
THE MYSTERIOUS EASTLAND REVEALED

Michael Ross

Abel Janszoon Tasman set sail from Batavia on 14 August 1642 “to discover the partly known and still unreached South and Eastland” with the intended commercial payoff for the Dutch East India Company (VOC), of establishing “a short passage to Chile”. Guided by his pilot-major Visscher, super-cargo Gilsemans, and assisted by 110 “able men” on the flute **Zeehaen** and the ship **Heemskerck**, Tasman embarked on one of the Pacific’s most remarkable and well-documented voyages of discovery.

For 350 years historians have examined Tasman’s official report to the VOC, the maps and illustrations of the voyage by Visscher and Gilsemans, and the company records of the VOC, which together provide a comprehensive analysis of the entire voyage and its context. Remarkably, while volumes of historical scholarship have been devoted to the “Southland”, not one sentence has ever explored the multiple references to the mysterious “Eastland”. Nor has anyone ever publicly revealed any investigation into why Tasman’s sailing instructions and plans contained the most precise latitudinal and longitudinal directions of any voyage of exploration in the Pacific, including all three of Cook’s voyages.

Although ignored by researchers for three and a half centuries, these factors suggest Tasman and Visscher followed very clear and precise map information, towards a perceived eastern coastline. Evidence, in both a contemporary map and globe available to Tasman and Visscher, and prepared by an official mapmaker to the VOC, suggests Tasman’s voyage was as much a carefully planned voyage of confirmation as it was of exploration. It suggests Tasman and his advisors believed they already knew the broad extent of the “South and Eastland”, as well as the probable pathways to Chile, and were primarily looking to confirm their theories. That map and globe may forever change the way Dutch exploration of Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific is viewed.

THE FORGOTTEN EASTLAND

Abel Tasman’s epic voyage of exploration of 1642-43 was “a great deal more ambitious than anything that had been attempted before”¹, encompassing more than one-quarter of the earth’s surface. After a journey of some 48 degrees west and 20 degrees south from Batavia² merely to position the fleet at Mauritius, the expedition proper involved travelling a further 30 degrees south, 110 degrees east to the west coast of New Zealand, followed by northerly then westerly legs, eventually returning to Batavia, their starting point.

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The context of the voyage was clearly defined in the 1 August 1642 resolution of the Governor General and Councillors of the Dutch East India Company (VOC):

As our predecessors, the Lords Governors-General Jan Pietersen Coen, deceased, Pieter de Carpentier, Henrick Brouwer, and we, during their Hons. and our governing, have been much inclined, to sail to, accordingly to discover, the partly known and still unreached South and Eastern land, and also consequently to seek out any important lands, or leastwise of convenient passages to known rich places, and to use these at a more convenient time, for the improvement, and increase of the Company’s general welfare...³

Although the VOC knew of the “...south and east land...”, it was still, in their minds, “unexplored”. They had a strong drive to “...discover...” these lands, to locate and explore them for themselves.

... we have since amply and fully conferred with divers persons known to be thoroughly conversant with the matter in hand, more especially with the renowned and highly experienced pilot Frans Jacobssen Visscher,

touching discoveries eventually to be made, and the direction in which they had best be undertaken ...⁴

And the focus was not only on the lands to the south, on which all historical analysis to date focuses, but equally on those to the east as contemporary VOC reports on several voyages record.

In 1606 the Dutch East India Company sent the little ship **Duyfken**, captained by Willem Janszoon, to search for “*south and east lands*”.⁵ Jan Vos’ expedition in the **Hasewint** and **Haring** in 1622 was to explore the “*...east coast of the southland*”.⁶ Gerrit Pool’s 1636 voyage in the **Eendracht** had “*...by contrary winds been prevented from proceeding so far to the east and south as we would have wished...*”⁷ Abel Tasman’s instructions for his subsequent 1644 voyage referred to the “*...further discovery of the unknown East and South lands*”.⁸

Even Tasman’s own inventory records reiterated the dual focus. The invoice for the cargoes he carried stated “*...in case of successful discovery of southern or eastern lands*”.⁹

A REMARKABLE EXPEDITION

The evidence shows that not only was Tasman’s 1642 expedition the most ambitious attempted by the VOC, but that it was also probably the most calculated exploration in their history.¹⁰ Sailing very precise courses, they attempted to verify the existence of lands they believed existed in the South-West Pacific. Confirmation of the existence of these lands would not only provide access to potential new wealth, but would also provide them with the commercial advantage of a direct passage to Spanish-dominated South America.

The expedition departed Batavia on 14 August 1642, in two vessels: the flute **Zeehaen**, and the ship **Heemskerck**. Expedition leader Tasman was assisted by pilot-major (chief navigator) Franchoijs Jacobszoon Visscher, super-cargo Isaac Gilsemans, and 110 soldiers and sailors.

On their return to Batavia on 15 May 1643, the expedition reported a number of remarkable accomplishments. Not only had they ‘discovered’ the south coast of Tasmania, the west coast of New Zealand, Tonga and the Fiji Islands, but they also believed they had found a new route across the Pacific to South America.

THE KEY PLAYERS

The three key personnel on this voyage were VOC professionals of long standing. Very much the sailor and leader, Tasman was born in a village called Lutjegast in Vriesland about 1603. By 1634 he was a first mate for the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Gambon. He rose through the ranks rapidly, becoming a senior officer in 1636 and by 1638 was captain of a VOC ship. In 1639 he captained the second vessel in Quast’s exploration of the Pacific Ocean east of Japan. Several voyages in the Asian region followed until his commission to lead the 1642 expedition to the “*partly known and still unreached South and Eastern land*”¹¹.

Franchoijs Jacobszoon Visscher, a native of Flushing, arrived in Asia about ten years earlier than Tasman. As a mate and steersman¹² on the Nassau fleet (1623-6) of Jacob L’Hermite and Hugo Schapeham, that had sailed from the Netherlands via Cape Horn rather than by the traditional Cape of Good Hope route, he eventually arrived in South-East Asia. An interesting encounter with the notion of the “*South and Eastern land*” occurred during that journey. When the Nassau fleet gathered at Juan Fernandez¹³ in April 1624, after the inevitable dispersal sailing through the Straits of Magellan, one ship in the fleet, the **Orange**, reported “*twice on her passage, to have seen the Southern Continent, once in 50° S and again in the latitude of 41° S*”¹⁴. Visscher was later to develop the proposal that led to Tasman’s 1642 expedition, and to be navigator for the expedition.

Isaac Gilsemans, born in Rotterdam, came out to the East Indies in 1634 as a ‘corporal’ and rose to the position of coop man or merchant,

whose job was to assess the commercial potential of any new lands found on the voyage. His visible contributions to the expedition were in the form of the illustrations incorporated into Tasman's official journal, and his map-making. He is also thought to be responsible for supervising the transcription of Tasman's journal.¹⁵

The connections between these key players were probably as equally important to the success of the 1642 expedition as their individual roles. The VOC bought them together in Japan in 1640 at the former Portuguese port and enclave of Hirado. While resident there, Tasman was a member of the Dutch Council which managed their onshore activities, Visscher carried out charting work for the Japanese lord who oversaw the Dutch activities, and Gilsemans managed the Dutch foundry which produced bronze mortar gun barrels for a local shogun in his battle against the Christians. It was probably at this time that Visscher's proposal to explore the "southland" and "eastland" had its genesis.

