

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07476-6 - The Voyage of the Discovery: Volume 1

Robert F. Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## CHAPTER I

## HISTORICAL

Attention first drawn to Antarctic Region by Delineation of Map Makers—  
 Earliest References to Climatic Conditions—Varthema—Vasco da Gama  
 —Drake — Quiros — Tasman — Kerguelen — Cook — Bellingshausen —  
 Weddell—Biscoe—Balleny—D'Urville—Wilkes—Ross —Later Expedi-  
 tions—'Challenger' Expedition and Result—Inception of National  
 Antarctic Expedition—Sir Clements Markham—Action of Societies—Mr.  
 Longstaff—Decision to build new Ship—My own Appointment—Finance  
 Committee—Naval Crew—Purchase of Stores.

Till then they had deemed that the Austral earth  
 With a long unbroken shore  
 Ran on to the Pole Antarctic,  
 For such was the old sea lore.—RENNELL RODD.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY of the Arctic Regions would occupy a large volume; that of the Antarctic Regions compiled by Dr. H. R. Mill in 1901 contained 878 references, and included all books, pamphlets, and maps even remotely touching the subject that had been published in any country. This great difference in the published matter relating to the two ends of our globe justly represented the relative knowledge concerning them in 1901, to whatever extent the disproportion has been modified since that year.

The history of the Arctic Regions stretches back for many centuries, to the adventurous voyage of Oht-here, the friend of King Alfred, and to the exploits of the

## 2 THE VOYAGE OF THE 'DISCOVERY'

Norsemen in Greenland; the history of the Antarctic Regions commences at a much later period, and attention was drawn to them, not so much by the voyages of discoverers as by the persistent delineations of a great Southern continent by the map makers. The idea of this conjectural continent probably arose at a very early date, and when there was much excuse for such a view; but it was retained with extraordinary pertinacity throughout several centuries, being held long after the voyages of many navigators had disproved the existence of parts and thrown strong doubt on the accuracy of the whole conception.

Ortelius, in his '*Typus orbis terrarum*,' published in 1570, boldly draws the coast of '*Terra australis nondum cognita*' round the world and well to the north, even crossing the Tropic of Capricorn in two places. The editions of Mercator follow this delineation pretty exactly down to the one published by Hondius in Amsterdam in 1623, and although the famous map of the world prepared for Hakluyt in 1599 has the merit of omitting the Southern continent as unauthenticated, the fictitious coastline continued to appear in later maps and naturally attracted the attention of enterprising navigators.

There are three legends on the Southern continent of Ortelius's map: one is to the effect that it is named by some the Magellanic Region; the second tells us that the Portuguese called the part south of the Cape '*Psittacorum regio*' (region of parrots), because of the incredible number of these birds; and the third, opposite to Java, refers to Marco Polo and Varthema for statements of

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07476-6 - The Voyage of the Discovery: Volume 1

