

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

ABEL TASMAN

Journal, 1642-43

Reel M1558

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Abel Janszoon Tasman (c. 1603-1659) was born in Lutjegast, near Groningen, in the Netherlands. Not long after his marriage in 1632, he sailed to the East Indies and in 1634 he was the mate on a vessel sailing from Batavia to Ambon. He spent two years in the Moluccas seas, before returning to the Netherlands in 1637. In the following year, accompanied by his wife, he left the Netherlands permanently and settled in Batavia. Between 1639 and 1641 he commanded a number of expeditions to Japan, China, Formosa and Cambodia and acquired a reputation as a competent commander of long-distance expeditions.

In 1642 the Governor-General and Council of the East Indies resolved that Tasman should command a major exploring expedition to determine the extent and coastline of New Holland. He was to proceed to Mauritius and then sail southwards to 52-54°S. He would then sail eastwards as far as the longitude of New Guinea and the Solomon Islands to establish if there were any lands at that latitude. He was also directed to examine the northern coast of New Holland and ascertain if a passage south divided the west coast of Cape York from the coast of New Holland to the west. Sailing in the *Heemskerck* and *Zeehan*, Tasman discovered the southern coast of Tasmania, which he named Anthony Van Diemens Landt, and the western coasts of New Zealand, which he named Staten Landt. Landings at both places were very brief and the Batavian authorities later expressed concern that he had not fully examined the lands and people that he had encountered. Tasman then sailed north to Tonga and Fiji and returned to Batavia around the northern coast of New Guinea.

In 1644 Tasman commanded the *Limmen*, *Zeemeeuw* and *Bracq* on a second voyage to New Holland. Leaving Banda in February 1644, he sailed along the southern coast of New Guinea, but failed to discover Torres Strait. He then charted the Gulf of Carpentaria and the northern and western coasts of Australia as far as North West Cape. He returned to Batavia in August 1644. The expedition covered a huge stretch of coastline, but because it sailed some distance from the coast it failed to establish that Croker, Melville and Bathurst and various other islands were in fact islands. Tasman was a member of the Council of Justice of Batavia in 1644-48. In 1648-49 he led a fleet of ships with the intention of attacking Spanish vessels in the Philippines, but the expedition had only limited success. In his last years he was a merchant in Batavia.

THE JOURNAL OF ABEL TASMAN

In 1867 a manuscript journal of Tasman's 1642-43 voyage was presented to the Netherlands State Archives by J.G. Gleichman. It is signed by Tasman, but is written in a different hand. Almost certainly, it was written in Batavia and was sent to the Netherlands soon after the voyage. While it was endorsed by Tasman, it was probably written partly or largely by other officers on the *Heemskerck*. Another contemporary copy of the missing 'original journal', with many textual differences, is held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney. A copy of the former journal was acquired by Joseph Banks and he arranged for an English translation to be made by Charles G. Woide in 1776. Both the Dutch and English transcripts were acquired by the British Museum following the death of Banks in 1820.

Reference: Andrew Sharp. *The voyages of Abel Janszoon Tasman* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968)

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Add. MSS 8946-8947

Journal of Abel Tasman on his voyage of exploration in the ships *Heenskerck* and *Zeehan*, 14 August 1642 – 15 June 1643 (Dutch, 139ff), together with an English translation by Charles. G. Woide (1776).

Most of the entries in the journal are brief, recording winds, weather, the setting of courses, and sail settings. The journal describes the departure from Batavia (14 Aug. 1642), ship repairs and the procurement of wood, animals and supplies at Mauritius (Sept. 1642), meetings of the ships' officers, the sighting of Van Diemen's Land (24 Nov. 1642), a landing on the south-east coast of the island (2-3 Dec, 1642), sailing north past Maria Island and Schouten Island, the first sighting of New Zealand (13 Dec. 1642), sailing northwards along the west coast, conflict with Maoris at Golden Bay, the naming of Cape Maria van Diemen (4 Jan. 1643), departure from New Zealand, meetings with islanders at Tonga (21-25 Jan. 1643), the exchange of provisions and gifts, impressions of the Tongans, encounters with Fijians (Feb. 1643), Tasman's decision to explore islands to the north of New Guinea, including New Britain and New Ireland, meeting and trading with people in the Moluccas, and the return to Batavia (15 June 1643).

The journal contains a large number of coastal profiles and maps.

Preceding the journal are two letters written in August 1776 by Henry Norris about the provenance of the manuscript and errors in the translation. The translation is preceded by a few notes by the translator.