

TO AND FROM THE MAGIC LANTERN: Reappearing Photographic Images of the Netherlands in Various Media

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WITHOUT DOUBT, THE MAGIC LANTERN was in the 19th and early 20th century among the most popular media to present images on a variety of topics to a variety of audiences. However, most motifs that we see on lantern slides were neither exclusive to nor especially produced for the magic lantern.

As Tristan Mostert wrote recently in the *NMLJ*, the motifs of the 18th-century Musschenbroek slides were taken from printed books; this means that the motifs of these slides are older than the slides themselves. In the same issue, John Hyett showed that copying illustrations to slides was still practised in the 1880s to illustrate the topical event of the Crimean war.¹ Many MLS members also hold slides in their collections that were made from illustrations – copying illustrations to lantern slides seems to have been a very common practice. In all of these cases, the motifs were not ‘invented’ for the lantern; rather, slide producers took up popular motifs and transferred them to lantern slides.

Whilst this practice is understandable during times when images were either expensive to produce or the number of people who travelled and could deliver (visual) information of far away places was severely limited, it is surprising to find exactly the same *photographic* images over and over at times when both travel and technology became accessible to a wider range of people. Here are some examples of how photographic images of the Netherlands travelled from one medium to another with an appearance on a lantern slide as a stop on their itinerary.

FROM STEREO PHOTOGRAPHS TO LANTERN SLIDES

Rather than ‘reappearance’, ‘direct adaptation’ describes the link of stereo photographs with the magic lantern. Stereo photographs were enjoying great success after their presentation at the London Great Exhibition in 1851. At first, stereo photographs

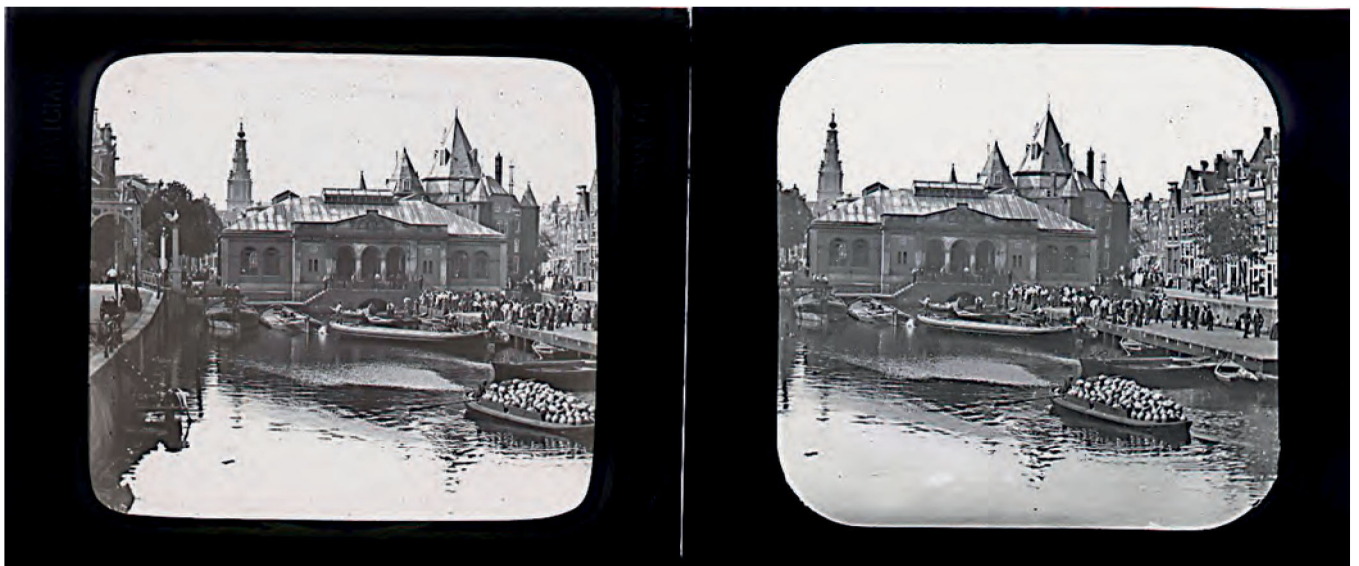
were produced exclusively on glass plates. The production of stereo photographs on glass continued after cheaper versions were produced on albumen paper because of the superior aesthetic quality of glass stereo photographs. Most individuals had to content themselves with the paper editions; glass stereo photographs were primarily produced for public exhibition.

Instead of attributing the ‘former-stereo-now-lantern-slides’ to a clever way of selling leftovers in stock, as has been proposed by, among others, Vera Tietjes-Schuurman,² it is more likely that manufacturers continued the production of glass stereo photographs – the only change being that resellers cut them in two and sold them as lantern slides.

