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The Dutch East India Company (VOC) Tasman Map and Australia: Competing Interests, Myth Making, and an Australian Icon

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Article abstract

The floor of the entrance to the Mitchell Library vestibule, which is part of the State Library of New South Wales, displays a stunning mosaic 1939-1941 reproduction of a seventeenth century map recording Abel Tasman's two journeys of 1642 and 1644. It charts the west, north and southern coasts of the Australian continent, but is incomplete, thus representing the historical moment between an imagined Terra Australis Incognita, and the final survey of the east coast which presaged British colonisation. The original Tasman map, also held by the Mitchell library and currently undergoing restoration, has a strange and chequered biography. This paper explores the myths associated with what is known colloquially as the Bonaparte Tasman map, in honour of its last owner Prince Roland Bonaparte, a nephew of Napoleon. We examine its contested origins and role as an agent of Dutch East India Company imperial ambitions, relegation to forgotten cast-off when that empire collapsed, Bonaparte's desire to gift it to the nascent Australian Commonwealth as a symbol of new nationhood, and the international subterfuge involved in its acquisition by not by the nation, but the State Library of NSW. Analysis of what was known of the map in the decades prior to its arrival in Australia challenges the conventional narratives, and we propose the biography of the Tasman map (and its embodiment in the Mitchell Library vestibule mosaic) is a study in imperialism, colonialism, federation, and power.

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The Dutch East India Company (VOC) Tasman Map and Australia: Competing Interests, Myth Making, and an Australian Icon

The State Library of New South Wales, located in Sydney, Australia, is the oldest major public library in the country. Its historical research wing, the Mitchell Library, reigned for decades as the nation's premier collecting institution, and its vestibule-entrance boasts a spectacular 1941 mosaic reproduction of one of its greatest treasures: a 17th century map recording the voyages of Dutch navigator Abel Tasman. Colloquially known as the Bonaparte-Tasman map, it records Tasman's voyages of 1642 and 1644, charting much of the Australian continent's coast. Yet the coastline is incomplete, thus representing the historical moment between an imagined *Terra Australis Incognita*, and the final survey of the east coast which presaged British invasion and colonization. This paper explores the myths associated with the Bonaparte-Tasman map, named in honour of its penultimate owner, Prince Roland Bonaparte, a nephew of Napoleon. We examine its contested origins and role as an agent of Dutch East India Company imperial ambitions; its relegation to forgotten castoffs when that empire collapsed; Bonaparte's desire to gift it to the nascent Australian Commonwealth as a symbol of new nationhood; and finally, the international subterfuge involved in its acquisition, not by the nation, but the Mitchell Library. Analysis of what was known of the map in the decades prior to its arrival in Australia challenges the conventional narratives and we propose the biography of the Tasman map is a study in imperialism, colonialism, federation, and power.

Terra Australis Incognita and the Two Voyages of Tasman

The prospect of a Southern Land occupied the European imagination for many centuries. Although already continuously occupied for at least 65,000 years (Clarkson et al. 2017, 306-10), *Terra Australis Incognita* – later to be called New Holland, and then Australia – embodied, according to Liam Bennison, "many of the tropes of the ancient Greek antipodes…illustrations evoke the eschatia, the endzones of wonders and the monstrous" (2020, 82). As Bronwen Douglas argues (2010, 181-4), it was a topic of speculation, fear and fantasy since Pythagorean assertions on sphericity of the earth, with later conjecture on the probability of a large southern land mass taking on a new commercial urgency during the 15th century (Hiatt 2008; Stallard 2010, 2016). By the early 17th century, when the Dutch government supported military-commercial enterprise Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie (hereafter VOC) had its Asian base in Batavia (now Jakarta, Indonesia), and other bases throughout the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia (Boxer 1965), an imagined southern continent was already appearing

in multiple European maps (Collingridge 1895). Ever alert to new fields of potential profit, VOC's attention turned to *Terra Australis*, which was thought to be south of their Batavian stronghold.

Figure 1
Map of Australia, New Guinea, New Zealand...showing the results of his voyages of 1642-3 and 1644 known as the Tasman map. Image from Alamy Stock images, permission to reproduce granted.

In 1642, Antonio Van Diemen, Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies and based in Batavia, sent Abel Tasman on the first of two exploratory journeys. The 1642 voyage of the *Heemskerck* and *Zeehaen* was highly ambitious and, according to Michael Ross (2002, 2), "probably the most calculated exploration" in VOC history. Their goals were exploration of seas and land, and a search for profitable commodities. Tasman's first voyage mapped parts of what is now known as Tasmania, New Zealand, and Tonga. The second voyage in 1644 charted vast tracts of the northern Australian coastline. Yet in the eyes of the VOC the explorations were unsuccessful as they did not identify sources for commercial exploitation (Sharp 1968, 341). Nevertheless, the various charts produced by Tasman's artists would inform navigators for over 150 years and prove instrumental in the later British surveying of Australia. One particular version of the map synthesising the two journeys (figure 1), now held by the Mitchell Library, would go on to assume the status of founding document for the Commonwealth of Australia. Yet significant as the Bonaparte-Tasman map is, it remains, in many aspects, as mysterious as the unknown southern land it sought to trace.

Birth of a Map

Maps are not just innocent renderings of seas, coasts, geographical features, and human-made infrastructure: they are inescapably political, imperial, colonising and silencing. They establish power and seek to rewrite sovereignty: as Harley suggested. cartography is a process by which power is "enforced, reproduced, reinforced and stereotyped" (Harley 2001, 79). The charting of lands previously unknown to a European imperial centre represents the process described by Fujikane as cartographies of capital, where abundant lands are recast as wastelands ready for exploitation (2021, 3-4). The creation of maps in the Age of Discovery was an inherently political act, but as Pedley (2005, 6-9) illustrated, their consumption – as globes, bound in books or as large sheets for display – formed a buoyant market stretching from the palace to the private home. It was to service the dual roles of declaration and decoration that the Bonaparte-Tasman map was born.

