

Lesson Objective: Students will learn about the Sherley Brothers, European Travelers to Persia, and their relations with the Safavids Kings

Homira Pashai 8-10-2020

Studies on Persianate Manuscripts, Arts, and Literature

Illustrations: Courtesy of London, National Portrait Gallery; National Trust Collection, London.

Source: Schleck, Julia. *Telling True Tales of Islamic Lands: Forms of Mediation in English Travel Writing, 1575-1630*. New Jersey: Rosemont Publishing and Printing Corp, 2011.

The Sherleian Adventures in Safavid Persia

In the spring of 1598, in Venice, a mission to the court of Ferrara that Sir Anthony Sherley سر آنتونی شرلی had undertaken for his patron, the earl of Essex, had aborted as a result of the change in the political situation. Anthony and his companions stayed in Venice for three months, searching for another mission. During this time, Sir Anthony happened to talk with a Persian merchant about the King of Persia. Another traveler, Angelo, also provided Sir Anthony with information on the court of Persia and offered to be Anthony's guide during the voyage to Persia. There is also evidence from the writings of Giacomo Foscarini that Venetians encouraged Anthony to travel to Persia to divert the Persian trade from Portugal to Venice. Finally, in May 1598, Sir Anthony Sherley, his brother, Robert Sherley رابرت شرلی, and his party started their anti-Portuguese sabotage and fortune-hunting expedition to Persia.

In 1592, seven years before Sherley's arrival to Persia, Pope Clement VII sent a letter to Shah Abbas شاه عباس asking him to unite with the Christian forces against the Turks. Abbas was fighting against Uzbeks ازبک ها at that time and was not ready for another war. Sherley's arrival in Qazvin fortuitously happened simultaneously with Abbas' victory over the Uzbeks. Thus, the King of Persia was contemplating sending an envoy to the Pope.

Upon arrival, Anthony Sherley introduced himself as a cousin of the Scottish King James and the ambassador of all the kings of Christendom to the king of Persia. In *Telling True Tales of*

Islamic Lands, Julia Schleck explains the Sherley brothers' status before their expedition to Persia. She noted, "Sir Thomas and his heirs-Thomas, Anthony, and Robert Sherley had fallen deeply in debt to the Crown." Sir Thomas, the senior, treasurer during 1586 and a decade later, had misappropriated the funds entrusted to him for the war in the Low Countries. Thus, as a fallen courtier, Anthony Sherley was on no ambassadorial mission when he left for Persia.

In 1599, Anthony Sherley, with an envoy of Fifteen Englishmen and Husain 'Ali Beg حسین علی بیگ as the Persian ambassador, a few servants, interpreters, and a Franciscan and a Dominican monk departed from Isfahan as an embassy of Persia to eight European courts. Anthony left his brother, Robert at the Persian court. They were supposed to meet the Holy Roman Emperor, the Pope, the kings of Poland, Spain, French, England, and Scotland, and the grand duke of the republic of Venice. Shah Abbas sent thirty-two camels bearing presents for the European heads of state. But Sherley sold all of them to an English friend and took refuge at the court of Venice. Husain 'Ali Beg had to return to Persia but passed away on the journey home. Thus, the mission failed. Anthony never returned.

Shah Abbas kept Anthony's brother, Robert, as a palace detainee for nine years, then he sent Robert to Europe to see what happened to his brother. In his journey to Europe, Robert found out that Anthony had betrayed him and lived his life in Granada under the assumed title El Conde de Leste.

During his nine years stay in Persia, Robert married and had a significant part in organizing the Safavid military forces. He married the Circassian Theresia Sampsonia ترزا سمپسونیا in Isfahan. He returned to Persia again after he found out about his brother in Granada. Robert distinguished himself in military campaigns, spent thirty years serving the king of Persia, and was sent to various missions in Europe.

Robert Sherley and his wife, Theresia Sampsonia



Sir Anthony Sherley





ANTONIVS SHERLEYNS ANGLVS
EQVES AVRATVS

*Magni Sophi Persarum Legatus Sanctiss^o D. N. Clem. VIII. ceteris
que Principibus Christianis huius amicitiae et Auctor et Ductor*

Ioannes Orlandi fecit Roma In platra pasquini Anno Domini 1601. Super. pmissu

Terms:

Safavid

Isfahan

Franciscan and Dominican monks

Uzbeks

Write a travel account about a city or a country you visited recently and share with the class your experience with the geography, culture, food, and people you have encountered on this visit.

Include images or illustrations in your work.