

Chapter 12

EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND THE LIMITS OF MERCHANT CREDIT

JULIA SCHLECK

ABSTRACT

Although significant knowledge of the Islamic world came to Christendom through the transmission and translation of written works, the first-hand experiences of European travellers served as another major source of information about contemporary Muslim societies. The transmission and reception of such knowledge was notoriously problematic, however, as travellers were routinely dismissed as exaggerators or simple “travel liars.” Some experiential knowledge was valued and some derided, depending largely on the source of the account and his or her standing in the home community. This paper will explore the credit given to one of the most organized and experienced set of travellers from early modern England to the Persian and Mughal Empires and other points around the Indian Ocean: the English merchants of the nascent East India Company. Despite the growing wealth and influence of these merchants in English society, their status as commoners and their devotion to business served to diminish the epistemological value of their knowledge claims. These same traits thus ironically served to enhance their knowledge base, and degrade its reception as truth in England. By focusing on an offer made by the Persian ambassador Robert Sherley to King James in 1622 for a direct trade in silks with Shah Abbas I, this paper will display the paradoxical role that the experiential knowledge of merchants played in the development of English familiarity with Islamic lands and peoples.

Keywords: East India Company, travel, trade, Persia, Sherley, credibility, witnessing

ALTHOUGH SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE of the Islamic world came to Christendom through the transmission and translation of written works, the first-hand experiences of European travellers served as another major source of information about contemporary Muslim societies. The transmission and reception of such knowledge was notoriously problematic, however, as travellers were routinely dismissed as exaggerators or simple “travel liars.” Some experiential knowledge was valued and some derided, depending largely on the source of the account and his or her standing

in the home community. This paper will explore the credit given to one of the most organized and experienced set of travellers from early modern England: the members of the nascent East India Company. Despite the growing wealth and influence of these merchants in English society, their status as commoners and their devotion to business served to diminish the epistemological value of their knowledge claims. The same traits which served to enhance their knowledge base thus simultaneously impeded its reception as truth in England. By examining a contentious offer made to King James in 1622 for a direct trade in silks with Shah Abbas I of Persia, and the East India Company's efforts to oppose it, this paper will display the paradoxical role that the experiential knowledge of merchants played in the development of English familiarity with Islamic lands and peoples.¹

In her book *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing*, Mary Baine Campbell wrote that "neither power nor talent gives a travel writer his or her authority, which comes only and crucially from experience."² Subsequent studies have made clear, however, that this confident assertion of the supremacy of empirical knowledge better reflects our current reality than that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the early modern period, empirical knowledge had only a partial claim to credibility in European societies, and it shared that space with the powerful contender of received tradition, often tellingly referring to in the period simply as "authority."³ Furthermore, the legal status of witnessing, including eyewitnessing, was also in flux in the period, shifting from older medieval precedents of what Andrea Frisch has called "socio-ethical" witnessing to a more modern "epistemic" witnessing.⁴ To take the latter term first, "epistemic" witnessing refers to our modern understanding of the act, wherein, as Campbell articulated, the witness's credibility relies upon their ability to say that they were there during the event in question, and that they saw or heard something that anyone in the same place would have seen or heard. Their credibility relies upon their transparency and objectivity. A given individual happened to occupy the place of the witness through their positioning in time and space.

The early modern period had a different idea of the function of the witness. Their legal protocols did have a place for "epistemic" eyewitnesses, but as Frisch notes,

¹ Sincere thanks are due to the American Philosophical Society, which provided the support necessary to complete the research for this article.

² Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 3.

³ This point has been made quite compellingly in relation to travel writing by Anthony Grafton and Nancy Siraisi in *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁴ Andrea Frisch, *The Invention of the Eyewitness: Witnessing and Testimony in Early Modern France*, North Carolina Series in the Romance Languages and Literatures 279 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Department of Romance Languages, 2004).

the narrow terms of the modern, epistemic paradigm simply do not account for the range of discourses that form and inform early modern testimony. The eyewitness constituted but one subtype of witness among many in sixteenth-century Europe, and as such, was subject to the norms governing early modern witnessing and testimony quite broadly construed.⁵

The broader understanding of witnessing Frisch alludes to here is what she describes as “socio-ethical” witnessing. In this regime a witness’s credibility related directly to their standing in the community.

In order to be eligible to give testimony, a folklaw witness had to be recognized as a legitimate deponent in the eyes of his community. This legitimacy was not based on a witness’s epistemic capacities, but rather on his socio-ethical status [...] a witness’s social status retained priority over his potential knowledge in determining his juridical legitimacy and thus, his credibility.⁶

So the primary qualification governing the ability of a person to testify in a case of doubtful knowledge was their social standing within the community. Someone of lesser status or known to be of dubious morality would have less credit as a witness, regardless of whether they happened to be in a position to see or hear the events in question first hand. Barbara Shapiro sums this up nicely in her book *“Beyond Reasonable Doubt” and “Probable Cause”: Historical Perspectives on the Anglo-American Law of Evidence*. She writes:

The credibility of witnesses was related to social and economic status as well as to the opportunity to observe first hand the fact in question. Thus the testimony of nobles counted for more than that of commoners, ecclesiastics for more than that of laypersons, men more than women, and Christians more than Jews. The value system of the medieval era was thus incorporated into the system of proof.⁷

This has obvious ramifications for travellers, and for the claims they made about foreign lands and peoples. Such claims were frequently doubtful, given the general lack of knowledge about foreign cultures and the challenges that their practices and beliefs offered to European ideologies and ways of life. The socio-ethical standing of the traveller-witness thus played a large role in the reception of the testimony they offered about foreign lands. A traveller’s credit, in other words, depended heavily on their place within the home community and less on the fact of their travels. This dynamic shifted significantly across the course of the seventeenth century, but it still held force in the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras, the point at which the great English trading companies began their regular ventures to the Middle East, India and Indonesia. Although the members of these

⁵ Frisch, *The Invention of the Eyewitness*, 23.

⁶ Frisch, *The Invention of the Eyewitness*, 38, 44.

