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Travelogues as Raw Material of Political Knowledge: The Case of the “Oriental” States in the Renger Series (1707–1716)

From 1704 to 1718 the German publishing house Renger in Halle an der Saale issued over seventy monographs, each describing a polity of the world, using the European countries as a blueprint for African, Asian, and American cases. This series amounts to probably the most complete and – if this expression is allowed – most global series of books dealing with the different political regimes that was published in early modern Germany. Initially, there were forty-one books on European and fifteen on non-European “states,”¹ each bearing the matching title *Der Staat von* (The state of), followed by the name of the respective political entity. All the volumes on the empires, countries, and regions outside Europe drew on printed travelogues as their main sources, although this was not always made explicit. Therefore, the books considered here turn out to be compilations, written anonymously by academic hacks employed by the publishing house. Travel accounts authorized and authenticated the information in these publications, but the knowledge they contained and conveyed had to be transformed and reconfigured to fit into the analytical framework of the Renger series.

The present paper deals with the Renger volumes on “Oriental” states, comprising the Islamic and Asian realms.² The sample consists of volumes on Turkey, Persia, the Mughal Empire, Siam, Japan, China, the so-called “Tartarian regions,” and Morocco.³ This chapter will show, first, to what extent these books openly acknowledged their debts to the travel accounts they exploited, and sec-

1 See the list in *Einleitung zu den Europäischen Staaten Und Derselben Beschluß* (Frankfurt am Main, Leipzig 1708), pp. 61–64, and in *Staat Der Japanischen Und der übrigen Vornehmsten Insuln In Ost=Indien: Als ein Beschluß aller ausländischen Staaten / nebst einer ordentlichen Verzeichniß derselben / wie sie nach und nach im Druck erschienen* ([Halle an der Saale] [1716]), *Verzeichniß Aller ausländischen Staaten* (immediately before the table of contents).

2 See *Einleitung zu den Europäischen Staaten*, pp. 7–9.

3 *Staat von Türckey* ([Halle an der Saale] [1708]); *Der Staat Von Persien* ([Halle an der Saale] [1707]); *Der Staat Des Grossen Mogol* ([Halle an der Saale] [1710]); *Staat Von Siam*, In *Ost=Indien* ([Halle an der Saale] [1715]); *Der Staat von Sina* ([Halle an der Saale] [1708]); *Staat Der Japanischen Insuln* ([Halle an der Saale] [1716]); *Staat von der Kleinen und Grossen Tartarey* ([Halle an der Saale] [1709]); *Staat Von dem König=Reiche FEZ und MAROCCO in Africa* ([Halle an der Saale] [1714]).

ond, by which means and techniques the contents of these travelogues were modified so that they could fit in with the format required in the series. The third section of the chapter deals with the transfer of trustworthiness from the original travel reports to the Renger publications and is followed by a conclusion that stresses the commercial character of the series. The aim of this study is to reveal the impact of early modern travel literature on the relevant Renger volumes and thereby the considerable intertextual and epistemic potential of the genre, which was the main basis for a comparative approach to the different regimes of the early modern world from a European angle.⁴

1 References and rip-offs

The eight books under scrutiny all refer to accounts and authors upon which their descriptions are based, but these references vary extremely in their form, level of detail, and precision. Within the *Staat von Türrkey* (1708) references are quite scant, amounting to eleven mentions of authors and sometimes their works within its running text. Among them are well-known travel accounts by Jean de Thévenot (1633–1667), Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605–1689), Pietro della Valle (1586–1652), Paul Rycaut (1628–1700), and Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq (1522–1592).⁵ The text of the *Staat Des Grossen Mogol* (1710), in contrast, is peppered with numerous cross references which often serve to verify numerical data.⁶ François Bernier (1625–1688) is one of the authors most frequently quoted directly,⁷ while most of the other travel accounts are present only indirectly, since they are referred to via the popular compilation *Ost= und West=Indischer, wie auch Sinesischer Lust=und Stats=Garten* (1668),⁸ edited by Erasmus Francisci (1627–1694). These travel reports do, however, also remain visible because they are explicitly cited in the *Stats=Garten*.⁹ The *Staat Des Grossen Mogol* thus is on top of a three-layered structure of intertextual exchange: The original travelogues provide first-hand information, which is processed in Francisci's

⁴ See also Horst Walter Blanke, *Politische Herrschaft und soziale Ungleichheit im Spiegel des Anderen: Untersuchungen zu deutschsprachigen Reisebeschreibungen vornehmlich im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (2 vols., Waltrop 1997).

⁵ *Staat von Türrkey*, pp. 82–83, 106, 109, 161, 163, 166.

⁶ *Staat Des Grossen Mogol*, e.g., pp. 81, 96–108.

⁷ *Staat Des Grossen Mogol*, pp. 52, 81, 84, 89, 93–94, 100, 110.

⁸ *Staat Des Grossen Mogol*, pp. 77–78, 82–84, 97–100.

