



CHARDIN, SIR JOHN

CHARDIN, Sir JOHN (born Paris, 6 Julian = 16 November 1643, died Chiswick, London? 25 December 1712 Julian = 5 January 1713 (the date of his death is uncertain; he was buried on 29 December 1712 Julian = 9 January 1713], an Huguenot jeweler who traveled extensively in Asia and wrote the most detailed foreign account of the Persia of his time.

Sources. The sources on Chardin's life, aside from his own statements and the information that can be derived from his account of his travels, are few. Most available information can be found in standard biographical dictionaries, though they contain many errors: *Biographie universelle* VII, Paris, 1844, pp. 506-07; *Nouvelle biographie universelle* IX, Paris, 1855, cols. 715-19; *Dictionnaire de biographie française* VIII, Paris, 1959, cols. 482-83; *Archives biographiques françaises* (microfiche), Munich and New York, 1988-; *Dictionary of National Biography* X, London, 1887, repr. vol. IV, 1967, pp. 63-64; and *British Biographical Archive* (microfiche), Munich and New York, 1984-. The earliest substantial published notice was L. Langlès's "Abrégé de la vie de Chardin" in his standard ten-volume edition of Chardin's *Voyages . . . en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient* . . . (I, Paris, 1811, pp. xi-xviii; all references are to this edition, which is described in detail below), but Nicéron (et al.)'s *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des hommes illustres dans la république des lettres* (XXVI, Paris, 1734, pp. 44-47) should also be noted. Two helpful recent sources are S. Yerasimos' introduction to his edition of *Voyage de Paris à Ispahan* (I, Paris, 1983, pp. 15-29) and, in particular, Anne Kroell's "Douze lettres de Jean Chardin" (*JA* 170, 1982, pp. 295-338), which includes an extended biographical



introduction and much useful documentation. For additional references, see John Emerson, *Ex Occidente Lux. Some European Sources on the Economic Structure of Persia between about 1630 and 1690* (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 1971, pp. 92-95).

Life. The chronology of Chardin's life and journeys is not entirely clear, and there are several lacunae. He was, for example, in Qazvīn for four months in 1675 (*Voyages* IX, pp. 233-362), rather than in 1674, as he reported (II, p. 387). Furthermore, throughout his published work he appears to have used the Gregorian calendar, even though he spent his later years in England, where the Julian calendar was still in use. Jean Chardin was the son of a rich Huguenot jeweler and received an "éducation très rare alors dans la classe marchande" (*Nouvelle biographie*, col. 715). In either 1664 or 1665 (Emerson, pp. 92-95), accompanied by a certain M. Raisin, he traveled on behalf of his father to India, where European jewelry was in considerable demand. Available information on this first journey is somewhat scanty and contradictory, but he seems to have passed through Persia and gained access to the court, where Shah 'Abbās II (r. 1052-77/1642-66) appointed him a royal merchant and commissioned some jewelry that he himself had designed. In Du'l-ḥejja 1078/April 1667 he was traveling from Hormoz to Isfahan (*Voyages* VIII, p. 499); toward the end of the year he left for India, returning in 1080/1669 to Persia, where he spent six more months. In mid-1670 he was back in Paris, though it is not clear by what route he traveled. By his own account he found that the religion in which he had been brought up kept him from all kinds of employment and that he must either change it or renounce honors and advancement (I, p. 1). Consequently he decided to continue his commercial career in the East and at the same time to deepen and extend his knowledge of everything Persian.

With the help of his father he executed the commission for the shah's jewels, even though he must have known of 'Abbās II's death, and, in partnership with Raisin, assembled other rich and varied merchandise, including numerous [clocks](#) and watches. Chardin left Paris in August 1671 and joined Raisin in Livorno; together they went to Istanbul via Izmir and left for Persia in July 1672, following a Black Sea route that took them first to Kaffa (Feodosiya) and then to the Imeritian (western Georgian) principalities on the eastern shore, a turbulent area only nominally subject to the Ottoman empire. After some harrowing experiences in Mingrelia they arrived in Tiflis (Tbilisi) in January 1673 and a month later proceeded to Erevan (Īravān), whence they followed



