The Constructions of the East in Western Travel Narratives, 1200 CE to 1800 CE

This book investigates how the idea of the ‘east’ emerged in western travel narratives between the 13th and the 18th centuries. Sifting through critical travel narratives – real and imagined – it locates the changing geography as well as the perceptions surrounding India. The author presents how historical stereotypes interacted with a burgeoning demand for travelogues during this period and have fed into the way we think about Asia in general, and India in particular. From the mythical travels of Prester John to the enigmatic ‘adventures’ of Marco Polo, from the fraught voyages of Johannes Plano de Carpini to the missionary zeal of Friar Odoric of Pordenone and William of Rubruquis, this volume traces the history of the ‘Orient’ as it was understood by the west.

A major intervention in understanding how popular narratives shape history, this book will be of great interest to scholars and researchers of history, medieval history, history of travel, world literature, postcolonial studies, and general readers interested in travel narratives.

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Radhika Seshan

Introduction

It is accounted a romantic thing to wander among strangers and to eat their bread by the camp-fires of the other half of the world. . . . Wandering in itself is merely a form of self-indulgence. If it adds not to the stock of human knowledge, or if it gives not to others the imaginative possession of some part of the world, it is a pernicious habit. . . . It is only the wonderful traveller who sees a wonder, and only five travellers in the world's history have seen wonders. The others have seen birds and beasts, rivers and wastes, the earth and the (local) fulness thereof.

So declared the Introduction to *The Travels of Marco Polo*,¹ in the version that was printed in English in 1818.

For anything to which a man is accustomed long, commonly grows unpleasant; whereas Variety delights him, and rescues his imagination from the tediousness of ordinary Objects. Hence is the desire men have naturally to Travaile: and though it withdraws one from his relations and country, and exposeth him to several incommodities and perils, yet the pleasure of his Voyage preponderates all apprehensions, and renders all discouragements contemptible and vain. And as there is Pleasure in Travailing, so it hath in my judgement its Utility likewise, and its Profit as well as Diversion.

– Guy Miège,² a Frenchman who accompanied the Earl of Carlisle on a diplomatic mission to the court of the Tsar in 1663.

A common feature of today's world is the ubiquitous map on phones, tablets, etc. The map gives you directions from place a to place b, in the shortest possible time, and by the route which has the least traffic. But what about the world in which such devices did not exist? How did people learn about other places, perhaps located not so far away? Were these worlds real or imagined? Who went there? And how? And what did they see there? These are the questions that have resulted in travel narratives of many kinds – the

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‘traveller’s tale’. Tales of travel could take an individual anywhere he or she wanted, in imagination, but he or she needed first to have something to grasp, which had to come through the story of someone who had ‘been there, done that’.

Travel has always fascinated humans. Whether this is a genetic inheritance from the days of the nomads, or a later development from the days of more settled life, when travel was (perhaps) a way to escape the tedium of daily life, or just a desire to impress one’s fellow men with one’s worldly wisdom and knowledge, the fact is that travel has always been a major part of human experience. This fascination has found expression in storytelling and later in writing of all kinds. These stories could be real or imaginary and could be understood as either; but crucial to the telling of the tale is the need to make it in some sense identifiable. A tale has to have a location, and that location has to be believable, and perhaps, at a later stage, verifiable.

Storytelling is of different kinds, in both prose and poetry. This would include mythologies, oral narratives which often collapse time and space (or on the other hand locate them very firmly),³ bardic compositions and histories, and perhaps, in a slightly later time, more ‘factual’ narratives. Stories have a wide audience, and the more popular a story, the greater its reach. The most popular stories are those that talk of epic battles, with the hero winning against all odds, or those that throw into sharp relief the frailties or pride of those in power. Thus, for example, we have the stories of Sindbad the Sailor, or versions of the stories from the Arabian Nights. Fables, too, are stories, and many such stories are to be found in different cultures, as can be seen in, for example, the common themes found in the Mulla Nasruddin stories, or the Birbal and Tenali Raman⁴ stories in India.

The reverse can also be said to hold good, for as Romila Thapar⁵ has pointed out, the retelling of a story also provides information about the context of a particular way of retelling. In other words, the story has multiple temporal and spatial locations. We can also see travel literature in this fashion for, transcending time and space, these stories continue to be read. What is read into the narrative would then belong to a different time and a different context from the one in which it was written. It is in this sense that this book deals with travel accounts.

Travel writing in the western world can perhaps be said to have come into its own from the medieval period. The medieval world was one that was circumscribed in many ways, physical and mental, and the one who transcended these restraints was someone to be regarded with awe. The travelling minstrel, the troubadour who sang of love and war, or the family bard, all were people who had a certain cachet, as having seen the world. More importantly, what they wrote (or sang) was regarded as the final word: at least until the next, more authoritative, word came along. These subsequent works were based on the earlier, which had laid down the fundamentals of the familiar. This familiar could be modified, but the essential character of ‘difference’ was always maintained. A traveller’s tale could also in a sense be

a re-affirmation of certain stereotypes, which, in the time of original composition, served perhaps to differentiate, and then became a kind of shorthand, where the explanation of difference was no longer needed, for the stereotype was firmly established.⁶

The utility of a travelogue as an account and as a source for history has been accepted for a very long time. In English, the Hakluyt Voyage volumes began to be published as early as the 16th century, and in the 19th century, there were translations into English of travelogues in different languages, all of which were seen as necessary for the reconstruction of the history of the Europeans in India. But it should be remembered that India has long attracted a range of travellers, from the Buddhist pilgrims of earlier times, to those who came to explore the possibilities of trade and then to perhaps settle in the country, to others like the celebrated al-Beruni, who famously talked of the “eye of the observer [which] apprehends the substance of that which is observed”,⁷ to the more recent tourist, exploring the heritage of India. In 1908, E.F. Oaten in his book *European Travellers in India*⁸ declared that he would include in his work only those who had left some record of their travels, whether they were professional travellers, or those who travelled only because of the nature of their work. This still left him with a vast selection of works from which to choose.