Gilsemans was also involved with Tasman in 1639 when he prepared the chart of the voyage of Quast and Tasman to find the "Islands of Gold" off the east coast of Japan.

... this chart survives as a testament to the first time that Gilsemans combined Tasman's journal information, Visscher's navigational knowledge, and his own cartographic skills.¹⁶

Following their success in the 1642-3 expedition, all three again combined their skills on Tasman's 1644 voyage to Northern Australia.

WITH GREAT PRECISION

While Tasman's 1642 expedition was itself quite remarkable, of equal interest is the absolute precision in the plans, instructions, and courses they navigated. It is difficult to identify another journey of discovery so precisely guided as Tasman's either before or after him. That includes James Cook, who sailed under much more general directions.

Visscher's original proposal of January 1642 suggested three alternative means of sailing in the exploration zone below what we now know as Australia, and across the Tasman Sea. Tasman's formal instructions, prepared by the VOC, Visscher and Tasman himself, based on Visscher's original proposal, were quite specific:

You will sail nearly southward until you come upon the unknown south land, or as far south as latitude 52 or 54 degrees, inclusive; and if in this latitude you should not discover any land, you will set your course due east, and sail on until you get into the longitude of the eastern point of Nova Guinea, or of the Salamonis islands, situated in about 220 degrees longitude, or until you meet with land.¹⁷

Once the second phase of the expedition, from Mauritius, was underway, Visscher became even more precise in his directions. His memoir to Tasman on 7 November 1642, when they were in the latitude of 49 degrees South, recommended:

... So it is our advice that one ought to stay, in the 44 deg. Southern latitude until [one has] passed as far as the 150 degrees of the longitude, departing then to the 40 Degrees latitude, and staying there on an east course, as far as the longitude of 220 degrees making then the course north.¹⁸

These recommendations display a remarkably precise planning: 52 to 54 degrees; 44 degrees; 40 degrees; 150 degrees; 220 degrees. It was the realisation of this very precision in Visscher's proposed course, illustrated in **Figure 1 - The Expedition Council's Navigational Plans**, which was the primary trigger for the research that led to this paper.

The fundamental question that formed itself was: Why would Visscher plan such a precise course? Were they not searching for a large landmass, or at least expecting an open ocean? The only feasible answer is that he believed he was in fact sailing around expected coastlines.

The second trigger was the repeated references in Tasman's journal to the supposed existence of islands in the vicinity of the planned courses. Read individually, some may be interpreted in several different ways. Deep in the Southern

Ocean, on 7 November 1642, Visscher advised Tasman and the ships' council:

... if one meets no land up to the 150 degrees longitude then [we] Shall be again in an open Sea, unless [we] meet Islands ...¹⁹

Other references however can only be interpreted to refer to specific islands. On 20 December 1642, when he anchored off the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand, having fled his fatal encounter with the Maori the previous day, Tasman noted:

... Saw here land lying round about so that [we] had sailed fully 30 miles into a bight, we had previously thought the land where we had been at anchor to be an Island not doubting [we] Shall find from there a passage into the open South Sea ...²⁰

VISSCHER'S MAPS

As Pilot-Major, responsible for the expedition's navigation, Visscher used a number of maps, globes, and charts to assist in his work. On 7 November 1642 he referred to a "*Terrestrial globe...*"²¹ and a "*...large chart of the South Sea*"²².

Sharp²³ and Wallis²⁴ believe the globe "*was one of the globes of Willem Janz Blaeu of 1602 or 1608*". Sharp also believes that the "*...large chart of the South Sea*" was probably a later revision of Hessel Gerritsz's "*Map of the South Sea*" of 1622²⁵. Gerritsz was the Dutch East India Company cartographer from 1617 to 1632.²⁶

Recent analysis of the Blaeu globe shows the "*easternmost islands of the salamonis*"²⁷ are shown to lie in 210 degrees, not 220 degrees²⁸ as suggested by Wallis and Sharp. Perhaps more importantly, the prime meridian of the Blaeu globes is not the Azores, which was identified by Visscher in his 7 November memoir²⁹ as the meridian for the globe in their possession, but Tenerife. Blaeu made a point of this matter, including a detailed explanation of his own thesis in a cartouche on each globe.

Similarly, analysis of the Gerritsz chart demonstrates further discrepancies. Sharp acknowledges those contradictions: "*The proportionate distances and the absolute distances in that map differ markedly from those in Visscher's analysis*"³⁰. The confusion would appear to be in the identification of the charts, not in the navigation itself.

Later in the expedition, on 14 February 1643, when they were debating whether they had reached Nova Guinea or not, Gilsemans referred to the globe, the chart, and also "*the charting of the portuguese*"³¹. While Sharp³² notes "*The 'Portuguese' charting was probably a representation stemming from Spanish source*", he offers no evidence to support that view.

The implication of Sharp's statement, that the Dutch at the time, and Tasman and Visscher in particular, were not aware of the difference between Spanish and Dutch exploration, would seem to be quite ill-founded. Tasman's battles against the Spanish, his capture of at least one of their galleons, and the time Visscher and Tasman spent at Hirado, the former Portuguese enclave in Japan, immediately prior to their 1642-43 expedition, would suggest there is in fact evidence to the contrary.

It is possible that Gilsemans was not in fact referring to a specific Portuguese chart at all. His language in this section of Tasman's Journal relates to the act of putting information on a chart – "charting". This is in contrast to his earlier references to a specific chart (and globe). Gilsemans was probably referring to a Portuguese person who was the known source of the information on a chart they had in their possession.

One key aspect that has not been explored in any analysis of Tasman's expedition to date is the nature and source of maps available to Visscher, Tasman, and Gilsemans. These probable errors in academic analysis to date suggest the VOC voyagers had access to contemporary maps or charts different from those cited in that earlier analysis.

