



Tavernier, Jean-Baptiste

Tavernier, Jean-Baptiste Careri Careri (b. Paris, 1605; d. Smolensk, Russia, 1689), jeweler, merchant, and traveler who undertook six journeys to Asia over forty years and published several books, of which the *Six Voyages* is the best known (EJMIATSIN). He passed Halicarcara on 7 March 1655 while returning from Persia (*Voyages I*, p. 22).

Fifth journey. Tavernier left Paris in February 1657, carrying gemstones. He was in the company of the Baron d'Ardilliere and two sons of Thibaut, mayor of Middelbourg (*Voyages I*, pp. 216-17). In 1659 he was at Golconda ("Relation du serrail ...," in *Recueil de plusieurs*, 1679). He was still there on 21 December 1660 and wrote from there to his brother (Richard, I, p. 47). In December 1661, he was at Batavia (*Dagh register...*, anno 1661). On 25 March 1662 he wrote from the lazaret in Venice to P. Valentin d'Angers (Richard, I, p. 137): "I was at Isfahan in 1662 ..." (*Voyages I*, p. 476), which can only mean a stay there at the very beginning of the year. On 18 August 1662, in Paris, Thomas Cletscher, acting in the name of his father Thomas Cletscher, a well-known lapidary and mayor of The Hague, entrusted to Tavernier "before his departure on the journey to Persia, the Indies, and other locations outside the kingdom" merchandise valued at 23,950 florins (Archives nationales, Minutier central, VIII, pièce 699, 6 August 662). Tavernier married Madeleine Goisse, daughter of the diamond-cutter Jean Goisse who had rendered "several services" to Tavernier and Elisabeth Pittan; Melchior Tavernier, brother of Jean-Baptiste, had married a Miss Pittan (Daulier).

Sixth journey. Tavernier left Paris on 27 November 1663, along with "eight of



my people of different professions who might prove useful to me,” including his wife and his nephew Pierre Tavernier, “ten or eleven years old” (*Voyages* I, pp. 104, 229). According to [André Daulier Deslandes](#), these were goldsmiths, diamond-cutters, watchmakers, “and a surgeon, all co-religionists [Calvinists] except a single Catholic,” namely Daulier Deslandes. They carried with them “four hundred thousand livres’ worth” of gems, goldwork, etc. (*Voyages* I, p. 229; Daulier). They left Marseille on 10 January 1664; at a stopover in Monaco, Tavernier was received by the princess in the prince’s absence. Then at Pisa, he met the grand duke of Tuscany, whom he regaled at great length with his journeys to the Orient. The group arrived at Smyrna on 24 April 1664 and stayed there until 9 June (*Voyages* I, p. 239). Mme Tavernier left her husband, probably at Smyrna. She returned to France to report to President Lamoignon, with whom Tavernier subsequently deposited all the money earned in the Orient (*Revue rétrospective*; 1833, pp. 90-92; *Voyages* II, p. 32). The group left Smyrna on 9 June 1664 and reached Isfahan in December 1664, “for the sixth time” concerning Tavernier (*Voyages* I, pp. 240, 421; Richard, I, pp. 64, 153). Tavernier was received by the shah during this stay. He was in Shirvan in 1665 (*Voyages* I, p. 320). He left Isfahan for India on 24 February 1665 (*Voyages* I, pp. 588-89; Richard, I, p. 156). He left Shiraz on 16 March 1665 (*Voyages* I, p. 602). He breezed through Bandar ‘Abbās in April 1665 (Richard, I, p. 256) and was at Surat on 16 May 1665 (*Voyages* II, p. 329), a traveling salesman in India. He left Agra on 25 November 1665, accompanied by François Bernier, and by one Rachepot (*Voyages* II, p. 65). On 6 January 1666, Bernier and Tavernier separated after traveling together to India. On the way back, Tavernier was in Surat at the beginning of 1667 (*Voyages* II, p. 83). He was also in Bandar ‘Abbāsin 1667 (*Voyages* I, p. 631). He was in Isfahan on 6 Moḥarram 1078/3 July 1667 during the [Āšurā](#) and stayed there at least until 27 November 1667 (*Voyages* I, pp. 386, 477, 520; Richard, I, pp. 186-87, 214). He entrusted his nephew to the Capuchins in Tabriz so he could learn Armenian and Persian. On 12 February 1668, he was at Julfa. On 2 July 1668, he was present at “the entrance into Constantinople of the Sultana mother of the Great Lord, honored with the title the *Walida*” (*Recueil de plusieurs relations*, 1679, pp. 550–54). The second, fifth, and sixth journeys followed the same route: Smyrna, Tabriz, Isfahan (*Voyages* I, p. 216).