⁷ Barbara Shapiro, *“Beyond Reasonable Doubt” and “Probable Cause”: Historical Perspectives on the Anglo-American Law of Evidence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 188.

companies were the most frequent and knowledgeable travellers to the east during this time, their status as commoners rendered their knowledge less worthy of credit than that acquired by members of the nobility or clergy. Their empirically derived information sat uneasily beside their lower social status throughout the period, a process best displayed in moments when the two were placed in tension. At those moments, the place occupied by merchant trading companies became an odd one indeed, at least to modern eyes.

The rest of this article will focus on one such event, centred on a silk trading proposal made by an ambassador for Abbas I, the Safavid shah of Persia to James I, king of England and later his son Charles I in the mid-1620s. This episode will highlight the ways in which empirically generated knowledge of the Persian economy and political landscape was considered and then rejected, in spite of what today we would consider authoritative claims made by the East India Company based on their extensive experience in the country. Although the dominance of the epistemic witness and empirically derived knowledge of foreign lands was soon to come, at the dawn of the British mercantile age, the reception and acceptance of such knowledge was still tempered by the social structure. Much ink has been spilled on the role that racial or ethnic prejudice played in the generation and acceptance of knowledge about the Middle East in Europe in the early modern era, but relatively little on the impact of social status. Here I will argue that domestic prejudices surrounding rank and social status are just as, if not more, important to consider when studying the reception in Europe of knowledge from and about the Islamic world.⁸

As a merchant collective, the East India Company was in a different position than the many individual travellers who wrote about their adventures in foreign lands. They did not publish accounts of the travels made by company agents, and usually had no need of public display or public acceptance of the truth of their experiences in the East. A return on investments was sufficient for the joint stock holders, who did not demand further explanations of events overseas. This was not true for most individual travellers, whose published accounts register both a need to justify (and/or promote) their actions abroad and anxiety about how their stories will be received. These individual traveller-writers sought to establish their credit on the basis of first-hand experience. They emphasized the authority that came from being an eyewitness in the written accounts they published upon returning to their homelands. But in so doing, they also anxiously highlighted the skepticism with which such travellers were met when providing empirical information about foreign places. William Parry, for example, travelled through the Ottoman Levant into Persia and then following a brief stay at the court of the shah, he went north along the Caspian Sea and Volga Rivers through Russia and back to England. He made this journey as part of the entourage of Sir Anthony Sherley, and published an account of his

⁸ For further consideration of this argument see Julia Schleck, *Telling True Tales of Islamic Lands: Forms of Mediation in English Travel Writing, 1575–1630* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2011).

travels upon returning to London in 1602. Although a minor gentleman and thus part of the noble estate, Parry is clearly anxious about the reception of his narrative, and he begins his account by recognizing the difficulties faced by travellers such as himself in getting their stories believed. He begins his narrative with the observation that "It hath beene, and yet is, a proverbiall speech amongst us, that Travellers may lie by authority." He is uncertain whether this proverb arose from travellers taking advantage of the authority eyewitnessing gives by lying to their countrymen with complete abandon, or whether it comes from the narrow minds of English readers who "wil beleieve nothing that falles not within their owne ocular experience, or probabilitie of truth." But he is sure that there are many "honest and true Travellers" who "for speaking the truth of their owne knowledge (for in the world are many incomprehensible miracles of Nature) yet, because it exceeds the beliefe of the unexperienced and home-bred vulgars, they are by them concluded liers for their labour."⁹ He proclaims himself to be such an honest and true traveller, and clearly hopes that this introduction will have eased the reception of his narrative sufficiently to avoid being considered a liar.

As someone publishing a traveller's account and hoping thereby to gain credit from his readers—something he no doubt hoped to translate into employment or preferment—Parry was in a particularly delicate position. In contrast, the merchants of the East India Company and other great trading companies of England had no need to print their tales, and therefore submitted their travellers' tales to no public censure. Company captains, agents and factors were required to submit detailed accounts of their travels to the governing committee back in London, but there they encountered readers well familiar with the wonders of these distant lands, and who had already testified to their trust in the traveller by hiring him. It was only when the Company had publically to account for their travellers' knowledge that the dynamics highlighted so vividly in Parry's account came strongly into play.

Such an occasion arose in 1623 when the king sought their advice on an unusual trading arrangement offered by the Safavid shah, Abbas I, through his ambassador, Sir Robert Sherley. As his name might indicate, Robert Sherley was not your usual Persian ambassador. An English-born subject of King James, Sherley had travelled to Persia on the same voyage as Parry, accompanying his brother Anthony to the shah's dominions. When Anthony was sent back to Europe as a Persian ambassador, attempting to secure an alliance between Persia and the princes of Christendom against the Ottomans, Robert was left behind as security for Anthony's good behaviour and ultimate return. When Anthony neither behaved nor returned, Robert was stranded in Persia, left to the displeasure of the shah.¹⁰ Robert nevertheless managed to survive, and to regain the shah's

⁹ William Parry, *A new and large discourse of the trauels of sir Anthony Sherley Knight, by sea, and ouer land, to the Persian Empire Wherein are related many straunge and wonderfull accidents: and also, the description and conditions of those countries and people he passed by: with his returne into Christendome. Written by William Parry gentleman, who accompanied Sir Anthony in his trauels* (London: Printed by Valentine Simmes for Felix Norton, 1601), A3r–v.