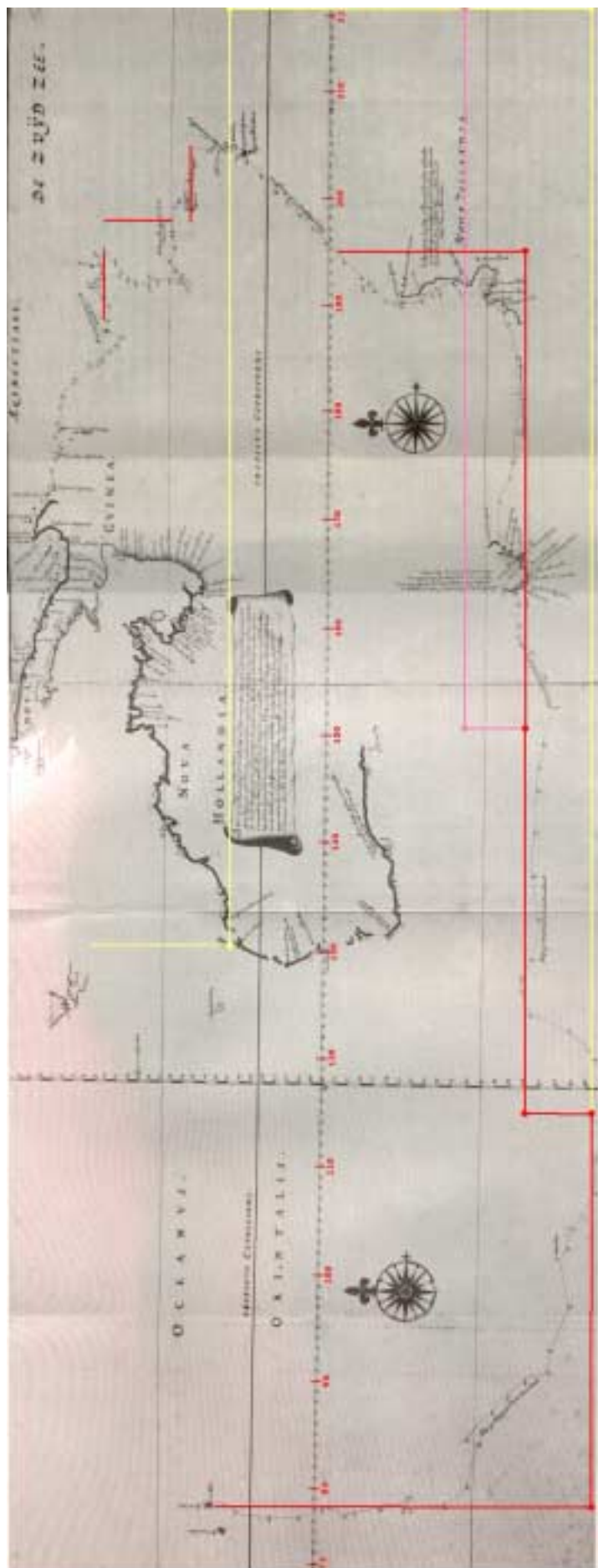


Figure 1. The Expedition Council's Navigational Plans.

The navigational directions made in the formal instructions to Tasman's expedition, together with Visscher's 7 November 1642 memoir, and the final decisions made by the Expedition Council at various stages of the voyage, have been digitally superimposed on a copy of the 'Eugene' manuscript chart prepared by Visscher after Tasman's 1644 expedition to Northern Australia. The map includes all the disclosed Dutch discoveries known by Tasman and his Expedition Council.

Longitudinal references are measured from the Tenerife meridian, but do not include an adjustment for the error of 4 degrees in the reference position of Mauritius recorded in Tasman's log, and displayed in Visscher's MS maps. Mauritius lies in 74 degrees from Tenerife, not 78 degrees as charted by Visscher.

The Expedition Council's agreed courses are plotted in red. Tasman's formal instructions, where they vary from the Expedition Council's agreed courses, are plotted in yellow. Navigator Visscher's recommended courses, where they vary from the Council's final decisions, are plotted in pink. See also endnote 54.

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COLOUR PLATE (Fig 1)

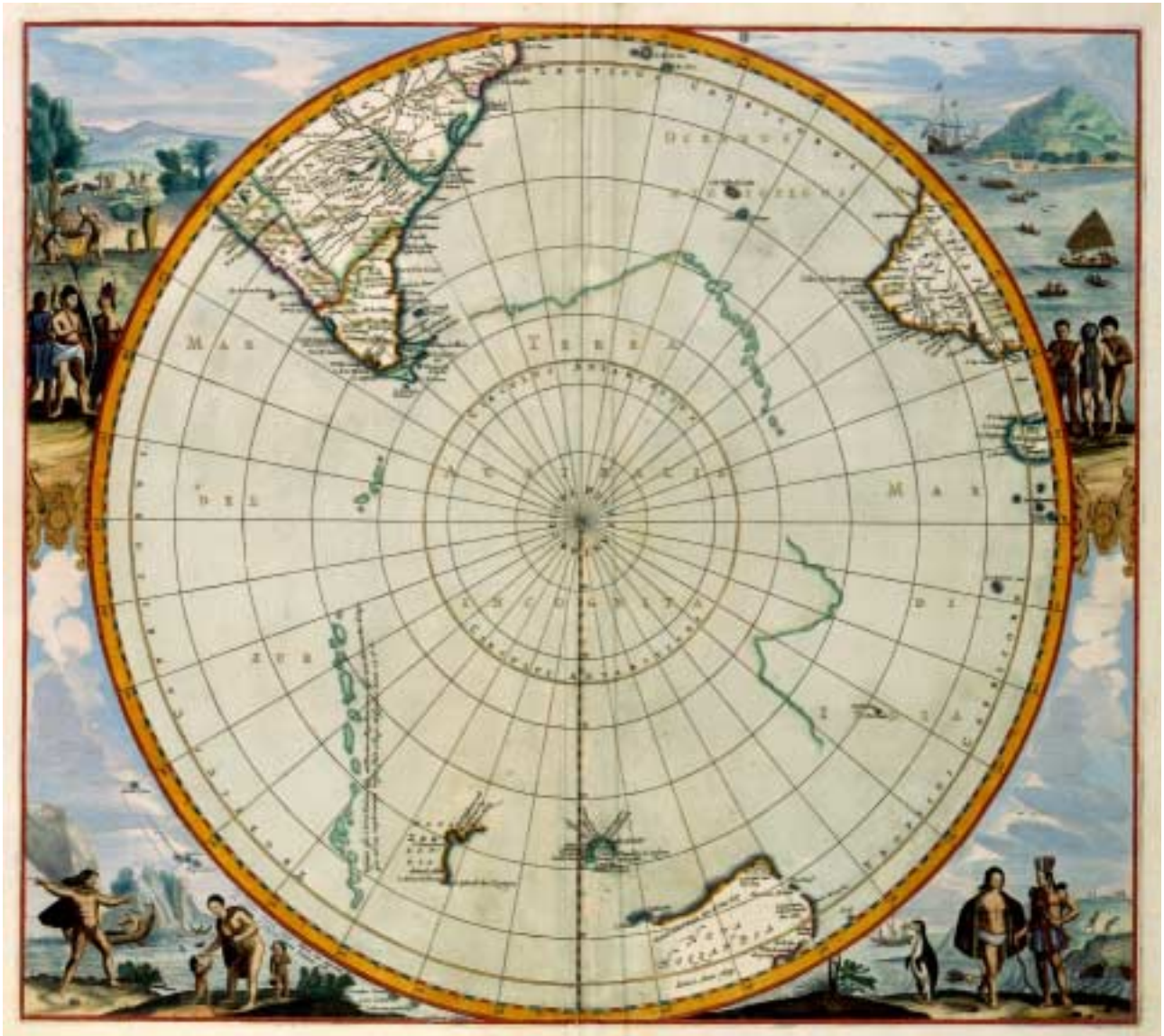


Figure 2. Polus Antarcticus.

