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SPECIAL FEATURE

Unorthodox Transportation and the Enlightenment

SPECIAL FEATURE INTRODUCTION

UNORTHODOX TRANSPORTATION AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Jessika Wichner

The following collection of essays takes a look at unorthodox means of transportation along water routes and on ice, and unusual travel destinations during the period of the Enlightenment. From the beginning, humans have always strived to move from one place to another. For the most part, people have relied on their own ability to move forward and walk from one destination to the next. The need to convey objects further represented an act of human necessity. In the fourth millennium BC, various means of transportation were developed, such as boats, ships, sleighs, carts, and wagons, and only recently, balloons, airplanes and space-ships. Alongside the transportation of people and objects using traditional means, the invention of unusual vehicles also took place. They developed out of a need to improve on the existing modes of transportation, to fulfil new demands, and to provide people with new vehicles designed to overcome geographical obstacles.

The description of a ship, powered by waterwheels, at the beginning of the nineteenth century is the starting point of Dorit Engster's essay, "The Paddle Wheel Boat: A Technical Invention of Late Antiquity." The operat-

ing mode of the ship resembles the description of a similar vehicle from the fourth century that was also powered by waterwheels. Dorit Engster shows how waterwheels were developed in Greek and Roman Antiquity and how this technical advancement spread to various fields of application among them the propulsion of ships. She also discusses how the transfer of knowledge about waterwheels from Antiquity to the Enlightenment took place. She shows that the technical knowledge of the waterwheel was transmitted by texts and paintings and even survived the Middle Ages without having to be reinvented in the Renaissance.

In the second essay, "Seafaring Nuns: The Journey of Six Capuchin Sisters from Toledo to Mexico City, 1665," by Frieda Koeninger and Raquel Guíérrez Estupiñán, the authors show how a religious problem, namely the adherence to monastic rules for Capuchin sisters, was solved on longer journeys, and in this particular case, how it was solved on a transatlantic crossing. In the seventeenth century voyages like the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean from Spain to Mexico were still tremendously fatiguing and inconvenient adventures. This applied in particular to women and even more to nuns, who suffered enormously from the strains of the journey. Because of the fact that the Capuchin sisters were neither allowed to leave their cloister nor to show themselves in public to men, a mobile cloister had to be built for their journey in accordance with monastic rules. Frieda Koeninger and Raquel Guíérrez Estupiñán show what this unusual means of transportation looked like and how it was used during the journey of the six Capuchian sisters who traveled from Toledo to Mexico City in 1665.

Melvin Pena focuses in his essay, "Cosmopolitan Friendship in James Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to Corsica*," on the unusual voyage of James Boswell to the island of Corsica in 1765 while he was on his grand tour. Voyages to Corsica, the wild and rough island in the western Mediterranean, were already rare, and a detour to Corsica on a grand tour which normally led from court to court on the Continent and enabled young gentlemen to look at the world and the culture of their aristocratic fellowmen was even more seldom. The result of this extraordinary journey was a cosmopolitan friendship between two totally different people: James Boswell, a young author and lawyer, and the despotic Corsican leader Pascal Paoli. Their geographical, social, and cultural descent could not have been more different.

In Jessika Wichner's essay "Winter Travelers: Captain Jones' *Treatise on Skating*," the focus of the analysis is on ice skating. The conveyance of objects and messages by ice skaters over long distances on frozen waterways was typical for countries like Holland and Scandinavia. During the Enlightenment

ice skating became popular in Britain as well, although long-distance skating was no longer suited to a country with a limited number of canals and waterways. This resulted in the alteration of skates in order to meet new demands. Not only did the skates as such change, but also the techniques, which led to a completely new and unorthodox way of skating, which was the advent of figure skating.

This collection of essays is but an illustration of the unusual travel destinations and unorthodox means of transportation which were carried out along various water routes during the Enlightenment. Nonetheless, only a small number of the unorthodox vehicles that existed in the eighteenth century come to light. In fact, the essays presented here are but a first attempt to examine a complex topic that has until now received little consideration in academic works and will hopefully go on to receive more attention in the years to come.