the route taken by so many European travelers: through Tabrīz, Zenjān, Qom, and Kāšān to Isfahan, arriving on 9 Rabi' I 1084/14 Julian = 24 June 1673 (for a brief discussion of this route, see Emerson, pp. 137-38, 197-201). Chardin spent the next four and a half years in Persia, but only about two and a half years, during which he lived in Isfahan and made two journeys to Bandar-e 'Abbās, are covered in his published journals (Emerson, pp. 205-10). Much of 1087/1676 he spent in Isfahan, working on his description of the city (*Voyages* VII, p. 289). He left for India toward the end of 1088/1677 and reported being in Surat in 1678 and Golconda in 1679 (IV, pp. 43, 82). The date and circumstances of his return to Europe and the chronology of the important events in the first year or two after his return remain somewhat unclear; the accounts in the biographical sources differ considerably. H. O. Bonnerot, Kroell, and others have considerably clarified these issues. It now appears that in 1680 Chardin sailed around the Cape of Good Hope on the *Président*, a ship of the French East India company, and landed in France. He arrived in London for the first time on 17 Julian = 27 August 1680 but later visited Paris on business. He returned to England in haste in the spring of 1681 (see Kroell, pp. 326-27, for a letter to his editor, François Charpentier, written at Dieppe on April 7). He maintained business interests in France and made at least one more trip, in October 1681, when he was involved in the liquidation of Raisin's estate; the latter had died at Bandar-e 'Abbās earlier that year. He was, however, to spend most of the remainder of his life in England. There Chardin was knighted by King Charles II, either for services rendered to the East Indian Company, or, it has been argued, for money (L. Hunt, *The Old Court Suburb*, London, 1855, I, p. 284), and on the same day married Esther de Lardinière Peigné, a Huguenot refugee from Rouen, by whom he was to have seven children. In 1682 he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. He subsequently spent some time in the Netherlands as a representative of the East India Company; in 1688 he was retained by Armenian merchants in London to help them reach an agreement with the company for carrying on trade in Asia (Ferrier). For the rest of his life Chardin continued to pursue his business interests (see, e.g., Kroell, pp. 309-10, 332-37) while preparing his *Voyages* for the press.

Published works. Chardin's works can be divided schematically between the diaries of his journeys and residence in Persia and books of general description and history; nevertheless, excursions on general topics also occur in the diaries, and there are personal reminiscences in the general works. A certain amount of extraneous material, including an account of the French



East India company's activities in Japan, has crept into the diaries. They are also poorly organized at certain points, which may be the fault of Charpentier. Chardin was somewhat defensive about his own French prose style (*Voyages*, I, p. xxix-xxx), and Charpentier's death in 1703 may also explain why some of Chardin's work remained unpublished.

1. In the interval between his two long sojourns in the East Chardin published *Le couronnement de Soleïmaan troisième, roy de Perse, et ce qui s'est passé de plus mémorable dans les deux premières années de son règne* (C. Barbin, duodecimo, Paris, 1671). An anonymous English translation, *The Coronation of Solyman III, the Present King of Persia*, was appended to the 1686 edition of his *Travels* (see 2, below). An anonymous German translation, *Beschreibung der Krönung Soleimanni des dritten dieses Nahmens . . .*, was appended to a German translation of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier's travels, *Beschreibung der sechs Reisen . . .* (J. H. Widerhold, folio, Geneva, 1681); it is occasionally found bound independently. The French text was republished in the 1735 edition of *Voyages* (IV, pp. 204-324) and in Langlès's edition (IX, pp. 377-573; X, pp. 1-140). The original French edition was reproduced in facsimile on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the coronation of Reżā Shah (Tehran, 1355 Š./1976) in the Pahlavi Commemorative Reprint series as *Tājgoḏārī-e Solaymān*. Finally, there have been two Persian translations, *Šarḥ-e tājgoḏārī-e Šāh Solaymān Šafawī wa waqāye'-e do sāl-e ba'd* by 'Alī-Reżā Amīr(-e) Tūmān Motarjem-al-Saltāna (Tehran, 1331/1913) and *Tājgoḏārī-e Šāh Solaymān*, published as volume IX of Moḥammad Moḥammadlū 'Abbāsī's translation of the entire *Voyages* (Amīr Kabīr Publishing Co., Tehran, 1345 Š./1966; see 3, below).

2. Chardin's second work, his account of the first part of his second voyage, *Journal du voyage du chevalier Chardin en Perse et aux Indes orientales, par la Mer Noire et par la Colchide. Première partie, qui contient le voyage de Paris à Isfahan* (M. Pitt, folio, London, 1686), was published after he had settled in England, concurrently with an English translation, *The Travels of Sir John Chardin into Persia and the East Indies. The First Volume, Containing The Author's Yoyage from Paris to Ispahan*, overseen and corrected by the author himself (Pitt, folio). Sheets from this translation were provided with a new (cancel) title page and republished by C. Bateman in 1691. Both the French and the English editions have been reissued on microfilm in the series "English books 1641-1700" by University Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Mich. The French version was republished twice in Amsterdam in 1686: as *Journal du voiage* by J. Volters and T. Haring in duodecimo and by A. Wolfgangh (2nd rev. and corr.



ed.), also in duodecimo. In 1687 it was republished in two octavo volumes by T. Amaulry in Lyons, with a marginal commentary that Chardin disavowed as being arbitrary and contradictory (*Voyages* I, p. xli). Also in 1687 a German translation, *Des vortrefflichen Ritters Chardin . . . curieuse Persien- and Ost-Indische Reisebeschreibung* (J. F. Gleditsch, octavo gathered in 8s and 4s, Leipzig; micropublished as no. 2648.1 on reel 172 in “Goldsmith’s-Kress Library of Economic Literature,” New Haven, Ct., 1974), and a Dutch version, *Dagverhaal der reis van den Ridder Chardyn na Persien en Oost-Indien* (Sander van de Jouwer, quarto, Amsterdam), appeared.