⁹ Erasmus Francisci, *Ost= und West=Indischer, wie auch Sinesischer Lust= und Stats=Garten* [...] (Nürnberg 1668), pp. 1436–1456.

book, which in turn informs the Renger volume. The same triad underlay the *Staat von Sina* (1708).¹⁰ This volume also includes a critique of earlier accounts: it blames Francisci's compilation for having complicated the much clearer description of the Chinese legal system in the important travelogue of Johan Nieuhof (1618–1672) from 1666.¹¹

While the Renger publications on Turkey, the Mughal Empire, and China use references to travel literature embedded in the main text, the *Staat Von Siam* (1715) applies footnotes to specify the sources of the information conveyed. They are indicated by lowercased letters, asterisks, and crosses, and normally contain the exact page of reference. The explanation of the term *Mandarin*, for example, is verified by the following footnote: "See Trigault, *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas undertaken by the Society of Jesus*, p. 61, book I, and Neuhof, *Beschreibung der Ost=Indischen Compagnie Gesandtschaft an den großen Cham von Sina*, p. 240."¹² The seventy-five numbered pages contain as many as seventy-six footnotes, which leads to a density of references that is not achieved anywhere else in the Renger series. Again, Francisci's *Stats=Garten* figures alongside the travelogues of Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo (1616–1644), Thévenot, and others.¹³ The author most cited is Guy Tachard (1651–1712) with the German version of his account.¹⁴ The Renger volume on Japan combines both techniques and contains references in footnotes and in the running text.¹⁵

The *Staat Von Persien* (1707) is a special case. It only names two French cartographers and once refers quite vaguely to "today's writers on the world" (*heutigen Welt=Schreiber*),¹⁶ although the whole book is largely an unacknowledged rip-off of François Sanson's (fl. c. 1695) *Reise nach Persien* from 1695.¹⁷ Whole passages of the latter are taken over into the *Staat Von Persien*, without ever

10 See *Staat von Sina*, p. 183, and Francisci, *Stats=Garten*, p. 1607; *Staat von Sina*, p. 228, and Francisci, *Stats=Garten*, p. 1586.

11 See *Staat von Sina*, p. 244; Francisci, *Stats=Garten*, p. 1592; Johan Nieuhof, *Die GESANTSCHAFT der Ost-Indischen Gesellschaft in den Vereinigten Niederländern / an den Tartarischen Cham / und nunmehr auch Sinischen Keiser [...]* (Amsterdam 1666), p. 240.

12 "Vid. Trigantium de Christiana expeditione apud Sina suscepta a societate Jesu. p.61. L.I. & Neuhofium in der Beschreibung der Ost=Indischen Compagnie Gesandtschaft an den großen Cham von Sina p.240."; *Staat Von Siam*, p. 42.

13 See *Staat Von Siam*, e.g. pp. 2–4, 7–10, 26.

14 Guy Tachard, *Curieuse und Merckwürdige Reise Nach SIAM [...]* (Hamburg 1706); Guy Tachard, *Zweyte Reise Nach SIAM [...]* (Hamburg 1709).

15 *Staat Der Japanischen Insuln*, e.g. pp. 9–10, 13–15, 123–124, 314 (recte 134), 156.

16 *Staat Von Persien*, pp. 126, 146.

17 François Sanson, *Reise nach Persien / Oder: Der neueste Staat desselben Königreichs [...]* (Dresden, Leipzig 1695); see also the largely identical edition by the same publisher from 1701.

mentioning either author or title. This is the exact opposite of how the *Staat Von MAROCCO* (1714) proceeds, which likewise largely draws on a single travel account, in this instance on François Pidou de Saint-Olon's (1640/46–1720) *RELATION DE L'EMPIRE DE MAROC* (1695).¹⁸ But this connection is explicitly made clear in the preface of the corresponding Renger book, which provides a bibliography of the contemporary literature on Morocco on two pages. It lists eleven titles, among which the account by Saint-Olon is praised as the most trustworthy one and hence chosen as the main source.¹⁹

The Renger volumes did, however, not only borrow textual information from travel accounts, but also images. Within the series images occur exclusively as frontispieces, and those of the *Staat Von Siam*, the *Staat Der Japanischen Insuln* (1716) and the *Staat Von MAROCCO* can all be traced back to travelogues. The Siamese scene (Fig. 1) is an inverted copy of an engraving in the *VOYAGE DE SIAM* (1686) by Guy Tachard,²⁰ the Japanese one is similarly carved after an illustration in the *Beschryvinge Van het Machtigh Koninghrijck van IAPPAN* (1661) by François Caron (around 1600–1673),²¹ while in the Moroccan case the frontispiece turns out to be a combination of several prints from Saint-Olon's *RELATION*.²² All three title pages have in common that they show scenes of audiences of, or homages to, the local ruler.

The choice of frontispieces showing basic ceremonial events at non-European courts is significant: The alien material culture and exotic setting they evoked at the very beginning of the individual books probably proved attractive to potential buyers, who at the same time could be expected to decipher the basically familiar ceremonial logic underlying the depicted situations. The original images, in contrast, were sort of hidden in the interior of the travel accounts and each belonged to a specific context. Thus, their re-use as frontispieces within the Renger context was presumably a deliberate functional change, most likely due to commercial reason.

¹⁸ François Pidou de Saint-Olon, *RELATION DE L'EMPIRE DE MAROC* [...] (Paris 1695).