This ‘direct adaptation’ from glass stereo photograph to lantern slide can be observed in the following comparison of two lantern slides. (Fig. 1) The French slide number 12142 (‘Marché aux poissons, Amsterdam’, made by Lévy & Cie in France) and slide number 12142 (‘Fish market, Amsterdam’ with the mask of McAllister) are clearly made from the same photographic image. The slight shift in the horizontal perspective indicates that these slides were made from glass stereo photographs.

It seems more likely that McAllister bought stereo photographs, cut them, provided them with their own mask and wrote the slide’s title in English, than that these slides were cut and prepared by Lévy & Cie. More evidence for the continuing production of stereo photographs by Lévy & Cie and their ‘direct adaptation’ into lantern slides can be found in the cases of Dutch slide producer and reseller Merkelbach & Co. Vera Tietjes-Schuurman mentions that Merkelbach & Co. cut glass stereo photographs into lantern slides and mounted their mask on the glass.³ The source quoted in the entry of Ferrier & Soulier – the

1. Left: Slide no. 12142 ‘Marché aux poissons, Amsterdam’, sold in France. Right: slide no. 12142 ‘Fish market, Amsterdam’, sold by McAllister in the USA. With a stereo viewer, you can see that the slides have been the left and right side of a glass stereo photograph.



NOTES

1. Mostert, Tristan. 2012. ‘The Collection of Musschenbroek Slides in the Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, Leiden, The Netherlands’ and Hyett, John. 2012. ‘Graphic Illustrations of the Sudan War’. In *The New Magic Lantern Journal* 11 (1): pp. 9–13.
2. Tietjes-Schuurman, Vera. 1979. *Van Toverlantaarn Tot Kinematograaf: Een Reis Door De Geschiedenis Van Het Geprojecteerde Beeld*, p. 57. Rottevalle: Stichting Peter Bonnet Museum.
3. Tietjes-Schuurman 1979, p. 112. Tietjes-Schuurman observed that Merkelbach & Co. took over images by Ferrier & Soulier. In Gwen Sebus’s collection are some slides which show a French title and producer’s number in the emulsion with the letters ‘L.L.’. This made it possible to identify the images as coming from Lévy & Léon (later part of Ferrier & Soulier). Merkelbach & Co definitely did not produce all the images of their slides.



2. 'A family group of Marken people'. Lantern Slide No. 31 of 50 from the series 'A Visit to Holland/Picturesque Holland'. York & Co(?), London. c. 1887. Collection Gwen Sebus

antecedents of Lévy & Cie – in the *Encyclopedia of the Magic Lantern* proves that French stereo photographs were also imported into Britain and cut in two by local resellers.⁴ It was only reasonable for manufacturers such as Lévy & Cie to continue the production of stereo photographs on glass plates. After all, the equipment to produce positive images on glass (wooden frames for exposing negatives and for processing and drying the positive glass plates, etc.) was still there – in stereo format. As long as Lévy & Cie sold their stereo photographs, it seems they were not bothered about resellers cutting them in two pieces and selling them as lantern slides.

Like Ferrier & Soulier, Lachenal and Favre & Co.⁵ were renowned internationally as producers of stereo photographs in the 1860s. Both enterprises became involved in the lantern slide trade during the 1870s. According to a report in Liesegang's journal *Laterna Magica*, competition between these manufacturers in the lantern slide market increased once photographic slides projected by the magic lantern were 'discovered' as valuable tools in education.⁶ A whole new seller's market of schools and universities promised further profit.

FROM TOURIST SOUVENIRS TO LANTERN SLIDE...

In the next case, photographic images of Dutch city views migrated from cabinet photo cards and cartes des visite to the lantern. Dutch editor Andries Jager (1825–1905) issued a series of photographs around 1880 with the primary aim of selling them to tourists. Various websites of historical photographs on Dutch cities contain images issued by him. There is a connection between Jager and Dutch lantern slide manufacturer and reseller Merkelbach & Co.: some lantern slides of the Merkelbach & Co. series 'Nieuwe reis door Holland en België' (New travel through the Netherlands and Belgium), c. 1883–5, show the writing 'A. Jager' in the emulsion.

