

Correspondence

Sir,

The priest J.P.D.C., referred to as an 'unidentified Prêtre Indien' in Evelyn Stokes's contribution to your last issue, is no mystery. He was a Canon of St. Peter's at Lisieux, Father Jean Paulmier de Courtonne. It seems fairly incontrovertible that he was descended from Essomeric, an 'Indian' brought back to France by Gonneville (see Patrick O'Reilly, 'Le Chanonie Paulmier de Courtonne et son projet d'évangélisation des terres australes', *Revue d'histoire des missions* (September 1932), 322-39. Also E. Boissais, *Binot Paulmier dit le capitaine de Gonneville, son voyage, sa descendance*, Caen, 1912; and C. Bréard, *Notes sur la famille du capitaine Gonneville*, Rouen, 1885). Any French claim to pre-1642 knowledge of New Zealand based on Gonneville's voyage would be very tenuous; only J. B. de la Borde expressed the belief that Gonneville's landfall was in the neighbourhood of New Zealand, but he was merely an amateur historian. A similar description of A. S. Thomson would not be unfair: his claim that the 'manners and customs of the islanders where de Gonneville anchored . . . correspond wonderfully with the habits of the New Zealanders' conveniently ignores Gonneville's comment on the dexterity with which these islanders used bows and arrows.

Commentators were often led astray by the adjective 'austral' which simply means 'southern' and can be applied to any place south of the Equator, not necessarily near the Australian continent. Gonneville's landfall was fairly successfully identified with a part of the coast of South America in 1847 when Pierre Margry demonstrated that Gonneville did not turn the Cape of Good Hope but remained in the Atlantic.

J. DUNMORE

Massey University