



A Journey To Persia: Jean Chardin's Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Empire

R. W. Ferrier

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"Isfahan is half the world" was the proud boast of the 17th-century capital of Persia, established as the new political centre of the country by Shah Abbas I shortly after his accession to the throne in 1588.

One of the many travellers attracted to Persia by these claims was Jean Chardin, a young French jeweller who spent a total of 10 years in Isfahan. During this time, he became intimately familiar with the city, its markets, shops, and workplaces; he was invited into people's houses and entertained; he visited gardens and participated in hunts; his knowledge of Court affairs was extensive; and he travelled hundreds of miles, all over the country, visiting other towns and villages.

His journals are a source of information for all interested in Middle Eastern history. They also provide a portrait of life both at court and among humble artisans in 17th century Persia. First published as "Chardin's Voyages", this edited collection includes a comprehensive introduction with a biography of Chardin and a description of Iran in the mid-17th-century, placing the writing in its historical context.

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