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*Lieux et milieux de savoirs :
pour une écologie des pratiques savantes*

sous la direction de
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From the Field to the Bookshop. Shaping Persepolis in the Early 18th century

Emanuele Giusti*

Abstract

Between the 17th and the 18th centuries three travelers — Jean Chardin, Engelbert Kaempfer and Cornelis de Bruijn — tried to represent accurately the Iranian monuments of Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam. Social, material, and environmental factors influenced the travelers' observations on the field as well as the transformation of their notes and sketches in books and engravings designed for the public. In spite of the travelers' attempts at overcoming the difficulties of fieldwork and reproducing in print the reality of Persepolis, their claims to truth — especially de Bruijn's — were put in jeopardy not only by the nature of Persepolis as an unstable environment for the development of a historical knowledge, but also by their efforts to crystallize it through mobile material supports.

Keywords: Jean Chardin, Engelbert Kaempfer, Cornelis de Bruijn, Persepolis, travel, Safavid Iran, antiquarianism, orientalism, engravings, scientific instruments.

Résumé

Entre le XVII^e et le XVIII^e siècle, trois voyageurs — Jean Chardin, Engelbert Kaempfer et Cornelis de Bruijn — ont tenté de représenter avec précision les monuments iraniens de Persépolis et Naqsh-e Rostam. Des facteurs sociaux, matériels et environnementaux ont influencé leurs observations sur le terrain ainsi que la transformation de leurs notes et croquis en livres et gravures destinés au public. Malgré leurs tentatives de surmonter les difficultés du terrain et reproduire sur papier Persépolis en sa réalité, leurs prétentions à la vérité — surtout celles de de Bruijn — ont été mises en cause par la nature de Persépolis comme environnement instable pour le développement d'une connaissance historique et par leurs tentatives de la cristalliser à travers des supports matériels mobiles.

Mots-clés : Jean Chardin, Engelbert Kaempfer, Cornelis de Bruijn, Persepolis, voyages, Perse safavide, antiquaire, orientalisme, gravures, instruments scientifiques.

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Introduction – Antiquity and Exoticism in the Early 18th Century

Early modern Europe was deeply interested both in antiquity and in the “exotic”, far-away lands and peoples perceived as different. The study of antiquity rested on a textual tradition, but it could also involve remnants of cities and buildings (Schnapp, 1993). The exotic could be experienced by traveling and through new traditions stemming from travel, formed by maps, books and pictures (Schmidt, 2015). These two areas of knowledge were not uniform or static. Antiquity could be clarified, consolidated, or criticized (Grafton, 1992), as is shown by the far-flung *querelle* of the Ancients and the Moderns (Fumaroli, 2001). The exotic could change its meaning, expand indefinitely, its parts be rearranged (Gallegos Gabilondo, 2018). What is more, antiquity and the exotic could overlap and question assumptions on history and identity: what if far-away people have an antiquity of their own? What if this exotic antiquity does not correspond to the most trustworthy classical authors, nor to the sacred history of the Bible (Rossi, 1979)? In this paper I will try to show how a place, or better still, an environment was materially assembled within the early 18th-century Republic of Letters, where one of these unsettling intersections took place.

In the late 15th century a Venetian ambassador to Iran, Giosafat Barbaro, saw mysterious ruins in the province of Fars: those of Persepolis, one of the archeological sites of the Marv Dasht plain and the greatest monument of the Achaemenid dynasty (6th-4th century BCE).¹ Barbaro did not know this archeological truth of ours. He gathered information on the spot, then penned a description according to his cultural background (Barbaro, 1543, p. 51r-51v). He was not the first European to write about the ruins, but his description circulated widely. During the 17th century, as new travelers approached the site (Invernizzi, 2005, p. 69-89, 173-408), a new tradition took shape. Besides the description of Chilminar — as the site of Persepolis was known by one of its modern Persian names (Allen, 2007) — now travelers also wrote about other nearby ruins, the Achaemenid and Sassanid monuments of Naqsh-e Rostam.

This story unfolds in the context of early modern Eurasian circulation of goods and peoples and in that of European shifting experiences of Safavid Iran (Matthee, 2009, 2016). The interactions between Europe and

¹ Denominations of monuments in Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam vary in scientific literature; for the reader's convenience, I will adopt those used in the work of Eric F. Schmidt (1953, 1970), easily accessible online: <https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/publications/oriental-institute-publications-oip>.

Iran were motivated by diplomacy and commerce (Floor & Herzig, 2012); however, as was the case for other parts of Asia, an interest in religion, history and “Oriental” knowledge had a role to play too (Russell, 1994; Hamilton & al., 2005; Brentjes, 2010; Loop & al., 2017; Bevilacqua, 2018). The enthusiasm of travelers for the ruins led to an explosion of contradictory information and armchair scholars started to pay attention. Some questions arose: who built those once grandiose structures? When? And for what purpose? Nobody could agree on their historical meaning (Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1991).

These questions are interesting because they involved a familiar type of object which nonetheless resisted a definitive interpretation. Europeans understood ruins in the light of a textual tradition and/or by reading the inscriptions they may carry. In the case of Persepolis, no interpretation based on texts was conclusive, since evidence from Greek and Latin authors, or even from the Old Testament, was incomplete or conflicting. In addition, nobody could decipher the cuneiform inscriptions found at the site (Mousavi, 2012, p. 113-122). This predicament increased the interest in the ruins within the Republic of Letters and stimulated a demand for better descriptions (e.g. Baudelot de Dairval, 1686, vol. 2, p. 721-722).

Three travelers successfully rose to the challenge in the following decades. Jean Chardin (1643-1713), a French merchant, visited Persepolis in 1666, 1667 and 1674 (Van der Cruysse, 1998). Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716), a German physician then employed in the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie, the Dutch East India Company (VOC), went there in 1685 (Haberland, 1990; Haberland, 1993; Haberland, 2014). Finally, Cornelis de Bruijn (1652-1726/7), a Dutch painter, visited the site between 1704 and 1705 (Drijvers, de Hond & Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1997). While almost forty years passed between Chardin’s first visit and de Bruijn’s stay, all three travelers published their accounts between 1711 and 1712 (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 242-410; Kaempfer, 1712, p. 297-365; de Bruijn, 1711, p. 208-316).²

This coincidence caused a controversy. De Bruijn, after a discussion involving his patron Nicolaes Witsen, scholar and mayor of Amsterdam, and the humanist Gijsbert Cuper (Chen, 2009; Peters, 2010), published a

² While Chardin published the first volume of his travelogue in 1686, the complete edition, including the account of Persepolis, was only published in 1711 in two different printings (3 volumes in-4° or 10 volumes in-8°). While a new and more complete edition was issued in 1735 (4 volumes in-4°), a critical edition appeared in 1811, edited by the Orientalist scholar Louis-Mathieu Langlès (10 volumes in-8° and an atlas). I will use this one to cite the text, while the images will be from the 1711 in-4° edition.

pamphlet debating the differences between Chardin's and Kaempfer's descriptions and his own (de Bruijn, 1714). He tried to demonstrate that his competitors were imprecise or wrong, because they spent too little time on the site and did not master the art of drawing. Only his relation was a truthful reproduction of the ruins:

That is why I have spent there about three months, with the intention to contradict any reproach and to deserve the trust of my fellow countrymen, as the first to have made the World aware, according to the truth, of the Rests of such a famous and 2000-years-old Work, so well described — so I think — in its proper original form according to Art, as is represented from life in the Prints as accurately as possible. (de Bruijn, 1714, p. 50)³

These sources and debates are well-known (Drijvers, 1989; Peters, 1989; Drijvers, 1991; Drijvers, 1993; Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1997), but it is worth going back to them. In fact, the literature discussing the early modern European reception of ancient Persian ruins displays two weak points. First, most of this literature has been produced by archeologists and/or ancient history scholars. As a result, despite its pioneering character and a clear awareness of the problem (Kuhrt, 1991), early modern descriptions of the ruins are often placed in a somewhat teleological history moving from error to truth: the emphasis mainly falls on what travelers “misunderstood” or “got right”. In my opinion, this approach does not allow us to fully understand the contexts in which the ruins were experienced, reproduced, and circulated. Secondly, this literature tends to concentrate on single historical figures, undermining to some extent the study of the wider networks in which these events took place. The approach adopted in this paper — which is but a modest attempt at avoiding these pitfalls — seeks to put the travelers' experiences in the context of early modern knowledge building. A broad methodological model can be found in recent works about early modern perceptions of the history of philosophy (Levitin, 2015), Hinduism and Buddhism (App, 2010), or “exotic geography” (Schmidt, 2015, p. 145-161). At a different level, the concept of *milieu de savoir*, understood as an attempt at underlining the ultimately fluctuating and unattainable nature of

³ “Ten dien einde heb ik aldaer omtrent drie maenden doorgebracht, met dat inzicht, om alle berispingen te ontgaen, en by myn Landsgenoten den lof te verdienen, van de eerste geweest te zyn, die de Overblyfzelen van zoo een befaemd en over de 2000 Jaren oud werk aen de Wereld naer waerheid heeft bekend gemaakt, zoo wel in desselfs regte geschapenheid na de konst, zoo ik meene, beschreven, als in Printen met alle mogelyke naeukeurigheid na ‘t leven verbeeld.” All translations are mine unless is specified otherwise.

lieux de savoir (Jacob, 2014), will help me to bring attention to the following points.