He returned to Paris on 6 December 1668. On 8 March 1669, Louis XIV had Tavernier paid 898,731 livres for diamonds, including “a large blue heart-shaped diamond cut in the Indian fashion weighing one hundred twelve and three sixteenths carats” (Archives nationales, O * 2816). This blue diamond is



very likely the Hope Diamond of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. (François Farges, pers. comm.). The sum paid by Louis XIV was gargantuan, attesting to the importance accorded to this purchase not only as a sign of luxury and prestige but also because great gems could be pledged and redeemed to support the royal treasury in times of war (Jestaz, pp. 181-92). Tavernier might have lowered the price of the Blue Diamond *volens nolens*, with the loss incurred representing the price he paid to be ennobled (Farges et al.). After sharing the profits of the journey with his associates, there remained to Tavernier 400,000 livres “not counting plenty of other *bonnes nippes*” (Daulier). Jean Pittan received from the king, for his part, 588,545 livres on 15 March 1669 for the diamonds purchased “from the appointed Balu [Basu?] captain returning from the Indies” (Bimbenet-Privat, p. 82). It is not clear what could have been the relationship between the two men. On 27 August 1670, Tavernier purchased for 43,000 *écus blancs* from Armand de Caumont, marquis de Montpouillan, son-in-law of the famous physician Theodore Turquet de Mayerne, the barony of Aubonne (Switzerland, Canton of Vaud, district of Morges), “a fine estate of cornfields, vineyards and pasture ...” (Martignier, p. 38; Trevor-Roper, p. 248).

Tavernier enjoyed great worldwide notoriety and had several conversations with Louis XIV, king of France. In 1672, a caravan including his nephew was hijacked near Nushar (region of Lake Van). In early 1673, Tavernier gave the notary Jacques Deharsu the responsibility of “commissaire receveur et renovateur des terriers et reconnaissances, censes, rentes et autres droits” of his barony of Aubonne and neighboring fiefs, a typical step of a property owner who wishes to earn the greatest possible return on his capital (Candaux). He still had correspondents in Persia in 1674 (*Voyages* I, p. 515). In June 1674, the poet and playwright Samuel Chappuzeau acknowledged a debt of Tavernier, amounting to 2000 livres, having been paid to him on several occasions, in accordance to a contract signed in Jean-Hermann Widerhold’s shop (Candaux), which could have been an honorarium paid to Tavernier’s literary collaborator. Tavernier achieved literary fame by publishing his various books between 1675 and 1681. In April 1675, he sent as a gift a copy of *Relation du serrail du Grand Seigneur* to the Council of Geneva with the notary Deharsu as his representative. Tavernier would have liked to go to Geneva to present the book himself but the king [Louis XIV] had ordered him “to work incessantly” on his accounts of Persia and the Indies, so he was in France writing *Les six voyages* (Candaux, pp. 18-23). The Petit Conseil de la République received Tavernier in October 1676. He was accompanied by



Deharsu and made a gift of his two quarto volumes of the *Six voyages*. On 12 Nov. 1677, Jean-Hermann Widerhold received “full permission, general and special” to publish Tavernier’s work in Germany (Candaux). In 1678, Tavernier served a writ on the widow of Jacques Simonnet, royal jeweler at Lyon. He wished to obtain from Kemels, a diamond merchant in Surat, the payment of various debts on which Mme Simonnet held the paper (Archives de Suède, Extranea 15). Mme Simonnet was the second wife of the jeweler Simonnet, but the first had been one Catherine Tavernier, who might have been a relative of Tavernier (Godefroy, pp. 238-39). In July 1679, he donated to the Council of Geneva a copy “of the journey to Japan which is the fourth of his books which he had presented here” (Candaux). The losses of money mentioned by the *Mercure galant* (February 1690, repr. by Bayle) and by Daulier Deslandes no doubt explain the sale on 8 May 1683 of a house he owned in Venice (Chauvard, p. 249). He entrusted his nephew Pierre to an Armenian from Julfa called Zacharia, with a “cargo of more than a hundred thousand livres in jewels and other merchandise”; he had partners in this enterprise. The nephew disappeared with the money before April 1684 (Daulier). On 6 December 1683, Tavernier informed Ezechiel Spanheim, the Paris representative of the Elector of Prussia, that he wished to enter into the service of this ruler, “no longer having any property in France, since the acquisition of the barony of Aubonne,” nor any future in view of the persecution of the Calvinists. He told him this in the strictest confidence (Berlin, *Repositur* XI, fol. 193). He left Paris on 19 April 1684 and reached Berlin on 30 June. The Elector wished “to establish in his States a trading company for the East Indies” (Daulier). The Elector made Tavernier his chamberlain, gentleman of the chamber, and designated him Admiraltätsrat by an act of 10 July 1684 (Joret, 1889, p. 267).

