

# Crafting Knowledge of the Mughal Empire in Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumus* and Seventeenth-Century English Travel Accounts

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## Introduction

In October 1614, the East India Company nominated Sir Thomas Roe to serve as the first English ambassador to the Mughal Empire. George Abbot, the Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote to Roe in January 1617, while Roe resided at Emperor Jahangir's court. Abbot advised him to closely observe events in India, for "as things now stand throughout the whole worlde, there is no place so remote, but that the consideration thereof is mediately or immediately of consequence to our affaires here."<sup>1</sup> Abbot assured Roe that his post in India, far from London and royal favor, was essential to England's national interests. He encouraged Roe to report to him on Jahangir's habits and demeanor, the activities of Dutch and French merchants, and any potentially valuable merchandise. In doing so, he articulated the need to obtain information about India that was reliable and could be used to England's advantage against their European rivals. The English needed to think globally if they were to acquire significant political and economic power in Europe.

Roe's response to Abbot and his other writings from the embassy circulated in several forms. While in India, he had kept a journal where he noted the significant events at court each day. The journal and copies of Roe's letters were assembled into one manuscript.<sup>2</sup> Roe had this work in his possession when he left India and copies of it were sent to the East India Company (EIC) at their offices in London. The Company had funded the embassy, which they hoped would lead to a permanent trade agreement with the Mughal Empire. Roe's journal also passed into the hands of the cleric and historian Samuel Purchas. In 1622, Purchas petitioned the Company to view the journal and any other accounts written by Englishmen while they were employed abroad.<sup>3</sup> He published the available accounts in *Hakluytus Posthumus or, Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625). This massive compendium of travel narratives was the largest book then printed in England. In the work, Purchas had set himself the task of tracing a global history of exploration, ranging from the apostles to contemporary English voyages to the East and West Indies. Purchas incorporated the Company into an exalted history of men traveling abroad to learn about foreign places. Roe's description of the Mughal Empire was placed into a new rhetorical context, within an extensive body of travel narratives.

In this essay, I consider the writings of the Company's employees, including Roe's journal, within Purchas's larger literary project. Purchas regarded travel and historical analysis as inseparable activities, which could draw out moral and theological lessons from human experi-

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop George Abbot to Sir Thomas Roe, 20 January 1617, SP 14/90, f. 65, National Archives.

<sup>2</sup> William Foster, ed., *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619*, 2 vols. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1899), lix

<sup>3</sup> Foster, *Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe*, lxii.

ence.<sup>4</sup> He sought to reconcile ancient and contemporary travel accounts to reveal God's intent for England. He gathered disconnected reports but assumed that travelers shared one interpretation of Mughal history and society. Comparing Purchas's strategies for writing history with travelers' accounts of India informs our understanding of how Englishmen produced knowledge about India in the early modern period. Purchas used historical references to demonstrate that the English were destined to challenge Catholic Iberian power around the world. He believed that colonization was a divine mission. This desire for imperial expansion was not fully shared by Englishmen who visited the Mughal Empire.

This article calls for a reexamination of the *Pilgrimes* in order to understand the types of assertions that could be made about India in the early seventeenth century. It adds to a body of literature challenging the idea that early modern knowledge and intercultural contact were determined by fixed cultural or ideological constraints.<sup>5</sup> Diverse responses to the Mughal Empire were possible. Moreover, no single set of actors controlled how information moved within long-distance networks of trade and correspondence. Juxtaposing the travel accounts with Purchas's editorial commentary reveals that Purchas could not entirely decontextualize and revise the travelers' assessments of India. In fact, Purchas's system for managing information preserved many of the travelers' arguments. We cannot use these authors to support any simplistic interpretation of Anglo-Indian power relations or a "proto-orientalist" discourse in the early seventeenth century.<sup>6</sup> The variety of responses to the Mughal Empire demonstrates that producing many images of India was more useful to English travelers than manufacturing an intellectual consensus.

### Samuel Purchas's Editorial Philosophy and Early Modern History Writing

Purchas's intellectual competitors were Iberian historians who claimed complete knowledge of the world through their nations' imperial conquests. In their works, they attached classical and biblical references to their countrymen's observations.<sup>7</sup> This historical framework validated newly acquired information through existing precedents. For example, while employed at the royal court, the Florentine historian Pietro Martire d'Anghiera claimed that the Spanish were destined to return the world to a common faith, under a single monarch.<sup>8</sup> Because they had mastered the

<sup>4</sup> H. C. Porter, "Purchas as Theological Geographer," in *The Purchas Handbook: Studies of the Life, Times and Writings of Samuel Purchas, 1577-1626*, ed. Loren Pennington (London: Hakluyt Society, 1997), 1:188.

<sup>5</sup> Examples of this literature for the early modern period include: Jerry H. Bentley, "Early Modern Europe and the Early Modern World," in *Between the Middle Ages and Modernity: Individual and Community in the Early Modern World*, ed. Charles H. Parker and Jerry H. Bentley (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007); Joseph Fletcher, "Integrative History: Parallels and Interconnections in the Early Modern Period, 1500-1800," in *Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia*, by Joseph Fletcher, ed. Beatrice Forbes Manz (Aldershot, England: Variorum, 1995); Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Europe's India: Words, People, Empires, 1500-1800* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Jyotsna Singh, *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues: 'Discoveries' of India in the Language of Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1996); Pramod Nayar, *English Writing and India, 1600-1920: Colonizing Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2008); Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India, 1600-1800* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995); Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: the British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Kira von Ostenfeld-Suske, "A New History for a 'New World': The First One Hundred Years of Hispanic New World Historical Writing," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, ed. Jose Rabasa et al., vol. 3, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 558.

<sup>8</sup> David A. Boruchoff, "The Politics of Providence: History and Empire in the Writings of Pietro Martire, Richard Eden, and Richard Hakluyt," in *Material and Symbolic Circulation between Spain and England, 1554-1604*, ed.

lessons drawn from ancient sources, they could surpass that knowledge and civilize a new part of the world. It was the historian's task to align modern and ancient journeys and offer spiritual justifications for expansion abroad.