While this book focuses on travel accounts of an earlier period, the fascination with the genre of travel writing can be seen to have continued into contemporary times as well.⁹ As the tourist industry expanded and as travel began to be ‘sold’, travel literature too began to be studied. A special edition of the *Comparative Critical Studies* of 2007¹⁰ begins by saying that literature tests and transgresses the boundaries of community. It goes on to say that the symbiosis between travel and fiction emerged “with the turn to modernity, before which the charge of travel liar was the bugbear of every travel writer”.¹¹

Travel literature may have acquired greater acceptance from the 18th century onwards, but it should be remembered that travel itself and the account of the travel – whether real or imaginary – has always had an audience. The experience of the journey is personal, but it has the potential to be shared. We are all fascinated by stories which take us out of our own lives, at least for a while. So, the travel narrative allows the armchair (or fireside) traveller to share vicariously in the thrills of the travellers’ own experiences. The teller of a story has traditionally had an important place among humans, as has the eyewitness. The combination of the traveller, storyteller, and eyewitness is bound to be someone who enjoys a status often denied to others, for he or she is one who can comment with authority on that which he or she has seen, but which others have not. It is, therefore, a first-hand, eyewitness account, necessarily carrying greater credibility. However, this credibility has to be established – and so, all travellers and storytellers often use certain tropes, which help their audience to locate themselves and the story that is being told. The story of the unfamiliar has to be couched in terms of the familiar,

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and then extended beyond that familiar. For example, if one were to take the Sindbad stories, the 'familiar' is to be found in the stories of the voyages to a real place, India, but that land is strange, and so peopled by strange creatures, like the roc. Fantasy or fable may play a part in the tale, but there is of course a difference between a purely imaginary tale of fantasy such as those in the Arabian Nights, and the account of the traveller, such as those discussed in this book. This difference is, again, because of experience – so, the traveller is one who has experienced, and passes on that experience to others. The traveller's tale is therefore both a 'tale' – a story – and an 'account' – one that is factual (more or less) and broadly verifiable.

Within the broad genre, there are many different kinds of writing. For example, there is an entire range which examines the ways in which certain places are described, or looks at the ways in which travel and tourism began to grow into a major industry in the modern world. An example of this would be the many Lonely Planet books, the Michelin guides, or in an earlier time the Baedeker guides.¹² Another aspect of the study of travel writings has been the focus on veracity and verifiability. This has been particularly true of the study of such writing in history. Yet another branch has looked at the links between works of fiction which purport to be travelogues, such as *Gulliver's Travels* or *Robinson Crusoe*, and then to examine how such works were accepted as genuine, i.e., the social reception of such literature. Science fiction such as the works of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* or Douglas Adams' *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* are all forms of travel writing. Science fiction is not commonly regarded as being part of travel narratives, for they are a genre in themselves. But they do describe time, space, the collapsing of both, and, like the more 'recognised' travelogues of Robinson Crusoe, the stories are anchored in defined landscapes even if not geographically anchored ones. While this work has not looked at such travelogues, they remain an area that needs to be explored. Finally, in recent times, the travel and tourism industry has sparked a fresh interest in modalities of travel and the study of travel in different historical periods. Today, travel and tourism is a major industry and an important part of many academic circles as well.¹³ One needs only to take a quick look at the academic syllabi of travel and tourism courses to see this. This interest has expanded into many diverse fields including publishing (for example the Oxford University series on *Monumental Legacy* published between 2002 and 2012) or films such as the now iconic *Star Trek* or the *Lord of the Rings*. All have in various forms addressed the themes of travel.

A fascination with travel in general and India in particular was a prominent feature of the post-Renaissance European world, and can, in some form, be seen even today.¹⁴ Michael Fisher's work, *Beyond the Three Seas: Travelers' Tales from Mughal India*,¹⁵ was specifically concerned with the ways in which Europeans described the Mughal world that they were beginning to know from the 16th century onwards. An earlier work which continues

to be of tremendous importance is Donald Lach's *Asia in the Making of Europe*,¹⁶ a multivolume work which has been the starting (and often ending) point for both students of history and lay readers. The subject of foreign travel, especially of westerners travelling to the east, is one that continues to attract considerable attention.¹⁷ Another relevant work is that of Percy G. Adams, for he has highlighted one aspect of travel writing, that which he has called the 'travel lies'.¹⁸

The idea of the travel lie is rooted in the fact that travel carries with it much baggage, and not just of the material variety. One part of this baggage is truth. Percy G. Adams has argued that in the Dublin edition of *Gulliver's Travels* "Jonathan Swift knowingly or unknowingly [introduced] posterity to the three kinds of travel books of the eighteenth century." These three kinds were the true travel accounts of perhaps the Ralph Fitch¹⁹ variety, the imaginary voyage such as those of Swift himself, or in the 19th-century Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*; and what Adams has called the 'travel lies'.

A travel lie (or a travel liar) would essentially be one that stretched the bounds of credibility. But these bounds would require some kind of authentication or verification before the accounts could authoritatively be dismissed as lies. Robinson Crusoe on his island was soon known to be a work of fiction, but Mandeville's Travels were understood as genuine and were not included in the category of travel lies until very much later, probably not till the 20th century. We could also look at the legends surrounding the land of Prester John. This was a mythical land, but one which acquired a great deal of credence by being rooted within a believable structure, enough that many people searched for it, and some even claimed to have found it. What I am therefore arguing is that such accounts of travel in many ways created a 'known' world, or perhaps a knowable world, which could be visited, described, and then dismissed as fabrication or accepted as genuine.

I have earlier argued that another way of describing travel accounts is to put them into three broad categories – of travel for adventure, travel for profit and travel for knowledge.²⁰ If studied in this fashion, Mandeville could be seen as representative of the first category, of travel for adventure, Peter Mundy the second, and Dr Helenus Scot the third. These also represent different times, for Mandeville is of the 14th century, Mundy the early 17th, and Scot the late 18th. Thus, there is a change visible not just in the genre of writing, but also in the reason for travel. Where earlier travels were to (perhaps) have an 'adventure' or know more about the world in which they lived, later travels were more concerned with accuracy in knowledge. An additional point that needs to be made is that the search for knowing could go in many different directions: to mapping as cartography, to providing maps of fictional lands – Narnia or Middle Earth; travel as search for some kind of a promised land – El Dorado, Shangri-la, or the Holy Grail; or science fiction of the H.G. Wells or the Jules Verne variety. Or perhaps we should just follow Adams himself who, quoting from the *Gentlemen's Magazine* of 1741 says that "a white Lie is that which is not intended to

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injure any Body in his Fortune, Interest, or Reputation but only to gratify a garrulous Disposition and the Itch of amusing People by telling them wonderful stories.”²¹ It is some of these ‘wonderful stories’, along with the more mundane travel accounts out of Europe to the ‘eastern worlds’ from the 13th century onwards, with which this book is concerned.

The fascination of the metaphor of travel can also be found in many other areas which seem to have no direct link to travel. The symbolism of travel for the life-cycle of human beings has been used over and over again, whether by Sufi mystics with their concept of ‘*safar*’,²² as a journey towards self-realisation, which caters for many detours or halts on the way, or by John Bunyan in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, which is an allegorical tale of the search for salvation. We find this in Shakespeare also – as, for example, in the often misquoted ‘journeys end in lovers’ meetings’. The point that I am trying to make is that there is a clear structure to both travel and to the account of the travel – there has to be a start, the journey itself, with halts on the way, and then the return. The halts and the return are as much to be celebrated as the journey itself.

