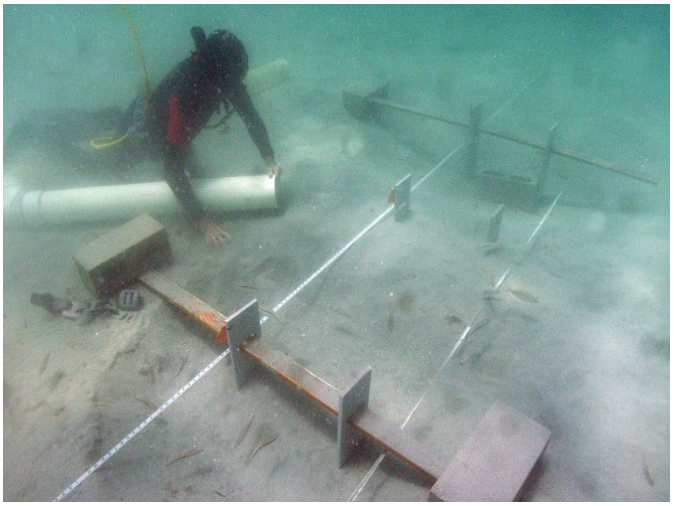
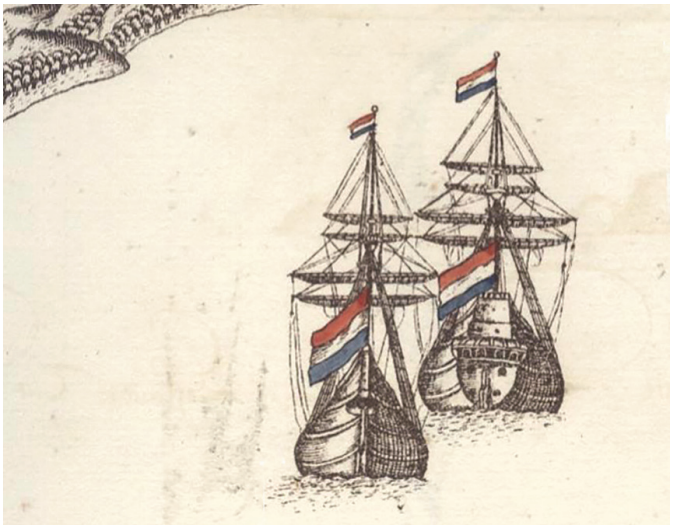
2019
VOLUME
43

Australasian Journal of Maritime Archaeology

Journal of the Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology





ISSN 2652-0516

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AUSTRALASIAN JOURNAL OF
MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGY
(ISSN 2652-0516)

PUBLISHED ANNUALLY
BY
THE AUSTRALASIAN INSTITUTE FOR MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGY
at Flinders University, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide, South Australia 5001

The *Australasian Journal of Maritime Archaeology* is published annually in print (ISSN 2652-0508) and electronic formats (ISSN 2652-0516) by the Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology (AIMA) at Flinders University, GPO Box 2100, Adelaide, SA 5001. Individual subscription to the journal is by membership in the institute: Ordinary Membership is AUD 65.00; Student Membership is AUD 35.00; Institutional Membership is AUD 95.00. For additional membership options or to order back issues, visit http://www.aima-underwater.org.au/. All issues of the journal (including those under former titles) are available in electronic format through RMIT Informit at http://search.informit.org. The journal will consider for publication manuscripts consistent with the broad areas of research supported by AIMA. These include the maritime archaeology and history of Australasia, the Indian Ocean region, Southeast Asia and Oceania from ancient to modern times. The Editor welcomes the submission of original manuscripts on any subject within that scope. Article submissions that announce discoveries, present new information or break new theoretical ground are especially welcome, as are articles that deal with interdisciplinary approaches, methodologies, analysis of material culture or theoretical frameworks for interpreting archaeological data. The Editor also encourages special topics and thematic issues, and reviews and memorials are solicited as well. Manuscripts are subject to peer review by at least two readers as well as the Editor or Assistant Editors.

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The Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Australian Federal Government through the Historic Shipwrecks Program.

Produced by the Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology and
the Maritime Archaeology Program at Flinders University

Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology
Registration No A0820044J
Western Australia Associations Incorporation Act 1987 Section18 (6)
ABN 37 830 874 307

Australian Government
Department of the Environment and Energy

Van Delft Before Cook: The Earliest Record of Substantial Culture Contact Between Indigenous Australians and the Dutch East India Company Prior to 1770

WENDY VAN DUIVENVOORDE, DARYL WESLEY, MIRANI LITSTER, FANNY WONU VEYS, WIDYA NAYATI, MARK POLZER, JOHN MCCARTHY AND LIDWIEN JANSEN

Abstract

This article details the importance of the 1705 Van Delft expedition for the early European history and culture contacts of northern Australia. The expedition sailed from Batavia with three ships under the command of Maarten van Delft and spent nearly three and half months exploring along the north coast of Australia—Tiwi Islands, Cobourg Peninsula and Croker Island. Along the way, they interacted with different groups of Indigenous peoples and possibly collected the cultural material now held in the Dutch National Museum of World Cultures—the earliest known existing cultural material collected from Australia. This article provides a detailed synthesis of Indigenous interactions with the Dutch prior to 1770 and accords the Van Delft expedition its proper significance in terms of the extent and detail of its survey and its importance in ending Dutch colonial interest in Australia. Through detailed analysis of the primary sources for the Van Delft expedition, including cartography, this study demonstrates that the expedition covered parts of the Australian mainland and Croker Island, and that Van Delft's crews interacted with mainland Indigenous groups as well as Tiwi Islanders.

INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AND DUTCH CREW MEMBERS: SIGHTINGS AND BRIEF INTERACTIONS

Brief and often tense interactions with Indigenous Australian peoples occurred from the first time a Dutch East India Company ship ventured into Australian waters (Heeres 1899; 1898; Leupe 1868). Although these first European voyagers did not stay long enough or interact closely enough to learn the names of specific groups, in most cases there is sufficient detail on the location of these encounters to associate them with known Indigenous peoples. In 1606, the *Duyfken* expedition, under the command of Dutch explorer Willem Janszoon, sailed from the East Indies into northern Australian waters. Despite some speculation on a possible earlier European encounter (McIntyre 1982; Pearson 2005:15–19; Richardson 1989; Urban 2009), the crew of *Duyfken* made the first recorded European landfall on Australian soil. The journey may have been a planned expedition to explore the 'South Land' or an opportunistic enterprise resulting from Dutch shipping and trade conditions in Southeast Asia (Parthesius 2006:60). Janszoon sailed up a river located on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula, where his crew encountered Indigenous people. When they attacked his boat suddenly, one of his crew was fatally wounded by a spear (Sheehan 2008:24; Sigmond and Zuiderbaan 1995:23). The 1623 expedition by Jan Carstenszoon provides the earliest surviving copy of a journal from the VOC archives that contains a description of some part of the Australian coast (van Dijk 1859; NL-HaNA 1623). In the ships *Arnhem* and *Pera*, he and his crew sailed along Australia's north coast, following a route similar to that of Janszoon in 1606, but continuing much farther to the west (Heeres 1899:20–45; Sigmond and Zuiderbaan 1995:43–50; NL-HaNA 1623). Carstenszoon's crew experienced brief, violent encounters on several occasions (van Dijk 1859).

Even Willem de Vlaming's 1697 expedition to the Western Australian coast, which paralleled Van Delft's in purpose and duration, observed only traces of Indigenous peoples (Schilder 1976a:78–97; 1985). The expedition ships *Geelvink*, *Nijptang* and *Wezeltje* sailed north from Rottnest Island on 29 December 1696 and, for almost three months, explored and mapped the coastline in detail. For a few days, they also searched for Indigenous people along the Swan River and Jurien Bay in order to establish contact and take captives back to Batavia, the capital of the Dutch East Indies (modern-day Jakarta, Indonesia).

The crew observed smoke at several places along the coast and found footprints of different sizes, some empty huts and an obvious lookout tree that had steps carved into the trunk all the way to the top. At the Swan River, the shore party of 86 men included two "black inhabitants" from the Cape of Good Hope, South Africa, who were brought along as interpreters (Schilder 1976a:84). Nevertheless, the shore parties never managed to engage with any Indigenous people and each time returned to the ships empty handed (Schilder 1976a:82–88).

Probably the most extensively studied episodes of the Dutch in Australia are the four VOC shipwrecking events off the Western Australian coast. Historical sources that inform on shipwreck survivors and their movements on Australian soil and interactions with Indigenous Australians exist for three of the ships: *Batavia* (1629), *Vergulde Draak* (1656) and *Zeewijk* (1727). The main records of these ships survive in Dutch East India Company archives solely because some members of the crew made it to the ship's intended destination and reported its loss to Company authorities. *Batavia* and *Zeewijk* survivors established camps and lived for a time on islands in the Houtman Abrolhos Archipelago, near to where their respective ships wrecked, before they were rescued and/or headed off towards Batavia (Drake-Brockman 2006; Ingelman-Sundberg 1978:7–11). Similarly, the under steersman (*onderstuurman*) and six sailors from *Vergulde Draak* managed to complete the voyage to Batavia in the ship's boat (Green 1977:48), whereas the vast majority of the ship's survivors that remained behind, including the captain, vanished without leaving much of any archaeological trace (Green 1977:48–60; Henderson 2002; Sheppard 2019). *Zuiddorp* (or *Zuytdorp*, 1712), the fourth VOC ship that wrecked off Western Australia, was the only one to disappear without a trace (Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffer 1979a:2147.3). The Company never organized a search expedition for the ship or possible survivors since, for all they knew, the vessel could have been lost anywhere in the Indian Ocean between Cape of Good Hope and Batavia. Not until 1927, when archaeological remains of the ship—cargo and personal possessions—were discovered on the cliffs near the wreck site, did evidence of the ship's wrecking and potential survivors come to light (the underwater site was not located until 1964; see Pendal et al. 1994:14–19 for discussion of various sightings, reportings and discovery of the wreck site and material).