Pietro Martire was regarded as a model for historical writing by Richard Hakluyt, Samuel Purchas's mentor. Hakluyt studied at Christ Church College in Oxford and was ordained as a priest in 1580, before he began to promote English expeditions to America.<sup>9</sup> In 1587, Hakluyt published a Latin translation of Martire's chronicle of Spanish conquests in the New World, *De Orbe Novo*. In the preface, he lauded Martire for describing "the whole body of that tremendous entity America, and cloth[ing] it decently in the Latin dress familiar to scholars. And so often as the events themselves demand he examines the hidden causes of things, inquires into the hidden effects of nature, and from the innermost shrines of his erudite philosophy he draws comments."<sup>10</sup> Martire had reframed travelers' descriptions of America using a European intellectual idiom. He was not merely the passive transmitter of facts, he interpreted them for his readers and offered a clear lesson on the spiritual and political necessity of travel.<sup>11</sup>

In 1589, Richard Hakluyt published the first edition of *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, a collection of travel writing by Englishmen. He synthesized ancient histories and reports of recent discoveries to encourage new English expeditions. In the *Principal Navigations*, he created a genealogy for English discoveries extending from the fourth century to the circumnavigations of Sir Francis Drake and Thomas Cavendish. Hakluyt organized these voyages in chronological order and by region, to follow the continuous movement of Englishmen around the globe. In the preface to the 1598 edition of the *Principal Navigations*, he described his work as restoring forgotten accounts "to their true joynts and ligaments" with the help "of Geographie and Chronologie (which I may call the Sunne and the Moone, the right eye and the left of all history)."<sup>12</sup> Hakluyt envisioned the *Principal Navigations* as a literal body of knowledge, which would naturally coalesce into a complete description of the world.<sup>13</sup>

During the early modern period, the accepted canon of historical sources describing foreign places was challenged by an influx of new information from travelers.<sup>14</sup> Travelers were increasingly regarded as legitimate sources for facts about foreign places.<sup>15</sup> Hakluyt described how Portugal and Spain had benefited from combing historical study with modern accounts: "these two worthy Nations had those bright lampes of learning (I meane the most ancient and

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Anne J. Cruz (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2008), 105.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Payne, "Hakluyt, Richard (1552?-1616)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., Oct. 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Richard Hakluyt, "Epistle Dedicatory," in *The Original Writings & Correspondence of the two Richard Hakluyts*, ed. E. G. R. Taylor (London: Hakluyt Society, 1935), 2:362.

<sup>11</sup> Boruchoff, "Politics of Providence," 107.

<sup>12</sup> Hakluyt, "Preface to the Reader," in *Original Writings & Correspondence*, 2:433.

<sup>13</sup> Nandini Das, "Richard Hakluyt's Two Indias: Textual *Sparagmos* and Editorial Practice," in *Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Daniel Carey and Claire Jowitt (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 123; Boruchoff, "Politics of Providence," 107.

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts: The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 58; Daniel Woolf, "From Histories to the Historical: Five Transitions in Thinking about the Past, 1500-1700," in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2006), 39.

<sup>15</sup> Joan-Pau Rubies, 'Travel Writing as Genre', in *Travellers and Cosmographers: Studies in the History of Early Modern Travel and Ethnology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 26-27.

best Philosophers, Historiographers and Geographers) to shewe them light; and the loadstarre of experience (to wit those great exploits and voyages layed up in store and recorded).<sup>16</sup> They had been able to confirm their scholarly theories through direct experience. The English would have little success abroad until they could also consult a repository of facts that was synthesized with inherited knowledge. Hakluyt believed the best resources for crafting this type of knowledge were the accounts of travelers. In the *Principal Navigations*, he gathered reports of English journeys to every region of the globe, seeking to provide the same “loadstarre of experience” possessed by the Spanish.

Lorraine Daston has described the importance of direct observation in the seventeenth century for generating factual information, as a “fact” came to mean a specific truth that did not require a theoretical basis.<sup>17</sup> Facts no longer needed to be drawn from universal truths. However, the increased emphasis on empiricism did not explain how scholars should deploy facts to generate theories. The veracity of facts was doubted as well, particularly when information could circulate far beyond its original context.<sup>18</sup> Through their collections, Hakluyt and Purchas claimed that they could obtain accurate knowledge of the world. Both men hoped to join the network of counselors and spies providing intelligence and advice to the Crown.<sup>19</sup> The Company’s governor, Sir Thomas Smythe, noted to Purchas that consulting Hakluyt’s work had saved the Company thousands of pounds during their voyages to India.<sup>20</sup> Purchas placed a greater emphasis than Hakluyt on providing a spiritual interpretation for travelers’ writings.

After Hakluyt’s death in 1616, Purchas acquired his collection of logs and letters related to English travel. He was educated at St. John’s College in Cambridge and, like Hakluyt, was ordained as a priest. In the dedication of the *Pilgrimes* to Prince Charles, Purchas presented himself as a skilled humanist researcher and editor. He wrote that, “out of a Chaos of confused intelligences [I] framed this Historicall World, by a New way of Eye-evidence.”<sup>21</sup> According to Purchas, modern travelers’ firsthand experiences could resolve contradictory histories. However, firsthand accounts still required an editor to extract truthful and relevant details from their “confused intelligences.” Purchas distinguished classical figures like Aristotle and Pliny from his “cloud of witnesses,” who surpassed ancient authors “in certainty (relating what they have seene) and in fulnesse (by advance of New Worlds found in, and besides the World knowne to them) no lesse then they are exceeded in Antiquitie and learning.”<sup>22</sup> Modern travelers may have lacked the erudition of their classical predecessors, but they had seen more of the world. Purchas presented himself as smoothing over the inconsistencies in ancient and contemporary sources and validating each text that was included in the *Pilgrimes*. He acted as what Christine Johnson has described as a “cultural arbiter,” a scholar who did not travel but possessed the necessary rhetorical and analytical skills to assess information brought back from overseas.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Hakluyt, “Preface to the Reader,” 2:435.

<sup>17</sup> Lorraine Daston, “Fear & Loathing of the Imagination in Science,” *Daedalus* 134, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 17.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin Breen, “No Man Is an Island: Early Modern Globalization, Knowledge Networks, and George Psalmanazar’s Formosa,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 17 (2013): 396.

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas Popper, *Walter Raleigh’s “History of the World” and the Historical Culture of the Late Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 19-20.

<sup>20</sup> Samuel Purchas, ed., *Hakluytus Posthumus or, Purchas his Pilgrimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), 2:503.

<sup>21</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 1:xxxvii.

<sup>22</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 1:2.

<sup>23</sup> Christine Johnson, “Buying Stories: Ancient Tales, Renaissance Travelers, and the Market for the Marvelous,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 11, no. 6 (2007): 409.