Safar is linear, for it ends in self-realisation; but travel is cyclical, because one has to return to the point of origin. Can one then argue that what changes in this cycle is the mode of representation because of the perception of the traveller? The mystic in search of the destination has to travel, but he also follows in the footsteps of those who went earlier. There are therefore markers along the way, sometimes recognisable, but often not. But what if these markers become more universally recognisable? Would they not then become tropes of identification? For example, many of the accounts describing land journeys across Asia mention having passed close by or having been told about the mountain where the ‘old man of the mountain’ lived. No attempt is made to explain who the old man was, or to describe him and his followers, but references to this old man, or to the mountain where he lived, are to be found even in the early 16th century, in the account of the Portuguese traveller Ludovico di Varthema. The ‘old man’ could be located in a vaguely Biblical land, or in the better-known land of the ‘assassins’, who were believed to have followed the precepts and instructions of the old man of the mountains; the point is that everyone ‘knew’ the old man of the mountains. How do these stereotypes add to or detract from the account? Even more, does anything change when a stereotype is later used as a form of shorthand? This is one of the questions that I hope to raise in this book, specifically the question of ‘*the east*’. What is the east, and what does ‘*the east*’ become shorthand for? Such shorthand as a quick and convenient way of writing incorporates within it many symbols. In a travel account, what were the symbols that were used, what were the methods of representation and what were the processes by which such descriptions came to be representative rather than descriptive?

Another concern of this work is with the way in which some stereotypes began to acquire wider currency. They began to form the basis of the

perception of difference, and such perceptions sometimes found their way into colonial perceptions. What was clear from a very early age was the idea of the east as 'different'. Difference lay in many things – in weather, in customs, in religions, and perhaps, most importantly, in perceptions of political and social systems. The travellers studied here drew the attention of their audience to all these aspects, thus highlighting the difference. It is not my intention to argue that perception of difference was automatically, or from the beginning, also a perception of the 'other' as inferior; but identification of the first could lead, in the colonial context, to the latter. This work is, therefore, an attempt to trace the way/s in which the perception of the 'east' was shaped through the travellers' accounts between the 13th and the 18th centuries. Perhaps in keeping with the travel accounts themselves, or at least those studied here, the 'east' is also narrowed down, finally, to India. This is due partly to convenience, partly to the accounts selected for study which have been restricted to those available in English, and partly to the position India occupied in western imagination from fairly early times.

The east was, through much of the period under review, not a fixed location, even if it had already become more or less located in Asia. Still, even in the middle of the 17th century, the account of Guy Miège, who went with the official English mission to the court of the Czar, said that he was in the east as soon as he crossed the Volga. For him the east was not in Asia but was to be found east of *his* world.

While the ways in which the east was constructed and defined are discussed, this work is not directly concerned with the idea of Orientalism as propounded by Edward Said. As a conceptual category, Orientalism is associated with the forms of domination of thought and action, which were established under colonialism. What I am concerned with is not the fixed category of 'The Orient', but the more loosely defined 'east' – loosely defined, because in these centuries, the east was not yet only the countries of Asia. However, by the end of the period under review, the ideas that became part of 'Orientalism' began to be much more clearly defined. What is studied here is thus the travellers' accounts, the continuities visible in accounts across centuries, the clarifications and differences visible in them, and finally, to the extent possible, their impact in their own countries. I must emphasise that the age studied is the pre-modern one, when publication began to be easier, but did not yet cross continental barriers, unlike the travellers themselves. I hope, therefore, that I will succeed in tracing, to some extent, the shift from the broad category of 'east' to the more structured 'Orient'.

This work covers a rather broad span in chronological terms, for I begin with some of the travel writings of the 13th century, and end with some written in the 18th century. Obviously, no attempt can be made to include all the travellers of this period – there are far too many, going in too many different directions, to be able to even mention the majority of the travellers. Any such attempt would end in being a list of names and places, rather than an effort to study their writings and their perceptions. The book is therefore divided

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into six chapters which take us from the imagined to the beginning of colonialism and the 'Orient'. The first chapter is concerned with myths and legends, the second and third go on into the early travels of exploration and the growth of knowledge about the east, while the next three chapters trace the processes by which definitions of the east began to be both more specific and more general – India as rich in produce but with visible poverty, with splendid cities which also had thatched mud houses, which were also, of course, crowded and dirty. The 'orient' was thus beginning to be anchored.

At the same time, the work would be incomplete if I did not at least make the attempt to study the readership of such accounts in their own countries, and, to the extent possible, the way in which these accounts were reflected/located/mentioned in the literature of the country of origin. Here, again, I will not take the entire range, but concentrate, instead, on just the English-language writings, and on the better-known, rather than the more obscure works (better known in the sense of both more recognised, and more easily accessed by a range of readers).

Travel, as exploration and narration of exploration, played the dual role of instructor and storyteller, and in the process, travel narratives began to reconstruct the world through more accurate information. Those who went to these strange lands and returned to tell the story provided knowledge that enabled a shift from the realms of imagination to the regions of reality. Worlds had been, and continued to be, constructed; but now, within these worlds, were clearly defined, named, and delineated regions, which could be rendered on a map, so that others could follow the maps, to arrive at the same places. These worlds thus became more 'fixed', for they were tied down through descriptions of peoples, places, customs, and religions. Knowledge therefore moved from memory, to imagination, from the general to the particular, and then to the familiar and mundane. In the process, the 'east' began to be reconstructed and recast. As knowledge was recast in many forms, the earlier 'exotic' began to lose its lustre, to become ordinary, and often inferior. I must reiterate that this attitude is not to be found in most of the travel accounts used here, but taken out of their time and space, and used in a different set of constructs, they lent themselves to different ways of thinking, understanding, and labelling. It is this that I am most concerned with here. This book is therefore concerned first with some of the travellers – who they were, where they went, and what they wrote. Then, some of the continuities and changes have been traced, before going on to examine, to a rather limited extent, the echoes of travel writing in literature of different kinds.

Notes

- 1 William Marsden (tr. and ed.), *The Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian*, London, 1818, revised with an Introduction by John Masefield, London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1931; New Delhi, Asian Educational Services reprint, 2003, Introduction, p. ix. The five travellers who were taken note of were Herodotus, Gaspar, Melchior, Balthazar and Marco Polo himself.