Between the 17th and the 18th centuries, fierce debates raged through Europe about the reliability of classical authors, the value of the Biblical account as an infallible source for the history of mankind in comparison to “exotic” ones (Rossi, 1979), and more broadly about the standing of historiography as a form of valid knowledge (Borghero, 1983). It may be useful to take this context into account when considering the efforts made by the travelers to represent the ruins as accurately as possible (DaCosta Kaufmann, 1999; Burioni, 2013). In fact, although they deployed partially different strategies and showed different degrees of confidence in their claims to truth, all three travelers shared the aim of giving the ruins a definite material and historical identity. In fact, the travelers tried to establish the ruins as a *lien de savoir* and then to make it accessible in the form of a book. This portable Persepolis could be used to safely enquire about the history, art, and customs of ancient Persia. However, such a project was doomed to fail. As I will try to show, the travelers’ attempts at crystallizing the ruins were undermined by their fundamentally ecological nature. This was most apparent in the case of the most confident traveler, de Bruijn.

In fact, the site changed over time due to natural or man-made damages and was experienced by travelers in different ways. The ruins are best understood not as a regulated and immutable place for the development of knowledge, but as a complex environment where the result varies according to the shifting conditions of information gathering, classifying, and processing. I will analyze these issues in the first section of my work. When travelers reconstructed Persepolis at home in order to offer it to the public, the set of textual and visual information retrieved on the field was affected by the social and material conditions of the travelogue’s editing and publishing process. I will address these problems in the second section. To sum up, the on-field experience, as well as the material and intellectual tactics deployed to support the reconstructions of the ruins, were fragile, mobile, and interdependent. In the end, individual variability was such that it was impossible to form a universally acceptable knowledge in and about the ruins.

As an operative solution for the writing of this paper, I will discuss separately the field experience and the back-home reconstructions of the ruins as a *milieu de savoir*. In fact, both stages were connected and influenced each other, even if they contributed differently to the potential crystallization of Persepolis as a history laboratory.

On the Field

Travelers reached the ruins from the route connecting the Safavid capital of Isfahan with the Persian Gulf port of Bandar Abbas (Floor, 1999). In 17th century Iran, caravanserais made travel easier, but due to the deterioration of road security in the last decades of Safavid rule (Matthee, 2012, p. 148-151, 215-222) the three travelers may have had different experiences. The route was also hazardous because of its diverse geographical setting, exposing travelers to cold mountain weather as well as to the hot climate of the Persian Gulf. They all visited the site between autumn and winter, thus avoiding the summertime heat.⁴

Furthermore, not all of them were free to choose the duration of their stay. Business allowed Chardin to visit the site time and again, but never for more than a few days (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 319). Kaempfer had to find a compromise between the little time available in the caravan's timetable and the social pressure coming from his former employer, the Swedish ambassador Lodewyck Fabritius, who had requested him to describe the ruins on behalf of Nicolaes Witsen (Kaempfer, 1687; Kaempfer, 1965, p. 85-97; Haberland, 1990, p. 39-46). On the other hand, the "main aim" of de Bruijn's journey was the "examination of these antiquities" (de Bruijn, 1711, preface).⁵ De Bruijn had been directly instructed by Witsen to describe the ruins (Witsen, 1713) and provided with letters of recommendation (e.g. de Bruijn, 1711, p. 363; de Hond, 1997, p. 68). Hence, enjoying the hospitality of Dutch representatives and VOC officials, he could concentrate on his mission. The travelers tried to cope with the problem of time availability: Kaempfer skipped meals (Kaempfer, 1712, p. 335), de Bruijn mounted a field kitchen to avoid going back too often to the nearby village (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 224).

Another influencing factor was indeed the surrounding network of human settlements, from the local village of "Mircasgoon" (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 410) to the nearby city of Shiraz. The local inhabitants provided the travelers with food, tools, manpower and information about the ruins. The importance of local actors for the development of "European" knowledge has been widely discussed (Raj, 2007; Schaffer & al., 2009) and

⁴ Jean Chardin: from 13th to 19th February 1674 (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 410-413); Engelbert Kaempfer: from 2nd to 4th December 1685 (Kaempfer, 1965, p. 95-96); de Bruijn: from 9th November 1704 to 23rd January 1705 (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 208, 318). We do not know how much time Chardin spent at Persepolis during his first two trips in 1666 and 1667 (Van der Cruysse, 1998, p. 207-212).

⁵ "Want gelyk het onderzoeken dezer outheden het voornaemste oogmerk dezer tweede reize geweest is".

thus is hardly surprising. It is worth stressing all the same. First, the ability to tap into local resources could be an essential part of a traveler's way of materially dealing with the ruins: de Bruijn had to send for a stonecutter from Shiraz when he broke all his chisels trying to detach the sculptures which were to confirm the veracity of his description (de Bruijn, 1711, preface, p. 219; figure 1).

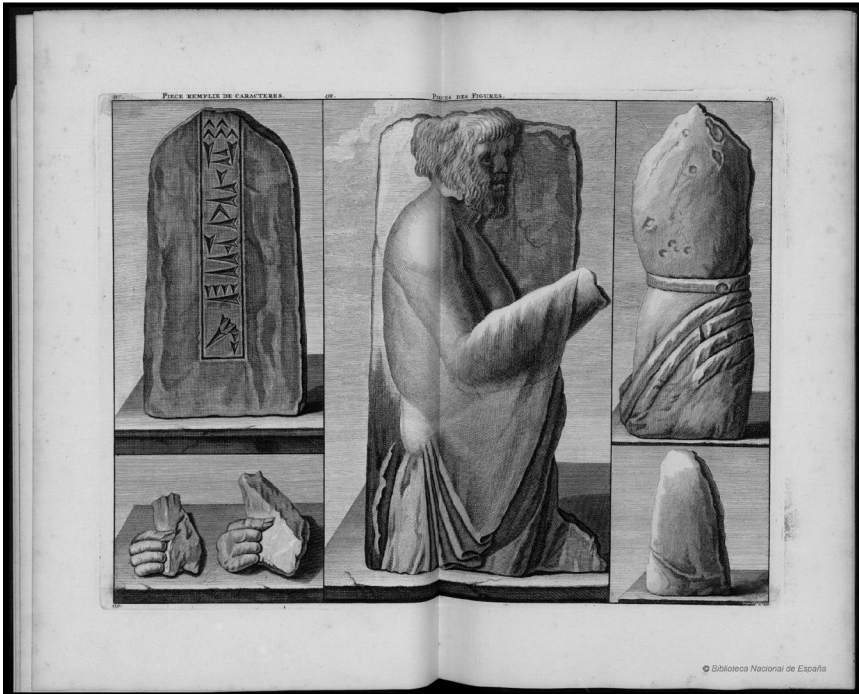


Figure 1 - Objects taken from Persepolis to Europe by Cornelis de Bruijn (de Bruijn, 1718, vol. 2, plates 137-140) (Source: Biblioteca Nacional de España)

Secondly, interaction with the same environment could produce different results even in a limited time interval. Chardin and Kaempfer visited “Mir-casgoon” during the same generation, but while Chardin gets to know more about the underground water conduits of Persepolis talking with local notables (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 331-335), Kaempfer must have met with different people, because he “heard nothing about them from the inhabitants of Myrgascun” (Kaempfer, 1712, p. 353).⁶ Finally, local actors disseminated interpretations of the ruins which were at variance with classical or

⁶ “nec de iis quicquam audivisse a Myrgascunensibus”.

biblical traditions (Mousavi, 2012, p. 73-94; Casale, 2017). The hero tales of Persian poetry and the definition of the ruins as “houses of idols” affected the travelers’ stance, even when they rejected these voices (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 334-340, 390; Kaempfer, 1712, p. 301-305, 315-317; de Bruijn, 1711, p. 227-228). To sum up, local interactions could help travelers assemble the ruins as a *lieu de savoir*, but more often they increased the complexity and instability of the conditions under which they operated.

- *Acquiring: The Senses and Their Enhancement*

The most basic task carried out by visitors was to acquire information through the senses: travelers experienced Persepolis first and foremost with their eyes and hands. Sight, often supported by touch, appears to have had two functions.

