

Brett Hilder, *The Voyage of Torres*. Queensland, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1980. Pp. xx, 194, appendices, annotated bibliography, illustrations, charts, index. A \$17.95.

The bicentennial of Captain Cook's discovery of the eastern coast of Australia in 1770 and the forthcoming bicentennial of the British settlement which was to become Sydney (1788) has stimulated research in Pacific history, reviving claims that the Portuguese, the Spaniards, and others had discovered Australia. In *The Captain Cook Myth*, Jilian Robertson contends that credit should be given to William Dampier rather than to Cook and others. In *The Secret Discovery of Australia* (1977), K. G. McIntyre attempts to demonstrate that the Portuguese not only sighted the western coast of Australia before any other Europeans--which is very likely since they often came to present-day Indonesia for spices--but also its eastern coast, and this long before Captain Cook. The claim is upheld by Hilder. It is common knowledge that the Spaniards discovered Torres Strait in 1606: the Dutch missed it by a narrow margin. But there is disagreement as to the course of their vessels. Did they sight the north of the eastern coast of Australia? According to Hilder, a captain and master very familiar with the Strait of Torres, they did. a

Luis Vaéz de Torres was under the command of Pedro Fernández de Quirós whose fleet sailed from Peru in 1605. The ships reached Espiritu

Santo in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) but they became separated on leaving the island. The flagship, with Quirós aboard, returned to the Americas while the other two units of the fleet, under the command of Torres, continued the voyage and passed through what was to become the Torres Strait. Hilder explains that because of a bank which Torres called *placel*, extending between New Guinea and Australia, there are only very few passages. It used to be assumed that Torres had taken a northern passage and sailed close to New Guinea. According to Hilder's research, he first tried to cross the *placel* in the middle of the strait, but had to turn back. He finally found the passage, now called Endeavour Strait after Cook's vessel, and sailed for two days off Cape York, the peninsula which terminates the eastern coast of Australia in the north.

Hilder, who died recently, acknowledges his debt to the late Father Celsus Kelly O.F.M. In his *Calendar of Documents* (p. 214) Kelly mentions the omission of two lines, which are in the original of Torres' letter to the king of Spain, in the text published by H. N. Stevens in *New Light on the Discovery of Australia* (1930) which up to now has been the main source for studies of Torres' voyage. Using charts from the Royal Australian Navy Captain, Hilder has followed step by step the most likely course taken by Torres. In his recently published book, *The Spanish Lake*, O. H. K. Spate writes that Hilder's careful examination of documents, in particular the maps drawn by Diego de Prado y Tovar, who was with Torres, and his navigational knowledge as a seaman, leave little doubt that Australia was sighted by the Spaniards in 1606.

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