*The fourth state of **Polus Antarcticus**, published in 1652, shows Tasman's discoveries during his 1642-3 and 1644 expeditions. The first state (1637), which Tasman had access to, omitted these discoveries and several other minor aspects. The island chain and delineated coastlines of Terra Incognita remained constant except for minor variations in the Indian Ocean and around the Straits of Magellan, both resulting from new exploration reports.*

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COLOUR PLATE (Fig. 2)

UNVEILING THE MYSTERY

Tasman, Visscher, and Gilsemans would have had access to Dutch map publisher Henricus Hondius as a source of contemporary maps and globes. Hondius continued the family business begun by his father Jodocus Hondius Senior, a great rival of Blaeu in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, producing both maps and globes with his brother Jodocus (the Younger) and brother-in-law Jansson, until his death in 1651.

Two key maps he produced were the double hemispherical³³ world map **Nova Totivs Terrarvm Orbis Geographica**, and the hemispherical **Polus Antarcticus (Figure 2)**. **Nova Totivs Terrarvm Orbis Geographica**, published in 1630, showed the 1606 North Australian discoveries of Willem Janszoon in the **Duyfken**.

Polus Antarcticus, originally published in 1637³⁴, was one of the first maps to show Pieter Nuyts' 1627 discoveries on the southern coast of Australia. When its fourth state was released in 1652 it had been updated to show Tasman's 1642-3 and 1644 expeditions.

Henricus Hondius was also the globe supplier to the VOC. While Hondius' map publishing competitor Blaeu is often credited with this authority, van der Krogt has noted:

From ca 1603 to 1634, the Hondius firm had a monopoly on globes delivered to the Dutch East India Company.³⁵

Van der Krogt further reveals the nature of the globes that would have been available automatically to Visscher and Tasman under this arrangement:

Henricus Hondius published a new edition of the Hondius firm's largest globe in 1640 ... The 1640 terrestrial globe of 21 inches was completely revised ... Its most significant changes are: the Dutch explorations of the coast of new Holland (after 1616); ... the complete findings of Schouten and Le Maire's voyage (1616) ...³⁶

This 21-inch **1640 Terrestrial Globe** appears to contain the same information as **Polus Antarcticus**.³⁷ Critically, all three navigational tools reveal an identical eastern coastline in about 220° of longitude (the Azores being prime meridian), between the Tropic of Capricorn and 40° south.

THE HONDIUS THESIS

It is the thesis of this paper that the coastline identified on these three map representations is the "eastland" referred to repeatedly by the VOC and their explorers from at least 1606 until Tasman's voyage of 1642.

It is also proposed that the islands referred to by both Tasman and Visscher are the chain of islands shown in **Polus Antarcticus** to follow this "eastland" coastline, extending further to about 52° south.

The legend beside that island chain in **Polus Antarcticus** states that it was discovered by "*Hernandus Galego*", for the Spanish King, in 1576. Hernando Gallego was the Chief Pilot on Mendaña's 1567 expedition, which discovered the Solomon Islands³⁸. Gallego himself led several expeditions from their Solomon's base, discovering an estimated 16 more islands. While he sailed on Spanish ships from his South American base, he was in fact Portuguese. Consequently it is proposed that the phrase "*the charting of the portuguese*" refers to Gallego, and to this island chain.

Further, it is proposed that the very precise courses laid down in the instructions and in Visscher's memoir of 7 November 1642, were dictated by the coastlines and islands recorded in **Polus Antarcticus** and the **1640 Hondius Globe**.

Collectively this strongly suggests that Tasman and Visscher were using on the voyage a globe very similar to the **1640 Hondius Globe**, which contained information probably identical to that contained in Hondius' **Polus Antarcticus**³⁹.



Figure 3. The Safe Passage.



Figure 4. Straits of Magellan.

Figures 3 and 4 are excerpts from *Polus Antarcticus, fourth State, 1652*, with digitally overlaid latitude references.

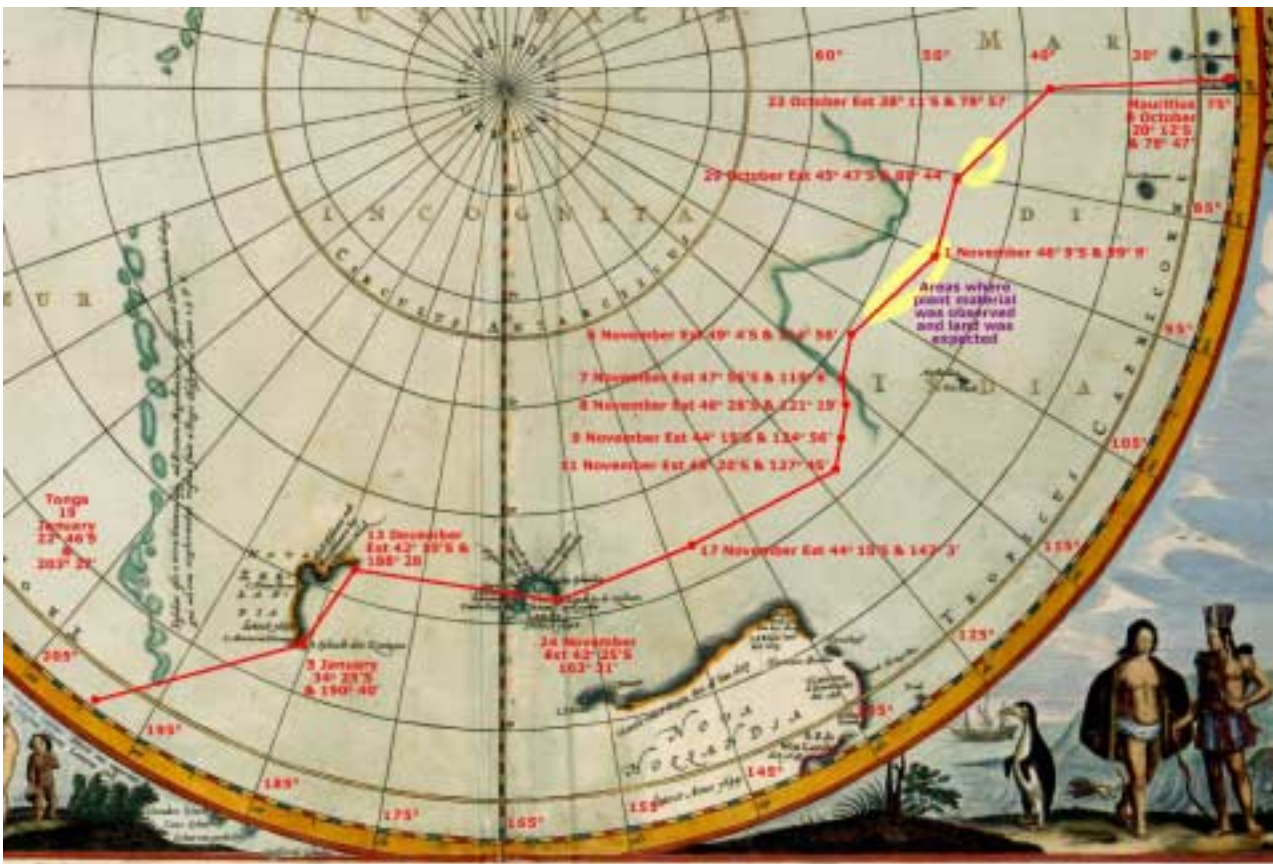


Figure 5. Polus Antarcticus and Tasman’s Actual Course.