The first one would be to supply the material perception of the ruins: identifying colors, recognizing shapes and figures, roughly appreciate dimensions and proportions. Touch seemed to be instrumental in getting information about the nature and quality of the materials. However, the outcome of these operations was not uniform. For example, by analyzing their hardness and different colors, Chardin states that the building materials were not taken from the close Kuh-e Rahmat mountain (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 285-286). De Bruijn does the same thing but maintains the opposite (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 223-224). This was not inconsequential. Chardin’s opinion led him to believe that ancient Persians had the ability to move heavy materials over long distances, while de Bruijn ended up thinking that the monuments had mainly been cut out of the mountain.

This remark brings us to the second possible function of sight and touch, a reconstructive one. Just as they could process sensory information to understand construction techniques, the travelers could infer the past existence of lost structures from what was extant and hypothesize the initial appearance of the complex. This, in turn, was connected to its original function. According to de Bruijn, the columns had once supported arcades, an appropriate architectural feature for the palace of a king (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 227). For Chardin, instead, the columns had never supported any roof, the lack thereof being a suitable feature for a temple, his favorite hypothesis about Chilminar’s function (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 280-282). By applying this reconstructive practice, the travelers were trying to give a definite identity to the ruins, but the differences between their results suggest that the stability of Persepolis would be put in danger once a third party would go through its representations.

However, experiencing the ruins was not just about sight and touch. In one case, Chardin uses an auditory sensation to formulate a hypothesis

about the invisible inner structure of Naqsh-e Rostam's tombs. Having sent two of his servants to explore the chambers,

I told them to go on as much as the light could lead them, and being there, to shout with all their strength. When they did so, we heard their voices rolling in that cavity and saw countless storms of pigeons getting out from the three other openings. This led me to believe that the tombs, or recesses reciprocally separated, did not correspond to the façades and altars on the surface, but that there was just one vault from one end of the mountain to the other. (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 350)⁷

In another case, travelers used an indirect visual-cum-olfactory sensation to identify objects in a relief. While looking — possibly — at one of the decorated jamb of the western doorway in the northern wall of the Throne Hall in Persepolis, the travelers state that the cone-shaped vases at the foot of the main figure may be connected with the use of perfumes or spices (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 296; de Bruijn, 1711, p. 220). Chardin reminds us that “Perfumes are widely used in the Orient”; in the East Indies, he had seen “perfume vases which more or less looked like those on there” (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 296).⁸ Thus, senses could be activated through comparison with experience of a present-day world that resembled ancient Persia, since in this instance the Orient was thought to be immutable (Chardin, 1811, vol. 1, p. XXX-XXXI).

As we have seen, sometimes the acquisition of information was mediated by the senses of the servants. While Kaempfer probably had very few, or no personal servants at all, apparently Chardin had many of them and used them for the exploration of the underground conduits of Persepolis and the tombs of Naqsh-e Rostam (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 328-332, 346-352). While it is not always clear if they were his own servants, or villagers and passers-by recruited on the spot, also de Bruijn availed himself

⁷ “Je leur dis d’aller aussi avant que la lumière les pourroit conduire, et qu’étant là, ils criassent de toute leur force ; ce qu’ayant fait, nous entendions leur voix rouler dans cette cavité, et vîmes des bandes innombrables de pigeons se jeter dehors par les trois autres ouvertures : ce qui me donna sujet de croire qu’il n’y avoit point autant de tombeaux, ou de caves séparées l’une de l’autre, qu’il y avoit de façades et d’autels en perspective dessus, mais que ce n’étoit qu’une seule voûte d’un bout de la montagne à l’autre.”

⁸ “Les deux vases qui se voient devant cette figure royale, me paroissent être des cassolettes pour les suffumigations, dont l’on se sert dans les temples. L’usage des parfums est grand dans l’Orient [...] j’ai vu des vases à parfum, qui étoient à peu près faits comme ceux-ci, non-seulement à la côte des Indes, vers le cap de Comorin, mais encore en d’autres lieu où il n’y a point de mahométans.”

of the help of others when the task at hand was demanding or unsafe (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 213, 222, 226). Here, money availability was paramount: a reward was needed to persuade others to take on dangerous tasks (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 331). In this sense, differences in individual conditions of travel may have determined what a traveler could or could not do, just as individual differences in managing the information retrieved through the senses influenced the process of knowledge building. We may say that, in fact, this individual variability put at risk the stability of the Marv Dasht ruins as a *lieu de savoir* in the very first steps of its construction.

- *Classifying: Measurements and Instruments*

The development of a historical knowledge about and through the ruins appeared to be possible only if they were accurately described. Accurateness meant that every bit of it had to be measured, in order to correctly reproduce dimensions and proportions. Every traveler used the units of measurement of his country of origin (table 1), so that the similarity between some of their names does not imply that they were the same. Apparently, they chose units according to the dimensions of the objects to measure.

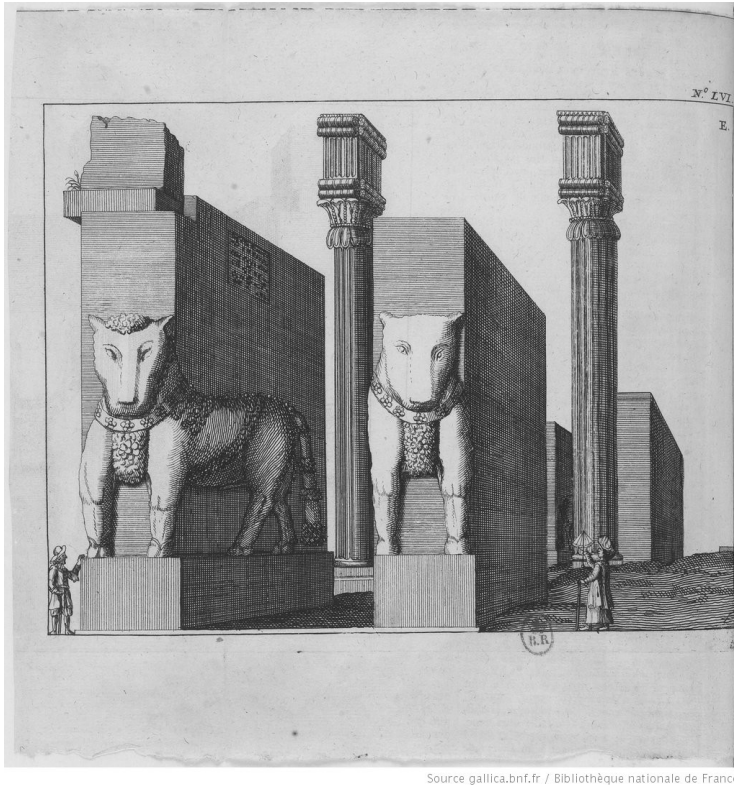
	Chardin	Kaempfer	de Bruijn
Distance	Lieue, Pas	Parasanga, Passus	Uren, Schrede
Length	Toise, Pied, Pouce	Passus, Pes,	Schrede, Voet, Duim
Width	Toise, Pied, Pouce	Orgyia, Passus, Pes, Spithama	Schrede, Voet, Duim
Height Depth	Toise, Pied, Pouce	Orgyia, Passus, Pes, Palmus	Voet, Duim

Table 1 - Units of measurement used by the travelers, in decreasing order of size (Source: Author's elaboration)

In practice, measurement was not a simple matter. Columns were high on the ground, rock tombs and Sassanid reliefs were difficult to reach, sometimes even the winter sunlight was unbearable for the eyes (Kaempfer, 1712, p. 332). Kaempfer sometimes admits that he could not take measurements (e. g. Kaempfer, 1712, p. 352): besides being in a hurry, we may argue that he did not have adequate tools. On the contrary, the homogeneity of de Bruijn's measurements suggests that he was fully equipped.

However, we find more details in Chardin's travelogue. Chardin possessed simple tools like ropes and poles as well as complex ones. In particular, he took the height of the Apadana columns with a "quart de nonante"

(Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 278), a type of back staff. This instrument, used by engineers to take heights, was not difficult to build but its use requested some expertise (Manesson Mallet, 1702, vol. 2, p. 85-98). Another hint comes from one of Chardin's plates (figure 2).



