

Christian-Muslim Relations A Bibliographical History

Volume 11. South and East Asia, Africa and
the Americas (1600-1700)

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Walter Peyton

Walter Payton; Peiton

DATE OF BIRTH Second half of the 16th century
PLACE OF BIRTH Sutton Coldfield
DATE OF DEATH Between September 1639 and 15 June 1641
PLACE OF DEATH Probably Sutton Coldfield

BIOGRAPHY

Walter Peyton was a 17th-century British sea captain. He appears to have been the only (surviving) child of Maria Pickerton and Henricus Peyton (also spelled Peiton), a member of the Peiton family of Peiton Hall, Sutton Coldfield, and a merchant by profession. Only scant details about Walter himself are known. He was married to Dorothea, daughter of Thomas Stanton de Wolverton, and they had two daughters, Dorothy and Maria, and a son, Walter Peyton.

Walter Peyton sailed for the British East India Company. Two of his ship's journals are extant, describing the journeys made in 1613 and 1615 to the region of present-day Indonesia. Both voyages were under the command of Captain Christopher Newport and had the purpose of buying spices, especially pepper, from the region (for example, from Bantam, Sumatra and Aceh).

The 1613 expedition seems to have consisted of only one ship, *The Expedition*, which left Gravesend in early January, anchored in India in September, and at Bantam, Java, in December that year. The ship returned to England in July 1614. The 1615 expedition consisted of a flotilla of four ships, again under the command of Newport; Peyton served as captain of *The Expedition*. The convoy left Gravesend in early January; on board were Sir Thomas Roe, James I's ambassador to the Mughal Emperor Jahāngīr, and his entourage. Since it spent a considerable period of time in Socotra and India, the fleet did not reach Aceh until October 1616. It returned to England in May 1617. During this second journey, Peyton kept a journal, which has survived. It is not known whether Peyton went on any journeys other than those mentioned here.

The National Archives at Kew hold Peyton's nine-page will, drawn up in September 1639. This indicates that Peyton, by then a widower, had

become prosperous; he owned a house, Marlpiitt Hall, in Sutton Coldfield, and bequeathed jewellery and substantial sums of money to his daughters, some small bequests to other family members and the remainder of his property to his son. A sentence from the prerogative court in Canterbury of 15 June 1641 indicates that Peyton had died before that date.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Primary

- MS London, BL – Add 19276 (1615-17; Peyton's journal of the voyage to East India and return)
- MS Kew, National Archives – PROB 11/183/1 (1639; Peyton's will)
- MS Kew, National Archives – PROB 11/186/337 (1641; sentence concerning Peyton)
- MS Kew, National Archives – E 199/45/38 (24 March 1623-23 March 1624; writ and inquisition on goods of Walter Peyton of Sutton Coldfield)
- Walter Payton, 'A Journall of all principall matters passed in the twelfth voyage to the East India, observed by mee Walter Payton, in the good ship the Expedition. The captain whereof was M. Christopher Newport, being set out, anno 1612', in S. Purchas, *Purchas. His pilgrimes, in five books*, 1625, London, vol. 1, pp. 488-500
- Walter Peyton, 'Voyage of Captain Walter Peyton to India, in 1615', in S. Purchas, *Purchas. His pilgrimes, in five books*, 1625, London, vol. 1, pp. 528-35

Secondary

- J. Fetherston (ed.), *The visitation of the Country of Warwick, 1619 taken by William Camden*, London, 1877, pp. 379-81
- R. Kerr (ed.), *A general history and collection of voyages and travels*, Edinburgh, 1824, vol. 9, pp. 137-65, 219-41

WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Journal of Walter Peyton, voyage to East India, and return, 1615-1617

The second voyage of Captain Walter Peyton to India, in 1615

DATE 1615-17 (first published in 1625)

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE English

DESCRIPTION

Walter Peyton's journal describing the 1615-17 voyage to 'India' is a text of about 20 pages, narrating the journey of a flotilla of four ships under the command of Captain Christopher Newport from England to India and the area of present-day Indonesia. On board were Sir Thomas Roe, King James I's ambassador to Shāh Jahāngīr of the Mughal Empire, and his entourage. Peyton's journal was first published in an abbreviated form in Samuel Purchas's *Purchas. His pilgrimes* (1625), and later reprinted a number of times in English as well as translated into Dutch.