3. Three more volumes of the original *Journal du voyage* were planned, but it was not until 1711 that most of the promised material finally appeared, as part of a new edition of *Voyages de monsieur le chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l’orient* (J. L. de Lorme, Amsterdam), which was published in both a three-volume quarto and a ten-volume duodecimo set from the same type. The first volume of the three-volume edition consisted of a considerably enlarged version of the *Journal*, with significant interpolations, including the full text of Chardin’s translation of Father Giuseppe Maria Zampi’s “Relation de la religion des Mingréliens” (1811 *Voyages* I, pp. 192-325) and, most important, his diary of events in Isfahan in the second half of 1084/1673 (III, pp. 13-256). The second volume contains four general works: “Description générale de la Perse” (III, pp. 255-464; IV, pp. 1-187), “Des sciences et des arts libéraux de la Perse” (IV, pp. 188-464; V, pp. 1-204), “Du gouvernement politique, militaire et civil des Persans” (V, pp. 205-500; VI, pp. 1-164), and “De la religion des Persans” (VI, pp. 165-496; VII, pp. 1-270). The third volume contains “Une description de la ville d’Ispahan, capitale de Perse” (VII, pp. 271-492; VIII, pp. 1-143), “Premier voyage de l’auteur à Bander Abassi . . .” (VII, pp. 171-519; IX, pp. 1-91), and “Second voyage de l’auteur, d’Ispahan à Bander Abassi . . .” (IX, pp. 93-376). In the ten-volume set each of the seven enumerated works appeared as a separate volume, and the first volume of the three-volume set was divided into three separate volumes: “Voyage de Paris à Mingrèlie” (1811 *Voyages*, I, pp. 1-332) and “Voyage de Mingrèlie à Tabriz” (I, pp. 353-452, II, pp. 1-350), and “Voyage de Tabriz à Ispahan” (II, pp. 350-472; III, pp. 1-254). The ten-volume duodecimo format was retained in subsequent editions of *Voyages* published in 1723 by C. Ferrand in Rouen and in the same year by J. B. Mazuel, P. M. Huart the elder, and André Cailleau in Paris, all from a single new typesetting but with the same pagination as the Amsterdam edition.

In 1720 the English publisher J. Smith brought out the first two volumes of a



proposed eight-volume translation of the new material in these eighteenth-century editions, as a continuation of the 1686 translation of the *Journal* (see 2, above); the first volume included Chardin's diary of events in the second half of 1673, the second his general description of Persia. The bibliographical history of this work is too complex to repeat here, but essentially the same material was published with three different title pages (*Sir John Chardin's Travels in Persia . . .*, *A New Collection of Voyages and Travels*, and *A New and Accurate Description of Persian and other Eastern Nations*); the remaining six volumes never appeared. The version under the first title was reprinted in London by Argonaut Press in 1927, with a valuable preface by N. M. Penzer, in which the entire publishing history of the work is described in detail. This edition was itself reprinted in 1972 by AMS Press in New York and, in reduced format, in 1988 by Dover Press in New York. There has been no subsequent translation of any other part of the work, and thus considerably less than half the original is available in English, much less in German and Dutch. Although the accuracy of these translations has not yet been thoroughly investigated, some mistranslations in the English version have been noted.

Apparently in order to allow for its sale in Roman Catholic countries the original publisher, de Lorme, had suppressed several passages in Chardin's manuscript that might have aroused the wrath of the authorities; he also omitted, perhaps from haste, several that do not seem to fit into that category. All these passages, most of them brief, were reintegrated, in brackets, in the first complete edition of Chardin's published work, *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l'Orient . . . Nouvelle édition, augmentée du Couronnement de Soliman III et d'un grand nombre de passages tirés du manuscrit de l'auteur qui ne se trouvent point dans les éditions précédentes . . .* (4 vols., Aux dépenses de la compagnie [i.e., the Dutch East India company], quarto, Amsterdam, 1735; available on microfiche from Inter-Documentation Company AG, Zug, Switzerland). The passages have been listed by Emerson (pp. 286-90), with identification by their opening and closing words and accompanied by the volume and page numbers where they were omitted in the three- and ten-volume editions of 1711, as well as those where they were inserted in the 1735 and 1811 editions. According to both Penzer and Langlès, there were many misprints and some omissions in the 1735 edition, and for this and other reasons Langlès undertook what has now become the standard version (including *Couronnement de Soleïmaan*): *Voyages du chevalier Chardin en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient . . . Nouvelle édition, soigneusement conférée sur les trois éditions originales, augmentée . . . de notes, etc. . .* (10 vols., Le



Normant, octavo, plus atlas, folio, Paris, 1811). It was nicely produced on excellent paper with only a small amount of text on each page, so that the work seems much longer than it actually is; the 132 plates, which in earlier editions had been distributed throughout the text and often folded several times, were conveniently grouped in large format in a separate atlas. These plates, originally engraved from drawings by the French artist Guillaume-Joseph Grelot, who had accompanied Chardin on part of his second voyage, and re-engraved for later editions, illustrate mainly buildings, architectural features, and city views. They are attractive and give a reasonably accurate impression of their subjects (though the city views are clearly rather generalized) but are deficient in details of the surface decoration on buildings. More than a quarter of them are devoted to Isfahan and Persepolis. Langlès's edition reproduces all the significant prefatory material from earlier editions and includes copious annotations and an index, both of which are helpful, though the index could have been far more detailed. The original 1711 division into ten volumes, as has been noted, was not preserved.

