

John Lockwood Kipling and *Kim*

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John Lockwood Kipling, father of the writer Rudyard Kipling, was an important international figure. His sculpture and drawings of Indian subject matter (as well as the artwork of his students) were displayed for the public and members of the royalty through exhibitions and architecture in both India and England. The British government perceived his knowledge of India as a sign of his expertise of Anglo-Indian affairs. Government officials elected Kipling to many different positions and tasks. The major points of employment in Kipling's lifetime include Decorative Artist and Sculptor for what is now known as the Victoria and Albert Museum, Professor of Sculpture in the Bombay Art School, curator of the Lahore Museum, and principal of the Mayo Art School in Lahore, which he organized. Kipling founded *The Journal of Indian Art and Industry* and wrote for the *Indian Gazette*, *Pioneer*, and the *Civil and Military Gazette*. He was also awarded the CIE, Companion of the Indian Empire. Aside from his work as a professor, correspondent, and writer, he was an artist, which was the occupation he assigned to himself on his marriage certificate.¹

Kipling's art is predominately noted in the form of illustrations. His primary medium was relief sculpture and it was through this medium that he illustrated several of his son's novels, including the 1901 novel, *Kim*. Kipling used a new system of reproduction, utilizing photographs of bas-relief terra cotta plates which he had created. For the Victorians, the extreme popularity of illustrations began after the middle of the nineteenth century. Economic growth enabled more of England's population to purchase reading material and a surge in literacy necessitated a variety of literatures for different economic classes and age groups. Illustrations offered the means of a mass reproduction of images and illustrations were often serialized in the press (the novel *Kim* and its illustrations were published in *McClure's Magazine*). Illustrated novels sold more copies than novels without illustrations.²

Kipling's work for *Kim* conveys the Anglo-Indian attitudes present at the height of the British Empire. Not only was he visually involved in the production of the novel, he

contributed to its literary development. Stuart Sillars—in his book on visualization and narratives—states:

Generally produced by the artist in close collaboration with the writer, it (illustration) offered a means of comment as well as a redefining viewpoint which ensured that the reader...was offered guidance as to how the events offered in the discourse should be perceived.³

Kipling and his son Rudyard were part of the writer/illustrator dynamic that Sillars observes in Victorian publications. Rudyard wrote that many of his stories "have been collected from all places and all sorts of people...and a few, the very best, my father gave me."⁴ For *Kim*, the elder Kipling "had played some part in the story's composition, as he had in earlier works..." and Rudyard specifically acknowledged that he was indebted to his father for the book. In regards to the novel's recurring locale of the Grand Trunk Road, Rudyard wrote that his father "knew every step, sight and smell...as well as the persons he met" on the road that *Kim*, the protagonist, traveled upon.⁵

In a letter from 1901, the author identified his conception of *Kim*. He wrote that it was "so Indian, so remote, and in appearance so uncaring for the ordinary reader." Then in the same letter chastised the *Daily Chronicle's* review because it "finds fault" in the novel for being what "it sets out to be and not a carefully constructed drama with a plot and a finale."⁶ *Kim* is rather like a documentary of India. Despite the novel's setting of imperial spies between Britain and Russia in the territorial struggle over India, the illustrations, like the text, narrate a perception of India as a moving diorama of varied people and customs. The protagonist's travels through Northern India are continuously dotted with momentary meetings with the native people, almost like a pageant. For example, in one of the treks along the Grand Trunk Road the book reads:

They met a troop of long-haired, strong scented Sansis (gypsies) with baskets of lizards and other unclean food on their

¹ Ankers, Arthur R., *The Pater: John Lockwood Kipling* (Kent: Hawthorns Publications Ltd., 1988) 38.

² Goldman, Paul, *Victorian Illustrated Books* (London: British Museum Publications, 1994) 33, 45.

³ Sillars, Stuart, *Visualization in Popular Fiction: 1860-1960* (New York: Routledge, 1995) 30.