In evaluating his sources, Purchas adhered to the instructions of the *ars historica*, a humanist genre of literature that taught historians how to investigate the past.<sup>24</sup> When requesting to view the East India Company's travel logs, he assured their directors that he "desire[d] to see but the Historicall part and will medle with nothings elce."<sup>25</sup> He treated his travel accounts as historical sources which would reveal one comprehensive image of the world. These works would naturally be consistent with another. Nicholas Popper has argued that Walter Raleigh's techniques for historical writing "emphasized the certainty of knowledge gained by the process of extracting, compiling, judging, and synthesizing evidence, rather than by identifying the most authoritative source."<sup>26</sup> Purchas, like Raleigh, believed the intellectual labor involved in assembling and revising a large quantity of sources legitimized their content.<sup>27</sup>

Purchas presented the *Pilgrimes* as a compilation of factual knowledge, gained through travelers' firsthand experiences and substantiated by his careful editorial practices.<sup>28</sup> He assured his readers that the accounts could be treated as testimonies credible enough to be scrutinized in court.<sup>29</sup> He had effectively experienced his authors' journeys by including them in the *Pilgrimes*, and he was "a sworne Witsesse, to say the truth, all the truth (in just discretion) and nothing but the truth."<sup>30</sup> Purchas distanced himself from the association of history with classical rhetoric, which persuaded audiences through established tropes and stylistic techniques.<sup>31</sup> The intellectual benefits of reading the *Pilgrimes* was the comprehensiveness of the descriptions. He wrote that: "Here therefore the various Nations, Persons, Shapes, Colours, Habits, Rites, Religions, Complexions, Conditions ... are by Eye-witnesses related more amply and certainly then any Collector ever hath done."<sup>32</sup> Purchas included accounts from high-ranking gentlemen and fleet generals, as well as factors, chaplains, ship captains, and navigators.<sup>33</sup> He sought to bring these accounts into conversation with one another, thereby confirming the accuracy of each source. He declared that his work "in open Theatre presented a Shew of Discoveries on an English Stage, wherein the World is both the Spectacle and Spectator; the Actors are the Authors themselves."<sup>34</sup> Englishmen were both "actors" and "authors," representing the world to their readers and enacting England's discoveries in writing, on a stage presided over by Purchas.

Purchas suggested that his emphasis on empirical data strengthened the sacred mission of the *Pilgrimes*. The collection replicated the form of the Bible by using a series of individual narratives to trace God's work.<sup>35</sup> Purchas saw no contradiction between collecting eyewitness accounts and using those accounts to substantiate his theory of divine providence. He wrote that: "as David prepared materials for Salomons Temple ... so here Purchas and his Pilgrimes minister

<sup>24</sup> Popper, *History of the World*, 53-58.

<sup>25</sup> Foster, *Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe*, lxii.

<sup>26</sup> Popper, 122-123.

<sup>27</sup> Johnson, "Buying Stories," 432.

<sup>28</sup> Rubies, *Travellers and Cosmographers*, 26.

<sup>29</sup> Barbara Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 1:xlx.

<sup>31</sup> David Armitage, "Literature and Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Origins of Empire*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1:104-105.

<sup>32</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 1:xlxiii.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Strachan, "India and the Areas Adjacent," in *The Purchas Handbook: Studies of the Life, Times and Writings of Samuel Purchas, 1577-1626*, ed. Loren Pennington (London: Hakluyt Society, 1997), 1:242-243.

<sup>34</sup> Johnson, "Buying Stories," 431.

<sup>35</sup> Davis Harris Sacks, "Richard Hakluyt's Navigations in Time: History, Epic, and Empire," *Modern Language Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (2006): 31.

individuall and sensible materials (as it were with Stones, Bricks and Mortar) to those univerrall Speculators for their Theoricall structures.”<sup>36</sup> Ralph Bauer uses this point to describe Purchas as a “Baconian collector” who sought to distill useful information for new metaphysical philosophies.<sup>37</sup> However, Purchas was not primarily interested in discovering “rationalist causes” for the events described in his travel accounts.<sup>38</sup> He wanted his accounts to validate his understanding of God’s design, which was that Europeans would spread the Christian faith across the globe. The *Pilgrimes* did not lack an interpretative framework because Purchas relied on individual accounts. We should not make any casual associations between empiricism and impartiality.<sup>39</sup> Purchas’s desire to provide eyewitness information cannot be disentangled from his Protestant beliefs. He wanted to establish that Englishmen had received complete knowledge of the world and that their voyages were divinely ordained.

The first book of the *Pilgrimes* was devoted to the journeys of ancient kings, biblical patriarchs, and the apostles. This book featured Solomon’s expeditions from Israel to Ophir, a region renowned in the Bible for its wealth, as a model for English expansion. In the late sixteenth century, the Spanish cleric Benito Arias Montano proposed that Ophir had once existed in the Spanish colony of Peru.<sup>40</sup> By conflating Ophir and Peru, Montano represented Solomon’s journeys as the biblical precursor to Spain’s empire in America. Purchas contradicted Montano’s theory through contemporary reports from English travelers. He correlated Ophir’s treasures of gold, elephants, and jewels to how William Hawkins, a factor for the EIC, described the Mughal Empire.<sup>41</sup> By placing Ophir in India, Purchas implied that the East India Company was emulating Solomon.<sup>42</sup> He noted that Elizabeth I “sent her servants to Ophir and Peru too, and round about the universe to repaire that Temple, and to defend the Faith, which a greater than Salomon had by her in England restored from Babylonish captivite.”<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth had defended true Christianity from the corruption of the Catholic Church and surpassed Solomon in the pursuit of a universal Protestant monarchy. Purchas invoked sacred history as a source of precedents that gave spiritual meaning to his colonial goals.

Purchas linked new European trade and settlements to a Protestant millenarian vision.<sup>44</sup> He claimed that Christianity was now “open and common to the Communitie of Mankind, to which in this last Age no better meane is left then Navigation and commerce.”<sup>45</sup> Christ’s return would be achieved by unifying the human race, which had split after the construction of the Tower of Babel. Purchas’s interpretation of history was based on a teleology in which Christian peoples were destined to spread across the world. The Mughal Empire complicated Purchas’s prediction of a unified Christian world.<sup>46</sup> India was the ancient location of Ophir, destined for

<sup>36</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 1:xl.

<sup>37</sup> Ralph Bauer, *The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures: Empire, Travel, Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 83.

<sup>38</sup> Bauer, *Cultural Geography*, 81.

<sup>39</sup> John G. Demaray, *From Pilgrimage to History: The Renaissance and Global Historicism* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 2006), 101-102.

<sup>40</sup> Popper, *History of the World*, 144.

<sup>41</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 1:105.

<sup>42</sup> Popper, *History of the World*, 148.

<sup>43</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 1:135.

<sup>44</sup> Arthur H. Williamson, “An Empire to End Empire: The Dynamic of Early Modern British Expansion,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 68, no. 1-2 (March 2005): 228.

<sup>45</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 1:13.

