Álvaro da Costa's journey to Persia and Turkey (1611), the ruins of Babylon, and the riddles of globalization

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ABSTRACT: This article analyzes Álvaro da Costa's return trip from the Estado da Índia to Lisbon in 1611. The constraints of Costa's travel allow us to discuss some common assumptions about the character and spirit of early modern travelers and to illustrate some of the limits of travelers' observations and the peculiar modes of knowledge they displayed. Reading through the many misunderstandings and apparent mistakes that Costa introduced in his *Tratado da viagem*, the article also explores the complex dynamics of "discovery" and argues that early modern globalization must be understood as a manyfold process. Individuals not only disposed of different information, but they also used very diverse frameworks to interpret and make sense of such information. The article contrasts Costa's use of older but resilient interpretative frameworks with more modern and more accurate interpretations and shows that very different perceptions about world connections coexisted during the early modern age. In particular, the article focuses on how Costa actively combined his observations of the ruins of Babylon and other cities he found on his route with previous paradigms of universal history, such as biblical theories on the historical succession of empires.

KEYWORDS: Travel literature; Microhistory; First globalization; Mesopotamia; Babel; Discoveries; Ruins.

RESUMEN: *El viaje de Álvaro da Costa por Persia y Turquía (1611), las ruinas de Babilonia y los enigmas de la globalización.—* Este artículo analiza el viaje de regreso de Álvaro da Costa desde el *Estado da Índia* a Lisboa en 1611. Las limitaciones del viaje de Costa sirven para debatir algunas asunciones corrientes en torno al carácter y el espíritu de los viajeros de la edad moderna y para ejemplificar algunos de los límites de sus observaciones y los particulares modos de conocimiento que utilizaron. Una lectura atenta a los aparentes errores y malentendidos que Costa introdujo en su *Tratado da viagem* permite explorar también las complejas dinámicas del "descubrimiento" y sugerir que la globalización de la edad moderna fue un proceso con múltiples vertientes. Los sujetos no solo dispusieron de informaciones diferentes, sino que también usaron marcos muy distintos para interpretar y dotar de sentido a dicha información. El artículo compara el uso que Costa hace de paradigmas interpretativos previos pero muy resistentes con otras interpretaciones más modernas y precisas, y muestra que durante la edad moderna coexistieron percepciones muy diferentes sobre las conexiones mundiales. En particular, el artículo se centra específicamente en los modos en que las observaciones de Costa sobre las ruinas de Babilonia y otras ciudades que encontró en su camino fueron activamente combinadas con anteriores paradigmas de la historia universal, tales como las teorías bíblicas sobre la sucesión de imperios.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Literatura de viajes; Microhistoria; Primera globalización; Mesopotamia; Babel; Descubrimientos; Ruinas.

After several years of service in the Estado da Índia, the Portuguese military officer Álvaro da Costa crossed Persia and the Mesopotamian territories under Ottoman rule between January and April 1611. Costa recorded his impressions of the cities and ruins he saw along his way back to Lisbon in his *Tratado da viagem*. At first sight, Costa's travel may seem a sign of the increasing connectedness of the early modern world. However, it is easier to detect connections in world history than to interpret their meanings —whether we choose to start looking at the city of Cairo in 1250, admiral Cheng Ho's voyages, or the international sugar trade in the eighteenth century. Costa's account includes a long list of misunderstandings. These "errors" allow us to investigate under which conditions old interpretive frameworks offered more certainties than newer ones, which generally posed more suggestive questions but less coherent results. His case moreover shows that not every early modern traveler was "modern" or produced cracks in the old frameworks which were condemned to slowly fade away.

The riddle posed by Costa's account mirrors widespread contemporary discussions on the ways to "measure" connectedness and assess the global nature of the world we live in. Thomas Friedman's popular analysis (2006) of the current state of world affairs proposed that "the world is flat" and that no one could stop this increasing homogenization, but critics of this thesis, such as the economist Pankaj Ghemawat (2007), have dug into datasets to show the resilience of national patterns of consumption and communication, and the importance of understanding distance. A term —globaloney— has been coined to denounce oversimplifying claims of globalization, but many authors still consider the increasing consciousness and the subjective meaning attributed to connections as a relevant factor of globalization (Steger, 2020, p. 14). These disagreements illustrate the gap between perceptions of globalization and hard indicators of global connections.

The problem of defining the modes and effects of global connections offers no easy solution, and has engaged a good number of scholars in one of the liveliest debates in sociology, history and economics of the past three decades or more. While sociological and economical models have so far prevailed in explaining the main characteristics of globalization, historical thinking is often invoked as a solution to the problem. Almost every description of global connections or phenomena incorporates an implicit or explicit evolutionary pattern to explain the growing nature of such connections. Authors strive to understand differences in the rhythm of global flows and to establish an accurate chronology of those changes (Stearns, 2009). Nevertheless, disagreement on the starting point and the possible periods or phases of globalization is as important as disagreement on its present nature. Some have proposed three waves of globalization (Robertson, 2002), some try to identify the early modern period with the beginnings of global patterns of commercial exchange and political endeavor, and others focus on redefining the actual moment of the rise of Europe and the West and its

economic prevalence and political predominance (Pomeranz, 2001; Bayly, 2004; Osterhammel, 2014). It seems very difficult to escape the causal chain between past and present, but the idea, rather logical, that connections developed progressively can easily drive us into a cognitive fallacy that equates every sign of connection as a precedent to the current situation.

Historians have deployed several related strategies to avoid the crudest dangers of retrospective projection of present concerns. Scholars have stressed the importance of assessing the slow tempo of assimilation of many geographic and cultural novelties within older biblical and classical frameworks (Elliott, 1970). Similarly, Sanjay Subrahmanyam traced the "long and slow evolution" of global views on history back to sixteenth-century historians, but clearly alerted that this was a minority trend (Subrahmanyam, 2014, p. 18). The actual extension of early modern economic systems and the effective reach of commercial networks have been re-evaluated. The multiple and unstable juridical frameworks that co-existed within what we call early modern empires, and the implementation of actual dominance have been reassessed (Hespanha, 2001 and 2019; Benton, 2002; Darwin, 2007). Finally, early modern historians have stressed the role of the individual.

Reacting in part to the predominance of sociological and macroeconomic discussions on the nature and the rhythm of connections, historians have emphasized the "human focus" of an increasingly connected world, and set an agenda for global microhistory (Andrade, 2010, p. 74; De Vito and Gerritsen, 2017, pp. 7-11; Levi, 2018, pp. 32-33). Establishing a dialogue between general narratives and particular examples has proved no easy task. John-Paul Ghobrial recently made a point of differentiating the flow of porcelain plates and other goods in the sixteenth century and the circulation of people. Specifically, he pointed to the danger of creating a caricatured "chain of global lives whose individual contexts and idiosyncrasies dissolve too easily into the ether of connectedness" (Ghobrial, 2014, pp. 8-9). Individual perceptions of globalization and strategical agency in intercultural contexts seem more intriguing and complex objects of study than material culture, commerce, or cultural clashes.