¹⁹ *Staat Von MAROCCO*, preface (An den Leser),)(r.

²⁰ *Staat Von Siam*, frontispiece; Guy Tachard, *VOYAGE DE SIAM DES PERES JESUITES* [...] (Paris 1686), here pp. 288–289.

²¹ *Staat Der Japanischen Insuln*, frontispiece; François Caron, *Rechte Beschryvinge Van het Machtigh Koninghrijck van IAPPAN* [...] (Den Haag 1661), here p. 49.

²² *Staat Von MAROCCO*, frontispiece; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, (referring to) pp. 88, 93, 95–98.

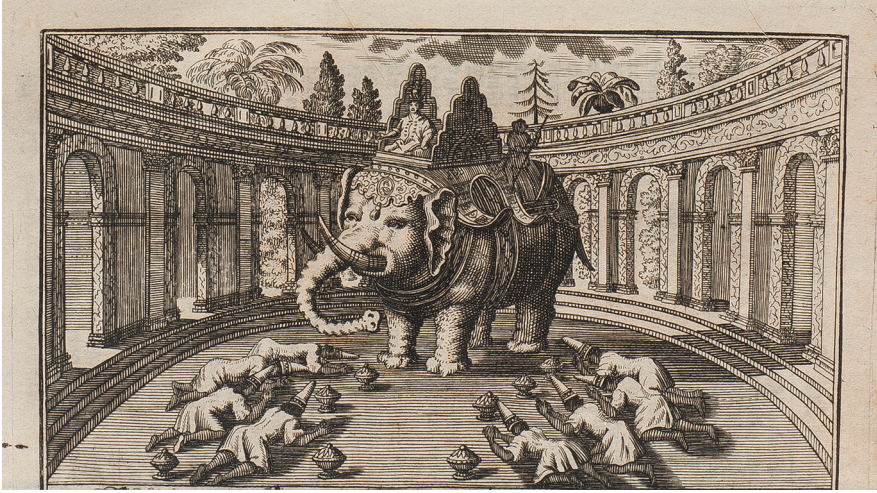


Fig. 1: *Staat Von Siam, In Ost=Indien* (Halle an der Saale 1715), frontispiece.

Source: © Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel [Gb 298:13 (4)].

2 Shifting texts

Obviously, the publisher Renger had right from the start planned to produce and sell a whole series of books under the title *Der Staat von*, since the first volume on Portugal was advertised together with five books on other European countries.²³ When the first subseries on Europe was completed and proved a success, a second one was announced that was to cover non-European states²⁴ and use the former's layout and structure. Hence, all the Renger volumes follow the model developed for the European cases and look very much alike. This standardization becomes clear if one looks at the respective tables of content: the chapters uniformly focus on the political and administrative structures of each polity, including the dynastic regimes. Separate chapters are also devoted to the revenues, the size of the army, and the interests of each state, as shown, for example by the publications on France and on China.²⁵ Consequently, any borrowing from a travel account had to be transplanted into the appropriate con-

²³ CATALOGUS UNIVERSALIS, Sive DESIGNATIO OMNIUM LIBRORUM, Qvi hisce Nundinis Autumnalibus FRANCOFURTENSIBUS & LIPSIENSIBUS Anni 1704. vel novi, vel emendatores & auctiores prodierunt [...] (Leipzig 1704), fol. F2v.

²⁴ Einleitung zu den Europäischen Staaten, p. 59.

²⁵ Staat von Franckreich ([Halle an der Saale] [1705]), pp. 5–6, and Staat von Sina, pp. 6–7.

text of the relevant Renger volume, which in turn was determined by the structure common to all the works. Therefore, whenever larger chunks of the original texts were to be quoted or paraphrased in a Renger publication, they had to be repositioned in the right place. That is why the practice of compilation can basically be understood as a process of de-contextualization and then re-contextualization of the passages in question. Books and printed news media compiling political information from different sources were a regular feature of the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century book market.²⁶

A suitable example is the way in which extensive sections of Sanson's *Reise nach Persien* were incorporated into the *Staat Von Persien*, which was published twelve years later. Sanson's book, a German translation of the French original,²⁷ starts with two statements affirming the trustworthiness of the account: the translator stresses that Sanson has not included anything in his account that is "taken from other travel books" or "what he had not seen himself",²⁸ while the author himself boasts of his first-hand knowledge of court and country.²⁹ Since the Renger book on Persia does not mention Sanson at all, there is no such claim to truth and factuality.

Information taken from the *Reise nach Persien* is mostly adopted by the *Staat Von Persien* in a condensed manner. The higher religious and court officials are treated by Sanson in hierarchical order on over twenty pages, and this directory is transferred into the Renger publication one by one. The single items are, however, often dealt with in abridged form. Therefore, the relevant text in the *Staat* comprises about 70 per cent of the number of characters originally used in the *Reise nach Persien*.³⁰ This practice is also employed with regard to a block of text on the relations of Persia to other countries. These are handled on more than forty pages in Sanson's book and make up the main contents of the chapter

²⁶ See Volker Bauer, Strukturwandel der höfischen Öffentlichkeit: Zur Medialisierung des Hoflebens vom 16. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert, in *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 38 (2011), pp. 585–620, here pp. 606–608; Daniel Bellingradt, Forschungsbericht: Periodische Presse im deutschen Sprachraum der Frühen Neuzeit, in *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 69 (2014), pp. 235–248; Rudolf Schlögl, Anwesende und Abwesende: Grundriss für eine Gesellschaftsgeschichte der Frühen Neuzeit (Konstanz 2014), pp. 322–323.