<sup>46</sup> Nicholas Canny, “The Origins of Empire: An Introduction,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The*

resettlement by Christians. However, the Mughals had recently conquered the region. In his commentary on the Mughal Empire, Purchas attempted to assure his readers that native Indians could be converted, while minimizing the Mughals' wealth and political strength.

Purchas assimilated Indians into European history in order to justify English trade and settlement in India. If Indians had Christian origins, then English rule could return them to their original state. For Purchas, colonization and his historical analysis had the same goal: restoring dispersed peoples to "one Body of mankind."<sup>47</sup> In his discussion of Ophir, Purchas traced the descent of modern-day Indians from Shem, the son of Noah who populated Asia.<sup>48</sup> He also described the legendary journey of Bishop Sighelmus to visit the St. Thomas Christians in the ninth century.<sup>49</sup> The St. Thomas Christians believed St. Thomas the Apostle traveled to India and evangelized their order. These traces of a Christian heritage were a providential guarantee that Indians could be saved from their regression into idolatry.

Purchas highlighted information about India that could justify conversion and settlement. His commentary demonstrates that the study of history and geography had been linked to controlling foreign peoples.<sup>50</sup> Several historians, including Jyotsna Singh, Kate Teltscher, Pramod Nayar, and Bernard Cohn, have argued that early modern colonization and travel writing were complementary activities. According to these scholars, travelers disregarded, or failed to comprehend, the diversity of Indian landscapes, communities, and peoples. By simplifying a complex world for English consumption, travelers facilitated the later conquest of India. This theory draws on Edward Said's argument that European awareness of Asia "transformed itself from being textual and contemplative into being administrative, economic, and even military."<sup>51</sup> However, Purchas did not have the interpretive skill to establish Mughal inferiority on the basis of his gathered accounts. He left Mughal history open to the diverse perspectives of his authors. Moreover, as discussed by David Armitage, he did not have a clear vision of how overseas colo-

nization should be accomplished.<sup>52</sup> His statements about India could not be tied to a political agenda and thus were not the basis for colonial action.

Purchas viewed European travel as part of a global spiritual redemption, but this claim was not expressed in his accounts of India. Therefore, he could only predict in general terms how Mughal power would decline. When discussing Asian and Near Eastern empires, he remarked, "the Persian, the Mogoll, the Abassine, the Chinois, the Tartarian, the Turke, are called Great, but their greatnesse is like Polyphemus with one eye, they see at home like purblind men neere to them, not farre off with those eyes of Heaven."<sup>53</sup> He characterized these states as unable to receive divine knowledge, thus positioning them lower than Europe on a civilizational hierarchy.<sup>54</sup> He wrote that European societies were younger than those of Africa or Asia, yet

*Origins of Empire*, ed. Nicholas Canny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1:20.

<sup>47</sup> Purchas, 1:10

<sup>48</sup> Purchas, 1:85-86.

<sup>49</sup> Purchas, 2:287.

<sup>50</sup> Lesley Cormack, *Charting an Empire: Geography at the English Universities, 1580-1620* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 10; Shankar Raman, *Framing 'India': the Colonial Imaginary in Early Modern Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 89-90.

<sup>51</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 210.

<sup>52</sup> David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 81-90.

<sup>53</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 1:52.

<sup>54</sup> Joan-Pau Rubies, "Travel Writing and Ethnography," in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter

“as Benjamin, the beloved, [were] made heir to the Rest, exchanging the Pristine Barbarisme, and Incivilitie (which Authors blame in our Ancestors) with *Asia* and *Africa*, for that Civilitie of Manners, and Glory of Acts and Arts, which they (as neerer the Arkes resting place) sooner enjoyed.”<sup>55</sup> Purchas likened Europe to the favored Israelite Tribe of Benjamin. Europeans had overcome the barbarism of their ancestors while Asian and African societies, once flourishing through their proximity to Jerusalem, had degenerated.

The Mughal Empire existed outside of Purchas’s philosophy, in which travel displayed God’s intervention in the world on behalf of English Protestants. Despite his claim that the *Pilgrimes* was a comprehensive history, Purchas did not attempt to identify the Mughals’ origins. He did not mention their ancestral connection to Timur, known in England as Tamerlane, or Genghis Khan. Purchas’s audience would have been familiar with these figures. For example, the antiquarian John Stow noted in *The Annales*, a chronicle of English history, that Sir Thomas Roe had been appointed ambassador to “the great Maghoore whome some corrupty call Mogall,” who was “a mightie, opulent, and civill prince, and is the ninth in descent from the Scythian Tamberlaine.”<sup>56</sup> Purchas’s vision of impending Christian triumph was not consistent with the Mughal Empire’s fame nor the accounts of the Mughals in the *Pilgrimes*.

### Perceiving and Describing the Mughal Empire

Samuel Purchas viewed his collection as a progression towards complete knowledge of the world, which would assist English expansion. His conviction that England’s empire was preordained had to be confirmed in each account from an English traveler. The persuasiveness of his collection depended on his “pilgrimes.” He introduced the works of the East India Company’s factors, sailors, and captains by once again describing these men as actors in a “Scenicall Historie, or a Historicall Scene.”<sup>57</sup> To fit Purchas’s historical interpretation of India, the travelers needed to recount the spiritual and political failings of the Mughals and Indians. The accounts that followed Purchas’s introduction did not satisfy this narrative.

William Hawkins was the first English writer in the *Pilgrimes* to offer a detailed description of the Mughal Empire. Hawkins was a captain in the third voyage funded by the Company, which departed for Asia in March 1607. He was charged with the “delivery of his Majesty’s letters to the Princes of Cambaya and Surate.”<sup>58</sup> According to the Company’s minutes, Hawkins was selected for this task on the grounds of his “experience and language,” as he was fluent in Turkish, and Jahangir was descended from Central Asian Turks.<sup>59</sup> It’s unclear where he acquired this knowledge. Several historians have speculated on his life prior to his involvement with the Company. He may have previously been a merchant for the Levant Company, but he did not offer any details about past journeys in his writings. His original journal of his residence in India is no longer extant. Parts of his account were preserved in the extracts published by Purchas. The Company directed every captain and factor to keep “Continuall & true Journalls” for the “better direction of posteritie.”<sup>60</sup> Hawkins could not have known that his journal would be printed

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Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 243.

<sup>55</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 1:252.

<sup>56</sup> John Stow, *The Annales, or a Generall Chronicle of England* (London, 1615), 945.

<sup>57</sup> Purchas, 3:355-356.

<sup>58</sup> Court Minutes of the East India Company, 27 January 1606/1607, IOR/B/3, India Office Records, British Library.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> “Commission from the Company, 9th March, 1606/1607,” in *The Register of Letters of the Governour and*



in the *Pilgrimes*, but he was aware the text would serve as documentation of his activities for the EIC.

