Philippe Bornet

Unruly Images

Representing India in the Calwer *Bilder-Tafeln zur Länder- und Völker-Kunde* (1883)

Abstract

This article focuses on a work published in 1883 by a German Christian press associated with a missionary society. The book provides a visual panorama of all the world's cultures in 1,690 engravings. Most images were reproductions of material that had initially appeared in a variety of other contexts, ranging from missionary periodicals to secular travel magazines and British colonial literature. This study examines the message that the volume's editors wanted to convey: the extra-European world was portrayed as devoid of historical agency, non-Christian religions as false, and the presence of western agents – in particular, missionaries – as providential. Retracing the life story of a few images, I show that some of them communicated these notions better than others. For example, engravings based on photographs were often not as polemical as those based on drawings, simply because of the characteristics of photography as a medium. Complicating the critical reading of the images as simply missionary propaganda, I argue that a volume like the one examined here is best understood when placed within a transnational (or connected) history of visual practices.

Keywords

Christian Mission, India, Engravings, Orientalism, Photographs, Hinduism, Calwer *Bilder-Tafeln zur Länder- und Völker-Kunde*

Biography

Philippe Bornet is senior lecturer at the University of Lausanne, in the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilisations. After time at the University of Tübingen and at the University of Chicago, he completed a PhD in the comparative history of religions on rituals of hospitality in Jewish and Indian texts (University of Lausanne, 2007). His current research examines interactions between India and Europe and, more specifically, Swiss missionaries in South India at the beginning of the 20th century and the circulation of epistemic and visual cultures. Recent publications include *Rites et pratiques de l'hospitalité* (2010), and the edited volumes *Religions in Play* (2012) (with M. Burger) and *L'orientalisme des marges* (2014) (with S. Gorshenina).

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Introduction: Unruly Images*

Since the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* in 1978 and its sequel, *Culture and Imperialism*, in 1993,[1] it has been a commonplace to look at western artistic and visual representations of non-European cultures as "orientalist" artefacts which essentialise what they represent and tacitly reinforce power asymmetries between Europe and its "oriental" others. One can think in this context of the "orientalist" school of painting[2] or the representation of "oriental" cultures in western cinema,[3] theatre or even music. In his analysis of artistic productions such as the opera *Aida*,[4] Said seems to suggest not only that art faithfully reflects the ideological (and colonial) worldview of its period of production, but also that its later performances are bound to reproduce the same "message". While Said expressed more nuanced views in later works,[5] such a perspective reduces an artwork to an unidimensional meaning and does not leave space for radical reinterpretations by new audiences, let alone the register of emotions: an artwork can trigger feelings in its viewers or listeners, and it cannot be assumed that they will be systematically aligned with whatever "ideological subtext" one identifies in it.

More recently, however, several studies have underlined that art – in particular music and images – are complex objects that cannot be quickly reduced to a single dimension: one must take account not only of the artist's intentions, but also of the medium itself and the individual interpretations of recipients. Thus, in his *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*, John MacKenzie was one of the first to insist that even works produced within an imperialist context have the ability to "resist" imperialist ideological configurations.[6] More recently, François Pouillon has focused on the "polysemic"

* First versions of this article were presented at the 2010 IAHR Congress in Toronto and at the 2011 AAS Conference in Hawaii. I thank Dr Paul Jenkins, former archivist at the Basel Mission Archives, for his most helpful indications about the circulation of images in Protestant missionary contexts, the Calwer Verlag for the permission to reprint the images here, and the reviewers of JRFM for their thoughtful suggestions.

1 Said 1978; Said 1993.

2 See for example Nochlin 1989.

3 See Derfoufi 2018 for an analysis of the trope of the white archaeologist in western cinema.

4 Said 1993, 111–131.

5 See for example his response to S. Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*: Said 2001.

6 MacKenzie 1995.

aspect of images, specifically analysing the relative success of "orientalist" painting in the contemporary Middle East. He identifies cultural, comic (!), and financial aspects in the revalorisation of such visuals among a Middle Eastern viewership.[7] Yet more studies have analysed the translocal history of visual media and have shown that images that might seem to be reflections of a European orientalist imaginary have sometimes unexpected relations to actual images produced in the represented context, thus challenging the view of a visual Orient as a purely western creation and acknowledging the agency of local artists.[8] In that sense, analysis of "orientalist images" becomes a more complicated study of how images move across spaces, be it in terms of their production, their viewership, or the other visual cultures they encounter.

The present contribution explores a number of aspects of this complex transcultural framework through the study of one specific case. To do so, it focuses on the representation of Indian culture and religion in a volume dating back to the end of the 19th century and intended as a sort of global visual history. The first part presents the volume as a whole: the intended audience, the content's organisation, and most importantly, the diverse origins of the featured images. The second part analyses the volume's section about India, looking more specifically at the representation of religious practices, missionary activity, portraits of "natives", and the depiction of remarkable buildings or landscapes. Comparisons are offered between the volume's images and their appearance in other editorial contexts. The conclusion reflects on the translocal circulation of visual material and its implications for the interpretation of "orientalising" processes.

A Late Modern *Orbis Pictus*

The cover of the January 1851 issue of *The Missionary Magazine and Chronicle*, a journal of the London Missionary Society (hereafter LMS), carries an engraving showing a pair of Indian twins and a caption saying, "'John Angell James,' and 'George Storer Mansfield,' the Hindoo twin orphan children" (fig. 1). The opening pages tell the story of orphan twins who had been "found, when quite infants, on the road-side" and had subsequently been

7 Pouillon 2014, 15–16.

8 For example Gruzinski 2001; Subrahmanyam 2012.

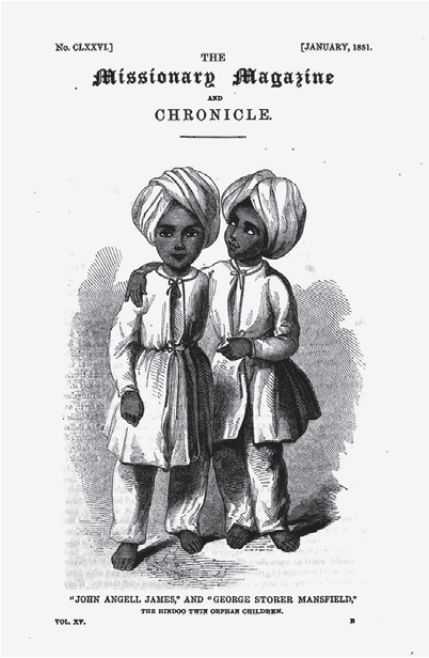

Fig. 1: Cover of the *The Missionary Magazine and Chronicle* 176, (1851), published by the London Missionary Society.

