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Raymond Howgego (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Exploration to 1800*. Sydney, NSW: Hordern House [www.hordern.com or www.explorersencyclopedia.com], 2002. xv + 1168 pp., indices. AUS \$295 (plus AUS \$35 s&h); cloth; ISBN 1 875567-36-4.

Writers on exploration need explorers' courage: the subject is ill-charted, shark-infested, storm-racked and strewn with rocks. It is hard even to say what exploration means. It sounds purposeful, yet so much of it happens by accident or in error. It sounds innovative, yet few documented discoveries were unprecedented by unsung adventurers. It excites enmities, partly because western explorers have traditionally displaced the indigenous pathfinders whom they followed and partly because the historiography has reflected disputes over priority, which formerly determined the outcome of rival imperial claims. Although, strictly defined, exploration means route-finding, it is used in an extended sense to mean "scientific exploration." This can cover almost everything, from the gleanings of curiosity-cabinets, zoos and gardens of acclimatisation, to ethnographic fieldwork, geological researches, fossil finding, surveying and archaeology. Serendipity as well as science surely plays a part: it is hard to find consistent, rational grounds on which to exclude the contributions of pilgrims and exiles, diplomats and messengers, pirates and fishermen, hunters and foragers, merchants and migrants and mining prospectors. It is clearly not necessary to explore somewhere "new: " most of those "scientific" explorers followed in route-finders' wakes, and the world has learned much from observant tourists. Is it necessary to travel at all? Much information about the structure of the world has been revealed in laboratories. Kant explored the universe on his walks around Königsberg. Who will explore for us the boundary between real and metaphorical exploration? And when does the history of the subject begin?

Even in the strictest sense of the word there have been four great ages of world exploration: the first more than a million years ago, when homo erectus spread from east Africa across Eurasia; the second from about 150,000 to about 50,000 years ago, when homo sapiens, starting from about the same place, covered the Old World; the third at an uncertain date, probably around 15,000 years ago, when the process was completed by the settlement of the Americas. The last has been going on more or less ever since, with accelerating pace: a history of restored communications between communities, cultures and civilisations, sundered by the effects of earlier explorations.

Raymond John Howgego, like most historians of exploration, has focussed on the last phase, or, more precisely, on the relatively well-documented period from about 3000 BC to c. 1800 AD. This is entirely proper. The routes explorers then

established and the knowledge they transmitted were the scaffolding and platforms with which the modern world was built. Explorers were genuinely the harbingers and pioneers of the long-range exchanges of culture, commerce, colonies and contagion that now enmesh the globe. No one can deny that the subject is worthy or that Howgego's enterprise is much needed. Over 7500 entries, of genuinely global ambition (albeit inevitably patchy coverage) aspire to convey an austere factual panorama of the field, with selective bibliographical listings. The history of exploration is like a well-barnacled vessel: all the accumulated errors need to be scraped away, the suppositions voyages extruded, the forged maps and relations discarded and the speculations sorted from the facts. A reliable reference book is like a fair wind or longed-for landfall. It is a task which needs someone of Howgego's gifts of patience, clarity and painstaking industry to accomplish.

Even the worthiest attempt is bound to have some deficiencies of the sort which tend to attract reviewers' attention. These must be candidly stated. Howgego never says what he means by "exploration" and never makes a decision about coverage. His prudent criterion is to be as inclusive as possible. The book's subtitle proclaims it "a comprehensive reference guide to the history and literature of exploration, travel and colonization." This is clearly over-ambitious, as colonization is hardly covered at all, and travel is treated very patchily. It leads the reader to some surprising encounters. Al-Ghazzali appears, presumably because of his spell as a pilgrim; but he never recorded any significant information about his travels. The author's uncertainty about the wisdom of including him seems clear: most entries are accompanied by fairly extensive (and generally useful) bibliographies, but in al-Gazzali's case we are told only that there are numerous editions of his works and that "most European commentaries are concerned with his influence on European thought."

Muhammad ought surely to have been included by the same criteria, but he is not. Royal itineraries are very under-represented. There is nothing about rulers as important in surveying their own realms as Hayan Wuruk in Java or Hideyoshi in Japan. Although in general the coverage is heroic, the author has made many capricious decisions: among the plant-finders and ethnographers of the VOC, for instance, Van Reede, Hermann and Meister appear, but not Rumphius or Witsen, Baldaeus but not De Laet.

The non-European coverage is a welcome and fascinating aspect of the book. Estebanico, the black slave who accompanied Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca across Texas, gets an entry, but not his namesake, who sailed with Magellan, or his successor, who was responsible for the first reports of the existence of Cibola (though the latter is mentioned in the entry for Marcos de Niza). One Inca explorer is included - Tupac Inca Yupanqui - but without mention of his alleged nautical feats (though under the entry for Alvarp de Mendafia, there is an allusion to legends of lands to the west of Peru). Ancient Egypt is remarkably well covered: the earliest figure to get an entry is Djer, whom Howgego dates, without

referring to the controversy on this matter, to 2900 BC. Chinese, Arab and Persian figures all appear, whereas subjects from south and southeast Asia are hardly covered: this is a pity, as there is a wealth of material, especially in the Jatakas and epigraphic sources.

Howgego's work should be understood essentially as a biographical dictionary. The geographical and thematic entries are too few and capricious to be useful. The entry on the Aleutian Islands is specifically confined to Russian voyages. To take random examples, there is no entry under Easter Island or Rapa Nui, none for Armenia or Ethiopia. There is a bibliography for Pennsylvania, for instance, but not Texas. An entry for "Phoenicians" covers the Canary Islands, but not Europe or Africa. There is an entry for fictitious voyages but none for suppositions ones, which are dealt with inconsistently: some have entries, but it is not always clear whether this amounts to endorsement of their historicity. Why are we told about Jason but not Odysseus? Rules of transcription are inconsistent. Bibliographies are inevitably patchy and of variable quality. In a very few entries - notably on Henry the Navigator, where the old myth of the scientific "centre" at Sagres recurs - the task of mastering all the available information has overwhelmed the author.

Still, the achievement is commendable, as far as it goes. Until confronted with the quality of Howgego's work, I would never have believed it possible for a single writer to have produced a dictionary of such reliability and thoroughness on this elusive and danger fraught subject. It makes a handsome book, superbly produced by sensitive publishers. Yet the best place for its future development is unquestionably the web, where it could be kept up to date, corrected and expanded as knowledge increases.

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