All subsequent editions or reprintings of Chardin's work in French consist of work extracts, for example, those included in Jean François de la Haye, ed., *Abrégé de l'histoire générale des voyages* . . . XXVII, Paris, 1780, pp. 93-523; Albert Montemont, ed., *Bibliothèque universelle des voyages* XXXI, Paris, 1836, pp. 168-237; A. Duponcel, ed., *Nouvelle bibliothèque des voyages anciens et modernes* X, Paris, 1841 (not examined); and George Mantoux, ed., *Les voyages de Jean Chardin* . . . , 2 vols., Paris, 1883 (not examined). *Voyages en Perse* (textes choisis et présentés par Claude Gaubon, Paris, 1965) consists of extracts from volumes III and IX of Langlès's edition; a version with the same title published in Tehran in 1350 Š./1971 is probably a reprinting of Gaubon's edition, for the introduction is by him and the pagination very similar. *Voyage en Perse et aux Indes Orientales*, with a biographical and literary notice by Alfred Ernst (Paris, 1894, eighteenmo), has only 36 pages. Finally, there is Yerasimos' recent partial edition (cited above). English extracts or summaries are included in John Harris, *Navigantium atque Itinerantium Bibliotheca* . . . II (three editions, London, 1705-64), largely reprinted in John Pinkerton, *A General Collection of Voyages and Travels* IX (London, 1811). Other versions are *A New Collection of Voyages, Discoveries and Travels*, VI (London, 1767; not examined) and *The World Displayed* XV-XVI (London, 1767-68; not examined).

'Abbāsī's Persian translation, based on both the 1711 Amsterdam and the 1811 Langlès edition, was printed between 1335 Š./1956 and 1345 Š./1966 (*Rāhnemā-*



ye *ketāb* 9/3, 1345 Š./1966, p. 334). A second printing of the first four volumes, with identical pagination and apparently with no significant changes, appeared in 1349-50 Š./1970-71. Although this edition follows the general scheme of the work, it omits several chapters of the general description of Persia, the entire description of the Persian religion (and thus Chardin's comments on Persian material that he had translated), and most seriously, the accounts of his two journeys to Bandar-e 'Abbās. The style of the translation was described by Īraj Afšār as "smooth and eloquent," but the massive annotation (which creates two volumes out of the description of arts and sciences, for example) was severely criticized for its irrelevance, inaccuracy, and plagiarism (*Rāhnemā-ye ketāb* (2/3, 1338 Š./1959, pp. 381-86; further comments 9/2, 1345 Š./1966, p. 206, and 9/3, 1345 Š./1966, p. 334, where the index vol. X is dismissed as virtually useless; the translator's reply is found in 4/7, 1340 Š./1961, p. 587).

Chardin's description of Isfahan was first translated by Mīr Sayyed 'Alī b. Moḥammad-Bāqer Ḥosaynī Janāb Eṣfahānī in the only published volume of *al-Eṣfahān* (Isfahan, 1343 = 1303-04 Š./1924-25), in the form of a long continuous footnote taking up about one third of each page between pages 106 and 238. It has not been possible to check the completeness or accuracy of this translation. Another version of the same text, *Safar-nāma-ye Šārdan dar qesmat-e Eṣfahān*, was brought out in Tehran in 1330 Š./1951 and reprinted with minor additions as *Safar nāma-ye Šārdan, baḵš-e Eṣfahān* (Tehran, 1362 Š./1983). Īraj Afšār (*Rāhnemā-ye ketāb* 2/3, 1338 Š./1959, p. 382 n.) gave the translator's name as Ḥosayn Orayzī, but elsewhere (Mošār, *Fehrest*, col. 1995), he is listed as Abu'l-Qāsem b. 'Alī-Aṣḡar Orayzī. The material on Isfahan is also included in Volume VII of 'Abbāsī's translation. A Georgian translation by M. Mgaloblišvili (Mgaloblishvili) of the information about Georgia, with a long introduction, was published in Tbilisi in 1975 as *Žan Šardenis mogzašvoba Sparseṭ'ia da aḡmosavleṭ'is sxva' Kveqnebši* (Russian title: *Puteshestvie Zhana Shardenia v Persiyu i drugie strany Vostoka*).