Fig. 2: Panel 56, "Tamil lands", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

educated by the wife of a missionary in Mysore, Karnataka. The engraving of them, based on a sketch drawn by a local artist, was aimed at inspiring compassion in the metropolitan sponsors of the mission, a society of women based in Birmingham. The author of the article, Annie Coles, ardently insisted that more financial support was needed.[9] She added that if properly educated with adequate means, these Hindu twins would later contribute to the progress of the missionary work. Noteworthy in the engraving are the children's clothes, certainly sent from Europe by the sponsors, and their facial expressions, suggesting a gentle character. The picture adds a strong evocative power to a compelling story.

9 The text invites donations: "Help them with your money and by your prayers, that they may never disgrace the much-loved names they bear (*sc.* George and John)". John Angell James (1785–1859) was a famous British "non-conformist" evangelical preacher and author of several books; George Storer Mansfield (1764–1837) had donated money for the foundation of Spring Hill College, a non-conformist seminary in Birmingham.

More than 30 years later, the same picture was reprinted in a different context: a collection of engravings which appeared in 1883 under the title *Bilder-Tafeln zur Länder- und Volker-Kunde* (literally, "Image Panels on Geography and Ethnology"), published by the Calwer Missionsverlag, which was run by eminent members of the Pietist mission of Württemberg, including Hermann Gundert (1814–1893).[10] The picture of the twins (fig. 2) was no longer illustrating a story or encouraging readers to sponsor missions. Rather, it had been selected for its artistic quality and suggestive character, as an edifying example of missionary activity in India. It was one of the 1,690 engravings depicting the entire world republished in this book without any text beyond short captions next to the pictures.

If we browse through the volume's pages, many questions arise, specific as well as general: what was the intent behind this project? Where did the images come from and why were they republished in this volume? Does the visual discourse of this volume systematically adopt an "orientalist" perspective that rehearses and propagates stereotypical conceptions about foreign cultures and religions?

The Making of a Visual World Geography

Audience

In the short preface to the *Bilder-Tafeln*, possibly written by Gundert himself, the work's intended purpose is clearly stated:

> In the present work, we publish a series of the most interesting pictures from our collection [Illustrationsschatz]. In so doing, we would like to present, alongside detailed works about individual countries, a modest work made up of images, which only quickly gazes at Europe, and deals with the land and people of the four other parts of the world in manifold ways. […] We hope that those panels will contribute to increasing the knowledge and the engagement with the weal and woe of those distant countries in Christendom.[11]

10 Gundert was the successor of Christian Gottlob Barth (1799–1862), a well-known Pietist of Württemberg.

11 Anonymous 1883a, [iii] (this and all other translations are mine).

The preface also introduces the volume as an addition to another book, also published by the Calwer Verlag, the *Lesebuch der Erdkunde* ("Reader of Geography") by Eduard Schwarz, a work intended for the classroom and meant to be an illustrated (but mostly textual) depiction of the world's natural and human geography.[12] Even if its publishing policy evolved slightly towards more scholarly works under Gundert's direction,[13] the Calwer publishing house specialised in literature for young people. It published, for example, a *Missionsblatt für Kinder* ("Missionary Paper for Children"), following the model of the British *Church Missionary Juvenile Instructor* of the Church Missionary Society (hereafter CMS) and of the *Juvenile Missionary Magazine*, of LMS. This context suggests that the volume was intended as a pedagogical tool, and indeed, contemporary advertisements recommended it warmly as an illustrated atlas for geography classes as well as for "Missionsstunden", that is, catechesis in public schools. A review published in the *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin*, the journal of the Basel Mission, praised the use of this volume by schoolteachers and clergy, stressing the volume's exceptionally cheap price[14] – one way to secure a large diffusion.[15] Even though a thin booklet giving some context and explanations was published one year later, in 1884,[16] the quasi-absence of text in the original volume certainly singularised the work and broadened its audience, while also suggesting that the images were self-evident. In sum, the book certainly targets the usual audience of the Calwer Verlag: mostly young people, parents, and teachers belonging to a Pietist middle class. For these reasons, the volume can be considered a visual geographical history of the entire world intended for educational purposes, a kind of updated version of John Comenius's *Orbis Pictus* of 1658 with a Christian evangelical subtext.

A closer look, however, reveals that while some images conveyed an obvious message related to missionary propaganda, others were more ambigu-

12 Schwarz 1866 and Schwarz 1869.

13 An example is Wurm 1908, a handbook about the history of religions. See however the title of Josenhans 1855, unambiguously intended for a young audience.

14 As advertisements in the *Calwer Missionsblatt*, the Calwer publishing house's official periodical, inform us, the book was available in different sizes, for different prices: as a booklet for 6 Marks, in slightly larger size (175×110 cm), for 10 Marks, and in full size (165×243 cm) for 12 Marks. The prices correspond approximately to USD 30, USD 60 and USD 70 today, see www.measuringworth.com [accessed 15 March 2021].

15 Anonymous 1883b, 224.

16 Anonymous 1884.

ous. The collection included visual elements showing a great variety of subjects and although some clearly reflect an evangelical (and critical) attitude towards local cultures, others do not echo such a polemical Christian perspective. Similarly, while the reproduction of wood engravings exclusively contributed to the book's homogeneity, the genealogies of specific images are highly diverse: sources range from sketches drawn by European or local artists to traditional local iconography and photographs.

Organisation of the Volume

Extracting pictures from their original settings in order to print them next to each other, the editors of the *Bilder-Tafeln* made decisions about selection and organisation. These choices created an implicit interpretative framework by arranging the images into a specific order, creating a categorisation into specific "panels" (each displaying 8 to 10 engravings), and placing other images as neighbours. The table of contents is striking in reflecting a particular conception of world history (fig. 3). Organised by continent, it is conceived as moving gradually from the known, local, and Christian to the more foreign and other.