Tratado da viagem que fez D. Alvaro da Costa is one example of those individual perceptions. The work remains unpublished, with the exception of fragments published by Luis Graça (1983) and José Nunes Carreira (1980, 1997). Both scholars revealed important aspects of the text, such as the uses of the Bible, but their analysis remained limited to a close reading of the *Tratado*. Graça and Carreira also agreed that the composition and circulation of the *Tratado* in the early modern era are an enigma. The original manuscript from Evora has several hands and mixes third-person and first-person references.[1] The combination is not as unusual as Luis Graça suggests, but it most probably indicates that the text was copied by one of Costa's servants (Graça, 1983, p. 307; Carreira, 1980, p. 187). An early modern Lisbon copy appears to reveal a certain generic interest in travel writing, as the *Tratado* is bound together a *roteiro* (itinerary) of Africa by Manuel

Mesquita Perestrelo and an account of the Battle of Chaul, but we know nothing about the manuscript's reception.[2] Interest in the work was revived in the nineteenth century. From 1850 to the 1880s, the erudite Querubino Lagoa worked on a copy with the goal of publishing an annotated edition (Rivara, 1850, p. 5).[3] And by the early twentieth century, *Tratado da viagem* was considered part of the subgenre of "itineraries from India to Portugal by land" (Baião, 1923). Most of this corpus nevertheless remained unknown beyond Portuguese historiographic circles (Floor and Hakimzadeh, 2007).

Recent anthologies of travel accounts to the area, histories of Mesopotamic archeology, and anthologies of relationships with the Islamic world have included most of the Portuguese return travels. Rudy Matthee has not only produced several comparative overviews of early modern travelers to Persia but also pointed for the first time to the relevance of ruins in these travels. Interest in the Safavid empire and the diplomatic contacts and relations between Persia and the Luso-Hispanic monarchy has also grown steadily in the last decades (Gil Fernández, 2006-2009; Couto and Loureiro, 2008) and major figures such as García de Silva y Figueroa (Loureiro and Resende, 2010) or Anthony Sherley have received a renewed attention. This article recovers Costa's account to raise questions about early modern discovery, a notion that is problematic when applied to the Americas, but even more so in regions such as Mesopotamia. Costa's experience also stresses the particularly unfavorable contact conditions posed by certain geographical areas, the slow evolution of cartography in regions away from the coasts, and how European Christians creatively incorporated the realities discovered into resilient cultural schemes.

The first part of this article looks at the literary corpus to which Costa's text belongs and the significance that Costa placed on his travels. Second, the article examines the conditions of observation that Costa had to deal with and his interpretation of space. The third part of this text provides a comparative look at the "search" for and the multiple "discoveries" of Babylon. Next, I examine contrasting interpretations of ruins and the use of written sources and local informants in search for the Tower of Babel, a case in point in this problematic history of discovery. Finally, the article tackles the connections between Costa's interpretations of ruins and more general theories on the succession of worldly empires. Compared to the accurate perceptions of several of his contemporaries, Costa often made mistakes in his observations, but he always managed to make good sense of what he saw. The experiences of this nearly unknown Portuguese traveler can help explain some less innovative examples of diversity in early modern globalization and show that his traditional historical vision was perfectly compatible with other far more perceptive understandings of world geopolitics.

A RETURN VOYAGE IN CONTEXT

The decades immediately before and after Costa's trip were unique as concerned the intense contact between the Hispano-Luso and Safavid monarchs. Philip II and Philip III sent letters and messengers to the shah, who for his part had European informants and sent ambassadors to points throughout Europe (Rubiés, 2011; Gulbenkian, 1972). Together with other memoranda, and the minutes from the Council of State, one fruit of these diplomatic efforts was the publication in 1604 of *Relaciones de don Juan de Persia*, by Uruch Bech (or Beg), in which the shah's emissary wrote about relations between the two kingdoms.

The first of the three most characteristic features of this period was a sensation that a strategic and diplomatic window in the struggle against the Ottoman Empire was opening up, a feeling exemplified by the comment by Father António Gouveia, one of the emissaries, that the Turks were "the common enemy of everyone" (Gouveia, 1611, fos. 48b-49r, and 50r). Second, evangelization was a constant presence. The papacy and the Spanish monarchy both spoke in messianic terms, inspired in part by their hopes for conversion of inhabitants of the territory and even of Abbas I. And third, the health of trade with Asia, both overland and with Persian Gulf ports, was of prime concern, with special attention being paid to rivalries with the Dutch and English companies operating in the area. This growing and fascinating exchange of information, however, did not give rise to lasting reciprocal influence, and there are few traces of Portugal's influence in Persia (Cunha, 2018). Although military tensions vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire and the Portuguese presence in the Indian Ocean never disappeared, and although Abbas I's policies toward Western travelers and Christian missionaries underwent important changes toward the end of his reign, generally it was the contacts, not the subsequent cooling-off, that have most drawn historians' attention. As is often the case with global history, more attention is paid to integration and harmony than to discord and disintegration (Adelman, 2017).

Two individuals stand out in this context of increasing communications. Firsts, the very peculiar English traveler Anthony Sherley (or Shirley). Recent studies rightly point to the global nature of his geopolitical view in the seventeenth century (Subrahmanyam 2011, pp. 116-132; Alloza, Bunes and Martínez Torres, 2010). Sherley's main work, *El peso de todo el mundo*, which he wrote for the Count-Duke of Olivares, in fact described Persia as being part of a world complex of the monarchy's friends and enemies (Sherley, 1622, fos. 80r-85v). Second, García de Silva y Figueroa, whose writings during his period as ambassador (1614-24) not only include minute details about Abbas I's government but also give the impression that Europeans were absolutely familiar with the kingdom's political and cultural vicissitudes. Of course, these two men were not of the same caliber as Costa. Sherley and Silva y Figueroa spent years in Persia while Costa was there for barely two months. Costa's account was far less incisive, but we should not let Costa's motivation and interpretative logic be eclipsed by the growing attention to these other figures and global history.

In sum, Costa's route through Persia and Turkey was not completely unknown but nor was it all that familiar in

the early modern age. Although before 1500 knowledge obviously was quite limited, it is difficult to refer to the "discovery" of Persia in the early modern age. Rather, the matter should make us think carefully about the notion of "encounter" along the lines recently proposed by Nandini Das concerning contacts between England and Japan. The goal would be to combine the traditional definition of encounter —or journey —as an isolated event with the study of other more expansive processes of the creation and circulation of knowledge (Das, 2016, pp. 1344-1345). Persia and Mesopotamia moreover were peculiar travel scenarios. Due to particular political and military conditions, Europeans were not able to penetrate equally throughout the region, which remained an area partially mapped and semi-discovered. But far from being an unknown *terra australis*, and even further away from the unexpected apparition of the American continent, the past of the region was especially prone to the use of previous interpretative frameworks. The attempts to locate ancient monuments and cities and to recover biblical toponymy were very common but did seldom convey a notion of discovery. Instead, authors sought to establish their authority as eyewitness in face of previous accounts and to defend the validity and accuracy of their observations and identifications. As the examples of Babylon and the tower of Babel show, Europeans produced contrasting or overlapping theories, and struggled to collate local information with textual traditions.