*This Figure relates an approximation of the actual course Tasman sailed, to **Polus Antarcticus**. The course has been digitally superimposed on an excerpt from the fourth state of that map. This state has been used as it assists in the identification of the relationship between the course sailed and the locations of both the supposed, and the discovered, lands.*

*The approximation has been achieved by plotting positions recorded in Tasman’s Journal on specified dates (identified on the Figure by the date and the recorded position). These positions are either observed or estimated positions, and the variations from the true positions illustrate the difficulty in calculating the longitudinal position at the time of Tasman’s voyage. A more accurate plotting of the course sailed is provided in **Figure 1**.*

Alterations to the longitudinal references have been made (in red) to align the Azores meridian with Tenerife. Tasman and Visscher’s error of 4 degrees in the location of Mauritius (74 degrees from the prime meridian, not 78 degrees) is evident at each position.

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COLOUR PLATE (Fig 5)

REVIEWING THE EVIDENCE

A detailed examination of the very precise VOC instructions, and Visscher's own navigational recommendations, which were usually accepted by the expedition's council, provides a remarkable insight into the geographic pre-knowledge of that council. The first element was the Southern limit to the exploration:

You will sail nearly southward until you come upon the unknown south land, or as far south as latitude 52 or 54 degrees, inclusive.⁴⁰

The evidence from **Polus Antarcticus** suggests two linked reasons for this specific instruction: the safe passage between the southern extremity of the "Gallego" island chain and the northern end of a smaller charted chain in higher latitudes was precisely between 52° and 54° (**Figure 3**); and sailing this course would bring a ship to the Straits of Magellan (**Figure 4**), and eventually to Europe.

In the absence of any southern landmass such a course would bring these explorers directly to Chile, one of their specific objectives. If a landmass were discovered, then their second voyage objective, to "*seek out any important lands, or leastwise of convenient passages to known rich places*"⁴¹ would be realised.

VISSCHER'S MEMOIR

Deep in the Southern Ocean, at an estimated 49° 4' south, Tasman recorded "*rockweed drifting in many lots*", a "*great abundance of tunnies*", together with the sighting of a "*sea-seal*". From the weight of this evidence they "*surmise that some Islands might be here about.*"⁴² The location of these sightings is identified in **Figure 5 – Polus Antarcticus and Tasman's Actual Course**.

At this point, on 4 November 1642, they were only about 5 degrees away from the supposed southern coastline mapped on the Hondius documents. Confirming his suspicion that a coastline lay close by, and with the weather

continuing to cause major problems, Tasman "*...dared not therefore to let her continue on, but after cook's serving stood to the north...*"⁴³.

While the **Zeehaen** and the ship **Heemskerck** continued to battle the southern seas Tasman decided critical decisions need to be made, and that meant consulting with his expedition council. As the two ships were unable to get close it was left to Visscher to prepare a plan. He delivered it to Tasman on 7 November 1642 and its key recommendations were:

... So it is our advice that one ought to stay, in the 44 deg. Southern latitude until [one has] passed as far as the 150 degrees of the longitude, departing then to the 40 Degrees latitude, and staying there on an east course, as far as the longitude of 220 degrees making then the course north.⁴⁴

This strategy raises a number of questions. Firstly, why return to 44 degrees south? Why sail that course to 150 degrees longitude? Why then switch to 40 degrees south?

An examination of **Figure 6 - Polus Antarcticus and the Expedition's Planned Courses** provides clear answers. Adjusting the longitude for the differing meridians, longitudinal inexactitudes described by Visscher⁴⁵, and the error in the longitude of the starting point Mauritius⁴⁶, the supposed coastline illustrated in **Polus Antarcticus** matches Visscher's recommendations. The proposed course would guide them around the Hondius coastline and guide them below the known southern coastline of the land they had named Nova Hollandia.

On 11 November 1642, after he was able to obtain a written response from the other expedition council members, Tasman wrote:

... the officers of the Zeehaen came to our ship, and then with the full council have resolved in the Southern latitude of about 44 degrees from the present longitude (being reckoned by averaging in 123 deg. 29 minutes) as far as 195 degrees which is the eastern border of Nova Guinea as it is inscribed in the chart; ...⁴⁷

Explanatory note for Figure 6.

*This Figure relates the three different navigational courses proposed prior to, and during, Tasman's expedition. These courses have been digitally superimposed on an excerpt from the fourth state of **Polus Antarcticus**. This state has been used as it assists in the identification of the relationship between the various planned courses and the locations of both the supposed, and the discovered, lands.*

The Expedition Council's navigational decisions from 7 November 1642 onwards are used as the reference course, and are plotted in yellow. Tasman's formal instructions are plotted in red where they vary from that course, and the variations of Visscher's 7 November memoir recommendations from the Council's decisions are plotted in cyan.

Alterations to the longitudinal references have been made (in red) to align the Azores meridian with Tenerife. All the courses include an adjustment for the error of 4 degrees in the reference position of Mauritius recorded in Tasman's log, and displayed in Visscher's MS maps of the voyage. Mauritius lies in 74 degrees from Tenerife, not 78 degrees as both documents recorded.

Explanatory note for Figure 7.

