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Jean-Baptiste Tavernier
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Travels in India

VOLUME 1

JEAN-BAPTISTE TAVERNIER
TRANSLATED BY VALENTINE BALL



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JEAN BAPTISTE TAVERNIER
BARON OF AUBONNE

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JEAN BAPTISTE TAVERNIER

BARON OF AUBONNE

At the age of 74

1676

VOL. I, PLATE I

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TRAVELS IN INDIA

BY

JEAN BAPTISTE TAVERNIER

BARON OF AUBONNE

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH EDITION OF 1676

WITH A

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR,
NOTES, APPENDICES, ETC.

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

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PREFACE

TAVERNIER'S name, owing to its frequent mention in histories and in works on precious stones, has long been known as that of one of the most renowned travellers of the seventeenth century. Possibly it would not be incorrect to speak of Tavernier as in some respects the most renowned traveller during that period when so much was done to bring home to the people of Europe information about countries which had previously been but little known.

Such being the case, it is not only somewhat surprising that there should be so much error in the published accounts of his life, but also that his *Travels*, although they have been frequently issued in various languages, have not, as a whole, been subjected to critical examination and elucidation with the aid of our modern knowledge of the countries which they describe.

Of Tavernier's life and work Prof. Charles Joret has given an exhaustive survey in a recently-published monograph. In the present volumes it is sought to present an approximately literal translation of the portion of the *Travels* which refer to India, accompanying it by such identifications of localities with modern sites,

and such elucidation of obscure points, as have been possible under the circumstances.

As will be explained more particularly in the biographical sketch, the chief faults in Tavernier's encyclopædic volumes consist in a want of systematic arrangement of the subjects, a fuller and more carefully correlated chronology, and a reconciliation of really or apparently contradictory statements; such work, in short, as should have been done by the editors whom he employed, but which they appear to have either wilfully shirked or omitted to recognise as a part of their duty.

Upwards of two hundred years have elapsed since an English translation, that by John Phillips, has appeared; but owing to that translator's misconception of the author's meaning, through want of local knowledge, and to serious abridgment, it gives a very inadequate idea of the true merits of the work, which, except to those who have read it in the original, have therefore been practically unknown to English readers.

A word of explanation is due to the readers of these volumes as to how it has happened that the present editor came to undertake the onerous task of translation and annotation.

For a long time I have been well acquainted with the portions of Tavernier's works which deal with the economic mineral resources of India, and although I have published some accounts of these, having succeeded in identifying the sites of the diamond mines described by him, which were for a long time supposed

by authors to be beyond the reach of recognition, I have felt that in order to truly represent him a new English edition, at least of the Indian travels, was much wanted, which would give his facts in their own setting and substantiate, by means of modern illustration, the strong claim which he has to be regarded as a veracious and original author.

Being fully mindful of my deficiencies as a philological and historical critic, I had, when further acquainted with the work, determined not to undertake the task myself, as I felt that such qualifications as I possessed, which were mainly derived from a long experience of travelling in India in connection with the Geological Survey of that country, would not make up for the lack of special knowledge in the subjects just alluded to.

Acting, however, under the advice of Colonel Yule, I commenced the translation and annotation in the year 1886, and have devoted the greater portion of my spare time since then to this work.

In speaking of the aid which Colonel Yule has ever been most ready to afford, I must guard against implying that the work has been completed in any way under his supervision; that for various reasons has not been possible, and it would be an ill return for so much assistance as I have received to lay upon him any responsibility for opinions which he has not had an opportunity of considering. At the same time the direct acknowledgments of his advice which are made in the footnotes by no means cover the extent of

my indebtedness, and I regret the impossibility of doing more now than to give expression to my gratitude to him for his labour and advice in these somewhat general terms.

To Mr. V. A. Smith of the Bengal Civil Service I am indebted for much assistance and advice while passing this first volume through the press. His departure for India has deprived me of a continuation of his valuable aid in connection with the second volume.