The gestation and creation of the Bonaparte-Tasman map (hereafter Tasman map) is shrouded in uncertainty, with its draftsperson, date, and location of production all disputed. It was routine for all

VOC documents and maps to have multiple copies made for distribution to various Board members and bureaucrats. The map currently held by the Mitchell Library may well be one of these duplicates. The exquisite artistry in its execution indicates that it is no mere reproduction. As Schilder wrote, the Tasman map is "one of the most famous and most beautiful maps ever executed by a Dutch cartographer" (1975, 354). Its role was to act as what Harley (2001, 57) called a communicator of imperial message: an awe-inspiring herald of the achievements of Abel Tasman, his benefactor Antonio Van Diemen, and the imperial strength of the VOC.

The map was most likely created some time in the middle to late 17th century. Commissioned by Batavia's VOC Governor Antonio van Diemen in 1644, work was probably carried out by the office of Supervisor of Navigation, a role occupied by Abel Tasman in 1644-45 (Zandvliet 2007, 1443). The first firm reference to the physical map itself comes two centuries later in 1843, when it is noted among the collection of Jacob Swart, proprietor of the Van Keulen company of Amsterdam (Swart 1843, 239). Swart later mused that it may have been compiled under Tasman's supervision (1860). F C Wieder seemed to take this suggestion as fact, and – seizing on the date of 1644 in the map's legend, referring to the second voyage – confidently asserted that the map "is by Tasman and executed in 1644" (Wieder 1942, in Schilder 1976, 148). Later, writers such as Jones (1948, 15-16) and Burnet (2019, 191) support this early date, but this was rigorously critiqued by Voorbeytel-Cannenburg (1943, 639-42), who saw no evidence of Tasman's hand in what he suggested was a "cartographical monster" – a work cobbled together from multiple sources. In his authoritative volume on Dutch explorations of Australia, Schilder suggests a creation date of approximately 1695 (1976, 354).

The location of the map's production is also unknown. Wieder (1925, 139) claimed it was created in Batavia, due to the use of thick Japanese paper as opposed to parchment, though this same paper was also available in Europe. According to van Breda (2014), the great Dutch artist Rembrandt executed many of his works on "Oriental" papers. The definitive catalogue of Rembrandt's works notes that Japanese and possibly Chinese materials were widely available (Biörklund 1968, 172). Japanese paper was also undoubtedly in the hands of Isaac Gilsemans, Tasman's chief draughtsman, who was stationed in Nagasaki prior to joining the first voyage in 1642 (Anderson 1991, 15). Thus the map, just based on paper alone, could well have been produced in either Europe or Batavia.

The mobility of people and paper between Dutch imperial nodes precludes any definitive finding on the Tasman map's point of creation. Andrew Sharp, after exhaustive research, concluded that the map was probably compiled in Amsterdam late in the 17th century from earlier, imperfect drafts made in Batavia (Sharp 1968, 319), and both Schilder (1976, 148) and Hooker (2015, 7) concur. In contrast, Wieder (1925, 139) and Burnet (2019, 191) confidently assert the map was produced in Batavia in 1644-45. Compelling evidence on either perspective is scarce, and we suggest that identification of a probable author or authors may hold the key.

The identity of the artist has long been debated, with the only certainty being its commissioner, Antonio Van Diemen. Its owner in 1860, Jacob Swart, mused that "Perhaps it was compiled under the very eyes of Tasman" (Burnet 2019, 193). Wieder had no doubt that the map was "a unity, not a mere collection of parts" and "the work of one draughtsman under the direction of one man and none other than Tasman himself" (Henderson 25 May 1933, AT34/1/7) The two draftsmen most associated with Tasman's journeys were Isaac Gilsemans, who served as Supercargo (trademaster or chief merchant, from Spanish *sobrecargo*) on the *Zeehaen* and produced many of that journey's iconic images, and Franz Jacobszoon Visscher, Tasman's chief pilot. Noted scholar P.A. Leupe (1872; 1876, 16-7) argues for Visscher as chief artist, as does Destombes (1941, in Schilder 1976, 190). Wieder was certain that the inscriptions on the map "could not have been written by a Dutchman," due to apparent use of French in some of the lettering, and "inclines to the opinion that the map was drawn by a Frenchman in the service of the Company at Batavia" (Henderson 25 May 1933, AT34/1). The picture is further clouded by speculation of Chinese or Javanese authorship of the map, as reported by Jones (1948, 16).

We suggest that Isaac Gilsemans is the only certainty in this range of possible artists. According to Heeres, Gilsemans was the draughtsman mentioned in the mission's instructions to "make exact drawings of the appearance and shape of the lands, islands, capes, bights, inlets, bays, rivers, shoals, sand-banks, reefs, cliffs and rocks, etc." (1895, 107). Based on a forensic study of Gilsemans' handwriting, Grahame Anderson argues convincingly that the map is the work of at least four people, and Gilsemans was one of that group (1994, 39-40; 2001, 156). Moreover, as the evidence points to Gilsemans having died in Batavia prior to 1647 (Anderson 1994, 43), a Batavia-based creation of the map, some time in 1645-46, appears compelling.