⁴ Baldwin, A. W., *The Age of Kipling*, ed. John Gross (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972) 23.

⁵ Ankers 57.

⁶ Baldwin 23.

backs.... Behind them, walking widely and stiffly across the strong shadows, the memory of his leg-irons still on him, strode one newly released from jail.... Then an Akali, a wild-eyed, wild-haired Sikh devotee in the blue-checked clothes of his faith...stalked past.... Here and there they met or were overtaken by the gaily dressed crowds of whole villages turning out to some local fair.⁷

India is presented as a timeless place where the natives wander as they please and the customs are the only constant.

J.L. Kipling's description of *Kim* as simply a story of Indian life corresponded with his visual conception of the novel. The illustrations are centered on the many characters of the text that Kim meets, whether they are central to the story or not. The figures of *Kim* are shown in traditional Indian dress, surrounded by open landscapes or the native architectural elements of patterned design, such as the horse-trader "Mahbub Ali" (Figure 1). The presentation of the figures is plainly just that, a presentation. Kipling's illustrations create a simple look of figures and common events that could have been images from his 1876 guidebook of Lahore or images from ethnographic studies. Kipling, like the novel itself, did not address the significance of the British-Indian political events at hand.

The illustrations for *Kim* bear a striking resemblance to ethnographic images. "The Lama" (Figure 2) is similar to the photo of a man named Rae Doona Chund (Figure 3), from *The People of India* by John Forbes Watson and John Kayes published between 1868-1875.⁸ Both these men are depicted sitting in rich, flowing garments and ornaments. "The Ressaldar" (Figure 4) from *Kim* is similar to "A Mohammedan" (Figure 5) from F. M. Coleman's *Typical Pictures of Indian Natives* of 1897.⁹ The Ressaldar is a character from a novel, yet (like most of the illustrations) looks like he is posing for a photo, as the Mohammedan is doing. Both wear turbans, but the Ressaldar's ragged clothing indicates his poverty while the Mohammedan is dressed in neatly pressed, white garments. The small sculpture of an elk and books on the table depict modern English decor and also acknowledge wealth and knowledge. The artist Kipling's use of text is another one of the ways his work resembles ethnographic studies. Kipling takes up a presentational style of titles in his illustrations for *Kim*, such as "The Lama," "The Ressaldar," "The Woman of Shamlegh," "The Jat and his Sick Child," or "The Letter Writer." The titles take the subjects from their foundation and possible positions of authority or prestige. He presents the viewer with the appearance of Indian life as something to be observed and deciphered. Of course, the English not only oc-

cupied the land, but the Indians themselves, as the novel reminds the reader. For example, when Kim first meets the lama the book states: "This man was entirely new to all his experience, and he meant to investigate further: precisely as he would have investigated a new building or a strange festival in Lahore city. The lama was his trove, and he purposed to take possession."¹⁰ The lama is not described as a person but an object of study.

Kipling's experiences with Indian culture were observed first-hand, a method of preference in his work as an artist. In a letter to one of his granddaughters concerning artistic advice Kipling underlined this statement: "Above all else you must draw from life."¹¹ *Kim*'s illustrations present figures from everyday Indian life as a visual text on the people and scenes one might encounter in the country, complimenting the story's shifting diorama of Indian life and customs. The illustration "On the Road" (Figure 6) with its general title and procession of weary travelers could be a scene observed anywhere in daily Indian life. There is not anything in the frieze-like group to indicate that this scene was specifically designed for *Kim*. "On the Road" is undoubtedly a scene that Kipling, in his thirty years of life in India, witnessed first hand. His position as curator of the Lahore museum contributed to his knowledge of India culture and ethnography. He identified some of the items displayed in the museum in his guidebook, which shows his attention to ethnography. He wrote, for example, "Conspicuous in this array is the costume of a Tibetan lama of high rank richly ornamented and picturesque."¹² From this statement, it is generally thought that the clothing of "The Lama" in *Kim* is modeled after the museum's Tibetan garments.