INTRODUCTION¹

LIFE OF J. B. TAVERNIER

JEAN BAPTISTE TAVERNIER was born in Paris in the year 1605. This has been ascertained from the statement in the volume of his *Relations*, namely that in 1679 he was seventy-four years old. But there is no direct evidence as to the exact month or day of his birth, and they cannot now be ascertained owing to the disappearance of the registers of the Church at Charenton, where he was baptized.

Not very much is known of the family of his father Gabriel, of whom, however, it is recorded that he fled from Antwerp to Paris in 1575, together with his brothers Melchior and Nicolas, in order to avoid religious persecution, they being Protestants. They readily accepted French nationality, and it is suggested by M. Joret that their ancestors may have originally migrated from France to Belgium. Melchior became famous as an engraver and printer to the King; he was born in 1544, and died in 1641, at the age of ninety-seven years. Of Nicolas the record is more scanty, it being only known that he was married to Claudine le Bert, by whom he had a son named

¹ Largely based on the excellent life of *J. B. Tavernier* by Prof. Charles Joret, Paris, Plon, 1886.

Jacques. Of Gabriel it is known that like Melchior he was a geographer, but he appears to have been rather a merchant than an artist. He married Suzanne Tonnelier, by whom he had three sons—Melchior, baptized in 1594; Jean-Baptiste, who, as already stated, was born in 1605; and Gabriel, born in 1613. As will be seen hereafter, Tavernier mentions a brother Daniel¹ who died at Batavia in the year 1648, and there also appears to have been a brother named Maurice, whose son accompanied Tavernier on his sixth voyage. The possibility of Gabriel being identical with either Daniel or Maurice has been discussed, but there would be no advantage in retailing the various opinions here, as none of them are conclusive. Melchior, like his uncle, became distinguished as a cartographer; he died in 1665, during the last of Jean Baptiste's voyages to the East.

The geographical surroundings of Jean Baptiste, and the discussions which learned men held with his father, and to which he listened with avidity, served to inflame in his mind from his earliest years a strong desire to see foreign countries; but minute as are his descriptions of his travels, he, so far as his own autobiographical account is concerned, ignores the events of his early youth; and indeed it may be said that throughout he sinks his personality to such an extent that the actual period at which some of his adventures took place can only be arrived at by the casual mention of incidents and dates which are scattered about through his works, while with regard to others there are no indications whatever, and in reference to some

¹ See Book III, chap. xxvi. The name Daniel is printed on the map of Tonquin in Tavernier's account of that Kingdom.

periods of his life we are left in complete darkness as to where and how they were spent.

By the age of twenty-two he had, he states in his "Design," seen the best parts of France, England, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Poland?¹ Hungary, and Italy, and had acquired a fair knowledge of the most useful European languages. It would appear from M. Joret's estimate that these rambles must have commenced when he was only fifteen years old. It is not necessary to follow the details of these European travels here, as they are fully set forth on following pages in "The Design of the Author."

FIRST VOYAGE.—Contrary to those writers who have stated that Tavernier started on his first voyage to the East in 1636, M. Joret has, I think, very clearly proved, by reference to the easily ascertained dates of historical events which took place while he was in Constantinople, that his departure cannot have been later than January or February 1631; and that, in 1633, after visiting Persia, he returned to Europe by Aleppo and Alexandretta to Malta, from whence he made his way to Italy, bringing with him some Persian turquoises as articles of trade. During the next five years his occupation is unknown, the record being almost blank.