The book opens on a presentation of Europe, which is represented by the Reformers and by a selected number of images depicting the landscapes of England, France, and the German region of Württemberg. Immediately after these introductory panels (seven out of a total of 178), the book goes both eastwards and backwards in time, first illustrating places in Palestine and Syria mentioned in the Bible. This thematic imbalance quickly suggests that the real subject of the volume is certainly not the "entire world", but rather the "exotic" and extra-European world. Leaving the Near East, the work then approaches India from the west, followed by Sri Lanka, China, and Japan. After a few pages about Africa, the Americas are shown with no mention of recent American history, such as the Civil War, but with an exclusive focus on native people, that is Inuit, native North Americans, and native South Americans. The book concludes with pictures of Australia and Melanesia.

With the volume's organisation strongly reminiscent of a Hegelian conception of world history, it is not surprising that only Europe is represented through actual historical figures. This approach is certainly not specific to this publication: the treatment of non-European cultures, in particular Africa and Asia, in western school material very often reveals a hierarchis-

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Fig. 3: Table of contents, *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

ing conception of world history and religions, locating historical agency exclusively in the west.[17]

Engravings, Photographs, and Engravings of Photographs

According to the preface, the images published in the volume stem from a collection kept by the Calwer publishing house (an "Illustrationsschatz"). In fact, all the images had already been published, not only in periodicals published by the Calwer Verlag (the *Calwer Missionsblatt*) or the Basel Mission (the *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin*), but also in periodicals of British missionary societies such as the *Missionary Register* (CMS), *Church Missionary Gleaner* (CMS), *The Church Missionary Intelligencer* (CMS), or *The Missionary Magazine and Chronicle* (LMS).[18] Periodicals of these British societies had included images in the form of wood engravings from an early date, modelled on the American Tract Society, which was a pioneer in this domain.[19] Other pictures had initially appeared in secular publications, such as the French journal *Le Tour du Monde: Nouveau Journal des Voyages* – a journal which published travelogues and reports of explorers – or in books by British scholars, such as James Fergusson's *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture* (1868/1891).[20] Tracing the origins of a specific image can be a tricky task even though many of them are signed by an engraver. In some rare cases, the artist's name[21] or the technology used is specified, but this information does not reveal much about the image's own source, which might have been, for example, a sketch, drawing, painting, or photograph.

17 See further examples in the volume edited by Richards 1989, as well as the case of depictions of Africa in Swiss children's literature in Purtschert 2012.

18 Chronologically, the first missionary periodical to include pictures was the *Missionary Papers for the Use of the Weekly and Monthly Contributors to the Church Missionary Society* (London, from 1816 on). The Calwer Verlag did not pursue missionary activities by itself but was closely associated with the Basel Mission; see Lahmann 1999, 10.

19 See Morgan 1999, 52, who emphasises the role of this medium in the context of American evangelical societies as examples of early mass-media communication: "Wood engravings conformed in medium and appearance to the format of the tract and its use: visual propaganda that was inexpensive, mass produced, and able to entice the eye with the tract and then its contents."

20 Fergusson 1868/1891.

21 Signatures are often (but not always) followed by a Latin abbreviation, for example *sc.* for *sculpsit* or *del.* for *delineavit*, which indicate respectively the engraver and the author of the drawing on which the engraving is based. See Gascoigne 1986, 48a-b-c.

A first series of images appears simply to have been drawn by an artist before being engraved. In these instances, the image was not bound by any technical constraints, which allowed for the reproduction of more dramatic scenes, for they could be created from scratch according to editorial needs. They might be based on drafts prepared in the distant context or entirely manufactured in Europe. In both cases, they "created a space in which the romantic imagination of the artist could intervene in very direct ways".[22] And indeed, as long as only engravings were printed in periodicals, almost full editorial control could be exerted by intervening at any stage in the making of these images, including forging an item in order to fit a particular agenda (see below for an example). The present collection includes works by the British "orientalist" engraver and artist Joseph Austin Benwell (1816–1886) and the French artists Émile-Antoine Bayard (1837–1891) and Horace Castelli (1825–1889), who had both worked for the journal *Le Tour du Monde*.[23]

A second set of images comprises engravings produced from photographs. Photography was already being used by missionaries in the second half of the 19th century, and it was widespread throughout India from at least the 1850s.[24] Photographs were included in the regular reports circulating between missionaries and their home institutions. The Basel Mission, for instance, sent a circular to its missionaries in India, China, and Africa in 1878 that stressed the importance of reports and photographs communicated to headquarters.[25] That message indicates that "visual material" about the distant countries was needed by the home institution and that even at an early date missionaries working in the field could take photographs without being professional photographers.[26]

22 Pinney 1997, 22.

23 Other artists whose work was reproduced include the British C. W. Cheshire, W. Dickes, W. Harrison, J. Johnston, J. Knight, E. J. Marty, C. E. O. Measom, T. Robinson, X. A. Ruff, R. Sayer, J. Scott, Sheeres, E. Whymper, and the French A. Bertrand, L. Dumont, C. Laplante, Auguste Trichon, as well as the Belgian Adolphe-François Pannemaker. For information on some of these figures, see the corresponding entries in Bénézit/Busse 1999.

24 See Jenkins 1993, 92: "Photographs were already being taken in the context of the London Missionary Society and Jesuit presence in the 1850s." Photography itself dates from the first decades of the 19th century and in India, photographical studios, clubs, and curricula were established from the middle of the 19th century on; see Karlekar 2013, 29–30, for Tamil Nadu.

25 Josenhans 1878, 4: "We would also like to urgently request drawings or photographs suitable for wood engraving and publication in our sheets. Any expenses for these will be gladly reimbursed."

