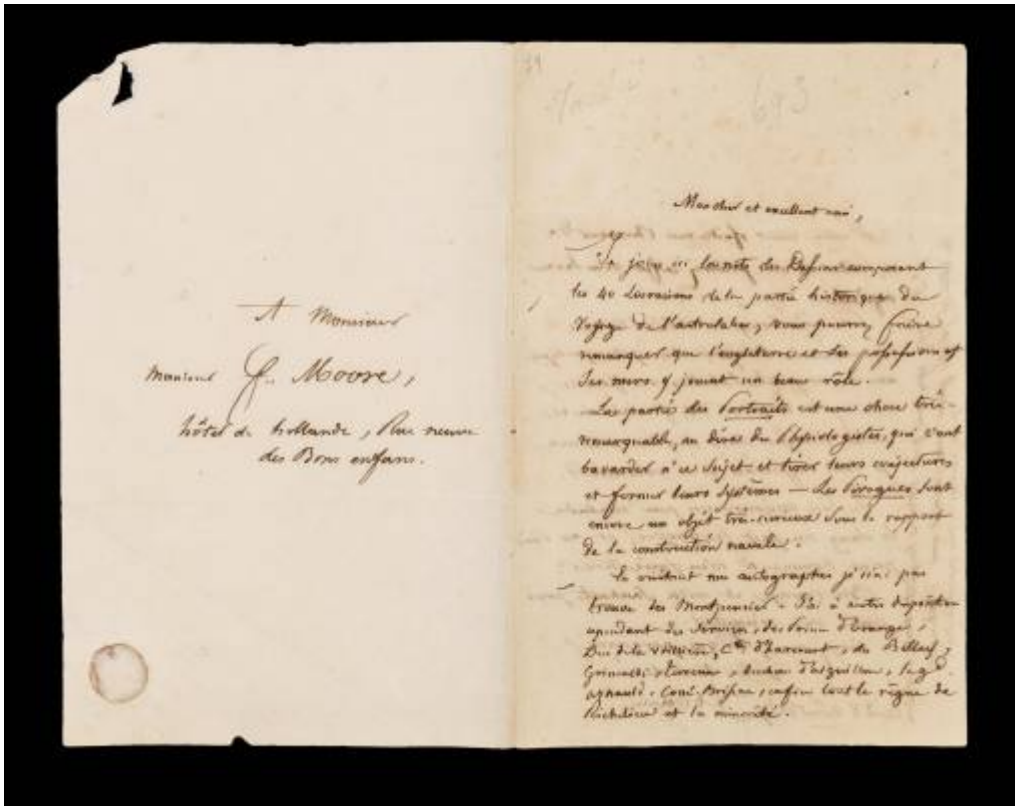


Three octavo manuscript documents in black ink, 2 pp with address leaf, 12pp sewn together, and 4 pp in protective blue cloth chemise.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF DUMONT D'URVILLE'S ASTROLABE VOYAGE

Mon cher et excellent ami...

Author
TASTU, Joseph.

Publication date
26 and 28 August, 1829.

Publisher

Publication place
Paris,

Physical description
Three octavo manuscript documents in black ink, 2 pp with address leaf, 12pp sewn together, and 4 pp in protective blue cloth chemise.

Dimensions

Notes
A revealing group of documents relating to the publication of several important French voyages, including Dumont d'Urville's aboard the 'Astrolabe'.

Born in Perpignan, Joseph Tastu began his career as a printer-bookseller by learning the trade from his father. In his youth he left the south for Paris, where he set up his own printing business, as well

as editing and contributing to several newspapers, and authoring works on the Catalan language and Napoleon. Over the course of his career Tastu developed relationships with several leading scholars, including Nathaniel Fish Moore, a classicist, linguist, and educator, who eventually held the position of President of the Columbia College, now Columbia University. Before receiving this prestigious appointment, Fish Moore travelled and lived in Europe. During the late 1820s he lived for a time in Paris, which is presumably where he first came into contact with Tastu.