The exact links between Jager and Merkelbach & Co. still

need to be researched; both had their enterprise based in Amsterdam. To date, I have not found evidence for whether Merkelbach & Co. engaged Jager to take photos for lantern slide production, whether Merkelbach & Co. bought the images, or whether Merkelbach & Co. pirated them before Jager's enterprise was shut down in 1899. Whatever the case, Merkelbach & Co. did not mention the provenance of their images in the 1886 catalogue of photographic lantern slides.⁷ To complicate things even more, Jager issued some stereo photographs on Dutch scenery taken by Pieter Oosterhuis (1816–86) in the late 1850s.⁸

These are examples for the migration of photographic images on the Netherlands to the slides of the magic lantern. But images produced for slide series of the magic lantern had an afterlife on other carriers, too.

... FROM THE LANTERN'S ARMCHAIR TRAVEL TO ACADEMIC COMPENDIUM ...

The image 'A family group of Marken people' (Fig. 2) of the (probably) York Series 'A Visit to Holland/Picturesque Holland' from c. 1887, reappeared about 15 years later in the anthropologic compendium *De volken der aarde* (The Peoples of the Earth).⁹ The lantern reading for this image includes an anecdote on how difficult it was to convince these people to pose for the camera, thereby emphasising the traveller's cunning.¹⁰ In the anthropologic compendium, this illustration is not explicitly referred to in the text. I was quite intrigued to find that a scientific publication edited by a Dutch(!) anthropologist made use of outdated images. This is all the more surprising as contemporary photographs of Marken people – by then a major tourist attraction – were anything but scarce. Furthermore, the traditional Marken costume underwent a change in details between 1887 and 1904. This might not have been relevant to 'real' or armchair travellers, but I expected more striving for accuracy and actuality from established scientists in the field of anthropology.

4. Crangle, Richard; David Robinson and Stephen Herbert, ed. 2001. *Encyclopedia Of The Magic Lantern*, p. 113. London: Magic Lantern Society.

5. Keulen, Wim van. 2002. Stereofotografie in Nederland 1855-1940. In: *Photohistorisch Tijdschrift* 25 (3/4): pp. 67–74.

6. Ed Liesegang. 1878. Die Projektionskunst auf der Pariser Weltausstellung. In *Laterna Magica*, December 1878, pp. 37–9.

7. Merkelbach & Co. 1885/86. *Catalogus van Photographiën op Glas ten gebruike bij de Sciopticons, Dissolving Views en andere groote toverlantaarns*. Amsterdam. Provenance: Stadsarchief Gemeente Amsterdam.

8. Keulen, Wim van and Felix van West. 2002. Boek-Kunsthedelaar/ Uitgever Andries Jager en de vroege Nederlandse stereomarkt. In *Photohistorisch Tijdschrift* 25 (3/4): pp. 88 f and Vries, Leonard de. 1989. *Nederland 1857–1920 gezien door de Stereoscoop*. s'Gravenhage: SDU uitgeverij, p. 22.

9. Snelleman, Johann F. 1904. *De Volken Der Aarde. Met Meer Dan 800 Afbeeldingen. Bevattende Duizenden Portretten, Fotografisch Opgenomen Over De Geheele Aarde. Deel II*. Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema's boekhandel.

10. Anonymous. [c. 1889]. *Picturesque Holland. Descriptive Reading. Illustrated by a Series of Fifty Photographic Views of Nature*. London: Lyndall & Son. Provenance: British Film Institute