¹⁰ Accounts of the lives of Robert and Anthony Sherley brothers include Richard Raiswell, "Sherley, Anthony, Count Sherley in the nobility of the Holy Roman empire (1565–1636?)," *Oxford*

good opinion of him sufficiently to be sent like his brother on an ambassadorial mission to Europe (it is worth noting that both brothers were sent as *ilchi*, or “messengers,” who were usually considered the most dispensable of the classes of messengers sent to foreign princes, and so the Western title “ambassador” is somewhat misleading here).¹¹ Robert began his first tour as the shah’s *ilchi* in 1608 and returned to Isfahan in 1615. The shah was so pleased with his work that he immediately returned him to Europe, over Robert’s protestations, and it is during this second journey that Robert presented to King James what seemed like an extraordinary arrangement for Persian silk imports. In brief, the ambassador offered a direct trade between the two monarchs, in which James would be permitted to import the entire Persian silk market for resale in England and Europe at large. He was also invited to export enough English woollens to Persia to balance the trade, so that no bullion need leave the kingdom, as it did under the current trade managed by the East India Company.¹² The Shah promised to provide soldiers sufficient to protect the merchandise if the English provided the ships for long-distance

Dictionary of National Biography (online), Oxford University Press, 2004; Richard Raiswell, “Shirley, Sir Robert, Count Shirley in the Papal Nobility (c.1581–1628),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online), Oxford University Press, 2004; D. W. Davies, *Elizabethans Errant: the Strange Fortunes of Sir Thomas Sherley and His Three Sons, as Well in the Dutch Wars as in Muscovy, Morocco, Persia, Spain, and the Indies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967); and E. Denison Ross, *Sir Anthony Sherley and his Persian Adventure, Including some Contemporary Narratives Relating Thereto* (London: Routledge, 1933). The Sherleys, including Robert’s Circassian wife, Teresa, have also attracted recent critical attention: see Jonathan Burton, “The Shah’s Two Ambassadors: The Travels of the Three English Brothers and the Global Early Modern,” in *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic, 1550–1700*, ed. Brinda Charry and Gitanjali Shahani (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 23–40; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Three Ways to Be Alien: Travails and Encounters in the Early Modern World* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011); Schleck, *Telling True Tales of Islamic Lands*; Bernadette Andrea, “Lady Sherley: The First Persian in England?,” *Muslim World* 95 (2005): 279–95; Jane Grogan, *The Persian Empire in English Renaissance Writing, 1549–1622* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 150–79; and Kaya Şahin and Julia Schleck, “Courtly Connections: Anthony Sherley’s *Relation of his travels into Persia* (1613) in a Global Context,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 69 (2016): 80–115. There are also several contemporary literary works based on Sherleys, analyzed most notably by Laurence Publicover, “Strangers at Home: The Sherley Brothers and Dramatic Romance,” *Renaissance Studies: Journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 24 (2010): 694–709; Anthony Parr, “Foreign Relations in Jacobean England: The Sherley Brothers and the ‘Voyage of Persia,’” in *Travel and Drama in Shakespeare’s Time*, ed. Jean-Pierre Maquerlot and Michèle Willems (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14–31; Ralf Hertel, “Ousting the Ottomans: The Double Vision of the East in The Travels of the Three English Brothers (1607),” in *Early Modern Encounters with the Islamic East: Performing Cultures*, ed. Sabine Schülting, Savine Lucia Müller, and Ralf Hertel (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 135–51; and Nedda Mehdizadeh, “Translating Persia: Safavid Iran And Early Modern English Writing” (PhD dissertation, George Washington University, 2013).

11 For a discussion of the cultural mistranslation of Sherley’s status as “ambassador,” see Burton, “The Shah’s Two Ambassadors.” For the term *ilchi*, see Mehdizadeh, “Translating Persia,” 89–92.

12 The amount of bullion exported by the East India Company and other long-distance trading enterprises was a bitter point of debate. A series of pamphlets were published on the issue in early

transport. The deal would produce an extraordinary amount of revenue for the king's customs, as well as enrich the wool trade in England. It was a deal that was too good to ignore.

The East India Company was familiar with Robert Sherley through its agents in Persia and India. He had been a dubious ally on a few occasions but was generally regarded with suspicion, since he acted, as befitted a servant of the shah, to forward the interests of his Persian master and not necessarily those of England or its merchants. When he arrived in England with trading proposals for James, the Company immediately took notice, discussing his history with the company in their Court of Committees on the third of February, 1623:

it was remembred that S:r Rob[er]te Sherly came out of Persia 7 yeares since, that his Commission was Immediately for Spayne, and not for England, that in his former Ambassag[e] he came first for Spayne, next offered the trade to the Hollanders, and when his proposic[i]ons tooke no effect, he last came into England, and had wrested from the Company divers sommes of money besides his passage into thindies notwithstanding w[hi]ch he had done ill s[er]ruices for the Company, and rayled against them.¹³

Given this state of affairs, the Company put itself on the defensive, preparing to combat whatever proposals might emerge from the embassy that would affect its business. They directed one of their members to look out for arriving letters from the region that might give them information on their own recent efforts to establish a regular trade in Persia, and they directed another member to consult the court records and familiarize himself with the past history of the Company in relation to Sherley and the Persian trade. In short, they "armed themselves with reasons to putt off[f] the charge like to acrew to the Company."

the 1620s, including Thomas Mun, *A discourse of trade, from England vnto the East-Indies answering to diuerse obiections which are vsually made against the same* (1621); Edward Misselden, *Free trade, or, The meanes to make trade flourish. Wherein, the causes of the decay of trade in this kingdome are discovered and the remedies also to remooue the same are represented* (1622); Edward Misselden, *The circle of commerce. Or The ballance of trade in defence of free trade: opposed to Malynes little fish and his great whale, and poized against them in the scale. Wherein also, exchanges in generall are considered: and therein the whole trade of this kingdome with forraine countries, is digested into a ballance of trade, for the benefite of the publike. Necessary for the present and future times* (1623); and Gerard Malynes, *The center of The circle of commerce. Or, A refutation of a treatise, intituled The circle of commerce, or The ballance of trade, lately published by E.M. By Gerard Malynes merchant* (1622). For a general history of the East India Company, see K. N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company: The Study of an Early Joint-Stock Company 1600–1640* (London: Routledge, 1999). For one focused more specifically on the company's finances see William Robert Scott, *The Constitution and Finance of English, Scottish and Irish Joint-Stock Companies to 1720*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910). See also Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London's Overseas Traders, 1550–1653* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

13 "A Courte of Comittees houlden the 3:d of February 1623," EIC IOR-B-8: Court Book VI, 2 July 1623–30 June 1624. F. 394.