Unpublished materials. A great deal of the material to which Chardin referred in his prefaces to the 1671 *Couronnement*, the 1686 *Journal*, and the 1711 *Voyages* (IX, pp. 392; I, pp. xxvii, xliv) remained unpublished. In 1711 he mentioned works entitled "Notes sur divers endroits de l'Ecriture-Sainte," based on his Asian experiences; "Géographie persane"; and "Abrégé de l'histoire de Perse tiré des auteurs persans." Sometime in the 1770s the six-volume manuscript of the first work was borrowed by the biblical



commentator Thomas Harmer from Sir Philip Musgrave, Chardin's grandson. It consisted mainly of rough notes in French, some of which were used by Harmer to amplify the second edition of his *Observations on Divers Passages of Scripture* (3 vols., London, 1776). A brief glance at this work reveals one or two passages of considerable interest (e.g., on nomads; 4th ed., I, London, 1797, pp. 122-27). Harmer returned the volumes to Sir Philip, and it has not been possible to discover what happened to them after that.

According to Langelès (*Voyages* I, p. xlv n.), the "Géographie" was probably a translation of Mostawfī's *Nozhat al-qolūb*. It is difficult to believe, however, that Chardin would not also have incorporated information from other authors, as well as his own observations; at one point (III, p. 267) he referred to "géographes persans." Parts of the opening chapters of his "Description générale" read as if some of this material had been incorporated in a rather disorganized way, which may explain some extraordinary errors, for example, the statements that Persia had very few earthquakes (contradicted by information about specific earthquakes elsewhere in the text, e.g., II, p. 398; III, pp. 133-34) and that the population of the country was 40 million (III, pp. 285, 267).

Chardin had begun his "Abrégé" in 1671 as the preface to his translation of a historical work by Mīrzā Moḥammad Šafī', a *monajjem-bāšī* (court astronomer) who had been given a pension by 'Abbās II in order that he might write a history of Persia to the death of 'Abbās I (r. 996-1038/1588-1629; *Voyages* IX, pp. 393-94). Mīrzā Moḥammad appears to have been a *sayyed* (descendant of the Prophet Moḥammad) from Māzandarān, who had risen from *mošref* (inspector) of the *kāšša* (private) gardens to superintendent of the *mawqūfat* (endowments), from which post he was dismissed by the *šadr* (chief religious official) Mīrzā Maḥdī (Našrābādī, p. 71). Chardin had sought out Mīrzā Moḥammad and acquired information to continue the history to the end of Rabī' I 1080/August 1669. It was the most recent part of this information that he published as *Couronnement de Soleïmaan* (IX, pp. 393-94), but in his later prefaces (I, pp. xxviii, xxxvii) he referred to the book as an eyewitness account, thus slighting the contribution of Mīrzā Moḥammad.

The most significant of Chardin's lost manuscripts were probably his diaries for 1676 and 1677. They and the diaries for 1675 were described in the preface to the 1686 *Journal* as forming part of the fourth volume of that edition, which never appeared; they were not mentioned in the preface to the 1711 *Voyages*. Those for 1675 covered his residence in Qazvīn and his second journey to



Bandar-e 'Abbās and have been at least partly published. That Chardin kept a diary of his second journey to the East is certain, for he sent to Cosimo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany, at least three excerpts (Kroell, pp. 311, 317, 322) that might supplement the information in the *Voyages*; unfortunately, none of them has been located. In addition, no journals from the first voyage were ever published; although Chardin apparently never mentioned such journals, it would be surprising, in view of his general industry, if he had kept none. That he had already collected a considerable amount of material by the end of that journey is apparent from the preface to *Couronnement* (IX, pp. 392-93); most of it can be recognized in his later publications.

At some time in the 19th century the omnivorous collector Sir Thomas Phillips acquired fourteen volumes of Chardin's papers; after his death they were sold in 1899 (Munby, p. 61) and came into the hands of the London booksellers Bernard Quaritch of Grafton Street. They were sold again in 1912, but no record of the purchaser was kept. There was, however, a list of the contents (Emerson, pp. 104, 291-92), which showed them to consist of commercial and other correspondence, mostly in French, dated between 1684 and 1718 and hence of great value for any future study of Chardin. In addition, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, is preserved (Nouvelles acquisitions françaises [N.a.f.] 7485, fols. 26a-84b) the text of Chardin's reply, written in 1680, to questions put to him by the French traveler Cabart de Villarmont [Villermont] about the drugs, plants, and commerce of Asia, in particular Persia; some of the language is reproduced in the *Voyages*.

The value of Chardin's contributions. European travelers to the Middle East have generally received a very bad press in Western scholarship in the postcolonial era. They have tended to be lumped together and accused of a variety of sins, including arrogance, prejudice, isolation, and ignorance of every kind, from the historical and cultural background to the language. In reality travelers are very different from each other in the knowledge, understanding, sympathy, and judgment they bring to bear on a particular society, the time they spend there, their grasp of the language in all its forms, their energy in penetrating it and opportunity to make contacts in the time they spend there, and then their diligence and conscientiousness in writing about their experiences. A long overdue appreciation in the West of the much greater importance of indigenous extraneous sources should not skew the balance wholly against the latter; they can be used to control native materials and in a surprising number of instances provide information on subjects



about which local sources are silent. Travelers in the 17th century in particular, increasingly “modern” individuals, but without the growing sense of superiority of the 19th-century traveler, traveling to Persia in the context of a balance (though a rapidly shifting, one) of political, economic, and cultural power, could meet Persians—perhaps for the last time until very recently—as psychological equals.

