Maritime Exploration

This series includes accounts, by eye-witnesses and contemporaries, of voyages by Europeans to the Americas, Asia, Australasia and the Pacific during the colonial period. Driven by the military and commercial interests of powers including Britain, France and the Netherlands, particularly the East India Companies, these expeditions brought back a wealth of information on climate, natural resources, topography, and distant civilisations. Their detailed observations provide fascinating historical data for climatologists, ecologists and anthropologists, and the accounts of the mariners’ experiences on their long and dangerous voyages are full of human interest.

A Voyage to the South-Sea and along the Coasts of Chili and Peru, in the Years 1712, 1713, and 1714

The first reliable maps of the Chilean and Peruvian coasts were drawn by the French explorer Amédée-François Frézier (1682–1773). In 1712, he was sent on a spying mission to the Spanish ports and fortifications of South America, travelling along the Pacific coastline as far as Callao, the port of Lima. His maps were later used by two of France’s most famous explorers, Bougainville and Lapérouse. Frézier also took a keen interest in botany, mineralogy, economics and anthropology. His most celebrated achievement is the introduction to Europe of the Chilean strawberry, which was used to create the hybrid species known today as the garden strawberry. Frézier’s observations and illustrations of the people, plants and animals he encountered on his South American travels are given in this popular account, published in Paris in 1716 and reissued here in the English translation of 1717.
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Amédée François Frézier

Frontmatter

More information
A VOYAGE TO THE SOUTH-SEA,
And along the COAST OF CHILI and PERU,
In the Years 1712, 1713, and 1714.

PARTICULARLY DESCRIBING
The Genius and Constitution of the Inhabitants, as well Indians as Spaniards: Their Customs and Manners; their Natural History, Mines, Commodities, Traffick with EUROPE, &c.

By Monsieur FREZIER, Engineer in Ordinary to the French King.

Illustrated with 37 COPPER-CUTTS of the Coasts, Harbours, Cities, Plants, and other Curiosities: Printed from the Author’s Original Plates inserted in the Paris EDITION.

With a POSTSCRIPT by Dr. Edmund Halley, Savilian Professor of Geometry in the University of Oxford. And an Account of the Settlement, Commerce, and Riches of the Jesuites in Paraguay.

LONDON:
Printed for JONAH BOWYER, at the Rose in Ludgate-street.
MDCCXVII
TO

His Royal Highness

GEORGE

PRINCE of WALES,

GOVERNOR

OF THE

SOUTH-SEA Company:

THIS

Translation of Monseur FREZIER’S
Voyage to the SOUTH-SEA

IS

With all Respect and Humility,

DEDICATED.
THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

As the Accounts of Voyages and Travels are universally well received and esteem'd, if drawn up with a due Regard to Truth; it is no wonder that of Monsieur Frezier to the South Sea, and along the Coasts of Chili and Peru, so little known to all the Europeans except the Spaniards, should be well approved of in France and Holland, in the French Tongue: Especially, if it be consider'd, who the Author of it is, and what his Performance.

As for the first of these, the late French King, Lewis XIV. who owed the Brightest Part of his Glory, and his Grandeur, to his Encouragement of the Arts and Sciences, and to his singular Judgment in the Choice of fit Persons to improve them, having
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having been at a vast Expence to support his Grandson upon the Throne of Spain, thought this a proper Opportunity of getting a full Information of the least known Parts of the Spanish West-Indies, before the French, as well as all other Nations, should be excluded those Seas by a Peace. For this end, he pitch’d upon our Author, an experienced Engineer and Mathematician in his Service, whom he knew to be every way qualifi’d to make Hydrographical Observations for the Use of Mariners, and for the Correction of the Charts; and also to take exact Plans of the most considerable Forts and Fortresses along the Coasts whither he was going; to direct to their best Anchorages, and to point out their respective Dangers; (things which might hereafter be of great Use to the French, if a War should happen to break out again between the two Nations) And this Gentleman he sent at his own Charge on board a Merchant-Ship, in the Year 1712, to pass as a Trader only, the better to insinuate himself with the Spanish Governors, and to have all Opportunities of learning their Strength, and whatever else he went to be inform’d of. And we find in his Dedication of this Work to the Regent of France, that he had so well executed the late King’s Design, that upon his Return that Great Prince made Monsieur Frezier explain to him the Plans he had drawn, and signify’d his Approbation of them both by gracious Expressions, and by a generous Reward. But his
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his Most Christian Majesty dying before the Book was ready to appear in the World, the Duke of Orleans, who now governs the Kingdom, was pleas’d to permit our Author to address it to him: And the Account he gives him of it, is, that it is a Collection of the Observations which he made in Navigation, on the Errors of the Maps, and the Situation of the Harbours and Roads he had been in; together with a Description of the Animals, Plants, Fruits, Metals, and whatsoever the Earth produces of Curious, in the richest Colonies in the World; and lastly, a most exact Account of the Commerce, Forces, Government, and Manners, as well of the Creolian Spaniards, as of the Natives of the Country, whom he treats with all the Respect which is due to Truth.