Batavia *(1629)*

The *Batavia* shipwreck occurred on the uninhabited Abrolhos Islands, far from the coast of Western Australia. Thus, no interaction between the main group of survivors and the local Indigenous population occurred. Forty-eight of the survivors, including Chief Merchant Pelsaert and all but one of the senior officers, left in the ship's boats to search for water along the coast before sailing on to Batavia to get help. Pelsaert recorded in his journal that, on several occasions along the way, his party encountered people who presumably belonged to the Nhanta group. This constitutes the earliest known observation of Indigenous people on that coast. On 14 June 1629, Pelsaert saw smoke inland and sent six of his crew ashore to search for water in the vicinity. Those on the longboat witnessed:

> four people who had come crawling on [their] hands and feet towards our people who then unexpectedly came out of a hollow from a height nearby, they leapt up and ran off at full speed […]. They were black people, entirely naked, without any cover [translated from Roeper 2002:73].[1]

Two days later, Pelsaert notes:

> We next saw eight black men, each carrying a stick in their hands, and they approached to within a musket shot's distance, but, when we went towards them, they ran away and we could not get them to stop where they were so that we might get closer to them [Drake-Brockman 2006:120].

This brief interaction seemed to have frightened the Indigenous people, since they ran away.

Months later, two sailors were deliberately marooned on the Australian mainland as punishment for their roles in the so-called mutiny amongst the shipwreck survivors. They were given "Nuremberg toys, knives, beads, bells and small mirrors" to trade with Aboriginal people (Roeper 2002:186, 220; Drake-Brockman 2006:217). Seven years later, the 1636 expedition sent to explore the north coast of Australia from the east and sail as far west as the Abrolhos was instructed to look out for the two mutineers and, if still alive and willing, give them passage to Batavia (Sigmond and Zuiderbaan 1995:71). They were never spotted, and their fates remain unknown; no evidence has ever been found to indicate that they did in fact interact with Indigenous Australians.

Vergulde Draak *(1656)*

The second VOC vessel to sink off the Western Australian coast was *Vergulde Draak*. In the early hours of 28 April 1656, it struck a reef five

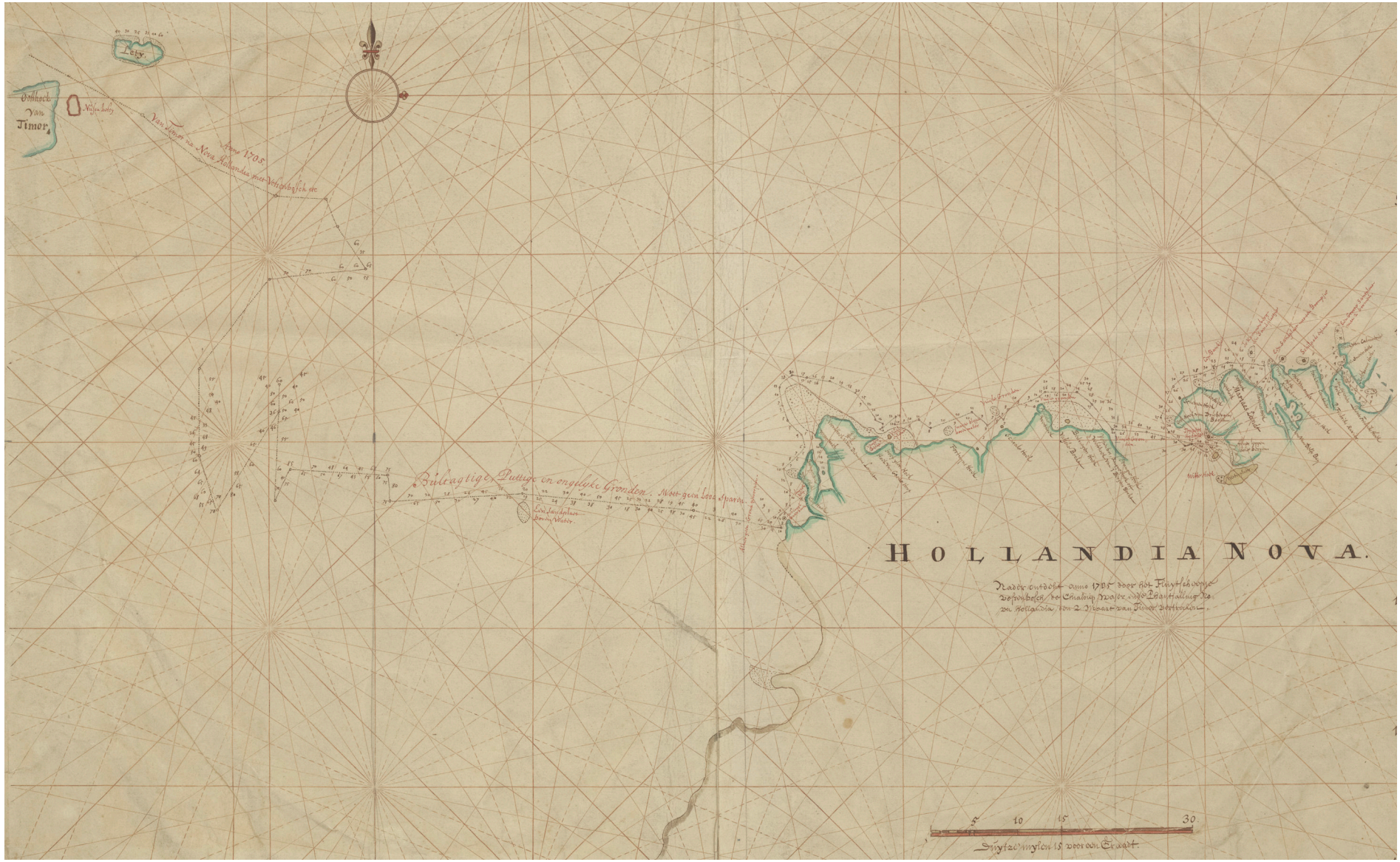

Fig. 1. Manuscript chart from the 1705 voyage of VOC ships *Vossenbos*, *Waaier* and *Nova Hollandia* under command of Maarten van Delft; Archief Kaartcollectie Buitenland Leupe, 4.VEL. 500 (NL-HaNA 1705b).

kilometres off the coast, south of what is now known as Ledge Point, 100 km north of Perth. Of the 193 people on board, 75, including the skipper, Pieter Albertszoon, made it ashore. Documentation in the Dutch East India Company archives containing eye-witness reports attests to the fact that 68 crew and passengers from *Vergulde Draak* were marooned on the Western Australian shore. The other seven sailed to Batavia in a longboat for help. The Governor-General of Batavia immediately dispatched two vessels to rescue those left behind who, according to the seven, were "about to go inland where they very much hoped to find provisions and drinking water" (Leupe 1868:97). The survivors were not found. Over the ensuing two years, the VOC dispatched four rescue expeditions to search for them—all unsuccessful (Green 1977:48–60; Heeres 1899:75–80; Henderson 2002; Sigmond and Zuiderbaan 1995:87–98). Extensive archaeological research along the stretch of coast in the area where *Vergulde Draak* sank has failed to find any remains of the 68 people who were left behind, nor has there been any indication that they interacted or co-existed with the local population in the area. No archaeological evidence has ever been found to suggest that the survivors were in contact with the Noongar people (Sheppard 2019; Van Duivenvoorde et al. 2013:54). If there had been such contact in the weeks after the shipwrecking, it would have been mentioned in the letters written by the *Vergulde Draak* survivors that were sent with the small group that sailed to Batavia in the ship's boat (Leupe 1868:97; WCARS 1656; see also Sheppard 2019:207–212). Bob Sheppard recently put forward the plausible hypothesis that the 68 survivors may have managed to refloat the longboat and attempted to sail to Batavia, only to wreck somewhere south of the Abrolhos Group of Islands or within the archipelago itself (Sheppard 2019:233, 236–237). The most recent terrestrial and underwater archaeological investigations of the *Vergulde Draak* shipwreck, under the auspices of ARC Linkage project 'Shipwrecks of the Roaring