Hawkins wrote daily while he lived in India and concluded his log with a “briefe Discourse of the strength, wealth, and Government” of the Mughals.<sup>61</sup> He outlined the *mansabdar* system, through which Emperor Jahangir granted titles and revenue to a corps of military commanders, courtiers, and civil servants. Hawkins used European titles, such as Duke, Marquis, and Earl, to distinguish the various ranks, implying this arrangement was similar to European nobility. He divided Jahangir’s wealth into separate categories of jewels, bullion, and animals, listed the quantity of each item, and acknowledged that some objects were too numerous to count. He noted, “of rich Diamants [sic], Balance Rubies, Rubies and old Emerods [sic], there is an infinite number.”<sup>62</sup> Pramod Nayar has suggested that Englishmen described Indian treasure as abundant and immeasurable to emphasize the unnaturalness of their society.<sup>63</sup> Wealth symbolized the perversion of civic life in India, where rulers consumed the property of their citizens. Hawkins alluded to the Mughal emperor’s right to seize noblemen’s assets upon their death but wrote that Jahangir “dealeth well with [their children], possessing them with their Fathers Land, dividing it amongst them.”<sup>64</sup> Hawkins did not use his observations to outline Mughal corruption or royal avarice.

Hawkins’s portrayal of Jahangir was not entirely favorable. He stated that the emperor took too much pleasure in punishing unfaithful subjects and public executions.<sup>65</sup> However, Hawkins thought the Mughals’ prestige and civility would advance England’s fame, for Jahangir was “thought to be the greatest Emperour of the East, for Wealth, Land, and force of Men.”<sup>66</sup> He may have even overstated the volume of Jahangir’s wealth in order to demonstrate that the emperor would be a valuable trading partner for the Company. In 1617, Joseph Salbank, a factor in Agra, submitted his description of India to the EIC. He noted that Jahangir’s wealth was great, “yet cannot amount unto that exceeding height that Captain Hawkins hath very fabulously [declared?] of it.”<sup>67</sup> Jahangir had frequently deflected Hawkins’s efforts to obtain a commercial partnership between England and the Mughal Empire. By highlighting the emperor’s fortune, Hawkins expressed to the Company’s directors the difficulty of compelling such an empire to accommodate their demands.<sup>68</sup>

Hawkins took detailed daily notes, but his account was impressionistic, offering discrete pieces of information on courtly life without a broader analysis of Mughal society or history. He oriented his journal towards how the English might obtain an economic partnership with

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*Company of Merchants of London trading into the East Indies, 1600-1619*, ed. George Birdwood (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893), 116-117.

<sup>61</sup> William Hawkins, “William Hawkins, his Relations of the Occurents which happened in the time of his residence in India,” in *Hakluytus Posthumus or, Purchas his Pilgrimes*, ed. Samuel Purchas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), 3:29.

<sup>62</sup> Hawkins, 3:33.

<sup>63</sup> Nayar, *English Writing and India*, 12-13.

<sup>64</sup> Hawkins, “Relations,” 3:34.

<sup>65</sup> Hawkins, 3:38-41.

<sup>66</sup> Hawkins, 3:36.

<sup>67</sup> “Joseph Salbank to the East India Company, the 22nd of November, 1617,” in *Letters Received by the East India Company from its Servants in the East*, ed. Frederick Charles Danvers and William Foster (London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1896-1902), 7:189.

<sup>68</sup> Rahul Sapra, *The Limits of Orientalism: Seventeenth-Century Representations of India* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 49.

the Mughals. He did not use his notes to suggest that the Mughals' political authority be overthrown. Hawkins's account aligns with Joan-Pau Rubies's suggestion that sixteenth and seventeenth-century Portuguese writers "offered distinct images of India for European readers, but rarely attempted to define Indian civilization."<sup>69</sup> English travelers exhibited a similar focus on practical concerns and information that could help the EIC forge a relationship with the emperor.<sup>70</sup> Hawkins's goal was to demonstrate that he was a skillful observer and capable of obtaining confidential information from the Mughals. His journal was not consistent with Samuel Purchas's dismissal of the Mughal Empire.

The accounts of Hawkins and his fellow travelers should not be considered as coherent and fixed commentaries on the Mughals and Indians.<sup>71</sup> The EIC and collectors like Purchas did not dictate the structure of Hawkins's writing. It benefited Hawkins to offer a number of different images of the Mughals, which could suit various audiences, rather than a singular interpretation. He focused on readily available information that could be useful to the Company and would present him as one of a few men advancing England's interests in the midst of a sophisticated empire. He attempted to capture the different forms of Mughal political power and the disposition of the Mughal emperor. William Finch, a factor who accompanied William Hawkins, expressed a greater interest than Hawkins in Mughal history. Like Hawkins, little is known about Finch's life prior to his work for the Company.<sup>72</sup> In Jahangir's palace at Agra, Finch observed paintings of the emperor's ancestors, including "Acabar his Father, Hamowne his Grand-father, Babur his great Grand-father, who first set foote into India, with thirtie of his Nobles."<sup>73</sup> Finch was aware of Babur's conquest of India and the formation of the Mughal Empire. He visited the tomb of Akbar while traveling from Agra to Lahore and remarked that this emperor "sometimes thought the World too little for him."<sup>74</sup> Unlike Purchas, Finch seemed to appreciate Jahangir's imperial heritage. Both Hawkins and Finch dramatized the Mughal Empire without an explicit colonial ideology.

In addition to recounting Jahangir's lineage, Finch described Hindu religious practices. He visited a temple dedicated to the god Rama, where he observed the Brahmins "record the names of all such Indians as wash themselves in the River running thereby; which custome they say, hath continued foure lacks of yeeres (which is three hundred ninetie foure thousand, and five hundred yeeres before the Worlds Creation)."<sup>75</sup> The Brahmins' records defied Christian biblical chronology. Finch emphasized this miscalculation to demonstrate that only Christians could access true historical knowledge. Purchas reinforced this assessment by commenting in the margins that these records were "Indian fables."<sup>76</sup> Finch was interested in Hindu traditions,

<sup>69</sup> Joan-Pau Rubies, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance: South India through European Eyes, 1250-1625* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5.

<sup>70</sup> Miles Ogborn, *Indian Ink: Script and Print in the Making of the English East India Company* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 5.

<sup>71</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Frank Submissions: The Company and the Mughals between Sir Thomas Roe and Sir William Norris," in *The Worlds of the East India Company*, ed. H. V. Bowen, Margarete Lincoln, and Nigel Rigby (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002), 70.

