

## Christian European Travelers' Views on Nawab Bahawal Khan III, the Muslim Ruler of Bahawalpur State

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### Abstract

This article delves into the unique perspective of Christian European travelers on Nawab Bahawal Khan III, offering direct insights into their views on the Muslim ruler of Bahawalpur State. Other sources fail to provide a comprehensive portrayal of Nawab Bahawal Khan III's personality. These travelers encountered the nawab at various times and documented their observations about his personality, court, habits, and way of speaking in their travel accounts. Despite the predominant motive of British travelers being missionary work during that era, they surprisingly held favorable opinions about the nawab. While these travelers did forge political connections, their underlying agenda also included the propagation of Christianity. Hence, it is intriguing to note their positive opinions about a Muslim local ruler along with his generosity and delightful hospitality.

**Keywords:** Christian, European Travelers', Nawab Bahawal Khan III, Bahawalpur

### Introduction

By 1727, a group from Sindh known as the Daudputras, who claimed descent from Abbas, the uncle of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), and styled themselves as Abbasi, accepted an invitation from the Gilani and Bukhari Makhdums of Uch Sharif. They settled in the east of the confluence of the Chenab and



Sutlej Rivers in the area of Chaudhari. These Daudputras were skilled warriors and weavers, as noted by Goldsmith. Within a short span of twenty years (1720s-1740s), they had spread along both banks of the Sutlej, Ghara (the joint stream of the Sutlej and Chenab Rivers), and Indus Rivers. They established petty principalities with tax collection rights by assisting local rulers in warfare, receiving land in return. This led to the emergence of the Bahawalpur State as a loose confederation of the Daudputras, with the Pirjanis, a sub-caste of the Daudputras, having ill-defined subordination. This phenomenon prevailed during the eighteenth century, but Bahawal Khan II annexed all chiefdoms, consolidating them into his Princely State named Bahawalpur. Muhammad Rahim Yaar Khan, son of Nawab Sadiq Khan II (r.1809-1825) born in 1797, later became sixth ruler of Bahawalpur State and assumed the title of Nawab Bahawal Khan III (r.1825-1852).<sup>1</sup> Nawab Muhammad Bahawal Khan III died due to fever on 19 October 1852 and left six sons behind him.<sup>2</sup>

#### **European Travellers' Views about Nawab Muhammad Bahawal Khan III**

Sir Arthur Conolly (b. 2 July 1807- d. 24 June 1842) visited Bahawalpur State in 1836-1837 during the time period of Nawab Bahawal Khan III. He says about the nawab in his book, *Journey to North of India, Overland from England through Russia, Persia and Affghanistan* published in 1838. Conolly told the nawab that he was an Englishman and going back to his motherland after staying in Iran through the country of their border, the nawab gave him respect.<sup>3</sup> He visited Derawer Fort to meet the nawab but the meeting could not be held due to the absence of the nawab but the vizier facilitated the Conolly and provided him a letter of the nawab which was actually a free pass on which Conolly was exempt from all duties to cross Bahawalpur State.<sup>4</sup> Charles Masson (b. 16 February 1800-d. 5 November 1853) visited the Bahawalpur State in autumn of 1826 in the period of Nawab Bahawal Khan III. He gave details of this journey in his book titled as *Narrative of the Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Punjab and Kalat* published in 1844. One evening, Masson was walking in a pasture near Ahmadpur town when by chance, the nawab passed from there. He was sitting in palanquin and accompanied with numerous columns. He saw Masson and ordered to

stop the conveyance. He asked about Masson and signaled him to come closer. But Masson could not reach the nawab due to the rush of the people who were gathered to see the nawab. One of the nawab's person servant told Masson that the nawab wants to see him in Durbar.<sup>5</sup>

