

« Les voyageurs français en Perse de 1600 à 1730 ». *Eurasian Studies*, IV/1, 2005, pp. 41-74.

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- 1 This article is a review and summary of a number of prominent features which appear in published reports and travel accounts by French visitors to Iran between 1600 and 1730. This period, highlighted by Šāh ‘Abbās’s unprecedented policy of initiating and maintaining diplomatic and economic contacts with European powers, saw increased cultural interaction between Iran and the Occident. Touzard brings a strong sense of typology to this article, and classifies French travel accounts – Père Pacifique de Provins, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Père Raphael Du Mans, to name a few – on the basis of their “religious”, “diplomatic”, “commercial” and “explorative” mandates. Culling references and descriptions from this variegated body of sources, Touzard organizes and presents these under a series of rubrics including “Itineraries”, “Characteristics of Travel”, and “Representations of Persia”. Not surprisingly, the issue of how Persia is represented by these Frenchmen constitutes the bulk of this article, and we are given piecemeal glimpses of how, for instance, Père Pacifique invoked Paris’s oldest square, la Place Royale, while touring the imperial space of Naqš-e Jahān in Eşfahān. Touzard also points out the compulsion of many of these Humanist-trained scholars to seek out those sites and monuments – Persepolis, Garden of Eden, Babylon – which were so celebrated in the biblical and classical traditions. The conclusion summarizes this collection of disparate references in the hopes of flushing out some larger themes regarding French representations of Iran. By and large, these characterizations are negative, and usually framed by issues of Christian proselytism, interloping of Persian markets by French merchants, and the tendency to rely on “preconceived ideas and prefabricated, mental structures.”

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Thèmes : 4.2.1. Safavides et Qâjârs

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