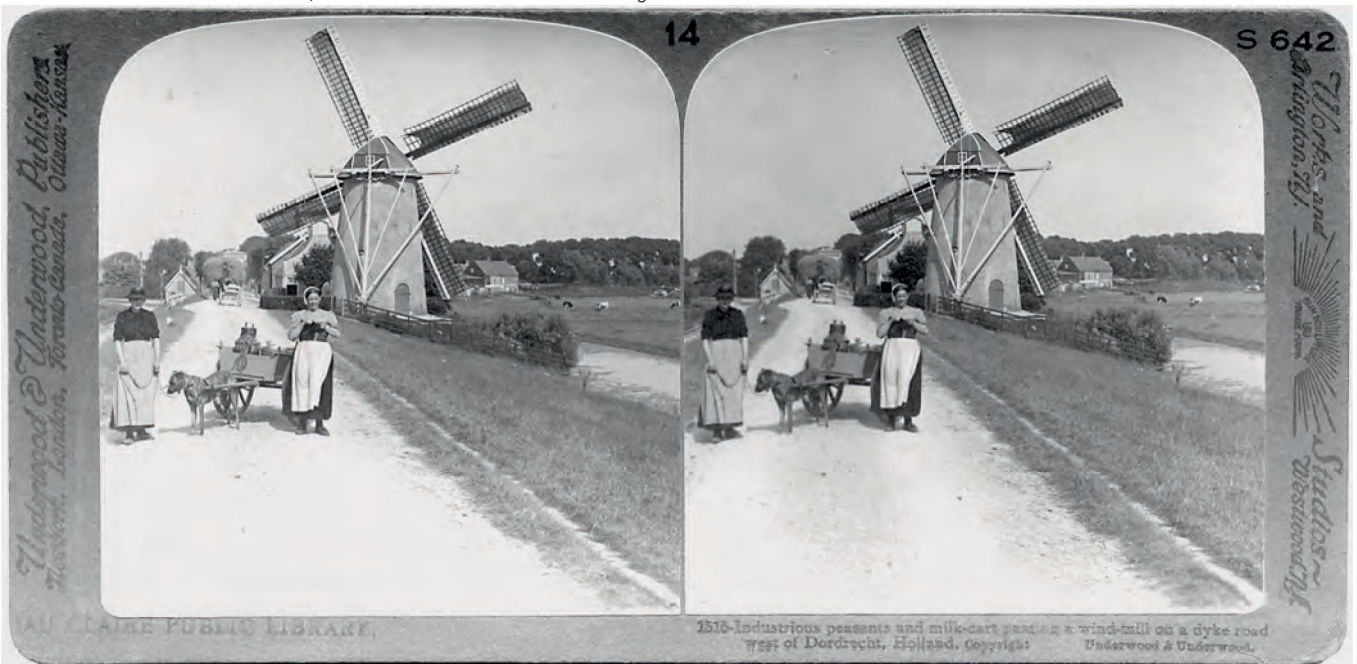


3. 'Dutch Women with Milk Cart on Dyke Road, The Netherlands.' Lantern Slide No. P219, producer's number V25200. Issued by Keystone View Company, Meadville, not dated. Collection Gwen Sebus

... AND FROM STEREO CARDS TO BRITISH TOURIST GUIDE BOOKS AND AMERICAN LANTERN SLIDES

Another case of travelling images takes the same image across the Atlantic. The Keystone slide 'Dutch Women with Milk Cart on Dyke Road, The Netherlands', manufactured in the US, also appeared in the 1910 British tourist guide *Things Seen in Holland*, with the caption 'West of Dordrecht. South Hollanders delivering milk, and knitting. In Holland the dog is employed as draught animal, and not merely as a domestic pet.'¹¹ Not only the image, but also the comment was copied; the lecture card issued along with the Keystone slide reads '[...] In The Netherlands, "to work like a dog" really means something. Almost every peasant has a dog to pull his cart.'¹² This is an abridged version of the text printed on the back of the Underwood & Underwood stereo

'Industrious peasants and milk cart passing a windmill on a dyke road west of Dordrecht.' Stereo photograph on cardboard. No. 14 of 30 from the Series 'Holland'. Underwood & Underwood, c. 1905. Collection Henk B. Kranenburg



11. Roche, Charles E. 1910. *Things Seen in Holland*. London: Seeley and Co. The photograph is reprinted as the frontispiece.

12. 'Dutch Women with Milk Cart on Dyke Road, The Netherlands.' Lantern Slide and comment card, No. P219, producer's number V25200. Issued by Keystone View Company, Meadville. Collection Gwen Sebus.

photograph with the title 'Industrious peasants and milk cart passing a windmill on a dyke road west of Dordrecht' (Fig. 3).

This example shows that Keystone used Underwood & Underwood stereo photo images to produce lantern slides. This is not surprising, as it is well known that the Keystone View Company later bought Underwood & Underwood's stereographic stock and rights. The reappearance in the tourist guidebook of 1910 with full copyright credit to Underwood & Underwood indicates that Underwood & Underwood generated additional income by selling the rights to reprint images from their images (in other formats) to third parties.

In this case, the same photographic image was available in stereo photograph (Fig. 4), lantern slide and tourist book – slightly modified to fit into the frame (compare the windmill blades in the images).

CONCLUSION

Even around 1900, when it was possible for editors and tourists to take new and up-to-date photographs themselves, the same photographic images continued to be used, across national borders and on different carriers. Curiously enough, publishers seemed to prefer reprinting old and outdated photographs to using more recent views.

From this it follows that research into the photographic lantern benefits from looking into other media that display photographic images. Not only does a comparison with other visual media help dating lantern slides; it also nourishes the understanding of the popularity of the lantern slides. The media landscape was already multimedial.

In addition, the observation that photographic images of the Netherlands were reprinted from a limited number of photographs calls for further research to prove whether this was a general phenomenon. What people could have seen and known about the Netherlands was limited by the disseminated images – and this visual knowledge would have been the same from any place where the magic lantern, the stereoscope, academic publications and tourist guidebooks used such images. If we wonder where thinking in national stereotypes originated, these images of people and places that were widely circulated over decades provide a valuable contribution to an answer.

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