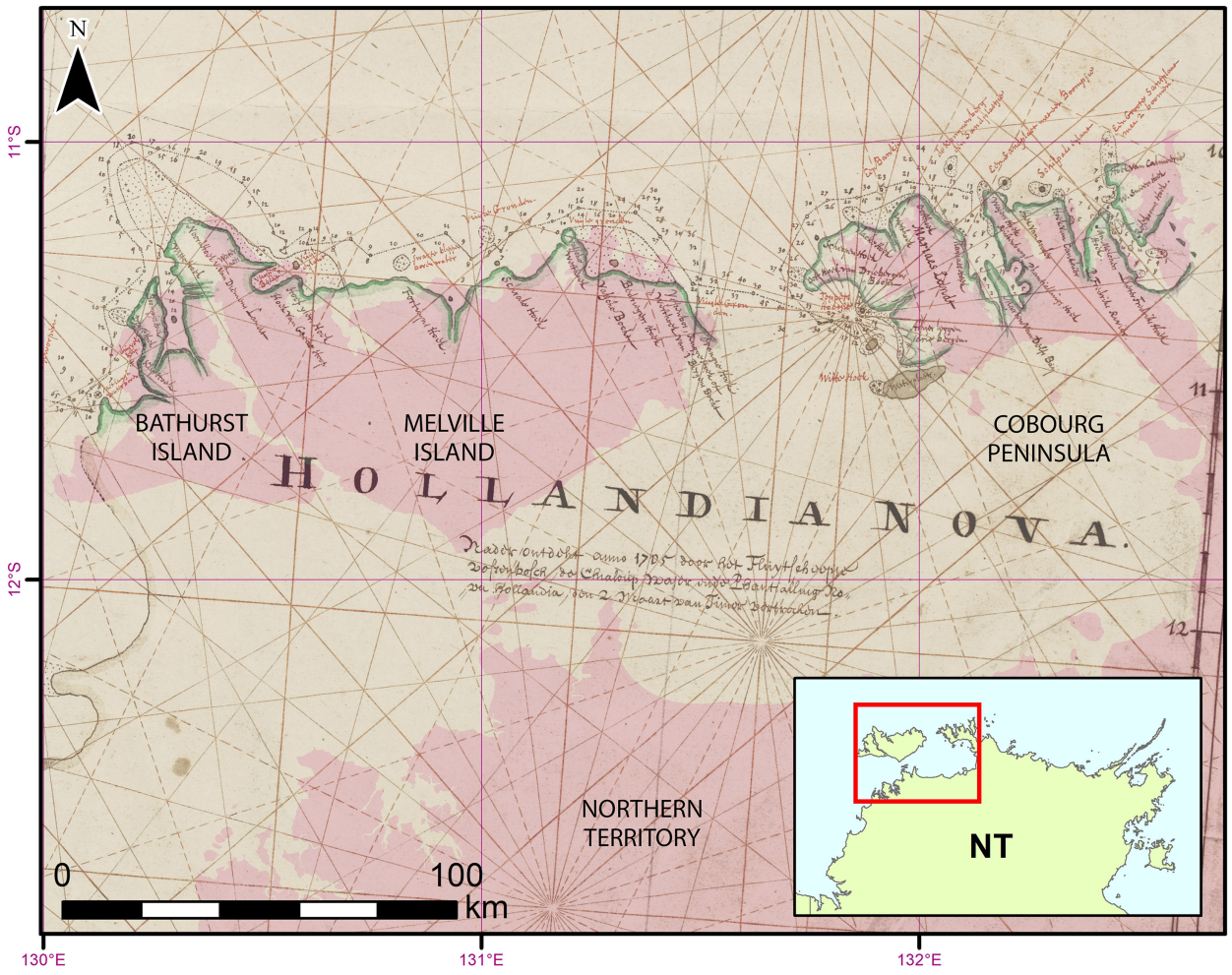

Fig. 2. The 1705 manuscript chart georectified and overlaying the present-day coastline of the Tiwi Islands, Cobourg Peninsula and Croker Island (J. McCarthy).

Forties' (LP130100137), found no significant archaeological evidence for the fate of the survivors.

Zuiddorp ***(1712)***

In April 1712, the *Zuiddorp* ship ran aground on the cliffs near Murchison River, approximately 300 km south of Shark Bay on the Western Australian coast. Reportedly, no search was undertaken for the missing ship and none of its crew ever arrived in Batavia. The ship's fate was unknown until the 20th century, when the wreck site was located in the waters below the cliffs within the confines of a nature reserve. The shipwreck site and its hinterland have been subject to archaeological study since 1971 (McCarthy 2006; Morse 1988; Playford 2006; Weaver 1994). This included attempts to ascertain whether *Zuiddorp* survivors interacted with Indigenous groups living in, or travelling through, the area, all of which proved fruitless (Michael McCarthy pers. comm. 2020). In the mid-1950s, these ranged from opportunistic visual inspections conducted by enthusiasts to field research conducted by independent scholars and WA Museum personnel. In 1986, exploring possible Indigenous-European interactions at or near the site and their ramifications became a formal part of the Western Australian Museum's *Zuiddorp* research program. Over the ensuing decades, this led to a number of searches, remote sensing and archaeological investigations by the Museum (McCarthy 2006), as well as associated genetic studies by an independent group (Rossi et al. 2002). Again, all these efforts proved futile.

Despite dubious anecdotal information linking the marooned survivors from *Zuiddorp* to local Indigenous groups (McCarthy 2006:106–107; 2018:61; Pearson 2005:23; Playford 2006:210–232), archaeological evidence is scant at best, and suggests that local Indigenous groups did not frequent the area. Wreckage, including glass bottles, timbers and rigging material, was found atop the cliffs above the shipwreck, but none of the glass is worked, which inevitably would be the case if these items had been picked up and used by Indigenous people (McCarthy 2006; Weaver 1994). The best evidence for any Indigenous presence in the area are shell middens on the Zuytdorp Cliffs and in the coastal dunes, but these date to 4,000±78 years BP, more than three-and-a-half millennia before the shipwrecking (Morse 1988:39). Furthermore, the sea near the wreck site is inaccessible most of the year, and the area's nearest source of potable water is eight kilometres away. Morse (1988:39), therefore, concluded that Indigenous people probably visited the coastal area near the *Zuiddorp* shipwreck only for "shell gathering and eating trips during occasional spells of good weather. Longer or more frequent occupation is more likely to have occurred closer to the hinterland soaks, where fresh water and a variety of both plant and animal foods are available".

Zeewijk ***(1727)***

The survivors of the *Zeewijk* shipwrecking in June 1727 ended up on the Southern Group of Islands of the Houtman Abrolhos Archipelago. Twelve of the survivors were dispatched in the ship's boat to get help, but were never heard from again. The remaining survivors then succeeded in building a small sloop from the wreckage, in which, after 10 months on the islands, they set sail for Batavia. On 30 April 1728, 82 men finally arrived in Batavia (Sigmond and Zuiderbaan 1995:119–132). Along the way, the survivors explored and charted the islands of the Southern Group in detail. *Zeewijk*'s skipper Jan Steijns and upper steersman Adriaan van de Graaf kept detailed records of the voyage, documenting their daily movements, where they collected freshwater or dug wells and what plants they foraged to supplement their diet (Leenstra and Paesi 2014). The Abrolhos Islands were not occupied by Indigenous Australians in the 18th century, so the crew had no interaction with local Western Australians. They also make no mention of any sightings or interactions with Indigenous Australians on the mainland (CIE 2014; Heeres 1899; Ingelman-Sundberg 1978; Leenstra and Paesi 2014; Leupe 1868; Paterson et al. 2019).

Through the company's archival records and, in some cases, original ship journals, VOC expeditions touching the Australian coast provide impressions of the continent; knowledge of its geography, demography, flora and fauna; the claiming of land; and details of contacts with Indigenous peoples, including taking captives at times and other conflicts (cf., Sheehan 2008). Several recent studies detail, investigate and interpret brief interactions with Indigenous people and the emotional reactions of the Dutch to early violent encounters, including feelings of grief and betrayal (cf., Broomhall 2014, 2015; Sutton 2008). Conversely, they discuss how Indigenous peoples perceived the foreigners to be spirits of the dead and, in response, staged ceremonial fights to drive them out (Morris 2001:33; Sutton 2008:44–48; Venbrux 2002:177). Nevertheless, with the exception of the 1705 Van Delft expedition (discussed below), historical records confirm that the crews of VOC ships had only brief encounters

with Indigenous Australians that resulted in little cultural exchange (cf., Heeres 1899; Sheehan 2008; Sigmond and Zuiderbaan 1995).

WILLIAM DAMPIER'S JOURNEYS ALONG THE WEST AUSTRALIAN COAST

Englishman William Dampier made two voyages of exploration that touched the Western Australian coast, the first in 1688 and the second in 1699. On the first voyage, Dampier sailed aboard *Cygnet*, captained by John Read, from Timor to the northwest coast of Australia, where they made landfall at what today is known as Cape Leveque, north of Broome (Marchant 1988:62–73; McCarthy 2015; 2012; 2008; 2004). Arriving on 4 January, the crew proceeded to careen their ship in King Sound, where they stayed for two months camping ashore and obtaining water with the help of Indigenous Australians (McCarthy 2004:54–55). Dampier described these events—the first substantial culture contact between Europeans and Indigenous Australians—in great detail, providing a comprehensive account of his travels and observations of the many lands, peoples, flora and fauna they encountered (McCarthy 2012; 2004:55). After returning to England, Dampier (1697) published a highly successful popular account of his travels, but the descriptions therein of Indigenous peoples are much different to those in his original journal. His original observations are more factual and nuanced, whereas his book conveys a much more negative impression. For example, he describes the Indigenous Australians he encountered as "the miserablest People in the World" and "a nasty People", noting that "setting aside their human Shape, they differ but little from Brutes" (Dampier 1697:464). McCarthy (2012) discusses this discrepancy in detail, noting that Dampier was encouraged by publishers and editors to rework his original accounts so as to "egregiously embellish and pander to the sensational with an eye to sales" (McCarthy 2008:209; see also Marchant 1988:72; Preston and Preston 2004:5). Dampier's original records are more in keeping with his reputation and talents as a naturalist (Marchant 1988:72), and "his published and much condemned description of what is believed to be the maritime Bardi people in the Kimberley is at odds with his actual journal entries and draft" (McCarthy 2008:209; Preston and Preston 2004:175). Unfortunately, this fact is not widely known, which, as McCarthy (2008:209) astutely highlights, can lead to problematic considerations. For example, Eric Venbrux (2002:161–162) cites Dampier's published work in his article, 'Wild and Barbaric Manners', to show that Indigenous Australians were considered "the antipodeans of 'civilised' Europeans". To some extent, this also applies to the original journals of VOC expeditions, which often were copied or abridged into reports by administrators in Batavia. They may not have been altered with popular publication in mind, but they were edited to better serve the interests of the Company. In this regard, when Indigenous encounters resulted in European deaths on VOC voyages, the anger and frustration of the survivors were easily translated into negative descriptions of the encountered 'others', who met their 'kindness' with aggression and who were unwilling or uninterested in trade (Broomhall 2014). This gave rise to descriptions of Indigenous peoples as "cruel", "savages" and "barbarians".