- 2 Guy Miège, *A Relation of Three Embassies from His Sacred Majestie Charles II to the Great Duke of Muscovie, the King of Sweden and the King of Denmark in the Years 1663 & 1664*, London: John Starkey, 1669, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A50829.0001.001?view=toc> on 20 June 2019, Author's Preface, p. 1.
- 3 For example, I remember as a child hearing stories from the Mahabharata in a temple. The recitation would often begin by saying "there was a time when Arjuna disturbed Yudhishtira and Draupadi and so had to do penance. On his penance he travelled to . . .". All the places mentioned here were real places which could be located geographically.
- 4 Mulla Nasruddin was a 13th-century Turkish Sufi, to whom many satirical stories are attributed. Tenali Raman performed a similar role at the court of King Krishnadevaraya of the Vijayanagar Empire at the beginning of the 16th century, while Birbal was a poet at the court of the emperor Akbar in the second half of the same century. All three are remembered for their wisdom, which found expression usually in satirical ways. They can perhaps be compared to the court jesters of European stories. In literature, there is the idea of 'seven major themes' – which argues that any story, written in any time, can be reduced to one or more of those themes. This can be applied to travel stories also. Though they ostensibly fit well with the theme of 'voyage and return', the need for variety makes them move to the other themes – and so, we have fables, science fiction, moral tales, and many more.
- 5 Romila Thapar, *Sakuntala*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2000.
- 6 We see these in some of the 19th-century writings in India – the 'wily' or 'cunning' or 'crafty' brahmins being among the most common. In other words, these adjectives no longer needed to be used to qualify the caste, for when talking of a brahmin, the adjectival description was taken for granted!
- 7 Quoted from the *Kitab fi Tahqiq ma lil-Hind* of Abu Raihan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400–1800*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 1.
- 8 Edward Farley Oaten, *European Travellers in India During the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, London: Asian Educational Services Reprint, 1909, 1991, pp. 5–7.
- 9 This can perhaps be seen in the popularity of the books of Bill Bryson and Mark Tully.
- 10 Benjamin Colber and Glyn Hambrook, "Editors' Introduction", *Comparative Critical Studies*, 4.2, 2007, pp. 165–175, accessed 16 February 2016.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 166.
- 12 The Baedeker guides were published for a century or more from the 1850s to the 1970s and first in German. It is tempting to argue that this industry was a 19th-century development from the German *Instructions to Travellers* that used to be published in the 15th and 16th centuries.
- 13 The idea that travel broadens one's horizons remains even in the present-day world as can be seen in the many 'study abroad' programmes that exist in many universities and schools; high school students who have travelled abroad often find that this helps them to get into the colleges of their choice.
- 14 See, for example, Fred Dallmayr, *Beyond Orientalism: Essays on Cross-Cultural Encounter*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications (reprint), 2001, where he says that South Asia represents a "crossroads of life-forms"; Preface, p. x.
- 15 Michael Fisher (ed.), *Beyond the Three Seas: Travellers' Tales from Mughal India*, Delhi: Random House India, 2008.
- 16 Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Vol. 1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965; Vol. 2, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977; Vol. 3, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

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- 17 See, for example, Paul Starkey and Janet Starkey (eds.), *Travellers in Egypt*, London: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2001; David Arnold, *Tropics and the Traveling Gaze: India, Landscape and Science, 1800–1856*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005; Nabil Matar (tr. and ed.), *In the Lands of the Christians: Arabic Travel Writing in the Seventeenth Century*, New York: Routledge, 2003; Michael Fisher (ed.), *Beyond the Three Seas: Travellers' Tales of the Mughal Orient*, Delhi: Random House India, 2007, to mention only a few.
- 18 Percy G. Adams, *Travelers & Travel Liars 1660–1800*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962, p. 1.
- 19 An Englishman who came to India in the late 16th century and on returning to England provided considerable information about India and her products as well as about Burma and Pegu to the English.
- 20 Radhika Seshan, “Fabled Lands, Fabulous Wealth: Travel Accounts from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Century”, presented at the Conference on *On the Road: Writing Travel and Travellers*, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, November 2008.
- 21 Adams, op.cit., p. 5.
- 22 The word *safar* means ‘journey’, and, in Sufi philosophy, it is the term used to describe the journey of life. The philosophy also has mention of halting places en route where one waits for a longer or shorter time until the ‘path’ ahead is clear once again or at least the direction in which one is to go is identified.

Notes

- 1 George Rawlinson (tr. and ed.), *Herodotus Histories*, Wordsworth Editions of World Literature, 1996.
- 2 Ibid., p. 271.
- 3 Ibid., p. 270.
- 4 Strabo, *Book XV*, On India, internet archive, www.und.ac.za/und/classics/india/strabo.htm, accessed 14 March 2012.
- 5 It is interesting to speculate that this was because beyond these places lived the strange world of Islam and the stranger world of different denominations of Christians. But this remains a speculation.
- 6 This can be best seen in the medieval maps, where the edges of the earth were depicted with fantastic and mythical creatures, and the words “Here be danger.” This can be seen in the *Carta Marina*, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e5/Carta_Marina_AB_stitched.jpg, accessed 21 June 2019.
- 7 To misquote Bernard Shaw, “these were two countries divided by a common belief.” (The original quotation is supposed to be “two countries divided by a common language”, but the attribution has been questioned, for the sentence is not found in his published work).
- 8 I have written about this in greater detail in Radhika Seshan, “Identity Formation, Foundational Myths and Communalism: Western Europe and India”, published in *The ICAI Journal of History and Culture*, 1.1, May 2007, pp. 56–72.
- 9 Ronald Latham (tr. and ed.), *Marco Polo: The Travels*, Penguin Books, 1958, Introduction, p. 8.
- 10 Edward Brooke-Hitching, *The Phantom Atlas: The Greatest Myths, Lies and Blunders on Maps*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2016, p. 195.
- 11 Edward Ullendorff and Charles Fraser Beckingham, *The Hebrew Letters of Prester John*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982. There are believed to be some 100 manuscripts in libraries across Europe that deal with the myth, with the Hebrew letters being only one of the languages in which the manuscripts are written. See also Rila Mukherjee, “The Strange History of Prester John across the Indian Ocean”, *Asian Review of World History*, 6.2, 2018.
- 12 Richard William Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, Yale: Yale University Press, 1961, p. 71.
- 13 Even in the 1950s *Prester John* was a detective story that was supposed to be read by English school children.
- 14 E. Denison Ross, “Prester John and the Empire of Ethiopia”, Arthur P. Newton (ed.), *Travel and Travellers of the Middle Ages*, New York: Barnes & Noble, 1968 (first published in 1926), pp. 174–194; C.F. Beckingham, “The Quest for Prester John”, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library*, 62, 1980, pp. 290–310.
- 15 See for example, Elinor M. Brent-Dyer’s *Chalet School Series* published from 1929 onwards. There references are to be found in the early books and not in the later books of the series.
- 16 Sir Alfred William Pollard (ed.), *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville, with Three Narratives in Illustration of It: The Voyage of Johannes de Plano Carpini, the Journal of William de Rubruquis, and the Journal of Friar Odoric from Hakluyt’s “Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries”*, London: Macmillan & Co, 1900, p. 178.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid., p. 185.
- 19 Ibid., p. 186.
- 20 See Radhika Seshan, “From Mandeville to Mundy: Sources for the Study of Medieval India”, Radhika Seshan (ed.), *Convergences: Rethinking India’s Past*,

New Delhi: Primus Books, 2014, pp. 55–62, for a brief discussion on a possible connection between John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progression* and Mandeville's discussion of the way to the land of Prester John.