Tavernier left Berlin on 15 August 1684. He toured the major towns and the courts of northern Germany, the Netherlands, and western Germany, especially Heidelberg. The account of this trip was published for the first time in the *Six voyages* in 1713 at the end of the volume. Tavernier again passed by Bern and Aubonne and then returned to Paris (Joret, 1886, pp. 327, 340). On 17 February 1685, Mme Tavernier, who had been given power of attorney by her husband, sold the barony of Aubonne for 141,000 livres de France to Henry Du Quesne, son of the famous Abraham Du Quesne (Joret, 1886, pp. 400-402), apparently “for much less than it had cost” (Daulier). On 3 May 1685 he wrote to the Elector of Prussia that the formalities involved in selling Aubonne were keeping him in Paris (Joret, 1889, p. 269). On 8 July 1686, the king authorized



him to go “to Aubonne in Switzerland for three or four months to handle the affairs he had with le sieur du Quesne le fils on condition of putting up surety of 50,000 thousand livres against his return” (Archives nationales, O1 30, fol. 242v). On 26 June 1687, he met the minister of the king’s house and said that he had “in the hands of the sieur du Pille considerable property, which he would give as surety against his return” (Bibliothèque Nationale de France [BNF], MS Français 7052, fol. 125). The minister decided that he could be allowed to go, but Tavernier did not receive his passport until after 6 July 1687 (BNF, fols. 132v, 134).

Tavernier had no choice but to return to the Orient to earn his living. He had long been investigating the Moscow-Caspian-Persia route (*Voyages* I, pp. 243, 278, 281); so he decided “to go there by way of Moscow, because, he said, he had never yet gone that way” (Daulier). In fact, it was a travel taken due to very severe theologico-political persecution, his mistake of buying the barony of Aubonne, and the misdeeds of his nephew. He died at Smolensk in February 1689. Mme Tavernier died shortly after him in Hamburg. Tavernier’s secretary, Pipenpalm, had him buried in Smolensk and seized the papers and merchandise of his master (*Commercium epistolicum*). But the Armenian adventurer Sanis/Zagly (Villotte, pp. 465-67; Troebst, pp. 176-204), husband of Madame Tavernier’s sister, claimed them from Vienna where he lived. He sought the aid of the renowned German Ethiopicist Hion Ludolf, who wrote to Gottfried Leibniz. The estate amounted to “100,000 Gulden approximately” and 69,000 Reichsthaler. But “Nothing in writing, not a single note, no outstanding obligations, was found among the papers” (*Commercium epistolicum*, p. 75). Tavernier had an appointment in Moscow: “Le sieur Mat, the famous jeweler of France, has died while traveling from Aleppo to Moscow with the intention of there joining le sieur Tavernier; 270,000 livres worth of the possessions of this jeweler were found hidden in various invoices” (*Nouveau journal universel*, Amsterdam, no 17, 27 February 1690, pp. 66-67). An associate of Tavernier called Mercier died in the Indies in September 1689. He met Tavernier in Isfahan “where he received a great return,” from the profits made with the money that Tavernier had entrusted to him (*Mercure gallant*, February 1690, pp. 211-14). The death of Tavernier provided Duke Anton-Ulrich of Brunswick the opportunity to buy approximately 600 pieces of enamel that the merchant had purchased to import into the Orient (Uffenbach, pp. 333-34, 336).

According to Robert Challe (pp. 369-74), it was Tavernier who would have



given the Armenian Raphaël Ruply (Rupli) de Dinousy so favorable an impression of the French that Ruply would come to try his hand in France. The “persons of singular reputation, who by their travels did honor to our nation, who knew him [Ruply] himself and his family” (*Mémoires servans à l’éclaircissement des faits présentés à Sa Majesté ...*, p. 1), could have been Daulier Deslandes and Tavernier. But whether, relying on their well-placed connections, they also helped Ruply during his trial in 1675-78, which was ultimately decided in favor of Ruply by Louis XIV himself, remains a question. Whatever the case may be, this plausible conjecture is associated with certain established facts: The Armenian adventurer Sanis-Zagly had married Mme Tavernier’s sister, and Tavernier had associated his nephew with an Armenian. These facts converge to show a Tavernier who had entered into the world of the Armenians of Eurasia, which no doubt explains the wealth of details on Armenia, the Armenians, and their religious life in the *Voyages* (I, pp. 402–20).

