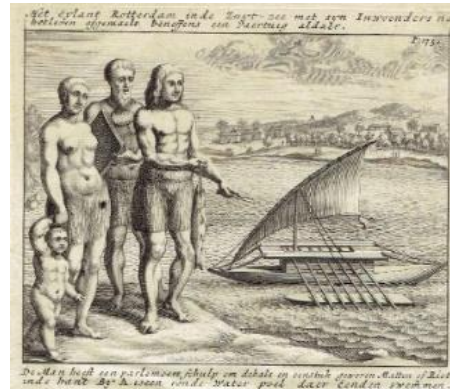


## First Contacts

### The early Pacific and European accounts of Abel Tasman's 1642 voyage

Author: Rudiger Mack



#### What makes the book unique?

This book offers a new and different view on Abel Tasman's 1642-43 voyage during which he was the first to circumnavigate Australia, and the first European to visit Tasmania, Aotearoa New Zealand, the main islands of the Tonga group and other Pacific islands. It brings together several Māori and Tongan oral traditions of the first encounters with Europeans and discusses Tasman's voyage with a strong emphasis on the indigenous perception.

From the European perspective the book presents and discusses several previously untranslated sources in Dutch, French, German, Italian, as well as other visual and textual sources whose significance have not yet been fully appreciated.

This new approach offers a different perspective than previous histories about the voyage. By cross referencing textual and visual sources with each other, new interpretations of certain events during the voyage emerge. The results are often surprising, particularly regarding the first encounters between Europeans and Indigenous Peoples in Tasmania, Aotearoa, and Tonga.

#### The Māori kaupapa

There are six Māori oral traditions of the first encounters with Tasman – ranging from the West Coast of the South Island to Three Kings Islands. The study of these traditions in context with each other, reveals that iwi remember a surprising amount of detail and that Māori had agency when interacting with the VOC vessels. They observed the ships and applied different defensive strategies.

A similar approach to the Tongan sources enables us to identify the place where Tasman landed in Tongatapu, and the high-ranking chief who invited Tasman to his compound.

### **The importance of Witsen's account**

The most underrated Dutch source of Tasman's voyage is a chapter in a book by the VOC Raad and Mayor of Amsterdam, Nicolaes Witsen, published in 1705. My book publishes the original Dutch text and for the first time a complete English translation which reveals details of Tasman's voyages that are not known from any other sources.

It also contains five illustrations which vary significantly from the other known illustrations from Tasman's official journal. The rich artistic visual record from Tasman's voyage shows that the Dutch probably came much closer to a landing in Golden Bay than previously thought.

A detailed study of the Witsen illustration of Golden Bay followed by an archaeological survey has enabled me to identify an ancient tauranga waka in Wainui Bay which is still visible today.

The illustrations of Tongatapu and Nomuka also show more detail than the official journal. It has always been a mystery who the artist was who copied the illustrations from Tasman's voyage into the official journal between Tasman's return to Batavia in June 1643 and December 1643. The book examines this question and comes to a conclusive result.

### **The French connection**

The initial reception of the results of Tasman's voyage in Europe shows that in the first few decades after Tasman's voyages there was much stronger interest in his discoveries in France than in any other European country. It also reveals how French politicians, clerics and academics tried to gather more detailed information about Tasman's voyages through personal links with academics and people in influential positions in the Netherlands. It is often assumed that there were no European efforts to further explore the Pacific in the century between Tasman and Captain Cook. A chapter in my book discusses that in fact there were attempts from both the Dutch and French side.

### **What did Tasman look like?**

The book finishes with a chapter on the three portraits of Tasman, which are presumed to depict the famous navigator. It demonstrates the enormous interest, particularly from Australia, to find a portrait – and the efforts by certain art dealers to satisfy this demand. It demolishes the provenance of two paintings and leaves only one portrait, which may show us what Tasman truly looked like.

### **A publication of importance**

The Dutch contribution to the early exploration of the Pacific should be acknowledged more than it often is. The European kaupapa is mostly about Captain Cook. There are many books about 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century English and French expeditions, but no major book on Tasman's 1642 voyage has been published for over 20 years. History is now a compulsory subject in New Zealand secondary schools and this book will fill a gap in our understanding of the earliest encounters between Māori, Tongans, and Europeans. It will balance the narrative of the European discovery of New Zealand.

The foreword for my book was written by emeritus professor Atholl Anderson who says that "the book will be essential reading for Pacific historians."

### **Rudiger Mack – Background**

I have always been interested in Pacific history, ever since reading about the mutiny of the Bounty when growing up as a child in Germany. I learnt French, English and Latin at school. I studied Dutch,

history, and German at the University of Münster, Westfalen, and later acquired some knowledge of Spanish and Italian, and some te reo in the last few years. This has enabled me to bring together several historic sources in these languages which have been largely ignored by monolingual historians.

I spent many hours and days, over the last 20 years, researching and writing this book. It is written to an academic standard but will be an enjoyable read for the general public. The goal is to make a contribution to a deeper understanding of the shared Māori and Pākeha history in our country.

I have previously published six articles on the early contact period of Aotearoa, particularly on Tasman's visit in 1642. Over time, I collected so much new and exciting material however, that it deserves to be published as a book.

### **Publication costs**

The manuscript has been completed and is with my publisher, The Heritage Press. The publication costs of \$18,000 will result in a lush hardcover book of 430 pages, that includes no less than 75 illustrations.

I have been offered a contract with the publisher, which I will sign as soon as the bulk of the funding is secured. I am currently running a crowd funding campaign to raise \$10,000.

<https://boosted.org.nz/projects/first-contacts>

When that campaign finishes on 15 June, the plan is to get together with the Oranjehof museum in Foxton and find a way to secure the remaining sum. I will have a little income from royalties and my own book sales. The hope is to break even. Any financial assistance would be hugely appreciated.

### **Examples of illustrations from the book:**



Details of Golden Bay and Cook Strait. Francois Jacobsz. Visscher's chart showing an opening in Cook Strait is on the left, the official SAC chart is on the right.





Figure 7: Detail from the Golden Bay illustration in *Noord en Oost Tartarye* illustration showing Abel Tasman Point with a Dutch boat close to the shore intending to land



Photo of Abel Tasman Point, taken 5 January 2010 from the same position as the *Noord en Oost Tartarye* illustration

Contact details for the author: [rudi.mack@outlook.co.nz](mailto:rudi.mack@outlook.co.nz) 0064 273164066