26 See Jenkins 1993, 92: "At this stage of the study of missionary photography, […] we should consider it likely that any missionary society was organising itself a supply of photographs

The determination of whether an engraving was based on a photograph is an important task, since drawings and photographs elaborate reality in vastly different ways – which is not to say that photography is any more "real" than drawings. First, the technique used for producing photographs in the 19th century had consequences for the representation of the subject matter, since, as Paul Jenkins writes, "Photography, especially with a slow camera, and in situations where the human object could help to determine how he or she was pictured, was much less likely to be sensationalist in its content than images which were generated by artists or by technicians at the request of editors in a metropolitan context."[27] Thus, for technical reasons, especially exposure time, engravings based on photographs usually show still-lives or landscapes, people posing, and peaceful situations. Secondly, some human subjects of photographs would have been able to control how they were positioned, the expression they wore or the context in which they were photographed. However, scenes were often staged under the direction of the photographer, a control reinforced with the introduction of studios in the earlier 20th century. In addition, one cannot assume that in the second part of the 19th century photographers in India were exclusively British or western colonial agents or missionaries. As Pinney noted, "early Indian photographic practitioners were part of an élite that mimicked key colonial aesthetic forms".[28] Photographic clubs developed quickly in India, for example in Bombay in 1854 – one year after the founding of the Photographic Society of London – and in Calcutta in 1856; at its founding the latter had some 30 Indian photographers as members. In this context, portraits and group photographs were becoming more and more popular in India, in part at the request of the photographed subjects, eager to show themselves in the progressive light associated with the new technology. A large collection of photographs taken by the famous Indian photographer Lala Deen Dayal (1844–1905) witnesses to this popularity and to the fact that

from overseas in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. 'Organising a supply' can also mean purchasing photographs from studios, where these existed, or obtaining images from other missionary societies. It is my impression that there was frequent exchange of objects, images and texts among Protestant missionary societies for use in their publicity into the 1860s and 1870s, if not throughout the century."

27 Jenkins 1993, 94. See also Jenkins 1993, 114, fn. 13, where the author suggests that the *Bilder-Tafeln* volume is actually a publication of the Basel Mission's "Cliché-Buch" (Basel Mission Archives, QQ-30.001), and that about 25% of the engravings of that collection are based on photographs.

28 Pinney 1997, 86.

photography percolated into many circles, from higher class families to royalty and schools, and included representations of female subjects.[29]

Thus, it may be speculated that engravings based on photographs represent scenes that are not as polemical as engravings based on sketches or drawings, reflecting technical constraints and often a negotiation between the photographer and the photographed subject.[30]

While making an engraving from a photograph might seem paradoxical, it is easily explained by both printing constraints – half-tone printing of photographs only became mainstream after 1895[31] – and ideological message, for the process adds opportunities for intervention and removes the original personal and contextual setting, creating a distance between the viewer and the object. The decontextualizing process at work in the making of an engraving from a photograph also evokes timeless notions of exoticism and antiquity – ideas that were all central to the general worldview the book was seeking to convey.[32]

Imag(in)ing India and Hinduism

Four main aspects of cultural diversity are highlighted by the volume, with a particular focus on religion: (1) local religious practices, (2) missionary activities as a civilising process, (3) portraits of natives, and (4) remarkable landscapes or sites with no direct connection to religion.

Religion

While religion is naturally a major topic throughout the *Bilder-Tafeln*, India is significantly (and oddly) the only region in the entire book with a dedicated section on religion. As expected, many images in that section reflect

29 See Karlekar 2013, 34–38.

30 Although it was still possible to ask for specific subjects to be photographed, to select the most fitting clichés, and/or to reframe photographs before publication. See Jenkins 1993, 98–101 for a few examples of the relations between the photographer Christian Hornberger, active in Ghana, and the Directorate of the North German Mission in Bremen in the second half of the 19th century and for more on the interests at stake in the selection of the photographed subjects.

31 Rice 2010. For example, the *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin* printed its first photograph as late as 1896.

32 See Chatterjee 2011, 23 about a similar transition from photographs to engravings in the reproduction of images of major Indian sites in schoolbooks produced in the 1950s and 1960s.

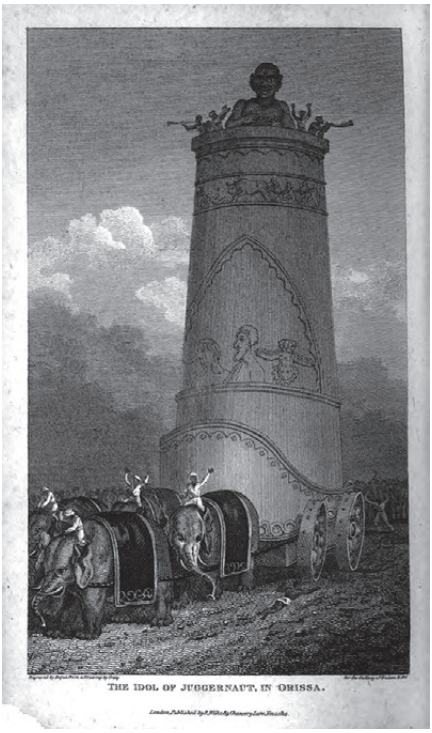


Fig. 5: *Bilder-Tafeln*, panel 31, "India: religion", "Heathen carts", Calw. (© Calwer Verlag)

Fig. 4: "The Idol of Juggernaut, in Orissa", in: Edward Polehampton / John M. Good, *The Gallery of Nature and Art: or, A Tour Through Creation and Science*, London, 1818, vol. 6, 485.

missionary propaganda, with a particular insistence on "strange rites" and various ascetic practices that would naturally make a strong impression on a Pietist audience accustomed to churches where nothing but minimal rituals were performed. The section includes a series of images dealing with hectic rituals and odd deities, although with the surprising absence of *satī*, a favourite theme of missionary polemics which had horrified western observers since medieval times.[33]

Here, as in the other parts of the book, the images were not new but had been borrowed from earlier publications. Thus, a picture showing the "extravagant" processions of chariots (*tērs*) at the Jagannath temple of Puri (fig. 5) is a republication of an engraving which had appeared as early as 1818, in a book about various curiosities of the world considered from a Christian Protestant perspective and entitled *The Gallery of Nature and Art*. The original image (fig. 4), with a carnivalesque chariot topped by a human

33 Weinberger-Thomas 1999. The absence of *satī* might have to do with the young audience targeted by the volume.

Fig. 6: Panel 32, "India: religion", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

Fig 7: Henry Lord / Jean-Frédéric Bernard / Bernard Picart, Dissertation sur la religion des Bramines, in: *Moeurs et coutumes de tous les peoples du monde*, 1723, vol. 1, part. 1, between pages 68 and 69.

figure surrounded by trumpet players, is referenced as "engraved by [William?] Angus from a drawing by [William Marshall?] Craig". The depicted scene does not bear much resemblance to anything actual: the chariot has nothing to do with a South Indian *tēr* and the deity certainly does not look like Jagannath. The painter, probably William Marshall Craig (d. 1827), therefore likely conceived the visual elements after a text and his own imagination. The image features the classic motif of a person crushed by the chariot, generally interpreted a sign of religious fanaticism. In its republished version, the image removes the scene from its natural setting of clouds and trees and relocates it in the middle of Hindu temples and an ecstatic crowd. With that transposition, the image loses the aesthetic qualities of the original, and its visual message becomes purely polemical.