Neither must we omit any thing that is of Use in the Author’s Preface, where he is more particular; and especially as to the Difference between this Work and Father Fleillée’s Journal. He tells us, that that Learned Monk apply’d himself chiefly to Astronomy, Botany, and other Parts of Natural Philosophy; whereas Monsieur Frezier’s Business hath been to take Plans, and to bring the Navigators acquainted with the Seasons, general Winds, Currents, Rocks, Shelves, Anchorages, and Landing Places, where-ever he came. It must not therefore seem strange, that the Plans of those two Authors
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Authors do no better agree: But Monseur Frezier produces several Instances of the Father’s Mistakes:

The Mouth of the Bay of La Conception (says he) is made too wide in Feuillé’s Plan by almost the Half; the Streets of Callao are all confounded; and the Bastion of S. Lewis hath a defenceless Face, tho’ there is a Line of Defence fichante up on the Spot. These last Faults are not, however, to be imputed to him: The Addition of several Works, which were never inserted in any other Design than that of the late Monseur Rosselin, Engineer of the Place, shews, that they are not his, but the Copyer’s, from whom I had also the fame Plan and the Designs. In that of the Road of Callao, he makes the Town, which doth not really exceed 600 Toifes, as big as the Isle of S. Laurence, which is almost 4000 Toifes. Lastly, he himself owns, that in his Plan of Lima, the Quarter call’d Malambo falls short of a sixth Part, whereas that Quarter makes at least a sixth Part of the Town; that of Cercado is placed without the Inclosure, tho’ it is really within it; and he reckons the Bastions but 25, when there are 34. Not to mention other Plans, whose Imperfections are of less Consequence. Moreover, that Father places Arica and Ylo under the same Meridian, within eight Seconds of Time, or two Minutes of a Degree; whereas I know by my own Observation, that those Ports, which are
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' about 28 or 30 Leagues distant one from the other, lie S.E. and N.W. on the Globe, which causes a Difference of at least a Degree.

For the rest, our Author acquaints us, that his Plans (except three, viz. of Callao, Valparaiso, and Copiapo) are drawn by the same Scale, that so their Proportion may be seen at once; and that he hath been more particular in his Relation of the Customs and Manners of the Indians, and of their Mines, and Methods of working them; so that his Book and Father Feuillee’s have very little in common.

To speak Truth, this last-mention’d Part of Monsieur Frezier’s History is so very New and Curious, that it might alone be thought a sufficient Motive to the Translation, and Publishing of it in English, had it wanted the Recommendation of the Judicious, which it doth not: For, after the Privileges granted by the Spaniards to our South-Sea Company, of trading in those distant Countries, and the Settlement of English Factories by their Consent at Vera Cruz, Cartagena, Panama, Portobelo, and Buenos Ayres, (to bring home Gold and Silver, no doubt) What could be of so great Advantage to the English, as an Account of the Manner of discovering, opening, and working their Mines?

Before we entirely bid Adieu to Monsieur Frezier’s own Abstract of his Work, we cannot but take Notice how unaccountable it seems, that a-
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Among the Indians of Chili, there should be no Track, or Sign, or Foot step, either of the Worship of a Deity, or of the Cohabitation of Men, as in all other known Parts of the World; but that they should content themselves with living separately under a sort of Hutts made of the Branches of Trees.

Upon the whole matter, we have taken due Care to have a just Translation of this Useful Work: And lest any Blunder might be made in copying Monsieur Frézier’s Plans, &c. (which too commonly happens in Affairs of this nature) we have at a considerable Expence procured a Number of Cutts printed from the Original Plates at Paris, by that Author’s Permission; the French Explanations whereof being render’d into English, and insert’d at the Foot of their proper Pages, the Reader will at the same time understand them with Ease, and have the Satisfaction that the Plates are true and genuine.

One Objection doth indeed lie against Monsieur Frézier, arising perhaps from his Ambition to be thought to correct the General Sea Chart of our Country-man Dr. Halley, Savilian Professor of Geometry in the University of Oxford; but besides that the Reputation of this Chart is establish’d by the Experience of our Navigators in most Voyages, beyond the Power of Monieur Frézier to hurt it; we must remember that our Author is a Frenchman:
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And therefore we need give no farther Account of their Difference, than is contain’d in the Letter subjoin’d, which Dr. Halley was pleas’d on that Occasion to write to us; and in the Postscript at the End of M. Frezier’s Book.

What follows that, being a Relation of the Jesuites Settlement and Commerce in Paraguay, which are sometimes mention’d in the Course of Monsieur Frezier’s Voyage, we judg’d it not improper to give it a Translation from the Edition printed in Holland, and to annex it to ours in English.

Mr.
April 6, 1717.

Mr. Bowyer,

I am glad to hear you have undertaken to print, in English, the Voyage of Mr. Frézier to and from the Coasts of Peru and Chili. Our People are very much unacquainted with those Seas; and those that are, commonly want either Will or Language to inform the World properly of what they find worth Notice, and of what may be of Use to those that shall hereafter make the like Voyages. The French have the Faculty of setting off their Relations to the best Advantage; and particularly your Author has informed us, in a very instructive manner, of several things that are not only very entertaining, but also what may be of eminent Service to us, either in case of Trade or War in the Seas he describes. On this account I cannot doubt but your Design must answer your Expectation, especially since you beflow on the Book so elegant an Edition. But however it may have pleased me in other Respects, I find myself obliged to desire of you the Liberty to subjoin a small Postscript in Defence of my Chart of the Variation of the Compass, (whereby I hoped I had done Service to the Sailors of all Nations) against the groundless Exceptions of your Author, who seems to seek all Occasions to find Fault, and is otherwise unjust to me. If you please to grant me this Favour, you will, without any Prejudice to yourself, very much oblige.

Your very humble Servant,

To Mr. Jonah Bowyer

Edm. Halley.