SECOND VOYAGE.—On the 13th of September 1638 we find him again starting from Paris for the East, taking ship at Marseilles for Alexandretta, with a following consisting of a young Artist, a Surgeon, and his brother Daniel. He was, moreover, on this occasion well equipped as a merchant. After spending

¹ Poland, as pointed out by M. Joret, does not appear to have been visited till he was twenty-five years old.

six weeks at Aleppo he left it on the 27th December¹ with a caravan, and passing through Meshed, Bassora, and Shiraz, reached Ispahan at the end of April or beginning of May 1639. Here he visited the King, Sháh Safvi, grandson of Sháh Abbás. Our next record of him shows him to have been in Hindustan early in 1641, but as to the route which he followed, whether by sea or by land, and at what date he traversed it, there is no direct evidence. M. Joret suggests that he left Ispahan at the end of 1639, that he paid his first visit to Dacca in 1640, and that he remained in Agra during the winter of 1640-41. In 1641 he tells us that he was at Burhánpur on the journey from Agra to Surat, and elsewhere that he was at Goa at the close of the same year. His journey up from Surat to Agra in 1640, unlike the journey back *via* Burhánpur, was probably made by the Ahmadábád route which is described on pp. 66-89. At Agra he found Sháh Jahán enjoying a peaceable reign. From Goa he appears to have visited Golconda and made full inquiries and perhaps visited the diamond mines—returning to Surat by the land journey throughout, in the spring of 1642. How he occupied himself during the remainder of this year is uncertain; but he states that he paid a visit to Ahmadábád, probably while awaiting the season for sailing towards the end of the year 1642 or the beginning of 1643, when he states he was in Bandar Abbás.

THIRD VOYAGE.—We do not know when he reached Paris nor what route he followed; but we find

¹ I do not think it necessary to enter into any discussion here as to the enigmas presented by the incompatibility of some of his statements with these dates. (See Joret, p. 48.)

him towards the close of 1643, namely on the 6th of December, starting thence on his third voyage to the East, arriving as before at Alexandretta. On the 6th of March 1644 he started from Aleppo in the company of two Capuchin monks, arriving at Ispahan on the 3d of May, where M. Joret considers he must have remained for some months, reaching Surat in January 1645, most probably by the Bandar Abbás route. On the 19th of January he started *via* Daulatábád and Nánder for Golconda, whence he visited the diamond mines, regarding which he had ascertained particulars, if he had not actually seen them, on the occasion of his previous journey. After visiting the mine of Raolconda, *i.e.* the modern Ramulkota, 18 miles south of Karnúl, he appears to have returned to Golconda and afterwards proceeded to the mine which he called Gani or Coulour; this, it will be seen, stands for Kán-i-Kollur on the Kistná, at seven days' journey eastwards, or more correctly south-eastwards, from Golconda. (See p. 172.) How the remainder of this year and the whole of 1646 were employed we cannot say. In connection with the descriptions of the above-named mines he also describes one at Soumelpour (see Book II, chap. xvii), which was situated on the Koel river, an affluent of the Sone, in the District of Lohárdagá in Western Bengal, but as to when he visited it, if ever, he gives no certain indication. There are some grounds for supposing that in 1647 he visited Persia, indeed he actually states (Book I, chap. viii) that he was in Ispahan towards the end of that year. Be this as it may, we find him on the 11th of January 1648 at Mingrela, that is to say Vengurla, on the west coast of India, where he had arrived from

Surat in the Dutch vessel called *Mæstricht*. After nine days spent there, during which time he enjoyed the hospitality of the Dutch, who had a factory there, he embarked on an armed vessel for Goa, where he arrived on the following day, and was much struck with its decadence since his previous visit in 1641. During the two months which he spent in Goa he was on the most friendly terms with the Viceroy—the wealthy Dom Philippe de Mascarenhas,—the Archbishop, and the Inquisitor-General, by all of whom he was treated with much kindness, the latter having first satisfied himself that he had left his Bible behind him at Vengurla. On the 11th of March he returned to Vengurla, where he remained for more than a month, or till the 14th of April, when he embarked for Batavia, for the ostensible reasons of seeing so famous a place, and of rendering a service to the Dutch by conveying to them information about the discovery of a new port in Africa which had been made by the Portuguese. M. Joret probably rightly concludes that he was anxious to seek for and meet with his brother Daniel, whom he had not seen for ten years.