In the morning, he went to the palace of the nawab where he was sitting cross-legged on a carpet on a large pillow resting his left arm on a black shield. He was wearing a simple white linen dress. There were splendid armllets in his arms made up of turquoises surrounded with gold. There was a double-barreled fowling-piece. There were European sabers on his both sides. He had beautiful face and possessed good qualities. When Masson met, Nawab Bahawal III was 23 or 24 years old. He welcomed Masson courteously. Masson was served meat, eggs, birds and fish everything at the same time. Nawab ordered to give 3 double fists full with money for Masson's home as *Mahemani*.<sup>6</sup> Charles Masson defines that the Nawab was very popular. His ministers were very co-operative. His favorite hobbies were hunting and pursuing his hunt. The nawab was very expert mechanic of guns.<sup>7</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Sir Alexander Burnes (16 May 1805-2 November 1841) came to Bahawalpur State in 1831 in the period of Nawab Bahawal III. He gave his views about the nawab in his book *Travels into Bokhara* published in 1834. Alexander Burnes says that Nawab Bahawal Khan III was a good-looking man of about 30. He was slightly serious in his ways though was a mechanical minded person. He had made a gun of European style, caps and thundering powder. He showed his matchlock by which he had hunted a deer. He gave very much importance to machines, agriculture and trade. When he was giving an interview, he kept holding a rosary in his hand. Burnes says that though the nawab was opponent to Ranjit Singh, yet he did not say any word to insult Ranjit Singh. He told about his favorite game of hunting and his way of hunting deer. In the evening, the nawab showed the gifts given by Mount Stuart Elphinstone to his grandfather Nawab Bahawal Khan II (r. 1772-1809) These gifts were preserved officially with pride. It was a show of confirmation of the friendship of the two governments. Mr. Burnes considered the nawab a high-minded person.<sup>8</sup>

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The nawab sent a messenger to Burnes from the Derawer Fort who brought a deer hunted by the nawab himself for Burnes and many other gifts including 40 bottles of sherbet, 40 packets of sweetmeat and jams and a bag containing 200 rupees which were sent for charity as a sign of recognition of the arrival of Burnes to the State.<sup>9</sup> Burnes met the nawab on the morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1831 at a place one mile away from Uch town. The nawab was residing in a large house. He sent a band of his regular army personnel, with horses, palanquins, a chair under canopy and many other luxurious things. Burnes entered the court yard where the officers and chiefs were standing in lines there. Later, Nawab Bahawal Khan III was seated on the carpet. Ten persons were attending him. The nawab stood up and hugged Burnes. He inquired about Elphinstone, the person who made a sincere and long-lasting friendship of the nawab's family and the British Government.<sup>10</sup>

On 5<sup>th</sup> June 1831, the nawab met Burnes in the garden. The nawab came on an open sort of chair in the company of nearly 1000 persons. He remained with them for about an hour in that tent. He showed pleasure on the Burnes's gifts containing a support of pistols, a watch and some other things. The nawab gave money to every European traveler along with gifts. . When the nawab went, their *Mahemandaar* Ghulam Qadir Khan brought gifts from the nawab for them and presented in beautiful manner. On another occasion the nawab sent him two horses richly decorated with silver and gloss fittings, one matchlock and a hawk. There were shawls and trays of other fabrics which were made in Bahawalpur. Some of these were very costly. Burnes gave the nawab a gift of a drumming gun and a lot of thanks for his sincerity and hospitality. Burnes acclaimed that the nawab and public of Bahawalpur State were very good-mannered.<sup>11</sup>

Major-General Sir Herbert Benjamin Edwardes (12 November 1819 – 23 December 1868) In his book *A Year on the Punjab Frontier in 1848-49* published in 1851, H.B. Edwardes gives his views about the Nawab. When Edwardes visited Bahawalpur in 1848, the chief of Nutkani tribe<sup>12</sup> was an old man named Asad Khan. Nawab Bahawal III fought a skirmish with Kora Khan, the head of Dera Ghazi Khan a sister of Asad Khan got married with

the nawab. At the end, Kora Khan was defeated and he also gave his daughter in marriage to Nawab Bahawal Khan III.<sup>13</sup>

Edwardes says that Nawab Bahawal Khan III was a worthy ally and one of the firmest friends of British Government. He adds that though the services of the army of the nawab were hesitant, yet he helped the British militaries with total army belongings.<sup>14</sup> Edwardes writes in the footnote of the book that the people of Daudpotra gave much honor to their chief and called him Khan. They would call the name of their Khan every evening in one voice even in battlefield.<sup>15</sup>