Whilst the date, location, and artist remain open to clarification by future research, one thing about the Tasman-Bonaparte map is certain: it was designed to impress. As Harley noted, political power was effectively "reproduced, communicated and experienced through maps" (2001, 54). The Tasman map's primary intended audience was undoubtedly the VOC Board, but beyond that, its commissioner and artists would expect it to be viewed by members of the public, particularly navigators. This was not the first time the coastline of New Holland was represented, but is without a doubt the most aesthetic rendering to date, created to celebrate the complexity and scale of Tasman's voyages, and through them, the power of the VOC. The Bonaparte-Tasman map was compiled, according to Swart with "almost a kind of luxurious indulgence" (cited in Schilder 1976, 148). This level of artistry suggests it was not designed as a secret map. Although Tasman's journeys were a failure in the pragmatic eyes of VOC Directors, who lost interest in his discoveries in favour of trading in the Indies which was "the real wealth of the Company" (Sharp 1968, 341), the map remained as a bold and attractive assertion of Dutch imperial dominance.

We do not know conclusively where, when, how, or by whom the Tasman map was created, but if its origin *was* in the

East Indies, there were copious opportunities for it to travel to Europe. Batavia was the busiest VOC port in the Asian region, with hundreds of departures per year in the 1640s, most often in December and January (Bruijn 1987, 77-81). The journey commonly involved a stop at Cape Town, before rounding the west side of Africa for the northward journey. This is how the map – or at least, the drafts from which it would emerge – would have made the global crossing.

The Tasman map may well have hung in the Amsterdam headquarters of the VOC, as some writers have suggested, but there is no concrete evidence. Its location remains undocumented for a century and a half. By the time of the VOC's collapse and nationalization in 1797, the map was probably already in the hands of the famed Van Keulen mapmaking and publishing establishment in Amsterdam (Hooker 2015, 2; Burnet 2019, 193). Van Keulen had produced highly valued and extensively used maps and atlases since 1681, and became official mapmakers to the VOC in 1743. This positioned them as active agents of empire: as Harley observed, "the cartographer has never been an independent artist, craftsman or technician. Behind the map maker lies a set of power relations" (2001, 63). The Van Keulen company enjoyed the monopoly on atlases, pilot guides, and charts from the late 17th century. The involvement of mathematician and surveyor Claes Jansz Vooght confirmed their status as prime innovators of Dutch commercial cartography (Schilder and van Egmond 2007, 1402). Although sometimes relegated to one of a procession of official VOC cartographers (Jones 1948, 17; Burnet 2019, 193), the company, handed down through multiple generations of master-cartographer fathers and sons, produced the oceanic guides for imperial expansion for Dutch, British, French and German interests. It was Van Keulen's penultimate proprietor who would thrust the Tasman map into the historical record for the first time.

Emerging from Obscurity

In 1843, Jacob Swart, declared Van Keulen's ownership of the Tasman map in a Dutch-language periodical. This is the first documentation of the map that is known. In a brief note in one of his own firm's publications (Swart 1843, 239) he noted that a manuscript (*geteekende*) map of Tasman's adventures was in his collection, dated 1644. It showed the whole island of New Holland, and Swart remarked on the dotted line representing the hypothetical east coast of Australia, finding it "quite remarkable" that the conjectural line had proven somewhat accurate (Swart 1843, 239). A decade later, Swart again mentioned the map in an article about Tasman's journal (Swart 1854, 75-80). As noted above, Swart documented it a third time in 1860, in an essay and rendering which was to become the blueprint for a century's worth of reproductions.

The Tasman map fully entered society when, in 1885, upon the Van Keulen company's closure, it was acquired by Amsterdam bookseller Frederick Muller and Company. The map was now firmly in the world of documented provenance. In 1891 Muller's new owner, Anton Mensing, listed it as item 2154 in the sales catalogue *Geographie, Cartographie, Voyage* with detailed historical information (Hooker 2015, 3). There was interest in the Australian press: Muller and Company may well have been the parties mentioned in a striking 1893 story about "a

well-known firm of booksellers in Holland" who, after purchasing some books from an "old navigation school," found that the scrap paper they were wrapped in was, in fact, an original 1642 Tasman map of the Australia-New Zealand voyage (*Launceston Examiner*, 23 August 1893, 3). The map offered by Muller in 1891 had likely also come to the attention of J.B. Walker in Hobart, who had spent years "ransacking the archives" and had already procured two facsimile Tasman maps (*Launceston Examiner*, 26 March 1896, 5). When Muller listed the Tasman Map for sale, a group of concerned Australianists headed by historian George Collingridge tried to persuade the New South Wales government to purchase it, but as Collingridge later complained, "those who should be the most interested in matters connected with the early history of Australia have shown hitherto but little interest in the subject" (1895, 238). When listed for sale, the Tasman Map had emerged from relative obscurity into a new cultural role: its original function, as an awe-inspiring emblem of empire and exploration, switched to object of desire for the Gentleman Anthropologist.

Figure 2

Prince Roland Bonaparte, circa 1914. Image from Alamy Stock images, permission to reproduce granted.

In 1891, the Tasman map was purchased by Prince Roland Bonaparte (figure 2.), great-nephew of the emperor, Napoleon. Roland was a committed ethnographer. In the 1880s he had travelled to Lapland to record a powerful photographic collection on Sámi people (Escard 1886), and in 1885 he produced a series of photographs of Manbarra people from Australia's Bwgcolman/Palm Island while they were in Paris (Poignant 2004, 193). Fabulously wealthy, Roland's palace boasted a library spanning multiple levels with a large Australasian division (Thomson 1904, 145), and his life was devoted to his collection. He was active in the world's oldest Geographical Society, the French *Société de Géographie*, and became its president in 1910. It was in his role as gentleman anthropologist that Prince Roland entertained British-born surveyor and explorer of Australia, William Vere Barclay, sometime in late 1898 or early 1899. Although the specifics of Barclay's visit are unknown, the record of his discussion with Prince Roland was to catapult the Tasman map onto the Antipodean stage, and also enmesh it in fraught issues of Australian nationhood and identity.