<sup>72</sup> James Burnley and Basil Morgan, "Finch, William (d. 1613)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>73</sup> William Finch, "Observations of William Finch, Merchant, taken out of his large Journall," in *Hakluytus Posthumus or, Purchas his Pilgrimes*, ed. Samuel Purchas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), 4:55.

<sup>74</sup> Finch, 4:76.

<sup>75</sup> Finch, 4:66.

<sup>76</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 4:66.

but implied their practices were misguided. In the modern-day city of Allahabad, he noted monuments to “Baba Adam, and Mama Navah, (as they call them) and of their Progenie, with Pictures of Noah and his Descent” and remarked, “Indians supposed that Man was heere created.”<sup>77</sup> Purchas used Finch’s account to support his theory that Hinduism contained traces of Christianity. He wrote that Finch had observed “Mon[uments] of Adam and Eve, and of the Creation.”<sup>78</sup> Christian theology had been diluted and misremembered in India. Purchas believed Englishmen could restore Indians’ former knowledge of God. Finch did not use this Christian scriptural framework for Hinduism. Unlike Purchas, he did not see Indians within a hierarchy of human development that demanded English intervention.

Purchas attempted to collate Hawkins and Finch’s accounts into a comprehensive body of knowledge. He noted on Finch’s text to “see Capt. Hawkins former relations” and “see that which follows in Sir T[homas] Roes Journall.”<sup>79</sup> English scholars often left comments in the margins of books to mention similar sources or elucidate an argument.<sup>80</sup> Purchas seemed to suggest that his accounts could be layered on top of one another to create a complete image of India.<sup>81</sup> This editorial technique reflects an obsession with gathering as much information as possible, even if contradictory.<sup>82</sup> Purchas further confused the description of India in the *Pilgrimes* by including reports from minor figures, including sailors and servants. Their information was often superficial and lacked any new insight into Mughal society.

Nicholas Withington was among the minor factors whose journals were published in the *Pilgrimes*. Withington traveled through the modern-day region of Sindh in Pakistan to purchase textiles and indigo. He wrote that the inhabitants were “Razbootches, Banians, and Boloches: in Cities and great Townes, the Governours are Mogols. The Countrey people are rude, naked from the wast [sic] upwards, with Turbants contrary to the Mogoll fashion.”<sup>83</sup> Razbootches could refer to Rajputs, who were members of a loosely organized clan in northern India.<sup>84</sup> The Boloches were likely the Baluchi, an ethnic group also native to the region. The third category Withington mentioned was the Banians, an occupational caste that included merchants and moneylenders from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds. Withington lacked sensitivity to the distinctions between Indian social classes and communities. He disparaged the “countrey people” in the region without clarifying their religion or ethnicity, except to remark that they wore their turbans differently than the Mughals. This description suggests an interest in knowing Indian peoples, as well as an inability or unwillingness to obtain more information. Indian culture was not fully realized and explicated in his account, yet he did not contribute to a worldview in which Indians and Mughals were naturally inferior. Instead, Withington wrote to assist fellow English merchants in profiting from the Mughal Empire.

As indicated by the writings of Hawkins, Finch, and Withington, English travelers’

<sup>77</sup> Finch, “Observations,” 4:67.

<sup>78</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 4:67.

<sup>79</sup> Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, 4:74.

<sup>80</sup> Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton, “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read his Livy,” *Past and Present*, 129, no. 1 (1990), 40.

<sup>81</sup> Johnson, “Buying Stories,” 438.

<sup>82</sup> See Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

<sup>83</sup> Nicholas Withington, “Extracts of a Tractate, written by Nicholas Withington,” in *Hakluytus Posthumus or, Purchas his Pilgrimes*, ed. Samuel Purchas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), 4:171.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Kerr, ed., *A General History and Collection of Voyages and Travels* (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Company, 1813), 9:131.

responses to the Mughal Empire cannot be easily categorized. They hesitated to undertake a detailed account of Indian and Mughal history. Pramod Nayar argues that this period marked the “emergence of a cultural imaginary which in turn facilitated and justified a collective thinking about non-European regions as possible colonies.”<sup>85</sup> Finch, Hawkins, and Withington occasionally expressed disapproval of unfamiliar customs and religious practices. These moments of prejudice were not coupled together within a comprehensive theory. They were uninterested in devising how best to control Indians and, moreover, they did not share one image of the Mughal Empire. The fragmentary nature of their writings reflects the disconnected composition of the *Pilgrimes*. By emphasizing the importance of empiricism and firsthand accounts, Purchas inadvertently created a collection of disparate voices.<sup>86</sup> In a letter to Archbishop George Abbot, the ambassador Sir Thomas Roe expressed the need for a thorough history of India: “broken and undependant pieces and fragments, have little light in them, lesse pleasure and no profit: so that he that would doe any thing in this matter should write a history, and take it somewhat high, to shew the beginning and growth of this Empire ... the ambitions and divisions in the present state.”<sup>87</sup> Despite Purchas’s claim to complete knowledge, the travelers in the *Pilgrimes* did not attempt a full appraisal of Indian society.

Sir Thomas Roe called for comprehensive accounts of India, but his writings followed a similar format to Hawkins and Finch’s works. His embassy was intended to bolster the Company’s reputation with the Mughals. The factors had repeatedly recommended that the Company send an ambassador appointed by James I, in order to demonstrate that England was a worthy ally for the Mughal Empire. Roe seemed ideally suited to promote the EIC in Jahangir’s court. His family was well known in London, as both his grandfather and uncle had served as Lord Mayor.<sup>88</sup> He was educated at Magdalen College in Oxford and joined the households of Prince Henry and Princess Elizabeth in 1603. His time as a courtier left him impoverished and willing to accept the Company’s offer of a diplomatic position.

Roe kept a daily journal from his arrival at Surat in September 1615 until his departure in 1618. He recorded geographic and topographic details about each city and village he visited. He tracked latitude and longitude as well and noted corrections to Gerardus Mercator’s map projection, first published in 1569.<sup>89</sup> Gentlemen studied geography to learn of recent European discoveries and prepare for careers in government.<sup>90</sup> Roe’s education at Oxford may have encouraged him to revise Mercator’s work as a civic act. In his journal, he criticized the “falseness of our Maps, both of Mercator, and all others, and their ignorance in this Countrey.”<sup>91</sup> While many English travelers collected data on Indian geography, Roe was able to share his observations with fellow gentlemen and members of James I’s court. George Carew, the Earl of Totnes, wrote to Roe in January 1617 and asked that he “continue the curious description of that huge monar-

<sup>85</sup> Pramod Nayar, *Colonial Voices: The Discourses of Empire* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 5-6.