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 2 - Guillaume-Joseph Grelot taking heights at the Gate of Xerxes (Chardin, 1711, vol. 3, plate 56) (Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Gallica)

Here, a man in Persian dress standing next to the Gate of Xerxes takes heights with what looks like a protractor or, in French, a *rapporteur* or *petit demi-cercle* (Manesson Mallet, 1702, vol. 2, p. 27-85). This may be Chardin's painter, Guillaume-Joseph Grelot. In the drawings made for his next patron, the Venetian Ambrogio Bembo (Bembo, 2005; Invernizzi, 2010), Grelot often portraits himself in Persian dress.⁹ In two of these, he represented

⁹ All the sketches drawn by Grelot for Bembo are available online on UMedia (<http://purl.umn.edu/236582>), the digital portal of the University of Minnesota,

himself surrounded by his instruments: a compass, a set square, a sector, a pair of compasses, a protractor and a spyglass (figure 3).¹⁰



Figure 3 - Guillaume-Joseph Grelot's self-portrait, particular of his view of Aleppo in Bembo's Minneapolis manuscript journal (Source: Courtesy of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota)

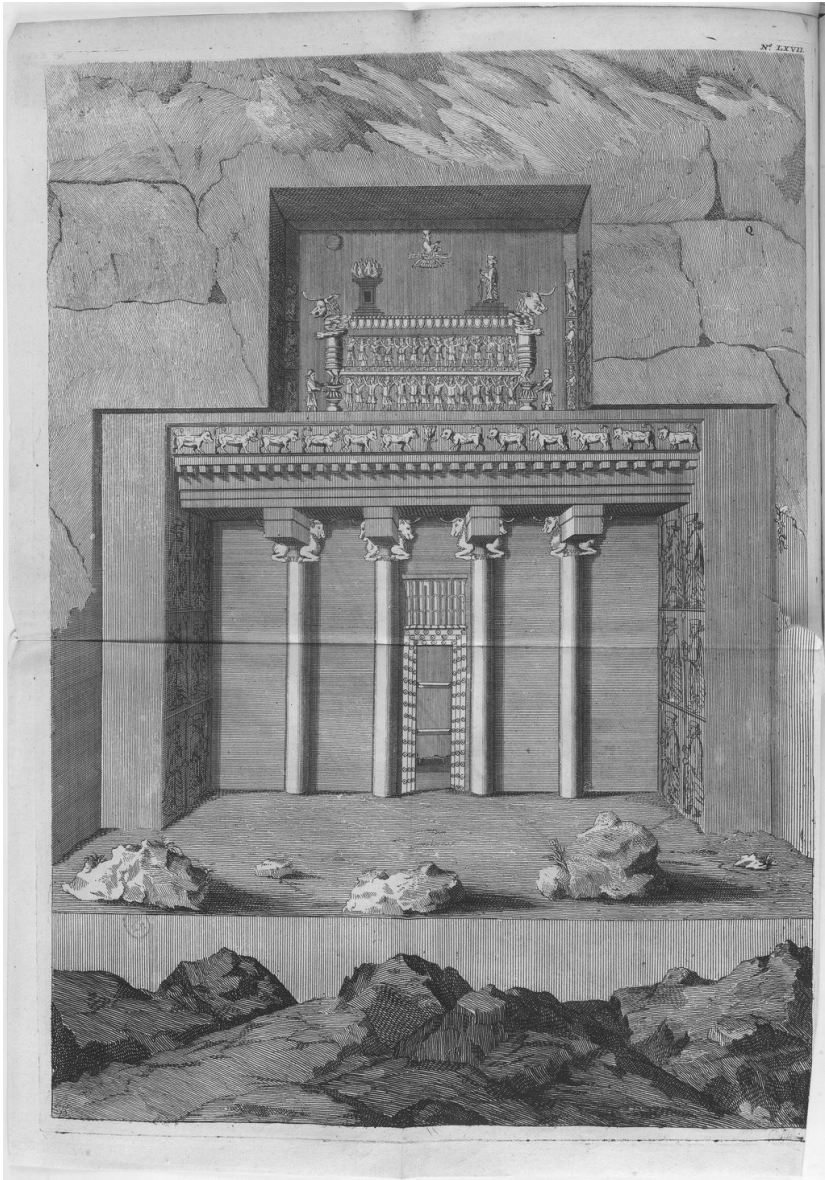
It is in part likely that Grelot used the same instruments when he was with Chardin, since Chardin used a spyglass ("lunette d'approche") to make a sketch of one of the rock tombs at Persepolis, the northern tomb or tomb of Artaxerxes III (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 306). By way of contrast, it is possible that Kaempfer could not use such an instrument: when referring to a Naqsh-e Rostam tomb, he says that "I could not clearly define its size, since it was far out of reach." (Kaempfer, 1712, p. 313)¹¹

However, the use of such tools may have affected the material result of the travelers' efforts. Let's look at how the tomb of Artaxerxes III is represented in Chardin's plate 67 (figure 4) and in de Bruijn's plate 158 (figure 5). While de Bruijn arranges faithfully the human figure on the left and the fire altar on the right, Chardin's plate 67 shows them in reverse.

whose James Ford Bell Library holds the "Minneapolis" version of Bembo's journal provided with Grelot's drawings (call number 1676 fBe).

¹⁰ I have used Manesson Mallet 1702, vol. 1, p. 150-153, 285-287 to correctly identify the instruments.

¹¹ "Magnitudo, quia extra contactum remota, definiri accurate non potuit."



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 4 - Tomb of Artaxerxes III at Persepolis as represented by Jean Chardin (Chardin, 1711, vol. 3, plate 67) (Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Gallica)

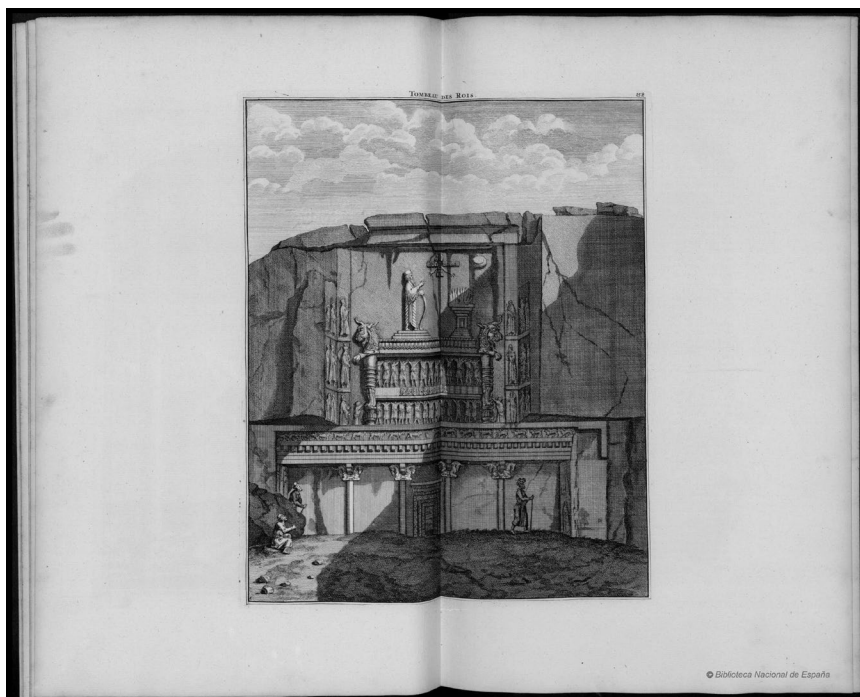


Figure 5 - Tomb of Artaxerxes III at Persepolis as represented by Cornelis de Bruijn (*de Bruijn*, 1718, vol. 2, plate 158) (Source: Biblioteca Nacional de España)

This “error” may have been done during the transformation of the original drawing into the plate and the print (Griffiths, 1996, p. 13-99).¹² Otherwise, the drawing may have been wrong, possibly out of the incorrect use of a (rudimental) spyglass, which — as I mentioned — Chardin used to reproduce that tomb. Since he had lost the instruments brought from Paris (Chardin, 1811, vol. 1, p. 375, 403-404), we may argue that, while he had been able to replace the simplest ones (like the *quart de nonante*), he found it difficult to replace his spyglass. Thus, in Persepolis Chardin may have used a simpler spyglass, for example one made of two convex lenses. This in-

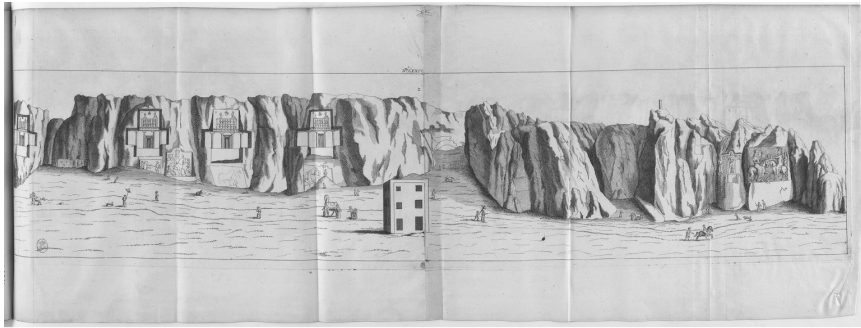
¹² I have been able to see six different copies of Chardin’s travelogue — three of the 1711 in-4° edition and three of the 1735 edition — and the plate was identical in all of them. The copies are respectively from: Universiteitsbibliotheek Amsterdam, OG 69-4-6; Koninklijke Bibliotheek, KW 1015 D 13; Bibliothèque nationale de France, 4-02H-16 (3); Universitätsbibliothek Mannheim, Sch 054/323-2; Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen, 4 ITIN I, 2928:2; Real Instituto y Observatorio de la Armada (San Fernando), 04359 / 04362.

strument would have offered an inverted image of the observed object: a right-side up image could only be obtained by using a more complex spyglass, like a four-lenses one (Manesson Mallet, 1702, vol. 1, p. 285-287; Van Helden, 1977). In other words, Grelot may have done the error while transferring on paper the image seen through the spyglass, during the first stages of Persepolis' visual reproduction.

