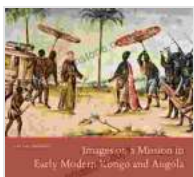


Images On Mission In Early Modern Kongo And Angola: A Glimpse into the Visual Culture of Christianization

The of Christianity to Kongo and Angola in the late 15th century marked a significant turning point in the history of these regions. Along with the arrival of European missionaries came a range of visual objects, including paintings, sculptures, and devotional prints, which played a crucial role in the process of Christianization. These images were not mere decorative elements but rather potent tools used to convey religious messages, shape beliefs, and consolidate political power.



Images on a Mission in Early Modern Kongo and Angola by Jason Waguespack

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 264 pages



The Sources of Missionary Images

Missionary images in Kongo and Angola originated from various sources:

1. **European art:** Missionaries brought with them a wealth of European religious art, including paintings, sculptures, and prints depicting

biblical scenes and saints. These images were often used to adorn churches and other religious spaces.

2. **Local artistic traditions:** Missionaries also commissioned local artists to create works that reflected the Kongo and Angolan cultural context. These works often incorporated traditional motifs and symbols into Christian iconography.
3. **Imported African art:** In addition to European and locally produced images, missionaries also made use of imported African art, such as ivory carvings and bronze sculptures, which were adapted to serve Christian purposes.

The Role of Images in Conversion

Missionary images played a multifaceted role in the Christianization of Kongo and Angola:

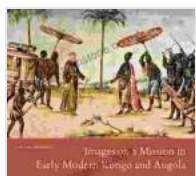
1. **Visual aids:** Images served as visual aids for missionaries, helping them to communicate complex religious concepts to local populations who may not have been familiar with biblical narratives or Christian doctrine.
2. **Objects of devotion:** Images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and other saints became objects of devotion for converts, providing a tangible connection to the divine.
3. **Symbols of power:** Images were also used by Kongo and Angolan rulers as symbols of their authority and legitimacy. By adopting Christian iconography, rulers sought to align themselves with the power and prestige of the European Christian world.

Case Studies

The Church of São Salvador in Kongo: Built in 1596, the Church of São Salvador in the Kongo capital of Mbanza Kongo was a magnificent example of the fusion of European and African artistic traditions. The church's interior was adorned with paintings depicting biblical scenes, while the exterior featured sculptures of Kongo kings and warriors. These images served to reinforce the authority of the Kongo monarchy and to legitimize its embrace of Christianity.

The Luanda Ivories in Angola: The Luanda Ivories are a collection of 80 ivory carvings produced in Angola in the 16th and 17th centuries. These carvings depict a range of Christian subjects, including the Virgin Mary, the infant Jesus, and various saints. The ivories demonstrate the skill of Angolan artisans and the extent to which Christian iconography had been assimilated into local artistic traditions.

Images played a central role in the Christianization of Kongo and Angola in early modern Africa. They were used to convey religious messages, shape beliefs, consolidate political power, and create a visual culture that reflected the complex interplay between European and African influences. Through an examination of missionary accounts, artistic works, and archaeological evidence, this article has shed light on the multifaceted role of images in this fascinating period of African history.



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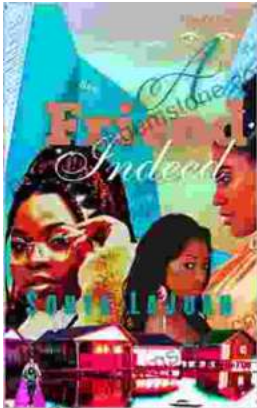
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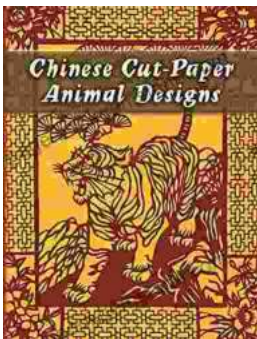
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