One of the illustrations that is different from the others is the frontispiece "Zam-Zammah" (Figure 7), a scene taken directly from the first page of the book. It portrays the title character, Kim, sitting atop a canon that the Indians called *Zam-Zammah*. Kim is visually depicted as the dominant figure. The linear perspective and the large slabs of the ascending brick platform draw the viewer's eyes to Kim, where he sits with a knowing smirk. The back of the lama in the bottom-left corner leads to the uprising platform that creates a diagonal line directly to Kim. The compositional distance gives a perspective of Kim as being quite small for a boy of thirteen; yet despite the distance, *Zam-Zammah* is still enormous, emphasized by the upward procession of the objects. This illustration differs from the others in that it depicts a scene taken directly from the novel and it does not label or show a single figure; most importantly, this illustration differs because it portrays a British person—not a native person. The label of the frontispiece regards a weapon of war. Kim has gained the position atop the canon, won it from the Hindu boys around

⁷ Kipling, Rudyard, *Kim*, ed. Edward Said (Middlesex: Penguin Classics, 1987) 109-110.

⁸ Low, Gail Ching-Liang, *Black Skins/White Masks* (London: Routledge, 1996) 222.

⁹ Low 204.

¹⁰ Kipling 60

¹¹ Ankers 139.

¹² Aijazuddin, F. S., *Lahore: Illustrated Views of the 19th Century* (Ahmedabad: Mopin Publishing, 1991) 135-136.

him “since the English held the Punjab and Kim was English. Though he was burned black as any native; though he spoke the vernacular by preference, and his mother tongue in a clipped and uncertain sing-song; though he consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazar; Kim was white.”¹³ Hence, *Zam-Zammah* symbolizes the dominance of Britain over India.

Kipling was, after all, a product of his times and despite his concerns for India he was still engaged in prevalent British attitudes toward colonization. Edward Said described Imperialism as a world that “entered into the cultural and aesthetic life of the metropolitan West.” Imperial Britain was an accepted standard of government to the English and not something to be remedied. Because Imperialism was so much a part of culture, separating Britain from Imperialism was not possible. He states: “India had a massive influence on British life, in commerce and trade, industry and politics, ideology and war, culture and the life of imagination.”¹⁴ Kipling’s reporting for the publication the *Pioneer* reveals that he held the same prejudices and attitudes toward India as many others in the Anglo-Indian community. He was “pessimistic” about the ability of India to function independently. “In his opinion the Hindus were unable to recognize that the solution to many of India’s problems was bound up with the future of the Empire; nor did they appreciate all that the British were engaged in doing on their behalf.”¹⁵ The native inhabitants of the country were not only considered to be a people that required governing, but also a culture for Britons to observe and document. Government contributed to this end: in 1870, the government assigned Kipling to tour the northern provinces of India in order to draw Indian craftsmen (these drawings were exhibited in the International Exhibition of 1870).¹⁶

Kipling’s artistic education demonstrates the imperial control over India. His training took place in South Kensington and the program’s influence is observed in his work. The curriculum, implemented by artist Richard Redgrave for British art schools, “had far-reaching consequences for colonial art in India” and “provided the framework” for artists such as Kipling, according to historian Partha Mitter.¹⁷ The schools were not interested in creating classically-trained artists; in fact, the study of the nude was avoided even though students were required to learn how to draw from models. Primarily, instruction focused on elements of design: “perspective and architectural drawing with geometrical instruments; freehand drawing of flat shapes, of ornaments from books and objects

in the round.”¹⁸ The focus on geometry and architecture in training contributed to artists’ interest in India, and other “Oriental” subjects. Artists were drawn to the Eastern artistic traditions of rich ornamentation and inspired by the picturesque landscapes observed in India. Kipling’s interest in design, drawing from life, and talent for sculpture are observed in his reliefs for *Kim* but are also methods that are rooted in his training. The South Kensington program became an enforced curriculum of imperial policy for art education in India as taught, for example, by Kipling.¹⁹