²⁷ François Sanson, *VOYAGE OU RELATION DE L'ETAT PRESENT DU ROYAUME DE PERSE [...]* (Paris 1695).

²⁸ "[...] aus andern Reisebüchern entnommen" or "was er selbst nicht gesehen"; Sanson, *Reise*, *Zuschrift*, fol. a4v.

²⁹ Sanson, *Reise*, Erinnerung an den Leser (section immediately before p. 1).

³⁰ See Sanson, *Reise*, pp. 19–40, and *Staat Von Persien*, pp. 26–37.

“Von den Persischen Interesse” (on Persian interest) in the Renger publication. Again, there is a similar ratio of about 70 per cent.³¹

Other textual techniques are also involved in the processing of Sanson's book. Sometimes detailed accounts are simply cut off.³² Where the *Reise nach Persien* expands, for example, on the meals laid out at the shah's audiences, the *Staat Von Persien* abruptly stops with the sweets being served, indicating the omission by a mere “etc.”³³ Occasionally, the sequence of short passages transferred from one book to the other is changed,³⁴ and in some cases sections of the text are deliberately transplanted into a completely different context. Sanson describes the tomb of Esther and Mordechai (Hamadān) as one stage of his missionary journey through Persia, while in the *Staat Von Persien* it is dealt with as part of a short paragraph about Jews, which closes a section on the different religions to be found in the Asian country.³⁵ Quite often, specific, first-hand information is generalized in the *Staat Von Persien*. Whereas Sanson explicitly speaks of the “legitimate spouse” of Shah Sulayman I, also known as Safi II (1648–1694), in whose reign he had visited Safavid Persia, the *Staat* quotes this passage and turns it into a general characterization of the position of the ruler's consorts.³⁶ In yet another passage Sanson compares Persia to France, obviously bearing in mind his intended French readership. In the *Staat Von Persien*, however, which is, after all, part of a German series, the point of reference is expanded to include the Netherlands, England, and Germany.³⁷

But the most fundamental change in the course of the transfer of knowledge from Sanson's travel account to the Renger volume is the elimination of narrative elements. This happens on two levels: First, Sanson's *Reise* features some sections written in the first person. The author himself figures in the narrative, attesting to the authenticity of his account, which is structured by his physical movement across the land.³⁸ The main text of the *Staat Von Persien*, in contrast, dispenses completely with any reference to the person of the author. Second, many passages are reduced within the *Staat Von Persien* to a single observation, whereas the accompanying narrative from Sanson's *Reise* meant to shed additional light on the given information is skipped. When Sanson writes, for exam-

31 See Sanson, *Reise*, pp. 143–183, and *Staat Von Persien*, pp. 66–88.

32 See Sanson, *Reise*, p. 112, and *Staat Von Persien*, p. 25.

33 See Sanson, *Reise*, p. 62, and *Staat Von Persien*, p. 10.

34 See Sanson, *Reise*, pp. 88–89, and *Staat Von Persien*, pp. 13–14.

35 See Sanson, *Reise*, pp. 245–246, and *Staat Von Persien*, p. 103.

36 See Sanson, *Reise*, pp. 88–89, and *Staat Von Persien*, p. 13.

37 See Sanson, *Reise*, p. 97, and *Staat Von Persien*, p. 47.

38 See Sanson, *Reise*, pp. 225–255.

ple, about an execution and the role of a certain official in it, this is followed by a tedious anecdote about an Armenian condemned to death. The Renger book, in contrast, simply mentions the rank of the royal officeholder in charge, reducing the whole passage to four lines of text.³⁹ What is left of Sanson's travelogue in the *Staat Von Persien* is, ultimately, a factual account largely devoid of individual traits and personal experience.

The different tools for condensing, shifting, and reformatting are similarly employed in other "Oriental" volumes of the Renger series, which are also based on one main source. A case in point is the *Staat von der Kleinen und Grossen Tartarey* (1709), which chiefly relies on Eberhard Isbrand Ides' (1657–1712/13) account⁴⁰ of his *Dreyjährige Reise nach China* (1707).⁴¹ The *Staat Von MAROCCO* predominantly exploits the travel account from 1695 of François Pidou de Saint-Olon, French ambassador to Morocco in 1693. Although it utilizes the diplomat's report as its factual basis,⁴² it also interprets or even distorts its message at least once. Saint-Olon writes about sultan Moulay Ismail (1645–1727), who is "*absolu*

³⁹ Sanson, *Reise*, pp. 192–193, and *Staat Von Persien*, p. 113.