Like many travel accounts of this period, Costa's text contains all sorts of varied information and can be classified in many different ways. Since early descriptions of Persia include a range of data that goes from botany and information about ancient Mesopotamian civilizations to ethnographic and historical commentary, the interpretative challenge lies in understanding the general logic with which travelers grouped together all these elements. The first page of Costa's treatise states, "the Portuguese nation was the first to undertake long-distance navigation on the ocean" echoing other discovery narratives and clearly similar to the foundational words of Luis de Camões (in *Lusiadas*, 1572, Canto 1, I, 3), "where sail was never spread before." But Costa's object was not to narrate the glories of the Portuguese nation; rather, he had more concrete personal motivations, and it is worthwhile looking into these circumstances in order to understand the personal meaning of his voyage.

What little we know about Costa —one of several figures with the same name, who must not be confused— (Rosa, 2013) comes from his *Tratado da viagem*. He was born in Lisbon, had traveled to Ormuz in 1601 to serve his king as "soldier, captain, and captain major," and went on to Goa when the new viceroy, Ruy Lourenço de Tavora, arrived in 1609. This last move coincided with the appointment of his brother-in-law Gaspar de Sousa as governor of the Malaca fortress. Once in Goa, Costa learned that in fact someone else had been appointed, but he decided to stay until a lawsuit he filed was resolved. After that took place, in 1610, his "old wish to return to Portugal by land" took hold of him once again (Costa, fo.

17). Costa had managed to integrate himself well in the relatively unknown world of India, but still he longed to return to his home country.

He believed that his work had come to an end and wished to request that his service papers be finalized, "as everyone else did," but his account is not the usual recitation of military accomplishments. He barely refers to clashes in Ormuz in 1608, "in a war when the Persian Moors took action against the Portuguese" (Costa, fo. 17). This might refer to Shah Abbas I's advance on Ormuz and the taking of Queshm or perhaps a battle in Lar/Lara in which the Portuguese backed a rebellion against the shah, in response to which Persia blocked traffic of goods from the island of Ormuz.[4] Some of Costa's descriptions are implicitly based on a military vision of world history, but if his goal had been to win some sort of favor or grant, he surely would have provided more detail, along with the expense and dangers of his military career.

The reasons why Costa chose the land route "through Persia and Turkey" are quite clear: he wanted to "visit the holy city of Jerusalem and then go to Portugal, visiting kingdoms and provinces that I could not see if I returned by sea" (Costa, fo. 17-18). As Nunes Carreira (2003, p. 65) has said, his desire to visit the Holy Land weighed heavily in the written account of his journey. His wish to be in Jerusalem for Easter in 1611 explains, among other things, why he left Baghdad and Aleppo so quickly. The full title of Costa's manuscript emphasizes the centrality of his objective; it announces not only a "particular account" of the entire Holy Land but also refers explicitly to Jerusalem among all the other "cities, lands, towns, kingdoms and provinces" of his journeys. His goals were similar to those of other travelers, for example António Tenreiro (1560), who also made explicit his "desire to go to Jerusalem." And his many references to his efforts to visit holy sites despite being ill make his account similar to others in the pilgrimage genre. Costa wrote at far greater length to establish his image as a good Christian than as the protagonist of military adventures in India.

Costa therefore did not share the usual objectives of travelers in Persia, as described by Rudi Matthee; he was not an official envoy, nor did he publish his work for personal gain, nor did he have any particular humanist or erudite expertise (Matthee, 2009, p. 142; 2012, p. 13). Neither does his work describe the growth of Christianity in far-flung corners of the world, as in the correspondence of Augustinians and Carmelites in Persia (Gil Fernández, 2006, pp. 255-265; 2009, pp. 37-119; Ortega García, 2012, p. 168). In contrast to Pietro della Valle's "enormous wish" to travel east "because of the various curiosities I wished to see and observe," (Valle, ed. 1661, p. 556) most of the kingdoms and provinces Costa visited were actually in Europe. Chapters 27-38, nearly one-third of the account, take place in France and Italy, most notably in Rome, to which Costa traveled as soon as he disembarked in Marseille. Rome was doubly attractive to him; not only was it a pilgrimage site, it also preserved its ancient imperial spirit. In his case, the *curiositas* associated with the secularization of travel in the modern

age gave way to *pietas*, and in this regard he was similar to other Christian pilgrims drawn to holy places (Groves, 2012, p. 683). In short, his was a return trip to key sites in a known world.

Return trips to Europe during the "age of discoveries" have drawn much less attention from historians, and we know very little about the reasons for returning or the lives of those who returned. But Costa's route, as already mentioned, is not entirely unique or unprecedented; it has similarities to other Portuguese works of the time. Tenreiro presented himself as a pioneer in these return trips, saying "it was a new and strange thing in this kingdom to see a man coming from India to Portugal by land" (1560, sign. A). Portuguese studies of this subgenre have shown that in the following decades returnees included the surgeon Mestre Affonso, Gaspar de São Bernardino, Nicolau da Orta Rebelo, Pedro Teixeira (the translator of a Persian history), Sebastião Manrique, and Manuel Godinho (Fuente del Pilar, 2005, pp. 629-630).

Copies and appropriations (whether acknowledged or not) among the various authors were common to all early modern travel literature, and Iberian accounts of Persia were no exception (Matthee, 2012, p. 14). Mestre Affonso took part of Tenreiro's *Itinerario* in his own account, and there have been detailed analyses of the similarities of the texts by São Bernardino and Orta Rebelo (Resende, 2014, p. 377; Carreira, 2011; Serrão, 1972). On occasion we find references and commentary regarding previous texts. Describing how he had been attacked by thieves, for example, Orta Rebelo said they were the same dangerous thieves described earlier by Fray Pantaleão de Aveiro in his *Itinerario da Terra Sancta*. Orta Rebelo also referred to a previous "Castilian itinerary" which should not be confounded with the works of the Spanish ambassador García de Silva y Figueroa.[5] All these accounts have a certain standardized approach to narrative, and certain tropes appear again and again, even if we do not take into account the copies. Costa's work lies squarely within this body of work and shares its itinerary with many previous accounts, but it stands out for its interpretation of the Mesopotamian past.