THE 1705 MAARTEN VAN DELFT EXPEDITION TO THE TIWI ISLANDS

One year after William Dampier's 1703 publication detailing his 1699 endeavours along the west and northwest coasts of Australia, the VOC Governor-General and Councillors in Batavia decided to organise two expeditions: one to investigate the north coast of New-Guinea and another to explore the north coast of Australia (Stapel 1937:134). The expeditions were a reaction to Dampier's interest in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. A letter from the VOC Government in Batavia to the Gentlemen XVII in Amsterdam refers to Dampier as a threat and warns of his desire to claim New Guinea for England so that his country might profit from the region. The Dutch expeditions were an attempt to stave off the English and investigate any potential benefits that New Guinea and northern Australia might provide. The instructions for the two expeditions are clear on this and begin with the line:

> The fossicking, spying and writing of the well-known English traveller William Dampier, as well as other considerations, motivated us to undertake another crusade [NL-HaNA 1705a:fol. 1921; translation by W. van Duivenvoorde; see also Robert 1973:40; Stapel 1937:134].[2]

Exploration of the northwest coast of New Guinea was assigned to the command of Jacob Weyland in the ship *Geelvink* (De Vlaming's old vessel), the sloop *Kraanvogel* and the pantsjaling *Nova Guinea* (pantsjalings were locally build and rigged vessels with low draughts for sailing into shallow coastal waters and rivers). Maarten van

Fig. 3. Late 17th-century VOC map of the East Indies (Indonesian Archipelago), *Nova Guinea* (Papua and Papua New Guinea) and *Hollandia Nova* (north and west coasts of Australia), the latter based on the 1644 voyage of Abel Tasman (north coast and Gulf of Carpentaria) and the 1697 voyage of De Vlaming (west coast); Archief Kaartcollectie Buitenland Leupe, 4.VEL. 344 (NL-HaNA 17th c.).

Fig. 4. Detail of the so-called Bonaparte Map showing the route and anchorages of Tasman's 1644 voyage along the northern Australian coast; State Library of New South Wales, Mitchell Map Collection, 1644 ML 863 (Tasman 1644).

Delft was given command of the expedition to the north coast of Australia in the flute (*fluitschip*) *Vossenbos*, the sloop *Doradus* (replaced prior to departure by *Waaier*) and the pantsjaling *Nova Hollandia*. The 95-ton *Vossenbos* was a small flute built on the Company shipyard in Hoorn in 1693. It sailed to Southeast Asia only once, after which it was consigned to the intra-Asiatic trade before eventually being laid up in Batavia on 17 October 1706 (Bruijn et al. 1979a:1704.1). The instructions further detail that *Vossenbos* carried provisions for the crew to last for 10 months, the sloop was supplied with 7 months of provisions, while *Nova Hollandia* could only carry enough food and water for two months and was to be resupplied from the stores aboard *Vossenbos* (NL-HaNA 1705a:fol. 1931). The two fleets were instructed to meet at the Banda Islands in September after having completed their explorations (NL-HaNA 1705a:fols 1924, 1926, 1928). The sailing instructions were signed on 20 January 1705 and three days later, the two fleets set sail from the Batavia roadstead (Stapel 1937:135).

Although the original journals of the Van Delft expedition have never been found (similar to the Tasman journal discussed in Rüdiger Mack's article, this volume), the Dutch East India Company Archives in the National Archives in The Hague do contain the following documents that detail the expedition's journey:

1. Detailed chart of the north Australian coast showing the sailing route (Fig. 1)(NL-HaNA 1705b);
2. Sailing instructions (NL-HaNA 1705a:fols 1921–1933);
3. Extracts from letters sent from VOC officials in Banda and Makassar to VOC authorities in Batavia (NL-HaNA 1705c:fol. 75; NL-HaNA 1705d:fols 312–313); and
4. Abridged journal/report of the expedition (NL-HaNA 1705e:fols 92–102). The report was generated in Batavia in the months following the return of the fleet by VOC councillors Hendrik Zwaardecroon and Cornelis Chastelijn, who used the original journals kept by Van Delft aboard *Vossenbos*, Andries Rooseboom on *Waaier* and Pieter Fredriks from Hamburg, who commanded the pantsjaling *Nova Hollandia*, as well as oral accounts of the surviving officers (NL-HaNA 1705a:fol. 92, see also Mayor 1859:165–173). They note that, in addition to these journals and oral accounts, the expedition also provided some declarations, resolutions and similar type papers that detailed the loss of anchors, barrels and sails, changes in sailing directions and so on (NL-HaNA 1705e:fol. 95).

The documents are accessible to English-speaking readers via the transcriptions and translations in Willem C.H. Robert's (1973:134–147) book, *The Dutch Explorations, 1606–1756, of the North and Northwest Coast of Australia*.[3] It must be noted that Robert omits large sections of the aforementioned archival documents. He also omits some sentences from the sections published in his book, which presumably he deemed insignificant. This is problematic when authors discussing the Van Delft expedition rely solely on partial, incomplete

transcriptions of original archival documents (e.g., Heeres 1899; Robert 1973; Stapel 1937) or on secondary sources, which can result in simplistic or erroneous interpretations (e.g., Forrest and Forrest 2005:55–60; Forrest 1995; Halls 1967; Kenny 1995; Morris 2001; Robinson 2003; Sheehan 2008). In addition to Robert's work, Venbrux (2002) published an article on the Van Delft expedition and the crew's interaction with the Tiwi peoples, which should be considered another standard work that provides much context and anthropological interpretations of the expedition.

Maarten van Delft's fleet left Batavia on 23 January 1705, but unfavourable weather conditions kept his three ships on the islands near Timor from 12 February to 2 March. It took the fleet a month to reach Australian waters, after which it sailed along the north coast of Australia from 2 April until 12 July. During this period, they explored the west and north coasts of Bathurst and Melville Islands, the Cobourg Peninsula and the west and southeast coasts of Croker Island. The crews on the three ships charted the coast in great detail, much as Willem de Vlaming's expedition had done for the west coast of Australia; they described the lands and any people they encountered there, and added new islands, rivers and many other details to the existing chart, which was last updated by Abel Tasman in 1644 (Figs 1–4).

The first fleet reached Australia at the southwestern coast of Bathurst Island, near Cape Helvetius, on 2 April, although at the time they believed it part of the mainland (Fig. 5). Sailing north, they passed Clift Island (marked as *Duyvels Klip* on the chart) and continued along the island's north coast. On several occasions they observed local Indigenous groups: "our men already from the beginning […] noticed on the beach at several points signs of people, smoke and the like" (NL-HaNA 1705e:fol. 96; Robert 1973:139). The first bay mentioned in the report (although, in fact, the second bay encountered) they named Rooseboom's Bay (*Roosebooms Baij*), after Andries Rooseboom, skipper of *Waaier* (present-day Apsley Strait). Curiously, the report states that the bay was a "dead-end", even though it is in fact a navigable strait between Bathurst and Melville Islands. The report further notes that there were several outflows on either shore, the area was devoid of fresh water and, although they saw signs of human presence, they saw no people at the time. Nevertheless, as the fleet was sailing out from the 'bay', the crews saw men with children and dogs walking away from the beach, unwilling to make contact. The following translation of a section of the Van Delft expedition report highlights the culture contact with Indigenous Australian groups:

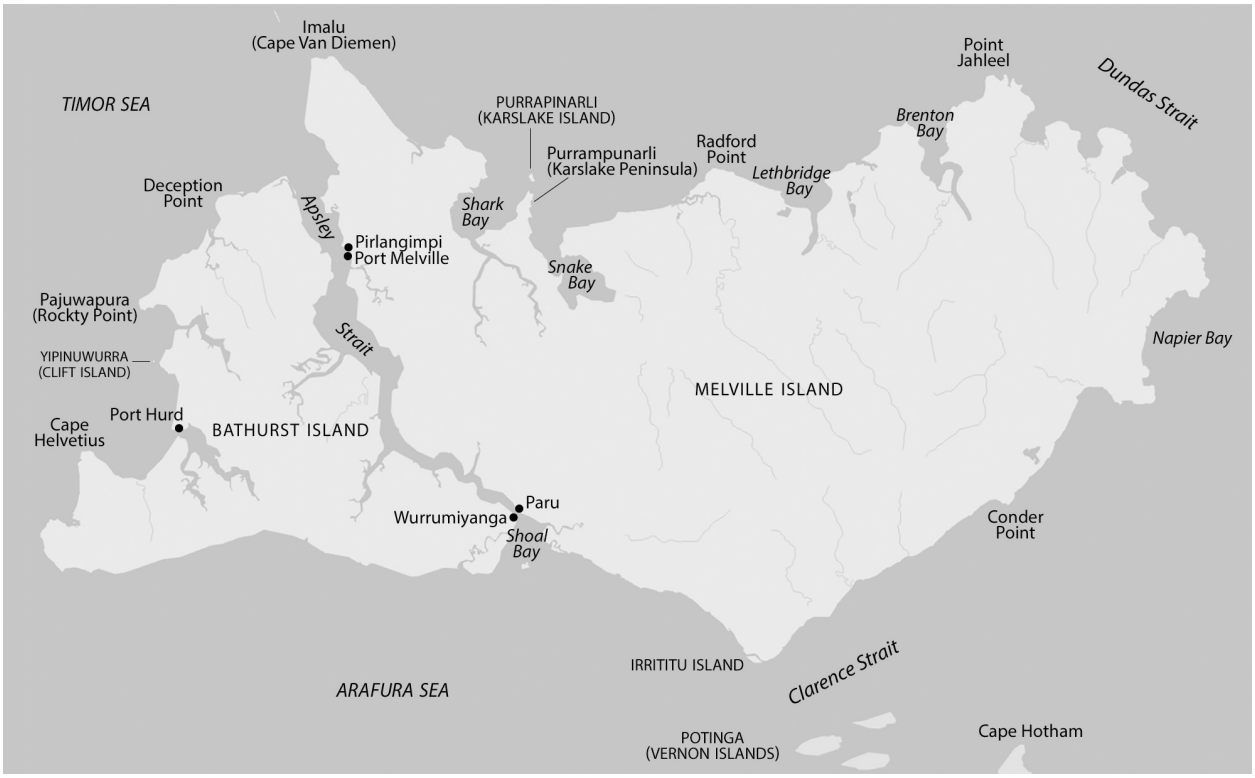

Fig. 5. Map of Tiwi Islands (after TLC 2019).