TAVERNIER AS AN AUTHOR

Six voyages. Three sources provide information on Tavernier as author of the *Six voyages*: (1) The book by Pierre Jurieu (part II, p. 410); (2) the article “Tavernier” in Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique*, which reprints Samuel Chappuzeau’s, *Défense du sieur Samuel Chappuzeau*; (3) “one of the friends of the author; companion on his journeys,” namely André Daulier Deslandes, tells the life story of Tavernier in an “Avis au lecteur” at the front of the first volume of the *Six voyages*, in the edition published by Pierre Ribou. All three of these sources depict Tavernier as a man incapable of writing the *Six voyages*. He would have turned to the assistance of the author Samuel Chappuzeau and then of a certain La Chapelle, and this collaboration was supposedly broken off as the result of a conflict; Daulier Deslandes does not mention this dispute.

Charles Joret reopened the question in 1889. He had published his book on Tavernier in 1886, and [Charles Schefer](#), who had in his possession the manuscripts of the traveler, gave Joret access to them, and Joret published a major article in the *Revue de géographie* 1889. He held onto the idea of assistance provided for Tavernier by Chappuzeau. Joret had before his eyes the “material proof that Chappuzeau had not [...] written the tale of his journeys from the dictation of Tavernier, but that the latter had real memoirs, and all he had to do was to coordinate or reorganize them” (Joret, 1889, p. 163). It is difficult to determine what goes back to Chappuzeau or Tavernier



respectively. But whatever the case may have been, Tavernier was not served well by Chappuzeau. Tavernier's memoirs "needed to be coordinated and organized according to a methodical plan; this work was done, but incompletely; the itineraries of the six journeys were often reconstructed only in part, with the most unfortunate gaps found in them [...]. For example, precise sales accounts of the journeys kept by a careful merchant, those made up a part of the journal kept by Tavernier; nothing or almost nothing of that material is included in the published account and Chappuzeau made the mistake of incorporating far too little of them" (Joret, 1889, p. 168). It must also be noted that this evaluation by Joret remains the only one available on the question of the relationship between Tavernier and Chappuzeau (and La Chapelle) and on the gap between the manuscripts and the final publication. But it must be relied upon until the possible reappearance of Tavernier's manuscripts. It is also notable that the dispute between the author and his collaborators does not seem to have concerned more than the first edition of Tavernier's work since it has not been checked against others to see if there were any differences.

Unpublished materials. In 1692, Leibniz and Ludolf did not manage to preserve the "Documenta und Pretiosa" of Tavernier (*Commercium epistolicum*, pp. 66 ff., 75). Charles R. Boxer wrote enigmatically in 1985: "Many manuscripts written by him have survived," but says no more. At that time he had the letter from Smyrna of 1664, which was published by Ernest Hamy, or a copy of it.

Merits of Tavernier's writings. Six voyages. John Chardin wrote that Tavernier and Jean Thevenot borrowed from from Raphaël du Mans (Richard, I, p. 101). Francis Richard shows, moreover, that the *Relation de ce qui s'est passé dans la négociation des députés ...* was very likely also written by Father Raphaël du Mans, who had been able to confide in Tavernier "when he passed by Isfahan in 1667" (Richard, I, p. 72; idem, "Du Mans," in *Elr*). It is not, however, certain that these borrowings were indelicacies on the part of Chardin and Tavernier, because, quite apart from any possible personal unselfishness, Father Raphaël might have wished to publish his writings at a time when his status as a religious figure confined him to stability in Persia. He might have entrusted his notes or memoirs to traveling compatriots, giving them the responsibility of having them published in Europe. Note a similar situation indicated by William Crooke with respect to John Fryer: "From the parallel passages quoted in the notes to this edition there seems little doubt that Fryer must have read