On this voyage Tavernier narrowly escaped shipwreck off the coast of Malabar, but at length succeeded in reaching the harbour of Point de Galle, in Ceylon, where, as usual, he was well received by the Dutch authorities. On the 25th of June, the merchandise having been transhipped to another vessel, the voyage was continued, and on the 17th of July the coast of Sumatra was sighted, and on the 22d Tavernier reached Batavia. On the following day he went to pay his respects to the General, Vanderling, and the Director-General, Caron, by whom he was at first

well treated. Subsequently, however, he was involved in tedious investigations in reference to his relations with M. Constant, the Commander at Bandar Abbás, for whom he had purchased diamonds at the mines. These inquiries suddenly collapsed when Tavernier disclosed the fact that he possessed a very considerable amount of compromising information concerning the illicit transactions of the very members of the Council at Batavia who proposed to try him.

His stay at Batavia was interrupted by two short visits to Bantam, where he was well received by the King, of whom his brother was a boon companion ; and he also experienced much kindness from the English Resident, who offered him a free passage to England, which he at first accepted, but subsequently declined in favour of a similar offer made by the Dutch. Thereupon followed a serious contention about certain Dutch pay-bills which he had purchased at a considerable discount, intending to sell them at par in Holland, and so employ his capital during the voyage. This traffic having been prohibited, those who had bought bills were all, with the exception of Tavernier, both compelled to give up what they had purchased, and otherwise severely mulcted and punished. Tavernier held out to the last moment, but finally handed up the bills on promise of an order for payment of his outlay in Holland. Ultimately he sailed without this promise being fulfilled, and it was only after several years and the institution of an action against the Company in Holland that he, or rather his brother for him, received part of the sum due. From all these circumstances he, perhaps naturally enough, became a bitter enemy of the Dutch, and availed

himself of every opportunity for manifesting his hostility.¹

After his second return to Batavia from Bantam he was about to visit certain Kings in Sumatra, when his brother Daniel arrived in a dying state from Bantam; and shortly afterwards died, in spite of all that could be done to cure him.

Somewhere about the month of October, according to M. Joret's estimate, Tavernier sailed for Holland in a ship called the *Provinces*, which having passed the Sunda Straits, and failed to make the Cocos Islands, steered for the Cape of Good Hope, where it arrived in fifty-five days; and the fleet, after remaining there twenty-two days for the recovery of the sick, etc., proceeded to St. Helena, which was reached in eighteen days; and then halted for a further twenty-two days, when the crews and passengers of the several vessels in the port entertained one another. Ultimately, after some delays on account of contrary winds, the fleet reached Holland, where the Directors treated Tavernier with much politeness and hospitality; as regards his claim against them, they denied all knowledge of it at first, but finally offered to give him a free passage back to Batavia in order that he might get it paid there: this offer he declined to accept.

There is no precise intimation in the text as to when he arrived in Holland. M. Joret concludes that the voyage must have taken six months, and that, allowing for delays in Holland, he could not have reached Paris till the spring of 1649.

FOURTH VOYAGE.—Two years having been spent in Europe, which were occupied in the sale of the precious

¹ See his *Histoire de la Conduite des Hollandois in Asia*.

stones brought by Tavernier from India, and in repeated efforts to recover his debt from the Dutch Company, he again started for the East, leaving Paris on the 18th June 1651. It was not till the 25th of August, however, that he sailed in the *St. Crispine* from Marseilles; and after touching at Malta and Larnaca in Cyprus, reached Alexandretta on the 4th of October, and Aleppo on the 7th. Owing to disturbances in the country he was unable to resume his journey eastwards till the last day of the year. It is needless here to detail his adventures in Persia from this time forwards till the 11th of May, when he embarked at Bandar Abbás on a ship belonging to the King of Golconda, which was bound for the port of Masulipatam, on the east coast of India. After narrowly escaping shipwreck he reached Masulipatam on the 2d of July—or perhaps for 2d we should read 12th, and on the 21st of July, together with M. du Jardin, he set out to march to Gandikot *via* Madras, which latter place he reached on the 13th of August. The description of this march will be found in Book I, chap. xviii. Here it need only be pointed out that conformably to his custom he made friends with the English who were residing in Fort St. George, and visited the Portuguese Governor and Catholic brotherhoods at St. Thomé. On the 22d of the same month he started by the valley of the Pennair River for Gandikot, which he might have reached from Masulipatam by a more direct and shorter route had he not desired to visit Madras. On the 1st of September he reached Gandikot, which Mir Jumlá, on behalf of the King of Golconda, had just taken possession of. As Mir Jumlá was not only the General of the troops but also Prime Minister, Tavernier