The weapons the Company sought to arm themselves with were twofold. First, they sought ways to diminish Sherley's socio-ethical status so that his credit as a witness to conditions in Persia and future trading predictions would be weakened. Sherley had been by this time absent from Persia for a number of years. How could he be properly acquainted with the state of the Company's affairs there, especially since they had only very lately concluded upon certain trading capitulations with the shah? And how could he have received more recent instructions from his master, given the distance and the fact that reliable overland routes between Persia and Europe had recently been closed?¹⁴ "There is litle probabilitie," they concluded, or rather "allmost no posibility that S:r Rob[er]te Sherly should have any authentique power out of Persia to negotiate as an Ambassador, the circumstances of time, and the shutting of all passage overland into or out of those partes Considered."¹⁵

Indeed, from the very first mention of Sherley in the 1623 accounts, "the Courte conceived that he was an Ambassador, but had vsurped the title, yet because his Ma[jes]tie tooke notice of him as An Ambassador it became not this Company to make shewe of the Contrary."¹⁶ The Company would recognize Sherley's status as ambassador since the king saw fit to do so, but they considered it an illegitimate, or "usurped" title.¹⁷ Accordingly, in addition to questioning the currency of his mission and knowledge in the area, they sought to discredit Sherley's place as ambassador in a rather novel way: by seeking out and bringing to London what they considered to be a more legitimate ambassador, setting the two ambassadors against each other in James's court.

The Persian Naqd Ali Beg arrived in England in 1626 and was promptly greeted by the Company as a more legitimate representative of the Persian shah than their erstwhile countryman. Upon the first meeting of the two rival ambassadors at a private house, Sherley attempted to show the Persian his letters of credit from the shah, but Naqd Ali Beg tore up the letters and physically attacked Sherley.¹⁸ When the gentlemen

14 Paraphrase from "A Courte of Comittees houlden the 3:d of February 1623," EIC IOR/B/8: Court Book VI, 2 July 1623–30 June 1624, F. 394 and "A Courte of Comittees houlden the 13th of August 1624," British Library, IOR/B/9: Court Book VII, 2 July 1624–14 April 1625. F. 70.

15 "A Courte of Comittees houlden the 13th of August 1624," British Library, IOR/B/9: Court Book VII, 2 July 1624–14 April 1625. F. 70.

16 "A Courte of Comittees houlden the 3:d of February 1623."

17 Although the Company's reasons for this opinion are unclear, they rather interestingly align with modern critical assessment on this point. There was no commensurate role in Europe for the lower-valued "messengers" often sent from Middle Eastern and Indian courts. "Ambassador" was an inappropriate cultural translation for this position, in that it accorded too much status and importance to the individual concerned. The title thus was in a sense "usurped" by both of the Sherley brothers while carrying the shah's messages to European princes. See Burton, "The Shah's Two Ambassadors."

18 An account of these events was later published by a court official involved in the Sherley negotiations. My summary here draws directly on this source: John Finett, *Finetti Philoxeni: Som choice observations of Sr. John Finett Knight, And Master of Ceremonies to the two last Kings, Touching the Reception, and Precedence, the Treatment and Audience, the Puntillios and Contests of Forren*

of the court who had accompanied Sherley broke up the fight, they queried the violence of the Persian ambassador, who excused his rage by claiming that the letters were fake and Sherley an imposter who falsely played the role of ambassador. He could tell, he said, because the Shah's signature was on the back rather than at its proper location on the front of the document. Robert defended himself by claiming that the letters carried by "strangers" like himself were signed on the back, in comparison to those carried by native-born Persians. But this defence served only to highlight Sherley's less-than-regular status as a Persian representative, implying somehow that the East India Company's claims were true, and that Sherley had "usurped" the role of ambassador. Furthermore, Sherley's behaviour during the assault, in which he dodged away and hid behind the other English noblemen attending the meeting, damaged his status as a nobleman. In addition to not standing his ground and fighting back at the time, in the aftermath of the event Sherley defensively offered explanations and justifications rather than taking offence and accusing the Persian of impugning his honour, and subsequently demanding restitution. In the end, Sherley's status as an ambassador from a king had been shaken, and his status as a member of the English nobility had been decidedly tarnished. The Company's effort to damage Sherley's socio-ethical status with the noblemen who were to advise the king on this trading deal was both creative and effective.

The Company furthermore sought to tar Sherley's character by means of his acquaintance. A former Company employee, Richard Steele, was supporting Sherley's trading proposal at court. Steele had previously claimed to have "discovered" and opened up the trade for Persian silks, but the Company directors wryly noted that he "arrogated those thinges to himself, w[hi]ch were in question, and thought on long before."¹⁹ And indeed, the Persian silk trade had been a target of English merchant activity since the 1550s, when the Muscovy Company sent agents down the Volga River to the Caspian Sea. Steele had also previously run afoul of the Company by both personal transgression and professional incompetence. Against explicit Company policy, he had smuggled his wife on board their outgoing fleet, disguised as a lady's maid, only admitting their relationship when she revealed herself to be pregnant somewhere around the Cape of Good Hope. Once in India, Steele had insisted on presenting a plan to develop a waterwork on the Yamuna River to the Mughal emperor Jehangir I, despite the warnings of the Company's main agent on the ground, Sir Thomas Roe.²⁰ The plan showed little knowledge of the

Ambassadors in England. Legati ligant Mundum (London: Printed by T. R. For H. Twyford and G. Bedell, and are to be Sold at their Shops in Vine-Court Middle Temple, and the Middle Temple Gate, 1656), 135–37, 172–77.

19 "A Court of Committees held: Novembris. 8°. 1619," EIC IOR-B-6: Court Book IV, 19 Sept. 1617 – April 1620. F. 446.

20 Upon his return, the Company investigated Steele's behaviour in India, and their conclusions were scathing: "In w[hi]ch his vndertakinges he wrongd the Compa[ny] excedeinglye, as Sr Thomas Roe made it appeare, first, because the Riuer Gemini was vnfit to set a Myll vppon, raging wth vyolence of wats 3 mo together, over flowing his boundes a myle from his bankes, so that it app[ear]ed impossible to settle such a worke either at the highest or lowest tyme therof, when he falls wthin his bankes againe Secondly the Bamans [Brahmins] in Agra (who are the greatest p[ar]t of the inhabitantes) will

cultural and hydrographical realities on the ground, including the fact that the river flooded regularly and that the Mughal court already possessed an excellent waterwork system tapping into another river in the area. That Sherley's proposals were backed up by Richard Steele, the Company stated, only made them less likely to be grounded in truth. All told, the East India Company launched a remarkably effective multi-pronged campaign to tarnish Sherley's socio-ethical position in England, destabilizing his rank and status as a royal ambassador in an effort to compensate for their own comparatively low status as commoners and level the playing field somewhat.