Henry Edward Fane (b. 5 September 1817-d. 27 December 1868) visited Bahawalpur State from 15 December 1838 to 31 December 1838 in the time period of Nawab Bahawal Khan III. In his book *Five Years in India* published in 1842, he talked about Nawab Bahawal Khan III. Fane says Nawab Bahawal Khan III was very popular among his common people.<sup>16</sup> Fane says that he along with Sir Henry, the English representative, arranged a meeting with Nawab Bahawal Khan III on 30<sup>th</sup> December 1838 at Bahawalpur City. It was not a formal type of meeting. The nawab was sharing the good wishes and regards.<sup>17</sup>

Fane describes that after crossing some streets, they reached the main bazaar of Bahawalpur City and the palace of the nawab where he would reside when he would be in Bahawalpur City. They were to cross an arched entrance and enter into a small courtyard. After crossing the courtyard there were some steps. When Sir Henry reached near the foot of the steps, the nawab came forward to receive him. The Durbar of the nawab was very small and simple.<sup>18</sup> Major-General Sir Henry Havelock KCB (b. 5 April 1795-d. 24 November 1857) visited Bahawalpur State in 1838. He opined about this nawab in his book *Narrative of the War in Affghanistan in 1838-39* published in 1840.

Henry Havelock talks that the complexions of the nawab were extraordinarily dark. But his features and face were expressive of good sense and reasonable attitudes.<sup>19</sup> Havelock adds that when the nawab would present in the middle of his own city of Bahawalpur, he would be without formalities. He would become formal in protocol in his Durbar or out of the city. He was a kind mannered and loving person for his subject.<sup>20</sup> Havelock writes that they were

surprised with the characters of the most of the rulers of minor States of India and Nawab Bahawal Khan III was one of those. He further adds that the nawab was a great hunter. He was a mechanical minded person and watchmaking was the most prominent in that field under his supervision.<sup>21</sup>

Henry Havelock describes that when the Bengal Army entered Bahawalpur City on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1838, the nawab sent his son to say welcome to Sir Henry Fane cordially. The prince offered a *nazar* of 499 rupees at the appearance of General Fane. This was a manifestation of love, respect and attention for Sir Fane.<sup>22</sup> Even when they were in the areas of Ahmadpur and Khanpur, the blessings of the nawab remained continued for them. There was abundance of supply of the necessary items in these areas. The temper and the behavior of the administration of Nawab Bahawal Khan was very welcoming. He ordered Musa Khan, the Governor of Khanpur to take care of the British convoy. Musa Khan gave them very much honor.<sup>23</sup>

Havelock says that a grand *Durbar* was arranged in Bahawalpur City for meeting with Sir Henry Fane on the morning of 30<sup>th</sup> December 1838. The nawab came to the Durbar tent of the Commander-in-Chief Sir Henry Fane. The discussion was held in Hindustani language by Lieutenant Mackeson as translator. Havelock and Fane returned the visit to the palace of the nawab in Bahawalpur City on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1838. The palace was low with a narrow enclosure. The gifts were presented to them which included *lungi* and *khais* which were manufactured in Multan and Bahawalpur State. He gave smart and sturdy horses one for General Willoughby and one for General Fane. He gave a hawk for their junior.<sup>24</sup>

Captain Leopold Von Orlich (b. 30 June 1804-d. 2 June 1860), a German soldier, visited Bahawalpur State from 17<sup>th</sup> October 1842 to Tuesday, 8<sup>th</sup> November 1842 and he also met Nawab Bahawal Khan III. He gave opinion about Nawab Bahawal Khan III in his book *Travels in India, including Sindh and the Punjab* translated by H. Evans Lloyd and published in 1845.