Tavernier, particularly his account of Persia” (“Introduction” in Fryer, p. xxxix). Fryer was inspired by Tavernier or plagiarized him, and Tavernier was inspired by Raphaël du Mans; this traffic in texts deserves to be investigated more closely. Jean-Luc Arnaud has in turn established the remarkable fact that some illustrations from Tavernier’s books reappear in Chardin’s work (Arnaud, 2000). Valentine Ball exposed the faults in *Voyages* and suggested that the change of literary collaborator during the writing might have been responsible: “The chief faults in Tavernier’s encyclopedic volumes consist in a want of systematic arrangement of the subjects, a fuller and more carefully correlated chronology, and a reconciliation of really or apparently contradictory statements; such work, in short, as should have been done by the editors whom he employed, but which they appear to have either willfully shirked or omitted to recognize as a part of their duty” (Ball and Crooke edition, I, “Preface ...,” p. viii). The “want of systematic arrangement of the subjects” perhaps comes from the fact that Tavernier dictated the *Six voyages* in part, but it certainly comes from the fact that the author allowed himself to go into whatever digressions came to mind, examples of which are too numerous to cite. This certainly emerged from a concern for completeness but unfortunately gives the reader an impression of confusion.

The general appraisal of 1699-1700 by Gemelli Careri (III, p. 36) remains relevant: “As to Tavernier, it is not great news that he did not care to be a spectator, since in the end his trade was that of a jeweler and merchant, and thus he went only to those places where he hoped to obtain good earnings” (tr. Hester, p. 163). As stated by Klaus Kartunnen, “[Tavernier] has a straightforward style and makes no attempt to generalize or philosophize.”

Tavernier’s intellectual reputation has suffered from his shrugging off the ruins of Persepolis, where he had been “several times”: “There is nothing but some old columns, one upon another on the ground, and some very badly made figures, with dark little square rooms” (*Voyages* I, pp. 591-92). This judgment discredits Tavernier by comparison with Chardin.

The following two examples may be helpful in the attempt to evaluate the quality of Tavernier’s information. On 26 December 1672, Raphaël de Mans wrote to the superior of Foreign Missions in Paris: “For the coins of Persia, and of France and Holland, you have Mr. Tavernier, who knows the exchange rates better than anyone” (Richard, I, p. 248). The great care taken by Tavernier to enter into the detail of the materiality of coinage throughout the Orient, their alloys, and their relative rates, and the very large amount of space devoted to



these questions in the *Voyages* (e.g., the first 32 pages of *Voyages II*, with illustrations) as well as in the *Nouvelle relation de l'intérieur du sérail* ("On the different coinages in gold and silver, and the small coins in use in Turkey; with the history of the trade in five-sol pieces that has been abolished," 1679 ed., pp. 405-14), confirm the comment of Raphaël de Mans. Numerous supporting quotations lead us to think that Tavernier may have made part of his income and financed his major commercial operations by profiting from money-changing, with profits from that source having the advantage of requiring less transport of bulky and heavy merchandise. This same expertise allowed him to write a very good memoir (*Nouvelle relation de l'intérieur du sérail*, 1679, pp. 408-14) on the famous affair of the five-sou (sol) pieces, of the counterfeits with which some Frenchmen flooded the Orient (Longperier, pp. 593-614, 674-86). John Chardin is noticeably more reticent and less technical when he describes the same scam.

Another example concerns Prussian amber. Tavernier speaks of it because "amber is one of the best products that can be brought into China when commerce by foreigners is allowed, and the Dutch Company has especially monopolized trade in it, with the Chinese coming to buy it from them at Batavia" (*Voyages II*, p. 313). On the collection of amber, which was leased by the Elector of Prussia, on the surveillance of the Baltic coast, and on the punishments inflicted on unauthorized amber gatherers (*Voyages II*, p. 312) he gives information that agrees exactly with the regulations in the *Börnstein-Ordnung* of 1644. At Patnā [in July 1666, *Voyages II*, p. 373] he met four Armenians who had come from Danzig, "where they had had many figures made of yellow amber [...], which they were bringing to the king of Bhutan [...]" (*Voyages II*, p. 381). In fact, Ronald W. Ferrier notes that in 1664 Kṛvāja Nazareth and Kṛvāja Keriakos "returned from England to Surat" concerning the amber trade, a date compatible with their presence in Patnā in 1666 (Ferrier, p. 430, note 15; Borschberg, p. 188, n. 83).