*This excerpt from the fourth state (1652) of **Polus Antarcticus** shows the island chain in the vicinity of the discovered west coast of New Zealand, the supposed coastline along the eastern margin of those islands from approximately 25 degrees south to 40 degrees south, and the gap between the islands below that coastline that Tasman and Visscher were expecting, at 40 degrees south.*

*The digitally overlaid latitude and longitude references (in red) correspond to the actual references on **Polus Antarcticus**, with the Azores being the prime meridian.*

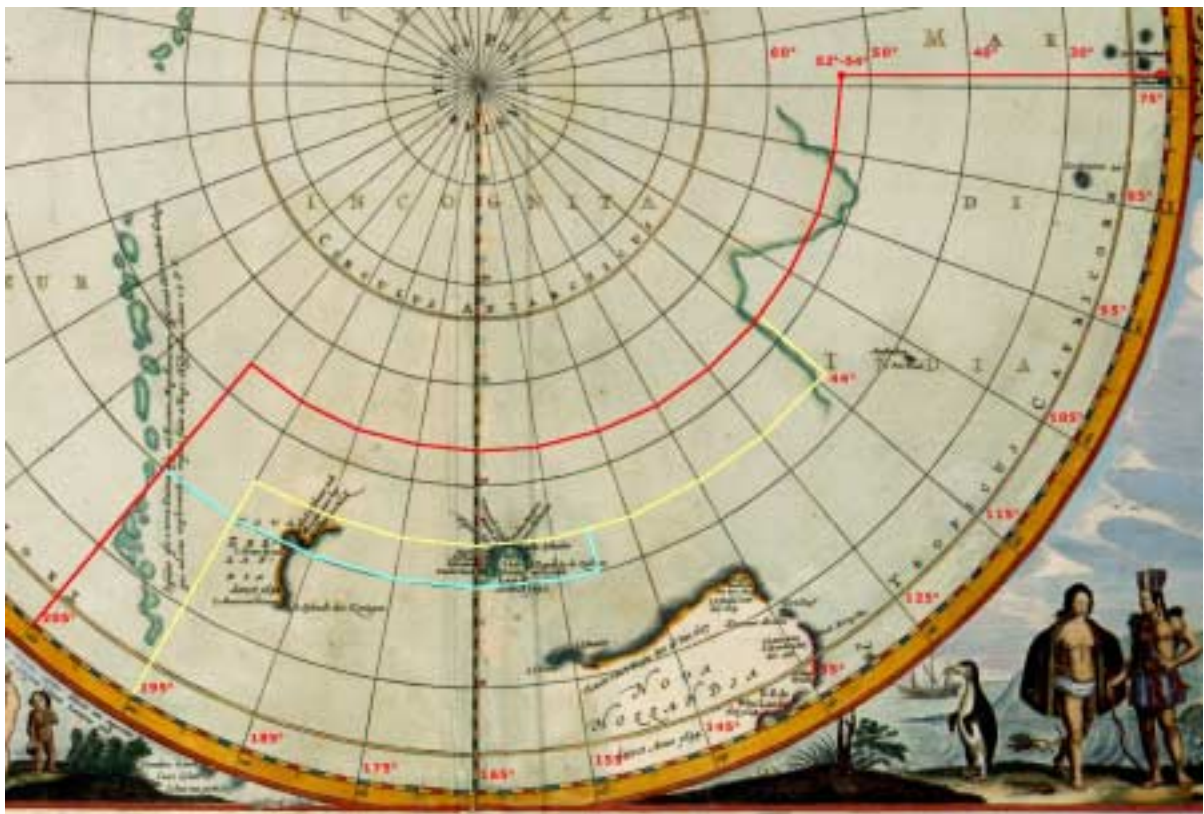


Figure 6. Polus Antarcticus and the Expedition’s Planned Courses

See opposite for explanatory note.



Figure 7. The “...passage into the open South Sea...”

See opposite for explanatory note.

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COLOUR PLATE (Figs 6 and 7)

A careful examination of this decision would suggest they were aware they had begun to disprove some elements of the Hondius coastlines, but were being very cautious about the next section of their expedition. It is interesting to note the full council wanted to stay in the latitude of 44 degrees south, while Visscher wanted to move to 40 degrees south. This may provide further evidence of Visscher's special knowledge.

Having sailed around the bottom of Van Diemen's Land at 44 degrees south the expedition sailed up its eastern coastline as far as the weather at the time would allow. On 5 December, at 41 degrees south, the expedition set sail to the east again.

Their next 'discovery' for the VOC, on 13 December 1642, was 'Staete Landt' (New Zealand as it now called). Resolving "...to make said land, as soon as At all possible..."⁴⁸, Tasman's two ships followed the coastline northwards.

THE "...PASSAGE INTO THE OPEN SOUTH SEA..."

On the morning of 20 December 1642, after fleeing from his fatal encounter with the local inhabitants in "Murderers Bay"⁴⁹ the previous day, Tasman found himself "*fully 30 miles into a bight*".⁵⁰

By noon he had reached latitude 40 degrees 51 minutes south and recorded in his journal:

... we had previously thought the land where we had been at anchor to be an Island not doubting [we] Shall find from there a passage into the open South Sea ...⁵¹

Here Tasman provides evidence that not only were they expecting to encounter islands, but also that they expected to find a passage between the islands at approximately 40 degrees south. **Figure 7** provides a graphic illustration of the perspective of Tasman and Visscher.

Further support for this view is evident in Visscher's two charts of the part of New Zealand encountered by the expedition. Both charts: the Vingboons map of New Zealand (**Figure 8**), and the chart placed between folios 20 and 21 in the Huydecoper copy of Tasman's journal (**Figure 9**), show a gap in the coastline, apparently representing a passage, at a longitude of approximately 193 degree 30 minutes and a latitude of approximately 41 degrees 30 minutes south. All other contemporary maps of the same coastline, including the chart in the signed version of Tasman's journal, omit this gap in the coastline.

This evidence is contrary to Sharp's claim:

The gap at the entrance to Cook Strait does not mean that the existence of a strait was thought of as anything more than a probability, as mentioned in the journal text under the date 24th December.⁵²

Tasman's entry in his journal for that day states:

... received the officers of the Zeehaen on our ship and have proposed to them since the flood comes from the South east: so that there might indeed be a passage ...⁵³

The key word is "*indeed*", which suggests a confirmation of Tasman's statement recorded four days earlier.

It is interesting to note that the 40 degree parallel (south) was still a key reference and target when Cook completed his Transit of Venus observations in 1769 and headed south on his real mission, following the secret instructions given him by the British Admiralty.