Orlich told that Nawab Bahawal Khan III commanded his peoples to give gorgeous decorum and protection to Von Orlich's companions with 6 horsemen. The people over there provided them birds' meat, eggs, milk and butter.<sup>25</sup>

Orlich says that they visited the nawab's country-seat in Khanpur on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1842 in the afternoon. This site was made for the purpose of the Nawab's refreshments, hunting, chasing the animals coming into the neighboring jungles and to hear the petitions and complaints of the common people. It was a small brick building having two stories and a verandah. They were to see just the outer sight of the building. The British convoy was not allowed to go inside the building because a beloved lady of the nawab was present there behind the curtains. There were beautiful flowery lawns in the garden with the plants of banana, figs and oranges.<sup>26</sup>

Orlich states that when they were reaching Channi Goth, the prince of Bahawalpur State had sent 25 horsemen to receive them. When they reached in their camp, 10 dishes of confectionary, the dishes of sheep, roosters, eggs and milk were offered by the nawab from his *Harram*. The nawab had expressed his desire that Orlich should consider him as the guest of Nawab.<sup>27</sup> Orlich expresses that the Nawab had sent Musa Khan to receive Orlich's convoy. The Nawab parceled 5 bottles of rosewater, 20 large dishes of confectionary, goats, sheep and fowls. Musa Khan invited Orlich on behalf of the nawab to visit of the nawab's house in the desert. Orlich accepted this invitation.<sup>28</sup>

Orlich articulates that he received a message on 24 October 1842, from a *Munshi* of the nawab that two of the nawab's carriages would be waiting for him to take them to his palace at Ahmadpur East. At the stipulated time, Musa Khan came along with 30 horsemen and the carriages. On the way they crossed the stabling of camels for the use of the nawab.<sup>29</sup> The Orlich went to see the nawab, when he was sitting in the center of the verandah on a pure white silken carpet. Large cushions were present there on the carpet. The nawab was surrounded by more than 200 chiefs and officers in semicircle. Their charming dresses, various groupings and different arms showed Orlich the scene of the Arabian Nights. The swords, guns and pistols of the nawab were placed in front of him. During their stay at the court, a servant remained present with a large fan to cool them. At their arrival, the nawab stood up, hugged them, shook hands and requested them to sit beside him. The chat was about the travel of Orlich, its object and about England. The nawab

talked more about chase and less on politics. Orlich tried to take leave but the nawab elongated the meeting for one and half hour.<sup>30</sup>

On the return from the nawab's palace of Ahmadpur Orlich received a horse as gift by the nawab having red painted tail and feet, a bridle and saddle expensively decorated with silver. But Orlich refused to accept this beautiful gift.<sup>31</sup> Orlich narrates that the nawab was a tall and handsome man between 40 to 50 years. He had large dark eyes which were faint and relaxed. He had a long, dark brown silky beard. His hair were partially curly and were falling on his shoulders. He was wearing white Muslim dress trimmed with golden lace. He was wearing wide silky pantaloons and wrapping rose colored turban, only a few rings and necklace of large pearls which were fastened by a diamond hook. He had a handsome knife in his red silky muffler.<sup>32</sup> His jewelry was except this which had great financial value. Orlich says that though the nawab would remain busy in hunting, yet he would give an ample time to the matters of governance so he exercised reasonable power on his subjects, and the people of his State. With reference to these qualities, Orlich considers him the one of the best prince of Princely India<sup>33</sup> Lieutenant A. H. E. Boileau came to Bahawalpur in 1835 in the time of the nawab Bahawal Khan III. He told about the characteristics of Bahawal III in his book *A Personal Narrative of a Tour through Western States of Rajwara*, in 1835 published in 1837.

He says that on the evening of 8<sup>th</sup> April 1835, he along with Lieutenant Mackeson met the Khan at Khanpur for first time. The nawab met them warmly and politely. Although he was ill still he held a full *Durbar*. The presence of the nawab was nice-looking. His etiquettes were appealing. He was much more decorous than his nearby Hindu Rajas. He was splendidly dressed with strings of fine pearls. He had very large emeralds on his head, very large emeralds round his neck and an armlet (*bazoo bund*) with an enormous golden emerald. The nawab had a very costly rosary of emerald beads. His shield and gun, engraved with gold and open litter having silver-covered poles.

