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WOMEN TRAVEL WRITING AND THE IMPERIAL ARCHIVE: A CASE STUDY OF ISABELLA LUCY BIRD'S *THE GOLDEN CHERSONESE AND THE WAY THITHER* (1883)[1]

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ABSTRACT: The present essay studies Isabella Lucy Bird's contribution to disseminating knowledge about the Malay Peninsula in *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* (1883). Borrowing concepts from Thomas Richards (1993) and Bernard S. Cohn (1996), it analyzes how Bird negotiates her place in the British "imperial archive." As a woman travel writer, she sets herself as a learned authority on the Malay Peninsula. Therefore, her text is replete with knowledge about the Peninsula and contributes to Britain's "knowledge-producing institutions" of Empire, to borrow Richard's words. The knowledge she transmits corresponds to the "investigative modalities" elaborated by Cohn. Bird provides a historical and political account of the states of the region that are either under British rule or worthy of annexation to it. She accounts for the geography, climate and natural environment of these states. She also disseminates knowledge about population diversity in the Peninsula and emphasizes dominant groups like the Malays. Through these, Bird also revises misconceptions about the region. In sum, Bird uses the Peninsula to contribute to the British "imperial archive" and to attract proper attention to it from British travelers, scholars and investors.

Keywords: Bird, anthropology, ethnography, geography, history, imperial archive, travel writing.

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[1] I would like to acknowledge that this article is the improved and extended version of my presentation at the 69th Annual Convention of the *Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association* in the panel "Victorian Travelers: Women Writing Boundaries" in Santa Fe (NM, USA) in October 8-10, 2015. Its title was the same as this article's title.

LA ESCRITURA DE VIAJES DE MUJERES Y EL ARCHIVO IMPERIAL: UN ESTUDIO DE "THE GOLDEN CHERSONESE AND THE WAY THITHER" (1883)

RESUMEN. El presente ensayo estudia la contribución de Isabella Lucy Bird a la diseminación de conocimiento sobre la Península Malaya en la obra *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* (1883). Usando conceptos propuestos por Thomas Richards (1993) y por Bernard S. Cohn (1996), el artículo analiza cómo Bird negocia su espacio en el "archivo imperial" Británico. Como mujer escritora de viajes, se propone a sí misma como una autoridad instruida con respecto a la Península Malaya. De esta forma, su texto está repleto de conocimientos sobre la Península y contribuye a las "instituciones británicas generadoras de conocimiento sobre el Imperio", tomando las palabras de Richard. El tipo de información que transmite la autora corresponde a las "modalidades investigadoras" que elaboró Cohn en su estudio. Bird proporciona una crónica política e histórica de los estados de la región que están bajo mandato británico o que son considerados como merecedores de anexión. La autora da cuentas de la geografía, clima y entorno natural de estos estados y también transmite conocimiento sobre la diversidad de la población de la Península, poniendo el foco en algunos grupos dominantes como los Malayos. A través de este grupo, Bird analiza ideas erróneas sobre la región. En resumen, Bird utiliza a la Península para aportar información adicional a este archivo imperial y para conseguir una atención más informada por parte de los viajeros, eruditos e inversores británicos.

Palabras clave: Bird, antropología, etnografía, geografía, historia, archivo imperial, literatura de viajes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (1993), Thomas Richards contends that the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a resurgence of interest in knowledge production and classification of colonial spaces. It was carried out in the framework of "knowledge-producing institutions like the British Museum, the Royal Geographical Society, the India Survey, and the universities" (Richards 4). According to him, key authors in the literature of Empire were also interested in contributing to what he calls "imperial archive" (6). Richards focuses on fictional texts like Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901). However, certain types of non-fictional texts also deserve their place in "knowledge producing" literature. For instance, some travelogues are part of the literature that contributes to the "imperial archive." They flourished particularly throughout the nineteenth century, and they were appropriate purveyors of knowledge about the spaces visited. Among famous travel writers, there is Isabella Lucy Bird (1831-1904). In the second half of the nineteenth century, she traveled throughout the world to fuel her writings with fresh experiences and ideas. Asia constitutes one of her destinations on which she wrote her accounts. Among these, *The Golden Chersonese*

and the Way Thither (1883) is an interesting example given the manner through which Bird locates herself in relation to the Malay Peninsula and the existing knowledge about it in "knowledge-producing institutions" like the Royal Geographical Society.[2] The timing of its publication presupposes that Bird was intent on integrating herself into this society in her effort to disseminate knowledge about the Peninsula. She knows that it is a male-restricted club. Therefore, to become a member she needs to circulate worthwhile knowledge about this lesser known region. After its publication, Bird was integrated into it,[3] following a long and controversial debate among its fellows. These were men who were reluctant to let women join their club, but they eventually accepted it because Bird, among other women, proved to be worthy of being considered for fellowship.

Bird's travelogues on East Asia have been subjected to a variety of critical studies. For example, Klaus Dittrich in "'The Western Leaven Has Fallen'– the British Lady Traveller Isabella Bird as a Thinker on Globalization in East Asia" (2013) studies Bird's writings on East Asia in the context of globalization. He associates them with "observations and ideas" that are "fundamentally related to phenomena of global interconnectedness" (23). Dittrich connects globalization with imperialism, and for him Bird considers the extent to which globalization transformed the countries of East Asia which she visited under the tutelage of the British Empire. For the critic, Bird reproduces some Orientalist tropes about East Asia, but Dittrich also recognizes Bird's "fascination" with Asian countries. For him, Bird is interested in the phenomenon of "cultural transfer" pertaining to East Asian rulers' recourse to European cultural models to develop their own countries. From this perspective, Bird emphasizes their reference to British models. Even if Dittrich examines Bird's stance on globalization in her travelogues, his reference to globalization's connection to imperialism is an interesting starting point for studying Bird's position as a travel writer in the context of British imperialism and the quest for knowledge at its service.