EARLY MODERN TRAVELS THROUGH PERSIA AND THE LIMITS OF OBSERVATION

The study of travel in the early modern age generally assumes its free and individual nature, praising, for example, travelers' "restless, brave, and individualist spirits" (Córdoba, 2005, p. xv). This is so in part because their accounts tend to minimize the role of companions and highlight individual protagonists who seemingly triumphed over all circumstances. But most travelers in Persia were in fact traveling with servants, interpreters, and companions of varying types. Costa embarked in Goa for Ormuz on September 9, 1610, along with two men and other servants, among whom only Joseph da Cunha (possibly in charge of writing the text, or parts of it) was identified. Furthermore, adventurers' alleged freedom of movement is questionable given that many of them could not move

about freely in Persia but rather were subject to the needs of larger groups such as the caravans of camels that periodically were driven toward the Near East.[6]

The practical conditions of travel in Persia also favored a linear vision of space. Distances between the points along the way were measured in days and from east to west; travelers were unable to capture changes in longitude despite the fact that the trip also went from south to north. This way of comprehending space is similar to the linear conception of the first "spatial imagination" of sixteenth-century colonial powers, which did not exactly correspond to the geometric cartography developed after 1492 (Padrón, 2002, pp. 31-35: Cosgrove, 2001, pp. 99-101). Inland Persia and Turkey were very different cartographic challenges han the coastline. For Portuguese cartographers during this era, the inland movement, which meant leaving behind their world of technical expertise, was an "epistemological leap" (Biedermann, 2011, p. 369). Their subsequent caution explains why cartographic "leadership" concerning the Persian interior lay in maps published in Venice or even in Amsterdam, based on commercial and diplomatic information. As Zoltan Biedermann suggested (2011, pp. 385 and 390) regarding Silva y Figueroa's travels, this "textual cartography" was able to provide strategic knowledge despite being tied to the land and lacking a bird's eye view of the territory. Terrestrial maps were not only less precise, but they also employed different explanatory methods. The ways in which Costa and his contemporaries used a variety of sources of information (including local guides) illustrate the persistence of literary and even oral cartography.

Costa's trip through Persia was quick, and his speed was probably dictated by the rhythm of the expedition he joined. He left Shiraz on January 2, arriving in Baghdad on February 21. On March 12 he was in Aleppo, on the 23rd he was in Damascus, and on April 1 he was in Jerusalem. This affected how Costa interpreted the signs of the past he encountered en route, particularly how he described ruins in ancient cities. Between Hoveyzeh and Baghdad, for example, he and his caravan companions could see the remains of a "large city, with no other trace than the tiles and bricks scattered about the ground" (Costa, fo. 62). The Portuguese traveler Pedro de Teixeira similarly wrote that he remembered having seen, "from a half-league away, a large house with a high tower where the tomb and body of the holy prophet Ezekiel lies" (Teixeira, 1610, p. 102). Orta Rebelo had a very similar experience, as will be noted below, when he tried to approach the Tower of Babel. This sort of observation from a distance of barely identifiable remains was relatively normal along the Persian route. Costa's testimony makes it clear he did not always have the time or ability to examine the ruins that travelers were so interested in. But his personal interpretation of the remains he encountered during his trip shows that it was possible to discover very different things according to the particular theoretical organization of one's observations.

The dynamics between the practical limits of observation and the theoretical frameworks that Costa used in his inter-

pretations are apparent at the point where he reached some architectural remains "that the Moors commonly call the arch of Nebuchadnezzar." This marks the only time Costa managed to get close to the structure he was describing, and furthermore is a good example of his methods of analysis of reality. His view of what is today known as the Archway of Ctesiphon (in Taq Kasra, some 30 km southwest of Baghdad) is also interesting because it predates that of Pietro de la Valle and because many other contemporary travelers had to settle for seeing the ruins from a distance. For Costa, this time the usual conditions of travel played in his favor given that "many people in the caravan left the road and went there," and he simply followed (Costa, fo. 71).

Both when they were part of expeditions with fixed destinations and when they had more leeway with their visits to Persia, Europeans still depended enormously on local sources and interpreters. Costa did at first, but he was sure of himself and he tried to complement and supplement the information they gave him. In the case of Ctesiphon's Archway, first, he said he had seen the "sumptuous" building "close up" and admired its size and the quality of construction. The "age" of the building was another important cause of surprise, and he believed they were the oldest ruins he had ever seen. Next, Costa stated that it was not an arch, "as they call it," but rather part of a vault that had once formed part of a temple nave, whose largest section "had fallen and was in ruins" (Costa, fo. 71). But Costa had no doubt that the place was linked to Nebuchadnezzar, and, relying on the Bible's superior cultural authority, he used the Book of Daniel to propose that this was the temple that had housed the golden image (Costa, fo. 70). Yet Costa ignored an important detail, as Daniel 3:1 clearly states that the statue was in the plain of Dura, which does not make sense if there was a temple built to house the image. So he combined his first-person observations, which correctly told him there had been a complete building there, with an erroneous interpretation based on textual sources and local informants.

As this incident shows, travelers' most frequent intellectual strategy for dealing with often partial or insufficient information was to combine local information with textual sources. Fray Gaspar de São Bernardino, for example, relied upon many allusions and quotations from classical and ecclesiastical sources to round out his work (Carreira, 1985b, p. 346). But using other written sources did not entirely solve the problem of veracity, given that among the sources used was Beroso's false chronicle, nor did it eliminate travelers' problems of imagination. Unlike Costa, São Bernardino could not visit the remains of the "arch like a main chapel" situated three leagues to the south of Baghdad, the one that "the Turks call Selmon [sic.] Pac." So, given the lack of direct information, he explained its construction with an anecdote he invented. According to that account, Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad and the wife of Ali, "ordered that it be built so God would give her sons" (São Bernardino, 1611, fo. 108r). The solution transformed the usual practices of European Christian rulers into generic Islamic history and illustrates how the mix of local information with travelers' knowl-

edge could be entirely idiosyncratic.

The Italian Pietro della Valle stands out both for his use of texts as interpretive resources and for the transparency with which he spoke of his method. According to him, every day he diligently wrote "a Diary, precisely noting down whatever I see and encounter, with thousands of circumstances and details" (Valle, 1661, p. 552). But he held onto these notes and contrasted them in Italy with other books and "knowledgeable people" so as to resolve any questions that observation had not allowed him to answer (Valle, 1661, p. 592). This approach is typical of a specific type of antiquarian trip, which is especially marked by seeing and reconstructing the past in relation to ancient explanatory texts (Vine, 2010, pp. 141-143). It also confirms that observation and description were relatively independent actions in the early modern era (Rubiés, 1991, pp. 243-244). Della Valle visited the so-called arch of Nebuchadnezzar, ordered that a drawing of the remains be done in 1616, and in the manuscript version of his diary he stated they dated back to the Bible. Nevertheless, the published version of his letters vehemently rejected that option, saying some "present-day Hebrew idiots" had told him it was Nebuchadnezzar's temple while he was more prone to believe the information provided by some Muslim inhabitants of Baghdad (Valle, 1650, pp. 731-733; Buroni, 2012, p. 1426). His rigorous approach must be applauded, though not at the cost of overlooking the internal logic behind other contemporary explanations. Indeed, the surprising assurance with which Costa interpreted his journey through Persia is quite different from the uncertainty of many of his contemporaries.

If Costa did not entertain the doubts that plagued Della Valle, nor was he entirely removed from the textual culture of his day. His account from his time in the Mediterranean includes several references to the *Aeneid*, a good dose of Biblical knowledge, and two references to "many histories" about Babylon and the "many authors" who had written about Carthage. So he had previous knowledge about the cities he visited. Although his reading had not enabled him to make empirical determinations nor was it always direct, it did allow him to understand the historical importance of the places he saw. It is likely, given his imprecision when it came to the golden image, that he had not brought a Bible with him nor had he read it along the way and that he was not especially concerned about testing his initial interpretation, based on his memory, against textual authority. Costa's story reveals someone who was sure of himself and relied upon old clichés and direct experience. The stories from Della Valle and São Bernardino, on the contrary, show that there often was a considerable time gap between the voyage and the written chronicle, which allowed for the addition of new interpretations based on readings, which might entirely modify the experience of the journey.