Next meeting was at the occasion of *Eid-ul-Azha* for Muslims. A large crowd was gathered in the *eidgah*. The people were eager to see the nawab with great

respect. As the nawab was going ahead, he was dividing charities amongst the poor. Macpherson, an European had been serving the Bahawalpur State for many years. He was deputed to supervise the discipline of the regulars. When Boileau reached the hall, the nawab stood up to receive them. He accommodated Mackeson and Boileau very close to him.<sup>34</sup>

Boileau expresses his pleasure about the renewal of his meeting with the Khan. Boileau arrived at Ahmadpur City on 21<sup>st</sup> of April, 1835. The nawab had generously provided them a native four wheeled carriage drawn by 2 horses for the purpose of their visiting to the nawab in Dera. They were to return in those local carriages. Since the nawab would use his more time in Ahmadpur City, so his palaces here were of more permanent quality. He says that at Dera he was very much attracted by the nawab.<sup>35</sup>

The Boileau says that he visited the nawab on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1835 for his final visit. The exchange of gifts took place in the manner of exchanging souvenirs in Europe. The officers from the court of the nawab took a packet of embroidered and some other beautiful things as a gift for Lieutenant Trevelyan over to Jaisalmer. The nawab gave Boileau his pet rifle for a symbol of his good-will gesture.<sup>36</sup>

The Boileau tells that there stood a dispute between Bahawalpur State and Jaisalmer State in March 1835. A committee of five Jaisalmer State officers was made by Raja Rawal of Jaisalmer State and a five members committee was deputed by Nawab of Bahawalpur for conciliation. Lieutenant Trevelyan was from Jaisalmer side and Lieutenant Mackeson was from Bahawalpur State. Mackeson and Trevelyan met at Mohangarh on 12<sup>th</sup> March 1835. After the dialogue, Bahawalpur State was determined guilty by the two parties. So Bahawal Khan would pay a ransom of 500 cows to Jaisalmer State. The nawab accepted this agreement open mindedly.<sup>37</sup>

The Boileau describes the hospitality, love and respect of the nawab even for his strangers. He utters that Mackeson was an envoy and very familiar to the nawab but Boileau was an uninvited guest. Even then Boileau was given an unexpected protocol from the nawab. Boileau was surprised when the Khan appointed an old Hindu Dewan, one of his respectable people as his *mahemandaar* of Boileau till Ahmadpur City for his guidance and protection.

The nawab directed the *mahemandaar* to accompany and provide the supply of camps and protection to the Boileau, wherever he wanted to visit the State. When Boileau's party was at Khanpur, they were pitched within less than half a mile from the residence of the nawab. As long as they lived there, the nawab used to send a train of hot dishes for them from dawn to dusk. When Boileau was departing at Khanpur, the nawab gave him a bale of cloth as a gift for a sense of good will. When they were in Ahmadpur, they pitched their tent faraway from palace of the nawab so, the nawab established the kitchen in their neighborhood. A variety of food items was sent to them in the meal.<sup>38</sup>

Boileau noticed that the nawab was an open-minded person. He had no religious prejudice. As instance for this, he says that when the time of the prayer would come, the nawab would just give a gentle hint to go for the prayers without regard of their presence. There were the Muslims, the Hindus and the Jews in his court at the same time. He would behave with the same politeness to all the persons having different religions. There a floor-cloth was spread under the protected edge of his house. The sky would his shelter. In this way he would talk with Boileau and his companions for long. During this time, all his *sardars* would bend in two rows along the margins of the carpet. It would seem a lane. Two or three of his closest attendants would sit in front of him with their faces turned towards the nawab.<sup>39</sup>

Boileau says that the nawab was a huntsman. So, he had many dogs of a very genre brought from Sindh having big in size and height. He also had hawks, which were flown of the cranes in winter season. The nawab had a few high-bred horses for hunting because the low lands of Sindh were not apt for camels. Nawab Bahawal Khan III would mostly hunt deer, hogs and *Neelgai*.<sup>40</sup>

### **Conclusion**

All travelers who visited Bahawalpur State during Nawab Bahawal Khan III's reign expressed gratitude towards him and praised his religious tolerance, noting that he was open-minded and accommodated all religious communities. Although the travelers were all Christians, the nawab welcomed them warmly, offering them hospitality and the finest gifts of his region. His religious tolerance serves as an exemplary model even in modern times. This

tradition of welcoming and providing hospitality to guests of all kinds was a hallmark of Bahawalpur State.

