GERMAN TOY MAGIC LANTERNS

CERAMIC MAGIC LANTERNS – Part 1

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Fig. 4

IN MY VIEW THE CERAMIC MAGIC LANTERNS are some of the most beautiful toy magic lanterns ever made.

Two models of ceramic toy magic lanterns are shown in the well-known books by Ernst Hrabalek[1] and Richard Balzer[2]. One has a square body and is attributed to Johann Falk (Hrabalek Fig. 93, Balzer p.35 left) and the other one has a round body and is attributed to Max Dannhorn (Hrabalek Fig. 91, Balzer p.35 right). Both magic lanterns have no labels or signatures of a manufacturer. My enthusiasm for these lanterns and the lack of information of their history motivated me to find out more about them. I hope I can promote appreciation for these wonderful toys.

THE SQUARE MODEL

There are different variants of the square model.

Variant 1

Fig. 1 (21/17)

This variant has three tile-panels and usually embossed marks in the metal door on the back of the lantern (Fig. 1). They show either 'D.R.G.M.'[3] (Fig. 2) or 'LUNA[4] D.R.G.M. No. 192 102 PATENTED in U.S.A.' (Fig. 3). The tiles in the sidewalls of the lantern have embossed marks on the inside. Usually there are two numbers which indicate the size of the panel in cm (Fig. 5). I

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 5

am able to make a list of the following sizes of the ceramic side panels (height x width). The matching sizes of the guide frames for the slides are given in parentheses.[5] The guide frames of the two smallest lanterns of variant 1 take only one size of slides.

12/11 = 12 x 11 cm	(for slides of	W/G 35 mm)
14/12 = 14 x 12 cm	(for slides of	W/G 40 mm)
15/13 = 15 x 13 cm	(for slides of	W 40/G 45 mm)
17/14 = 17 x 14 cm	(for slides of	W 45/G 50 mm)
18/15 = 18 x 15 cm	(probably	W 50/G 60 mm)
20/16 = 20 x 16 cm	(probably	W 60/G 70 mm)[6]
21/17 = 21 x 17 cm	(for slides of	W 70/G 80 mm)

I have not seen an example of variant 1 in the 20/16-size until now but, following the sequence, it seems likely that there was a size between 18/15 and 21/17. Fig. 4 shows a sequence of the different sizes (20/16 is missing).

It is remarkable that some parts of the lanterns – the feet, the nickel-plated ring of the chimney holder and the chimney itself – are always the same size, irrespective of the different lantern sizes. The length of the chimney differs sometimes. On the inside of some of the side panels an additional embossed mark can be found. It looks like a sun-symbol or a point with a halo (Fig. 5 . This is possibly a mark of the ceramic factory. Unfortunately I have so far not been able to identify it.

Variant 2

Fig. 6 (12/11)[7]

Fig. 7 (20/16)[8]

This variant has just two ceramic side panels. Two of the four examples I know of are shown in Figs 6 and 7. The metal parts of the lantern are soldered together. The lens is probably constructed in two shapes. The lanterns stand on small claw feet (the feet on the lantern in Fig. 7 are missing). The tile panels are fixed by the vertical

grooves on the front and back of the lantern. On the inside of the tiles are embossed numbers in the same manner as on the panels of Variant 1. The sizes of the known examples are:

12/11 = 12 x 11 cm (for slides of W/G 35 mm)
15/13 = 15 x 13 cm (for slides of W/G 40 mm)
20/16 = 20 x 16 cm (for slides of W/G 60 mm)

The fact that there is a model of variant 2 with the tile-size of 20/16 suggests that a variant 1 model was executed in this size as well. The 'sun-symbol', which is known from variant 1, is also embossed inside the side-panels. The lanterns usually have the embossed mark D.R.G.M. in the door on the back of the lantern. The guide frames of all examples are arranged for only one size of slides. It is possible that variant 2 was executed at least for three more sizes (W/G 45 mm = 17/14, W/G 50 mm = 18/15 and W/G 70 mm = 21/17).

Variant 3

Fig. 8 (138/135)

Fig. 9[9]

This variant has three tile panels, like variant 1, but has a different curved roof, an angled chimney and ornamental feet of cast metal. In total I have knowledge of four lanterns (Figs 8 and 9). The metal parts of the lantern body are executed in Russian iron. There is an additional metal sheet soldered underneath a hole in the bottom of the lantern to hold the burner. Each of the four exterior metal corners is fixed in the roof by two bent metal tongues (Fig. 10). This makes it possible to remove the side-panels from the lantern. The side-panels of the lantern in Fig. 8 have the embossed numbers 138 and 135, which indicate the size in mm. This is different to the size system that is used on the variants 1 and 2. The lantern is signed 'LUNA D.R.G.M. No. 192 102 PATENTED in U.S.A.', with an embossed mark in the backdoor as it appears on variant 1. The example which is shown in Fig. 9 has a metal plate underneath the bottom with the following embossed mark: 'LUNA D.R.G.M. No. 192 102 PATENTED in U.S.A.' (Fig. 11). I have no information about the size of the ceramic panels of the lantern in Fig. 9.