- 21 Ibid., p. 187.
- 22 Ibid., p. 188. It's interesting that 'evil women of nature' possibly worked here like an oxymoron.
- 23 As an aside, we could perhaps point to a fairly famous Mughal painting of Akbar's time by Miskin which has dragons, serpents, and crocodiles together with more familiar animals and birds.
- 24 Mandeville, op.cit., p. 188.
- 25 Ibid., p. 108.
- 26 Ibid., p. 110.
- 27 Chet Van Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps*, London: The British Library, 2014, p. 11.
- 28 Thomas Herbert, *Some Years Travels into Africa and Asia the Great, Especially Describing the Famous Empires of Persia and Industant: As also Divers Other Kingdoms in the Orientall Indies, and Iles Adjacent*, London: Jacob Blome and Richard Bishop, 1638, accessed through Google Books, January 2011. See particularly p. 7 showing a shark with a human in its mouth. This image may also go back to the Biblical story of Jonah being thrown overboard to a sea monster so that the ship that he was on would be saved. See also Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy, in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, Vol. 2: *Travels in Asia, 1628–1634*, London: Hakluyt Society, 1914, facing p. 16, showing a shark as well as the capture of a shark using a chain and a hook. Compare this with the image in Chet Van Duzer, ibid., p. 51.
- 29 Henry Yule (tr. and ed.), *The Book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian*, London: J. Murray, 1903, Chapter 16. See Chet Van Duzer, ibid., Fig. 27, p. 46 for the visual representation of pearl divers with fish moving away from them.

Notes

- 1 Henry Yule (tr. and ed.), *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, Vol. 2, New Series, London: Hakluyt Society, 1913, p. 176.
- 2 Ronald Latham (tr. and ed.), *Marco Polo: The Travels*, Penguin Books, 1958, Introduction, p. 11.
- 3 Sir Alfred William Pollard (ed.), *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville, with Three Narratives in Illustration of It: The Voyage of Johannes de Plano Carpini, the Journal of William de Rubruquis, and the Journal of Friar Odoric from Hakluyt's "Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries"*, London: Macmillan & Co, 1900 (henceforth cited as Mandeville, followed by specific narrative), Narrative of Carpini, p. 214.
- 4 Robert Silverberg, *The Realm of Prester John*, First Published, 1972; Republished London: Phoenix Press, 2001, p. 90.
- 5 Mandeville, op.cit., p. 217.
- 6 In the 20th-century children's stories *The Chronicles of Narnia*, written by C.S. Lewis, we have, in one book, meetings with the "Monopods" – creatures who have only one foot!
- 7 Silverberg, op.cit., p. 92.
- 8 Mandeville, Carpini, p. 215.
- 9 Ibid., William of Rubruquis, p. 266.
- 10 See Mandeville, Ibid., p. 109 and *passim*, where it is said that India consisted of over '5000 isles', and that "In every isle is great plenty of cities, and of towns."
- 11 Ibid., Rubruquis, p. 273.
- 12 Ibid., p. 106.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Silverberg, op.cit., p. 102.
- 15 Ibid., Carpini, p. 237.
- 16 Ibid., Rubruquis, p. 266.
- 17 Ibid., Carpini, p. 216.
- 18 Ibid., Rubruquis, p. 273.
- 19 Henry Yule (tr. and ed.), *Cathay and the Way Thither: Being a Collection of Medieval Notices of China*, Vol. 1, London: Hakluyt Society, 1866, Friar Odoric of Pordenone, p. 44.
- 20 Ibid., pp. 48–49.
- 21 Ibid., pp. 50–51.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 54–56.
- 23 It is because of this, the link with Alexander, that it is suggested that he meant Thatta rather than Thana.
- 24 The word 'Mobar' appears to be a corruption of Ma'abar, the name of the Sultanate that was established when the Khalji armies from north India defeated the Pandya rulers of Madurai. The Ma'abar coast therefore referred to the south-eastern coast of India in present-day Tamil Nadu.
- 25 Ibid., p. 81.
- 26 Ibid., p. 77.
- 27 Ibid., pp. 85, 88.
- 28 Pollard, op.cit., p. 335.
- 29 Yule, *Cathay* . . . , p. 92.
- 30 Pollard, op.cit., p. 337.
- 31 Ibid., p. 349.
- 32 *The Travels of Marco Polo: The Venetian* with an Introduction by John Masefield, first published, London, 1931; New Delhi: Asian Educational Services Reprint, 2003, p. 115.

- 33 Ibid., pp. 116–117.
- 34 Ibid., p. 119. This is probably the source of Mandeville's statement that the king of Cathay always married into the family of Prester John.
- 35 Ibid., p. 161.
- 36 Ibid., pp. 166, 172.
- 37 Travels of Marco Polo, op. cit., p. 334.
- 38 Ibid., pp. 337–338.
- 39 Ibid., p. 365. Sesame oil is still used, but has nothing to do with changing the colour of the skin!
- 40 Ibid., p. 362.
- 41 Henry Yule, *Cathay and the Way Thither*, Vol. 2, London: Hakluyt Society, 1866, pp. 279–308.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Henry Yule (tr. and ed.), *Mirabilia Descripta, the Wonders of the East*, by Friar Jordanus (circa 1330), London: Hakluyt Society, 1863, Preface, p. vi.
- 45 Ibid., p. vii.
- 46 Ibid., p. 1.
- 47 Ibid., p. 3.
- 48 Ibid., pp. 7–8.
- 49 Ibid., p. 12.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid., p. 17. The description of the Indian banyan is also found in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.
- 52 Ibid., p. 19.
- 53 Ibid., p. 37.

were “blacker, their statures, visages and limmes are altogether like men of Europa, and those of the coast of Malabar . . . are as blacke as pitch.”³⁶ As he travelled further east, he remarked on the similarity of features between the Chinese and the people of “Aracan, Pegu and Siam”, the only difference being that they were rather browner than the Chinese, and blacker than the natives of Bengal.³⁷ As pointed out previously, his focus was on skin colour, but as a marker of difference, not of inferiority. This is particularly clear in his mention of the mestizos being included among the Portuguese, and apparently having equal status, in marked contrast to the attitude to the ‘half-breed’ of later times. A rather noticeable feature is that he does make use of the word “Moor” fairly regularly, but unlike later writers, he appears to have used the word as a synonym for ‘black’, not Muslim. (It is interesting that in the same century Shakespeare used the word with the same connotation when he described Othello.)

Like other travellers of the same period, he too described the volume and variety of products of the trade of Asia in great detail, and remarked in particular on the overland caravan trade between Basra and Aleppo, in which merchants of all countries, including ‘France, Britain and Venice’³⁸ participated. India was described as “very fruitfull of Ryce, Pease, and other graines, Butter and oyle of Indian Nuttes” – the only thing he missed was olive oil. He was among the earliest to point out the medicinal value of many of the herbs found in Asia, something that formed a valuable item of trade in the 17th century.