A New Role: Symbol of Nationhood

The Tasman map's story in 1899 is of a Dutch map, depicting Antipodean coasts, made on Japanese paper, held by a French aristocrat, discussed by a British surveyor, in a talk about outback Australia, to a learned gathering in London. The speaker, Henry Vere Barclay (figure 3) was a complicated man. Born in England, he served in the British Marines as a

Lieutenant, travelled the Pacific and was inspired by the monoliths on Rapa Nui/Easter Island. After illness forced his retirement from the Marines, he worked as a surveyor in South Australia, a bridge-builder in New Zealand, disappeared in Tasmania, was missing presumed dead in 1884, re-emerged in 1887 under an assumed name as a mining speculator, and persisted as an explorer of the outback. He was a failed pastoralist, talented artist, and member of numerous learned societies (Strong 2008, 24-26; Strong 2013, 28-43). On Barclay's resurrection in 1884, he re-joined Adelaide society with the inflated rank of Captain of the Royal Navy, and it was under this identity, and between major explorations of the Australian outback, that he gave a talk at the Imperial Institute in London on 6 March 1899 (*Journal of the Society of Arts* 1899, 338). Barclay touched on Indigenous peoples, climate, geography, and water: yet it was a brief comment near the end of his presentation which would be reported all over Australia within days. According to the *Imperial Institute Journal*:

> Prince Roland Bonaparte had authorised him to state that the unique and extremely valuable map of Australia, made by Tasman and his pilot, would be presented to the Government of the Australian Commonwealth upon the Prince's decease. (1899)

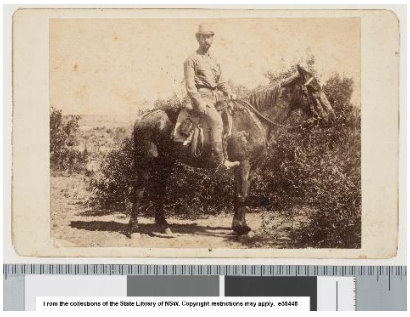

Figure 3
Henry Vere Barclay, explorer, on horseback. State Library of New South Wales. (P1/2048).

Barclay's aside about his conversation with Prince Roland became news across Australia. Within five days, headlines declaring Prince Roland's intent to bequeath the Tasman map to the Commonwealth of Australia had appeared in at least 44 Australian and New Zealand newspapers. While the headlines varied on 8 March 1899 – such as "Tasman's Map, a Present for the Commonwealth" (*Hobart Mercury*, 2), "A gift for Australia" (*Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 5), "Tasman's Map, an Interesting Present" (*Adelaide Advertiser*, 5) – the substance of this short article was the same across the reports. Melbourne's *The Argus* is representative:

> Captain Barclay stated that Prince Roland Bonaparte had promised that on his death he would bequeath to the Australian Commonwealth the original map of Australia, made by Tasman, the famous Dutch navigator, in the seventeenth century. (8 March 1899, 7)

It is reasonable to assume that with such wide coverage from urban and rural newspapers, the members of Australia's own learned societies must have taken notice. Barclay was already a fixture of the various Australian Geographical Societies, and was well known to up-and-coming librarian William Ifould, who would later play a central role in the Tasman Map's story. The Australian academic space was, in 1899, geographically isolated but tightly networked, and the news of Prince Roland's intended bequest of

the Tasman Map must have been the topic of broad speculation.

Prince Roland's intention to bequeath the map to the Commonwealth of Australia was also recorded several years later by James Park Thomson, President of the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland. Thomson's lively travel memoir (1904) includes a detailed description of his visit to Prince Roland's Paris palace. Roland showed him the map – quite an honour, as it was behind a screen and "only raised on very special occasions" (Thomson 1904, 145). Thomson wrote, "His Highness intends that it shall be presented to the Australian people on his death, considering the map would be of the greatest interest and use to the Commonwealth" (Thomson 1904, 145). Years later, when pressed by Mitchell librarian William Ifould about this anecdote, Thomson was "extremely vague," and Ifould suspected that Thomson actually took this statement from the widely reported lecture of Barclay's (Ifould 9 August 1944, AT34/3).

It is particularly significant that Prince Roland wanted to gift the Tasman map to the nascent Commonwealth of Australia. In 1899, that Commonwealth did not yet exist: the complex process of the federation of six individual colonies was near completion, but several key aspects – such as a site for the national capital and its cultural institutions – were still contentious. We might speculate that this bestowing of such a significant historical artefact may have, in Roland's eyes, conferred a deeper, Continental origin to the new, independent nation forming in the Asian geographical space. Though he would never travel to Australia, as he was terrified of snakes and disliked rabbits which "seemed to overrun the place" (Thomson 1904, 143), his gift would ensure that he left an indelible and unifying footprint in national life.

Thomson worked to keep the Tasman Map and Prince Roland's generosity alive in Australian public memory. Upon returning to Australia after his world tour, Thomson told the press about Prince Roland's determination to donate the map to the Australian Commonwealth, "as he thought that Australia would then have the best right to it" (*Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* 16 September 1903, 6). He then wrote about it in his memoir (Thomson 1904, 144-145). Again, in May 1905, when Capt. W Eaton of the Queensland Maritime Board addressed a Queensland Royal Geographical Society meeting on "Tasman, the Forgotten Explorer," Thomson, who was in attendance, made sure to remind the audience:

> Dr. Thomson … said he had seen Tasman's manuscript map in Prince Bonaparte's library in Paris, and he had been informed by that gentleman that at his death he proposed to devise the map to the Commonwealth. (*Queenslander* 1905, 8)

Yet there is a curious lull in reports of the map in the for almost two decades, and the activities of the map itself remain, like its existence in Prince Roland's mansion, protectively shrouded. In 1910, Prince Roland rose to the position of president of the Société de Géographie, an office he maintained until his death in 1924, at the age of 66. The stage was now set for his clearly expressed wish to be fulfilled: for the Tasman map to be bequeathed to the Commonwealth of Australia. Yet there is little information available on if Roland

had formally documented his verbal promise, and the movements of the map.