> Between these two islands or promontories, on 23 April, several inhabitants, who did not withdraw, met ours [men], but even so they walked together to high ground and, with all sorts of hand movements and gestures, attempted to drive our men from the land, as nobody could understand them, and had not the slightest idea of their language, which, according to the notes of skipper Maarten van Delft, seems to resemble that of the Malabars [a peoples of India], although this certainly cannot be the case.
>
> The colour and stature of this people seem, according to [Van Delft's] description, to resemble mostly that of the Indians of the East; but they walk about entirely stark naked, without any shame of age or sex, both of which were seen and met by ours from the aforementioned date until departure; except that only the women who had children with them covered their private parts with leaves or the like. But those mentioned before, the inhabitants first encountered, all together not exceeding 14 or 15 men, seeing that our men could not be induced to retreat from the shore by their grimaces, signals, gestures, yelling and displays of spears and clubs, etc., were imprudent enough to throw some of the said spears—more accurately, sharpened sticks—at our men, so as to injure and intimidate them, who after that, when one of their leaders—or one who appeared to be so—was wounded with a ball from a single shot, the rest began to run away, being very fast and of well-made posture; but the wives are tall and thin, with very broad mouths and small eyes, the hair of both is frizzy, like that of the inhabitants of the Papuan islands, and a yellow or red ointment, prepared with turtle-fat, seems to be their adornment.
>
> But the nature of these folk is foul and full of betrayal, as was apparent at the last [moment] when ours were about to depart, two seamen were waylaid and wounded by eight inhabitants, with the hope of taking their cloths, and all that after having spent [time] eating and drinking with these people for weeks, they having been aboard examining all things in admiration, having been given [presents] and in return providing our folk with fish and crabs. Besides that, their angry character also showed in the one who was injured by our men in the beginning, as aforementioned, for this one, bandaged with linen and assisted by our men, tore off the linen and threw it all to the side; nonetheless they seemed very keen on cloth, knives, coral [beads] and such knick-knacks, but also possess nothing of comparable value. They do not have iron, nor anything similar to mineral ores of metal; for a stone that has been sharpened serves as their axe; [they] live neither in houses nor huts, and occupy themselves with fishing using wooden harpoons and also small nets, and put out to sea in small vessels made from the bark of trees, which are so weak that [the sides] have to be shored up with crossbeams in order for one not to fold in on the other.
>
> Some of them have scars as if they have been cut or carved, which (it seemed to us) they use as some sort of adornment. They eat sparingly and moderately, by which they remain always skilful and agile; also they seem to subsist only by the before mentioned fishing, adding also a few roots and tuberous plants, but no birds or other animals of the woods, although our men saw these in abundance in several places, but the natives appeared to be indifferent to them […] according to his notes for 14 June, the skipper of the shallop *Waaier* once encountered about 500 people, including women and children, about two miles inland, and also had spied on them at night, when they sat together in the undergrowth around [several] night-fires, but witnessed nothing of note… [NL-HaNA 1705e:fols 97–99, translation by W. van Duivenvoorde].[4]

As per the VOC's instructions, Van Delft and his crew were to take substantial notes of the extent of beaches, but also of people, trees, fruits, fresh water, minerals and other noteworthy things, and specifically to take notice of any passages from the coast towards the inland (NL-HaNA 1705a:fol. 1925). The expedition also was instructed to bring back one or two people from unknown Indigenous groups, although this was to be voluntary and the crews of the ships were to refrain from any violence or threat (NL-HaNA 1705a:fol. 1931). Van Delft tried to achieve the latter by inviting people aboard the ships, providing them with food and drink, and gifting them with coral, knives, beads, cloth and other bric-a-brac. He did not seem to have gained enough trust for any of the locals to travel back with the fleet voluntarily, for which Van Delft may have attempted to compensate with his detailed descriptions (Stapel 1937:136).

The expedition was cut short by disease resulting in many deaths amongst the ships' crews; the symptoms included high fevers, eye infections and hydropsy (Stapel 1937:136). Aboard *Vossenbos*, the upper steersman, under steersman and a substantial number of crew succumbed, and Van Delft, himself, fell ill. The expedition was abandoned on 12 July 1705, as the remaining crews headed back to the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia). *Waaier* and its crew arrived at Amblan, a Dutch settlement on an island near Boeroe (present-day Buru), on 25 July; *Nova Hollandia* made it to Banda Island on 26 July; and *Vossenbos* finally arrived at Makassar on 4 August 1705. Of the 62 original crewmembers aboard *Vossenbos*, 40 made it to Makassar, but 25 of those were seriously ill. Apart from the bookkeeper and an under steersman, there were only four crewmen left who were able to handle the ship. Van Delft died four days after docking in Makassar.

The expedition had confirmed that there was nothing of economic interest or value to the Dutch along the north coast of Australia, leading VOC officials to conclude once again that there was nothing to entice them or the English to the South Land. It was one of the last expeditions to Australia, after which the Company focused their efforts on other regions (Sigmond and Zuiderbaan 1995:111; Stapel 1937:136).

Fig. 6. Southwesterly view of Shark Bay, just below Cape Lavery (to the right), believed to be the landing site of the Van Delft expedition in 1705 (M.B. Owen, courtesy PastMasters).

THE 1705 CHART OF THE VAN DELFT EXPEDITION

The Van Delft chart covers the west and north coast of Bathurst Island, the north coast of Melville Island and the Cobourg Peninsula, as well as the west and southeast coast of Croker Island (Fig. 1). The authors geo-rectified the original chart using the present-day coastline as a guide. The Van Delft chart is peculiar in that its prime meridian is relative to (east of) Ferro, rather than Tenerife (Canary Islands) (modern charts use Greenwich, England), which was more commonly used by Dutch cartographers in the 17th and 18th centuries (Sharp 1968:61). Robert (1973:63) explains, "[t]he first figure of longitude west of Cape Van Diemen is 151 00 East, apparently the draughtsman did not use degrees East of Tenerife, but East of Ferro, which is 1 degree 22 minutes west of Tenerife".

The chart detailing the Van Delft expedition clearly shows the sailing route of the three ships and provides a much more accurate map of the north coast than Tasman's 1644 chart (Figs 3–4; NL-HaNA 17th c.; Tasman 1644). The Van Delft expedition did not sail in uncharted waters, since the Pieter Pieterszoon and Abel Tasman expeditions of 1636 and 1644, respectively, had preceded them. It must be noted that the 1636 expedition only explored the Gulf of Carpentaria, the north coast and Melville Island superficially due to poor weather conditions (Sigmond and Zuiderbaan 1995:70–71). Van Delft's expedition probably would have proceeded along the same route as the earlier expeditions and mapped a much larger section of Australia's northern coastline if the crews had not been overcome by sickness. They likely would have continued their journey eastward from Croker Island towards the Cape York Peninsula. It also is probable that the three captains of the Van Delft expedition had the 1644 Tasman chart at their disposal during the voyage, and likely used the same anchorages marked thereon (Fig. 4).

When geo-referenced and overlayed on a chart of the present-day coastline of Australia, the Van Delft chart not only marks the expedition's route, but also confirms that they mapped the north and west sides of Cobourg Peninsula and parts of Croker Island as well (Fig. 2). This is significant, as no previous research has recognised this detail, and it confirms that the Van Delft expedition explored the Australian mainland and Croker Island, where they likely interacted with Indigenous groups other than the Tiwi (see next section). It furthermore clarifies some previous contentious interpretations and resolves debate on the exact route that the expedition sailed (see, e.g., Morris 2001:32; Halls 1967; Hart et al. 1988; Forrest 1995:14–17). Jan Tent (2019, in press) recently published an article that examines the 1705 Van Delft chart from a toponymic perspective. The Dutch names given to places during the expedition conform to VOC policy and, in this case, refer mainly to the names of ships or their captains, officials participating in the expedition, or the natural character of an area (Figs 1–2; Sheehan 2008:20–22; Tent 2019). As Venbrux (2002:169) points out, the placenames "tell a story about the course of this particular exploration, reflecting the sailors' mood, vision and imagination", although some discrepancies between the place names in the VOC report and those on the manuscript chart should be noted (Tent 2019; Venbrux 2002:169).

CULTURE CONTACT WITH THE 1705 VAN DELFT EXPEDITION

The Van Delft expedition encountered Indigenous Australian peoples in several locations, but the corresponding report, as well as recent studies, always assume that those people were all of

one and the same group. On 23 April 1705, the Van Delft expedition met the Tiwi people of Shark Bay (Melville Island) at the northern end of the Karslake Peninsula, known today as Cape Lavery, not far from where the Tasman 1644 expedition also anchored (Figs 1–2, 5, 6).[5] The 1705 VOC report details how the crews found fresh water there and were met by locals on the headland opposite Karslake Island (NL-HaNA 1705e:fols 96–97; Robert 1973:139; see translation above, p. 10). This area is part of the lands of the Wulirankuwu people (Fig. 5). The Tiwi locals went aboard the ships, exchanged fish and crabs for clothing and ornaments and allowed the Dutch to go ashore to obtain fresh water and explore the island's hinterland. Here the Van Delft expedition documented some of the earliest surviving observations of the Tiwi Islanders and collected Indigenous material culture through the exchange of goods (see discussion in next section).