Another depiction related to rituals shows practitioners engaging in astonishing bodily postures. Here the images do not seem to have been fabri-

Fig. 8: Panel 30, "India: religion", "Forced worship of Kali", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

cated from a missionary point of view, but instead were mostly borrowed from other collections that emphasised the strangeness or unnatural character of the represented scenes. They can be read against the development of anatomical sciences, commenting critically upon bodily postures that do not accord with God-given normality. One example is the famous image of a yogi over a fire that appeared in Bernard and Picart's archaic work of 1723 and is republished here with a few alterations (fig. 6). While the image's original publication context (fig. 7) emphasised the extreme postures of Indian yogis who were practising austerity "by devotion, in the honour of a god" (in the original French caption), the comment accompanying its republication speaks of "public atrocities" which for the most part were "fortunately" banned by the British.[34]

Finally, the volume published examples of the iconography of Indian gods such as Brahma, Kali, or Hanuman. While some of these representations obviously reflect Christian apologetics, others were simply copied from traditional iconography. Thus, one image that is allegedly of Kali (fig. 8), actually borrows elements from the Christian iconography of Moloch – with the bull head and the evocation of child sacrifice – and shows nothing even remotely resembling the traditional iconography of

34 Anonymous 1884, 9. See the comment of von Wyss-Giacosa 2006, 165–166 for an analysis of the image's construction and its relation with an image published in the classical work of the Dutch chaplain active in South India, Abraham Rogerius (1609–1649), *De open-deure tot het Verbogen Heydendom* 1651.

Fig. 9: Panel 30, "India: Religion", "Brahma", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

Kali. It was created entirely in order to project a dark light on Indian religious traditions.

Conversely, the image of the god Brahma and his *haṃsa* (a goose or swan) (fig. 9) had previously appeared (see fig. 10) in *The Complete Hindoo Pantheon* by Etienne Alexander Rodrigues (1842), who had evidently copied traditional iconography. The example in Figure 11 is typical of the syncretistic style of painting characteristic of the Thanjavur court, Tamil Nadu. The Indian artist, who had himself copied another version of a similar image – possibly a painting on a wooden panel on display at the Thanjavur court – worked with a technique that had been originally imported from Europe: gouache painting on European paper. While the Indian artist's copy already marked the move from an iconographic representation of the deity with religious function to a "neutralised" version on paper, the republication of a very similar image in the *Bilder-Tafeln* was meant to illustrate the strange, often zoomorphic, shapes of Hindu deities and their *vāhana*s.

Also illuminating is the engraving of the Mysore bull (Nandi) statue (fig. 12), very likely based on a photograph, perhaps even the 1865 photograph in Figure 13. The only major difference between the engraving and the

Fig. 10: Etienne Alexander Rodrigues, *The Complete Hindoo Pantheon Comprising the Principal Deities Worshipped by the Natives of British India Throughout Hindoostan, Being a Collection of the Gods and Goddesses Accompanied by a Succinct History and Descriptive of the Idols. Deduced from Original and Authentical Manuscripts and also Extracts from Standard Authors*, Madras, 1842, between pages 10 and 11.

Fig. 11: Brahma as a youthful man on a throne, and his *vāhana*. Gouache on paper, around 1830, part of an album entitled "Hindu deities" realised in Tiruchirapalli/Trichinopoly (South India), British Museum, London, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_1992-0410-0-1-5 [accessed 15 January 2021]. (© The Trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

Fig. 12: Panel 33, "India: religion", "The bull Bassawa near Mysore", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

Fig. 13: Nandi on Chamundi Hills in Mysore, British Library, Photo 512/(13), photographer unknown, London, http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/apac/photocoll/g/019pho000000512u00013000.html [accessed 15 January 2021]. (© The Trustees of the British Museum, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0)

photograph is the position of the attendant at the site, a detail easily adapted in producing the derivative engraving. When looked at in isolation, the image certainly does not reflect missionary propaganda; instead it conveys a sense of both the site's majestic beauty and the technical prowess required to sculpt such a gigantic monolithic statue.

It is worth noting that images of the iconography of Hindu gods became important building blocks in the construction of a nationalist and anti-colonial imagery around the same time. Art studios active out of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras specialised in the production of images showing Indian deities as well as scenes from the Indian epics, and artists such as Raja Ravi Varma (1848–1906) specialised in the representation of mythological scenes, with reference to visual codes typical of western "orientalist" images.[35] Abandoning the images' local contextual specificities – such as the specific location of that statue of Basava/Nandi in Mysore, or a specific South Indian style in the previous image – their decontextualised reproduction turned them into visual components of an essentialised notion of a Hindu India. It is striking that images similar to those that were used for anti-colonial purpose appear in the present volume, thus showing the "unruly character" of images which can take on different meanings as a result of their context of performance.

35 Mitter 1994; Pinney 2004. A striking example is Ravi Varma's new version of the "orientalist" painting by Jean-Joseph Benjamin Constant (1845–1902) entitled *Judith*; see Mitter 1994, 187.

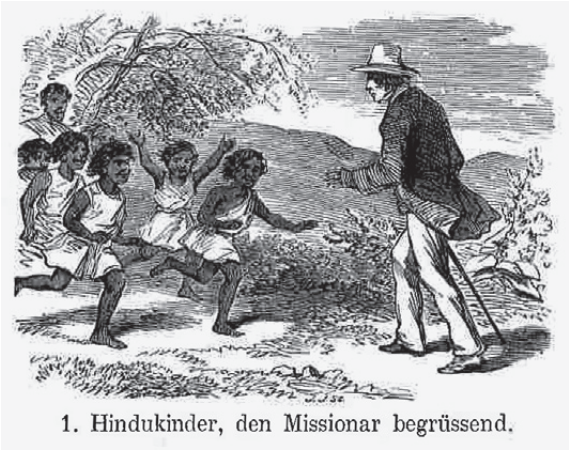


Fig. 14: Panel 55, "Tamil lands", "Hindu children greeting the missionary", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

The Civilising Mission

Next to images showing different aspects of "Hinduism", a second recurring theme in the collection is that of missionary activity itself. While the pictures depicting religion generally suggest the extravagant otherness of India and Hinduism, pictures showing missionary activity suggest that this otherness is not so extreme that nothing could be undertaken. The impression of an understandable otherness which one could improve is achieved through showing scenes of progress, most typically with a missionary at work and succeeding in his task. The missionary is easily recognisable: he (never she) is distinguished by his European clothing (often white), his hat, and his position in the picture, somewhat distant from the "native people", or at least standing in a space that is distinct from the main action, conveying the impression that he is observing and reflecting on what is happening (see, for example, fig. 14).