Throughout the 16th century, knowledge about the eastern lands steadily increased. What did not change was the centrality of India as recognisable, open to strangers, and therefore welcoming; but India also had its own oddities, which now needed to be made more explicit. In many ways India became much more central, not to the imagination but to functioning. India became a base from where further explorations east could be made. This naturally meant that India had to be better described, and that India became the point of comparison for both east and west. In the process perhaps the original ‘wonder’ of India began to be lost and the country taken much more for granted. As the further east became better understood, both the east and India began to be objectified.

Notes

- 1 Michèle Guéret-Laferté, *De l'Inde: Les voyages en Asie de Niccolò De'Conti*, Belgium: Brepols, 2004.
- 2 Supriya Chaudhuri, “The Idea of India”, Paper presented (in Italian as *L'Idea dell'India*), at International Conference on Oriente e Occidente nel Rinascimento, XIX Convegno di Istituto Francesco Petrarca, Chianciano-Pienza, Italy, July 2007.
- 3 As, for example, in the 13th-century account of the English historian William of Malmesbury. See *infra* Chapter 1.
- 4 Major, pp. 15–16.
- 5 It would perhaps also be interesting to look at the ways in which, in earlier times within India, the word *mleccha* was used.

- 6 John Winter Jones (tr.) and George Percy Badger (ed.), *The Travels of Ludovico di Varthema in Egypt, Syria, Arabia Deserta and Arabia Felix, in Persia, India and Ethiopia, A.S. 1503–1508*, London: Hakluyt Society, 1863.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 8 This presumably refers to the Nairs of Kerala. It should also be remembered that his account of society was limited to the coast, and to Malabar in particular.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 141–142.
- 10 M.L. Dames (tr. and ed.), *The Book of Duarte Barbosa*, 2 Vols., first published London: Hakluyt Society, 1918–1921; New Delhi: Asian Educational Services Second Reprint, 2002.
- 11 The port of Cambay, but the name was used to refer to the Sultanate of Gujarat as a whole.
- 12 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 7–8.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 47.
- 14 *Ibid.*, p. 8. This is also perhaps the earliest mention of the reaction to the Portuguese methods in Asian and African waters.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 40.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 41.
- 19 Ram Chandra Prasad, *Early English Travellers in India*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965, 2nd rev. ed. 1980, p. 24.
- 20 J. Courtney Locke, *The First Englishmen in India*, London: Broadway House, 1930, p. 9, cited in *ibid.*
- 21 J. Horton Riley, *Ralph Fitch: England's Pioneer to India*, London: J. Fisher Unwin, 1899, p. 55.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 56. (Henceforth cited as Ralph Fitch).
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- 25 J. Talboys Wheeler, *Early Travels in India: Reprints of Rare and Curious Narratives of Old Travellers in India, in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, London: Deep Publications (repr.), 1864, 1974, p. 18.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- 27 William Foster, *Early Travels in India, 1583–1619*, London: Oxford University Press, p. 244.
- 28 Prasad, *op.cit.*, p. 186.
- 29 'Weighty presence' where the Mughal emperors were concerned probably had more than one meaning.
- 30 Wheeler, *op.cit.*, p. 37.
- 31 An early 16th-century English factor at Surat, who also travelled to Agra.
- 32 *Ibid.* This refers to Jahangir, not Akbar.
- 33 Arthur Coke Burnell and Pieter Anton Tiele (tr. and ed.), *The Voyage of John Huyghen van Linschoten to the East Indies*, 2 Vols., London: Hakluyt Society, 1885; Asian Educational Services Reprint, 1988, Introduction, p. xl. Linschoten's work seems to have made publishing history of a sort for it was translated into English and German in 1598, two Latin translations were made in 1599 and a French one in 1610. The French and the original Dutch version were reprinted more than once.
- 34 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 28.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 36 *Ibid.*, p. 64.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- 38 Venice was still *the* city state for all trading ventures.

the same time, Francois Bernier in his description of India talked about the king owning all the land and made specific mention of the system of escheat.

Miège, though, was the exception, not the rule. He followed the older tradition of the Friars where once beyond the Caspian Sea or near the Volga they had entered the East. General understanding now did locate the east from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean onwards. Byzantium had already been perceived as the east; and after 1453, with the takeover of Constantinople by the Ottomans, the former Byzantium empire was clearly 'east'. Increasingly, the east was becoming fixed, different, but still problematic. The problems were now less of potential danger through warfare and more of differences in social and political structures.

Notes

- 1 Edward Grey (ed.), *The Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India*, 2 Vols., London: Hakluyt Society, 1892; Asian Educational Services Reprint, 1991.
- 2 Ibid., Vol. 1, p. 69.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid., p. 72.
- 5 Ibid., p. 71.
- 6 Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 195–196.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Thomas Herbert, *Some Years Travels into Africa and Asia the Great, Especially Describing the Famous Empires of Persia and Industant: As also Divers Other Kingdoms in the Orientall Indies, and Isles Adjacent*, London: Jacob Blome and Richard Bishop, 1638, p. 7.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid., p. 9.
- 11 Ibid., p. 17. The word troglodytes had begun to be used in the middle of the 16th century and seems to have referred to people at a lower, because earlier, stage of civilisation.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 37–44.
- 13 The account of Captain William Hawkins has not been included in this work even though a lot of it fits in with the other narratives included here.
- 14 *Travels in India in the Seventeenth Century by Sir Thomas Roe and Dr. John Fryer: Reprinted from the "Calcutta Weekly Englishman"*, London: Turner and Co., 1873, Asian Educational Services Reprint, 1993, p. 17.
- 15 Ibid., p. 21.
- 16 Ibid., p. 73.
- 17 Edward Terry, *A Voyage to the East Indies*, Preface, London: J. Wilkie, S. Hayes, W. Cater and E. Easton, revised version 1655, p. iv.
- 18 Ibid., p. 6.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid., p. 14.
- 21 Ibid., p. 16.
- 22 Ibid., p. 19. But he also provided examples to show that even when such 'charity' was shown to some of these people they ran away rather than take advantage of the benefits that they being given.
- 23 Ibid., pp. 50–51.
- 24 Ibid., p. 86.
- 25 Ibid., p. 87.