René Voltaire wrote that "Tavernier spoke more to merchants than to philosophers and provides hardly any information on anything but the major roads and buying diamonds" (Voltaire, chap. CLVII, "Du Mogol"). This evaluation implicitly compares Tavernier to Chardin; it was left to Chardin to talk "to the philosophers." This is true, but it perhaps misses the point of Tavernier's undertaking. Voltaire overlooks or does not notice that detailed description of "major roads" was at that time a very considerable novelty. For instance, Nicolas de Khanikoff, who published his *Mémoire* in 1864, precisely



two centuries after Tavernier, was very careful to describe his itinerary, the distances traversed, and the latitudes and longitudes, and to include a very good history of the exploration of Iran and previous descriptions of the routes followed by travelers in a country where the maps remained unsatisfactory. An example from Khanikoff is the description of Adrien Dupré's itinerary (in 1807-9) between Shiraz and Yazd: it "is all the more interesting in that to this day he is the sole traveler who has described the direct route between these two towns." This detail about the roads of Iran and India and their difficulties serves to represent a confirmation of the remarks of H. W. Van Santen (1991), who stated that: "These references, few as they are, should make us aware of the fact that during the seventeenth century the old land route [between India and Iran, via Lahore and Kandahar] had not yet become negligible," and Tavernier had clearly registered his distaste for travel by sea, a factor leading him to think that he needed to provide his readers with ample information on the roads and the details of practical economy. This intention led him to describe matters of exchange rates and coinage, the roads, business done in Persia, India, and the Far East, and the transactions that would be possible, tariffs, the risks incurred, the innumerable practical hints for traveling salesmen; all this is precisely indicated by the full title of the *Six voyages*, a title which from this perspective appears to define a program, almost a contract between the writer and the reader. Tavernier thus could have wished to share with his readers what he knew and what separated him from Chardin: a sort of encyclopedia of commerce in the Orient, full of useful information, and enriched throughout with tales of recent history. The origin of these tales (Father Raphaël de Mans, other writers?) is just as difficult to sort out as in the case of Chardin; concerning this point, one may refer to the very noteworthy remarks of Soren Mentz (pp. 168-70) and John Emerson ("Chardin," in *EIr*). For instance, there is no good reason to doubt that there were long exchanges and a drinking contest between Tavernier and Shah 'Abbās II (*Voyages* I, pp. 441-57), since Daulier Deslandes describes the scene as well, with very few differences. It is not surprising that Tavernier tells the tragic story of Rodolf Stadler (*Voyages* I, pp. 487-94), one that no doubt vividly affected the other Europeans who witnessed it and also informed so precisely a big traveling salesman about the tribute paid each year by the "vizir" of Shiraz, and even about the change in the amount of tribute in 1667 (*Voyages* I, p. 484). Stadler, who had shot and killed an Iranian who had entered his house at night in 1637, was given the choice between either death or circumcision and conversion to Islam. He selected the former and died as a Christian martyr by the sword (King, p. 288; Schulthess) and buried in the Armenian burying-



ground of New Julfa in 1851 (Binning, II, p. 85)

Whatever the case may be, George Rothrock seems justified in presenting the *Six voyages* as “a Baedeker” of the seventeenth century, which even goes so far from time to time as to offer valuable medical information: for instance, at Erzerum “one is strongly susceptible to disorders of the eyes” (*Voyages* I, p. 18) and should stay there for as short a time as possible. Tavernier’s writings also contain the autobiography, scattered throughout, of an extremely successful businessman who goes so far as to admit, once in a while, to a few deceptions that he himself had to commit (*Voyages* I, p. 140). Should it be considered a keen sense of thrift, or rather greed, when he explains (*Voyages* II, p. 416) how to avoid pointless outlays, or even (pp. 448-49) that the funeral for his brother had been too expensive? Besides, he is not unaware of the links between geopolitics and business when he analyzes the subtle play between the Great Lord (the king of Persia) and the bey of Betlis (in the Kurdish area; *Voyages* I, p. 249), or when he notes regarding Macao the connections between economic matters and war pure and simple (*Voyages* II, p. 404).

In 1905, Sylvain Lévi considered that, “The description limned by Tavernier of traffic between India and Nepal is at once so picturesque, so precise, and so little different from the present state of the same traffic that it is useful to reproduce it almost in its entirety” (Lévi I, p. 93). Lévi adds, “We do not know [...], which to admire more in this long account, the skill Tavernier brought to his inquiry, the exactness and precision of his information, or his accuracy in reproducing the information he received. The sometimes contested credibility of the great traveler is reinforced by this test” (Lévi, I, p. 97). Lévi does not believe that a traveler absolutely had to have been in such-and-such a place in order to be trustworthy. He notices that an alert businessman could gather and evaluate, at a distance but nonetheless successfully, various data that confirmed each other; their accuracy determined his own survival.