At some stage early in the 20th century, the Tasman map went from being carefully preserved behind a screen at Prince Roland's mansion, to enjoying exhibition at the Société de Géographie headquarters at 184 Boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris. This change in location, and public debut, may have occurred after 1910 when Roland became president of the Société de Géographie. Alternatively, it may have gone on display after Roland's death in 1924, when, as his daughter and heir Princess Marie later told British Ambassador Lord Crewe, "most of her father's collection had gone to the Société de Géographie, but the Tasman map had been only lent to that society, which had it on exhibition" (Bunbabin 1933, 8).

Figure 4
Photograph of Princess Marie Bonaparte (1882-1962) French author and psychoanalyst. Dated 1907. Image from Alamy Stock images, permission to reproduce granted.

Princess Marie Bonaparte was her father's only heir, and a remarkable woman by any standards (figure 4). Inheriting his scientific disposition, she researched and published in the nascent fiend of sexuality in psychoanalysis. She was first a patient and then colleague of Sigmund Freud, and later helped him – and, importantly to her, his research – escape Nazi-controlled Vienna. Following her marriage to Prince George of Greece and Denmark, her property would traditionally transfer to her husband. Yet theirs was an unusual marriage on many fronts, and Prince George had reportedly astonished Marie's father Roland by waiving any rights of inheritance or control over her fortune (Bertin 1982, 88). Princess Marie had nevertheless bestowed some control to George, and this included the Tasman map, for, in many later media reports, he was cited as the owner. Hence, by the mid-1920s the map itself held multiple meanings: a Dutch trophy, on Japanese paper, depicting an Antipodean coast, representing east Asian dominance, displayed in France, and owned by the Prince and Princess of Greece and Denmark. Yet its most complicated episode was yet to begin. For its erstwhile owner, the late Prince Roland Bonaparte, just as snakes prevented him physically visiting Australia himself, so too did metaphorical snakes prevent his gift being bestowed in the way he wanted.

From Gift to Grab: The Mitchell Library's Fight for the Tasman Map

If the Tasman Map's story were a dramatized production, then the star of its all-important third act would be William Ifould, the man who led the operation to bring the Tasman Map to Australia (figure 5). Hailing from a family with extensive outback pastoral holdings, Ifould began a career in librarianship in South Australia. Ifould would feign no knowledge of Prince Roland's intended bequest until

the late 1920s, yet this is almost inconceivable, given his close acquaintance with Captain Barclay in 1899 (Strong 2013, 88), when news of Prince Roland's proposed gift to the Commonwealth circulated the country. In 1912, Ifould left Adelaide for Sydney, becoming Principal Librarian for the Public Library of New South Wales. This would become the Mitchell Library, and despite Ifould's South Australian origins, he would rule as a fiercely loyal and jealous leader for three decades.

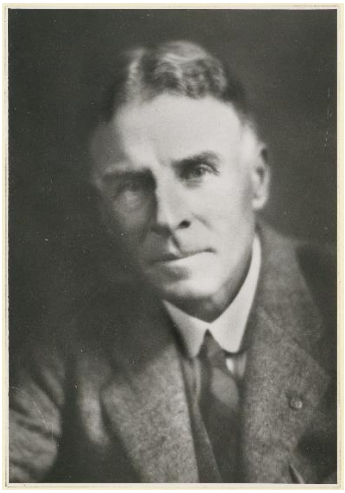

Figure 5
William Herbert Ifould. State Library of South Australia (B15058).

Ifould was no stranger to subterfuge and Machiavellian manoeuvring on behalf of his beloved library. David Jones (1992, 162-4) highlights numerous episodes of manipulation and deception, such as in the process of securing Cook's Endeavour papers at the Sotheby's action in London in 1923. Ifould travelled to London to bid on behalf of the Mitchell and was aghast on arrival to find his own Mitchell Trustees had agreed it would go to the Commonwealth and not his own library. Undeterred, Ifould engaged in a dizzying schedule of misinformation, laying false trails and neutralizing competitors. The experience of "losing" the Cook acquisition to the Commonwealth was a bitter disappointment and perceived threat to the Mitchell's prestige, which, according to politician and Mitchell Trustee T.D. Mulch, "should be maintained as the mecca of the student of Australian history" (1939, in Jones 1992, 165).

William Ifould's chief personal nemesis was Kenneth Binns, who from 1928 was the Librarian of the Commonwealth National Library, but Ifould also held an abiding antipathy for the Commonwealth itself. In the earliest days of the scramble for the Tasman map, the Commonwealth Library's collection was yet to have a permanent home, with the national capital of Canberra still in the early planning stages. Binns was based in Melbourne, then the seat of the national parliament, and this played into a rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne which had been evident since Melbourne's extraordinary gold rush boom of the 1850s (Leone 2014). This Ifould-Binns tension would later develop into an acrimonious Sydney-Commonwealth competitiveness, with numerous instances of contests over acquisitions (Jones 1992, 166-171), leading Jones to conclude that the rivalry sown and nurtured in Ifould's tenure "would affect relations between Australian libraries for many decades" (1992, 173). And it was into this fraught interwar environment of duelling librarians, capital city rivalries and a nation trying to agree on a sense of national identity, that the Tasman Map was to reassert itself with a striking new legend of discovery. But unlike many legends, this one was steeped in factual events.