The perspective is drawn, as accurately as one could have done by means of the spyglass, and as accurately as the constraints of the place could have allowed; for the mountain being on a slope, and without a plate, one must either look at this work almost perpendicularly, or move away from it out of reach. There is only one figure, whose features neither I nor my painter could clearly discern. It is a mysterious figure that can be seen at the very top of the work. We looked at it several times, without being able to be sure which side it was facing, sometimes it was looking at the fire and the sun, and sometimes we thought it was looking the other way. With that being said, I am sure that the whole representation does not have a false trait. (Chardin 1811, vol. 8, p. 306-307)¹³

In fact, the only other plate by Chardin to show such an erroneous arrangement is the general view of the tombs of Naqsh-e Rostam (plate 74), equally taken from far away (figure 6). At the same time, the close-up view of the southern tomb at Persepolis is correct (plate 68), as it is in the corresponding Grelot's drawing for Bembo (figures 7 and 8). The draughtsman may have made these sketches by looking closer and with the naked eye. When Grelot left Chardin out of mistreatment, the traveler kept his drawings (Van der Cruysse, 1998, p. 175-177). For the tomb of Artaxerxes III and for Naqsh-e Rostam, he may have taken the drafts done through the spyglass' eye. This question, which must remain open in the absence of conclusive evidence, allows us to focus on how instruments could affect knowledge construction on Persepolis.

¹³ "La perspective est dessinée, avec autant d'exactitude qu'on a pu le faire par le moyen de la lunette d'approche, et autant que la contrainte du lieu l'a pu permettre; car la montagne étant en talus, et sans assiette, il faut, ou regarder cet ouvrage presque perpendiculairement, ou s'en éloigner hors de portée. Il n'y a qu'une seule figure, dont mon peintre, ni moi, ne pûmes pas bien discerner les traits. C'est une figure mystérieuse qu'on voit tout au haut de l'ouvrage. Nous la considérâmes à diverses reprises, sans pouvoir nous assurer de quel côté elle avoit la tête tournée, tantôt elle nous paroissoit regarder le feu et le soleil, et tantôt nous jugions qu'elle regardoit de l'autre côté. A cela près, je suis sûr que toute la représentation n'a pas un faux trait."



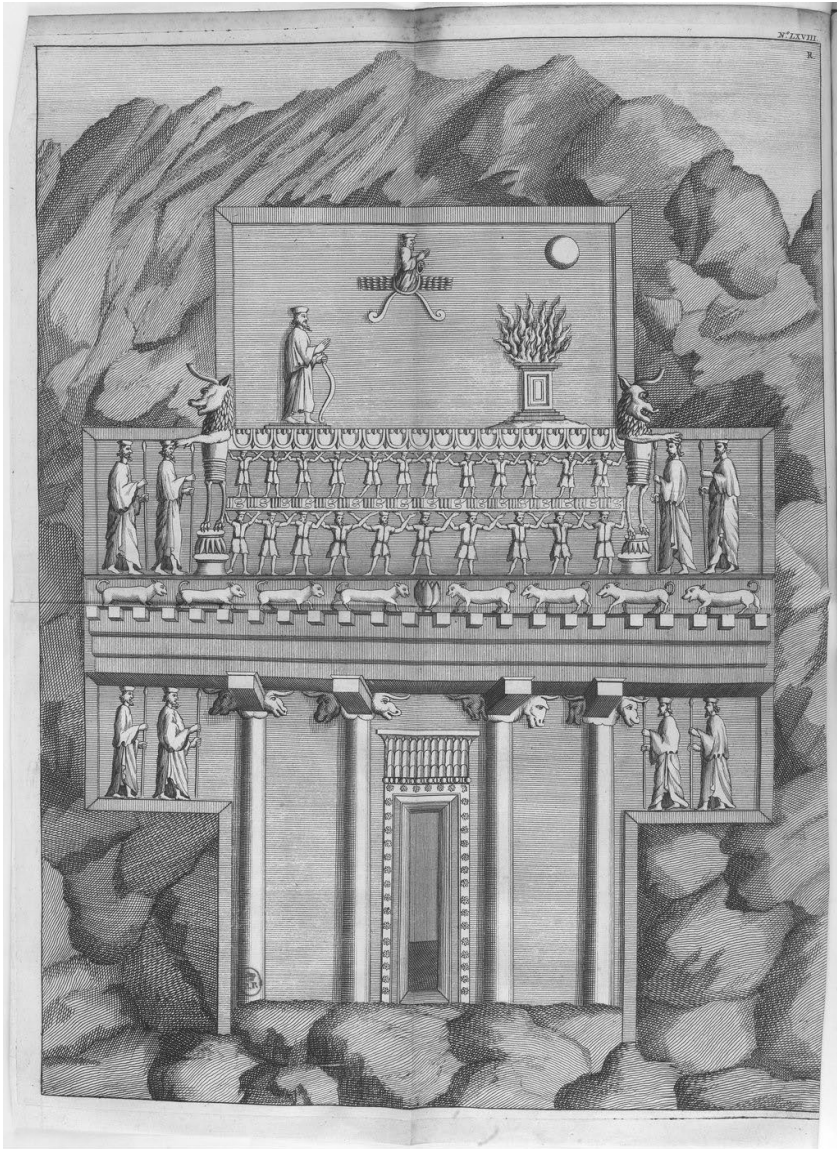
Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 6 - General view of Naqsh-e Rostam as represented by Jean Chardin (Chardin, 1711, vol. 3, plate 74) (Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Gallica)

All three travelers will portrait themselves and their aides as interpreters of a practice of measurement and precision. They may have perceived this as helpful in forging a bond of trust with their readers, through the creation of a common frame of reference. At the same time, since they were not completely commensurable, these frames contributed to the locality and specificity of each traveler's Persepolis (Bourguet, Licoppe & Sibum, 2002). All their tools may have been, to their eyes, instruments of precision: but precision for whom (Schaffer, 2015)? This may explain why de Bruijn will compare Chardin's measurements to his own: it was the only way to make his criticism understandable (de Bruijn, 1714, p. 24-25).

- *Processing: Construction of the Site*

Our travelers had gathered information through senses and servants and had classified it through measurement and instruments. These two stages of the fieldwork prepared and partially intertwined with the processing of the information, namely the construction of knowledge about the ruins. In order to complete this last stage, the travelers adopted different strategies that I will analyze in the next sections. However, senses operated against the background of previous experiences and/or intellectual assumptions. Expectations about how an Oriental temple or royal palace should have looked, or how religious service could have been performed (Rubiès, 2007, 2012), were instrumental in directing the senses and shaping the knowledge that appeared to derive from them. A condition of intellectual mediation enveloped both the field experience and the preparation of the book (Brentjes, 2009).



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 7 - Southern tomb at Persepolis as represented by Chardin (Chardin, 1711, vol. 3, plate 68) (Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Gallica)