had gone to him in order to show him—as he was bound to do, not merely as an act of courtesy but because it was the custom—the pearls and precious stones which he proposed to sell to the King. Several interviews which he had with Mir Jumlá served to impress him with a high opinion of that General's abilities. On the 15th Tavernier took leave after receiving his assurance that he had recommended him to his son at the Golconda court. His march northwards lasted till the 2d of October, when he reached Golconda. After some delay negotiations were opened with reference to the sale of the precious stones, but in consequence of a remark by a eunuch that the prices asked by Tavernier were too high, he took offence, and, together with M. du Jardin, left at once for Surat, following the same route as he had come by to Golconda in 1643.

In some of the editions the date of his showing the precious stones is given as the 25th (of October), but in the 1676 edition the 15th is mentioned; and as he started on the following day, and the distance was twenty-one¹ days or five days journey less than by the Aurangábád route, which was twenty-six days, he reached Surat either on the 5th or the 15th of November. Shortly afterwards his companion, M. du Jardin,² died, and Tavernier then set out for Ahmadábád, where he had been invited to bring his jewels by Sháístá Khán, who was then Governor of Gujarát. Thence he returned to Surat, and set out for Golconda on the 6th of March 1653 by the Aurangábád route, arriving at Golconda on the 1st of April.

¹ In Book I, chapter ix, p. 147, he says, however, twenty-seven days.

² As will be seen there is some uncertainty about the identification of this M. du Jardin. (See Index for references.)

He then paid another visit to the mines, regarding which, as he gives no details, we must only conclude that any observations of importance made by him on this occasion are incorporated in the account of his previous visit in 1645, which has been above alluded to. He appears to have returned to Surat during the same year, as in Book III, chap. xiii, he refers to having, in the year 1653, when on the return journey from Golconda to Surat, encountered a troop of pilgrims. He says M. d'Ardilliere was with him, to which M. Joret objects that he had died in 1652. But had he? We know his father, M. du Jardin, had, but of himself there is, so far as I know, no such record. Tavernier next refers to being back at Surat, where he heard that war had been declared between the English and Dutch. On the 8th of January 1654 he sailed in one of a fleet of five Dutch vessels of war which were despatched from Surat to intercept the English fleet, which was then expected to be on its way back from Hormuz. After a naval engagement, in which the English were beaten, and various delays, the Dutch fleet proceeded to Bandar Abbás, arriving there on the 7th of March. Tavernier then started for Ispahan, visiting Kerman *en route*, where he purchased a large quantity of the beautiful wool of that country for transport to France. After a protracted stay in Persia, where he visited many places which he had not previously seen, he returned to Paris apparently in the autumn of the year 1655, but the information he gives on this point is very vague.