Sometimes pictures were reworked in order to put more emphasis on the missionary activity. Thus, a depiction of a scene showing a "Hindu dying"[36] kept in the Basel Mission archives (fig. 15) is supplemented in the republished version with the figure of a missionary with his Bible (fig. 16). Evidently the engraver could easily modify a drawing for editorial reasons, and

36 The scene refers to the customary giving away of a cow – the *vaitaraṇī* cow – to a dying Brahmin, which will help him reach safely the other side of the Vaitaraṇī river in hell. See Kane 1968, 182–183 for details about the ritual.

Fig. 15: Basel Mission Archives, Basel, ref. QC-30.001.0172, http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll123/id/21708 [accessed 15 January 2021]. (© mission 21)

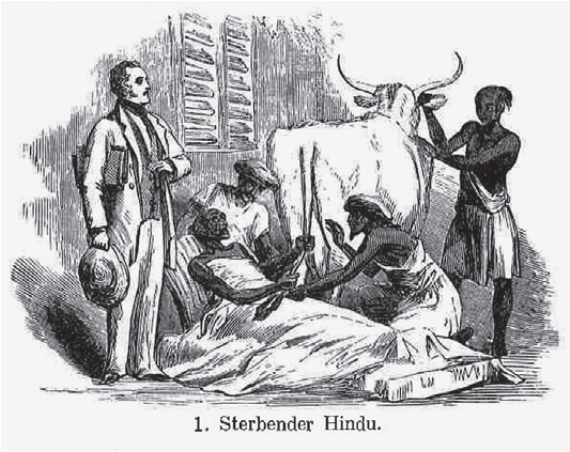


Fig. 16: Panel 57, "Tamil lands", "Dying Hindu", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

stereotyped characters – such as the figure of the missionary – were ready for insertion.[37]

A more extreme example of this "civilising mission" is provided by images suggesting the natives' lack of morality, and hence commenting on the pressing need for moral improvement through Christian mission. A good

37 Jenkins 1993, 93: "The image had to be transcribed onto a block of some kind (the presumption is that in most cases wood was used), which means that a craftsman intervened between the direct mechanical registration of an image in a photograph and its publication, and that changes therefore could be made in the image for a variety of editorial reasons."

Fig. 17: Panel 39, "The Ganges river region", "A mother sacrifices her child to the alligator", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

Fig 18: *My Picture-Book*, New York: American Tract Society, 1863, 46.

case is the figure of a mother sacrificing her child to a crocodile, seemingly implying that this was a common practice among Hindus (fig. 17). However, the same image was frequently printed in various missionary periodicals (fig. 18) without any specific link to India. Thus, a stereotyped representation could easily be reused in very varied settings, especially, perhaps, when the viewers were not directly acquainted with the depicted context.

Portraying the Natives

Some of the volume's images parallel British colonial projects attempting to document visually the characteristics of the native population, such as *People from India* (1868), a large photographical project that had the goal of visually recording all the diversity of Indian cultures. The anthropometrical perspective at work in this project depersonalised the human subjects to focus on their physical characteristics. In our volume, the same perspective is perceptible in images which document the physical attributes of a specific group, tribe, or caste.

Fig. 19: Panel 53, "Telugu lands", "Peitschi, the daughter of the snake charmer, as heathen and as Christian", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

Fig. 20: John Forbes Watson / John William Kaye (eds.), 1868, *The People of India. A Series of Photographic Illustrations*, London: India Office, 1868, vol. 1, 77, image 19, "Cole Christians. Aboriginal. Chota Nagpoor".

While the image from the *Bilder-Tafeln* found in Figure 19 seems entirely fabricated to fit the ideological message, with dress and hair playing the role of civilisational markers, the photograph from *The People of India* in Figure 20 is no less staged to convey the same message. In these cases, and in photographs as well as in drawings, the power configuration around the visual representation is strongly asymmetrical: the represented subjects are depersonalised and put to the service of an imperialist discourse which has no consideration for their interests. Though we noted above that photography was often used to depict more peaceful scenes than drawings, it appears here to be yet another "tool of imperialism".[38] Such images inscribe the colonial/missionary activity into a more global narrative of civilisational progress directed through the inexorable spread of western and Christian values on a worldwide scale, reassuring the reader/viewer that he or she is actually the model to which these other societies are aspiring.

38 To echo Headrick's 1981 classic work *The Tools of Empire*, on the relation between colonialism and technology.

2. Evangelisten in Benares.

Fig. 21: Panel 43, "The Ganges river region", "Evangelists in Benares", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.[39]

However, and in contrast with such depersonalising depictions, most images showing the natives in the volume are portraits, featuring people posing in costumes and in a rather flattering light. This description fits images commenting on successful cases of conversion, depicting native Indian "evangelists" who, it was hoped, would continue the initiated evangelising process on their own. The image in Figure 21 shows a group of Indian Christian male evangelists from Benares posing in elegant costumes around books that are probably Christian Bibles. While quite different from the depersonalising visual discourse of Figure 19, this composition has been carefully staged to suggest that Christianity was slowly but surely percolating through the local cultures, a picture that did not accord entirely with reality.

39 The original image appeared in *The Church Missionary Intelligencer* 12, 1861, 74 and 89. The text accompanying this initial publication focuses on the difficulties experienced by these Indian Christians, both in their conversion and in their work as evangelists. One of them (first from the right), a certain Nilakantha/Nehemiah Goreh (1825–1895), was a Brahmin from Maharashtra who had converted to Christianity before living a life of full renunciation as a "Christian Sannyasi". See Fox Young 2005 for an analysis of Goreh's life and the polemics between Christianity and Brahmanism in that context.