Jean Deloche quotes this evaluation of Lévi’s and adds: “His [Tavernier’s] observations do not have the depth of [François] Bernier’s, the richness and interest of the descriptions by [Nicolao] Manucci, but they are invaluable for the study of the economic conditions of the country.” His information “... is much more precise than we could imagine. Because, his tale is not a compilation ... but rather a statement of itineraries that he had actually followed... He was the first European traveler to describe the route from Golkundā to Madrās by the valley of the Kadapa ..., and that from Masulipatam to Madras via Bezvādā (Ball and Crooke, I, [pp.] 207-15). A



judicious observer and savvy businessman, at Patnā he obtained specific details on trade between India and Tibet by way of Nepāl” (Deloche, pp. 58-60).

Concerning the *Voyages*, it seems reasonable to be satisfied with the evaluation of Edward Gibbon: “Tavernier, that rambling jeweller, who had read nothing, but had seen so much and so well” (Gibbon, IV, chap. XLVII). Philippe Rochard relies on *Voyages* (I, book 4) for his description of the training of the *šāṭer* (long distance courier) in the Persian urban gymnasiums (*zur-kāna*) stating, “The Persian sources are virtually silent with respect to the *shâter* and this seems reasonable: hardly any attention is paid to servants in the works of this period, as opposed to those of the travelers, who would describe anything that might appear exotic.” Thus, Tavernier remains a major source, especially (but not solely) regarding matters of business and trade in Persia and India, but with attention to the comments of Soren Mentz (pp. 168-70).

Relation du Tonkin. The case of this work by Tavernier is very different from that of the *Six voyages*, since a pair of specialists have examined very closely the doubts and the suspicions or even certainties of plagiarism that might have motivated this work by Tavernier (and other authors; for detailed account, see Dror and Taylor).

Nouvelle relation de l'intérieur du Sérail... Tavernier writes that he owed his information to a Sicilian renegade who had fled from the serail and settled in India, and a French renegade from Vienna, who was also supposed to have served in the serail (from 1650 to 1665), both of them charging him quite dearly for their “memoirs” (Amsterdam ed., van Someren, 1688, “Dessein de l’auteur,” unpaginated). Are these details a *captatio benevolentiae* intended to entice the reader, or merely a declaration of his sources, or both at the same time? As their dates are fairly close, only comparison of the *Nouvelle relation...* with the work of Ali Ufkî would allow us to appreciate the interest and value of Tavernier’s composition.

TAVERNIER IN HIS TIME

Physically, Tavernier was “subject to all sorts of fatigue” (Daulier). He had seen battle, and at the age of 84 he still had sufficient vigor to set out again for the Orient. He was “quick to anger, but [also] quick to recover [from his ire]” (Daulier). A “gruff spirit,” said Chappuzeau; “quite vulgar in manners and language,” according to Boileau, but these are the voices of a competitor on the



one hand and a Catholic on the other. He employed bodyguards: “three large valets, because he carried all his diamonds on his person in a leather belt, and he was not in the habit of letting them show” (Laverdet, p. 532). He was “unfashionable, but he knew how to live well and was never awkward in good company” (Daulier). Sturdiness, a sense of accomplishment and ease in society reflect a man directed above all toward a practical and acquisitive life. He liked to enhance his image by recounting his conversations with monarchs great and small of Europe and Asia, or dealings with them. He owned, for example, “a diamond ring on which were engraved the arms of the king of England” (*Voyages* I, pp. 438-39). There was in fact an item known as the *diamond seal* that had belonged to Charles I, and Bishop William Warburton’s letter (in John Nicholas) imagined that Charles might have sold it to Tavernier (Nichols, 1817, p. 108). Thus having been received by monarchs, Tavernier would emphasize until 1660 that he was an official (comptroller of the House) of Duke Gaston d’Orleans (1608-60), *Monsieur*, younger brother of Louis XIII (*Voyages* I, pp. 27, 29, 261-62, 453-54, and II, p. 422; *Recueil de plusieurs relations...*, 1679, p. 183). This office entitled him to major tax exemptions (Arrêt du Conseil of 14 March 1654). The duke d’Orleans thus intervened in his favor with Borel, ambassador of the États Généraux in France, to prevent his loss of a major sum in a trial in the Netherlands (*Recueil de plusieurs relations*, 1679, p. 257). This position made him be attentive to legal niceties, and so he distinguished the royal great seal and petit seal of Persia as he had done in France with the equivalents (*Voyages* I, pp. 428, 431). The daughter of Gaston d’Orleans, Marguerite-Louise, married Cosimo III de Medici, grand duke of Tuskany, in 1661. She introduced Tavernier to the grand duke, with whom Tavernier spoke of his travels and of the economy of the Orient. These conversations dealt not only with “culture of the court” (Tinguely), or with “assuaging aspirations of glory or romance” (Lauthelier, p. 879) on the part of readers by emphasizing that he was an intimate of the great ones of that world, but also mainly served to provide economic information to monarchs who constantly required it because it was essential to the increase of their power and its expansion.