Chardin was the epitome of such a traveler. Although he was not fully conversant with all aspects of Persian life and was most interested in economic and political issues, his information on Safavid Persia outranks that of all other Western writers in range, depth, accuracy, and judiciousness. Unfortunately, scholarship on the Safavid period has not yet developed to a point that would permit a comprehensive evaluation of his work; in particular, Persian sources for the reign of Shah Solaymān (originally crowned as Ṣafī II; r. 1077-1105/1666-94) that could be used to control Chardin’s diary of events at his court are few.

The accounts of most travelers to Persia are valuable for primary evidence on the routes that they took—alignment, the length of each stage, the buildings noted (e.g., bridges, causeways, caravansaries), the settlements passed through, numbers of caravans and road guards encountered, and sometimes conversations with natives. Chardin provided such information too, especially on routes from the Black Sea to Isfahan and from Isfahan to Bandar-e ‘Abbās, but he went much farther in his detailed descriptions of buildings or encounters (see Emerson, pp. 118-285). He was also the most consistent in his attempts to estimate the sizes of places through which he passed, usually in terms of the numbers of houses but sometimes also in terms of the numbers of people; he may have made a practice of counting houses himself, for on one occasion he noted that he was reporting a figure from hearsay, having not been able to do the counting himself (II, p. 417). Among the places whose size he estimated are Erevan, Nakjavān, Marand, Tabriz, Zanjān, Solṭānīya, Abhār, Farsājīn, Qazvīn, Qomand, Kāšān (II, pp. 161-63, 297, 317, 321, 374, 376-77, 383, 387-88, 417, 461-63), Shiraz, Lār, Johrom, and Bandar-e ‘Abbās (VII, pp. 273-74, VIII, pp. 435-36, 465, 480, 508). Isfahan had 29,500 houses inside the walls and 8,780 outside (VII, pp. 273-74).

Together with the books of general description, then, the encyclopedic nature of his work thus easily takes precedence over its aspect as a travel account. Most of what is known about his methods, sources, and attitude toward his subject must be deduced from his own words, as few sources of independent



information on him and his experience have so far emerged. Yerasimos (pp. 24-29) has found two accounts (both, however, by Roman Catholics), which, though not impugning Chardin's knowledge or veracity about Persia, do show him behaving in a very high-handed manner: One of these is translated from a note in *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (I, 1939, p. 442 n. 9); the other is in the account of the Venetian Ambrogio Bembo.

Wide reading in the *Voyages* reveals the range of Chardin's knowledge and insight; he was a generally reliable witness, despite the occasions on which he was clearly mistaken or exaggerating. His description of most of his routes can be checked against the accounts of numerous other contemporary travelers, particularly Jean-Baptists Tavernier and Jean de Thévenot. Furthermore, whenever an important Persian text on a particular topic is available (e.g., on government, *Taḍkerat al-molūk*, ed. Minorsky, pp. 7-9, 110ff.), it confirms not only the general accuracy of Chardin's reports but also its usefulness in clarifying and supplementing that text. In fact, Vladimir Minorsky remarked (*Taḍkerat al-molūk*, p. 7) "were it not for the question of space, one would incorporate whole pages of Chardin's work."

When Chardin had his first audience with 'Abbās II in 1077/1666 he had to use the services of an interpreter, though he does not specify whether Persian or Turkish was spoken (III, p. 196); it was apparently not long, however, before he was able to understand and converse in Persian and to read and write it as well. In the 1686 preface he claimed to speak Persian as well as he spoke his native French, but in the 1711 preface he claimed to speak Persian as easily as English and almost as easily as French (I, pp. xxix, xxxix). Judging from his written communications his command of spoken English may, however, have left something to be desired (Kroell, pp. 332-35 letters X-XI). Throughout his work Chardin transliterated many Persian words into Latin characters; what they may reveal about his knowledge of the language and even perhaps the pronunciation of Persian in the 11th/17th century is worthy of further investigation. There is also a great deal of material that was translated from Persian into French, including most of his description of religion; astrological tables; proverbs, fables, and poetry (*Voyages* V, pp. 4-116, 139-68; III, pp. 155-60, 249-52); and building inscriptions, especially from Kāšān, Qom, and Isfahan (e.g., II, pp. 419-20, 423-24, 427-33, 435, 436-50; VII, pp. 321, 326, 363, 377, 396). It seems impossible that he did not have a good grasp of the written language, even though he may have received help. He also held long conversations with



many Persians and conducted elaborate negotiations at court. He was apparently able to translate into Persian from English and French and at least once did so extemporaneously (III, pp. 44); on another occasion he made such a translation in writing under great pressure (III, pp. 203-11). He thus certainly knew the language well enough for his purposes, whether or not he was fluent in all its aspects. Many of the errors in his translations and etymologies reflect his imperfect knowledge of Arabic, which he acknowledged and regretted (IV, p. 238); for example, he confused *šarḥ* and *čerāḡ* (*cherac*), gave the verbal root of *nāẓer* (*nazir*) as *našarat* (*nesret*), and provided a strange explanation of *monajjem* (IV, pp. 208, 315; V, p. 344). As for Turkish, which he also claimed to know, there is only a small amount of supporting evidence (II, p. 386; IV, pp. 238, 241-42).