Costa's itinerary, as is clear, was characterized by observations of the present and reflections on the past. Until chapter 11 he provides information about present-day political organizations and uses contemporary toponyms; thus, for example, he referred to the kingdom of Bom-

bareca, as it was known in Portuguese, and the cities of Dorequa (also Portuguese) and Hoveyzeh. But once he enters into what he geographically identifies as the "lands of Babylon" he calls the area "the land of Abraham, and Chaldea, by another name."[7] As Janet Grogan has said, "one result of the dominance of classical accounts of the ancient Persian empire is the persistence of ancient names in maps, itineraries, histories, and travel accounts of Persia, as well as romances" (Grogan, 2014, p. 15). This blend of present information and the reconstruction of a classical past can be found in many accounts, as the heritage was one of the principal elements that made the Safavid empire a "serious empire" in the eyes of Europeans (Matthee, 2016, p. 9). But this dual gaze is difficult to interpret, because at times Costa's story suddenly breaks its perspective and the Portuguese traveler displays less interest in a region's present than in visiting places where ancient events affecting the course of human history took place. As we shall see with the example of Babylon, his trip was less one of discovery than of confirmation.

THE MULTIPLE "DISCOVERIES" OF BABYLON

All visitors to Persia and the Mesopotamian region under the control of the Ottoman Empire provided similar descriptions of landscapes littered with ruined walls, bricks, and remains of ancient cities. Some spent more time describing materials and construction techniques, while others were more interpretive, trying to explain which buildings and walls were hidden beneath the rubble and why they were in this state. Until recently the omnipresence of these ruins had almost entirely been overlooked by historians, but Rudi Matthee has examined the value attributed to them. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, travelers' contacts with ruins did not significantly affect their observations of Safavid culture and customs, but between 1722 (the end of the Safavid dynasty) and 1800 they represented the destiny of a civilization in decline, and starting in the nineteenth century a metaphor for Iran's backwardness and Western superiority (Matthee, 2016, p. 3).

Nineteenth-century commentaries tell us much about the Orientalist gaze, but sixteenth- and seventeenth-century travelers to Persia shared the same attitude of erudite people contemplating ancient buildings and epigraphs throughout Europe. Matthee and others have emphasized that though Europeans' attitudes imposed categories on reality, this is quite different than the Orientalism of later years and must also be considered an example of "engaged empathy" (Matthee, 2009, p. 140). Archaeological preservation was dealt with in different ways in different parts of Europe, but there were three common features. First, ruins were appreciated for their ability to evoke memories of the past, particularly linked to municipal antiquities and therefore to notions of civic identity. The splendor of the past and the observable ruins had a directly proportional relationship. Pantaleão de Aveiro wrote that the "vestiges and ruins of Troy" showed "how grandiose and populated they were in other times," so that the Latin maxim distilling the relationship between remains and grandeur, "*Roma quanta fuit, ipsa ruina docet*" (her ruins teach how great Rome was), can be applied both

to a European context as well as to faraway cities (Aveiro, 1593, fo. 12r. and 201r.). Second, commenters referred to the rhythm and causes of decline, often in reference to the reutilization of building materials. And third, architectural remains inspired a variety of emotions and were the object of philosophical reflection regarding the pleasures of observation, the inexorable passage of time, and how memories and reputations of builders and patrons had vanished (McGowan, 2004, pp. 129-133; Morán Turina, 2009, pp. 155-166). The Jesuit Athanasius Kircher complained, for example, about how information about the past had been lost and how difficult it was to interpret ruins:

> But now, though scarcely sixteen hundred years have passed, only their vestiges survive … This is how the unfair lot of mortals make the wheel of vicissitude turn, so that nothing is stable, firm, and solid. How many great palaces, gardens equipped with every form of delight, do we see whose authors we do not know? (Kircher, 1679, p. 23, cit. in Grafton, 2004, pp. 183-184)

His lament referred to Rome, but it appeared at the start of a treatise Kircher had dedicated to *Turris Babel* (1679), suggesting the connection among all buildings in ruins, all of them symbols of vanity and pride that must not be imitated by those aspiring to true glory. Babylon, as we shall see, was a particularly relevant case in point.

Before entering Baghdad, Costa saw a series of "ruins and signs of ancient cities and pieces of walls lying on the ground" (Costa, fo. 72). The remains covered an area so large that they could be observed for three full days as the caravan filed past. Though the mass of signs was an interpretative challenge, Costa could explain what he had seen by combining his own contemporary perceptions of urban space with information provided through "conversations with natives," who said that the sites were

> the towns and fortresses, gardens and pleasure houses where the sons of Nebuchadnezzar lived and that the city of Babylon … ended in that temple, reaching to the other Euphrates River from the south and extending a long way to the west from one [river] to the other, but that Babylon also included the sons' cities, because they were so close to one another (Costa, fo. 72)

This description includes a variety of quasi-urban elements that remind one of Lisbon. The reference to Nebuchadnezzar's sons' "pleasure houses," for example, evokes the aristocratic summer palaces outside Lisbon. By joining the gigantic collection of remains dispersed along the banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates under one urban logic, Costa facilitated the adjustment between observation and interpretation.

Babylon's original layout was a tricky question, and many travelers and scholars during the modern age devoted themselves to resolving it. John Elliott has said that "tradition, experience and expectation were the determinants of vision" for Europeans in the New World, but one can also detect similar dynamics in relatively late texts referring to other parts of the world (Elliott, 1970, p. 20). As Peter Mason wrote, travelers were "human observers

who cannot but classify before they see" (Mason, 1994, p. 143). The range of proposals illustrates the different ways in which they adapted pre-existing categories and observations. There were nuances among them, but the most traditional approach was to say that Baghdad had been built atop the ruins of ancient Babylon. That theory was included in Juan de Persia's *Relaciones* (1604, vol. 1, fo. 38v). Though Uruch Bech sometimes used specific local knowledge, his knowledge about ancient Babylon was not necessarily any more precise than that of his European contemporaries, and much of his interpretation was based on three Italian and Spanish works: Fray Juan de Pineda's *Monarquía eclesiástica*, Giovanni Botero's *Relaciones universales*, and Juan de Minadoy's *Historia de la guerra entre turcos y persianos* (Alonso Cortés 1946, p. 13). Thus the apparently European gaze that identified Baghdad with Babylon was used by Bech to defend the antiquity and prestige of the Persian kingdom.