⁴⁰ Eberhard Isbrand Ides, *Dreyjährige Reise nach China / Von Moskau ab zu lande durch groß Ustiga / Siriania / Permia / Sibirien / Daour und die grosse Tartarey [...]* (Frankfurt am Main 1707); this edition is the German translation of the Dutch original: Eberhard Isbrand Ides, *DRIEJAARIGE REIZE NAAR CHINA, te lande gedann [...]* (Amsterdam 1704); see Michael Hundt, *Einleitung*, in Michael Hundt (ed.), *Beschreibung der dreijährigen chinesischen Reise. Die russische Gesandtschaft von Moskau nach Peking 1692 bis 1695 in den Darstellungen von Eberhard Isbrand Ides und Adam Brand* (Stuttgart 1999), pp. 1–102.

⁴¹ See Ides, *Reise nach China*, p. 23, and *Staat von der Tartarey*, p. 82; Ides, *Reise nach China*, pp. 41–51, and *Staat von der Tartarey*, pp. 83–87; Ides, *Reise nach China*, pp. 67–70, and *Staat von der Tartarey*, pp. 88–90; Ides, *Reise nach China*, pp. 72–76, and *Staat von der Tartarey*, pp. 92–94; Ides, *Reise nach China*, pp. 111–113, and *Staat von der Tartarey*, pp. 105–106; Ides, *Reise nach China*, pp. 119–122, and *Staat von der Tartarey*, pp. 106–109; Ides, *Reise nach China*, pp. 209–214, and *Staat von der Tartarey*, pp. 65–70; Ides, *Reise nach China*, pp. 217–219, and *Staat von der Tartarey*, pp. 78–79; Ides, *Reise nach China*, pp. 223–225, and *Staat von der Tartarey*, pp. 137–139; Ides, *Reise nach China*, pp. 243–245, and *Staat von der Tartarey*, pp. 73–75.

⁴² See Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 2–8, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, pp. 21–24; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, p. 12, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, p. 9; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 19–20, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, p. 52; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 41–52, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, pp. 66–72; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 60–66, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, pp. 23–25; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 66–68, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, pp. 38–39; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 99–104, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, pp. 26–27; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 104–107, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, pp. 43–44; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 108–112, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, pp. 40–42; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, p. 113, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, p. 45; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 117–120, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, pp. 45–47; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 138–140, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, p. 42; Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 140–150, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, pp. 62–65.

dans ses Etats” (absolute in his domain) and likens his own style of rule with the one of Louis XIV of France (1638–1715). In the *Staat Von MAROCCO*, however, this passage is significantly rephrased and recontextualized by explicitly labeling the sultan’s regime as “*Despotische Gewalt*” (despotic power).⁴³ This ploy is meant to taint the Sun King’s reputation by tying him to the notion of Oriental despotism,⁴⁴ which is present within the Renger series and influences its general attitude towards the French monarch.⁴⁵

The last two examples differ drastically from the *Staat Von Persien* in that they refer emphatically to their sources. As already mentioned, the *Staat Von MAROCCO* openly concedes that Saint-Olon’s *RELATION* was the book “*am meisten gebraucht*” (used most of all) among all pertinent publications.⁴⁶ The preface of the *Staat von der Tartarey* declares that it “owes something to various travel accounts by Olearius, Strauss [Struys] and other authors. But Isbrand Ides’s *drey-jährige Reise nach China* was most illuminating of all.”⁴⁷ Obviously the authors of these two Renger volumes – which remained anonymous anyway – had absolutely no qualms about admitting that their works were both mere compilations based upon one master text each.

3 The transfer of trust

Early modern travelogues have their own ways of establishing and maintaining the trustworthiness of their accounts. The most straightforward strategy is to stress the identity of the eyewitness traveler and the book author, particularly by writing in the first person. Being, after all, compilations, the “Oriental” Renger volumes had to find different means of displaying and preserving the authority and authenticity of the knowledge they had derived from the original accounts. They did so by not simply selecting and juxtaposing quotations from and references to the various publications they relied on, but also by evaluating them implicitly or explicitly.

⁴³ Saint-Olon, *RELATION*, pp. 66–68, and *Staat Von MAROCCO*, pp. 38–40.

⁴⁴ See Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Oriental Despotism and European Orientalism: Botero to Montesquieu*, in *Journal of Early Modern History* 9 (2005), pp. 109–180.

⁴⁵ See e.g. *Einleitung zu den Europäischen Staaten*, pp. 8–9, 52–53, and *Staat von Franckreich*, p. 63.

⁴⁶ *Staat Von MAROCCO*, preface (An den Leser).

⁴⁷ “[...] verschiedenen Reise=Beschreibungen / als des Olearii, Straussens / und anderer Autorum etwas zu danken: Doch das größte Licht hat uns gegeben des Herrn Ysbrand Ides [...] drey-jährige Reise nach China”. *Staat von der Tartarey*, preface (Geneigter Leser).