Another critic of Bird's travel accounts is Sharifah Aishah Osman. In "Letitia E. Landon and Isabella Bird: Female Perspectives of Asia in the Victorian Text" (2015), she draws on two Victorian authors and their writings about Asia to study their female gaze on the regions they visit. One of them is Isabella Bird, and Osman regards her as an "intrepid adventurer with a real interest in the places she visited and the peoples and cultures she observed" (Osman 86). She analyses Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*, where she identifies "unstable textual moments" (93) in Bird's attitude to gender issues and their relation to travel and travel writing. According to Osman, Bird's text is filled with "self-[assertive]" (94)

[2] For Richards, the Royal Geographical Society was among the "knowledge-producing institutions" on which the "administrative core of the Empire was built" (3).

[3] Bird's integration into the society came in two phases. She first contributed to founding the Scottish Royal Geographical Society in 1884. According to Bell and McEwan, the "writer and traveller, Isabella Bird Bishop, had been a founder member and was awarded an Honorary Fellowship in 1890" (296). Then, she and fourteen other women were nominated to fellowship in the London based Society in 1892 thanks to their contributions to "the stock of geographical knowledge" (RGS's *Proceedings* qtd in Bell and McEwan 296).

tropes, but it is also characterized by her use of the company of "reputable men" (96) to achieve visibility in high circles. Osman's reference to Bird's quest for recognition and visibility in the company of popular men provides an insightful beginning to studying her in the light of the British imperial tradition and its knowledge and power dynamics. Her participation in this dynamic provides a provisional source of recognition and visibility for her.

Another article that examines aspects of Bird's interest in the Malay Peninsula is authored by Nurhanis Sahiddan in "Approaches to Travel Writing in Isabella L. Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*" (2012). Sahiddan uncovers the diverse approaches to travel writing that prevail in Bird's text. First, using Robinson and Andersen's *Literature and Tourism: Essays in the Reading and Writing of Tourism*, she deals with Bird's text as a reflection of the relationship between "Tourism, Landscape and Spaces" (Sahiddan 164). Next, drawing on Tim Young's "Filling the Blank Spaces," Sahiddan analyses how the region constitutes an interesting space for exploration and exploitation of its "commercial potential" (165). Finally, Sahiddan deals with ethnography as another approach to travel writing that prevails in Bird's text. Using Joan Pau Rubies's "Ethnography and the Genres of Travel Writing," the critic deals with how Bird uses ethnography in her description of people in Singapore and the Malay Peninsula. Likewise, in "British Travellers' Perspective on the People of the Malay Peninsula in the 19th Century" (2024), Ahmed Cagri Inan, Sivachandralingam Sundara Raja and Noraini Mohamed Hassan deal with three travelogues to examine the extent to which travel writings can be viewed as "valuable historical texts" (Inan et. al. 12). Using Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*, among others, they show that despite their informative role the texts cannot always be relied upon due to contradictions and a lack of accuracy or transparency in them. They illustrate this point with Bird's contradictory and judgmental statements on the people of Malaya. Certain ideas in Sahiddan's article's sections as well as Inan et. al.'s reference to the place of Bird's text within historical discourse can be seen as precedents to the study of Bird's travelogue in relation to knowledge production and Empire. Nonetheless, Sahiddan overlooks this idea and focuses on other aspects while Inan et. al. question its reliability as a pure source of knowledge. Therefore, further research would only do justice to Bird's effort to take part in the British "imperial archive."

With reference to the writings of two British women on Malaya, Christine Doran in "Golden Marvels and Gilded Monsters: Two Women's Accounts of Colonial Malaya" (1998) studies the extent to which travel writers like Isabella Bird support the British Empire. Doran argues that Bird celebrates British rule in Malaya. According to Bird, the moral premises of British rule legitimate it in the eyes of colonized people. Bird also glorifies it by contrasting it with the previous European rulers of the region, namely Portugal and the Netherlands. Nonetheless, Bird does not disguise her "uncertainty" about continuous "imperial supremacy" (Doran 179). She expresses her anxiety about colonized people's unpredictable reactions like the Malay practice of "*amok,* mutiny, revenge and murder" (179). For Doran, Bird's "sense of unease was at its most extreme in situations where her gender was

foregrounded" (181). Using the travel writings of three travelers, Maria Noelle Ng in "Cultural Habits: the Travel Writing of Isabella Bird, Max Dauthendey and Ai Wu, 1850 - 1930" (1995) analyzes how travel writers construct their views of foreigners and their cultural habits along with the circumstances that foster their views. Regarding Bird, she focuses on her colonialist representations of Asians. These are shaped by her Scottish and evangelical background, her ties to British officials in colonial Malaya as well as the impact of the Crystal Palace's imperial exhibitions on her. She notes that Bird treated the Malays as "dependent subjects, with the indulgence reserved for ignorant children" (Noelle Ng 26). According to Noelle Ng, Bird also classifies "the Malays, Chinese and others into separate groups of people--unredeemed, unenlightened, superstitious […who] become targets of the evangelical civilizing project" (64). Both Doran and Noelle Ng make reference, each in her manner, to Bird's interest in imperial issues, but they do not relate her text to the knowledge/ Empire nexus.

As an account of her travels in the Golden Chersonese—consisting in the states of the Malay Peninsula—Bird's *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither* is interested in knowledge production and dissemination about the Malay Peninsula. In the following essay, I intend to examine how Bird contributes to the British "imperial archive" (Richards 6) and assumes an active role in the service of Britain's knowledge production and classification about its colonies. Therefore, I plan to borrow concepts from Thomas Richards (1993) and Bernard S. Cohn (1996) and connect them comprehensively to study how Bird negotiates her place in her travelogue as a woman in the British "imperial archive." She sets herself as a learned authority on the Malay Peninsula, a region whose states are either under direct British rule, under its protection or are, according to her, worthy of annexation to it. She fills her text with knowledge in the framework of Empire's "investigative modalities" (Cohn 5). She provides historical and political information on the states of the region and Britain's encroachment in them. She accounts for their geography, climate and natural resources. She also disseminates knowledge about the Peninsula's population diversity and expands on dominant groups like the Malays. In this manner, Bird negotiates her place in aspects of the work of Britain's "knowledge-producing institutions," including the Royal Geographical Society. Bird also takes the side of British imperial rule at the end of the century debate about its legitimacy or utility by emphasizing its profitability and efficiency.