Costa not only shared the usual identification, but he explained the visible remains near Baghdad without needing to definitely solve the problem of Babylon's original location. For him, "today nobody knows for certain where first Babylon was founded" (Costa, fo. 72). Some of his contemporaries, however, believed the question was more complex. São Bernardino pointed out that the Euphrates did not cross Babylon, as "many writers" had said, but rather the city was laid out along a broad expanse measuring eight by eight leagues between the Tigris and the Euphrates. São Bernardino (1611, fo. 100r) said writers were simply using a manner of speech, just as contemporaries said that the Tagus passed through Lisbon or Toledo and the Douro River through Porto. The "true testimony" that Babylon had been "built between the two rivers" could be found in two sources: "scripture and the ruins which I entered many times" (São Bernardino, 1611, fo. 100v). Greater use of textual authorities did not help him to establish a more correct interpretation of his direct experience, given that he continued identifying the ruins he could observe and visit from Baghdad as those of Babylon.

In contrast to these authors, others such as Della Valle differentiated the two cities. Years earlier, Pedro Teixeira had done so by pointing out that the cause for common confusion was "the proximity of the place where in ancient times it stood, which is not more than a day's journey away" (Teixeira, 1610, p. 124). The key point allowing him to make the distinction was simple: Babylon was on the Euphrates and Baghdad was on the Tigris. For Teixeira, therefore, the ruins around Baghdad were simply evidence of that city's ancient grandeur, "which was such that (as has been said) there are vestiges of its grand and magnificent buildings for five miles around the city" (Teixeira, 1610, p. 125). Teixeira's explanation was less ambitious and closer to the truth than that of his contemporaries.

Visual depictions also reflect these contrasting interpretations. The version of Babylon as an enormous city extending along the banks of both rivers was defended by Kircher (1679, p. 96), who used an engraving to schematically locate the most important cities of the Mesopotamian past. This image (Fig. 1) not only corresponds to Costa's and São Bernardino's general theses but it suggests an even broader extension. The map in Samuel Bochart's *Geographia sacra* (1646) showing "the lands in which the builders of the Tower of Babel were dispersed" is full of inaccuracies but it clearly identifies Babylon as a city along the east bank of the Euphrates (Fig. 2). The two engravings, endorsed by important and erudite figures, show that interpretations regarding Babylonian ruins could happily coexist for many years.

Seen together, the various theories call into question the notion of "discovery" as a singular and unrepeatable act, particularly if we consider that by around 1610 it was still possible to come across such singular accounts as that of the Portuguese chronicler Duarte Nunes de Leão, who was entirely unaware of the "discovery" of Babylon and stated in no uncertain terms that no one could "swear that they had seen vestiges of that Babylon that had been one of the wonders of the world" (Leão, 1610, fo. 13r). Though it was in his interest to prove the existence of vanished cities so as to justify the antiquity of the Portuguese kingdom, his commentary on Babylon also shows that information did not necessarily circulate with the same speed as travelers and that not all authors used available published sources in the same manner.

The discovery of Babylon was not a cumulative series of observations in which one progressively tested and refined information. Rather, it was a process of de-identification, a succession of rejection, in which traditional interpretations were tossed out, giving way to a new search. Numerous early modern discoveries share this unstable nature. Juan Pimentel (2001, pp. 28-29 and 36-37), for example, has looked into the existence of a "double discovery" in Australia by Pedro Fernandes de Queirós and James Cook at different times by different people and in accordance with completely different frames of reference. Jorge Flores (2015, p. 191) has shown that the desire to discover unknown lands produced not just new knowledge of geographic reality but also a proliferation of fantastic and marvelous elements such as appointing captains to govern imaginary islands in the Azores and the existence of false discoverers of the Island of Gold and lands south of India. From a different angle, Frederick Bohrer (1998, p. 336) expressed his disagreement with positivist archaeological narratives of continual progress and discovery of the Assyrian civilization. Costa's description of Babylon reminds us that the various processes that we associate with the first globalization thus did not take place in a fully discovered world. His unusual manner of seeing the Tower of Babel, which I describe below, reveals that the growing amount of information being gathered around the planet was being interpreted in accordance with a wide variety of paradigms.

THE TOWER OF BABEL, OR HOW TO MAKE SENSE OF RUINS

Given the Tower of Babel's fame among Christians it is no surprise that many travelers came looking for its

FIGURE 1. "Topographia urbium â Nembrod et a Nino eorumque posteris fabricatarum." Detail of the map showing Babylon embracing both the Euphrates and Tigris. Source: Kircher, 1679, p. 96.

remains. Most travel accounts repeatedly come up against two impediments to identification, both as concerned with observation and interpretation. First, the visible remains of the Etemenanki ziggurat, dedicated to the god Marduk, today considered a possible remainder of the tower, could hardly be seen as a tower at all. But there are two preserved ziggurats that do look more like towers: Aqar Quf (Dur-Kurigalzu, some 20 km west of Baghdad) and Borsippa (Birs Nimrud, 100 km to the south) (Marzahn, 2008, pp. 168-169). If indeed it is difficult to observe a nonexistent tower, it was also difficult to correctly interpret written sources and test them against local information.

Costa once again stands out in offering a simple explanation for a complex problem based on limited information. He simply says that there were two towers near Baghdad and that he "does not know which of them is Nimrod's." Today we know that neither could be Babel,

but that only makes his account more interesting. As for the closer tower, situated three or four leagues to the west, that was most probably Aqar Quf. It is more difficult to identify the second tower, which Costa (fo. 73) placed eighteen leagues to the city's east. One hypothesis is that Costa was talking about the Borsippa ziggurat, which had been identified as the Tower of Babel ever since Benjamin of Tudela visited in the twelfth century (Montero Fenollós, 2011, p. 33).

At first Costa's solution seems like a poor one, a simple reflection of his lack of information, but his doubts have considerable interest. Unlike sixteenth-century predecessors such as Cesare Federici, Leonhardt Rauwolff, and John Elred, Costa did not confuse Aqar Quf with the Tower of Babel (Montero Fenollós, 2011, p. 34-37). Because he left the matter hanging, Costa managed to preserve his main interpretive approach intact. It continued

Figure 2. Map Detail "Mesopotamia cum parte Babilonia". On the lower right corner, the legend BABILONYAE is placed between the river Euphrates and the Tigris. Source: Samuel Borchardt, 1651, *Descriptio terrarum in quas dispersi sunt structores turris Babel.*

being possible to think about Babylon as a huge place, its outskirts lying between the two rivers and containing both the nearest tower and "the other one that survives today" (Costa, fo. 73). For Costa, Baghdad was merely "the city that remains today, guarding the name and the memory of ancient Babylon" (Costa, fo. 74). The word "memory," as used by Costa, could refer both to recollections of an idea and to institutions such as sumptuous buildings and hospitals built or paid for to ensure they would last. Holding on to this general vision allowed him to continue interpreting all the ruins, the ones he saw and the ones he didn't, as monuments to the ancient city's grandeur.

Costa's distinctive position is best understood when compared to that of three close contemporaries. Five years earlier, Gaspar de São Bernardino had strongly argued that the tower closest to Baghdad was not Nimrod's tower. Contradicting the usual information offered by the Jews of Baghdad and relying instead on first-hand observation of construction materials, the Portuguese Franciscan concluded that "Corcosa [Aqar Quf] is made of adobe dried in the sun, and the other [Babel] of bricks baked in fire." His deduction was also based on the Bible, as indicated by a printed comment on the book's margin: "Literes coctos igni, Gene. C. 11" (São Bernardino, 1611, fo. 108v). Clever use of evidence and observation allowed São Bernardino to correct the mistaken identification of the tower, but this left him with a bigger problem to solve, since it was easier to dismiss a tower than admit to the fact

that there were few archeological remains of the Tower of Babel.