Peyton pays little attention to the journey from England to the Cape of Good Hope, but the text becomes more detailed once the ships reach the coast of East Africa. It details stopovers at the Comoro Islands, Malindi, Socotra and Persia, as well as the reception of Sir Thomas Roe in India by representatives of the Mughal court at Surat. Peyton also outlines the spice trade in the Indonesian archipelago and the commercial, political and military challenges this entailed.

Noteworthy are Peyton's observations about Islam in the Comoro Islands, his journals being among the earliest written records on the subject. Peyton narrates that the people of Mohelia (Mohéli) were 'strict Mahomedans', many of whom could speak and write Arabic. He also observes that they were 'very jealous of their wives and mosques', protecting both their sacred places and their women from strangers. When some of Peyton's companions venture too close to a village, the women are shut away and the men threaten to kill Peyton's companions if they come closer (Kerr, *General history*, p. 225).

Peyton also mentions that the islands Mohelia, Hinzuan (Anjouan), Angazesia (Great Comoro) and Mayotte were ruled by an old 'sultanness', whose three sons served as deputy chiefs, but he does not give her name (Kerr, *General history*, p. 224). This remark about a female ruler in the islands is confirmed by contemporary sources, such as Pieter van den Broecke. Other sources confirm the rule of female rulers at Anjouan at a later date, the oldest known being Alimah III (c. 1676-c. 1711). Peyton's sultanness predates Alimah III by more than 60 years. The power of the sultan, according to Peyton, was so absolute 'that none of his people dared to sell us a single coconut without his leave'.

SIGNIFICANCE

The earliest history of Islam in the Comoro islands is mainly based on archaeological evidence. Peyton's journal is one of the first written reports on Islam there. He describes a situation in the early 17th century

in which the islands were predominantly Muslim, where people had a good command of Arabic and observed strict regulations regarding the *ḥijāb*. He also notes that the islands were ruled by an established lineage of sultans, among them a female, indicating the acceptance of female rulers in this predominantly Muslim setting as early as the second decade of the 17th century.

PUBLICATIONS

MS London, BL – 19276 (1615-17)

Walter Peyton, 'Voyage of Captain Walter Peyton to India, in 1615', in Samuel Purchas, *Purchas. His pilgrimes, in five books*, London, 1625, vol. 1, 528-35; STC 20509 (digitalised version available through *EEBO*)

T. Coryate (trans.), *Tweede reys van Kapiteyn Walter Peyton, na Oost-Indien, met het schip de Expeditie, uytgerust van de Engelse Oost-Indise Maatschappij, neffens de Draak, de Leeuw en de Peper-Corn, in het jaar 1615*, Leiden, 1706 (Dutch trans.; repr. 1707, 1727)

Walter Peyton, 'The second voyage into the East Indies perform'd by Captain Peyton, with the expedition. Together with the Dragon, Lion and Pepper Corn, under the command of Captain Keeling', in J. Harris, *Navigantium atque itinerantium bibliotheca, or, A complete collection of voyages and travels, consisting of above six hundred of the most authentic writers*, London, 1705, vol. 1, 149-53; ESTC N010531 (digitalised version available through *ECCO*)

Walter Peyton, 'Some observations of Capt. Peyton's concerning the English and Portuguese trade, factories and acquisitions, in the East Indies', in J. Harris, *Navigantium atque itinerantium bibliotheca, or, A complete collection of voyages and travels, consisting of above four hundred of the most authentick writers*, London, 1705, vol. 1, 153-4; ESTC N010531 (digitalised version available through *ECCO*)

Walter Peyton, *The voyage of Walter Peyton to India, in 1615*, Edinburgh, 1811-17

Walter Peyton, 'The voyage of Walter Peyton to India, in 1615', in R. Kerr (ed.), *A general history and collection of voyages and travels*, Edinburgh, 1824, vol. 9, 219-41

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