Robert F. Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

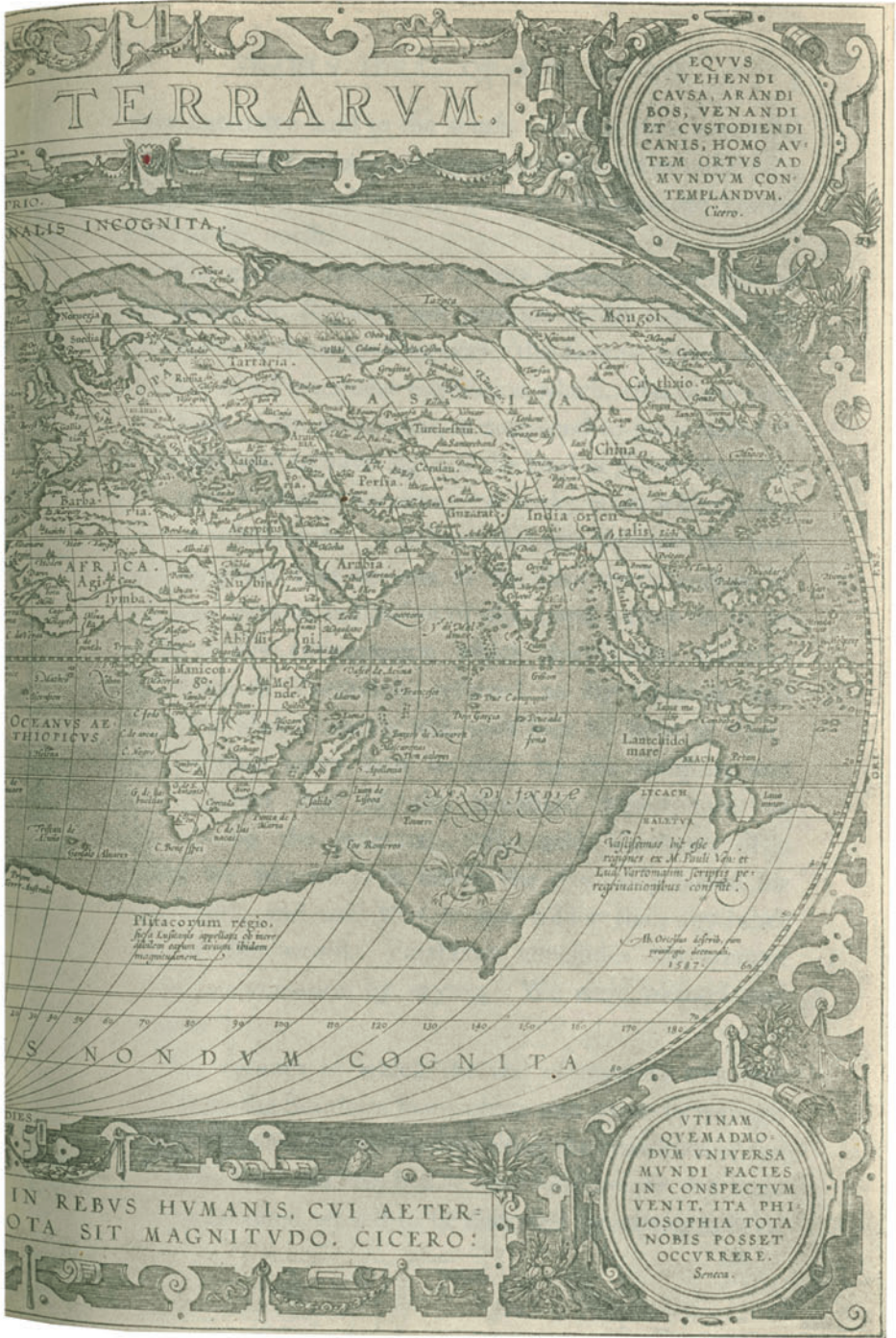
---

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-108-07476-6 - The Voyage of the Discovery: Volume 1  
 Robert F. Scott  
 Excerpt  
[More information](#)



From the Map in THEATRUM ORBIS TERRARUM]

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-108-07476-6 - The Voyage of the Discovery: Volume 1  
 Robert F. Scott  
 Excerpt  
[More information](#)



[A. ORTELI, Antwerpse, 1595.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07476-6 - The Voyage of the Discovery: Volume 1

Robert F. Scott

Excerpt

[More information](#)

---

## EARLY IDEAS OF THE SOUTH 3

very extensive land to the south. At this time a fanciful idea prevailed among cartographers that there must be a great mass of land to the south to balance the known land to the north.

The earliest references to the climatic conditions of the Antarctic Regions are perhaps to be found in the statement of Amerigo Vespucci ; this famous person acted as pilot of a Portuguese expedition which, after surveying the coast of Brazil in 1501, is supposed to have sailed to the south and to have sighted the land of South Georgia, of which Vespucci remarks : ' A rocky coast without any port or inhabitants. I believe this was because the cold was so great that no one in the fleet could endure it.' Another curious indication of the same nature is to be found in the conversation which the Italian traveller Ludovico di Varthema, referred to by Ortelius, had with the Malay captain who took him to Java in 1506. The skipper knew how to steer by the compass and by a certain star of the Southern hemisphere as well as by the pole-star. He told Varthema of a region far beyond Java where the day only lasted for four hours, and said that it was colder than any other part of the world. Varthema concludes his account of the conversation by saying, ' We were pleased and satisfied ' !