Richards defines the "imperial archive" as "a fantasy of knowledge collected and united in the service of state and Empire. Though a literary fantasy, it was shared widely and actually had an impact on policy making" (Richards 6). One of its core principles is "classification" of knowledge which was mostly disseminated by male writers on the colonial space of the British Empire. Accordingly, knowledge came through "taxonomies; by century's end 'classified' had come to mean knowledge placed under the special jurisdiction of the state" (6). Classification deals with knowledge from different domains relevant in a colonial context, but it is "united" as an "archive" for the benefit of Empire. According to Richards, the "security apparatus" of the late-Victorian imperial service was "recruiting its personnel and

deriving its technologies of surveillance from the geographical, demographic, and ethnographic practices devised by the various learned societies to produce and classify comprehensive knowledge about the Empire" (Richards 15). Richards refers to three major disciplines: geography, demography and ethnography. He does not, however, refer to history, which equally played a significant role. Cohn includes it in the disciplines that served the Empire. Its practice is carried out in the framework of the "historiographic modality" (Cohn 5) which is an "investigative" modality of the colonial system— "investigative modalities"[4] aimed at collecting knowledge for the sake of imperial hegemony. Dealing with another colonial setting, Cohn claims that "knowledge of the history and practices of Indian states was seen as the most valuable form of knowledge on which to build the colonial state" (5). He identifies "historiographic strand[s]" as part of this modality, and one of them is "histories of the British" (6) in their colonies. The role of travel writing in the knowledge/ Empire nexus prompts Russel McDougall and Peter Hulme to evoke the "connections between the Empire, ethnography and travel writing" (McDougall and Hulme 6). In their introduction to *Writing, Culture and Travel*, they view the travel writer as one of the "three particular disciplinary 'edges' to anthropology", the other two being the "missionary […and] colonial officer" (4). The writings of each of them contributed to the advent of modern anthropology and ethnography.

2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BIRD'S CONTRIBUTION AND HER METHODOLOGY

To effectively contribute to the British imperial archive, Bird identifies the Golden Chersonese as her region of focus. For her, it deserves more attention from British scholars, travelers and investors because it is less known than it should be. Bird opens her narrative with identifying an existing "gap in knowledge" (Clifford 18) about the region. To corroborate this idea, she reviews and evaluates previous mentions of it in literary, historical or geographical texts. For Bird, even if the region is called the "Golden Chersonese" by John Milton, the "*Aurea Chersonesus*" by Ptolemy and the "Malay Peninsula" by her contemporaries, it "has no legitimate claim to an ancient history" (Bird 1). She regards Pliny's allusion to the Malacca Straits as "too vague to be interesting" (1). Bird's criticism of Milton's, Ptolemy's and Pliny's references to the area is meant to prepare the ground for her contribution to existing knowledge about it.[5] Then, she highlights the lack of attention to it from her contemporaries. This impedes its profitability for the British economy or the

[4] According to Cohn, "investigative modalities" were part of "the colonial project" (5); they were "devised by the British to collect the facts" (5). Some of them "are quite general, such as historiography and museology" while others are "more highly defined and clearly related to administrative questions" (5).

[5] Bird places herself among famous Western scholars of previous centuries, namely the British John Milton, the Roman Pliny the Elder and the Roman-Egyptian Ptolemy. Milton was a poet and historian of the 17th century; Pliny the Elder was a naturalist of the first century; Ptolemy was a geographer of the second century. In her text, Bird prolifically assumes the survey tasks assumed by these intellectuals and expands the existing repertoire of knowledge on the Malay Peninsula.

expansion of Britain's power in the region. Due to this deficit, the region is "still somewhat of a *terra incognita*" (Bird 1).[6] It is not properly known to the British public, so Bird devotes the attention it deserves to it. She concentrates on it and avoids emphasizing neighboring regions of the Golden Chersonese—which she visited —but are not *terra incognita*.[7] She accounts for the states of the Malay Peninsula, three of which are British "protectorates" while several others remain exclusively native-ruled. According to Bird, these are more important for further British settlement and economic development.

Concentrating on these states is Bird's way of "filling […the] gap" (Clifford 18) in existing knowledge. She states that her aim is to "make a popular contribution to the sum of knowledge of a beautiful and little-travelled region, with which the majority of educated people are so little acquainted that it is constantly confounded with the Malay Archipelago" (Bird vi). The area of the Golden Chersonese involves Sungei Ujong, Sĕlângor, Pêrak and multiple other native-ruled states. Bird claims that the region "is probably destined to afford increasing employment to British capital and enterprise" (viii). Since she traveled there "under official auspices" (viii), she feels indebted to produce and classify knowledge about the area to make it more profitable. The knowledge she transmits would serve as an incentive for attracting more British settlement or investment and reinforcing the Empire. Her contribution to the archive is part of the overlapping fields of history, economic expertise, geography and anthropology/ ethnography. To make her observations, she needs to communicate with local people. For this purpose, she uses interpreters. For example, with the Chinese population of the region, she refers to "a Chinese interpreter who speaks six Chinese dialects, and a Malay interpreter who puts the Chinese interpreter's words into English" (192). She uses the second interpreter for her communication with the Malays. Moreover, to interact with women she refers to a "female interpreter" when male ones are not allowed like the time she visits a Sultan's harem (233).[8]

Bird's recourse to interpreters helps her to adopt ethnographic methodology pertaining to "participating overtly or covertly in people's daily lives […], watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions in fact, collecting" information (Aziz 5). This is called "participant-observation" (Clifford 13). In her

[6] The phrase "*terra incognita*" was first used in reference to the Malay Peninsula by Frank Swettenham in 1874 in his sketch "James Wheeler Woodford Birch" (Hampson, 152). Arguably, Bird places herself directly in relation to Swettenham by stating that more knowledge is "sill" needed.