Orta Rebelo left Baghdad in 1606 in the same expedition as São Bernardino. But Orta Rebelo's account is even more interesting because, thanks to his extraordinary use of local informants, he mentions two possible alternative towers. On December 2, 1606, as he passed by "the ruins of an old building," Orta Rebelo briefly separated from the group to draw close and, accompanied by his translator, he determined that the structure appeared to be the "Tower of Babylon." After looking around and taking some notes, the two men walked toward a nearby village in search of local information to corroborate their theory. The old Turk with whom they spoke said they were mistaken, and he showed them how to reach the true tower, warning that "there was nothing to see at the Tower, which had fallen and crumbled." The next day, alongside the Euphrates, a Turkish camel-driver pointed out to Orta Rebelo "a high mountain [called] Babelquelsi" (cit. in Carreira, 1985a, p. 166).

This document's details, especially the use of the toponym, are specific enough to allow us to suggest that Orta Rebelo was the first European to record the original site of the Tower of Babel. But he was hardly satisfied. On his second opportunity, the translator who accompanied Orta Rebelo stopped him from making a nocturnal visit, saying the area was too dangerous and was full of thieves. Orta Rebelo wrote with sorrow that "in the end a man must miss many things along the road so as not to wander away from the Company" (cit. in Carreira, 1985a, p. 166). Despite having managed to see certain remains of the tower and acquire much more precise information, his bitterness was far greater than that of Costa, who was happy to have experienced the fame of old Babylon.

A third interesting case is that of Pietro della Valle, whose method of observation contrasted even more sharply with that of Costa. The Italian was quite certain that "the true Babylon" was Babel, not Baghdad. Based on that, in 1616 he set out to search for the historical city with the hope of finding the "Nembrotto Tower," given that he "had understood that its ruins were still very large" (Valle, 1650, p. 704). This information, which he had obtained locally, contradicted his deep knowledge of classical sources that shed considerable doubt that there were any ruins at all. Della Valle knew Strabo had not mentioned the tower because "it had been ruined by Xerxes" and that Alexander the Great had not managed to restore it. Through his expert use of Strabo's *Geography* (XVI, 1) and other classical sources, Della Valle managed to find a replacement for his hopes of seeing a true tower. As he was seeking a barely visible construction, and thanks to his deductions regarding the surviving toponym, the Italian managed to free his head of any thought of seeking a tower (Valle, 1650, p. 713-714 and 718).

The high point of the expedition has Della Valle atop a "hill of ruins," all that was left of the tower. The Italian saw no indication that any large city had existed there, finding only the foundation of some fallen walls, fifty or sixty paces from the hill. "As for the rest, the surrounding terrain is extremely flat." Della Valle was more stunned than frustrated, affirming that "as far as I am concerned, I am amazed that one can see what one can see" nearly four thousand years after the city's founding (Valle, 1650, p. 713-714). Yet it is still very surprising that while Della Valle missed the remains of a city that had disappeared, Costa found them everywhere.

Comparing Costa and Della Valle's accounts there can be no doubt that both men discovered very different things. Della Valle was extremely close to the Biblical Tower of Babel (Montero Fenollós, 2011, p. 40), but he neither saw it nor understood it. Costa never saw the ruins of historic Babylon, but he produced quite satisfactory explanations about its vestiges. From the point of view of twenty-first-century archaeology, it might be fruitful to judge travelers who got closer to what we know is true as having used "greater rigor" in their discovery of the ancient Orient (Montero Fenollós, 2008, p. 32). Yet many of Costa's "errors" allowed him to understand what he was observing in a coherent fashion and offer a solid interpretation of the ruins of Babylon.

THE RUINS OF THE SUCCESSION OF UNIVERSAL MONARCHIES

How is it possible that Álvaro da Costa, with barely enough time to visit the area surrounding Baghdad and very little knowledge of ancient history, had no doubts about interpreting the confusing ruins he found? To answer that question, we must recapture the political and historical theory with which the Portuguese traveler enveloped all his observations. Relying on the hypothesis of a long list of cities founded and refounded based on the original, Costa beautifully explained the collection of ruins around Babylon as the result of a series of military conquests:

> And because all cities that were seats of monarchy suffered detriment and ruin, this one, which was the first, suffered much more destruction than all the rest, because there were huge wars there and it was possessed by many different princes and destroyed and ruined to its foundations many times, as can be read in many histories … And it was always rebuilt in different places, and that must be why its ruins lie to the east and the west for more than 20 leagues of land … It is said that its size was such that when enemies entered one end, several days would go by before residents at the other end learned of it (Costa, fo. 73).

This theory of the "seats of monarchy," the center of Costa's interpretative framework, comprises several elements that together emphasize Babylon's political and historical role. The most personal element of the explanation is the idea of successive constructions of the city in various sites, an idea that appears nowhere in classical sources or prior travel writing. His hedging by saying, "that must be why its ruins lie," shows that this part of the interpretation is definitely his. Another interesting element is the mysterious reference to "many histories." Aside from the Bible, the most accessible sources would have been Herodotus's *His-*

tories, Strabo's *Geography*, Diodorus Siculus's *Bibliotheca historica*, and Quintus Curtius's *Histories of Alexander the Great* (Blázquez Martínez, 2003). If we consider that just before this passage Costa wrote that Babylon had first been "won by Darius, king of Persia" and that "Alexander the Great conquered it after destroying the Persian monarchy," it seems clear that the Portuguese military officer at the very least had generic knowledge of classical sources. Thanks to these basic ideas, Costa could invent the idea of multiple reconstructions of the city in different places.

His description furthermore includes a reference to Aristotle's *Politics* with his description of enemies' entrance into the city. We can reject the hypothesis of direct consultation, since São Bernardino (1611, fo. 100r) said he had heard this information in Baghdad, but he also provided a citation saying, "Aristotle agrees with them," and the marginal printed note "Arist. 2. Politic. C. 4 & 1. 3.c.2."[8] But is difficult to know if Costa was citing from memory, basing himself on an anecdote drawn from someone else's book, or using locally obtained information. In any case, invasions, enormous wars, and destruction were not unfamiliar to any military veteran.

Costa's interpretive method emphasized the nature of Babylon's universal royal power. He transmitted the centrality of this sort of power when he called Nebuchadnezzar a "proud and idol-worshiping" ruler, but even so he was a "great Monarch of the world" (Costa, fo. 71). Even more surprising, Babylon "was also conquered by the Romans and their emperors," an opinion surely born while looking at a pile of ruins (Costa, fos. 72-73). Costa was merely extending Daniel's prophecy of the four kingdoms to Babylon's visible ruins, which were considered both the effective point of origin of all empires as well as proof of their later passage to the Persians, Greeks, and Romans.