Many references do not only consist of the basic bibliographical data, but also qualify the dependability of the source in question. One important reason for praise of an author or work is accuracy. For example, after dealing with the tomb of Muhammad (c. 570–632) in Medina, the *Staat von Türrkey* goes on: “Which was described accurately by Thévenot”, thereby referring to the latter’s *Reysen in Europa, Asia und Africa* (published in German in 1693).⁴⁸ Even more valuable are those travelogues that report on the “recent and most accurate voyages”⁴⁹ and hence combine topicality and precision, because the most recent information is also the most relevant and reliable one. The *Staat von Sina* therefore once concedes: “One cannot be sure if this law court of mercy still exists, because Father le Comte, the most recent [travel writer], does not disclose anything about it.”⁵⁰

Another, and arguably more convincing, mode of emphasizing the veracity of an account is predicated on the method by which the source had gathered intelligence. It was duly noted whenever an author wrote in the capacity of an actual witness. This is exactly why Thévenot serves as the favorite informant in the *Staat von Türrkey*, which sets great store by his “*Zeugnüß*” (testimony).⁵¹ Particularly the volume on China is full of assertions of this kind. One passage is introduced with the phrase: “Among other things, Father Gerbillon relates the following which he has observed on a voyage to Tartary.”⁵² Even more appreciated than Jean-François Gerbillon (1654–1707) was his co-Jesuit Louis le Comte (1655–1728), who figures repeatedly in the *Staat von Sina* because of his first-hand experience of the country.⁵³ His reputation is often enhanced by references such as “As Father le Comte testifies, who passed through there thrice” or “Father le Comte has measured the height in several places.”⁵⁴ The trustworthiness of a witness is even augmented by openly admitting to the limits of his perception. The *Staat Des Grossen Mogol* contains a passage on the serail in Delhi which

48 “[...] welches Tevenot accurat beschrieben”. *Staat von Türrkey*, p. 166; see Jean de Thévenot, [...] REYSEN In EUROPA, ASIA und AFRICA [...] (Frankfurt am Main 1693).

49 “...heutigen und accuratesten Voyages”. *Staat Von Persien*, p. 126.

50 “Ob dergleichen Stuhl der Barmhertzigkeit noch ietzo bestehe / kann man nicht gewiß versichern; weil P. le Comte, als der neueste / nichts davon meldet”. *Staat von Sina*, p. 250; see Louis le Comte, *Das heutige SINA* [...] (3 vols., Frankfurt am Main et al. 1699–1700).

51 *Staat von Türrkey*, p. 163.

52 “Unter andern erzehlet der P. Gerbillon nachfolgendes / so er auff einer Tartarischen Reyse observiret.” *Staat von Sina*, p. 112.

53 *Staat von Sina*, pp. 14, 112, 116–118, 124, 129–130, 139, 146, 160, 181, 185, 207, 221, 250–251, 271, 277, 286, 298–300, 317, 320, 325.

54 “[...] wie P. le Comte bezeuget / welcher dreymal dadurch gereiset” or “P. le Comte hat die Höhe an etlichen Orten gemessen”. *Staat von Sina*, p. 180.

reads: “Bernier has had occasion to enter it, [...] but his head was covered by a blanket so that he cannot tell us anything about the design.” This sentence is a third-person paraphrase of an episode narrated in Bernier’s first-person travelogue, which was published in German in 1672⁵⁵ and is frequently quoted in the Renger book.⁵⁶

Sometimes the Renger volumes stage debates between several travel writers. The book on the Mughal Empire refers to two pages from Francisci’s *Stats=Garten* – itself a compilation – on which three travelogues are juxtaposed, each expressing a different opinion about the sources and amount of the Mughal state’s revenues.⁵⁷ The *Staat Des Grossen Mogol* documents the diverging views and then decides that Bernier – who could not and thus did not figure in Francisci’s book – provides the most convincing and detailed data.⁵⁸ Within the *Staat von Sina* there is a similar confrontation to be found, but in this case Francisci’s book is pitted against le Comte’s *Das heutige SINA* from 1699, which is correctly quoted including the pertinent page number.⁵⁹ In both Renger titles, the more recent travelogues, published long after Francisci’s *Stats=Garten*, trump this encyclopedic work from 1668, but only after a brief comparative assessment of the relevant works. The *Staat Von MAROCCO* establishes the veracity of Saint-Olon’s account – its main reference – by logical reasoning. Put into the context of other sources, the French ambassador’s *RELATION* is deemed to be definitely superior: “Because this author agrees completely with all the others who belong here, one can easily reckon that everything else which is not recorded by others and which he described from his own experience represents the truth as well.”⁶⁰

Thus, within the Renger volumes on “Oriental” regimes many textual devices were used to refer to the corpus of relevant travel accounts. These travelogues did not only serve as simple depositories of authentic information on the respective countries, but they were apparently checked for factuality and validity. By this approach, the second-hand observations of the Renger volumes sought evidence

55 “Bernier hat zwar Gelegenheit gehabt hinein zu kommen / [...] doch hat man ihm eine Decke übern Kopff gehänget [...] / daß er also nichts nachsagen kan / wie es darinn ausgesehen.” *Staat Des Grossen Mogol*, pp. 93–94; see François Bernier, *Auffgezeichnete Beobachtungen Was sich in dem Reich Deß Großen Mogols Begeben und zugetragen hat* (Frankfurt am Main 1672), p. 49.

56 *Staat Des Grossen Mogol*, pp. 52, 81, 84, 89, 93–94, 100, 105, 110.

57 Francisci, *Stats=Garten*, pp. 1441–1442.

58 *Staat Des Grossen Mogol*, pp. 98–100, 105.