Chardin's profession gave him immediate access to the Safavid court, and his status as royal merchant under both 'Abbās II and Šafī II enabled him to move freely in ruling circles, which he was swift to exploit to both professional and intellectual advantage. For example, he had many dealings with the *nāẓer* (overseer) Najafqolī Beg, was acquainted with a certain *amīr šekārbāšī* (chief huntsman), and sold jewels to a *šadr-e mamālek* and his influential wife and to Prince Heraclius of Georgia (III, pl. 218; IX, pp. 323, 357-58). When he was unable to protect his interest in a bankruptcy case he asked the *nāẓer*'s deputy, Kōsrow Āqā, to act on his behalf (IX, p. 363). He also had contacts in the harem: He gave presents to the eunuchs and was asked to provide European clothes for the amusement of the women (IX, pp. 358, 368-69). He received letters from Georgia and from the court itself (IX, pp. 149, 370) and also had connections with such powerful people in the provinces as the governor of Erevan (II, pp. 194-99), Mīrzā Tāber, son of the vizier of Azarbaijan, the son of the khan of Ganja, and Tahmāsb Beg, son of the governor of Azarbaijan (II, pp. 335, 344-47, 350-60). He also was acquainted with members of the Armenian (e.g., II, p. 193) and Indian communities.

In the preface to the 1686 edition of his *Journal* Chardin claimed to have traveled all over Persia, from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf and to have visited the frontiers with Armenia, Iberia, Media, Arabia, and the Indus River, acquainting himself so well with new places that he believed himself able to recognize them instantly were he suddenly to be transported thither (I, p. xxix). From the evidence in *Voyages* it is not possible to confirm these statements fully, and it may be that he was exaggerating considerably. In his account of the first journey, apart from the travels and sojourns (e.g., at



Qazvīn) described in detail, other evidence places him in Māzandarān in 1077/1666 (III, p. 196; V, p. 223; IX, p. 413), Baṣra in 1076/1665 (V, pp. 319-20), the province of Kermān (“la Caramanie déserte”) at the end of Rajab 1088/August 1677 (VIII, p. 489), and Kermānšāh and “Babylone” (Baghdad?) at an uncertain date (V, p. 288). During the two years of the second voyage for which there are no records he may have followed the court on its travels and visited particular places on business or out of curiosity (I, p. xxviii). But there is no evidence that he saw, for example, Mašhad, Herat, or Sīstān.

The extent to which Chardin drew on sources other than his own experience cannot be satisfactorily determined. He published his work at a time when almost all the other important 17th-century travelers’ accounts of Persia had been or were being published. From scattered references throughout his work it appears that he had seen the accounts of Antonio de Gouveia, John Cartwright, Pietro della Valle, Sir Thomas Herbert, Adam Olearius, Tavernier, Pedro de Teixeira, François Bernier, and Thévenot, most of whom he cited in connection with their descriptions of Persepolis (e.g., II, pp. 330-31; III, p. 447; VII, pp. 284-85; VIII, pp. 293, 333, 339, 344-45, 410). In the preface to the *Couronnement* he stresses the inadequacy of previous accounts, but it is conceivable that, despite his scorn, they had an impact on his own work. He was also very friendly with Herbert de Jager, an agent for the Dutch East India company, with whom he began the process of exploring Isfahan in 1077/1666; de Jager drew up his own memoranda on the city (for his description of Persepolis, see Valentijn, bk. 5, pt. 1, pp. 221-24; see also [dutch-persian relations](#)). Chardin may well have learned much from him, but any evidence was probably lost when de Jager was shipwrecked in 1694. Chardin also knew well Raphaël du Mans, superior of the Capuchin mission in Isfahan from 1056/1646 to 1696, and at one point lodged with him (II, pp. 220-21; III, p. 26); du Mans’ own succinct and valuable account, *Estat de la Perse en 1660*, was not published until 1890. Many other travelers also learned from du Mans; some acknowledged it, some did not. Some of Chardin’s information is similar to that in du Mans’ work but may well have been arrived at independently (Emerson, pp. 114-17). He did, however, see a later and shorter work by du Mans (written in 1076/1665) that dealt primarily with the officers of the Persian court and central administration; a copy is in the Bibliothèque Nationale (ms. Français 6114), and, according to Francis Richard of the department of Oriental manuscripts (personal communication), Chardin frequently borrowed from it, sometimes almost word for word, for his own list of offices (V, pp. 341-79). There is a third work by du Mans, entitled “De Persia”



and written in 1684, in the Sloane Collection at the British Library, London. Chardin may have borrowed other material from these various works and could, of course, have learned a great deal in conversation.