Fig. 10

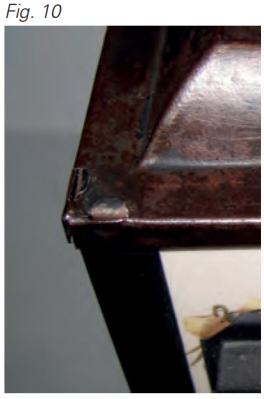

Fig. 11

THE ORNAMENTAL DECORATION

The ceramic tiles are usually decorated with floral ornaments. A few lanterns have decorations with children playing instead of a floral decoration. All ornaments are transfer prints under glaze. This means that after the blank tile is formed and fired, a transfer print (decal) is applied. A low temperature firing removes the oil that was present in the decal. A final glaze is then applied. After the final firing, the transfer motive has become an integral part of the product.

I assume that all floral designs were used for all sizes of variants 1 and 2. The lanterns with figural ornaments of variant 3 show such floral decals on the front panel (Fig. 12) as well.

Fig. 12

Over the years I collected pictures of 52 square lanterns (44 lanterns of variant 1, four lanterns of variant 2 and four lanterns of variant 3) from different sources such as auctions/internet, museums and private collections. The following table shows the known number of lanterns, distributed to the different sizes:

number of square ceramic magic lanterns				
size	variant 1	variant 2	variant 3	total
12x11	9	2		11
14x12	8			8
15x13	10	1		11
17x14	9			9
18x15	2			2
20x16		1		1
21x17	6			6
e.g. 138x135 mm			4	4
	44	4	4	52

In relation to the number of known square ceramic lanterns, the quantity of fourteen different floral ornaments that I have been able to identify until now is surprising.

THE ORIGINAL PRICES

Of course I was interested to find information about the original prices to a picture of the value in relation to other toy magic lanterns and the cost of living at that time. Thanks to the help of Kentwood D. Wells and the internet[10] I was able to find the following prices in ads of US newspapers relating to the square model, variant 1:

Newspaper	Date	shop	regular price in $
The evening world (N.Y.)	06/12/1904	The 14th Street Store	3.24
The Washington times	07/12/1904	S.Kann Sons & Co.	
The evening world (N.Y.)	08/12/1904	The 14th Street Store	2.19
The Philadelphia inquirer	09/12/1904	Snellenburgs	4.00
The St.Louis Republic	11/12/1904	Barr's Toy Store	

It is remarkable that no ads for the square model exist before or after the year 1904.

Although no size is given in any of the ads, I tried to find a relation between these prices and the known sizes, as shown in the following table:

size	discount price(s) in $			regular price(s) in $		
12/11	1.00	x	x	x	x	x
14/12	2.25	1.75	x	x	2.19	x
15/13	2.98	2.95	2.50	x	3.24	4.00
17/14	4.35	x	x	x	x	x
18/15	6.75	x	x	x	x	x
20/16	7.98	x	x	x	x	x
21/17	9.98	x	x	x	x	x

In relation to other toy magic lanterns, especially to the toy cinematographs with prices ranging from $6.50 up to $22.50, or Ernst Plank magic lanterns with prices ranging from $4.00 to $12.00 in some ads from 1900[11], the prices of the square ceramic toy lanterns were not as high as I expected.

I found no ads in German newspapers or catalogues and also no printed information about variants 2 and 3.

TRADE MARK AND PATENT

As mentioned before there is usually either the mark 'D.R.G.M.' or 'LUNA D.R.G.M. No. 192102 PATENTED in U.S.A.' on the different variants of the square ceramic lanterns. According to information

from the German patent office the 'D.R.G.M. 192102' states:

Zauberlaternengehäuse mit verzierter Wandung aus keramischem Material,
Anmelder: Fa. David Benda, Fürth i./B.;
eingetragen: 22.01.1903;
verlängert: 18.11.1905;
gelöscht in Folge Ablaufs der Schutzdauer. (ie 1908).[12]

The information about the D.R.G.M. No. 192102 was very interesting because I got new facts for dating the square ceramic lanterns and the name of the owner of the D.R.G.M.: David Benda, Fürth.