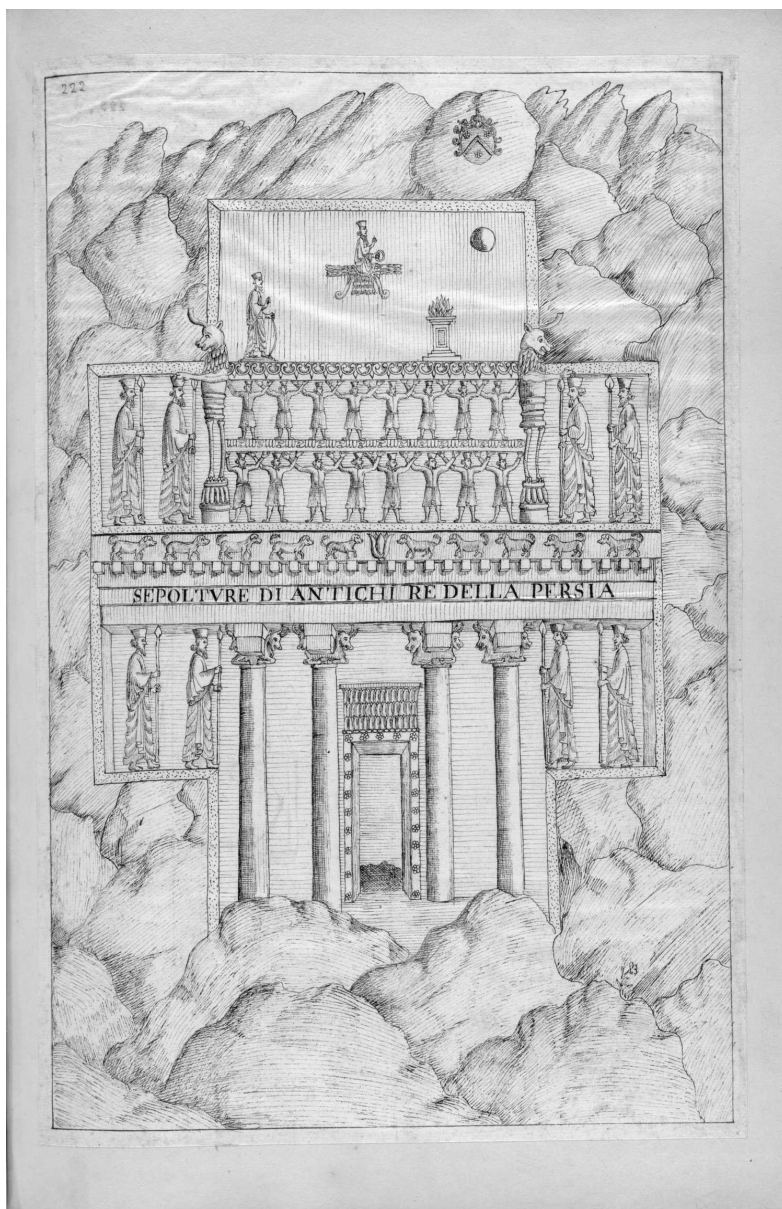


Figure 8 - Southern tomb at Persepolis as represented by Guillaume-Joseph Grelot in Bembo's Minneapolis manuscript journal (Source: Courtesy of the James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota)

If we were to draw an analogy between the traveler-writer and the contemporary natural philosopher, we would underline that theory (historical tradition) and practice (visiting the ruins) did not enjoy a hierarchical relationship in the context of knowledge building (what is Chilminar?) and that instruments played a key role in bridging the two (Gauvin, 2008). It was essential, for example, to verify if the distance between the main terrace of Chilminar and the tombs of the Kuh-e Rahmat corresponded to the “four plethra” mentioned by Diodorus of Sicily in his *Historical Library* (xvii, 71, 7), the key source for the identification of Chilminar with the royal palace of Persepolis (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 388; de Bruijn, 1711, p. 229-230; Kaempfer, 1712, p. 312-313). However, figuratively speaking, instruments bridged different islets in a largely uncharted lagoon, not the two banks of a river.

In addition, the use of instruments and the practice of measurement depended on habits of knowledge (Gauvin, 2011) whose correct deployment was not always guaranteed on the field. On the other hand, their output was calibrated on the specificity of the Marv Dasht ruins. When looking through the spyglass, Chardin never doubted that the blurred figure was looking at the fire and the sun. This corresponded both to other items among the ruins and to his text-based knowledge about the religion of ancient Persia.

It is also useful to comment on de Bruijn’s ambiguous attitude towards Persepolis and his will to reconstruct it. In fact, something he did on the field put in jeopardy his project, contributing to the instability of the site. In the first place, as I mentioned, de Bruijn snapped some pieces of sculpture from Persepolis, in order to strengthen his claims to truth. However, as we will see concretely for his drawings, this kind of displacement could not guarantee the stability nor the hegemony of his narrative about Persepolis. In the second place, de Bruijn engraved on a wall his name and the year he was in Persepolis (Simpson, 2005, p. 27). The site was permanently modified by taking something away and by adding something. Now Persepolis could speak not only for ancient Persia, but for modern Netherlanders too. Or, at least, this is what may have thought another famous traveler to Persepolis, Carsten Niebuhr, when he recognized de Bruijn’s name engraved in red chalk (Niebuhr, 1778, p. 159).

- *Traveling Libraries: The Intellectual (Back)ground*

The potential connection between the experience of travel and that of assembling, possessing, and using a library is very important for our case. According to the auction catalogues of Chardin’s (Levi, 1713) and Kaempfer’s libraries (Catalogus, 1773; Merzbacher, 2004), they owned sev-

eral classical sources that could have influenced their descriptions of the ruins. However, as we have seen, classical authors did not monopolize the stage. The Bible was an indispensable reference and texts from the Arabic and Persian geographical and historiographical traditions had a role to play too.

Books could be used in two different ways. The first one is as guides on the spot: approaching Persepolis, Chardin tells us that “it’s a great pleasure to go through this country with the ancient authors at hand”, with Arrian, Quintus Curtius and Diodorus in mind (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 242-3).¹⁴ However, the presence on the field of a source did not determine the result of one’s experience. In fact, Chardin will refuse the clues offered by classical authors about Chilminar being a royal palace and preferred the contrasting evidence offered by the Bible and sources of Arabic and Persian origin (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 384-410). While it is likely that he had a Bible on him while visiting Persepolis, we cannot say the same for, say, the geographical work of Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfī, the *Nuzhāt al-qulūb*. However, these sources may have been available to him in cities like Shiraz or Isfahan and in the library he kept in London after his homecoming (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 409-410). Thus, a library offered a set of instruments for the re-working of field notes and the preparation of the book.

Travelers could adopt an ambiguous attitude towards their intellectual background. De Bruijn declared that he avoided ancient authors and only used his eyes, in order to guarantee “the complete correspondence” between his drawings and “the pieces on whose basis they have been represented” (de Bruijn, 1711, preface).¹⁵ However, the prestige of a sanction by textual tradition was too appealing. Once he was back, de Bruijn welcomed the fact that his scholarly acquaintances had recognized the consistency of his description with ancient authors (de Bruijn, 1711, preface). Bearing this in mind, we can appreciate the multi-faceted influence exerted by books, as a form of materialized knowledge, on the perception and representation of the ruins.

¹⁴ “c’est un fort grand plaisir que de parcourir ce pays, les anciens auteurs à la main.”

¹⁵ “Want geen licht hebbende geschept uit de plaetsen der oude Schryveren, die van Persepolis en zyne overblyfselen gewagen, hebben wy deze aftekeningen alleen op het geleide van een omzichtig en naeukeurigh oog in dien staet gebragt, dat wy u de volkomenste verzekering kunnen geven van hare geheele overeenkomst met de stukken, naer welke zy afgebeeld zyn.”

Back Home

Chardin, Kaempfer and de Bruijn came back to Europe in different moments and contexts. Chardin, a Huguenot in the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, sought refuge in London. He was welcomed by members of the Royal Society such as John Evelyn and was elected Fellow in 1682 (Van der Cruysse, 1998, p. 275-280, 292-296). Kaempfer, after a brief stay in the Netherlands, came back to his hometown of Lemgo in Westphalia (Haberland, 1990, p. 85-89), while de Bruijn established himself in Amsterdam, close to his patron Witsen (de Hond, 1997). All three had notebooks and drawings reporting their experience.

Now their paper Persepolis found itself in a very different environment from the Marv Dasht plain or the travelers' train: the early modern European city. The impact of the urban milieus on knowledge production has recently been discussed as part of a history of entanglements (de Munck & Romano, 2020). This helps us stress how much these spaces influenced the outcome of the travelers' attempts at transforming the ruins in a *lieu de savoir*: the construction of Persepolis depended upon the encounters made by travelers in such cities as London, Amsterdam, Isfahan, Shiraz, Batavia and so on. John Evelyn made Chardin show Grelot's sketches to influential members of the London high society (Evelyn, 1959, p. 769), while Kaempfer elicited his fellow countrymen's curiosity thanks to what he had brought back from the Orient (Haberland, 1990, p. 89-90). However, the most interesting case is that of de Bruijn, who transformed his painter's cabinet in a window on Asia by showing and selling oil paintings and watercolors made during his voyage (Drijvers, 1991, p. 95; de Hond, 1994, p. 65). A part of them may have been about Persepolis (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 224; de Bruijn, 1714, p. 49). Some of the fragments of sculpture were also visible in his cabinet, while others were now in the hands of his patrons Witsen and Anton Ulrich, Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg (de Bruijn, 1711, preface). As I mentioned, de Bruijn's show of these items had a precise role in his claims to truth. However, arranging them in his book and circulating them was both an attempt at consolidating Persepolis as a *lieu de savoir* and a way of losing control over it.

Considering the spatiality of the travelers' experiences allows us to also discuss their connected temporalities. We know that Chardin told de Bruijn that he could not draw himself: de Bruijn could have had this conversation with Chardin during his trip to London between 1700 and 1701 (de Bruijn, 1714, p. 6; de Hond, 1997, p. 13). Just before leaving for Asia on 28th July 1701, de Bruijn could have learned about a key element of his future arguments. When he came back to Amsterdam, he had a great advantage, because the city was then the unrivalled center of (illustrated) book

publishing (Kolfin & Van der Veen, 2011; Pettegree & Weduwen, 2019). However, he was also exposed to competing narratives about the ruins, which could not fail to arrive in such a place. In fact, Gijsbert Cuper had greatly appreciated de Bruijn's work, until the (un)timely arrival of Chardin's and Kaempfer's books. It is striking that Witsen, who had so much helped de Bruijn, was instrumental on bringing Cuper's attention to these works (Drijvers, 1991, p. 98-101). This was a first crack in de Bruijn's Persepolis, because Kaempfer and Chardin enjoyed a scholarly reputation that the painter apparently could not match (Schmidt, 2015, p. 156-159). Only a personal intervention by de Bruijn, supported once more by his patron, resolved Cuper's doubts (Chen, 2005, p. 18-37). The tensions between the efforts made by the most uncompromising author to crystallize Persepolis and the inevitable renegotiations of his mobile material representations symbolize the back-home part of Persepolis as a *milieu de savoir*.