The manner in which the veil of mystery was first lifted from the Southern hemisphere was naturally enough by the extension of exploration along the coastlines of the Northern land masses, but it was long before the facts thus ascertained ceased to be distorted by cartographers.

## 4 THE VOYAGE OF THE 'DISCOVERY'

The circumnavigation of the Cape by Vasco da Gama in 1497 did not extend sufficiently far south to upset calculations greatly, but when in 1520 Magellan discovered the strait which bears his name, Tierra del Fuego, to the south, was at once seized upon as an evident part of the *Terra australis*, and its coasts were unhesitatingly joined to the main outline of that continent. And when Sir Francis Drake in 1577 'came finally to the uttermost part of the land towards the South Pole; the extreme cape or cliff lying nearly under 56° S., beyond which neither continent nor island was to be seen; indeed the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans here unite in the free and unconfined open,' his discovery seems to have been completely misrepresented, and his accounts were garbled in such a manner as to have taken centuries to unravel.

How complete was the ignorance of Southern conditions at the commencement of the seventeenth century can be gathered from the voyage of Quiros. Pedro Fernandez de Quiros was a Portuguese pilot in the Spanish service; favoured by the Pope Clement VIII., he obtained an order from the King of Spain, Philip III., to prosecute a voyage to annex the South Polar continent and to convert its inhabitants to the true faith. He sailed from Callao in 1605 and steered to the W.S.W., but after proceeding a month on this course his heart failed him, and in latitude 26 S. he turned to the W.N.W. On this track he discovered the largest of the New Hebrides group, named it 'Australia del Espiritu Santo,' and, firmly believing it to be part of



## EARLY VOYAGERS

5

the Southern continent, solemnly annexed it, with the South Pole itself, to the crown of Spain !

Of the early voyages of the seventeenth century, that of the Dutchmen Schouten and Le Maire in 1616 went to establish Drake's discovery of the meeting of Atlantic and Pacific Oceans south of Cape Horn, and to curtail the extent of the Southern continent in this direction ; but more important was the voyage of Tasman, who actually set forth in search of the continent, and in 1642, after crossing the Indian Ocean between the latitudes of 45 and 49 S., discovered Tasmania and the northern island of New Zealand. This was a heavy blow to the theory of a great Southern continent, because it was in this region that its most northerly extension had been suggested by the early cartographers, and Tasman showed that it could not lie much beyond the 50th parallel either in the Indian Ocean or to the south of Australia, then known as New Holland. How slowly even important information of this sort must have travelled in those days is shown by the fact that in 1660, when Wells published his 'new set of maps,' he says: 'New Holland is esteemed to be part of the Southern unknown continent.'

The result of these voyages was to give a great impetus to others ; especially it encouraged ships to venture to make the passage about Cape Horn, and this in turn led to a considerable increase of knowledge in this region. Voluntarily or involuntarily ships attained a comparatively high latitude, reaching the 62nd or 63rd parallel, and, for the first time encountering the great

## 6 THE VOYAGE OF THE 'DISCOVERY'

Southern icebergs, obtained some idea of the severity of the Southern Regions.

But the idea of a great and populous Southern continent, though weakened, was by no means dissipated, and the eighteenth century saw several expeditions despatched in search of it. Of these, some of the most important were the French ventures under Bouvet, Marion du Frezne, and De Kerguelen-Tremarec, which led to the discovery of Bouvet Island, the Crozets, and Kerguelen, and collected much further evidence to show the great extent of the Southern Seas.

During the latter half of the eighteenth century there came a marked change in the objects which were set before the Southern voyagers. Hitherto men seemed to have thought of little but the aggrandisement of themselves or their State by the discovery of some new America; but now for the first time we find an eagerness in exploration for its own sake. Science had made rapid strides, and it was felt that its ends should be furthered by a completer knowledge of the distribution of land and water on our globe, and by an investigation of natural phenomena in its less-known regions. This new view of exploration was held most strongly in France and England, and both Marion and Kerguelen in their voyages in 1771-2 were accompanied by a staff of learned men whose sole object was to add to the scientific knowledge of the regions visited. Curiously enough, the last of these voyagers, starting as he did under these more favourable conditions for exploration, succeeded in retarding rather than in advancing the