On 12 May, the expedition sailed into Lethbridge Bay (Fig. 5), the second bay they recorded after Apsley Strait, apparently having missed or ignored Snake Bay (Figs 1–2). In Lethbridge Bay, they observed a wide, saltwater river, now known as Jessie River (Aliu) (NL-HaNA 1705e:fols 99–100; Robert 1973:143). *Waaier* skipper Andries Roosenboom mentions in his papers that the river was known as Bessia River (NL-HaNA 1705e:fol. 99; Robert 1973:142–143). The VOC report states that only Van Delft's original journal describes the area, as the expedition found nothing of importance there.

By 25 May, the expedition had crossed the Dundas Strait and was sailing along the Cobourg Peninsula. The VOC report specifically cites Van Delft's original journal—"the original journal of the ship [*Vossenbos*]"—in noting that "the lands were mostly low and not mountainous in the least, with the exception of a prominent hill, which from some vantage points was revealed to be three mountains" (NL-HaNA 1705e:fol. 99; Robert 1973:142–143).[6] These mountains are designated on the chart by the note, *Alhier leggen drie bergen* (Here lie three mountains), and are located on the southwest corner of the Cobourg Peninsula—that is to say, the Australian mainland (Figs 1–2). The Van Delft expedition must have named the entrance of the Dundas Strait *Drie bergensbocht* (Three Mountains Bay), as the land flanking the strait to the west, due east of present-day Point Jahleel on Melville Island, is labelled as "*Westhoek van 3 Bergens Bocht*" (West side of Three Mountains Bay), and that to the east, on Cobourg Peninsula, as "*Oost Hoek van Driebergens Bocht*" (East side of Three Mountains Bay) (Fig. 1). This is significant, as it provides a timeline of the expedition's movement along the north coast and confirms that the fleet had crossed the Dundas Strait near the end of May and, thus, had left the Tiwi Islands. This means, therefore, that the 500 people of whom Roosenboom wrote in his journal entry for 14 June would have been the Iwaidja people of the Cobourg Peninsula (Horton 1996; NL-HaNA 1705e:fol. 99; Robert 1973:141–142).

By June, the expedition was in Port Essington, the largest inlet on Cobourg Peninsula, where the crews spent most of their time fishing to supplement their diets in an attempt to stem the disease spreading through the ships. They note the abundance of fish in those waters. Preoccupied as they were with the sick aboard the vessels, the crews do not seem to have interacted much with the Iwaidja people, although the VOC report does state that "here the inhabitants were so dim that they attempted to tow the pantsjaling [*Nova Hollandia*] to land with three small vessels, while it was at anchor, but seeing that they did not make any progress, [they] intended to do the same with the buoy of the aforementioned anchor; as this had little effect, they returned to shore" (NL-HaNA 1705e:fol. 101; Robert 1973:144–145). Little else is said in the report about the expedition's stay in Port Essington.

As already noted, the VOC report details the incident of the two men who were waylaid and wounded by eight locals who tried to remove their clothes (NL-HaNA 1705e:fol. 98; Robert 1973:140–141). The ascribed motivations of the Indigenous Australians involved in this incident range from curiosity, to attempting to ascertain the sex of the sailors (which Indigenous peoples had a difficult time establishing), to seizing desired goods by force as a form of repayment for their hospitality (Forrest 1995:17; Morris 2001:33; Venbrux 2002:173). Regardless, it is difficult to make any suggestion as to their motivation without having the original ship's journals, as the VOC report does not include the necessary details or context. Venbrux (2002:173) proposes that the incident took place near *Bedriegers Hoek* (Traitors Point) (Fig. 1), which lies to the east of Point Jahleel on Melville Island. The Tiwi group here comes from what is now known as Yimpinari land, and belongs to a different clan group than the people the expedition met at Cape Lavery, 82 km to the west.

The VOC report, on the other hand, refers to the incident in connection with the last bay that the expedition visited before departing from the Australian coast. The crew commented that:

Fig. 7. Tiwi Island objects in the Collection of the National Museum of World Cultures Foundation, reg. nos RV-2288-31, RV-2288-33, RV-2288-36, RV-2288-37 (courtesy of the National Museum of World Cultures, Netherlands).

> Nothing remarkable is to be noted from this visit or place, except that by moonlight at night a countless flock of black birds, as large as pigeons, passed the pantsjaling *Hollandia Nova*, the swarm continuing for at least half an hour; and the inhabitants became so accustomed to our men that they assisted them in stocking [provisions] and carrying drinking water, although subsequently they could not conceal their vicious nature, as aforementioned [NL-HaNA 1705e:fols 101–102; Robert 1973:144–145].

Thus, this section of the report indicates clearly that the incident with the two seamen could not have taken place on the Tiwi Islands, but occurred on the mainland, somewhere towards the eastern side of the Cobourg Peninsula between Raffles Bay and Bowen Strait.

The VOC report suggests that Andries Rooseboom, the skipper of *Waaier*, contemplated kidnapping Indigenous persons, noting that they could have:

> […] easily taken away two or three men, who daily came on board, and bring [them] to Batavia, but the skipper of the Vossenbos, who, specifically following the letter of instruction, wished to accomplish such with full consent of those people and not with any kind of force, has prevented him [Rooseboom] from doing so; although without cheating, as no one could understand their language, [it] was impossible [to do so] here and therefore they remained in their country (NL-HaNA 1705e:fol. 99; Robert 1973:141–143).[9]

Indigenous people who learned Javanese and Dutch were valuable interpreters for new expeditions and trips and could provide the Company with information on their own people, their customs and hinterlands (Sigmond and Zuiderbaan 1995:111–112; Stapel 1937:136; Venbrux 2002:172–173). Expeditions prior to Van Delft's had taken Indigenous people from the north coast of Australia by force. The 1623 Carstenszoon expedition in the Cape of Carpentaria had done so, with Carstenszoon offering a reward to any amongst his crew who managed to capture a local (Sheehan 2008:23). Over the course of the 17th century, though, the VOC eventually recognised that kidnapping people was not an effective measure in the long run and that it was much better for diplomatic relations if people came of their own accord. Even so, the expedition to New Guinea, which had departed from Batavia at the same time as the Van Delft expedition, did return with people who, against instructions, were forcibly kidnapped by the crew of the ship Geelvink (Venbrux 2002:172). Among them were two or three women, who were released, and six men. Two of the men escaped in Batavia, while the other four were employed by the VOC to learn the Dutch language (Venbrux 2002:172).

The crews who sailed in Van Delft's fleet had substantial and frequent contact with Indigenous Australians, and the cartographic analysis presented above has shown that they interacted with different groups on the Tiwi Islands in April and May 1705, but also with Indigenous Australians on the mainland from early June to mid-July 1705.

COLLECTION OF INDIGENOUS CULTURAL MATERIAL

William Dampier collected natural specimens, including plants and shell, during his voyage along the west and northwest coast of Australia in 1699 (Marchant 1988:79, 188–193; McCarthy 2004:56; Preston and Preston 2004:292–297). When his ship *Roebuck* sank off Ascension Island on 9 September 1701, he managed to salvage his journals and some of his Australian plant specimens (McCarthy 2004:56; Preston and Preston 2004:292–297). Once back in England, he turned them over to John Woodward of the Royal Society for study by Britain's botanists. These plant specimens are now in the collection of the Fielding-Druce Herbarium of the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Oxford (McCarthy 2004:56). As McCarthy points out, these plant specimens are the earliest material from Australian shores in a European collection (McCarthy 2004:56). Other items that Dampier collected never made it to England, but were lost with his ship. Undoubtedly, a large clamshell retrieved from the *Roebuck* shipwreck site during the 1999 archaeological survey was one of the specimens collected by Dampier (McCarthy 2004:63, 65; 2015:2, n. 7).

Historical records from other early Dutch voyages show that they too collected material along the Australian coast. Jan Carstenszoon's men collected "several weapons, of which they took some along with them by way of curiosities" in the Gulf of Carpentaria on 19 April 1623 (van Dijk 1859:36). Similarly, during his voyage near Cape Leeuwin on the southwest Australian coast, Jacob Pieterszoon Peereboom collected a stone axe with a wooden handle and a small sample of the gum or wax used to fasten the axe head to the handle (Heeres 1899:81). The 1697 Willem de Vlaming expedition also assembled a collection of natural specimens, including shells, fruits, plants, sections of wood and cultural material from along the Western Australian coast. Items that were brought back to the Netherlands, together with the 1616 Hartog Plate, were shells, fruits, a small bundle of fragrant wood, some oil extracted from said wood, as well as a "leather bag put together with straw or dried rushes", which De Vlaming had found in an empty hut on the coast (Schilder 1976b:284–293; Schilder 1985:218; Stapel 1937:129). This collection, together with the 1616 Hartog Plate and 11 aquarelle paintings of coastal elevations by Victor Victorszoon, travelled back to the Netherlands in the captain's cabin of the ship *Lands Welvaren*, which departed Batavia on 30 November 1697. Apart from the Hartog Plate, which is now in the Rijksmuseum, and the paintings in the collection of the Rotterdam Maritime Museum, the whereabouts of the Australiana is unknown (Schilder 1976a:83; 1976b:284–302). The Hartog Plate and paintings remained in Amsterdam with the VOC board of managing directors, the so-called *Heren XVII* (Gentlemen 17), until the Company declared bankruptcy in 1795 and its collections were transferred to the *Koninklijk Kabinet van Zeldzaamheden* (Royal Cabinet of Rarities) (Schilder 1976b:305). Whether the collected objects remained with the *Heren XVII* is unknown. They may well have ended up in the collection of Nicolaas Witsen, one of the managing directors of the Company and former mayor of Amsterdam, who was a well-known collector of data and curiosa (Venbrux 2002:166–167). He was well placed to obtain such objects and had an extensive social network in the Netherlands and abroad. Witsen does write in his reports and correspondence that the two shells, the bottle of oil and some wood were "with him" (Schilder 1976b:295–296, 301). The 1705 Van Delft expedition also collected cultural material from the Australian north coast, including the clubs and throwing sticks now in the collection of the National Museum of World Cultures in the Netherlands (Fig. 7) (Venbrux 2002:173–175). To date, this assemblage is the earliest known collection of Australian cultural material in a European museum. The Tiwi collection was kept by the VOC in Batavia, together with cultural material and other items from Company expeditions, and eventually was accessioned into the collection of the *Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Science, established 1778). The Society was given many cultural objects then held by the VOC administration in Batavia after the Company was declared bankrupt and the Netherlands took over governance of the East Indies. These objects were transferred from Batavia to the Netherlands in the early 20th century. The National Museum of World Cultures received more than 4,500 objects in several consignments between 1873 and 1936.[10] As no other VOC expedition is known to have visited the Tiwi