<sup>86</sup> Rubies, *Travel and Ethnology*, 352.

<sup>87</sup> Sir Thomas Roe, “Observations Collected out of the Journall of Sir Thomas Roe, Knight, Lord Embassadour from His Majestie of Great Britaine, to the Great Mogol,” in *Hakluytus Posthumus or, Purchas his Pilgrimes*, ed. Samuel Purchas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), 4:446-447.

<sup>88</sup> Michael Strachan, “Roe, Sir Thomas (1581–1644),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>89</sup> Sir Thomas Roe, Journal by Sir Thomas Roe (here named Rowe) of his Voyage to the East Indies, 6 March 1615 - 27 November 1615, Add MS 19277, f. 7r-f. 8r, Western Manuscripts, British Library.

<sup>90</sup> Cormack, *Charting an Empire*, 45.

<sup>91</sup> Roe, “Observations,” 4:440.

chy in which all cosmographers are very much mistaken.”<sup>92</sup> Roe was one of many advisors and scholars seeking favor through new and precise knowledge of foreign states. Like Hawkins and Finch, he used English interest in descriptions of foreign places to prove his usefulness. He was unconcerned with constructing a more thorough analysis of Mughal development.

Roe fluctuated between praising and criticizing the Mughals and Indians. He noted that prior to Babur’s invasion of India, “these Countries were governed by divers petty Gentile Princes, not knowing any Religion but worshipped according to their several Idolatries.”<sup>93</sup> Babur had imposed order on a divided people. The Mughals did not force Hindus to convert to Islam, instead “by the Law of Conquest [left] consciences at liberty.”<sup>94</sup> Roe’s praise for the Mughals’ tolerance fits with Rahul Sapra’s argument that English travelers contrasted Mughal gentility with “primitive” Indians.<sup>95</sup> Roe dismissively noted that Hindus ascribed divinity to animals and the Ganges River.<sup>96</sup> He praised Muslims for their knowledge of “Philosophy and the Mathematics” and their ability to “talk of Aristotle, Euclid, Averroes, and other Authors.”<sup>97</sup> According to Roe, the Mughals shared in the Greek and Roman classical tradition, defying Purchas’s suggestion that Mughals were ignorant of higher knowledge.

Roe balanced his description of Mughal accomplishments with his insistence that a diplomatic relationship with this state was impossible. In a letter to James I, Roe described Jahangir as “one of the mightiest Princes in Asia.”<sup>98</sup> Yet he added that Mughal government was “uncertain, without written law, without Policy, the Customs mingled with barbarism, religions infinite.”<sup>99</sup> The Mughals had failed to create an orderly, civil state. Roe’s description of the Mughal Empire was intended to flatter James and preserve Roe’s reputation. He wrote that factions at court and deceitful political advisors had brought the empire to the brink of a civil war and commented, “all the policy and wicked craft of the Divell is not practised alone in Europe.”<sup>100</sup> Mughal courtiers were equated to Machiavellian politicians.<sup>101</sup> By portraying the nobility as naturally malicious, Roe defended his failure to establish a permanent treaty. His criticisms created into a dramatic narrative in which he was the only virtuous man at court. He suggested that chaos and mismanagement prevented him from obtaining a treaty. However, he did not argue that England should manage or replace Mughal institutions. Therefore, these judgments cannot be attributed entirely to a “colonial imaginary.”<sup>102</sup>

In addition to critiquing Mughal governance, Roe attempted to diminish India’s fame and English interest in the region. In a letter to George Abbot in 1615, he noted that foreign places “cause much expectation in themselves of strange matters among the Vulgar, such as I, supposing they should have subject of worthy and large discourse,” but “here the remoteness is the greatness.”<sup>103</sup> Abbot likely understood Roe’s reference to a proverb from the Roman historian Tacitus: “everything unknown is thought to be magnificent.” Roe justified his unwillingness

<sup>92</sup> Lord George Carew to Sir Thomas Roe, 18 January 1617, SP 14/90, f. 35, National Archives.

<sup>93</sup> Roe, “Observations,” 4:450.

<sup>94</sup> Roe, 4:450.

<sup>95</sup> Sapra, *Limits of Orientalism*, 27-28.

<sup>96</sup> Roe, “Observations,” 4:451.

<sup>97</sup> Roe, 4:451.

<sup>98</sup> Roe’s Journal, f. 76r.

<sup>99</sup> Roe, f. 76r.

<sup>100</sup> Roe, “Observations,” 4:461.

<sup>101</sup> Rubies, *Travellers and Cosmographers*, 42-43.

<sup>102</sup> Nayar, *Colonial Voices*, 5-6; Raman, *Framing ‘India,’* 3.

<sup>103</sup> Roe, “Observations,” 4:442.

to stay in India and write a comprehensive history of this country by declaring that there was nothing exceptional to be discovered. He seemed to recognize that his account left large gaps in its depiction of Indian and Mughal society, and he attempted to blame those gaps on his subject matter.

During his residency, Roe visited the city of Chittoor, the ancient seat of Porus, who was defeated by Alexander the Great. Emperor Akbar seized Chittoor from the descendants of Porus and left the city in ruins. Roe wrote that the Mughals “have brought all the Ancient Cities to ruin ... I know not out of what reason, unless they would have nothing remembered of greatness beyond their beginnings, as if their family and the world were equals.”<sup>104</sup> The Mughals did not respect the value of other, more historic, civilizations. In this instance, Roe anticipated the British orientalist trope of despotic Asian rulers. He did not consistently use this image to characterize Jahangir or Mughal nobles. Roe’s conflicting representations of Mughals and Indians indicate that he struggled to reconcile his positions as a diplomat, a gentleman-traveler, and a representative of the East India Company. He offered different interpretations of the Mughal Empire to suit a variety of audiences and secure his own reputation.

The accounts previously discussed represent a range of strategies for writing about India and advancing one’s status in England. The *Pilgrimes* featured the journal of another English gentleman with a particularly unique approach. In a letter to Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, Roe wrote, “the factors have promised me an Historiographer, as fit for it as Xenophon for Cyrus or Homer for Achilles.”<sup>105</sup> He noted that Thomas Coryate might be suited for the position, as he had “not left a Pillar, nor tomb ... unobserved, almost in all Asia.”<sup>106</sup> Coryate was educated in Oxford and became well known for traveling on foot through France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands.<sup>107</sup> He published *Coryat’s Crudities*, a lengthy account of his journeys, in 1611. In 1612, he departed England for Istanbul, hoping to increase his fame by visiting the Middle East and India. He reached Jahangir’s capital of Ajmer in July 1615. He dispatched several letters and notes from India to England, which were published in 1616 as *Thomas Coryate Traveller for the English Wits* and reprinted in the *Pilgrimes*.