Chardin apparently approached the preparation of his work with great seriousness. He claimed that he had gathered a great deal of material on his first voyage but still did not consider that he knew enough to publish a detailed account (I, p. xxxvii). On his second voyage he made every effort to enlarge his understanding, trying to learn everything about which Europeans might be curious (I, p. xxxviii). To help him with his description of Isfahan he asked two (unnamed) *mollās* to make detailed descriptions of each quarter, and he himself explored the city so intensively that he claimed to know it better than London or Paris, in both of which he had spent more time. He also claimed to have spent five years in India but claimed that his unfamiliarity with Sanskrit prevented him from penetrating deeply into Indian civilization and writing about it (I, p. xxx). Nor did he succumb to the temptation, resisted by few other travelers, to animadvert on the Ottoman empire.

An indication of the range of Chardin's knowledge and interests at the end of his life is provided by the sale catalogue of the "remains" of his library (*Bibliotheca Chardiniana*, bound with similar catalogues in the Beineke Rare Book Library, Yale University; a second entry in *National Union Catalog. Pre-1956 Imprints* CIV, p. 4 col. 2, is almost certainly a conflation of two separate cataloguing records and refers to the library of the 19th-century bibliophile Charles Chardin), which amounted to almost 1,000 volumes, principally Latin classics. It also included many books in French on a variety of subjects, some Greek works (most with Latin translations), relatively little in English, and some books in Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. There were only a few books in Arabic script, presumably in Persian, and at least two volumes of voyages.

Chardin's massive work, along with many other accounts of travel to exotic lands, contributed to formation of one of the great streams of European knowledge leading to what Paul Hazard called "la crise de la conscience européenne" (see esp. I, pp. 10-15, 24-25; cf. Chaybany; Bonnerot, 1988; Eshghi) and hence to the Enlightenment. Some of his ideas, for example, on the influence of climate on man, had a considerable impact, and his work was read and commented on favorably by a number of great 18th-century figures like Charles-Louis de Montesquieu, Edward Gibbon, Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and William Jones. Even the plot of a play, *Royal Mischief*, by Mrs.



Manley (London, 1696), was drawn from his Travels.

“De la religion des Persans,” though it contains a number of extracts from theological works, along with comments by Chardin, consists primarily of a translation of *Jāme‘-e ‘abbāsī* by Shaikh Bahā‘-al-Dīn ‘Āmelī and is thus of little value to modern scholars, who can consult numerous editions of the original work. In the 17th century, however, it provided Europeans with unique access to an important representative work of Shi‘ite theology. *Le couronnement de Soleïmaan* is full of important material, whether reported directly by Chardin or derived from Mīrzā Moḥammad; it could be used to write a history of the early years of Ṣafī II (Solaymān). The description of Isfahan is a mine of information and can serve as a point of departure for many kinds of research on the city, though it is stronger on the newer parts and less detailed on the outlying areas; it provides a particularly detailed description of what lay between the Masjed-e Jāme‘ and the Zāyandarūd, which is of great value for a toponymic and historical reconstruction of the area in the 11th/17th-century (see, e.g., Golombek and Holod, 1974; idem, 1979; Brown).

Chardin’s work has already been exploited for such subjects as general history (Braun; Luft; Lockhart; Savory), administrative history (Busse, Minorsky; Röhrborn), socioeconomic history (Emerson; Keyvani; Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant*; Rabino di Borgomale), urban history (Blunt; Brown; Lockhart), anthropology (Massé, *Croyances*; Wulff, *Crafts*), art and architecture (Bier; *Survey of Persian Art*; Wilber), education (Golschani), medicine (Elgood), and religion (Firby), and even for the history of the Georgian principalities along the Black Sea coast (Brosset; cf. Yerasimos, pp. 19-21), but much more information remains untapped. For example, Chardin reported details on such political and cultural issues as the factions at court after the deaths of Shah Ṣafī I (r. 1038-52/1629-42) and Shah ‘Abbās II, the role and institutions of the harem, the attitudes of the *mojtaheds*, popular sites of religious visitation, divination, magic, astrology, libraries, *madrāsas* (schools of religious law), the Islamization of Georgian manners (II, pp. 115-16; cf. p. 43), and the patronage of buildings, particularly in Isfahan. He was interested in agriculture and botany (III, pp. 288-304, 330-45; IV, p. 95-110), including techniques of fruit-tree cultivation (III, p. 341), and provided a comprehensive account of the location of mineral resources (III, pp. 352-57). Other economic information ranges from details of internal and foreign trade (e.g., II, pp. 400-01, 417; III, p. 6, X, p. 123) and commodity prices (e.g., III, p. 293; II, p. 329; VIII, p. 439) to critical assessments of techniques in such crafts as papermaking, bookbinding (IV, pp.



149-50), and gold work, where his own professional expertise lends particular weight to his remarks (IV, p. 151). Chardin's work is also a valuable source for the history of minorities in different parts of Persia, including Armenians (II, pp. 42, 76; III, pp. 119, 221-22, 234, 276; X, p. 137), Indians (VIII, pp. 225-26, 418, 508; V, p. 265; IX, pp. 19-21; X, pp. 22-28), and Jews (VIII, p. 508; II, p. 388; IX, p. 242; cf. Emerson, pp. 228-85; Schuster-Walser).

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