This interpretative paradigm is consistent throughout his account, as can be seen if we look at his portrait of the Persian empire. There, preceding his description of Babylon, Costa states,

> the antiquity of this Kingdom is enormous. It was the second monarchy of the world, starting with King Sirus, who populated and ennobled Persia, from where he and his successors, the Dariuses and Xerxes, conquered part of the world with numerous armies, as is well known (Costa, fo. 38).

The military register is maintained, for example with the use of "numerous armies." *Tratado da viagem* therefore offers an interesting response to Sanjay Subrahmanyam's question regarding Spanish and Portuguese political theory during the time of the discoveries (2011, p. 75). The general development of universal history, according to Costa, must be understood as a standardized succession of universal powers known as *translatio imperii* (Fernández Albaladejo, 1993; Bosbach, 1998; Pocock, 2003; Nederman, 2005). The theory of the four kingdoms, which was widely present in the early modern age and certainly key in Costa's worldview, "provided a structure for understanding history" (Reid, 1981, p. 123).

The narrative is also consistent as concerns the many urban ruins that Costa observed directly, as can be seen in his description of a "broken-down large city that seems to be ancient Aleppo," which repeats the notion of the reconstruction of cities in successive sites that he previously used for Babylon/Baghdad. He says the city formerly known as Allafat was "one of those that King Darius conquered to be a capital" and that "it was not in the place where it is now," and, having been ruined through time and governments, it was "rebuilt where we see it today" (Costa, fo. 81). The reference to capital cities indicates Costa knew about Darius I's establishment of satraps, probably from the Bible (Daniel 6:1) and less probably through the list of cities in Herodotus's *Histories* (3: 89-97). The description corresponds to the role Costa assigned to cities as centers of political power and it even appears that his experience prior to going through Persia allowed him to further develop his theory.

Similar ideas about cities that had been destroyed and vanished only to be later refounded in different places were relatively common both in the historiography and chorography of his time. Duarte de Leão, for example, devoted a chapter of his work to cities in Lusitania that had disappeared and "through time were undone or moved to other places." The same sort of historical deduction can be found in the work of António de Gouveia, who explained that though Shiraz was a flourishing city in 1611, "it was once destroyed by the Tartars, and another time by the Arabs, aside from the ruin brought about in ancient times by Alexander the Great" (Gouveia, fo. 26r). Costa's explanation, therefore, was coherent both from the perspective of political theory and chorography. Scenes filled with ruins posed no problem for Costa. They allowed him to confirm the existence of successive destructions and conquests, which were typical of the cycle of rise and fall that was part of the political paradigm he was employing.

CONCLUSION

Costa's trip reveals motivations and intellectual context far distant from those of present-day histories of Mesopotamian archaeology, according to which early modern travelers allow to reconstruct an uninterrupted genealogy of the "rediscovery of the Orient" (Ooghe, 2007). Babel and Babylon inspired genuine and specific interest in early modern travelers, and their ruins, whether real or imagined, had a meaning entirely independent of the scientific paradigm of nineteenth- and twentieth-century archaeological expeditions. Moreover, Costa's detailed explanations of Babylon allow us to reflect on the dynamics between the perception of globalization and the resilience of well-stablished identifications, or to dispense with "the idea that global integration was like an electric circuit, bringing light to the connected." (Adelman, 2017; Drayton and Motadel, 2018). Knowledge and observation did not function in that manner in the early modern ages. Biblical authority and well-established theories on the succession of empires in world history proved especially resilient for Álvaro da Costa to interpret the past of the Mesopotamian region. In 1611 Costa saw the remains of the world's first monarchy and traveled through a series of

settings where the most important military confrontations among the other universal monarchies had taken place.

Focusing on one single testimony, a question arises. As in all microhistories, one needs to understand if Costa's travel is an exceptional case (Trivellato, 2011). Compared to other travelers who spent more time there and published books with far greater impact (Invernizzi, 2005; Matthee, 2009), Costa stayed only briefly and was largely ill-informed. However, Costa's case may offer insight into the experience of many others who travelled through Persia with limited means and limited information and have left no written accounts of their journeys. In his use of the paradigm of the four kingdoms and the *translatio imperii*, it is clear that Costa was echoing a widely reused and reformulated medieval tradition. Compared to some of his contemporaries or near contemporaries, Costa appears less modern in that he observes and accumulates evidence in a manner that does not challenge traditional interpretations. His perspective confirms that there existed global experiences that fundamentally served to reinforce existing traditional visions.

The *Tratado da* viagem offers insight into the relationship between biography and global history and shows that Costa was neither a trickster able to cleverly adapt his identity in different cultural contexts nor did he in any way exemplify cosmopolitanism (Subrahmanyam, 2011, pp. 21-22). Costa's vision has nothing to do with the sophisticated political image that Sherley proposed of Philip III as a monarch capable of observing the terrestrial globe from afar and calibrating its weight. Compared to Sherley's appreciation of growing global interconnections and the novel external point of view of the planet, typical of fully modern cartography, Costa's description was less original, but it worked extremely well for explaining the world. He did not offer a particularly correct explanation for the ruins of Babylon or Babel, but it was a credible and satisfactory one.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

1   The original manuscript, *Tratado da viagem que fez da India Oriental à Europa nos anos de 1610 e 1611, por via da Pérsia e Turquia, com particular relação de toda a Terra Santa, e da cidade de Jerusalém, que vizitou, e das mais ciudades, terras, e lugares, Reynos, e Provincias, que andou. E de huma breve e geral descripção da India Oriental, e da navegação, que a ella fazem os Portuguezes todos os annos*, is preserved at Biblioteca Pública de Évora (BPE), Cód. CXV 1-5.

2   Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo (ANTT), Lisbon, Ms. da Livraria 1057. A third copy is preserved at Biblioteca Municipal do Porto (BMP), Ms. 482.

3   As the result of these efforts, one further copy titled *Tratado da viagem q[ue] fez D. Alvaro da Costa*, is now preserved at the Biblioteca Municipal do Porto (BMP), Ms. 1431, Ms. 1432, Ms.

1433, which includes Cherubino Lagoa's introductory study: BMP, Ms. 1992: *Reflexões sobre o Tratado da viagem que fez D. Alvaro da Costa*.

4   Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo [ANTT], MMCG, cx. 6-2ªE, fos. 651-655, cit. in Cunha 2007, p. 224. Archivo General de Simancas [AGS], Estdo, 2864, fo. 89v, cit. in Couto and Loureiro 2009, p. 185.

5   Nicolau de Orta Rebelo, *Do caminho que fés da India vido por terra Nicolao dorta natural de Sanctos*, 1607. BNP COD. 341, fos. 81 and 94. Cit. in Nunes Carreira 1985a, p. 85n.

6   See map in Graça, *A visão do Oriente*, pp. 315-16.

7   Costa, *Tratado da Viagem*, chap. XI: "Do rei e reino de Bombareca e das cidades de Dorequa e Aviza em que se prosegue a Viagem te as terras de Babilonia." Another reference to Abraham's fatherland in fo. 76.

8   Relevant passages are found in Aristotle *Pol.* 2.1265a and *Pol.* 3. 1276a.

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