
« Further Thoughts on an Enigma: The Tortuous Life of Nicolò Manucci, 1638-c. 1720 ». *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 45, No. 1, 2008, p. 35-76.

Colin P. Mitchell

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- 1 The four-volume travel account (*Storia del Mogor*) of Nicolò Manucci has long been considered a primary source of critical importance in 17th-century Mughal studies. Employed initially under the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh and other nobility, and then later interacting with the Portuguese and the English, the Venetian Manucci is profiled in this article by Sanjay Subrahmanyam as one of those rare, cultural “go-betweens”, or *passeurs culturels*, who are situated in the liminal spaces of early modern Europe and South Asia. Rightly, Subrahmanyam observes that there has been far too much reliance on William Irvine’s early 20th-century English translation, and the time is nigh for a re-exploration of this key primary source in its earliest manifestation. This is, of course, complicated by the fact that Manucci’s work was written intermittently in Portuguese, French, and Italian. Subrahmanyam returns to the original manuscripts contained in Berlin, Paris, and Venice to better appreciate not only the character of the author, but also to make better sense of how the *Storia del Mogor* came to fruition. What follows in a detailed and frank analysis of different passages of Manucci’s travel account – freshly translated by Subrahmanyam and occasionally including original text – which sheds a great deal of light on the genesis of this ‘Venetian’ travel account. The transmission from India of Manucci’s text, and its publication in Europe, was a tortured process, and this in of itself is a fascinating and edifying tale regarding what obstacles our early modern cultural “reporters” faced in the publishing world. Subrahmanyam is also interested in discussing Manucci’s hierarchical view of Indian society, and surprisingly his fellow Europeans are not accorded any significantly high ranks. Manucci appeared to have been most disturbed by Gentile (Hindu) culture (this is reinforced by some

interesting illustrations from Manucci's text), and moderately impressed by Muslim Mughal culture. This article should definitely be read by those making use of Manucci in their own analyses, and it would also serve well in graduate seminars on Orientalism and Mughal historiography.

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Thèmes : 4.2.3. Inde musulmane

AUTEURS

COLIN P. MITCHELL

Dalhousie University - Canada