[7] For example, she visited Singapore when she was in the Peninsula. For her, it is not "*terra incognita"* because it is a cosmopolitan city inhabited by British officials and the "merchant class, English, German, French, American" (Bird 110). As such, it is known enough not to "care to go into much detail about so well-known a city" (109).

[8] The harem is the "women's house" (Bird 230). According to Reina Lewis it is "a segregated space […] from which all men except the husband (generally conceptualized as the Sultan) and his enuchs are barred" (Lewis 111). As a woman, Bird is allowed into it accompanied by Mrs. Ferney, the interpreter, and the Sultan's son.

travelogue, the outcome of her observations is delivered using a known practice in modern ethnographic research which is "combining personal narrative and objectified description" (Pratt 33). According to Mary Louise Pratt, the practice takes it origin from travel accounts which conventionally combined "first-person narration, recounting one's trip, and description of the flora and fauna of regions passed through and the manners and customs of the inhabitants. These two discourses were quite clearly distinguished in travel books, narrative predominating over description" (Pratt 33). Pratt adds: "the narration-description duality has remained remarkably stable in travel writing right down to the present" (Pratt 35). Bird applies this "duality" by organizing her text into descriptive parts and personal narratives of her immersion in the region and among its people. The text opens with a descriptive introduction where a general account of the Golden Chersonese is given. Then, after descriptive and personal parts devoted to areas outside the Peninsula which she visited earlier in her trip, she moves to the Peninsula's individual states. She proceeds in a similar manner. She starts with an introductory and descriptive chapter on each state followed by her personal narratives in the form of letters to her sister Henrietta.[9] Bonny Tan claims that "[d]etails accompany Bird's descriptions […which are] always informing and giving flesh to a general impression" (Tan 29). Most of her personal narratives of her encounter with local people, including Malay dignitaries and British officials, show how she manages to make her observations about the region, its people and their attitudes towards British rule. She is allowed into high circles of authority, both imperial and local, as well as domestic spaces like the Sultan of Sĕlângor's harem. She also visits remote communities like the Koto-lamah in Pêrak. Thanks to this, she determines her opinion on the maintenance of imperial rule in the region. She also witnesses firsthand the condition of local women like "seclusion" for Chinese women.

Along with the organization of Bird's text, its style is, according to Patricia Ann Tilley, characterized by a "positive stance, greater finesse and more literary expression" meant to inform "her public about a country" that is important to British interests (Tilley 240). Besides, she recurrently uses expressions that denote the relevance of more knowledge due to the prevalence of false ideas about the Peninsula, or lack thereof. On several occasions, she uses expressions similar to the following: "half of it being actually so little known" (Bird vii), "is not accurately known" (2), "is not very well-known" (5) "is not … many people suppose" (6). These underscore the limits of existing knowledge about the Golden Chersonese and the utility of further informative accounts.

[9] Bonny Tan claims that it was "Henrietta who had suggested titling Bird's Malayan travels *The Golden Chersonese,* based on her knowledge of Ptolemaic history and its mention in Milton's poems" (28).

3. HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL KNOWLEDGE

Once Bird advocates for the need to disseminate knowledge about the Golden Chersonese, she begins her contribution to it by providing a historical survey of European connections to it. She contends that the Peninsula was rediscovered by the Portuguese around 1513 and was introduced into Western history when Europe was still engaged in its Crusades against the Muslim world (Bird 2). During this episode, the Portuguese subdued Malacca. In the nineteenth century, this interest became more economic since the British and the Dutch projected their mercantile aspirations for expansion onto it. Bird's historical account corresponds to the objectives of the "historiographic modality" of Empire according to which "knowledge of the history and practices of" overseas territories (Cohn 5) is essential. Knowledge of "previous regimes" is necessary for colonizers who "sought to incorporate, as much as possible, [their] administrative personnel" (Cohn 5). It is also important to know the different conquerors of the region, the extent to which the original inhabitants defended themselves or were easily submitted to their rule and the means pursued by the conqueror(s) to subdue them. For instance, Bird claims that Malacca was under "Portuguese and Dutch rule" (Bird 130) before the British took over the imperial lead in the area. Under the British, it turned into a region with "no politics [and] little crime" (130) thanks to "a uniform system of criminal law" (Winstedt 96) implemented by British magistrates. This kind of information is filled with missionary ideology since Bird legitimates British intervention by celebrating its work for stability and security. Doran claims that "Bird maintained a serene conviction about the merits and morality of British imperial rule […which] was necessary to enforce both security and Justice" (Bird 177).

According to Cohn, knowledge of the history of local administrative and judicial practices is "the most valuable form of knowledge on which to build the colonial state" (Cohn 5). Bird conforms to this aspect of historical surveying. She highlights administrative problems inherent to the native states of the Malay Peninsula in order to show their need for British administrative expertise. First, she asserts that the "existence of the various legal compilations has led to much controversy and even bloodshed between zealots for the letter of the Koran on one side, and the advocates of ancient custom on the other" (Bird 23). For her, the division of the legal system among two opposing parties puts people in jeopardy and prompts them to look for protection under British law (23). Second, Bird points out the flaws in their system of government which is fostered by "absolute despotisms" (25). She contends that Malay despots encouraged "slavery and debt bondage" (25). Despots "had only to send a messenger bearing a sword or *kris* to a house, and the parents were obliged to give up any one of their children without delay or question" (25). In this regard, slavery needs to be dealt with by the British, who had already managed to abolish it in Malacca.