Figure 6
Daisy Bates, 1936. State Library of South Australia Portrait Collection (B6799).

Anthropologist Daisy Bates (figure 6.) was already well known by the time she entered the Tasman Map's story in 1926. Of Irish birth, genteel upbringing, and thrice married, she was 60 years old and had been living in harsh outback conditions for a quarter of a century (Bates 1940, 168-180). Bates was a complex mix of anthropological field worker and self-appointed saviour of the Indigenous peoples who, in that period, were still seen as a dying race. Her encampment at the permanent waterhole Ooldea Soak was a fixture on the Nullarbor Plain railway line, and she frequently appeared in the media, as a writer and as a topic of interest when visited by dignitaries and concerned citizens (Reece 2007). In 1926, Ooldea was owned by the Ifould family. It was in this isolated locale that Bates read, probably in August or September of 1926, her old acquaintance J.P. Thomson's 1904 book *Round the World*. Noticing his anecdote about the Tasman Map and Prince Roland's intention to bequeath it to the Commonwealth, Bates first consulted another regular correspondent, *Australasian* editor William Hurst (Salter 1972, 220). It is noteworthy that Bates did not contact the South Australian State Library, as she lived in its jurisdiction: she was possibly still angry after being refused funding eight years earlier (Reece 2007, 72). Instead, she wrote to William Ifould on 7 October 1926. She told him about consulting Hurst, who had no knowledge of the map being presented to the Australian Government, and asked Ifould "if it would not be worth the while" of the Mitchell to make enquiries to try and secure the map from Queen Amelia of Portugal, who she thought to have inherited it (Bates 7 October 1926, AT34/3). This letter to Ifould – an acquaintance and regular correspondent, who also held familial ties to the property where Bates lived – is mythologized in the legend which would be built around the Tasman Map as a bolt from the blue.

The Tasman Map's acquisition was historicised in 1948 in the Mitchell Library's official version, with Bates credited as drawing Ifould's attention, via Thomson's reference, to Prince Roland's "expressed wish". In this account by Phyllis Mander Jones, "Enquiries were at once made through the British Consul in Paris and the result was that the Prince's heir, the Princess George of Greece, graciously presented this priceless treasure to the Mitchell Library" (1948, 18). In this Jones narrative, it was a polite and seamless acquisition. More recent publications shed light on the complex nature of the acquisition. In his history of the Mitchell Library, Fletcher highlighted how Ifould "stressed the need to avoid informing the federal government lest the National Library enter the scene" (2007, 118), and Burnet's version of events mentioned

"seven years of secret negotiations" (2019, 154) by Lord Chelmsford, Agent-General of New South Wales in London. In fact, none of these accounts give true justice to the small army of academics, bureaucrats, notable colonial identities, and friends of the Mitchell who took part in the process of keeping the Commonwealth at bay and securing the Tasman map for the State of New South Wales. Rather than a simple matter of individuals making representations, it involved numerous meetings over several years, constant updates, pressure and persuasion, and a race against time to get possession of the map before agents of the Commonwealth – be they librarians, diplomats, High Commissioners, or the Prime Minister himself – could step in.

The acquisition of the Tasman Map proved an anxious time for William Ifould. Within days of receiving Bates's letter, he identified Princess Marie Bonaparte, also known by her married name of Princess George of Greece and Denmark, as the current owner. He wrote to the Under Secretary of the Premier's Department, requesting the New South Wales Agent-General Lord Chelmsford – who had spent time in Australia – be dispatched to approach Princess Marie (Ifould 19 October 1926, AT34/4). This mission had to be kept secret from Australian Prime Minister Stanley Bruce, who was then in London at the Dominions Conference: according to Ifould "this would mean the acquisition of the map by the Federal Government for the Commonwealth Library in Canberra" (Ifould 19 October 1926, AT34/4). To avoid alerting any Commonwealth diplomats, Chelmsford enlisted the British Ambassador in Paris, Lord Crewe, to visit Princess Marie. Fully aware of her father's wishes to bequeath the map to Australia, she was happy to comply (Agent-General 3 January 1927 cited by Ifould, AT34/4). However, there was a hitch: Marie's husband Prince George wanted to travel to Australia and present the map himself. This created concern for Ifould and his Mitchell Library loyalists, who were worried that Prince George might present it to the Prime Minister instead of the Mitchell (Ifould, 12 February 1927, AT34/4).

For the next six years, Ifould, the Mitchell Trustees, and the NSW Government feared the Commonwealth might gain possession of the Tasman Map. In October 1928, William Tyrell, now British Ambassador in Paris, wrote at Ifould's urging to Princess Marie reminding her of her pledge to gift the map to Australia. Not mentioning the Commonwealth, Tyrell told her that the Mitchell Library "…is a state institution and the most important depository in Australia for records of the early history of the Continent" (Tyrell, 12 October 1928 AT34/4). Weeks later, Ifould asked for the Agent-General to again make representations to Princess Marie. Ifould fretted that if the Australian High Commissioner became involved, "the map would doubtless be retained by the Commonwealth authorities for the National Library in Canberra. This is something which I am very anxious should not happen" (Ifould 7 November 1928, AT34/4). In response, George Fuller of the Agent-General's office assured the New South Wales Premier Thomas Bavin, and through him Ifould, that negotiations were continuing, and "the Commonwealth Authorities know nothing about the matter" (Fuller 22 January 1929, AT34/4). Six months later, British Ambassador Tyrell lunched with Princess Marie in Paris, and she held firm to the plan for her husband to travel

to Australia to present the map (Tyrell 16 July 1929, AT34/4). In August, Ifould seemed resigned to waiting for Prince George's visit, but feared "The Prince might easily make a mistake and hand the documents to the Commonwealth authorities for the National Library at Canberra" (Ifould 14 August 1929, AT34/4). Weeks later, Ifould asked that the British Ambassador write to Princess Marie confirming that the map would be presented to the "Mitchell Library," underlining for emphasis (Ifould 20 September 1929, AT34/4).

