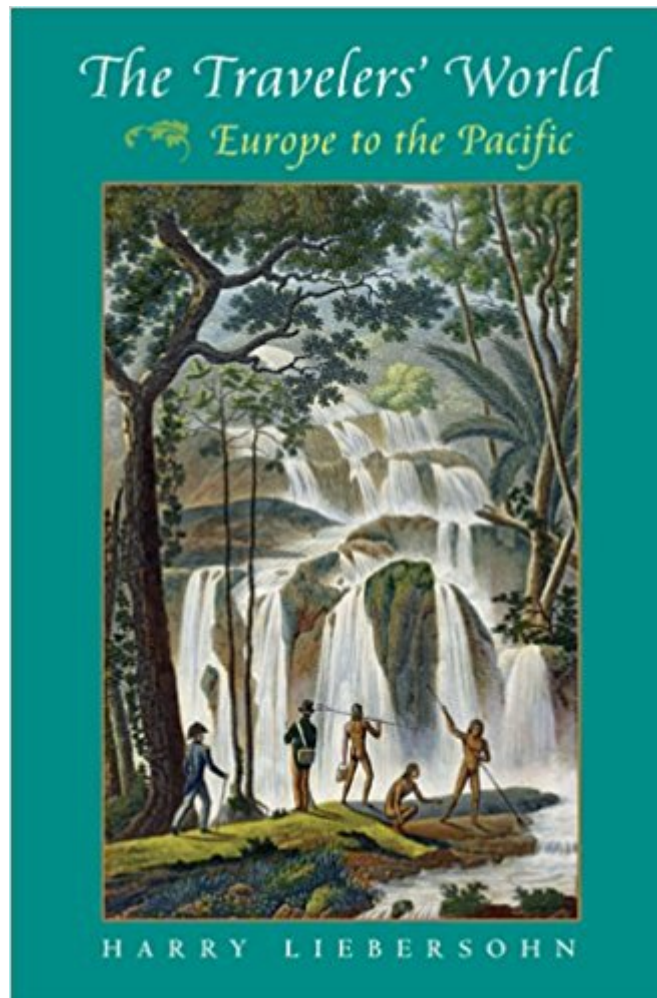




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The Travelers' World: Europe To The Pacific



Synopsis

In a beautifully crafted narrative that transports the reader from the salons of Europe to the shores of Tahiti, Harry Liebersohn examines the transformation of global knowledge during the great age of scientific exploration. He moves beyond the traditional focus on British and French travelers to include Germans, Russians, and some Americans, as well as the Tahitian, Hawaiian, and other Pacific islanders they encountered. Germany gets special attention because its travelers epitomized the era's cosmopolitanism and its philosophers engaged most fully in a multicultural understanding of humanity. Famous adventurers like Captain Cook make appearances, but it's the observations of such naturalists as Philibert Commerson, George Forster, and Adelbert von Chamisso that helped most to generate a new understanding of these far-flung societies. These European travelers saw non-Europeans neither as "savages" nor as projections of colonial fantasies. Instead the explorers accumulated a rich storehouse of perceptions through negotiations with patrons at home, collaborators abroad, salon philosophers, and missionary rivals. Liebersohn illuminates the transformative nature of human connections. He examines the expectations these servants of empire brought to the peoples they encountered, and acknowledges the effects of Oceanian behaviors, including unexpected notions of sexuality, on the Europeans. Equally important, he details the reception of these travelers upon their return home. An unforgettable voyage filled with delightful characters, dramatic encounters, and rich cultural details, *The Travelers' World* heralds a moment of intellectual preparation for the modern global era. We now travel effortlessly to distant places, but the questions about perception, truth, and knowledge that these intercontinental mediators faced still resonate.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book is well-written, interesting and creatively constructed and will serve as an important contribution for scholars interested in both colonialism and imperialism in addition to those working on travel, science, philosophy, Europeans abroad, non-Europeans in Europe and states' relations to these phenomena...The maps nicely show the sites travelers visited and the illustrations sprinkled throughout the text lend texture and flavor to the already fascinating subject matter. Liebersohn ultimately succeeds in portraying the production and procession of travel narratives as a series of networks. Germany and Germans were only mercurial ideas in this transitional hundred-year period, but this uncertain vision contributes to further understanding of the instability of structures that were later imagined as fixed, permanent and static, such as nation-states, science, knowledge and European global power. (Nathaniel P. Weston H-Net 2007-02-01)This book is timely, for it addresses, though not intentionally, aspects of globalization that invite the wringing of hands in many quarters...The history of that literary world of travelers has been ably portrayed here...It takes a central place in the growing literature. It is a great credit to author and publisher alike. (Barry Gough Journal of American History 2006-12-01)Liebersohn displays an impressive command of his specialist areas, European intellectual history and German history, but also that rare combination of great breadth of vision with clarity of expression and explanation. He writes in a very readable, accessible style that breathes life into the characters discussed and elucidates his complex and nuanced argument. (Paul D'Arcy International Journal of Maritime History 2006-05-01)The exploration of the Pacific has now been cast as decisive in the emergence of modern science and in the entanglement of science and empire. Harry Liebersohn's book provides a sweeping survey of five groups of people who were involved in travel and who created and reshaped the knowledge that emerged from the exploration of the Pacific. (Sujit Sivasundaram Isis 2007-12-01)The Travelers' World offers an original perspective on how to assess the scope of the impact travel writing had on social and political thought during this period. It also responds to several of the inherent flaws in the scientific and anthropological project in which the 18th and 19th century voyagers participated. Finally, this text urges the reader to reinterpret the body of travel literature in a cumulative context by considering each text in relation to others in the same tradition. (L. Olivia Grenvitz AmeriQuests 2007-01-01)

The Travelers' World is a terrific book. Beautifully written, elegantly organized, and persuasive, this

work is an innovative contribution to the history of travel, and should appeal not only to readers of discovery and exploration but to anyone interested in cultural and global history. (Suzanne Marchand, author of *Down from Olympus*)

For anyone interested in the history of travel or of the early contacts between Europeans and indigenous peoples, this is a wonderfully stimulating book. Liebersohn brings together a deep knowledge of European intellectual history and a very perceptive reading of travel accounts written by some of the lesser-known early voyagers to Tahiti, Hawaii, and other Pacific islands. The real success of the book, in my view, is how he situates these accounts within networks of patrons, local island collaborators, and a reading audience. He writes beautifully, in prose that is never cheapened with too easy judgments or clogged up with jargon. His book would be difficult to summarize, but suffice to say it will make you want to go back and read early travel literature. Very highly recommended. I am going to track down Liebersohn's earlier book, "Aristocratic Encounters," in hopes that it will be as good as this one.

Incredible but the author pretends the reader to believe that the Pacific was discovered for Europe by the North Atlantic nations in the XVIII century. He ignores that already in the XVI century the Pacific had been navigated by Spanish and Portuguese explorers and that from the late XVI century to 1815 the Spanish Manilla Galleons were the main means of transport across the Pacific to America and then, by virtue of the Spanish Atlantic Fleets to Europe. Furthermore, in the XVIII century Spain launched numerous military and scientific expeditions across the Pacific and along the American North Western coast.

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