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# A Buccaneer's Atlas: Basil Ringrose's South Sea Waggoner, A Sea Atlas and Sailing Directions of the Pacific Coast of the Americas, 1682

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the style, color, and character from Morelock's analyses. A collection of excellent photographs and adequate maps cannot bring *Great Land Battles* up from the general-reader category to the level it claims. If this were a paperback selling for ten dollars, it would be a bargain. As it is, *Great Land Battles* is a good idea carried out in a workmanlike way, but it falls short of its greater potential.

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Howse, Derek and Thrower, Norman J.W., eds. *A Buccaneer's Atlas: Basil Ringrose's South Sea Waggoner, A Sea Atlas and Sailing Directions of the Pacific Coast of the Americas, 1682*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1992. 314pp. \$75

In the centuries during which Spain controlled the Pacific coasts of America, Spanish officials took care to guard carefully the knowledge that their experienced pilots and seamen had gained about those coasts, as it was the kind of knowledge that an enemy could use in making an attack. Little of this information reached English or Dutch map makers directly. In those days, it was as rare and unusual to find a set of sailing directions as it would later be to find an enemy code book. For an Englishman to find such information in the seventeenth century probably involved a tale of adventure as well as an intellectual and hydrographical coup.

Among the manuscript maps and charts in the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich there is just such

an unusual set of sailing directions for the Pacific coast of South America, drawn about 1682. Two years before, a band of English pirates under Captain Bartholomew Sharpe had crossed the Isthmus of Darien on foot, passing through the hot, humid rain forests of easternmost Panama to reach the Pacific coast. There they attacked Spanish shipping and reaped a harvest for themselves, although one marked by many setbacks. Sharpe and his band stole a Spanish ship and became the first Englishmen to sail from the Pacific to the Atlantic, eventually returning to England via the West Indies. The story was very well known at the time, and the most popular version of the day may be found in the second volume of Exquemelin's classic account, *Buccaneers of America*.

Basil Ringrose, one of the buccaneers with Sharpe, wrote the journal that was revised and edited for the book under review. Among Ringrose's lesser-known accomplishments was to copy the Spanish charts and sailing directions, translating them into English. Another Englishman, William Hack, used Ringrose's work to produce a very famous atlas in 1683-1684. The book at hand publishes for the first time a facsimile of Ringrose's work, bringing us closer to what the original Spanish document might have looked like. Ringrose's "waggoner" covers the Pacific coast from Cape Mendocino in California southward to the Galapagos Islands and Cape Horn. It is a fascinating collection of information and a reflection of late seventeenth-century knowledge of the region, including a

variety of geographical, navigational, biological, and cultural aspects.

The editors have thoroughly analyzed the material, providing cross-references to other works, locations of related documents, indices and explanations for the charts and the terms used. From this point of view, it is a masterfully crafted reference work for scholars. The only drawback is in the production of the maps themselves, which are disappointingly small and printed in black and white. Undoubtedly, the publisher made the decision to print a less expen-

sive volume, which may be justified by the fact that Ringrose's work is not of the highest artistic standard—he applied his colors sparsely and crudely. All the maps in the volume are, nevertheless, legible and useful, even though they fail to project the impact one receives from the originals at the National Maritime Museum. In general, Howse and Thrower have made with this volume an important contribution to the history of hydrography.

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