As stated by Cohn, a "strand" of the "historiographic modality" of the colonial project involves "histories of the British" (Cohn 6) in their colonies. Bird adheres to this aspect when she accounts for British indirect interference in its "protected" states of Sungei Ujong, Sĕlângor and Pêrak. Concerning Selângor, she states: "The history

of the way in which we gained a footing in Sĕlângor is a tangled one" (Bird 212). She points out that British protection of Sĕlângor was implemented following the invitation of its Sultan Tunku Tia Udin, and its primary purpose was to settle "new disturbances and alleged piracies" (212). It was in 1875 that the first British Resident[10] was appointed as protector of the state. He was Mr. Davidson, and he

> had an intimate knowledge of the Malays, as well as a wise consideration for them; he had a calm temper and much good sense, and is held in honourable remembrance, not only for official efficiency but for having gained the sincere regard of the people of Selângor. His legal training and high reputation in the colonial courts were of great value in the settlement of the many difficult questions which arose during his brief administration (213).

Mr. Davidson's knowledge of the Malays and his devotion to his mission encapsulates the role of knowledge about colonized people in administrative efficiency. However, using the state of Pêrak, Bird recognizes that indirect British rule has not always been without problems since a former British Resident of Pêrak was assassinated, leading the British to wage a short war against it to restore peace. Bird claims that Pêrak "became notorious in England a few years ago for a 'little war,' in which we inflicted a very heavy chastisement on the Malays for the assassination of Mr. Birch, the British Resident" (215). The incident of Pêrak reveals that knowing the "natives" and respecting their "feudal" traditions contributes to keeping indirect British rule in place and avoiding similar incidents. Mr. Birch was assassinated for "interfer[ring] with religion and custom" and depriving local rulers "of feudal dues" (Winstedt 67). It also underscores the importance of knowing how to deal with belligerent and non-belligerent 'natives', using coercion with the former and "good sense," "calm temper" as well as wisdom with the latter. As the Resident of Sĕlângor in 1875, Mr. Davidson was known for these qualities. After Mr. Birch's assassination, he became acting Resident of Pêrak to restore trust in British rule in the state.

To place herself in the debate on the British Empire's utility or legitimacy, Bird examines colonized people's attitudes towards it and British officials' work in its name. According to her, most British officials are efficient and useful in their mission in the Peninsula. For example, she emphasizes their success in prohibiting slavery in territories under their tutelage. It is abolished in Malacca (Bird 133), and Sĕlângor's Sultan, acting "under British advice […,] very cordially agreed that the odious system of debt-slavery shall be dropped from among the institutions" of the state (233). Doran claims that promoting British rule's utility requires showing "the willing submission and contentment of the subject populations" (Doran 177). Thus, Bird points out local people's positive attitudes toward British interference. She affirms that most native rulers and their people are loyal to British rule. For her, "Malays

[10] In the British imperial system, indirect rule used the function of Resident "controlling a regional state through 'advice' given to the local prince or chief, became the norm for much of the Empire" (Fisher 393).

themselves are undoubtedly contented with British rule, and are prospering under it" (Bird 266). Besides, they "highly appreciate the manner in which law is administered under English rule" (Bird 140). From this perspective, Bird glorifies "Britain's imperial world role" (Matikkala 1).

Sĕlângor, Pêrak and Sungei Ujong are Britain's "Protected States" (Bird 154), and Malacca became a British-ruled colony. Britain does not, however, interfere in "unprotected Malay States" and the tribes of the inland. The unprotected states "with their independent rulers" include "Kedah, Patâna, Tringgânu, Kelatân, Pahang, Johore" and others (154). According to Bird, "In several of these states, more or less anarchy prevails, owing to the ambitions and jealousies of the Rajahs and their followers" (154). This anarchy can be unsettling for the ones already under British protection. For Bird, when Sĕlângor, Pêrak and Sungei Ujong were not yet British protectorates and underwent internal instability, they used to compromise British interests in its Straits Settlements. She claims that "a similar state of things in the three protected States formerly gave great annoyance to the Straits Settlements Government, and was regarded as a hindrance to the dominant interests of British trade in the Straits" (154). Now that they are no longer in internal turmoil, it is their turn to be threatened by the instability of the unprotected states. Therefore, Bird wants the British to learn from history and follow the path of how they gained control of Sĕlângor, Pêrak and Sungei Ujong and put the other ones under their protection.

Bird demonstrates that knowing the history of the region and how Britain "gained a footing" in it is crucial. Learning from past experiences contributes to maintaining British control in its protected states and eventually extending it to the unprotected ones. By emphasizing the extent to which British power is ingrained in the region, Bird conforms to the imperialist mindset of the end of the nineteenth century when British power in its colonies was highly considered among British imperialists. Bird also means to assure potential British citizens interested in investing their capital or settling in the region that it is safe or can be safeguarded. Safety and stability are prerequisites for implementing business or settling in overseas territories. From an economic standpoint, advocates of British imperial expansion argued that "the empire provided safe and exceptionally profitable outlets for British capital" (Matikkala 34).

4. GEOGRAPHICAL, CLIMACTIC AND NATURALIST KNOWLEDGE

In addition to Bird's historical note on the region, she includes geographical data about it. Richards regards geography as "unquestionably the queen of all imperial sciences [which] is inseparable from the domain of official and unofficial knowledge" (Richards 13). Forough Barani and Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya state:

> As a female, she [Bird] had no access to the academic training that could confer on her the appropriate status of 'scientist', yet she found that fieldwork, in the sense of exploration, was as open to her as to anyone with adequate resources. As the disciplines in general were professionalised, and particularly geography

> came to be strictly defined, women like Bird were removed from the newly-defined label of 'geographer' (Barani and Yahya 541-542).

To impose herself on this male-restricted discipline, Bird emphasizes the geography of the Malay Peninsula. She writes: "on the West side of the Peninsula, the native States of Kedah … Sĕlângor, and Sungei Ujong … are under British 'protection;' and on the East are Patâna, Kelantân, Tringgânu, and Pahang" (Bird 3). She claims that the interior "is scarcely at all known" and "contains towards its centre the Negri Sembilan" (3). Bird includes information about the total length of the Peninsula to show its significance for British expansion. Its "total length", she writes, "is eight hundred miles, and its breadth varies from sixty to one hundred and fifty miles" (4). Words like "West," "East," "centre," "miles," and "length" add momentum to Bird's geographical stance. Bird concludes with the extent to which the Peninsula needs more British exploratory attention because "there is a vast extent, more than half of the Malay Peninsula, unexplored" (5).