The second form of weapon the Company used in their fight against Sherley's proposal had to do with their instructions to their two members, to seek in their records for past accounts of their dealings with Sherley and the area, and to look out for current letters arriving with the fleet. With the help of these two committee members, the Company amassed empirical details of the past and current state of affairs in Persia, using their carefully kept records and correspondence networks. In so doing they leaned upon their collective status as eyewitnesses, claiming authority by virtue of their continuing travels to the region. Their business was to know the state of affairs in the nations of the East, including Persia, and they did so through agents who sent regular reports back to England by multiple routes to ensure its delivery. Letters arrived frequently throughout the year from East India Company servants on the ground in Persia and India, and they clearly hoped to claim authority based on their awareness of the most current news from the region. The company thus based their claims on a complex combination of epistemic and socio-ethical witnessing. The committee members in London who ran the Company had mostly never travelled to the region, so they were not themselves eyewitnesses. They were, however, commoners of quite high status in London, and well known at court. In their position as company directors, they had multiple eyewitness accounts given to them, which they trusted due to their personal knowledge of the author of each account. The socio-ethical standing of the author within the Company meant a great deal as to the credit extended a given account. Large amounts of money were committed based on such information, and so the need for accurate and reliable eyewitness accounts were critical to the Company. They would stand behind the authority of the accounts their agents sent, just as they did every time they made a business decision based on those accounts. This internal vetting system meant that the Company itself could collectively claim to be the possessor of the most reliable eyewitness accounts at the time, even though its directors had never travelled. The social status of the directors—commoners, but very wealthy London citizens—in turn boosted the credibility of the reports sent them by lower-status agents. The Company hoped to use this collective witnessing of conditions in Safavid Iran to make their case against Sherley's trade proposal and the expenses it would entail.

not touch nor medle w[i]th any wat[e]r that is brought or handled by any other then them selues. 3. The king and Nobilitie haue as excellent and artificall watrworkes of ther owne as can be desired." "A Court of Comittees held Nouembris: 10. 1619." British Library, IOR/B/6: Court Book IV, 19 Sept. 1617–April 1620. F. 449.

The Company reminded the king's agent, Secretary Conway, of their authority in questions of trade multiple times within the long series of exchanges on this matter. "[T]he vent of Clothes in Persia is better knowne to the Company, then it can be either to S:r Robert Sherly or Steele, the Company Factors having endeavored to vent of Clothes all the Country over," East India Company directors stated bluntly to Conway. Since their "experience & knowledge of the Trade in that Country, farr excee[s] Sr Robert Sherlys," their skepticism regarding the deal he proposed should be heeded. They recognized the authority of the king to make this decision, and respected the noble counsellors who advised the king on this matter, but they were insistent that experience should trump social status in this instance. Indeed, their own status as commoners, as those who *worked* in trade, should in this case, weigh in their favour: "[i]f there were any possibility of doeing good by otherwyes then have bene allready found, the marchant would for his gayne find it out." It is their business, they insisted, to seek profit, and if a more profitable deal were available in Persian silks, they would already have sniffed it out, or would, shortly. And they not only had a strong motive to do so, they had means. Citing the formidable intelligence network set up through the company agents' regular, often coded, correspondence with the governing committee in London, the directors continued that

neither is it probable that either S:r Rob[er]te Sherely or Steele whose hande is in this p[ro]ject cann come nere the Companie, in getting intelligence from those partes. For as much as the Company do employ thither the ablest men they cann gett, and are well furnisht of such whoe could neither give hope either of such a vent of English Commodities, or such retournes in exchange.²¹

The Company had both motive and means to seek out the most reliable information available in Persia on this matter, and their conclusion was that Sherley had no idea what he was talking about. His proposal was deemed "inconvenient" and contained "such matter, as seemed [neither] fitt nor feisible."

The Company also sought to back up this rather insulting conclusion with logical explanations for their judgement. They went into the details of the trade with the noblemen tasked by the king with handling the issue, Secretary Conway, Sir John Coke, and a committee from the House of Lords. First of all, they began, the numbers involved were unrealistic. It was said, they claimed,

[t]hat Sr Robert Sherley hath possessed the State That such a proporc[i]on of silk may bee brought from thence, as will give the King 450 thousand poundes yearly for Custome, whereas the proporc[i]on that the Companies Factors have advertised will not produce above 40,000li Custome if it were all to bee brought hither.

Furthermore, the Company "Governour satisfied the boord that where the proiect speakes of silke to the vullue of many millions, the silke of Persia that vends in [all]

21 "A Courte of Comittees houlden the 13th of August 1624."

Christendome doth not amount to one Million."²² Similarly, Sherley claimed that the Company would be able to sell 30,000 English woollens each year in Persia and India, which would allow them to bring back the silks after a simple barter. In other words, they would not have to export bullion from the realm, a point of some contention in England, as it was believed to make the country poorer, and certainly made it cash poor.²³ But the Company scoffed at such a number, noting that they had never been able to sell anywhere near that amount of English cloth in Persia. The proportion cited, they claimed, was simply "frivolous."

Besides, the Company argued, the shah himself had refused exactly such a trade in the near past. They had made efforts, through letters sent from King James and negotiated through an agent residing in Isfahan, to get Shah Abbas to agree to the Company purchasing 4,000 bales of silk on credit and storing it in a factory near the waterside. This was a critical part of mercantile practice, as it allowed agents to store up stocks of local goods and send them back to England at the ideal time when the proper fleet arrived. The merchants would pay back debts accrued during the year once further ships from England arrived with bullion and with English goods to sell in Persia, the latter of which they would also store and sell at a time considered most advantageous price-wise. There was considerable flex in this system, and the Company needed to be trusted that it could and would always pay back debts accrued during the course of the year. The shah simply refused to trust them to do that. As the Company records stated, he denied these requests "refusing at all tymes to trust out more then there was estate in his Country to satisfy for."²⁴ Given the consistently distrustful attitude displayed by the shah towards the English merchants, how was it credible that he should suddenly offer such free and advantageous trading terms through Robert Sherley? The answer of course, was that it was not credible, and neither was Sherley.

