

Provenance

This copy of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier's *The Six Voyages* carries an unusually attractive piece of near-contemporary provenance. On the front pastedown is an elegant manuscript inscription dated **10 September 1681**, only three years after the publication of this first English edition in London in 1678. Shapero Rare Books records the provenance as **"Henry Gorges, the gift of his father Charles,"** and specifically identifies the dated inscription in its Certificate of Authenticity.

The inscription begins **"Liber Henrici Gorges"**—"The book of Henry Gorges"—and records the volume as a gift from his father. It also appears to record its acquisition in London and the contemporary price, **17 shillings**. The inscription is therefore considerably more than a later collector's ownership mark: it documents the book's circulation within a few years of publication and provides a tangible connection with its earliest period of readership.

The precise identities of **Henry and Charles Gorges have not yet been established with certainty**. Research into the prominent seventeenth-century Gorges families has produced potentially interesting candidates, but none should presently be asserted without further documentary evidence. Accordingly, the safest catalogue practice is to retain Shapero's identification while avoiding an unsupported connection with a particular branch of the Gorges family.

The provenance is especially appealing because the volume itself substantially preserves its early physical character. Shapero describes it as bound in **contemporary sprinkled calf**, subsequently neatly rebacked while preserving the old red morocco lettering-piece. The book is complete with its **24 engraved plates** and is described by Shapero as "a very good copy."

Thus, the 1681 Gorges inscription provides this copy with something particularly desirable in an antiquarian travel book: **documented ownership extending almost to the moment of publication**, complementing the survival of its contemporary binding and complete suite of illustrations.