- *Building the Book I: From the Notebook to the Text*

The notebook is an important tool for the traveler willing to benefit from his journey and communicate his experiences to the public (Osterhammel, 2018, p. 188-196, 212-215). However, it is difficult to assess what elements the visitors to the ruins selected to be noted down on the field (Bourguet, 2010). Kaempfer's surviving manuscripts (Kaempfer, 1965, p. 1-3; Brown, 1993)¹⁶ help us on this point. One of his sketchbooks¹⁷ contains a few commented sketches of Persepolis and Naqsh-e Rostam: the traveler, besides roughly drawing the monuments, takes notes about measurements and possible identifications of figures.¹⁸

However, the transformation of the journal could take many steps. When visiting Persepolis in 1674, Chardin read again the "relation" he had written after his first visit in 1666 (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 344). This suggests that the account could emerge from the reworking of travel notes way before the preparation of the manuscript for publication. In the same way, it is likely that, besides published texts, the travelers could use as blueprints handwritten documents collected during or after the voyage. Kaempfer had

¹⁶ Unfortunately, I have not been able to see the British Library manuscript Sloane 2910, which apparently includes a manuscript version of Kaempfer's stay in Persepolis (ff. 124-127). Karl Meier-Lemgo did not include this text in his edition of Kaempfer's journal (Kaempfer, 1965, p. 1-3, 97-102).

¹⁷ British Library, Archives and Manuscripts, Sloane 5232, ff. 46v-62r.

¹⁸ British Library, Archives and Manuscripts, Sloane 5232, ff. 51r, 51v, 59v. Hüls, 1982, Wiesehöfer, 1993 (figures 1, 4, 6) and Haberland, 1996 (figure 19, 21, 22) include some reproductions from this manuscript.

excerpted¹⁹ the report written in 1651-1652 by Cornelis Speelman, secretary to the Dutch ambassador Joan Cunaeus (Speelman, 1908), and de Bruijn may have done the same (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 220, 406).

The transformation of travel notes into a published book involved the publishers as well as the network of acquaintances that the authors considered capable of discussing the interpretation of the ruins — even if most of them had never been there. This is true for Chardin (1811, vol. 1, p. XXIX; vol. 8, p. 313-4) as well as for Kaempfer (2001, p. 59-73) and de Bruijn, as I mentioned. In fact, the preparation for the publication implied the reworking of travel notes in a form acceptable to a scholarly public. This was done by embedding the description of the ruins in a frame of reference deemed necessary for its understanding. Each traveler adopted different strategies. Chardin constantly made comparison between the ruins, a variety of textual sources and his first-hand experience of “Oriental” lands and peoples in order to demonstrate that Chilminar had been a temple, built half a millennium before the life of Moses; he also inserted in his description a dissertation on the religious minority that he saw as the heir to the ancient Persians, the “Guèbres” (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 354-382, 401). De Bruijn’s description is followed by three large historical sections aimed at demonstrating that Chilminar was instead the royal palace of Persepolis (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 228-316). It is likely that the author of these texts was not de Bruijn, but one of his acquaintances, the scholar Praetorius (Drijvers, 1991, p. 92). Kaempfer too gave some historical context, despite being the most cautious on this issue (Kaempfer, 1712, p. 297-304, 315-317). These historical addenda may have been sketched before or during the journey itself, but most likely they took their final form after it. However, these texts could support the travelers’ interpretations only if they were themselves supported by the verbal and visual descriptions.

It is here that the Marv Dasht ruins are re-deployed in full. It may be said that, to some extent, travelers presented the ruins topographically, thus removing the reader from the concrete reality of the site. For example, Kaempfer distributed the reliefs and tombs of Naqsh-e Rostam and the buildings of Chilminar in numbered paragraphs, each entitled “Figura” or “Structura”. However, the travelers also tried to reproduce the bodily experience of the field, hinting at their own displacements — by giving the distances covered between the objects — and insisting on the movements of their gaze. Expressions and verbs referring to the sight (“voir”, “regarder”, “specto”, “video”, “te zien”) are frequently used by all of them and espe-

¹⁹ German excerpts by Kaempfer from Speelman’s Dutch journal are found in British Library, Archives and Manuscripts, Sloane 2912, ff. 70-107.

cially by de Bruijn. They only stop looking when readers can see for themselves through a plate (e.g. Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 254; de Bruijn, 1711, p. 211; Kaempfer, 1712, p. 310). Readers may have felt that they were visiting the ruins not only under the guidance of the traveler, but also together with him. “Now, so to speak, I shall open this body, in order to give you a view of the interior.” (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 210)²⁰ By using this anatomical metaphor just before getting into the thick of the description, de Bruijn showed the clearest awareness that, as was common in contemporary Dutch illustrated books, he was giving the readers a “chance for *autopsia*” (Schmidt, 2015, p. 86). We may see this as an attempt at deploying what has been called, for 17th-century natural philosophy, a “technology of virtual witnessing”, articulated in the circumstantial report of the field experience and the presentation of supporting iconographic documents (Shapin & Schaffer, 2011, p. 55-65). In this sense, by communicating the approval received from scholars, travelers may have wanted to encourage the common reader to align their witnessing acts with their needs.

- *Building the Book II: From the Sketch to the Engraving*

Sketches were thus a vital instrument for the representation of the ruins and that is why our travelers committed themselves to their production. Before being transformed into engravings, the sketches had a life of their own. De Bruijn showed his drawings of Persepolis to VOC's employee and traveler François Valentijn during his stay in Batavia in 1706 (Valentijn, 1726, vol. 4.1, p. 241), just as Chardin showed Grelot's sketches to his new friends in England and asked for their help in publishing them (Evelyn, 1959, p. 768-9).

Anyway, eventually the sketches did become prints. This process, involving the coordination of different actors, instruments, and techniques, could be managed differently and lead to different results (Gaskell, 2004). While de Bruijn supervised closely and was satisfied with the engraver's work (de Bruijn, 1711, preface), things went otherwise for Kaempfer. By using his sketches to make preparatory drawings,²¹ he tried to control the transformation process and to have his printed Persepolis resemble as much as possible the sketched one. However, according to Kaempfer, a mediocre engraver, a certain F. W. Brandshagen, got in the way. Sometimes working in Kaempfer's absence, the engraver spoilt his work, in part while reducing the drawings to the size requested for the fabrication of plates and

²⁰ “Nu zal ik dit lichaem, om zoo te spreken, openen, om u een gezicht van het binnenste te geven.”

²¹ British Library, Archives and Manuscripts, Sloane 5232, ff. 49r-49v.

prints (Kaempfer, 1712, p. 312).²² Hence, Kaempfer often explains how the “chalcographus” had deformed the original drawings (Kaempfer, 1712, p. 312, 316, 317, 324, 332, 336, 340).

In general, travelers viewed the images as capable of faithfully reproducing the material reality of the ruins, insofar as this reality could be retrieved through the senses and the practice of the draughtsman. The rule set by the travelers was that of mimesis: the images should reproduce the ruins as they were, untouched by the modifications for which Chardin reprimanded some of his predecessors (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 276-277) and for which de Bruijn attacked Chardin in his 1714 pamphlet. Addressing the controversial point of the original appearance of the colossi on the eastern side of the Gate of Xerxes, de Bruijn stated that “it seems that the winged Animals had human heads, but I didn’t want to depict anything more than what I found” (de Bruijn, 1714, p. 10).²³ For him, *what* was found and *how* it should be represented may have been the same thing.

However, it was not possible, nor useful, to apply mimesis to every object. Therefore, some of the images were less mimetic than “characteristic”, in the sense given to this word in the context of what has been called the “epistemic virtue” of “truth-to-nature”. Characteristic images were a compromise between the peculiarity of individual objects and the clearly recognizable groups of which they were part. In other words, these images represented the typical in an individual (Daston & Galison, 2007, p. 70). Kaempfer offered a general view of the mountain façade of Naqsh-e Rostam, with every different relief or tomb marked with Roman numerals. Then he described each “Figura”, most of the time providing a corresponding plate. When he came to the Achaemenid tombs, he explained:

At this point the slope of the mountain recedes a little; here, untouched by the climate, it offers an abundance of cavities, for the space of 160 *passus*. After these, Figures IV, V, VI and VII follow, one after the other and separated by a few *passus* from each other; we present these in a single representation, since all are similar to each other, like the egg with the egg, and are distinguished only by the number. (Kaempfer, 1712, p. 312)²⁴

²² See (Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 1991, p. 18, n° 32) for another example of how Brandshagen modified Kaempfer’s drawings, related to the nearby ruins known as Madar-e Soleyman.