From a contemporary perspective, the Company's arguments sound quite logical and persuasive. They mistook Robert Sherley, who was in fact sent by the shah with a number of military and trade proposals to Europe, but they were likely correct about the state of things on the ground in Persia. Sherley had indeed been away from the shah's court for eight years (1615–1623) by the time he arrived in England, and was unlikely to know the shah's current mind on the proposals he had sent so many years before. Alliances had been shifting rapidly in the Gulf as the Portuguese were ousted from Ormuz with English help, and the Anglo-Dutch rivalry in the Far East heated up. The Company's skepticism was well justified.

James, however, appears to have been less convinced by the Company's claim to expertise in the Persian trade, or rather, he considered it less important than other factors in the decision. Regarding the matter of Sherley's status as ambassador, Robert had been received by James in the past under such a title, and to admit that he was wrong, and had

²² "A Court of Comittees holden the 20th of December 1624." British Library IOR/B/9 Court Book VII, 2 July 1624–14 April 1625. Ff. 271–76.

²³ See note 12 above.

²⁴ "A Courte of Comittees houlden the vjth of December 1624 Afternoone." British Library IOR/B/9 Court Book VII, 2 July 1624–14 April 1625. Ff. 236–37.

honoured one of his own subjects with a status he did not deserve, was not an attractive idea. Both James and his son Charles, who succeeded his father in 1625, handled the matter by alternately ignoring it and refusing to receive either of the two ambassadors while ordering various of their secretaries to look into the details of the matter, who met with both Sherley and the Company directors. For James at least was enamoured with silk, and would dearly have loved to have put such an arrangement in place. He had infringed on the Company's charter rights to trade exclusively in the area at least once before in the Company's history, and clearly had no qualms about doing so again.²⁵ It was the king's prerogative. He hoped, therefore, to bring the Company to agreement with the proposal, and sought to reconcile all parties to the idea. The Company's arguments about its knowledge and experience in the trade, therefore, were likely all the more irritating for being logical. James also clearly relied most heavily on the socio-ethical status of the ambassador as a messenger from another king, regardless of Sherley's status as a member of the lower nobility in England, for when the Company made objections to the probability of the numbers proposed by Sherley, the reply from the king's side was "that the probability was the more because the moc[i]on comes from an Ambassador of a great Prince."²⁶ And not, it was implied, from mere merchants.

In the end, the king sided with Sherley, deciding to pursue the trade offered with or without the Company's help. The Company was informed that

[T]he King having duely Considered the overtures made by Sr Robert Sherley concerning the Persian Trade, and the important Consequences depending therevpon, and having likewise with the advise of the Lords of his Councell weighed the severall answers given by the Merchants of London vnto those proposic[i]ons, hee was now resolved with the assistance of his Nobility and such others as wold ioyn with him to pursue that trade his owne way hoping to bring the whole Trade of the Persian silk vpon freight hither into England by Contract between the 2 Kings.²⁷

James was no merchant, but the idea of bringing tons of bales of silk into England by direct agreement with another king appealed to him. The Persian trade would now be the purview of the English nobility, who would reap its rewards, dealing directly with their counterparts in the Persian court.

We are not, unfortunately, able to see the results that such an effort might have produced, because the king died shortly after this pronouncement in 1625. His son Charles

²⁵ In 1604, only a few years after the incorporation of the East India Company, King James disregarded the Company's privilege of exclusive trade in the east by granting his pensioner, Sir Edward Michelborne, a licence to trade to Cathaia, China, Japan, Corea, Cambaia and nearby lands. For more details, including the outcome of the voyage and the company's response, see *The Register of Letters &c. of the Governour and Company of merchants of London trading into the East Indies, 1600–1619*, ed. Sir George Birdwood and William Foster (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893), 134n2.

²⁶ "A Court of Comittees holden the 20th of December 1624," f. 70.

²⁷ "A Courte of Comittees shoulde[n] the vjth of December 1624 Afternoone." IOR/B/9 Court Book VII, 2 July 1624–14 April 1625. F. 236.

I was less enthused about silk, and less convinced of Sherley's proposals or identity. The entire matter was postponed until the questions surrounding Sherley's status as ambassador and the legitimacy of his offer could be ascertained. The rival ambassadors were put on an East India Company fleet, along with agents from the king tasked with finding out the truth of the matter from the Persians themselves. The Persian ambassador, Naqd Ali Beg, committed suicide shortly before the fleet arrived at the port of Surat, and Sherley, as a member of a nation which had recently fallen out of favour with the shah, was brusquely treated and cast aside upon arriving at Isfahan in 1628. The shah would likely have repented and brought Sherley back to court in a relatively short time, as he had in the past, but Sherley pre-empted him by dying as well, mere months after his return to Isfahan (July 1628). The idea of the silk trade was abandoned by the English king and court, and the merchants were left to pursue their trade in peace, no doubt to their great satisfaction.