Bird's geographical note on the uncharted and less known parts of the Golden Chersonese is meant to attract British interest in the region. This geographical and cartographic knowledge is accompanied by an account of its natural environment to provide details about what is valuable for settlement or investment. Used as a microcosm of the Peninsula, Bird views Sĕlângor as multiply advantaged. It is well-situated geographically. It is characterized by the absence of drought or flooding as well as any dangerous diseases. Besides, among its natural resources, there are tin and magnet which are important to industrial development. What is more, land is cheap to purchase. In other words, the circumstances are favorable for English investment in agriculture or industry. An account of the climate, fauna and flora of the region is as important as cartographic surveying. This account, therefore, is delivered in taxonomies including botany - naturalism and climatology.

To begin with, Bird acts as a climatologist in her observations about the tropical climate. Given that in metropolitan centers the tropical weather and its effects are perceived as problematic for settlement in the tropics,[11] Bird writes for encouragement that the "climate is singularly healthy for Europeans as well as natives, although hot and moist as may be expected from being so close to the equator" (5). To substantiate this statement, she asserts that "there are no diseases of climate except marsh fevers, which assail Europeans if they camp out at night on low, swampy grounds" (5). She corrects Europeans' misconception of the Peninsula as a "malarious equatorial jungle" (1). Bird highlights the absence of dangerous tropical diseases in Sĕlângor. She states that its "climate is remarkably healthy, and diseases of locality are unknown" (Bird 209). Besides, she gives detailed information on the annual state of the weather. She writes: "Rainfall is not excessive […as] there

[11] In British colonial literature, the tropical weather has been associated with the spread of disease. This is why travelers and imperial agents were subjected to medical examinations and inoculations in preparation for their encounter with the tropics. For instance, in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow undergoes such examinations in Brussels before leaving for the Congo.

is no regular rainy season" (6). She claims that the year is divided into two parts by the monsoon which "is not a storm, as many people suppose, from a vague association with the word 'typhoon'" (6). Bird revises people's flawed conceptions of the monsoon. She warns against the dangers of the "south-west monsoon" and mentions the pleasures of "the north-east" one.

Bird also acts as a naturalist or botanist when she describes the fauna and flora of the area. She contends that the natural conditions of the region are propitious to life and business. She insists that its natural resources are auspicious for British newcomers' economic growth and prosperity. For example, she mentions exotic fruits and vegetables that can make the wealth of British "gentlemen farmers" and merchants. She writes that the Peninsula's "botany is as yet very imperfectly known" (7). Its "beauteous rainfall and sunshine" stimulate the flourishing of "many of the most highly-prized productions of the tropics, with some that are peculiar to itself" (7). She exhaustively enumerates the products that could enrich English farmers and merchants and satisfy consumers in search of exotic products. Among these products, she lists timber, wild nutmeg, pepper and other spices, rice, sugarcane, coffee, yams, sweet potatoes, cocoa, sago, cotton, tea…etc. For her, feeding British markets with these products would help Britons to give up "[c]onservatism in diet" (7). She writes that the "yam, edible arum, and sweet potato must take the place of the 'Irish potato', and water-melons and cucumbers that of our peas, beans, artichokes, cabbages, and broccoli" (7). Along with tropical fruit trees, Bird describes the variety of species of trees that make the Malay Peninsula a "new wonder-world, so enchanting" and full of the "wealth of nature" (176). Bird quotes Darwin[12] as a scientific authority who states that a "visit to the tropics (and such tropics) is like a visit to a new planet" (176) due to the varieties of species of tropical flora. She reinforces her authority by referring to this aspect of the "Darwinian archive of Empire" (Richards 49).

Bird's observations about the tropical fauna are not as encouraging as those on the flora. These are intentional and meant to give preventive information on the dangers of "the things which bite and sting" (Bird 173). She illustrates with the bites of mosquitoes which cause the "mosquito fever" (173). She warns potential British newcomers against the peculiar dangers that result from the bites of insects and advises them to exercise caution. She also warns against the probable impact the fauna may have on crops. She particularly draws attention to the type of bat called the "vampire" [which] flies high, in great flocks, and is very destructive to fruit" (Bird 8). This can serve as a warning for agricultural investors who should act accordingly.

Along with the capacity of the region for agricultural development and its propitious climatic conditions, Bird shows its industrial prospects. For instance, she writes that the Malay Peninsula abounds with gold and tin (5), which could make the wealth of British "captains of industry." She contends that tin is less exploited even if the "vastest tin fields in the world are found in the western Malay states" (5). The only type of tin that is exploited is "steam tin" (5). She claims that "Tin is the

[12] Charles Darwin explored the Galapagos islands in 1835. References to him and the islands always evoke his "enchanted isles" (in DeFina 41).

staple product of Sungei Ujong, and until lately the Malay peninsula and the adjacent regions were supposed to be the richest tin producing countries in the world. There is not a single mine, however, properly so called" (187). Bird draws attention to the fact that tin is not exploited to its fullest potential, which is her way of calling attention to the region's economic prospects. The absence of tin mines does not affect all states. She illustrates with that of Sĕlângor, whose economy is based on its "inexhaustible tin mines" (207). However, she points out the lack of investment in magnet, Sĕlângor's "mineral wealth" (208).