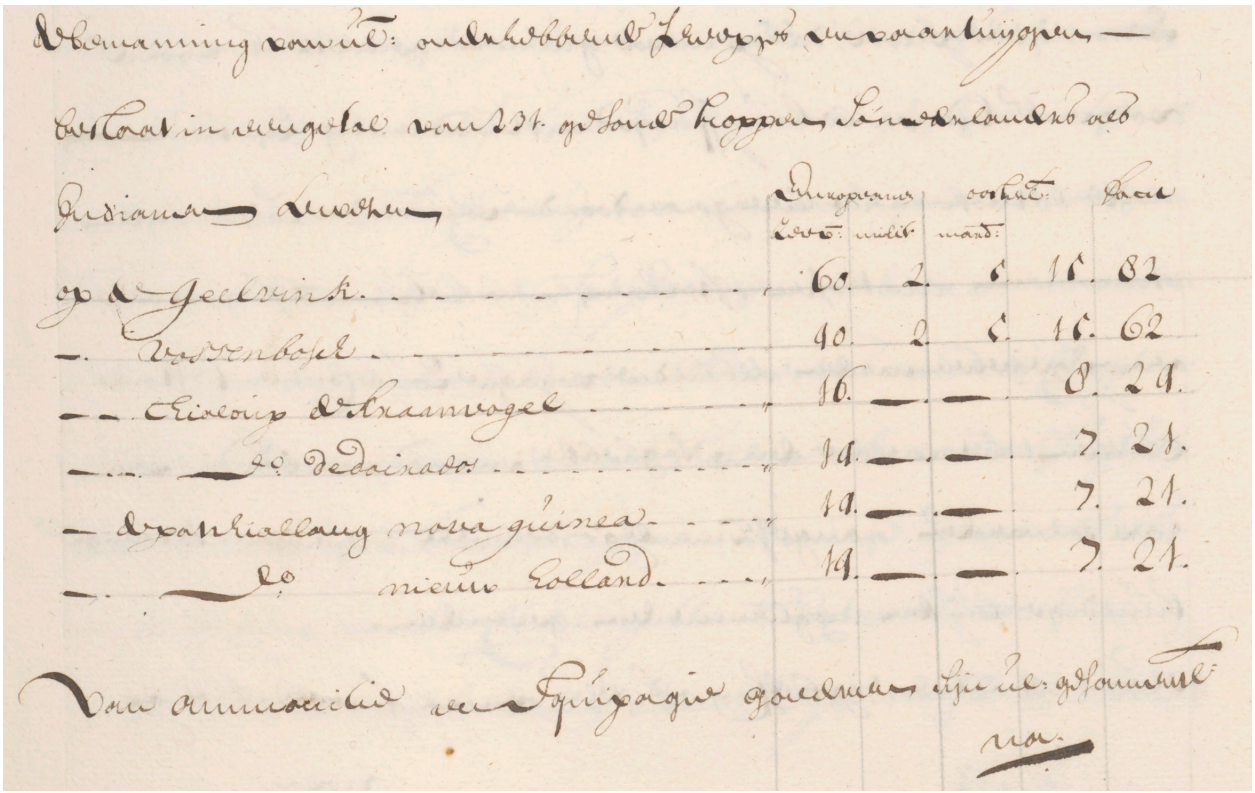

Fig. 8. Excerpt from the Instructions to the 1705 fleets showing the crew makeups of the ships (NL-HaNA 1705a:fol. 1919).

Islands after Van Delft's, these objects most likely were collected in 1705.

General historical perceptions tend to focus on the unidirectional exchange of European and later maritime Southeast Asian objects and materials (iron, cloth, tobacco, beads) to Indigenous Australians in this context. The orthodox view holds that European sailors were not interested in acquiring cultural objects produced by Indigenous Australians (as argued, e.g., in the 2001 Croker Island Native Title judgement), as part of wider, largely negative opinions about the capacities and achievements of Indigenous Australians (Peterson 2005; Strelein 2009).

The objects collected by the Dutch suggest a greater depth to visitations on north Australian shores, indicating possible two-way exchanges of items and ideas. The collected objects are the visible products of these encounters and constitute the earliest known conduits through which Indigenous Australians were conceptualised by the West, predating known British collections (i.e., from James Cook) by some 65 years. Moving forward, these objects and the culture contact they manifest should take priority in shaping the growing debates on race, civilisation and progress.

THE EUROPEAN AND INDONESIAN CREWMEMBERS OF THE 1705 VAN DELFT EXPEDITION

It also should be recognised that this culture contact was not only between Europeans and Indigenous Australians. In the mid-17th century, the VOC was well aware of the knowledge that Southeast Asians had of the Australian coast and coastal waters. Such reference was made by Adriaen Dortsman, who led an expedition to explore the east and southeast of the Indonesian archipelago in 1645 and 1646:

> […], as is done similarly without interference by Macassans and other Westerners, it is certain that they [the inhabitants of the islands south-east of Banda] leave no island unvisited, which has been confirmed by their navigation as far as Arouw (the eastern island [Aru Island]), and it is also in some degree credible that they often visit the largest Southern Islands, which has been called after Your Worship's name Van Diemenslant, Speuls Island and the land discovered by the ship *Arnhem* as well as all the others [...] [NL-HaNA 1.04.02 1158 folio 385; Robert 1973:134].[11]

The instructions given to the 1705 expeditions to New Guinea and Australia (Fig. 8) state specifically that the ships of the two fleets were to be crewed by healthy men, including Europeans and *Oosterlingen*

Fig. 9. Monument erected 1 May 1995 to commemorate 200 years since the Dutch landing; Maarten van Delft Coastal Reserve (Purrampunarli), Cape Lavery, Melville Island (M.B. Owen, courtesy PastMasters).

(Easterners). The three most senior officials, the skippers of the ships, were Dutchman Maarten van Delft, from Middelburg in Zeeland, Andries Rooseboom and Pieter Fredriks, both Germans from Hamburg (NL-HaNA 2019). Van Delft's ship *Vossenbos* was crewed by 62 men, of which 42 were Europeans and 20 were Easterners (NL-HaNA 1705a:fol. 1929). The 42 Europeans consisted of 40 seafarers and two soldiers, while the Easterners included five *Mardijkers* and 15 others. The latter were local Indonesians, whom also are referred to as *inlanders* (inhabitants) in the letter written on 28 August 1705 in Makassar. Mardijkers were a mixed ethnic community of freed slaves in the Dutch trading posts in Indonesia. Most of them came from the Bengal and Malabar regions, but some had European ancestry. They formed an important part of VOC society in Batavia and Southeast Asia. The Dutch converted them to Christianity and granted them manumission, which created a loyal group who bolstered the VOC's base in Southeast Asia (Choudhury 2014).

The expeditions' instructions further detail that the two European soldiers and the five Mardijkers on *Vossenbos* were able to handle guns, if needed, whenever the crew went ashore in unknown places (NL-HaNA 1705:fol. 1930). *Waaier* and *Nova Hollandia* each were manned by 14 Europeans and 7 Easterners (Fig. 8). The Van Delft expedition thus departed with a crew of 104 men, 34 of which were Asian.

THE TIWI BOAT SONG DANCE OF THE 1705 TIWI-DUTCH ENCOUNTER

The award-winning short 2011 documentary, *Tiwi and the Dutch*, features the narrative of the Tiwi's boat song dance, in which Tiwi elders Nelson Noah Mungatopi Wullipiyarimirri and John Anthony Wilson Wurrubadiwi, from the Karslake Peninsula (Purrampunarli), detail their people's encounter with the Dutch and how they feared what may have been devils arriving on their shore:

> They [their Tiwi ancestors] lived here. Yes, they lived here. They walked upon this land. They were walking along the beach. Going along the beach looking for fish, some were just sitting by that Murrawaji tree. They looked out and they saw something big coming. They didn't know what it was. They told their wives to hide. The Dutch started coming towards the shore and they anchored their ship. A couple of white folks jumped in their boats and started rowing towards shore. They went out and hid, our ancestors shouted: "white peoples, or might be devils." We will wait for them to come to shore and then we will chase them and spear them. They might steal our land; we will kill them with our spears. When they came ashore the Tiwi chanted a war cry. The Tiwi got a fright as the Dutch fired a musket—bang, bang! One of the Tiwi were [sic.] shot, and all our people started running towards the bush. They didn't kill him. The Dutch went back to check on the Tiwi warrior and tended to his wounds. The Dutch were good people. The Tiwi brought fish, crab and oysters as a peace offering. The Dutch went back to their ship and brought back an axe, knife, sugar and flour, flint. They stayed for a couple of months. The Dutch said, "take us over there and we'll dig a well for you." That well is still there; we still get water from that well today [Puruntatameri et al. 2011].