Although we tend to treat the early modern period as the dawn of an empirically based exchange of knowledge directly between formerly isolated European locations like England and the great empires of the Middle East and Asia, we would do well to hold off according the era any accolades for empiricism. Aside from the many familiar problems of translation and prejudice that Said so aptly highlighted in his work on later periods, there are additional issues surrounding the reception of empirically derived knowledge about the Islamic world in Europe. Merchants are arguably good sources for such information, given their professional need for accuracy and their pragmatic approach to navigating social and cultural difference in their pursuit of profit. But their networks of informers and long experience on the ground in the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Persia, and India were still regarded as only one factor in the assessment of knowledge by their social superiors. As commoners, the merchants necessarily lacked the socio-ethical credit of the nobility. Their claims to expertise were taken into consideration, but were not decisive when placed against contradictory accounts by higher-ranking individuals such as royal ambassadors. The oddity of Sherley's status as a Persian ambassador and his shaky reputation as an English nobleman gave the East India Company merchants an excellent opportunity to assert their case and potentially to triumph over the desires and solidarity of the aristocracy. Yet even with these favourable conditions, King James ruled against their knowledge and experience, and only his sudden death and the caution of his successor allowed the Company to continue its trade undisturbed. The episode stands as a cautionary tale to those who would argue for the growing empiricism of the period, and a reminder that the reception and acceptance of knowledge from the East was mediated not only by European prejudice against Muslims, but by domestic regimes of rank and status as well.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Benjamin of Tudela, Benjamin of. *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela (Sefer ha-Masa'ot)*. Translated by Nathan Adler. Malibu: Joseph Simon, 1987.
- Daud, Abraham ibn. *The Book of Tradition*. Edited and translated by Gerson D. Cohen. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1967.
- Ferdowsi, Abolqasem. *Shāhnāma*, eds. Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, Mahmoud Omidshah, and Abū al-Faḍl Khaṭībī. 12 vols. New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1987–2008.
- . *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*. Translated by Dick Davis. New York: Penguin, 2016.
- Al-Ghazzali, *The Mysteries of Worship in Islam*. Translation of al-Ghazzali's *Book of the Ihya on the Worship* by Edwin Elliot Calverley. Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf, 1925. Reprint, 1977.
- Ibn Jubayr. *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*. Translated from the original Arabic with introduction and notes by R. J. C. Broadhurst. London: Jonathan Cape, 1952.
- Ibn Qudāmah al-Maqdisi, Muwaffaq ud-Deen Abdullah ibn Ahmad. *Fiqh of Worship: Commentary on 'Umdat al-Fiqh (The Reliable Source of Fiqh)*. Translated by Hatem al-Haj. Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2011.
- Josephus, Flavius. *The Jewish War: Revised Edition*. Edited by Betty Radice and E. Mary Smallwood, translated by G. A. Williamson. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981.
- Khāqānī, Shīrvānī. *Maṣnavī-i tuḥfat al-'Irāqayn*. Edited by Yahyā Qarib. Tehran: Shirkat-i Sahāmī-i Kitābhā-yi Jībī bā hamkārī-i Mu'assasah-'i Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 2537/1978–79.
- Leo Africanus, *A Geographical Historie of Africa, written in Arabicke and Italian by John Leo, a More borne in Granada and brought up in Barbarie*. Translated and collected by J. Pory. London: George Bishop, 1600.
- Tafur, Pedro. *Andanças e viajes de Pero Tafur in Viajes medievales II*. Edited by Miguel Angel Pérez-Priego, 211–379. Madrid: Biblioteca Castro, 2006.
- William of Rubruck (Willem van Ruysbroeck). *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck: His Journey to the Court of the Great Khan Möngke, 1253–1255*. Translated by Peter Jackson. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2009.

Secondary Works

- Akbari, Suzanne Conklin. *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- Alam, Muzaffar and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds. *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400–1800*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Allsen, Thomas T. *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

- Atasoy, Nurhan and Lale Uluç. *Impressions of Ottoman Culture in Europe: 1453–1699*. Istanbul: Turkish Cultural Foundation, Armağan, 2012.
- Barthelemy, Anthony. *Black Face Maligned Race: The Representation of Blacks in English Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987.
- Bartlett, Robert. *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change, 950–1350*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Biglieri, Aníbal A. *Las ideas geográficas y la imagen del mundo en la literatura española medieval*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2012.
- Borm, Jan. “Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology.” In *Perspectives on Travel Writing*. Edited by Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.
- Brancaforte, Elio. *Visions of Persia: Mapping the Travels of Adam Olearius*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Dept. of Comparative Literature; distributed by Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Brancaforte, Elio, and Sonja Brentjes. *From Rhubarb to Rubies: European Travels to Safavid Iran (1550–1700)*. Cambridge, MA: Houghton Library, Harvard University, 2012.
- Braudel, Ferdinand. *The Mediterranean: and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. 2 vols. New York: Harper Collins, 1973.
- . *The Wheels of Commerce*. Translated by Siân Reynolds. New York: Harper & Row, 1982.
- Brenner, Robert. *Merchants and Revolution: Commercial Change, Political Conflict, and London’s Overseas Traders, 1550–1653*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Brockey, Liam Matthew. *Journey to the East: The Jesuit Mission to China, 1579–1724*. Cambridge: Belknap, 2007.
- Brotton, Jerry. *Trading Territories: Mapping the Early Modern World*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
- Brotton, Jerry, and Lisa Jardine. *Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000.
- Burton, Jonathan. *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama, 1579–1624*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005.
- Campbell, Mary B. *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Canby, Sheila R. *Shah ‘Abbas: The Remaking of Iran*. London: British Museum Press, 2009.
- . *The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014.
- Carrizo Rueda, Sofía. *Poética del relato de viajes*. Kassel: Reichenberger, 1997.
- Casale, Giancarlo. *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Charry, Brinda, and Gitanjali Shahani, eds. *Emissaries in Early Modern Literature and Culture: Mediation, Transmission, Traffic, 1550–1700*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2009.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. “Pilgrimages, Travel Writing and the Medieval Exotic.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Literature in English*, edited by Elaine Treharne and Greg Walker. 611–28. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Cosgrove, Dennis. *Apollo’s Eye: A Cartographic Genealogy of the Earth in the Western Imagination*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
- Cumming, Owen F. *Prophets, Guardians, and Saints: Shapers of Modern Catholic History*. New York: Paulist, 2007.