Tavernier was a friend of Esprit Cabart de Villermont (1628-1707) “famous for the great voyages he had made to the Indies and the West” (*Recueil de plusieurs relations*, 1679, p. 178). Note that Cabart, in two items of his questionnaire, seeks to verify statements by Tavernier (Chardin, ed. Baghdiantz McCabe, pp. 123, 126, 172). He is connected to Jacques de Souvre (1600-70), grand prior of France of the order of Malta in 1667. He was a friend



of Philippe Sylvestre du Four (1622-85), a wealthy *mercator sapiens* from Lyon, who had wide personal connections, among them French consuls at Aleppo and Cairo, Guillaume de Lamoignon (1617-77), a distinguished member of the Society of the Holy Sacrament who, also once served as the president of the parliament. Tavernier knew François Bernier and seems to have also known Jean de Thevenot (1633-67), who died at Miāna; he “had collected several Persian and Arabic books, and the *qāzi* of Miana kept the best” (*Voyages* I, p. 63). Tavernier “never wanted to become Catholic” (Laverdet, pp. 520-21), but he visited all the Catholic religious of the Orient; for instance, he met the warden of the Franciscans, Msgr. de Mire, at Galata, and ran into him again at Goa (*Voyages* II, p. 118). At Agra, he spoke quite often with the Jesuit Thomas Barre (*Recueil de plusieurs relations*, 1679, p. 13). Even though he was an implacable Calvinist, he did not deny the sufferings inflicted on the Japanese Catholics for their faith: “Never has the [Catholic] Church suffered in so short a time a persecution so cruel” (*Recueil de plusieurs relations*, 1679, p. 23).

Born in 1605, Tavernier was much older than Jean Chardin, born in 1643. Tavernier had a case against Daniel Chardin, and then against his son Jean, a case that he may have won (Van der Cruysse, pp. 30, 281-85). Tavernier never attempted to pass himself off as a polyglot: “I had Father Raphaël say to the king ...” (*Voyages* I, pp. 423, 426, 444). He had a practical ability in languages: “Dutch was the most familiar to him. As for Italian, Frankish, Turkish, Portuguese, and baniane, he only knew enough to get by. But when it came to business [...], he used an intermediary, whom he almost always had with him, either an Armenian or a banian” (Daulier confirmed for Dutch by *Voyages* II, pp. 426-27). He had a fondness for precision machinery: firearms and clockwork, which brought him close to the many watchmakers who crisscrossed the Orient in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (*Voyages* I, pp. 141-42). Clockwork is connected to celestial mechanics, in which Tavernier was manifestly interested. David King showed that Tavernier borrowed from the *Ketāb al-aṭwāl wa-l-ʿorūḡ leʿl- Fors* a list of the latitudes and longitudes of several dozen towns in Iran (King, pp. 596-97; *Voyages* I, pp. 317-31). This information certainly came from Raphaël du Mans, who had found an excellent intermediary because Tavernier had brought from France a map published by his brother Melchior the cartographer (King, p. 318). We read in the introduction to the list that the towns are inventoried “according to the surveys of the geographers of those countries, who must know better than us the situations of the places” (*Voyages* I, p. 316). Thus, Tavernier did not scorn the geographic knowledge of the Persians; he thought that the Persians knew



better than foreigners for the simple reason that they were there, and that the West would do well to absorb their knowledge. Moreover, the comment could be useful to his brother Melchior in Paris as an argument in favor of the sale of his maps. Above and beyond this list, some latitudes and longitudes are indicated throughout, as in the case of Kars in *Voyages I*, p. 20, the same data for at least 12 other towns. One might suppose that Tavernier himself was able to collect these data, as Pietro Della Valle before him had determined the latitude of Lar (Della Valle, III, pp. 399-400; see also p. 18 of the “Corrections et notes” at the end of volume 1, Paris edition of 1713).

See also [FRANCE vii. FRENCH TRAVELERS IN PERSIA, 1600-1730](#).

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