At this time, Tastu was in the process of publishing a highly detailed and wonderfully illustrated account of the most important French voyage to the Pacific: the expedition of the 'Astrolabe' led by Dumont D'Urville. The 'Astrolabe' had set sail from Toulon in April 1826, with instruction to explore the principle island groups in the South Pacific, collecting natural specimens and scientific data, and creating maps and charts of important areas.

In the present documents, Tastu writes to Fish Moore about financing the publication, proposing that his friend might help him organize subscriptions in London for the forthcoming work. He explains that the atlas volumes of the publication would run to some 520 plates, 200 for the zoology section, 80 for the botany, and the remaining 240 of the historical section divided between 132 of scenic views, 31 portraits, 9 scenes, 25 costumes, 28 monuments and 15 of native vessels. These predicted totals are a reasonably close match to those that were eventually published, when Tastu released 'Voyage de la corvette l'Astrolabe' between 1830 and 1835.

The full set ran to 26 text volumes and six folio atlases. The plates of its 'Atlas Historique' contained 26 of New Holland, including Sydney and Parramatta, as well as the first views of Port Phillip, now Melbourne, 14 of Tasmania and 31 of New Zealand There, D'Urville's expedition had explored Tasman Bay, found a pass between an island in Cook Strait and the northern shore of South Island (the island consequently named d'Urville and the strait "French Strait") and worked up the coast of North Island, completing the "most comprehensive exploration of the islands since Cook's death".

Tastu's extensive work would be published, he writes to Fish Moore, in livraisons of the plates, delivered to subscribers at a cost of 12 francs each, with two or three livraisons appearing per month, each containing between five and eight plates according to the importance of the section. The plates would form the basis for subscription, with the accompanying text volumes delivered free of charge to subscribers. In a further document Tastu gives more details about these topographical views, promising that they would be of the highest quality, all printed on china paper and the majority coloured. "The series of portraits is a very remarkable thing, according to the physiologists, who will long discuss the subject and draw conjectures and create their systems. The canoes [prirogues] also represent a very curious object from the point of view of shipbuilding".

In this document he also sets out a commercial agreement for Fish Moore to solicit subscriptions on his behalf, and authorizes him to sell the original drawings for his publication of Vivant Denon's great 'Voyage dans la haute et basse d'Egypte'. Tastu was in the process of publishing a second edition of Denon's description of the Napoleonic expedition into Egypt, first published in 1802. He refers to his proposal of a special issue of only 150 copies. More significantly, he makes available almost the entire collection of original drawings and sketches for the book, suggesting that Moore could offer them as a group for 4000 francs, for which he would receive a 25% commission. If he must sell the group for a more modest 3000 francs he would still earn 500 francs.

The final memorandum, a very neatly written 12 pages in rather formal language, was evidently to serve as an agreement or aide-memoire between Tastu and Fish Moore. It quotes major points from the publisher's prospectus for the Dumont d'Urville publication, describes how the publisher wishes to solicit English subscriptions, and outlines the commercial arrangement between the two men. Tastu wants an arrangement with an English business who will undertake to gain subscribers for

200 copies at a discount of up to 33%. He discusses territorial rights, apparently offering the London party the right to sales in the two Americas, India, and Oceania. He also mentions that if a London printing house considers an English version viable, he would be able to supply the printed plates, including making suitable edits to the captions.

Tastu also asks Moore while in London to purchase for him, on behalf of Dumont d'Urville, any memoirs or recent works on New South Wales, including specifically a copy of Cunningham's 'Two Years' Residence in New South Wales' (1827), and above all the work of a Monsieur Parmoter in Sydney if such has been published. It is not clear to which work or author this final and emphatic request refers.

Overall, Tastu's correspondence with Fish Moore reveals not only interesting details about the works he was to publish, but also valuable insight into the printing and bookselling trade in general.

Bibliography

Provenance

Price:

Inventory reference: 17586

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