Fig. 22: Panel 69, "Malabar", "The Swami of Shirali (Kanara)", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

Another image portraying the "natives" does not immediately convey the same sense of successful missionary activity. Figure 22 shows a religious leader, not in a case of "mistaken religion" but dressed in formal costume and clearly posing for the photographer. The person depicted here is the swami of Shirali, Karnataka, the guru of the famous and rich Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmin Math, Pandurangashram (1847–1915). A brief comment in the accompanying booklet indicates that the swami of this "little village agreed to sit in front of a photographer".[40] This wording suggests that the swami could have declined to be photographed, and that he controlled the interaction, not the other way around. With the medium employed, the group signalled its intention to appear modern and progressist, since photography was probably not a widespread technique in this location – an interpretation that is in accord with the profile of Pandurangashram, who is known for having turned the location into a

40 Anonymous 1884, 19.

"modern" (and widely successful) pilgrimage site.[41] Making an engraving out of the photograph had the consequence of removing the progressist aspect of the scene and so to say returning the swami back into a distant and past world of exoticism.

While I am not suggesting that such an image is a counter-example to Saidian criticism of visual orientalism, its production does not conform to the scheme of a "western" invention of the "East". Images like this carry a certain ambiguity and have the potential to resist the narrow evangelical subtext which runs throughout the volume: the "orientalist" aspect of the composition largely stems from the transposition of the photograph to an engraving and from its editorially determined location in the volume.

Picturesque India

The volume also includes a series of pictures that are not directly related to any religious theme and that show extraordinary natural landscapes, architecture, or human scenes. Previous collections of such images, such as F. B. Solvyns's *Catalogue of 250 Coloured Etchings*,[42] and images accompanying articles in the French *Le Tour du Monde* attempted to give to the stay-at-home viewer the experience of travel. An example is an image republished from the work of James Fergusson (1808–1886), a British historian of architecture better known perhaps for his rather eccentric work on comparative mythology entitled *Tree and Serpent Worship* (1868).

While the original publication (fig. 23) rightly indicates that it depicts a space adjacent to a temple for the temporary hosting of visitors, the *choultry*, the image's republication (fig. 24) suggests that we are actually looking at the dark nave of a temple.

Other images show Indian landscapes remarkable for one reason or another, such as alpine-like sceneries or picturesque views in which architecture is in harmony with a natural setting, as in the picture of Gorakhpur (Uttar Pradesh) in Figure 25.

Here, and without mentioning the obviously Islamic building in the image's centre, the accompanying book with text comments on the contrast between the beautiful scenery found in India and the "horrible religious

41 Conlon 1977, 143–144.

42 Solvyns 1799. See Hardgrave 2004 and the comments of Karlekar 2005, 29.

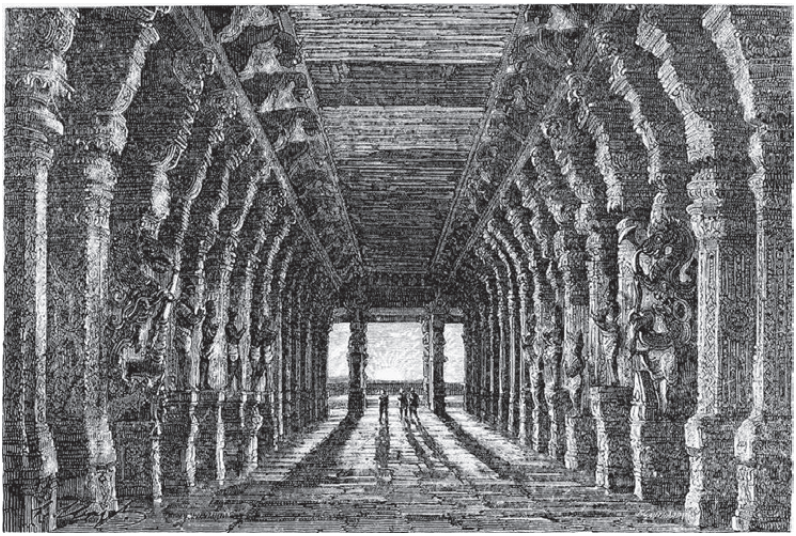
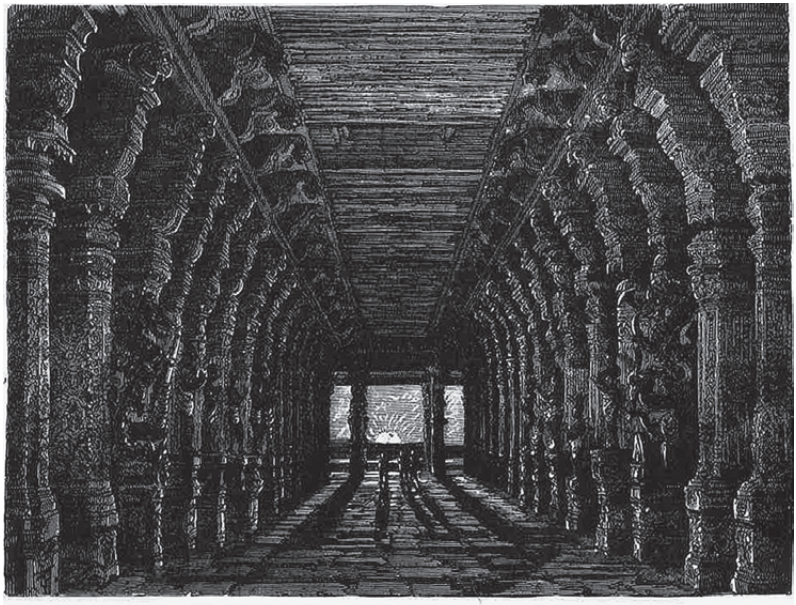


Fig. 23: James Fergusson, *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, London: Murray, 1868/1891, vol. 1, 363, "View of Tirumulla [sic] Nayak's Choultrie, Madura (From a Photograph)".



10. Schiff des Tempels Pudu-Mandapam in Madura.

Fig. 24: Panel 58, "Tamil lands", "Nave of the Pudu-Mandapam Temple in Madura", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.