Similar to ethnographic studies, Indian subject matter in art provided readers with an intimate insight into native customs to which they would not have otherwise been exposed. Romanticized and picturesque landscapes and native costumes stirred up the imagination of English viewers with the excitement of visiting far-away lands. The display of resources is also common to both ethnography and art. Beads, rings, and other kinds of jewelry observed in images of India presented Britain with exotic imagery of riches available in the “Orient.” For example, the lama indicates the ample goods available in India. In the novel, it is the lama who provides the funds for Kim’s education. Like the illustration “The Lama,” the photo of Rae Doona Chund depicts the phrase “A Banker” and his voluminous folds of decorated clothing and material indicate an abundance of possessions. “The Woman of Shamlegh” (Figure 8) from *Kim* is symbolic of the fertility of India, which is similar to other art works of the same time period. The woman holds a basket of her harvest and is presented in a pose that emphasizes her hips. Not only do the design and fold of the woman’s garments and heavy jewelry indicate riches, the items draw attention to her body.

In *Black Skins/White Masks*, Gail Ching-Liang Low states that through the lush folds of clothing and figures adorned in jewelry so frequently depicted in colonial art, India is depicted as a land of plenty.²⁰ The riches presented in *Kim* are borne out by the illustrations. The plates “act as framed postcards to the exotic array of figures in the book.” India appears as a “frieze or a pageant, and was romanticized as an object of sensuous and voluptuous pleasure.”²¹ The abundance of goods propagandized the Orient to the English because they offered a “world for visual and material consumption.” She further adds that India was depicted as a land of “pleasure to be enjoyed by Europe.”²² Imperial England was an acceptable standard of government for the Victorians because India was a country overflowing with resources.

¹³ Kipling, Rudyard, *Kim* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1901) 1.

¹⁴ Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993) 133, 137.

¹⁵ Ankers 106-107.

¹⁶ Archer, Mildred, “Lockwood Kipling and Indian Decorative Arts,” *Apollo* 290 (1986): 264.

¹⁷ Mitter, Partha, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India* (Cambridge: UP,

1994) 34-35.

¹⁸ Mitter 34.

¹⁹ Mitter 35.

²⁰ Low 207.

²¹ Low 207.

²² Low 207.

Low, like Said, argues that Britons generally romanticized India in reaction to their increasingly industrial country. Despite the English fascination with India, political problems were rife in the picturesque country. Said wrote: “An India of the imagination was created which contained no elements of either social change or political menace. Orientalization was the result of this effort to conceive Indian society as devoid of elements hostile to the perpetuation of British rule, for it was on the basis of this presumptive India that Orientalizers sought to build a permanent rule.”²³ The monarchy shared in and supported the visual consumption of a glamorous India. Aside from Kipling’s documentation of Indian craftsmen, he was also commissioned for artistic projects that necessitated his knowledge of the conventions of Indian design. He worked directly with Queen Victoria to discuss her ideas for an Indian-designed room at the royal retreat, the Osborne House, on the Isle of Wight (which was then executed by Kipling’s student, Ram-Singh). The room, elaborately decorated in woodcarving, became her favorite room in the house.²⁴ For the Durbar of 1877, when the Queen crowned herself Empress of India, Kipling was commissioned to design colorful and ornate embroidered Indian-style banners to commemorate the royal family members.