- 26 See Chapter 2, where Odoric seems to imply that, as fish came in on their own, no effort was required to catch them!
- 27 Ibid., pp. 127–129. This is an idea that was repeated in the 19th century when under colonialism it was declared that the Indian craftsman had no originality but could duplicate anything that was given to him.
- 28 Ibid., pp. 114–116.
- 29 Richard Carnac Temple (ed.), *The Travels of Peter Mundy, in Europe and Asia 1608–1667*, Vol. 2: *Travels in Asia 1628–1634*, London: Hakluyt Society, 1914, p. 43.
- 30 Archibald Constable (tr. and ed.), *Francois Bernier's Travels in Mogul Empire A.D. 1656–1666*, first published 1891, revised Vincent Smith, London: Oxford University Press, 1916; First Indian reprint, New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1983, p. 369.
- 31 Mundy, op.cit., p. 337.
- 32 Radhika Seshan, “Travellers’ Tales: From Mandeville to Mundy”, Radhika Seshan (ed.), *Convergences: Rethinking India’s Past*, New Delhi: Primus Books, 2014, pp. 55–62.
- 33 Mundy, op.cit., p. 166.
- 34 Mundy, ibid., p. 169. Apparently, 18th-century and later writers who insisted that Indians had no measurement of time had not read Mundy.
- 35 William Harrison Moreland and Pieter Geyl (tr. and ed.), *Jahangir’s India: The Remonstrantie of Francisco Pelsaert*, Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1925, Indian Edition, New Delhi: Idarah-I Adabiyat-I Delli, 1972, p. 50.
- 36 Ibid., p. 56.
- 37 Ibid., p. 57.
- 38 Ibid., p. 60.
- 39 Ibid., p. 69.
- 40 Ibid., p. 76.
- 41 Ibid., p. 69.
- 42 J. Talboys Wheeler, *Early Travels in India: Reprints of Rare and Curious Narratives of Old Travellers in India, in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, London, 1864; Indian Reprint, New Delhi: Deep Publications, 1974, pp. 18, 36, 72.
- 43 William Crooke (ed.), *A New Account of East India and Persia, Being Nine Years Travel, 1672–1681, by John Fryer*, London: Asian Educational Services Reprint, 1909, 1992, pp. 88–89.
- 44 *Travels in India*, op.cit., p. 5.
- 45 Ibid., p. 151. For Fryer, in this century, the myths of the albatross were either unknown or unimportant, for he did not report any of the superstitions regarding the albatross.
- 46 *Travels in India*, op.cit., p. 153.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid., p. 45.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid., pp. 64–65.
- 51 Ibid., p. 78.
- 52 Crooke, op.cit., pp. 88–89.
- 53 Ibid., p. 89.
- 54 John Fryer, *A New Account of East-India and Persia, in Eight Letters*, London: R. Chiswell, 1698.
- 55 Ibid., p. 286
- 56 Ibid., p. 90.
- 57 This was the chief port of the kingdom of Golconda, and occupied a position similar to that of Surat on the west coast.

- 58 Ibid., p. 80.
- 59 Fryer, op.cit., p. 161.
- 60 Crooke, op.cit., p. 116. The reference is probably to elephantiasis, a disease that was prevalent in this area until about twenty years ago.
- 61 Lady Fawcett and Charles Fawcett (tr. and ed.), *The Travels of the Abbé Carré in India and the Near East, 1672–1674*, 2 Vols., New Delhi: Asian Educational Services (reprint), 1990.
- 62 Ibid., Vol. 1, introduction, p. xiii.
- 63 Ibid., p. 1.
- 64 Fawcett (tr.) and Fawcett (ed.), op.cit., pp. 54–55.
- 65 Ibid., p. 59.
- 66 Ibid., pp. 139–140.
- 67 Ibid., p. 140.
- 68 Ibid., p. 247.
- 69 Ibid., p. 208.
- 70 Ibid., p. 211.
- 71 Guy Miège, *A Relation of Three Embassies from His Sacred Majestie Charles II to the Great Duke of Muscovie, the King of Sweden, and the King of Denmark: Performed by the Right Honorable the Earle of Carlisle in the Years 1663 & 1664*, London: John Starkey, 1669, accessed on Google Play, 3 October 2014.
- 72 Ibid., pp. 44–45.
- 73 Ibid., p. 49.
- 74 Ibid., p. 57.

before a mixed audience of Portuguese and local Africans. This was followed by *Richard II* but that was only for the Englishmen on board.³⁷

However, there was also a slightly ambivalent attitude to travel. If travel was a window to the world, was that really a world that one wished to inhabit? Travel brought many dangers in its wake – not least that of unfamiliar customs and societies. The east was being better documented, no doubt, but so were the lands to the west of Europe. It must be remembered that there were accounts of travels in the Americas as well, and one of the most widely read accounts was that of the cannibals of the West Indies! Of course, cannibals were in the east as well – accounts did mention cannibalism in Java, as has been said earlier – but these do not seem to have been as widely circulated. To slightly misquote Shakespeare, a serious question was ‘what manner of men be these’. This ambivalence is even clearer in Milton’s works. Milton was obviously familiar with the writings included in *Purchas, His Pilgrimes*, but in Milton’s work, Satan is the traveller, providing temptation, and leading the traveller straight to Hell and damnation. Travel took an individual from the known to the unknown and was dangerous precisely because of that. As the east was governed by ritual and unfamiliar forms of worship, it had to be governed by emotion, not reason, and was therefore doubly dangerous. Such attitudes, when linked to the increasingly censorious statements found in travel writings, as well as to the earlier attitudes to the east, began to manifest themselves in a multitude of ways, many of which ultimately found their way into colonial writings.

Notes

- 1 We do not know in how many other languages such instructions were published. Guidebooks which provided information about routes and halting places from Germany to different parts of Europe as well as the pilgrim routes were apparently published in German. However, the English instructions appear to have been a little different from the German.
- 2 Joan-Pau Rubies, *Travel and Technology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes, 1250–1625*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 84.
- 3 Clare Howard, *English Travellers of the Renaissance*, New York, 1913; London: Bodley Head, 1913, p. 3.
- 4 Sir Henry Ellis, *Original Letters Illustrating English History*, 2 Series, London: Harding, Triphook and Leonard, 1825–1846, pp. i, 110, cited in *Ibid.*, p. 4. The use of the word ‘deluded’ should be taken note of.
- 5 Cartaz was the pass issued by the Portuguese to merchants and merchant ships traversing the Indian Ocean world. Any ship could be stopped on the high seas by Portuguese men-of-war and if the cartaz was not displayed, the ship and its cargoes were forfeit to the Portuguese.
- 6 Mary Augusta Scott (ed., with an introduction and notes), *The Essays of Francis Bacon*, Essay ‘On Travaille’, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908, pp. 79–82.
- 7 John Cabot was commissioned by Henry VII in 1497, while Weymouth sailed on an expedition funded by the East India Company and the Muscovy Company in 1602.
- 8 At the time of the defeat of the Spanish Armada, they did not think that the Dutch would become their most serious rivals or that the French would subsequently become an even greater problem.