1. Bascharatpur (bei Gorakhpur).

Fig. 25: Panel 43, "The Ganges river region", "Basharatpur (near Gorakhpur)", *Bilder-Tafeln*, Calwer Verlagsverein.[43]

conceptions" associated with it.[44] The inclusion of such images republished from non-religious publications, such as *Le Tour du Monde*, without a clear relation to any evangelical or missionary agenda, anticipated a demand for exoticism from the viewership. These representations allowed viewers to travel without travelling, communicating a subtext on relations between modern metropolitan and distant contexts. As Peter Osborne noted about travel photographs, by "mediating between the private and the global", pictures had the implicit effect of providing "middle-class viewers with the means of identifying themselves in and with [a] global system".[45] This interpretation is also relevant in the present case since the collection of im-

43 Originally published in the *Calwer Missionsblatt* 12, 1866, 89.

44 For example: Anonymous 1884, 10: "The Hindus consider this magnificent alpine world to be the special domain of their god Siwa and his cruel wife Kali." Note Brooke 2010: "One of the dichotomies of missionaries' descriptions of India was the contrast of its natural beauty with its inhabitants' sinful nature, which prevented them from recognising it as a work of God's will. One LMS missionary – again describing the beauties of the picturesque Hooghly – urged his young readers to pity and pray for the heathen of Bengal, who had access to such majesty but were too 'depraved' to properly appreciate it."

45 Osborne 2000, 56.

ages keeps reasserting a specific notion of global progress (simultaneously religious, cultural, and scientific), with the viewers implicitly located at its apex, whatever their social position in their own society.

Conclusion

In his study of the role of images in the conquest of Mexico, Serge Gruzinski contrasts the "image-signifying" or "image-memory" with the "image-signified" or "image-miracle": while the first type of image had a simple pedagogical value, the second was performative.[46] He highlights the fact that missionaries did all they could to present Christian iconography – such as the Virgin Mary – as signifiers of something else. The volume examined here certainly pursues a "war of images" of its own on two levels: while some of the published images, such as those of Hindu gods, originated as "image-miracles" (having themselves a religious function), they were neutralised and disenchanted, recoded into the language of images as mnemonic tools.[47] At the same time, the volume displays an opportunistic use of the medium of engravings to produce an ad hoc visual depiction of the world that was suitable for edifying a broad and young European (German) viewership, even in competition with alternative media – such as photography – that would soon become mainstream.

Despite this general editorial intention, however, the genesis of specific images shows the ambiguity of their trajectory. While added elements with propagandistic purpose are quite easy to figure out, other visual artefacts lend themselves to various readings as either co-produced by Indian and European artists or showing scenes (such as the portrait of Pandurangashram, above fig. 22) in which the represented persons had interests that did not necessarily overlap with missionary propaganda. Aggregating decontextualised pictures from various sources and removing the represented topics

46 Gruzinski 2001, 66: "An image of the Virgin was not God, no more than it could be confused with the Virgin herself. It was only an instrument of remembrance and memory. The Christian west had long known of this pedagogical and mnemonic function assigned to the image."

47 See Morgan 2005, 115–146: "If the missionaries destroyed and buried images, the *Child's Paper* exhumed and reinstalled them as 'idols', a cherished Jewish, Muslim, and Christian category of image that served not only to police the borders of cultures but also often to justify violent assaults against what this article described as 'debased, ignorant worship'." (168).

from "history", the volume created an artificial distance from the viewer and allowed for the easy manipulation of the visual discourse. The selection, organisation, and manipulation of the images, sometimes more than the images themselves, is then particularly meaningful for an analysis of the kind of "orientalism" at work here – hinting at a type of visual "editorial orientalism".

Published at a time when photography was becoming increasingly popular, the volume might represent one of the last examples of a large-scale reproduction of engravings, a medium particularly well-suited to show a decontextualised, ahistorical, and exotic world. A major shift arose with the ability to easily reproduce photographs with the use of half-tone printing techniques. The fact that printed photographs became mainstream in publications removed some of the editorial control and became a way to invite the readers/viewers to a more realistic "imaginary travel". Lithographs and engravings were increasingly criticised for not conveying a realistic impression of the depicted topic, reflecting an inflection in the "visual culture".[48]

The volume is thus an excellent witness to the long and tumultuous lives of images: not only are they frequently manipulated and modified, in more or less subtle ways, but they also travel from one editorial context to another, from one viewership to another, and from one visual culture to another. The gaps between an image's production context and that of its various (re-)productions increase the hermeneutic space available to viewers: the larger the gaps, the more possible readings an image can generate. Thus, the images republished in the volume could take on new meanings, sometimes escaping the narrow missionary framework its editors had wanted to give them. This probably explains why the companion textbook was released in 1884, indicating that contrary to initial expectations, not all of the pictures were actually self-evident, indeed far from it: the viewers' interpretation had to be guided in the right direction, and (perhaps) especially if the book was targeting a younger audience.[49] In this context, it is conceivable that

48 Pinney 1997, 21. Of course, even with the reproduction of photographs using half-tone printing, it was still possible to ask for specific subjects to be photographed, to select the most fitting clichés, and/or to reframe photographs before publication.

49 Anonymous 1884, 2: "Some of the illustrations contained in those plates are so self-evident that any explanation of them would be superfluous; others, on the other hand, might hardly be understandable without an explanatory addition, especially to those viewers who have not yet dealt in detail with the customs of distant heathen peoples and the missions founded among them."

Hermann Gundert's grandson, the writer Hermann Hesse (1877–1962), came into contact with precisely this volume at an early age. Along with other artefacts and books about India which Hesse would have found in his family's home, these engravings might have contributed to shaping some of his conceptions about Asia – conceptions that certainly cannot be described as "missionary".[50]

Finally, even if many aspects of the making and transmission of pictures remain obscure and need further research, this example signals the presence of an elaborated system of image manufacturing, forging, and sharing in Christian Protestant missionary contexts from the beginning of the 19th century. This system involved not only regular interactions between Protestant and Anglican – but not Catholic – societies in the European context, but also contacts with artists and posing subjects in the local contexts. All these aspects have to be taken into account as part of a transnational and connected history of visual practices between Asia and Europe in the 19th century. Such a "connected" history of visual material needs to acknowledge the power asymmetries at work, since not all actors had equal access to resources for producing and publishing visual material. This approach can work, however, as a corrective to a perspective that would be limited to a (critical) analysis of western visual representations of extra-European cultures as mere inventions of a fantasised orient.[51]

In 1987, a facsimile of the volume was republished as an initiative of the Calwer Verlagsverein under the title *Calwer historisches Bilderbuch der Welt*. The volume was sold as such, without giving any hint as to its original context of production. Viewers are left to their own interpretations and the images show their astonishing ability to spring to life, once again.

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50 For a formulation of this hypothesis, which is likely but difficult to prove, see Giebenrath 2002.

51 As in Nochlin 1989, an influential but rather one-sided essay.

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