- Dawson, Christopher. *The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the 13th and 14th Centuries*. London: Sheed Ward, 1980.
- De Lorenzi, James. "Red Sea Travelers in Mediterranean Lands: Ethiopian Scholars and Early Modern Orientalism, Ca. 1500–1668." In *World-Building in the Early Modern Imagination*, edited by Allison Kavey, 173–200. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Della Valle, Pietro. *The Pilgrim: The Travels of Pietro Della Valle*. Translated by George Bull. London: Hutchinson, 1990.
- Desing, Matthew V. "Luciana's Story: Text, Travel, and Interpretation in the *Libro de Apolonio*." *Hispanic Review* 79 (2011): 1–15.
- Dunn, Ross E. *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986.
- Eickelman, Dale, and James Piscatori, eds. *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.
- Elsner, Jan, and Joan-Pau Rubiés, eds. *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*. London: Reaktion, 1999.
- Euben, Roxanne L. *Journeys to the Other Shore: Muslim and Western Travelers in Search of Knowledge*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Evans, Robert John Weston, and Alexander Marr, *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2006.
- Farooqi, Suraiya. *A Cultural History of the Ottomans. The Imperial Elite and its Artefacts*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2016.
- Frankopan, Peter. *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.
- Freedman, Paul. *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.
- Frisch, Andrea. *The Invention of the Eyewitness: Witnessing and Testimony in Early Modern France*. North Carolina Series in the Romance Languages and Literatures 279. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Department of Romance Languages, 2004.
- Grabar, Oleb. "Patterns and Ways of Cultural Exchange." In *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West During the Period of the Crusades*, edited by Vladimir P. Goss. 441–554. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986.
- Green, Nile, ed. *Writing Travel in Central Asian History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.
- Harney, Michael. *Race, Caste, and Indigeneity in Medieval Spanish Travel Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Harrigan, Michael. *Veiled Encounters: Representing the Orient in 17th-Century French Travel Literature*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008.
- Herbert, Thomas. *A Relation of Some Yeares Travaile*. London: William Stansby and Jacob Bloome, 1634.
- Jackson, Peter. *The Mongols and the West, 1221–1410*. Harlow: Pearson, 2005.
- Jacobs, Martin. *Reorienting the East: Jewish Travelers to the Medieval Muslim World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
- Jardine, Lisa. *Worldly Goods. A New History of the Renaissance*. New York: Norton, 1996.

- Juynboll, G. H. A. *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of Early Hadith*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008 [1983].
- Kafescioğlu, Çiğdem. *Constantinopolis/Istanbul: Cultural Encounter, Imperial Vision, and the Construction of the Ottoman Capital*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2009.
- Khair, Tabish, Martin Leer, Justin D. Edwards, and Hanna Ziadeh, eds. *Other Routes: 1500 Years of African and Asian Travel Writing*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005.
- Khanmohamadi, Shirin A. *In Light of Another's Word: European Ethnography in the Middle Ages*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014.
- Lach, Donald F., and Edwin J. Van Kley. *A Century of Advance: Trade, Missions, Literature. Asia in the Making of Europe 3*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Lach, Donald. *Asia in the Making of Europe*. 3 vols, with multiple books per volume. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965-98.
- Legassie, Shayne Aaron. *The Medieval Invention of Travel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Lestringant, Frank. *Mapping the Renaissance World: The Geographical Imagination in the Age of Discovery*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994.
- MacLean, Gerald, ed. *Re-Orienting the Renaissance*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.
- Matar, Nabil. *An Arab Ambassador in the Mediterranean World: The Travels of Muhammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Miknāsī, 1779–1788*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- . *Europe Through Arab Eyes, 1578–1727*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
- . *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Matthee, Rudolph P. *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600–1730*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Micallef, Roberta, and Sunil Sharma, eds. *On the Wonders of Land and Sea: Persianate Travel Writing*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Müge Göçek, Fatma. *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Necipoğlu, Gülru. *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power: The Topkapi Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991.
- Netton, Ian Richard. *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Medieval and Modern Islam*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Pérez-Priego, Miguel Angel, ed. *Viajes medievales II*. Madrid: Biblioteca Castro, 2006.
- Phillips, Kim M. *Before Orientalism: Asian Peoples and Cultures in European Travel Writing, 1245–1510*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.
- Prawer, Joshua. "The Roots of Medieval Colonialism." In *The Meeting of Two Worlds: Cultural Exchange between East and West during the period of the Crusades*, edited by Vladimir P. Goss. 23–38. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986.
- Richard, Jean. *Les Récits de voyages et de pèlerinages*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1981.
- Rose, Susan. *The Medieval Sea*. London: Continuum, 2007.
- Roth, Norman. *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.

- Roux, Jean-Paul. *L'Asie centrale, histoire et civilisation*, Paris: Fayard, 2007.
- Rubiés, Joan-Pau. "Travel Writing as a Genre: Facts, Fictions and the Invention of a Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe." *Journeys* 1 (2000): 5–35.
- Rubiés, Joan-Pau. *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes, 1250–1625*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Rubio Tovar, J. *Libros españoles de viajes medievales*. Madrid: Taurus, 1986.
- Ryan, Maria del Pilar. *El Jesuita Secreto: San Francisco de Borja*. Valencia: Biblioteca Valenciana, 2008.
- Said, Edward W. "Orientalism." In *The Edward Said Reader*, edited by Edward W. Said, Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin, 73–74. New York: Vintage, 2000.
- . *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979.
- Schleck, Julia. *Telling True Tales of Islamic Lands: Forms of Mediation in English Travel Writing, 1575–1630*. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2011.
- Smith, Pamela H., and Paula Findlen, eds. *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Snyder, John P. *Flattening the Earth: Two Thousand Years of Map Projection*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Speake, Jennifer, ed. *Literature of Travel and Exploration: An Encyclopedia*. 3 vols. New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2003.
- Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. *Three Ways to Be Alien: Travails and Encounters in the Early Modern World*. Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2011.
- Taylor, Christopher. *In the Vicinity of the Righteous: Ziyara and the Veneration of Muslim Saints in Late Medieval Egypt*. Leiden: Brill, 1999.
- Touati, Houari. *Islam and Travel in the Middle Ages*. Translated by Lydia Cochrane. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Youngs, Tim. *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Zemon-Davies, Natalie. *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2006.
- Zubillaga, Carina. *Poesía narrativa clerical en su contexto manuscrito: Estudio y edición del Ms. Esc. K-III-4*. Buenos Aires: Dunken, 2014.
- Zumthor, Paul. "The Medieval Travel Narrative." *New Literary History* 25 (1994): 809–24.