59 *Staat von Sina*, p. 251.

60 “Denn in dem dieser Auctor mit allen andern / welche hieher gehören / genau übereinkommt: so kan man sich leichtlich die Rechnung machen / daß auch die übrigen Dinge / welche wir bey andern nicht aufgezeichnet finden und Er aus eignern Erfahrung angemercket hat / mit der Wahrheit übereinstimmen.” *Staat Von MAROCCO*, preface.

in first-hand observations and at the same time decided on the latter's reliability. The mutual confirmation of both levels led to a transfer of trustworthiness from the travel accounts to the Renger series.

Conclusions: the business of compilation

The commercial character of the series is highly relevant. Once the European volumes with their standardized approach had been well received on the book market, it was an obvious decision to also supply publications on non-European countries following this model. The "Oriental" and Asian realms were therefore treated according to the successful description model developed for the European cases.⁶¹ Another feature that was preserved was the anonymity of the authors, which was, however, fully appropriate to the production process, because, starting with the *Staat von Portugall* as the very first title of the series, all Renger volumes were the result of text adoption or compilation.⁶² The hired writers and their products remained under almost complete control of the publishing house Renger and were not even mentioned on the title pages of these distinctly non-academic works.⁶³

In this context the place of publication is of paramount importance, because from 1694 onwards Halle an der Saale was the site of a renowned university that produced an increasing number of younger and underemployed academics in need of additional income. This is exactly where a second influential figure besides the publisher Johann Gottfried Renger (d. 1718) comes in. For it was the professor of law and historian Johann Peter von Ludewig (1668–1743) who had originally initiated the whole series⁶⁴ and who probably recruited his former student Caspar Gottschling (1679–1739) as the main compiler of the non-European Renger books. Gottschling in fact lived in Ludewig's household after 1709, when his career at an academy for knights (*Ritterakademie*) in Brandenburg had failed, and gave private lessons in, among other subjects, geography and

⁶¹ See Einleitung zu den Europäischen Staaten, pp. 64–71.

⁶² Johann Hübner, *Hamburgische BIBLIOTHECA HISTORICA*, Der Studierenden Jugend Zum Besten zusammen getragen, 2. Centuria, 100. Artickel (Leipzig 1716), pp. 334–372, here pp. 335–336.

⁶³ See also Volker Bauer, *Europe as a Political System, an Ideal and a Selling Point: the Renger Series (1704–1718)*, in Nicolas Detering, Clementina Marsico, and Isabella Walser-Bürgler (eds.), *Contesting Europe: Comparative Perspectives on Early Modern Discourses on Europe, 1400–1800* (Leiden et al. 2020), pp. 364–380, here pp. 364–365.

⁶⁴ See Einleitung zu den Europäischen Staaten, p. 59.

history.⁶⁵ It is likely that he used the holdings of Ludewig's personal library, which comprised a considerable collection of travel accounts,⁶⁶ among them, of all titles, a copy of Saint-Olon's *RELATION*. And it was indeed Gottschling who compiled the *Staat Von MAROCCO* from this French book.⁶⁷ This copy was moreover bound together with a copy of Sanson's *VOYAGE OU RELATION* on Persia,⁶⁸ and this might convincingly explain why this book served as the main source of the *Staat Von Persien* rather than, for example, the more popular and more comprehensive account by Jean (John) Chardin (1643–1713) from 1686.⁶⁹ Thus, the whole infrastructure required for the business of compilation did exist in early eighteenth-century Halle: a thriving and ambitious publishing house managing the commercial aspects, an academic institution providing qualified authors, and a library featuring the necessary raw material.

It was an obvious choice to use predominantly travel accounts as sources of information. In the case of the Renger series, however, this was not done *faute de mieux*. At least in some cases the works the respective volumes were indebted to were mentioned by title and author. The *Staat von Sina* is extremely outspoken and modest when praising the books which it drew on:

If there are readers whose appetite for a more comprehensive account is whetted by this short one [i.e. *Staat von Sina*], there is no lack of books that could satisfy this wish. Mendoza, Trigantinus, Martinus, Neuhoﬀ / Dapper / Erasmus Francisci, Andreas Müller / [...]. P. Couplet, P. le Comte, P. Gobien, P. Bouvet and many more have made us so familiar with the hitherto unknown China that we have to praise their useful diligence. And these are the sources from which this humble work has sprung. If the benevolent reader finds something inside which entertains him, this must be attributed to them rather than to the author.⁷⁰

65 Lothar Noack and Jürgen Splett (eds.), *Bio-Bibliographien. Brandenburgische Gelehrte der Frühen Neuzeit: Mark Brandenburg 1640–1713* (Berlin 2001), pp. 213–221, here p. 214.

66 See *CATALOGUS PRAESTANTISSIMI THESAURI LIBRORUM TIPIS VULGATORUM ET MANUSCRIPTORUM JOANNIS PETRI DE LUDEWIG* [...] (Halle 1745), pp. 841–849.

67 Caspar Gottschling, *Der Staat Von Schlaraffen-Land. Mit Kommentar, Nachwort und Bibliographie*, edited by Nikola Roßbach (Hannover 2007), p. 113.