In early 1930, the Mitchell's plans almost came unstuck, when British scholar Norman Mosley Penzer wrote to Princess Marie, asking for permission to photograph the Tasman Map. It was still on display at the Société de Géographie in Paris, and Marie – now seeing the map as Australian property – forwarded his request to British Ambassador Tyrell in Paris. Tyrell sent it on to Agent-General Fuller, who in turn forwarded it to NSW Premier Bavin. Citing a letter dated 1 February 1930 from Princess Marie, not present in the archive, he quotes Marie as stating that the map belongs "to the Government of Australia". Fuller was quick to claim,

> …it is probable that she does not mean to say the Map will go to the Commonwealth Government, and that the use of the words "Government of Australia" has no particular significance. (Fuller 19 March 1930, AT34/4).

And just like that, Princess Marie's clearly expressed will, similar to that of her father's that the map go to the Commonwealth, was dismissed as insignificant. Penzer was quietly given permission to photograph the map and told to credit Princess Marie and the Trustees of the Mitchell Library. Ever anxious, Ifould advised that the Agent-General make sure all concerned were aware that there was a Mitchell Library in Glasgow, so it should always be referred to as the Mitchell Library, Sydney (Ifould 7 May 1930, AT34/1/10), lest the Map be accidentally sent to Scotland.

In May 1932 came the breakthrough Ifould and his conspirators had been waiting for. After even more presentations to Princess Marie regarding Prince George's plans to travel to Australia to present the map, she advised new Agent-General Albert Willis that, as Prince George needed to postpone the trip yet again, she would turn the map over to Clive Voss, the Paris-based Australian Trade Commissioner (Willis 19 May 1932, AT34/4). It was not to be an instant handover, as the Société de Géographie wanted to keep it for several months to have a copy made, but the coup was almost complete for the Mitchell conspirators.

There were other, less-publicly-credited actors. An old friend of William Ifould from their time together in Adelaide, historian George Cockburn Henderson, was one of the key personnel in the Mitchell acquisition. Henderson was previously based at Sydney University, while working on his trilogy of works on Fiji, but lately had worked as Ifould's representative, researcher, and purchaser in London, scouring for potential acquisitions for the Mitchell Library across Britain and Europe (MLMSS 94, ML AH108/2). Henderson's absence from the Mitchell Library's modern telling of the map's acquisition is particularly jarring, given his

efforts on behalf of Ifould and the Mitchell over many years, and his role in securing a range of rare documents for the Mitchell archives.

Henderson was amongst the first to see the Tasman Map when it finally arrived at the Agent-General's office in London on 9 May 1933. It was dispatched to the British Museum to be photographed, and together with Dutch historian of maps Frederick Caspar Wieder, who rushed to London as soon as it arrived (Wieder 22 May 1933, AT34/4), Henderson produced a detailed report on the map's history and authenticity, which was promptly forwarded to the New South Wales Government (Henderson 25 May 1933, AT34/1). Henderson's research, informed by Wieder's expertise, constituted the Mitchell Library's professional assessment (Brunton 2011, 16) and has underpinned the Mitchell Library's representations of the map ever since.

It is not currently known how the much-prized Tasman Map travelled from London to Sydney. In late May 1933, Agent-General Ferguson wrote that the map was being sent to New South Wales, hermetically sealed, in a metal container "in the next office case to the Treasury" (Ferguson 25 May 1933, AT34/4). Earlier shipments of valuable documents, such as the Huydecoper manuscript acquired in 1927, were sent in waterproof, zinc-lined vessels (Ifould 9 February 1927, AT34/3). The Tasman Map almost certainly went by sea: according to Peter Hobbins of the Australian National Maritime Museum, air transport was, in the early thirties, both newsworthy and perilous, and it was unlikely such a valuable item would have been sent by air until the Empire Air Mail Scheme commenced in late 1938 (Hobbins *pers com*). The map was probably received some time before 31 August 1933, and its arrival was celebrated in Sydney's press with a jubilant headline and a large reproduction of the map (*Sydney Morning Herald,* 2 September 1933, 9). The scene was set for its elevation to national founding document, and a revision of the history of its acquisition.

Constructing a New Legend

The legend-building which took place after the Tasman Map was securely in Mitchell Library hands is entertaining – at times, almost picaresque. In modern versions of the acquisition, Prince Roland is relegated to a supporting role, and the starring troika became white saviour of the outback Daisy Bates, academically trained sexologist and aristocrat Princess Marie, and heroic librarian William Ifould. J.P. Thomson's anecdote of viewing the map in Prince Roland's mansion became a genesis-style founding story. Ifould was assiduous in crediting Thomson for his role in securing the map, and in the weeks following the map's arrival, the Brisbane press quoted Ifould as stating then-79-year-old Thomson was "ultimately responsible for its coming to Australia" (*Brisbane Telegraph*, 5 October 1933, 16). For Daisy Bates, who was enjoying a high-profile visit to Canberra as a special guest of the Commonwealth when the map arrived, publicity around her role was "a very considerable feather" in her cap (Salter 1972, 220). The role of Captain Barclay, and his own widely reported meeting with Roland, was expunged from the official story, even though Ifould knew Barclay well, and had a copy of his Imperial Institute talk in the correspondence file related to the map (AT34/2). In the 1948 official Mitchell Library book on the map, Jones implied that Roland's gift was expressed once only, to Thomson

(Jones 1948, 17). Jones's official story also reduced the years of negotiations and subterfuge to a simple story of the *noblesse oblige* of Princess Marie (Jones 1948, 18).