Exotic imagery manifested itself not just as design and custom but in the very act of complete transformation into another person. Costume was part of the interest in publications such as *Typical Pictures of Indian Natives*. Low writes: “The fascination with costume can be situated within a historical preoccupation with theatre and Oriental fashion in the nineteenth century.”²⁵ In *Kim*, the protagonist reveals detailed aspects of Indian life as he convincingly switches between a low-caste Hindu boy or an English boy, depending on his task at hand, and his switch corresponds to whether he will act in a civilized manner or in a street manner. Kim can do things as a Hindu that he would be unable to do as a Briton and vice versa. Being British gives him authority and this is established before the reader even looks at the text from the very beginning with the frontispiece “Zam-Zammah.” Kim’s heritage also allows him to “make a rude remark to the native policeman on guard,”²⁶ for example, and use pranks and insults freely to those around him. Kim’s clever ability to manipulate the Indians he encounters assures the reader that he has authority. This ability to move in and out of Indian and British cul-

ture follows the pattern of escapism explained by Said. Kim can be a part of whatever culture he wishes, one in which he must obey a rigid set of guidelines, or one that allows him to play tricks and prey on people’s superstitions. As Low states:

At its most basic level, dress functions as a visual prop to Kim’s skill in mimicking native mannerisms; costume enables the young white boy to pass as a low or high caste native. But costumes are also imbued with a symbolic significance that goes beyond their visual appearance; costumes in *Kim* are endowed with powers that enable the wearer to undergo a whole cultural and bodily metamorphosis. Clothes function as the privileged sites of racial and cultural differences.²⁷

Kim’s change from a low-caste Hindu to a Briton is depicted as something so authentic that even the lama cannot recognize who Kim is when he changes from English to Hindu. Kim’s ability to seamlessly blend into other cultures is depicted as theatrical and the element of danger involved in spying is minimized because Kim is essentially British, presumably with characteristics of perceptiveness and wit that will enable him to escape any threatening situation. Further, Kim is in a British land and his safety as a citizen traveling through India is secured. For Kim, India offers the excitement of foreign culture while retaining a veil of protection because of the occupation of Britain, that is, the occupation of the homeland.

The adherence to Imperial-ruled India is evidenced in the surge of subjects that romanticized India. Ethnography, Anglo-Indian novels like *Kim*, and the major figures of British art, through text, study, or art presented to the public an India that was to be observed, oftentimes scientifically, and enjoyed. Despite *Kim*’s setting of the secret political maneuvers of Imperial Britain, the book’s illustrations, as the narrative itself, do not confront the strife between the British occupation of India. Instead, both text and image depict a continuous presentation of Indian people scattered throughout the country engaged in their daily lives. The book’s point of view of a pleasurable pageantry of India emulates the attitude that India was England’s possession.

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²³ Said 149.

²⁴ Archer 269.

²⁵ Low 192.

²⁶ Kipling 5.

²⁷ Low 202.



Figure 1. J.L. Kipling, *Mahub Ali*, 1901, photographic illustration of bas-relief terra-cotta plate, from *Kim*, by Rudyard Kipling (London: Macmillan & Co.).



Figure 2. J.L. Kipling, *The Lama*, 1901, photographic illustration of bas-relief terra-cotta plate, from *Kim*, by Rudyard Kipling (London: Macmillan & Co.).



[upper left] Figure 3. John Forbes Watson and John Kayes, "Rae Doona Chund," photograph from *The People of India*, 1869-1875 (London: India Museum).

[upper right] Figure 4. J.L. Kipling, *The Ressaldar*, 1901, photographic illustration of bas-relief terra-cotta plate, from *Kim*, by Rudyard Kipling (London: Macmillan & Co.).

[lower left] Figure 5. F.M. Coleman, "A Mohammedan," photograph from *Typical Pictures of Indian Natives*, 1897 (Bombay and London: *Times of London*).

Figure 6. J.L. Kipling, *On the Road*, 1901, photographic illustration of bas-relief terra-cotta plate, from *Kim*, by Rudyard Kipling (London: Macmillan & Co.).



Figure 7. J.L. Kipling, *Zam-Zammah*, 1901, photographic illustration of bas-relief terra-cotta plate, from *Kim*, by Rudyard Kipling (London: Macmillan & Co.).



Figure 8. J.L. Kipling, *The Woman of Shamlegh*, 1901, photographic illustration of bas-relief terra-cotta plate, from *Kim*, by Rudyard Kipling (London: Macmillan & Co.).