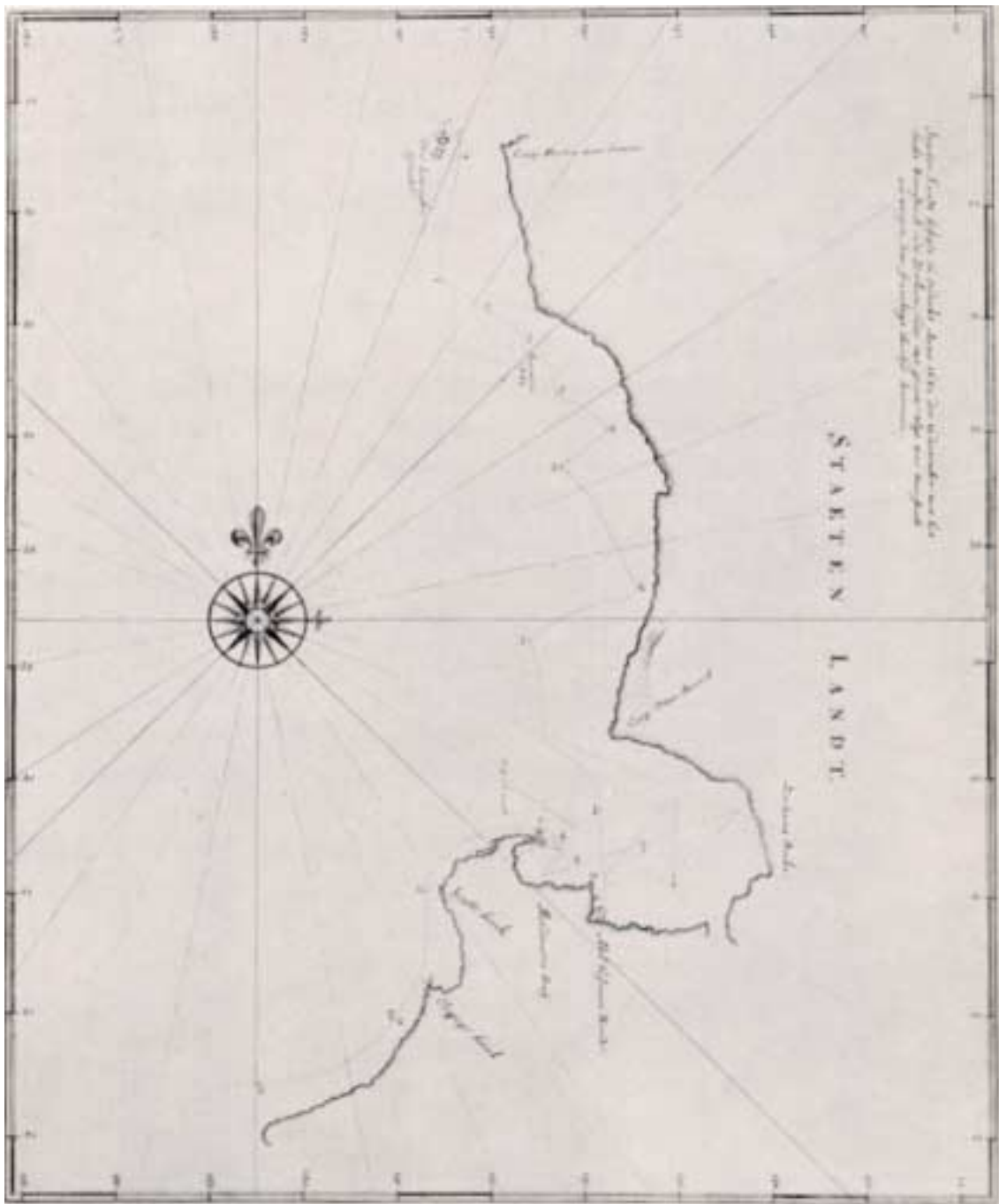


Figure 8. Visscher's Vingboons Chart.

*MS chart of Tasman's New Zealand discoveries attributed to Visscher.*⁵⁴

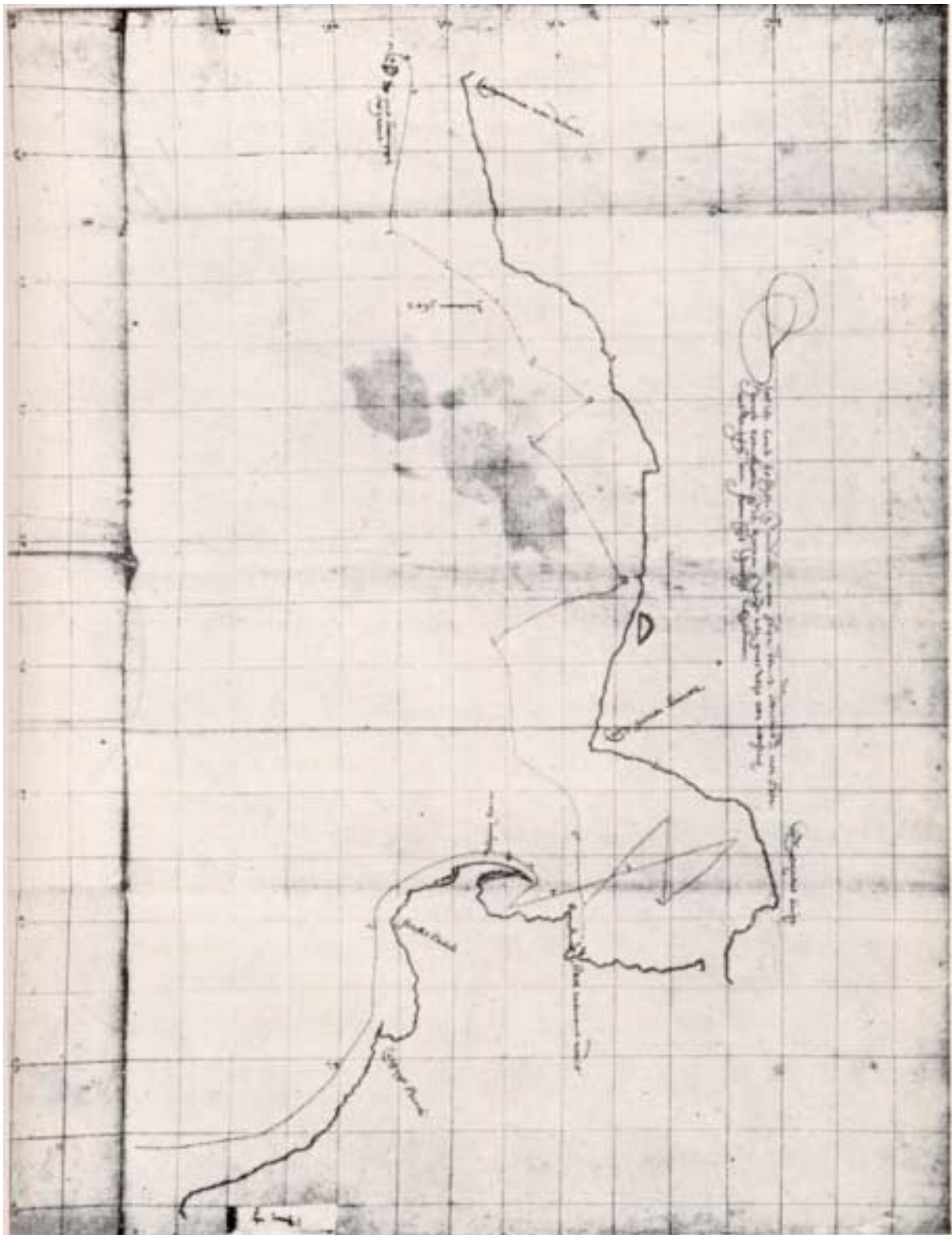


Figure 9. Visscher's Huydecoper Chart.

The MS chart placed between folios 20 and 21 in the Huydecoper⁵⁵ copy of Tasman's Journal, attributed to Visscher.⁵⁶

SAILING NORTH ...