- 9 A Latin word, used mainly to describe the colder regions of the north of the globe; it is to be found, along with a whole lot of other geographical terms, in Mandeville, as well as in other more authentic texts. Also used by Shakespeare in *Henry VI*.
- 10 This was the war among the four sons of Shah Jahan, Dara Shukoh, Murad Baksh, Aurangzeb, and Shah Shuja, for control of the empire. Aurangzeb emerged victorious and on getting the throne of Delhi imprisoned his father in Agra fort until the latter's death seven years later.
- 11 For example, a nobleman Mir Muhammad Taqi was given the monopoly for money changing in Masulipatnam in 1621, something that the English complained about at length to no effect. See William Foster (ed.), *The English Factories in India*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906–1927 in particular, Vol. 1 and 2.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 26.
- 13 *Portolani* were charts that were used as aids to navigation initially by the Italians in the 13th century, and later by the Spanish and the Portuguese. Usually oriented to a fixed point, they were used extensively initially in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, and later, by the Spanish and the Portuguese, in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans as well.
- 14 Hakluyt Society, 1903, Indian edition, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997.
- 15 Alexander Hamilton, *A New Account of the East Indies: Being the Observations and Remarks of Capt. Alexander Hamilton, from the Year 1688, to 1723*, the second edition, London, 1739; reprint, New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1995.
- 16 The word 'pilot' or variations of the Asian word *nakhuda* meant those who were responsible for actually guiding a ship into a river or into the harbour. They were familiar with the intricacies of river or coastal navigation and were therefore responsible for making sure that the boats did not get grounded or wrecked on any of the shoals.
- 17 Hamilton, op. cit., p. xiv.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. xvii.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. xviii.
- 20 James Richards (ed.), *Sir John Chardin's Travels in Persia*, 2000, google.com, accessed 24 October 2014.
- 21 *The World Displayed: of, a Collection of Voyages and Travels Selected from the Writers of All Nations*, 8 Vols., Vol. 7, Philadelphia: Travels of Sir John Chardin, 1796. Accessed through the Internet Archive, 24 October 2014.
- 22 Dharampal, ed., *Indian Sciences and Technology in the Eighteenth Century: Some Contemporary European Accounts*, New Delhi: Impex, 1971, p. 252–259.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 These methods seem to have died out shortly after, and our information on the bellows comes now primarily from his description.
- 27 E.A. Wallis Budge (tr. and ed.), *The Monks of Kublai Khan, Emperor of China, or: The History of the Life and Travels of Rabban Sawma, Envoy and Plenipotentiary of the Mongol Khans to the Kings of Europe*, London: The Religious Tract Society, 1928, www.google .com, Accessed 15 October 2014.
- 28 Subsequent editions of the volumes did not say until 1600 CE and merely said Voyages, Travels and Discoveries of the English Nation.
- 29 The first voyage, under Sir James Lancaster, reached the Malacca Straits and Bantam, and set up two factories at Bantam and in the Moluccas. The Second Voyage, under Sir Henry Middleton, also went to Bantam.
- 30 Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes in Twenty Volumes*, Vol. 2, University of Glasgow, 1905, p. 503. Accessed through the Internet Archive, 7 October 2014.

- 31 For example, John Mason, the son of a cowherd, who was studying at Oxford and came to the notice of Henry VIII at Oxford and was sent by Henry VIII to Paris for further studies. But we do not know if he was also given a copy of the instructions. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 32 Act I, Sc. iii.
- 33 Act V, Sc. iv, where one of the characters says “How use doth breed a habit in a man!” Della Valle’s statements have been cited earlier.
- 34 Merchant of Venice, Act I, Sc. iii.
- 35 In the 1726 reprint of the book a picture of the hero was provided with engraved below it the words “*splendide mendex*”, which can be translated as wonderful or glittering liar. See Daniel Carey, “Truth, Lies and Travel Writing”, Carl Thompson (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, London: Routledge, 2016, p. 3.
- 36 It is tempting to argue that Jonathan Swift was familiar with Fryer’s description of the ability of Indians to “arithmetize to the meanest fraction”, but rather difficult to prove! In the same way it would be nice if one could prove that John Bunyan’s ‘Vale Perilous’ in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* was derived from Mandeville’s vale perilous.
- 37 Richmond Barbour, *The Third Voyage Journals: Writings and Performance in the London East India Company, 1607–10*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 15–16.

mention. These were 'truth', but they were also stereotypes which contributed to different notions of the Orient.

Today's world is 'known' to many, so today the travelogues themselves have become a 'curiosity'. The worlds that they describe have ceased to exist, but the writings give us a sense of the time and the space, the wonders of the world that they brought to light and the sense of wonder with which they approached those worlds.

Notes

- 1 Richard William Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, Yale: Yale University Press, 1962, p. 33.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 *Medieval Sourcebook: Liutprand of Cremona: Report of His Mission to Constantinople*, Internet Medieval Sourcebook, Copyright Paul Halsall, January 1996. Accessed 27 October 2014.
- 4 I have discussed all this in detail in "Historiography and the Construction of a Communal Identity: Western Europe and India", published in *The ICAFI Journal of History and Culture*, 1.1, May 2007, pp. 56–72.
- 5 Cited in Evelyn Edson, *The World Map 1300–1492: The Persistence of Tradition and Transformation*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007, p. 98.
- 6 Marcus N. Adler, *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela, Critical Text, Translation and Commentary*, London: Oxford University Press, 1907, Introduction, p. x. Accessed through Project Gutenberg, 26 October 2014.
- 7 Donald Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, Vol. II: *A Century of Wonder, Book Three: The Scholarly Disciplines*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977, Paperback edition, 1994, p. 396. Book Two has on the cover a picture of a man on a camel and behind that an ox followed by a man carrying a stick, while Book 3 has a picture of Brama, Visno, and Hispar (Siva).
- 8 This may also be a reason for the lack of description in Rabban Sawma's account, mentioned earlier – they already knew the west, and didn't feel the need to know any more.
- 9 Ibid., Vol. 9, p. 24.
- 10 See Chapter 3.
- 11 Carpini, op. cit., p. 220.
- 12 Ibid., p. 237.
- 13 J. Tallboys Wheeler, *Early Travels in India: Reprints of Rare and Curious Narratives of Old Travellers in India, in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, London: Deep Publications (repr.), 1864, 1974, p. 72. Also William Foster (ed.), *Early Travels in India, 1583–1619*, London: Oxford University Press, 1921, reprinted 1968.
- 14 18th century French historian and Jesuit priest who wrote a book called *The History of the Mogul Dynasty* published in 1715 and based entirely on Manucci's work.
- 15 Ibid., p. 41.
- 16 See Romila Thapar, *Sakuntala*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, Second Impression, 2000.
- 17 Prof. Heiler, theologian, in 1932 – cited by Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1990, p. 97.
- 18 Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

- 19 Cited by Ian J. Barrow, *Making History, Drawing Territory: British Mapping in India, c. 1756–1905*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 11.
- 20 Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act II, Scene i.
- 21 See for example Edward Brooke-Hitching, *The Phantom Atlas: The Greatest Myths, Lies and Blunders on Maps*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2016, p. 179, where it is also pointed out that these imaginary creatures were conflated by Shakespeare with the Anthropophagi who were cannibals.
- 22 Simon Ryan, “The Cartographic Eye: Mapping and Ideology”, *Sydney Open Journals Online*, 2013, pp. 13–18.

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