



## JENKINSON, ANTHONY

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**JENKINSON, ANTHONY** (b. Market Harborough, 8 October 1529, buried Holy Trinity Church, Teigh, 16 February 1611), merchant and traveler. His writings and his map ([Figure 1](#)), which are significant for the study of early Anglo-Russian relations, document England's earliest concerted efforts to establish commercial relations with Safavid Persia. Jenkinson views Persia through the lens of mercantile opportunities, and his descriptions of the political state of affairs and its geography, culture, and religion offer valuable, albeit brief observations.

*Life.* Little is known about his early life. Jenkinson was trained for a mercantile career and traveled extensively throughout Europe and eastern parts of the Mediterranean between 1546 and 1556. In 1553, he obtained a safe-conduct for trade in the Ottoman Empire from Solaymān II (r. 1520-66), the first documented case of Anglo-Ottoman trade. Against the backdrop of the Ottoman-Safavid conflict, Jenkinson witnessed the procession of Solaymān II into Aleppo, and composed a short, but vivid account of the sultan who then was on his way, "marching toward *Persia* against the Great Sophie" (Hakluyt, II, p. 112).

Jenkinson was appointed captain-general of the Muscovy Company, and on 12 May 1557 he set sail for Russia to obtain a safe-conduct from Tsar Ivan IV (r. 1547-84) to explore the Caspian Sea (q.v.) and beyond. The document was granted, and Jenkinson together with Richard Johnson, Robert Johnson, and an interpreter left Moscow for Bukhara (q.v.), where they arrived on 23 April 1558. Jenkinson noted that the Uzbek city, which belonged to the Šaybānid



khanate (1500-99; see [ABU'L-ḲAYR KHAN](#)), had been part of Timurid Iran (1370-1507) and that its inhabitants “doe now speake the *Persian* tongue” (Hakluyt, I, p. 331). His chief interest, however, was in the available opportunities for the vending of English goods and the establishment of commercial relations. He decided to pass through Safavid Persia (1501-1722) “to have seen the trade of that Countrey” (I, p. 333) on his way home. But because of the “great warres that did newly begin betwixt the *Sophie*, and the kings of *Tartaria*” (I, p. 333), he could not pursue his plans and retraced his steps back to Moscow from where he returned to London in 1560.

In May 1561, Jenkinson was dispatched again and arrived at Moscow in August 1561. This time he carried a letter from Queen Elizabeth I (r. 1558-1603), addressed to “the Great Sophie of Persia,” as the Muscovy Company had given him explicit instructions “to procure letters of privilege or safeconduct of the sayd Sophie or other princes” (Hakluyt, I, p. 342) for trade in these regions. Jenkinson suffered a long delay until he received the tsar’s permission to continue his journey into Persia, and he left Moscow on 27 April 1562 in the company of the Safavid ambassador. Jenkinson arrived at Shemakha, in the province of Šīrvān, on 18 August 1562, and the province’s governor-general Obdolowc an (see [‘ABDALLĀH KHAN b. ESKANDAR](#), 1532/33-98) richly entertained him. On 2 November 1562, Jenkinson arrived in Qazvin, the seat of Shah Ṭahmāsp (r. 1524-76). But the shah did not wish to jeopardize his recently concluded peace with the Ottoman Empire, so that Jenkinson was neither well received at court nor did he obtain the desired documents. Jenkinson remained in Qazvin over winter until 20 March 1563. He conferred with Indian merchants about the possibility of trading in spices, and on his return journey he obtained trading privileges from ‘Abdallāh Khān. From Moscow Jenkinson immediately sent three members of the Muscovy Company—among them Thomas Alcock (d. 1564)—to Persia on a second voyage, while he himself continued on to England, where he arrived in 1564.

Jenkinson returned to Russia twice more in 1566 and 1571, but he did not go back to Persia. In 1568 he married Judith Marshe, the daughter of John Marshe (1516-79), an original member of the Muscovy Company in 1555. Jenkinson was granted a coat of arms with a crest featuring a sea horse on 14 February 1569. His successful missions to Russia as a representative of the Muscovy Company between 1557 and 1571 allowed him to rise to prominence in the Elizabethan diplomatic and mercantile circles, and he was credited with having initiated England’s trade with Persia (see [GREAT BRITAIN ii.](#) and [vii.](#))



during his second journey between 1561 and 1564. Jenkinson remained active in business, and in 1577 he became a member of the Spanish Company. He spent the last years of his life in Ashton where he drew up his will on 13 November 1610.

*Safavid Persia.* Jenkinson wrote about his travels to Russia and Persia, and produced a map (Figure 1). The travelogues remained unnoticed by his contemporaries until Richard Hakluyt (ca. 1552-1616) incorporated them into his compendious *Principal Navigations*, whose first edition appeared in 1589. But the map was first published in 1562, with a dedication to his patron Henry Sidney (1529-86), Lord President of Wales (Keuning, p. 172). The original version was edited by Clement Adams (ca. 1519-87), engraved by Nicholas Reynolds, and probably printed in Antwerp (Appleby). The map was known in the Netherlands in three different versions, and one was included in the famous *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (Figure 1). Abraham Ortelius (1527-98) compiled this popular atlas, whose first edition appeared 1570 in Antwerp. Although Jenkinson's map is far from accurate according to modern cartographic criteria, the latitudes are nearly correct, and Jenkinson's itinerary is quite clearly represented (Keuning, pp. 174-75). The map's main merit lies in its contribution to the expansion of Elizabethan England's geographical knowledge of these eastern regions.

In his writings, Jenkinson succinctly described, with an eye for commerce and geography, his journeys to regions never before visited by English travelers. In broad strokes he sketched Persia and its borders to other nations. As a merchant he did not fail, of course, to list the commodities that he found at the caravan market in Bukhara (q.v.): “*Craska* [that is, water-colored coarse linen], woollen cloth, linen cloth, pide silkes, Argomacks [that is, horses] and slaves” (Hakluyt, I, p. 332). Jenkinson was shrewd in his interactions with the shah. When the shah asked whom among “the Emperour of Almaine, King Philip, and the great Turke” he considered the most powerful player in the world, Jenkinson avoided any dispraise of the Ottoman sultan because of the “late concluded friendship” (Hakluyt, I, p. 349) between the Ottomans and the Safavids. Jenkinson's personal impression of Shah Ṭah-māsp was that he is “nothing valiant, although his power bee great” (I, p. 351); a quality Jenkinson found confirmed when the Ottoman sultan invaded much of Persia and forced the shah to retreat. Jenkinson considered the Persians in general “comely and of good complexion,” though he disapproved of them for being “proude and of good courage, esteeming themselves to bee best of all nations, both for their



religion and holiness, which is most erroneous” (I, p. 351).

The Portuguese courier António Tenreiro (fl. 1520s) had already noted the difference between Sunni and Shi‘i Islam (Lockhard, p. 381), but it was Anthony Jenkinson who first familiarized English readers with this distinction. Equally important, Jenkinson’s successful acquisition of a safe-conduct from ‘Abdallāh Khan protected English traders from misbehavior, extortion, and misappropriation and thus prepared the way for England’s future trade with Safavid Persia.

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