Coryate traveled to India without any intention of engaging in trade or diplomacy. He imagined himself as a classical hero, noting that he hoped to travel abroad for another seven years, “to make my voyage answerable for the time to the travels of Ulysses.”<sup>108</sup> His description of India created rich opportunities for self-aggrandizement. He suggested he was a traveling philosopher who gained wisdom through direct experience, as when he wrote of seeing the Indus River, which was “so much ennobled by the ancient both Poets and Historiographers, Greek and Latin.”<sup>109</sup> He worked to learn Persian, Turkish, and Arabic while residing at the Mughal court. Unlike many of the Company’s employees, he may have been aware that Samuel Purchas would publish his letters. He described Purchas as “the great Collector of the Lucubrations of sundry Classical Authors” and thanked him for lending Coryate a description of Constantinople.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>104</sup> Roe, 4:326.

<sup>105</sup> Roe’s Journal, f. 88v.

<sup>106</sup> Roe, f. 88v.

<sup>107</sup> Michael Strachan, “Coryate, Thomas (1577?–1617),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., Oct 2006), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6364>.

<sup>108</sup> Thomas Coryate, *Thomas Coryate Traveller for the English Wits: Greeting from the Court of the Great Mogul* (London, 1616), 6.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas Coryate, “Letters from Thomas Coryat,” in *Hakluytus Posthumus or, Purchas his Pilgrimes*, ed. Samuel Purchas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), 4:471.

<sup>110</sup> Coryate, 4:481.

Roe had been cautious to distance himself from Mughal customs and maintain the appearance of objectivity. Conversely, Coryate overtly displayed his affinity for foreign places.<sup>111</sup> He signed a letter as the “Hierosolymitan-Syrian-Mesopotamian-Armenian-Median-Parthian-Persian-Indian Legge-stretcher of Odcomb.”<sup>112</sup> He had styled himself in the *Crudities* as a “legge-stretcher” for walking during part of his journey across Europe. By attaching the other titles, he expressed that the flexibility of his identity and the extent of his travels were a source of pride. He wrote that he hoped to have his image “expressed in my next Book, sitting upon an Elephant,” a desire that was fulfilled on the title page of *Thomas Coryate Traveller for the English Wits*.<sup>113</sup> Coryate was willing to adopt aspects of Indian culture in order to entice his audience.

Unlike the Company’s representatives, Coryate often appeared to unquestioningly embrace the Mughals as worthy of emulation. In a speech to Jahangir, he requested permission to visit Timur’s tomb in Samarkand, the former capital of the Timurid Empire. He referred to Timur as the Lord of Corners to signify that he was “the highest and supreme Monarch of the Universe” and commented that, “perhaps he is not altogether so famous in his own country of Tartaria, as in England.”<sup>114</sup> Coryate considered Mughal history a narrative of imperial triumph. However, he also criticized Islam and Hinduism as misguided, perhaps to assure readers that he had not converted to their beliefs. He observed the “notable spectacle” of Hindus bathing in the Ganges River and declared that this ceremony was proof of “Superstition and Impietie most abominable in the highest degree of these brutish Ethnicks.”<sup>115</sup> In addition, Coryate debated with a Muslim man over the legitimacy of their respective religions. He argued that Muslims could not attain the scholarly achievements of Englishmen, because God would never reveal “his will to a people altogether misled in ignorance and blindness.”<sup>116</sup> In this encounter, Coryate seemed to anticipate the orientalist belief that Muslims were not capable of rational knowledge and could only be an object of study.<sup>117</sup> Yet his enthusiasm for the heritage and customs of the Mughal Empire complicates this position. Coryate, like other English travelers, did not adhere to a single ideological approach towards Mughals and Indians. He attempted to impress readers with his acceptance into a powerful empire while preserving his identity as an Englishman.

## Conclusion

Samuel Purchas hoped the volume of accounts included in the *Pilgrimes* would preclude the misinformation evident in historical sources.<sup>118</sup> His authors did not create clarity, they only added to the multitude of opinions. Travelers did not collectively perceive the Mughals as despotic rulers or Indians as ready for Christian conversion. Their accounts often offered positive assessments of Mughal government and India’s distinctive place in history.<sup>119</sup> In contrast, in the preface to his translation of the Bible into Algonquian, John Eliot described Native Americans in New England as “without law, without letters, without riches, or means to procure any such

<sup>111</sup> Singh, *Colonial Narratives/Cultural Dialogues*, 9

<sup>112</sup> Coryate, “Letters,” 4:479.

<sup>113</sup> Coryate, 4:475.

<sup>114</sup> Coryate, 4:485.

<sup>115</sup> Coryate, 4:488.

<sup>116</sup> Thomas Coryate, *Mr Thomas Coryate to his Friends in England Sendeth Greeting* (London, 1618), D4v.

<sup>117</sup> Alexander L. Macfie, ed., *Orientalism: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 4.

<sup>118</sup> Johnson, “Buying Stories,” 435-436.

<sup>119</sup> Vanita Seth, *Europe’s Indians: Producing Racial Difference, 1500-1900* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 5.

thing; a people that are deep in darkness.”<sup>120</sup> Unlike the societies English settlers encountered in the New World, the Mughal Empire had an imperial lineage and forms of wealth recognized by Europeans. Yet travelers could not unreservedly praise Mughal society without risking their relationships with the East India Company, their English patrons, and James I. Therefore, Indians and Mughals could be both civil and uncivil, depending on how the description might benefit the author.

The writings of the first Englishmen in India have seldom been studied within the editorial context of the *Pilgrimes*. The *Pilgrimes* expressed a mandate for colonization based upon providential design. English travelers did not adhere to Purchas’s model for historical analysis. William Hawkins, William Finch, and, at times, Sir Thomas Roe challenged Purchas’s vision of a global escalation in conversions. Their accounts remained discrete and unconnected, not marshaled into a description of India that demanded English intervention. They contradicted Purchas’s theory that Islam and the Mughal Empire were in decline. In the early seventeenth century, English travelers were more likely to consider the Mughals as a desirable trading partner, than to describe them as ineffective rulers and an uncivilized people. While Purchas made disparaging comments towards Indians, he did not possess the necessary political will for those comments to be accepted and integrated into a colonial ideology. The writings of Purchas and his travelers demonstrate why this ideology lacked force, as so many images of India were competing for a reader’s confidence in the early seventeenth century.

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<sup>120</sup> John Eliot, *The Holy Bible containing the Old Testament and the New, Translated into the Indian Language* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1663), A3v.