68 *CATALOGUS PRAESTANTISSIMI THESAURI*, p. 847, No. 6495.

69 Jean Chardin, *JOURNAL DU VOYAGE [...] EN PERSE & aux Indes Orientales [...]* (London 1686).

70 “Sollten sich aber Liebhaber finden / welchen diese kurze Nachricht [i.e. *Staat von Sina*] einen Appetit zu einer ausführlichen erwecket / so würde es auch an Büchern nicht fehlen / welche solchen nach Wunsch contentiren könnten. Mendoza, Trigantinus, Martinus, Neuhoﬀ / Dapper / Erasmus Francisci, Andreas Müller / [...]. P. Couplet, P. le Comte, P. Gobien, P. Bouvet, und viele andere / haben uns das bißher unbekannte Sina dergestalt bekant gemacht / daß wir solchen nützlichen Fleiß billig zu rühmen haben. Und dieses sind die Quellen / woraus gegenwärtige geringe Arbeit geflossen ist. Findet der geneigte Leser etwas darinnen / das ihn vergnügt / so hat er solches mehr Jenen als dem Verfasser zu zuschreiben.” *Staat von Sina*, p. 5. The author

In the *Staat Des Grossen Mogol*, which according to a special edition was, like the *Staat von Sina*, written by Dietrich Hermann Kemmerich (1677–1745),⁷¹ the practice of compilation is not concealed at all, but on the contrary turned into an advantage. Anybody who wants information on the Asian empire will profit from it: “Many would consider browsing Dapper, Thévenot, Mandelslo or other writers on the Orient who describe these realms exhaustively much too tedious. Hence these few sheets may satisfy a reader who only demands short, but still sufficient, information on this famous state.”⁷² This attempt to emphasize the superiority of the compilation over the original sources ties in neatly with Renger’s sophisticated marketing strategy.⁷³ It becomes visible in quite a lot of the publishing house’s own printed works, among them journals and bibliographies, which mention, advertise, or review the series in question or volumes belonging to it.⁷⁴

The processing of material that had already been published elsewhere had, however, a significant side effect: Because many of the travelogues serving as sources date back to the middle or end of the seventeenth century (e. g., Bernier on the Mughal Empire, Sanson on Persia, Saint-Olon on Morocco, Thévenot on Ottoman Turkey), a time gap emerged, since the Renger books on “Oriental” states only appeared after 1707. Hence, these volumes represent a state of affairs as perceived at least twenty years previously. In those times, however, the realms treated in the Renger volumes had appeared in their prime and were for this rea-

refers to Juan González de Mendoza (1545–1618), Nicolaus Trigantius (1577–1628), Martino Martini (1614–1661), Johan Nieuhof (1618–1672), Olfert Dapper (1636–1689), Erasmus Francisci (1627–1694), Andreas Müller (1630–1694), Philippe Couplet (1623–1693), Louis le Comte (1655–1728), Charles le Gobien (1653–1708), and Joachim Bouvet (1656–1730).

71 See Dieterich Hermann Kemmerich, *Staat Des grossen Mogol / wie auch von Sina / und Der kleinen und grossen Tartarey* (Halle an der Saale 1711).

72 “Zwar den Dapper, oder Thevenot, oder Mandelsloh / oder andere Orientalische Scribenten / welche diese Reiche ausführlich beschrieben / deswegen auffzuschlagen / würde manchem viel zu weitläufftig fallen. Derowegen können diese wenig Bogen einem Liebhaber / der nichts als eine kurtze und doch zulängl. Nachricht von diesem berühmten Staat verlangt / vielleicht einige Satisfaction geben.” *Staat Des Grossen Mogol*, pp. 3–4. The author refers to Olfert Dapper (1636–1689), Jean de Thévenot (1633–1667), and Johann Albrecht von Mandelslo (1616–1644).

73 Bauer, *Europe*, pp. 376–377.

74 See *Einleitung zu den Europäischen Staaten*, pp. 59–61; *Curieuses Bücher=Cabinet* 20. Eingang (1714), appendix; Jacob Friderich Reimmann, *Versuch einer Einleitung In die HISTORIAM LITERARIAM Derer Teutschen Und zwar Des dritten und letzten Theils Drittes Hauptstück Darinnen Die Historia Politices, und Historiae so wohl insgemein / als auch insonderheit der Historiae Civilis und derer dazu gehörigen Neben-Wissenschaften [...]* (Halle an der Saale 1710), pp. 279–284; *CATALOGVS Einiger Nützlichen Bücher*, So in der Rengerischen Buchhandlung Zu Franckfurt am Mayn und Leipzig In Denen Messen Zu finden ([Halle an der Saale] [c. 1714]).

son described quite favorably by European travelers.⁷⁵ This perspective certainly contributed to a surprisingly fair description of the “Oriental” states in the Renger context, which is thus an example of – to borrow a phrase from Jürgen Osterhammel – an “inclusive Eurocentrism.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Jürgen Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia*, translated by Robert Savage (Princeton, Oxford 2018), pp. 22–27.

⁷⁶ Osterhammel, *Unfabling*, pp. 65, 489.