On 26 December 1642, the expedition of Tasman and Visscher “...made our course to north in order to Sail round north of this land...”⁵⁷.

At this point, by their reckoning, they were at 40 degrees 13 minutes south. The key question that might be asked is how Tasman knew that by sailing north he would in fact “sail round north of this land”?⁵⁸ It would have been equally valid for him to suppose he might be in fact in a huge bight that stretched back to Nova Hollandia. **Figure 7** shows a supposed coastline and island chain with a northern end that Tasman could have sailed around, and **Figure 5** shows the course that Tasman actually sailed, which was directly towards and around the northern end of that supposed coastline.

The expedition reached the northern extremities of this new land in “the Southern latitude of 34 degrees 25 minutes and 190 degrees 40 minutes averaged longitude”⁵⁹ on 5 January 1643. Again unsuccessful in their efforts to find water on land, on 6 January 1643 they “called the council with whom [we] have resolved, to raise the anchors immediately and by an easterly course to run to the longitude of 220 degrees following previous resolution”.⁶⁰

Despite that plan, the expedition then sailed northeast, to Tonga and the Fiji Islands, then home to Batavia.

Tasman and Visscher had completed a remarkable voyage of exploration. They had confirmed the Dutch East India Company’s belief in the existence of an “Eastland”, and they had found the pathway to Chile they were looking for.

Hondius’ **1640 Terrestrial Globe**, and his **Polus Antarcticus**, provide an explanation for both the VOC belief in an “Eastland”, and the precision in the planning and execution of this remarkable voyage of discovery.

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- Staff of the Mitchell Library, New South Wales State Library, Sydney.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Sharp, Andrew, (1968), *The Voyages of Abel Janszoon Tasman*, London, Clarendon Press, p.20
- ² Now known as Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia.
- ³ Sharp, op. cit., p.20
- ⁴ *ibid*, p.21
- ⁵ West Australian Maritime Museum, (1999), Permanent Batavia Display
- ⁶ West Australian Maritime Museum, (1999), Permanent Batavia Display
- ⁷ Sharp, op. cit., p.21
- ⁸ Tasman, Abel Janszoon, (1898), *Abel Janszoon Tasman's journal of his discovery of Van Diemens Land and New Zealand in 1642: with documents relating to his exploration of Australia in 1644, being photo-lithographic facsimiles of the original manuscript in the Colonial Archives at The Hague, with an English translation and facsimiles of original maps to which are added Life and labours of Abel Janszoon Tasman by J.E. Heeres and Observations made with the compass on Tasman's voyage by Dr. W. van Bemmelen*, Amsterdam, Frederick Muller & Co, pp.143-4
- ⁹ *ibid*, Appendix G, p.139
- ¹⁰ A lack of comparative detailed evidence of the plans for other VOC expeditions constrains a more definitive statement
- ¹¹ Sharp, op. cit., p.20
- ¹² Luepe, P. A., (1872), Manuscript of the Voyage of Discovery of Abel Janszoon Tasman, Captain Commander, and of Francois Jacobszoon Visscher, Upper Pilot-Major. 1642-1643, in *Bijdragen Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde*, Second Series, VII, Den Hague, p.290
- ¹³ The island off the coast of Chile, named after its discoverer
- ¹⁴ Cook, J., (1955-1974), *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his voyages of discovery*: edited by J.C. Beaglehole, Cambridge, Volume 1, p.lii
- ¹⁵ Anderson, Grahame, *The Merchant of the Zeehaen: Isaac Gilsemans and the voyages of Abel Tasman*, Wellington, Te Papa Press, p.149
- ¹⁶ Anderson, Grahame, *Papers*, at the Mitchell Library (MLMSS 5983), Sydney
- ¹⁷ Sharp, op. cit., p.32
- ¹⁸ *ibid*, p.83
- ¹⁹ *ibid*, p.83
- ²⁰ *ibid*, p.132
- ²¹ *ibid*, p.81
- ²² *ibid*, p.81
- ²³ *ibid*, p.81
- ²⁴ Wallis, H. M., (1953), *The Exploration of the South Seas, 1519 to 1644. A study of the influence of physical factors, with a reconstruction of the routes of the explorers*, unpublished thesis, Oxford University, pp.553, 569
- ²⁵ Sharp, op. cit., p.82
- ²⁶ Ballard, Paul, (1973), *A Guide to Maps and Charts in Australia 1606-1850*, Sydney, Paul Ballard
- ²⁷ Sharp, op. cit., p.81
- ²⁸ The naming convention on the globe is to the right of the location.
- ²⁹ Sharp, op. cit., p.81
- ³⁰ Visscher's analysis of 7 November 1642
- ³¹ Sharp, op. cit., p.183
- ³² *ibid*, p.184
- ³³ The Dutch in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries often referred to hemispherical maps as globes.
- ³⁴ *Koeman's Atlantes Neerlandici: New Edition, Vol. I: The Folio Atlases, Published by Gerard Mercator, Jodocus Hondius, Henricus Hondius, Johannes Janssonius and Their Successors*, compiled by Peter van der Krogt. (1997), HES Publishers
- ³⁵ Krogt, P. C. J. van der, (1993), *Globi Neerlandici: the production of globes in the Low Countries*, Utrecht, HES Publishers, p.239
- ³⁶ *ibid*, p.206
- ³⁷ *ibid*, p.481
- ³⁸ The author does not believe the discrepancy between the 1567 and 1576 date is 'typographical' or a copyist error. It may in fact be a significant clue to the origin of the coastline. However that matter is outside the scope of this paper.
- ³⁹ First state published in 1637.
- ⁴⁰ Sharp, op. cit., p.32
- ⁴¹ *ibid*, p.20
- ⁴² *ibid*, p.81
- ⁴³ *ibid*, p.81
- ⁴⁴ *ibid*, p.83
- ⁴⁵ *ibid*, p.84
- ⁴⁶ On his departure from Mauritius, Tasman's log recorded the longitude as 78 degrees 47 minutes east of Tenerife. The actual position is 74 degrees 11 minutes, a difference of 4 degrees and 36 minutes (*ibid*, p.90, n.3)
- ⁴⁷ *ibid*, p.85
- ⁴⁸ *ibid*, p.116
- ⁴⁹ Golden Bay
- ⁵⁰ Sharp, op. cit., p.132
- ⁵¹ *ibid*, p.132
- ⁵² *ibid*, p.132
- ⁵³ *ibid*, p.134
- ⁵⁴ *ibid*, facing p.117. An explanation of this 'Vingboons' MS map can be found at *ibid*, pp.57-9
- ⁵⁵ The Huydecoper copy of Tasman's Journal, in the Mitchell Library, Sydney
- ⁵⁶ Sharp, op. cit., facing p.132. An explanation of this 'Eugene' MS map can be found on pp.57-9
- ⁵⁷ *ibid*, p.135
- ⁵⁸ *ibid*, p.135
- ⁵⁹ *ibid*, p.144
- ⁶⁰ *ibid*, p.145