



## STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (090)

**TEXT:** *Viajes al Río de la Plata y de allí por tierra al Perú*

**AUTHOR:** Accarete du Biscay

**EDITOR:** Jean-Paul Duvivier (Université de Paris-Sorbonne)

### PART 1: CRITICAL CONTEXT

(Based on Prof. Duvivier's Introduction)

#### 1. THE AUTHOR: A CLANDESTINE TRAVELER

##### **Who was Accarete?**

A French merchant (likely Basque from Ciboure) who posed as a Spaniard ("sobrino de Maleo") to bypass the strict Spanish monopoly laws.

##### **The Mask:**

He learned Spanish perfectly and used a false identity to travel to Buenos Aires and Potosí (1657-1659).

##### **The Motive:**

Purely economic. He represents the rising bourgeois ambition against the rigid Spanish mercantilist system. He was effectively an industrial spy for France (reporting to Minister Colbert).

#### 2. THE GEOPOLITICS OF SMUGGLING (CONTRABANDO)

##### **The System:**

Spain forced all trade through the "Galeones" system (Sevilla -> Panama -> Lima). This made goods in Buenos Aires incredibly expensive and scarce.

##### **The Reality:**

Buenos Aires survived thanks to smuggling (Dutch, English, French). Accarete's chronicle documents this "open secret" where governors accepted bribes to look the other way.

##### **Historical Value:**

The text reveals the fragility of the Spanish Empire's borders and the pragmatism of colonial life.

#### 3. TWO CITIES, TWO WORLDS:

##### **Buenos Aires:**

Described as a muddy village, defenseless ("no walls, no moat"), but rich in cattle and leather.

##### **Potosí:**

The "Imperial Villa." A metropolis of 160,000 people (larger than Paris at the time), opulent, expensive, and obsessed with silver.

##### **The Contrast:**



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Accarette provides a unique eyewitness account of the route connecting the Atlantic to the Andes.

## PART 2: CLASSROOM DISCUSSION TOPICS

### THEME A: *The Picaresque & Identity*

#### *Discussion:*

How does Accarette construct his persona? Analyze the scenes where he deceives authorities (e.g., carrying secret papers for the Viceroy). Is he a hero or a villain?

#### *Comparison:*

Compare his narrative voice (observational, calculating) with the impassioned voice of Las Casas. How does the "purpose" of the text change the description of the New World?

### THEME B: *Center vs. Periphery*

#### *Analysis:*

Buenos Aires was the "back door" of the Empire. Discuss how geography dictated economy and morality. Why were smugglers heroes in Buenos Aires but criminals in Seville?

#### *Textual Evidence:*

Look for passages describing the "abundance" of the Pampas vs. the scarcity of manufactured goods.

### THEME C:

#### *The "Other" Gaze*

#### *Discussion:*

Accarette is a Frenchman looking at Spaniards. How does he describe them? (Lazy? Corrupt? Hospitable?).

#### *Spy Report:*

Analyze the text as an intelligence report for Louis XIV. What details does he emphasize (fortifications, wealth, women)? Why?



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## PART 3: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

### 1. What was Accarette's primary motivation for traveling to the Americas?

- A) To convert indigenous people to Christianity.
- B) To conduct scientific research on flora and fauna.
- C) Commercial profit and smuggling opportunities.
- D) To escape religious persecution in France.

(Correct: C)

### 2. How did Accarette manage to enter Spanish territory legally?

- A) He obtained a special permit from the Pope.
- B) He posed as the Basque nephew of a Spanish captain named Maleo.
- C) He invaded Buenos Aires with a French fleet.
- D) He entered through Brazil without being seen.

(Correct: B)

### 3. According to Accarette, what was the main economic activity in Buenos Aires?

- A) Silver mining.
- B) Sugar plantations.
- C) Trading cattle hides (cueros) and smuggling.
- D) Silk production.

(Correct: C)

### 4. Why did the Spanish Crown prohibit direct trade with Buenos Aires?

- A) To protect the monopoly of the Seville-Panama-Lima route.
- B) Because the river was too dangerous for navigation.
- C) Because Buenos Aires had no goods to offer.
- D) To prevent the spread of diseases.

(Correct: A)

### 5. What contrast does Accarette draw between Buenos Aires and Potosí?

- A) Buenos Aires is rich and Potosí is poor.
- B) Buenos Aires is a defenseless village; Potosí is an opulent, crowded metropolis.
- C) Both cities are identical in size and wealth.
- D) Potosí is a port city; Buenos Aires is in the mountains.

(Correct: B)



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## PART 4: CITATION GUIDE (Stockcero Edition)

**Why cite this edition?** The Stockcero edition (ISBN 978-987-1136-26-1) includes the critical introduction by Jean-Paul Duviols, providing essential context on the geopolitical intrigue behind the text.

**Sample Citation (MLA):** Accarette du Biscay. *Viajes al Río de la Plata*. Edited by Jean-Paul Duviols, Stockcero, 2006.

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