



Sarah Bowdich Lee (1791-1856) and Pioneering Perspectives on Natural History

By Mary Orr

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History from below uncovers overlooked protagonists contributing to (inter)national endeavour often against considerable odds. Mrs T. Edward Bowdich then Mrs R. Lee (1791–1856) is indicative. When women allegedly cannot participate in early nineteenth-century scientific exploration, discovery and publication, Sarah’s multiple specialist contributions to French and British natural history, and to their dissemination, have surprisingly attracted no book-length study. This first appraisal of Sarah’s unbroken production of discipline-changing scientific work over three decades – in ichthyology, in historical geography, in the public dissemination of scientific knowledge – does more than fill this gap. It also pivotally investigates the intercultural and multi-genre dynamics of Sarah’s pioneering perspectives and contributions achieved often at great personal cost. Sarah’s larger significance is then to challenge ‘secondary’ or ‘leaky-pipeline’ models for women’s pioneering work in nineteenth-century natural history as a case study in the distinction of pertinence to women in STEM(M) today.

Key selling points

- The first major study of the works of Sarah Bowdich Lee (1791–1856) for their pioneering perspectives on natural history
- A major new intervention on the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural contributions by women to nineteenth-century natural history
- A significant reappraisal of the multi-genre dissemination of nineteenth-century natural history in word and image
- An important case study for rethinking ‘the leaky pipeline’ model still dominating women’s careers in STEM(M) today.

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About the Author(s) / Editor(s)

Mary Orr is the Buchanan Chair of French at the University of St Andrews. Her specialist research in nineteenth-century French studies connects its literature, histories and cultures including the natural and earth sciences.

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