arrival in Kashmir, E.G. Hull effectively fulfilled medical duties, traveling from village to village, providing healing through medicinal practices. Concurrently, she devoted a significant portion of her time to spiritual endeavors, actively engaging in evangelical efforts aimed at 'saving the souls' of the local population.[30]

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[26] Ibid. 167.
[27] Ibid. 168
[28] Ibid.173.
[29] Barnes, Irene H. "*Between Life and Death: the story of C. E. Z. M. S. medical missions in India, China, and Ceylon.*" London: Marshall Brothers, 1901
[30] Medical missionaries, often referred to as clinical evangelists, played a prominent role during the colonial era in promoting and disseminating Christianity. In a context where much of the colonial world grappled with poverty and inadequate healthcare infrastructure, Christian missionaries strategically employed modern medicine as an effective means of evangelism. Hospitals emerged as central hubs for evangelization, where patients, along with their caregivers, were exposed to preaching while awaiting

Armed with the magic lantern and translations of the Gospel in Persian and Kashmiri, Miss Hull dedicated herself wholeheartedly to the mission of evangelizing the people of Kashmir. Her interactions with individuals during her journeys between villages, where she offered care and healing to patients, are vividly chronicled in her work, 'Itineration in the Villages of Kashmir'.[31] The use of the Magic Lantern for evangelical purposes is referenced in her second work, 'Vignettes of Kashmir,' published in 1902.[32] During her one visit to a Kashmiri village, Hull mentions:

"There are men and women feeling after God in Kashmir, as in every land, and it is worth more than a day's journey to light on one of these. The lady doctor with her medicine chest, and I with a magic lantern, had started for a tour in the villages one bright spring day."[33]

Miss Hull, bearing a magic lantern along with medicines during her visits to villages, evidently seized every available opportunity to impart the teachings of the Gospels to her patients and the households she visited. During one instance, while residing at the residence of a Chowdry, a Hindu state official, to attend to patients, she noted:

"The Chowdry expressed great pleasure at my coming. He seemed an earnest man, with but little belief in his own religion, yet not content, like so many Indians, with being without any religion at all and he said eagerly: God has shown you English people the way ; come and show me the way, for I can nowhere find it."[34]

To guide the Chowdry and his household on "the way," Miss Hull conducted a magic lantern presentation for him, as well as others, including a Hindu priest who had assembled at the state official's residence. She remarked:

"Having brought with us our magic lantern, we mere afterwards able to exhibit to a large audience in his house, including more than one Hindu priest, a fairly complete representation of the principal events of our Lord's life. It seemed like a revelation to them. The women especially, sitting in front, gazed long, with folded hands and heads bowed in reverence, at a beautiful picture of the Babe of Bethlehem, saying afterwards to me with much emotion : " Truly it seemed as though God had Himself descended into our house to-day !"[35]

The people of Kashmir, unfamiliar with such visual presentations, were likely entranced by the enchanting 'magic' produced by the projection machine. This heightened the importance of the magic lantern in evangelical missions, providing missionaries with a platform to share their faith through visual storytelling, especially with

treatment from mission doctors. To comprehensively grasp the intersection of modern medicine and evangelization during the colonial period, see Hardiman, D. "*Healing Bodies, Saving Souls: Medical Missions in Asia and Africa*." Vol. 80, 2006. *Bowker*,

[31] Hull, E. G.. *"Itineration in the villages of Kashmir: Church of England."* Zenana Missionary Society. (In co-operation with the C. M. S.). United Kingdom, Office of the Society, 1890.

[32] Hull, E G.. *"Vignettes of Kashmir."* United Kingdom, Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1903.

[33] Ibid. 77.

[34] Ibid. 78.

[35] Ibid. 79.

those who were illiterate or struggled to grasp the teachings of the Gospels. The broad popularity of the magic lantern among the Kashmiri people is clearly reflected in Miss Hull's own observations, expressed in her words:

"The Tamasha , or spectacle, as people called our lantern, gained for us an audience everywhere, besides that of the sick and suffering women, who gathered round the lady doctor for treatment."[36]

While conducting a magic lantern show for a Muslim audience in another village, Miss Hull recalls utilizing a dim storage room within a residence for daytime projection.

"A large upper room, used in winter for storing provisions, but so far empty, with no aperture through which the light could come but the door and a window with a wooden shutter, enabled us to show our lantern in the daytime, and so secure a much better audience than we should in the evening….. The long, low room was densely packed from end to end, and as there was no possible means of ventilation without letting in the light, it was well we had no time to think of the atmosphere! The audience was entirely composed of Muhammadans, and the darkness gave some of them courage to ask very intelligent questions. It was a solemn moment, and an awed silence fell on all as a picture of the Crucifixion was thrown on the sheet. It was the one known as "The Marble Cross," in which the dying Saviour is alone represented. We did not break the silence by any explanations, but allowed them for a moment to sit still in the presence of the Crucified One."[37]

Miss Hull's use of the magic lantern to project biblical narratives for evangelical purposes was undoubtedly effective. Concurrently, the indigenous population, unaccustomed to such technological marvels, was fascinated by the novel spectacle of a machine employing light to project images onto a screen. The people of Kashmir, enchanted by the mystique surrounding this apparatus, developed a keen interest in further viewings. Interestingly, their curiosity was not solely motivated by evangelical purposes; rather, they perceived it as a form of entertainment, commonly referred to as 'tamasha,' denoting a captivating spectacle. This desire for additional shows is articulated in Hull's own account:

"There will be one more picture," I said, but we cannot show it as yet." I was referring to the Coming in Glory, but, ere I could explain my meaning, I was interrupted by a young man, who from the first manifested very great interest. He now sprang to his feet, exclaiming: "We must see it now, we must see all." When he allowed me to resume what I was saying, I told them that we could not show them that picture, but that God would, because it was written: " Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him." Yet even this promise scarcely satisfied them that we had not the picture of that awful Advent somewhere concealed."[38]

[36] Ibid. 83.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid. 84.

During her stay in Kashmir, E.G. Hull consistently organized lantern shows with evangelical objectives, delivering them to various audiences, including Kashmiri villagers, patients from her dispensary, the nobility, and even members of royal households.

Conclusion

In examining E.G. Hull's writings and the accounts of Kashmiri missionaries, the precise number of conversions to Christianity through magic lantern projections in Kashmir remains elusive. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that the magic lantern was intentionally deployed in the region as a visual and educational instrument for evangelical endeavors. Missionaries strategically employed this technology to project images onto a screen, featuring biblical scenes, illustrations of Christian doctrines, and religious narratives. This tactical use of magic lanterns proved effective in conveying stories and messages, especially in regions like Kashmir, where linguistic barriers or limited literacy presented challenges. The visual impact of magic lantern presentations served as a compelling medium for communicating Christian principles, facilitating the dissemination of faith and interaction with diverse communities within the colonial context.

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