By accounting for the minimal exploitation of minerals, Bird implies that there is more room for mining investment in the region. From this perspective, she wears the mantle of an economic analyst of the region's potential for investment and growth. She also disrupts anti-imperialists' arguments against British imperialism based on its economic drawbacks. Mira Matikkala argues that these concern two aspects: "One, dating as far back as Adam Smith, maintained that the empire caused enormous costs to Britain without corresponding benefits; the other, more modern approach, stressed the view that the empire 'drained' resources from the dependencies, thus causing extreme poverty in them" (Matikkala 19). Bird demonstrates that existing natural resources in the Malay Peninsula are either under exploited or not exploited at all. From Bird's perspective, their exploitation by the British does not impoverish the colonies because their economy does not depend on them and it is enriched by it. Arguably, she insists that Pêrak flourished under British protection: "Trade is rapidly advancing" (Bird 264); its "revenue […] has risen from £42,683 in 1876 to £138,572 in 1881, and the expenditure, keeping pace with it, has risen from £45277 in 1876 to £130587 in 1881" (265). This implies that the trade balance of the protectorate has drastically improved thanks to British expertise and the Resident's "financial sagacity" (265). Britain can also take advantage of this exploitation by creating more wealth.

5. ANTHROPOLOGICAL, ETHNOGRAPHIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE

The previous historical and geographical "forms of knowledge" about the states of the Golden Chersonese are meant to raise awareness of the advantages of establishing settlements and expanding British power in the region. Emphasis is first put on the value of the stability brought by English interference in its protectorates and the possibility of more stability if British power is extended to the unprotected states. Second, stress is laid on the value of the natural environment of the region and its economic importance. Temporary or permanent settlement also requires knowledge of the local population. Prospective settlers and investors need to know the people with whom they would interact. Richards argues that geography "must always be accompanied by the imperatives of state ethnography, which territorialize a domain not only by mapping it but by producing all manner of 'thick' description about it. The survey is only one form of ethnographic surveillance" (Richards 21). Ethnography overlaps with the broader field of "anthropology [which] was beginning to be defined as a distinctive form of knowledge" (Cohn 11) in the service of the colonial project.

In this regard, Bird wears the mantle of an anthropologist in giving information about the Peninsula's population diversity. She writes that the "population of the native states of the Peninsula is not accurately known, but, inclusive of a few wild tribes and the Chinese immigrants" (Bird 3). Despite the scant information available on the people of the region, Bird shares her knowledge of its ethnic composition. According to Richards, knowledge dissemination involves classificatory or taxonomic thinking. Bird classifies the people of the Malay Peninsula into three main ethnic groups: the Malays (12), the population of the Wild Tribes (13), and the Chinese (17). She argues that the Malays are not native of the land but migrants from neighboring islands. Yet they constitute the major group. She includes the people of the "Wild Tribes" into the aboriginal group, and they comprise the Samangs, the Orang Benou or Jukuns and the Rayet or Orang Laut. Finally, there are the Chinese. The latter and the Malays are not from the Peninsula, which implies that the area has always attracted foreigners. This complies with Bird's desire to revive British expansionist interest in the region.

Bird's "participant-observation" (Clifford 13) among the Malay people allows her to assume the role of an ethnographer by expanding her descriptions of the Malays and the Chinese. Viewed as an important group British newcomers are likely to interact with, Bird extends the scope of her knowledge of the Malays. She describes them physically and socio-culturally because they are a dominant race in the region. Physically, she describes them as brown-colored, black-haired, black-eyed with "broad and slightly flat faces … high cheek bones, … wide mouths, with broad and shapely lips … smallish noses [and] very open nostrils" (Bird 18). Arguably, this kind of description is not arbitrary because it would allow British visitors or settlers to distinguish them from the people of the "Wild Tribes," the Chinese or any other ethnic group. Socio-culturally, she states that unlike many other colonized people the Malays are civilized (18). Because the author is interested in attracting more metropolitan attention to the Peninsula, she claims that "there is nothing to fear from these 'treacherous Malays'" (184) given the "appurtenances of civilization in the Malay jungle" (184). The words "treacherous Malays"[13] are quoted because they refer to a false representation of the Malays in metropolitan circles. Bird deflates this *a priori* by mentioning the Malays' fearlessness and civilization. She also draws attention to their hospitality and friendliness. She claims that her experience with Sĕlângor's people is characterized by "Hospitality, kindness and most genial intercourse" (Bird 216). From this perspective, Bird is "mapping … the character" of the Malays, an ethnographic practice that overlaps with the "mapping of the territory" (Hampson 154).

Bird's "mapping of the character" of the Chinese involves one predominant trait: their industriousness. She insists on this quality in them: "the more I see them, the

[13] Bird quotes the expression "treacherous Malays" to subvert its prevalent use in colonial texts as a stereotype of the Malays, seen as "treacherous" and allegedly dangerous to Europeans. It was recurrent in travel accounts of the period. For example, Rodney Mundy refers to the dangers posed by "treacherous Malays" for all "those who frequent the seashores [and who] lead a life of constant peril" (301).

more I am impressed by them. These States, as well as Malacca, would be jungles […] were it not for their energy and industry" (Bird 220). According to Tilley, her approval of Chinese industriousness reflects "current stereotyping and imperial ideology of the rise of the 'savage' to civilisation' through personal industry and endeavour combined with British influence" (Tilley 268). Michel-Rolph Trouillot claims that the essence of anthropology is the existence of the "savage," but it can also contribute to the "destabilization and eventual destruction of the Savage slot" (Trouillot 167). Bird's references to Chinese industriousness (Bird 190; 341) show her ambivalent attitude toward the idea of the savage. Indeed, she vacillates between believing in the existence of savage populations and questioning it. Speaking of the "Wild Tribes," she attributes the word "savage" to them. Nonetheless, she dismisses its use for the Malays who "are not savages in the ordinary sense, for they have a complete civilization of their own" (Bird 138). For her, they "would be much offended if they were called savages, and indeed, they are not so" (171).

Bird even acts as a demographer by accounting for the population's quantity. She provides more details about the population by stating that "it is estimated a three hundred and ten thousand, which gives under nine inhabitants to the square mile, the population of the British settlements being about four hundred and twenty to the square mile" (3-4). In this sense, Bird conforms to the "enumerative modality" (Cohn 8) according to which colonized people are also surveyed and dealt with in "numbers." Besides, Bird proceeds comparatively, for she points out that the number of the population is less important in the native states than in the British settlements. The unsaid is that there is more space for British settlement in the native states.