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- <sup>3</sup> Arthur Conolly, *Journey to North of India, Overland from England through Russia, Persia and Affghaunistaun*, Vol. II (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), 283.
- <sup>4</sup> Conolly, *Journey to North of India*, Vol. II, 283-4
- <sup>5</sup> Charles Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Punjab & Kalat during a Residence in those Countries. To which is Added An Account of the Insurrection at Kalat, and a Memoir on Eastern Balochistan*, Vol. I, (London: Richard Bentley, 1844), 13.
- <sup>6</sup> Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan*, 14-6.
- <sup>7</sup> Masson, *Narrative of Various Journeys in Balochistan*, 27-8.
- <sup>8</sup> Sir Alexander Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara; being the Account of a Journey from India to Cabool, Tartary, Persia: also, a Narrative of a Voyage on the Indus from the Sea to Lahore with Presents from the King of Great Britain: Performed under the Orders of the Supreme Government of India in the Years 1831, 1832, 1833*, (London: John Murray, 1834), 93-4. 96-7 & 293.
- <sup>9</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara; also Voyage on the Indus*, 92.
- <sup>10</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara; also Voyage on the Indus*, 92-3.
- <sup>11</sup> Burnes, *Travels into Bokhara; also Voyage on the Indus*, 96-7.
- <sup>12</sup> Herbert Benjamin Edwardes gives a reference in his book *A Year on the Punjab Frontier in 1948-49* Volume II on page number 5 that during the reign of Delhi Sultanate, a Nutkani woman nurtured a boy in the *Harram* of a king. As a reward, the king gave her land in Sanghar and here the Nutkani tribe settled as the owner of the area.
- <sup>13</sup> Herbert Benjamin Edwardes, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier in 1848-49*. (London: Richards Bentley, 1851), Vol. II, 5 & 250.
- <sup>14</sup> H. B. Edwardes, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, Vol. I, Preface x & Vol. II, 730.
- <sup>15</sup> H. B. Edwardes, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier*, Vol. II, 384-5.
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- <sup>17</sup> Fane, *Five Years in India*, Vol. II, 20-21.
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- <sup>21</sup> Henry Havelock, *Narrative of the War in Affghanistan*, Vol. I, 107-8.
- <sup>22</sup> Henry Havelock, *Narrative of the War in Affghanistan*, Vol. I, 107.
- <sup>23</sup> Henry Havelock, *Narrative of the War in Affghanistan*, Vol. I, 112.
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- <sup>25</sup> Captain Leopold Von Orlich, *Travels in India, including Sindh and the Punjab*. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1845), 133.
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- <sup>27</sup> Orlich, *Travels in India*, 137-8.
- <sup>28</sup> Orlich, *Travels in India*, 138-40.
- <sup>29</sup> Orlich, *Travels in India*, 140 & 142.
- <sup>30</sup> Orlich, *Travels in India*, 143-4.
- <sup>31</sup> Orlich, *Travels in India*, 145.
- <sup>32</sup> Orlich, *Travels in India*, 143-4.
- <sup>33</sup> Orlich, *Travels in India*, 146-7.
- <sup>34</sup> A. H. E. Boileau, *Personal Narrative of a Tour Through the Western States of Rajwara, in 1835: Comprising Beekaner, Jesulmer, and Jodhpur, with the Passage of the Great Desert, and A Brief Visit to the Indus and to Buhawulpoor, Accompanied by Various Tables and Memoranda Statistical, Philological, and Geographical*. (Calcutta: N. Grant Tank Square, 1837), 53-4.
- <sup>35</sup> Boileau, *Personal Narrative*, 64.
- <sup>36</sup> Boileau, *Personal Narrative*, 67.
- <sup>37</sup> Boileau, *Personal Narrative*, 33-6.
- <sup>38</sup> Boileau, *Personal Narrative*, 55, 65, 67.
- <sup>39</sup> Boileau, *Personal Narrative*, 64-5.
- <sup>40</sup> Boileau, *Personal Narrative*, 74.