FIFTH VOYAGE. — In February 1657 Tavernier started from Paris on his fifth voyage. Shortly after leaving Marseilles, the vessel in which he had

embarked was chased by pirates, and was compelled to take refuge in a port near Toulon, from whence he returned by land, carrying on his person the jewels which he was taking with him to sell in the East, but allowing his heavier merchandise to proceed in the same vessel. At Marseilles he again took ship in an English vessel for Italy. In Italy he spent a short time, and visited Ferdinand II of Tuscany, who treated him with kindness and distinction. He then sailed for Smyrna in a Dutch ship, and, while awaiting the departure of the caravan, sent one of his servants to buy some pearls in Constantinople, which he heard that a Jew residing there had for sale, because, he remarks, pearls were the best articles of trade which could be taken to India. At this time, according to him, Smyrna was the principal *entrepôt* for all kinds of goods which passed from Europe to Asia, and from Asia to Europe. From the vague indications given by Tavernier Prof. Joret concludes that he started with the caravan from Smyrna in June 1657. The journey was made by Erivan and Tabriz to Ispahan, without any event happening worthy of particular record. Owing to the accounts which reached him of the disturbed condition of India, in connection with the usurpation by Aurangzeb of his father's throne, Tavernier appears to have prolonged his stay in Ispahan till the beginning of 1659; but before starting for Surat, which his letter addressed to Sháístá Khán proves him to have reached in May of that year, he despatched to Masulipatam, in charge of one of his servants for safety, and perhaps to evade dues, the bulk of the beautiful objects and rare curiosities which he had collected for Sháístá Khán in Europe. Sháístá

Khán's reply to his letter was an invitation to visit him at Jahánábád, sending him a passport to enable him to do so with ease and safety. Delayed by the rains, Tavernier had not started before he received other letters, first asking him to come to Burhánpur, and then to Aurangábád. When he went to take leave of the Governor of Surat, named Mirzá Arab, he was informed by him that until instructions came from Aurangzeb, who had been informed of his arrival, he would not be allowed to depart. He then wrote to Sháístá Khán, asking him to send an order to the Governor to let him go; this was done, and at length, after six months' delay at Surat, he set out and found Sháístá Khán laying siege to Sholápur (Choupar) in the Deccan. As will be seen on pp. 31 and 409, there are some discrepancies in Tavernier's two accounts of the sale of and payment for his goods. It is inferred from a casual statement that, having concluded this transaction, he pursued his course farther southwards in order to visit the diamond mines at Golconda again, from whence probably he returned to Surat about the end of 1660 or beginning of 1661. In his *Persian Travels* he says (Book V, chap. ii) that he was in Persia in 1662, and during the same year he returned to Paris, his age being then fifty-six years. It was thought that, as he had by this time amassed a considerable fortune, and was married in the same year for the first time in his life, he would settle down and rest from his travels, which, as we have seen, commenced when he was only fifteen years of age. His wife was named Madeline Gousse, a daughter of Jean Gousse, a jeweller, with whom he had had some business transactions, and who was a connection by marriage of his brother Melchior.

SIXTH VOYAGE.—Tavernier's original intention, expressed shortly after his marriage in 1662, was, however, to make a short journey to the East in order to close up his affairs there. As months passed in preparation, this intention expanded, and on the 27th of November 1663 he started from Paris, and did not return again for five years. On this occasion he took with him a young nephew, son of Maurice Tavernier, and four attendants of different professions, including a surgeon. His stock of precious stones, goldsmith's work, etc., was valued at 400,000 *livres*, which at 1s. 6d. would be equal to £30,000. On the 10th of January 1664 he embarked at Marseilles for Leghorn, and after passing through many misadventures, including a narrow escape of being drowned, he ultimately reached Smyrna on the 25th of April, where he remained till the 9th of June, when he left with the caravan for Tabriz. After three months' marching the caravan reached Erivan on the 14th of September, and Tabriz on the 9th of November, where two of the attendants, one a watchmaker and the other a goldsmith, died of sickness brought on by the fatigues of the journey. Here also Tavernier left his nephew Pierre in the charge of the Superior of the Capuchin Convent. On the 22d of November, having beforehand despatched his principal goods, he left with a small party for Ispahan, and arrived there on the 14th of December. Three days afterwards the King, Sháh Abbás II, who in 1657 had bought a quantity of jewels from him, summoned him to his palace, where he went in state accompanied by all the *Franks*, and bearing with him his most precious treasures, Father Raphael acting as interpreter. The Sháh first in-