Bird's demographic note on the Golden Chersonese is supplemented by her emphasis on women as a demographic category relevant in the context of knowledge production and circulation. In this sense, she conforms to Victorian travelers' role as "purveyors of authentic knowledge about 'colonial', subject women" (Burton 105). As a woman traveler, Bird considers the subordination of Far Eastern women to male power as a distinct category of analysis in her quest for knowledge about the Malay Peninsula. She states that native women are either veiled following the Muslim religion for the Malays (Bird 149; 235) or secluded for the Chinese. She claims: "the wives of all [the Chinese merchants] are secluded, and inhabit the back regions and have no share in the remarkably 'good time' which men seem to have" (133). At puberty, Chinese girls also undergo seclusion. Bird states: "When these girl-children are twelve years old, they will, according to custom, be strictly secluded, and will not be seen by any man but their father till the bridegroom lifts the veil at the marriage ceremony" (191).

Concerning Malay gender practices, Bird acknowledges that Malays are "stringent as to some of the rights of wives" (326-327). According to Bird, some of these are guaranteed by Muslim law like their right to half of the households' assets in case of a divorce pronounced by the husband (327). She states that "polygamy appears to be rare, except among the chiefs" (327). The latter are "polygamists" since they "lead their domestic lives according to fashion" (171). A case in point is Rajah Datu Bandar who has several "wives" (202). Bird also refers to Malay men's disposition

to connubial violence. She mentions the case of "a Malay, who was 'in trouble' for the very British crime of nearly beating his wife to death" (237). According to Burton, Victorian travelers viewed themselves as "saviors" for colonized women. They enlisted their suffering under male whim as part of the imperial project. Besides, as a woman Bird is allowed to interact with the women of the Malay Peninsula. It gives her an opportunity to collect "authentic" knowledge about them and to contribute further to the "imperial archive." This is a privilege that male ethnographers in colonial spaces barely had.

Bird's frequent references to the condition of women across cultures denotes a transnational approach. In her discussion of how connubial issues are legally dealt with in the region, Bird draws parallels between the rights of Malay, Chinese and Victorian women, or lack thereof. She claims that the "four wives of the Mussulman, and the subordinate wives of the Chinaman, have an equal claim to recognition with the one wife of the Englishman" (237). From this perspective, Bird occasionally alludes to her own condition as a Victorian woman traveler. Though she has many privileges that other women of her generation do not have at home, she faces other challenges like not being treated as an equal to male purveyors of knowledge by "knowledge-producing institutions" like the Royal Geographic Society. As a traveler, she occasionally confronts the sexist/ patriarchal attitudes of some of her male acquaintances like a Chinaman who ignores her tutoring about the immorality and illegality of selling a young girl he owns to another man for marriage (237).

Nonetheless, traveling without a male "chaperone" procures Bird a form of "empowerment." During her six-week visit to the Malay Peninsula, Bird navigates a world which is dominated by men. She meets with British officials—magistrates, Residents and Governors—and local rulers, who are all men. Barani and Yahya claim that "women like Bird often spoke of the empowerment they felt when they were exploring […particularly] regions that were located within the colonial power structure" (Barani and Yahya 542). Bird's empowerment is more than a "feeling" because she contributes to gathering information that is useful for the "colonial power structure." For example, as a woman, she manages to approach the Koto-lamah community in Pêrak. They were believed to be still belligerent to British rule since the incident of Pêrak, so no British official or traveler approached them afterwards. It is risky for Bird to do it, but her venture proves to be useful. Mr. Low, the British administrator of the district

> is glad that the thing was done, as it affords a proof such as he has not yet had of the complete pacification of the district; but, he added, it would appear somewhat odd that the first European to test the disposition of the Koto-lamah people should be a lady (Bird 319).

In other words, Bird's empowerment results from her capacity to collect information from local people on behalf of the imperial administration. Arguably, she acts under cover for the surveillance branch of Britain's imperial service in investigating local people's attitudes towards British rule. Many people of the Peninsula trust her and confide to her what they think of it like a Chinese man who

assures her that they are in "perpetual and renewed satisfaction with British rule" (191). This kind of information is relevant for Britain's continuous effort to avoid any mutinous action from them.

Besides, in her text Bird places herself in a male-dominated intellectual sphere. She recurrently cites the works of specialists in different domains like Mr. Daly and his surveys of the Golden Chersonese for the Royal Geographical Society (viii), Mr. Logan, a skillful geologist (5), Mr. Newbold, a zoologist, and others. Nevertheless, she makes her descriptions more knowledgeable—thanks to her close proximity with people from all the states of the Golden Chersonese—and characterizes them with interdisciplinarity. It is her way of asserting her intellectual merit. Apart from mentioning female relatives of British officials in the region and occasional travelers, Bird cites no female authority on it. From this perspective, she can be seen as an exception to the rule that limits women's access to the public space.

6. CONCLUSION

Bird deploys a variety of "forms of knowledge" about the states of the Golden Chersonese to shed light on the advantages of expanding British temporary or permanent settlements to the region under British protection or the native ruled ones and creating more investment opportunities in agriculture and industry. She highlights the fact that a sense of stability and order is safeguarded by English interference so that investment is safe. She also values the natural resources of the region and its propitious climate. Along with these, she shares her knowledge about the local population. She mentions the existence of two categories of people. She uses immigrant communities from China and other areas of the Malay Archipelago to show the extent to which the states of the Golden Chersonese are attractive to foreigners in search of opportunities. She informs about the local communities to demonstrate their hospitality towards foreigners which gives more security to any settlement or investment undertaking. Doing so, Bird places herself among other writers who desired to participate in the British imperial archive. Underneath the categories of knowledge that she disseminates are imperialist and gender concerns. She glorifies British rule in the Malay Peninsula and celebrates its efficiency. As a woman, she also assumes a role in public debates on the British Empire, a role that not all women have the opportunity to assume in Victorian Britain.

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