Beside the protection in Germany by the D.R.G.M., some of the square ceramic magic lanterns are marked '…PATENTED in U.S.A.'. US patents are now fortunately available on the internet.[13] I found variant 1 of the square model under patent no. 736,093. It was patented 11 August 1903 (Application filed 11 February 1903 under No. 142,946). The patent was registered to Simon Hamburger of New York, assignor to Hamburger & Co. of New York. The earliest mention of 'China Magic Lanterns' I have found so far is in an advertisement from Hamburger & Co. from February 1903 in *Playthings*,[14] with the following words: 'CHINA MAGIC LANTERNS, Patent Applied For, The LATEST NOVELTY in a Toy, Do Not Fail to See Them'.

In the Playthings issue of March 1903 the ceramic lanterns are mentioned in more detail:

A New Magic Lantern. The trade will hail with delight something entirely new in magic lanterns as a novelty deserving of encouragement and recognition, and as the new lantern is really a very good article it will have a large and quick sale. The lantern body is constructed of steel and is very handsomely finished. On the outside are tiles of china with beautiful figures and flowers painted and fired, making a very attractive and beautiful appearing lantern which has greatly pleased all who have thus far seen it. The maker is well known as a very reliable concern, and Hamburger & Co. show the new lantern in their large exhibit of foreign toys.

In an article under the heading 'Novelties' from April 1903[15] the successful combination of design and function is highly praised.

Fig. 13

Fig. 14 (17/14)

The assumption that the lantern was executed in seven sizes is confirmed here and the retail price of $1 up. The article mentions that the lantern is imported by Hamburger & Co. It's nice to see that the article confirms the use of the attribute 'square' for this model. One can assume that the article is motivated or initiated by Hamburger & Co. itself. It is a happy coincidence that the pictured 'Eldorado', later named 'Luna', lantern (Fig. 13) is also available as an identical collector's item (Fig. 14).

In November 1903 the square model is mentioned in another periodical for the trade as follows:[16]

Very handsome indeed are the new china magic lanterns. The sides of the lantern are made of china tiles, prettily decorated. As these tiles have been through a fierce heat in the process of manufacture, there is no danger of injury from the heat of the lantern, nor will the decorations become dimmed or tarnished. They can be easily taken apart for the purpose of cleaning.

(To be continued.)

NOTES

1. Ernst Hrabalek, *Laterna Magica Zauberwelt und Faszination des optischen Spielzeugs,* München: Keyser 1985.
2. Richard Balzer, Optical Amusements: Magic Lanterns and Other Transforming Images 1987.
3. The acronym D.R.G.M. stands for '**D**eutsches **R**eichs**g**ebrauchs**m**uster' and indicates that a copyright is protected against imitation in all of the German states. The period of protection was limited to three years.
4. LUNA was the Roman moon goddess, her brothers and sisters were the sun god HELIOS and aurora (dawn) EOS. There are photographic cameras as well as German toy magic lanterns that are named after these Roman gods, like the 'Helios' from Ernst Plank. The word LUNA is derived from the latin Lucna to the verb lucere or 'lighten' and this one from Lux or 'Light' (from Wikipedia).
5. The smaller size is for slides with wooden frames (W) and the bigger for unframed long glass slides (G).
6. See under variant 2 for information about this assumed size.
7. www.westlicht-auction.com and Cinemateca Portuguesa-Museu do Cinema, Lissabon, Portugal.
8. Eastman Kodak Museum, Rochester, New York.
9. ©www.antiquetoysandgames.com.
10. See Historic American Newspapers – Chronicling America.
11. San Francisco Cal., 2 December 1900, California Greatest Toy Shop and The New York Times, 22 December 1900, Ingersolls' of New York (also published in *The Magic Lantern Gazette* Vol. 22, Nr. 1, p. 29 and p. 12)
12. Magic Lantern body with ornamental walls of ceramic material; Applicant: Firm David Benda, Fürth i./B.; registered: 22.01.1903; prolongated: 18.11.1905; cancelled after protection ended by time [ie.1908].
13. see: Google patents and search for 'hamburger 736093' to get the full patent.
14. *Playthings* magazine, founded in January 1903, premier trade publication of the toy industry.
15. *The House Furnishing Review* – April 1903, p. 291, ©New York Public Library, digitized by Google.
16. 'Fabrics, Fancy Goods and Notions' – A Journal of Information for Jobbers and Retailers Dry Goods Fancy Goods and Notions by the Henry C. Nathan Company 409 Broadway, N.Y., Nov. 1903 p.28.

Helmut WÄLDE is a civil servant working for the German government. He has been an MLS member for 20 years. He is especially interested in the history of early German toy magic lanterns and slides. A more extensive article on ceramic lanterns was published by Helmut Wälde in the German magazine *Photo Antiquaria* in 2012.