²³ “Aen die gevleugelde Dieren schynen Menschen-hoofden geweest te zyn, dog ik heb daer niets meer aen willen verbeelden, dan ik gevonden heb.”

²⁴ “Quo loco paulo retrocedit rupes: eo quod lacunis abundaret, nullum coelum experta, spatio 160 passuum. Quibus postpositis, sequuntur Figurae IV. V. VI. &

One of Kaempfer's complaints against Brandshagen referred to this plate (Kaempfer, 1712, p. 313): it was a way to salvage his mimetic attitude from the technical inconveniences he stumbled against in the broader process of "drawing from nature" (Daston & Galison, 2007, p. 99).

Therefore, such combinations of text and image allowed the travelers to move closer to an ideal of truth, but it was also a solution to the problem of time scarceness. Chardin states that, since a reproduction of all the sculptures of Chilmimar would have taken at least one year, "I have contented myself with this five following plates, which are a sample of all the bas-reliefs to be seen on the front of this rocks." (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8., p. 286-287).²⁵ Chardin then describes and interprets each item represented in the plates (62-66), informing the reader about where he had seen other objects of the same type (Chardin, 1811, vol. 8, p. 288-302). On his part, de Bruijn adopted the same strategy as Kaempfer for Naqsh-e Rostam, giving a plate for the complex and one for a single tomb (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 225, plates 166-167). For him, life could be selected and even synthetized, but *not* refined.

However, it is useful to point out that one of the things reproached by de Bruijn to Kaempfer is that the German spoke of stork nests as being on just one of the columns of Persepolis, while according to his experience there were plenty of them here and there (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 209; de Bruijn, 1714, p. 39). De Bruijn may have believed that only his own experience qualified as a starting point for a true representation of Persepolis, and that he tried to crystallize his own representation as the immutably true one. His Persepolis was outside the contingencies of time: the animals and people he inserted in his plates were meant to reproduce a precise historical moment — that of his visit — but also a regular feature of the ruins, often frequented by nomads and their flocks (de Bruijn, 1711, p. 224).

The images may have been the main weak point of the travelers' project of founding the site as a stabilized *lieu de savoir*. As regards the internal coherence of the book, this is most apparent in Kaempfer's case, but a stronger one comes from the circulation of Chardin's and de Bruijn's visual materials. While Kaempfer's contribution slipped momentarily into oblivion, Chardin's and de Bruijn's books enjoyed wide popularity. Chardin probably benefited from his work being in French, whereas a French trans-

VII. successive & per intervalla paucorum passuum; Has uno schemate damus, quia omnes invicem plane, ut ovum ovo, sunt similes & solo numero distinctae."

²⁵ "Il m'auroit fallu demeurer un an et plus sur le lieu, si j'eusse entrepris de faire tirer toutes les figures taillées sur les marbres de ces ruines. Je me suis contenté de ces cinq planches suivantes qui sont un échantillon de tous les bas reliefs que l'on voit sur les faces de ces pierres".

lation of de Bruijn's travelogue would only appear in 1718. This is the main reason why the prominent antiquarian Bernard de Montfaucon, while working on his *L'Antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures*, chose some of Chardin's plates to illustrate the ancient Persian religion. However, he also added that "I don't see significant differences between [Chardin's and de Bruijn's] figures concerning religion", despite his acknowledgment of the dispute (Montfaucon, 1719, vol. 2.2, p. 403).²⁶ In this case, de Bruijn's attempt at enforcing a compliant witnessing of the superiority of his experience had failed.

What happened later was even more disrupting. A new French edition of de Bruijn's work appeared in 1725, presumably edited by the *savant* Antoine Banier (Anonymous, 1725, p. 502). In the first place, publishers and translators found fitting to cut a significant part of de Bruijn's historical addenda (1711, p. 208-318; 1718, vol. 2, p. 261-293; 1725, vol. 4, p. 301-408), thus undermining the overall force of his arguments. What is more, Banier inserted copious footnotes to de Bruijn's materials, including his 1714 pamphlet. In this paratexts, Banier contested de Bruijn's arguments and claims to superiority.

It is true that M. Chardin could not draw, but he had at his service M. Grelot, who was a very clever & very honest man; after all M. le Bruyn does not have so much to complain about the difference between his drawings and those of Chardin, since they are very similar, and one does not see whence comes his animosity against him. Chardin was a very intelligent traveler, and he seems to have examined the ruins well. Everybody is allowed to express his conjectures. (de Bruijn, 1725, vol. 5, p. 308, n. a)²⁷

Anyway, this was still a small crack in de Bruijn's personal Persepolis. A greater one came from a luxurious album published in London about a decade after his death, *Persepolis Illustrata* (1739), consisting of 32 images

²⁶ "Corneille Bruyn, voyageur habile & exact, dont l'ouvrage va paroître, prétend que Chardin s'est trompé en bien des choses, & donne des figures différentes en bien des choses de celles que Chardin avoit données : mais comme je ne vois pas de changemens considerables dans les figures qui regardent la religion, & que d'ailleurs cet Auteur ne paroitra que dans quelque tems d'ici, j'ai laissé les choses comme je les ai trouvées dans Chardin."

²⁷ "Il est vrai que M. Chardin ne sçavoit pas dessiner : mais il se servoit de M. Grelot, qui étoit fort habile & très-honnête homme ; après tout M. le Bruyn n'a pas tant à se récrier, sur la difference qui se trouve entre ses desseins & ceux de Chardin, puis qu'ils se ressembloit fort, & on ne voit pas ce qui le met de mauvais humeur contre lui. Chardin étoit un Voyageur très-intelligent, & il paroît avoir bien examiné ces Ruïnes. Il est permis à chacun de débiter ses conjectures."

distributed in 13 plates. It was introduced by an historical dissertation taken from the English translation of de Bruijn's travelogue (1737) and supporting de Bruijn's identification of Chilmīnār with the royal palace of Persepolis. The anonymous person behind *Persepolis Illustrata*, however, mixed de Bruijn's visual materials with some of Chardin's and never specified who was the author of what. This gesture represented, at the same time, a deviation from Chardin's interpretative stance — because his plates now illustrated a royal palace and not a temple — and an attitude of total negligence towards de Bruijn's claims. A new paper Persepolis was born, which escaped completely the control of both authors and eluded their attempts at crystallization, while at the same time offering a new one. Some years later, the visual materials found in *Persepolis Illustrata* were published in the in-4° edition (1747-1748) of one of the most successful editorial projects of the Enlightenment, the London *Universal History*, and once more de Bruijn's claims were denied (*Universal History*, 1747, vol. 5, p. 96-102, n. S-T). From there, the verbal and visual descriptions of the ruins of Marv Dasht so carefully crafted and defended by Chardin and de Bruijn would experience a joint journey through multiple Europeans languages and locations (Abbattista, 1989).

Conclusions. The Impossible Construction of Persepolis

Reproducing the ruins of Marv Dasht was a difficult operation and our travelers knew that well. That is why, while on the field, they took great care in the observation of the monuments. In order to gather and classify information, they raced against the clock, put a strain on their senses and used every resource available: money, tools, manpower. They transferred information to paper in the hope of preserving it unspoiled and of communicating it to the reading public. However, they were not only limited by the conditions of travel and thus by the availability of those resources. They were also entangled in a cultural background that (re)organized their sensible experience, partially determining how they could access and process the information retrieved on the field in order to construct a knowledge about and through Persepolis. Hence, each traveler developed his own representation of the ruins, because the conditions of their visits and the very nature of the site made it impossible to construct each time, by each point of view, the same knowledge of the monuments. That is why Persepolis could be considered a *milieu de savoir*: the material and intellectual results of early modern travelers' interest in it was at best fluctuating, at worst conflicting, and always subjected to factors that were impossible to completely control. Yet, when each traveler left the Marv

Dasht, Persepolis was like an open book to him (with some unreadable pages, though). Ironically, the very attempt at crystallizing Persepolis in a stabilized entity through the power of the printing press was likely to put in jeopardy the traveler's will of setting the record straight once and for all. The complexity of the material operations requested by this process, but most of all the circulation of knowledge it implied, made it impossible to keep Persepolis unaltered or to channel in one direction the historical knowledge stemming from (the representations of) it. In this sense, it is striking that the traveler the most committed to claim for his Persepolis the status of truth was also the most successful in spreading materials that could undermine those claims: circulation, readings and re-employments prevented the paper Persepolis from becoming a stable history laboratory and confirmed its identity as a *milieu de savoir*.

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