Figure 7
Tasman Map, vestibule, Mitchell Building, photograph by Ivan Ives, 1943. Image from Alamy Stock images, permission to reproduce granted.

So important was the Tasman Map to the Mitchell Library's sense of itself as the premier public institution of Australia, that simply holding the original was not enough. The crowning glory of the Map's new role was to be its reproduction as a mosaic in the vestibule of the Mitchell Library's £300,000 redevelopment (figure 7). Set in Wombeyan russet marble to resemble the tone of the original map's paper (Jones 1948, 18), the firm chosen in 1939 to create the mosaic, Melocco Brothers of Annandale, were estimated to be responsible for 90% of the marble, scagliola and terrazzo work in Sydney between 1910 and 1965 (Kevin 2005). Jacob Swart's 1860 lithograph was used as the model, as a more detailed copy was not completed until 1945 (Jones 1948, 18-19). William Ifould – depicted in *Smith's Weekly* as the "Man Who Blesses Every Stone In New Library" (7 September 1940) – was involved in every step of the process. His passion was infectious, according to David Jones:

> Ifould had more than a client's customary interest in decorative details, and his staff shared his enthusiasm. Staff scoured the literature for illustrations of watermarks, bindings, symbols, cherubs blowing the winds and pictures of ships for the proposed Tasman Map mosaic for the Vestibule. (1993, 347)

By 1940, as the map was being replicated in marble in the monumental building works at the library, the Bates-Ifould-Princess Marie narrative had taken firm hold. *Smith's Weekly* sidestepped the issue of "Prince Rollo" and his bequest altogether and simply said that Princess Marie "hunted out the map, and handed it over" (7 September 1940, 8).

The redeveloped library quietly reopened in 1942, with wartime austerities delaying an official celebration until 23 November 1943. At this time, Melbourne remained Australia's functional capital, with Canberra still under development, and the magnitude of the improvements to the Mitchell State Library certainly gave it a sense of pre-eminence over the peripatetic Commonwealth Library. The grand re-opening was the soon-to-retire William Ifould's finest hour. New South Wales Governor Lord Wakehurst presided over the festivities, and Federal Attorney General H.V. "Doc" Evatt, later to serve as President of the United Nations, told the crowd that while Hitler was burning and destroying valuable literature, "we were preserving them so that they could remain our strength and our hope" (*National Advocate,* 25 November 1943, 1). The mosaic remained a feature

of the redevelopment, with Ian Burnet quoting one commentator:

> In the years to come a million feet will cross this floor. They who pass this threshold to the sanctum beyond seek knowledge of man and life, past, present and future. May it never escape their attention that here beneath their feet is History. (2019, 197)

Discussion: Meaning of the Tasman Map

The original Tasman Map, being a jealously guarded treasure of the State Library of New South Wales, spent the vast majority of its time in Australia carefully stored away from the dangers of public engagement, before being restored and exhibited for several months in late 2021-22. It remains one of the Mitchell's "most illustrious acquisitions" (Brunton 2011, 15). The mosaic reproduction adorning the front entryway ensures that this significant document plays a central role in the day-to-day operations of the institution. In the corner of the vestibule, a bust of the library's long-serving chief librarian, William Ifould, watches it admiringly, just as he did in 1940 when *Smith's Weekly* wrote, "What he sees pleases him, which is only proper, for he is looking at his 'baby'" (7 September 1940, 8). Ifould's legacy looms large and is perpetuated by the Library which remains proud of his hard work to seize possession of the Tasman Map.

As a document, the Tasman Map occupies a paradoxical place in Australian public life. It represents the imperial ambitions of the VOC, which had given up on exploration of Australia before the ink on the Japanese vellum was even dry. It helped cement the Mitchell Library's status as the preeminent public library in the nation when the Commonwealth (now National) Library emerged in the new capital of Canberra. Its representation is underfoot (or behind ropes) for every visitor to the Mitchell Library, but its original was too precious and delicate to be seen by the public for nine decades. Its 17th century Dutch authorship unsettles the narrative that James Cook "discovered" Australia on behalf of the British in 1770, but nevertheless ensures that Australian "discovery" remains a European prerogative. The Library's story of its coming to Australia, disseminated from 1933 and still perpetuated today, hinges on the interventions of two remarkable women, Daisy Bates and Princess Marie, yet William Ifould and his coterie of male diplomats and academics are credited with doing the hard work. The Library does not obscure in its literature that Ifould and his agents conspired to keep the map out of Commonwealth hands; yet conspicuously absent from any version of the story through its 90 year possession, in media or its sponsored publications, is admission of foreknowledge of Prince Roland's longstanding wish, expressed multiple times, for the map to go to the Commonwealth. The role of Captain Barclay's 1899 anecdote, and its publication around the country, is eradicated. This is a very strategic omission, as it renders the map falling into the Mitchell's hands as a happy coincidence with colourful characters, and not the result of years of scheming and subterfuge. The Map is depicted as a coup for New South Wales, rather than a purloined national gift.

The Tasman Map, as it is commonly viewed today, is a mosaic reproduction, by Italian artisans, of a Dutch map, on

Japanese paper, depicting Antipodean coastlines, representing east Asian dominance, donated by a French aristocrat, intended for the Australian Commonwealth, but wrested by a state institution obsessed with inter-library rivalry.

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