After this narrative, Tiwi men perform the Boat Song Dance, which commemorates the Tiwi-Dutch encounter and celebrates Tiwi-Dutch friendship. This boat song was created for the anniversary of the 1705 Van Delft expedition in 1995 and led to the installation of signage and a plaque in what is today called the Maarten van Delft Coastal Reserve (Fig. 9). The well that features in the Boat Song Dance may have been dug by the Dutch, or just as likely by the Tiwi, Macassans or someone else (Fig. 10). Anthropologists have been critical of such local narratives and the commemoration of the 1705 Van Delft expedition to the Tiwi Islands, in that they appear to have been motivated mostly by political gain or to conform to new political realities (Robinson 2003:252; Venbrux 2002:178). As Robinson (2003:252) cautions, such public

Fig. 10. The so-called Dutch well; Maarten van Delft Coastal Reserve (Purrampunarli), Cape Lavery, Melville Island (M.B. Owen, courtesy PastMasters).

history-making is superficial memorialisation and not ethnohistory and should not be replicated as such without critical assessment.

CONCLUSIONS

Most 18th- and 19th-century narratives concerning early encounters between Indigenous Australians and maritime explorers, including the Dutch, French and Southeast Asians Islanders, often exclude the Van Delft expedition entirely or only touch upon it briefly (Paterson 2008; 2011:227–228; Sheehan 2008). The significance of the Van Delft expedition remains overlooked today, specifically in terms of Dutch-Indonesian-Tiwi culture contact, the detailed charting of the Northern Territory coast, the fact that one-third of the ships' crews were Indonesian, and the collection of Indigenous material culture now in the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden. The National Museum of Australia, for example, does not even list the Van Delft expedition on its 'Defining Moments in Australian History Timeline' website (NMA 2019:1700s). By recognising this expedition and its significance, it is possible to better understand VOC attitudes towards northern Australian Indigenous peoples and communities—and vice versa—and how these may have influenced later English colonisation. The Van Delft expedition is emblematic of more intense encounters between Europeans and Indigenous Australians, and should be included in any study of the early history of culture contact in Australia.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Michael (Mack) McCarthy at the Western Australian Museum for providing his insights on the VOC shipwrecking events along the Western Australian coast. We also would like to thank Johan van Langen of the Nationaal Archief in the Netherlands for his ongoing support and assistance. This research was generously supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Canberra through the Dutch-Australian Cultural Heritage Initiatives scheme (Activity no. GCE-2017-03). Finally, we are grateful to the two reviewers, whose comments were most constructive.

NOTES

[1] In Drake-Brockman's (2006) book, this text is translated as "black savages", but the original Dutch handwriting simply states "black people". Also, the translation in Drake-Brockman (2006:119) suggests four Dutch crewmen approached some Indigenous people, which is incorrect.

[2] (NL-HaNA 1.04.02 7622 folio 1921) Het woelen, spionneren en schryven van den bekenden | Engelschen reiziger William Dampier, alsook meer andere | consideratiën, hebben ons bewogen om weder van hier een | kruistocht te laten doen.

[3] Wherein this article translations of VOC documents are provided, they are transcribed and translated from the original archival record by W. van Duivenvoorde, as Robert's translations at times do not reflect precisely the handwritten original. Most notable is his translation of *inwoners* as "natives", whereas it is more correctly translated as "inhabitants". In each case, Robert's transcription and translation are cited along with the NL-HaNA record, since the former typically are more accessible.

[4] (NL-HaNA 1.04.02 2826 folios 97–99) Tusschen deese twee Eijlanden off uijt | hoeken zijn op den 23e April eenige Inlan | ders vande onse ontmoet die sig welniet re″ | ″tireerden maar evenwel met malkanderen | na een hoogte liepen, en met allerhande | actien en gesten de onse van land wilden | doen gaan, want niemant haar verstaan | konde en geenerhande slag van taal die | nade aantekening van Schipper Marten | van Delft, bij haar wat na het Mala″ | ″baars schijnt te Sweemen, dog het welke int | minste niet kan apparent wesen: De cou″ | ″leur en Statuur van deese menschen Schijnt | na de beschrijving wel het meeste over een te | komen met de Indianen vanhet Oosten | dog zij loopen gantsch moeder naackt son | der eenige Schaamte van ouderdom of sexe | die bijde doorde onse vandato voorm tot de | uure van haar vertrek zijn gesien en ontmoet, | uijtgenomen dat alleen de vrouwen die kinderen | bij sig hadden deplaatsen van haare Schamel | heid met eenige bladeren of diergelijk qua | men te bedekken; maar deese vooren eerst | aangetooge Inlanders met malkanderen | niet Sterker zijnde dan 14 a 15 man Verne | mende dat de onse door hare Grimmasten | gebeerden buijgingen van lighaam geschreeu″ | ″wen vertooningen van haare houte Assa″ | ″gaijen en handknuppels & niet konde be | woogen werden om van land te wijken had″ | den, de onvoorsigtigheijt eenige van gem Assa″ | gaijen of liever scherp gesleepen Stokken, | na de onse te werpen om haar daar meede | te quetsen en Intimideeren welke daar | op met een Enkel Snaphaan een van hare | principalen of die, sulk scheen te wesen, | door een Kogel quetsende de rest op de | loop sig begaff zijnde seer Snel en | van een wel gemaakt Postuur, dog de Wijve | zijn lang en schraal met zeer wijde monde | en naauwe Oogen, het haar van beijde is gekroest | als dat vande inwoonders in de papoese Eijlan″ | ″den, en een geele of roode Smeering met Schildpad | vet geprepareerd schijnd haar Sieraad, maar | den aard vandit volk is vuijl en vol van ver | raad als bleek opt laatste wanneer de onse | op haar vertrek Staande 2 mattroosen door | 8 Inlanders overvallen en gequest wierden | met hoope van haar Kleederen te zullen be | magtigen en sulk nadat zij al weken lang | met de onse hadden omgegaan gegeten en | gedronken, aanboord geweest, met verwonde″ | ″ring alles bezien hadden, beschonken war | en integendeel zij ook ons volk met visch | en krabben gerelageerd hadden, behalven | dat ook haren bosen inborst quam te | blijken, inden geene die inden beginne door | de onsen was gequest, en hier voor genoteerd | want desen met Linnen doorde onsen ver | bonden en geholpen Zijnde, na vermogen | rukte het Linnen aan Stuk en wierp | alles aan een kant, hoewel zij anders na | Lijwaat, messen, Coralen en sulke Snuijs | terije seer gretig scheenen, maar ook niets | besitten, het welke na eenige waardije ge | lijkt, en hebben nog ijzer, nog ijts, dat na | mineraal erts of metaal gelijkt, want | een Steen die gesleepen is, Speelt voor haar | bijl, woonen nog in huijsen nog in hutten, en | geneeren sig met visschen door harpoenen | van hout, als ook met kleene netten, en | varen in Zee met Schuijtjes uijt basten | van bomen gemaakt, die in sig selven | zo zwak zijn datse door dwarshoutjes | moeten werden geschoord, om niet tot | malkanderen toetebuijgen, Somminge | van haar hadden Lijk teekens als ofze | gekurven of gesneeden waren geweest, | dewelke zij (soo het de onse toescheen) | als een Zoort van Sieraadje gebruijkten: Zij | eeten zeer wijnig en matiglijk, waardoor | zij gedurig even vaardig en agiel werd″ | ″den gevonden; ook Scheijnen Zij | t eenenmaal sig met haren vooren aan | gehaalden visch vangst te behelpen, en daarbij | ook eenige Wortelkens en aard gewassen te gebruij | ken, maar geen gevogelte of andere gedierten | des wouds hoewel die daar in overvloed op | verscheijde plaatsen doord onze zijn ontmoet, | maarde inlanders Scheenen daar geen werk | van te maken, die

den gesaghebber vande | Chialoup Waijer, eens wel 2 mijlen land | waard in ten getalle van omtrent 500 men | schen, zoo vrouwen, als kinderen, volgens zijn | aantekening sub dato 14 Junij ontmoet, | en ook eens bij nagt haar lieden gespio | neerd heeft, wanneer zij bij deese en geene kreu | pel bossen aan nagt vuuren bij malkan | deren zaten, dog niets bij haar ontmoet, | 't welk na waardije gelijkt.

[5] The 1644 Tasman expedition also sailed into Shark Bay and anchored to the northeast of Karslake Island; however, without Tasman's original journal, we do not know if they interacted with any Tiwi people there (Heeres 1898; Posthumus Meyjes 1919:LXXVI, LXXXVII; Sharp 1968).

[6] (NNL-HaNA 1.04.02 2826 folio 99) Het voorn: Land is doorgaans laag | en gantsch niet bergagligt, uijtgenoomen | een kloek heuvel die sig op Sommige | verheden als drijbergen vertoonden.

[7] (NL-HaNA 1.04.02 2826 folio 101) [in Marias Land], alwaar de inwoonders zoo dom | waren, dat zij met 3 kleene Schuijtjes de | Patsjalling zoo als die ten anker lag, na | land wilde boegseeren maar siende dat | zij niet advanceerden, wilden sulk aanvangen | met de boeij van het voorm anker, dog | dit also wijnig van effect zijnde, begaven zij | sig weer na land.

[8] (NL-HaNA 1.04.02 2826 folio 102) Zijnde vandeese visite ofplaats niet | merkelijk te noteeren dan alleen dat | daar bij maneschijn des nagts een ontel | bare meenigte van Swarte vogels soo | groot als duijven, de Patsjalling Hollan | dia Novo zijn gepasseerd welkers Swerm | wel een half uur lang Continueerde en | begonden de Inlanders hier Sodanig aan | de onse te gewennen, dat zij haar hielpen | drink water slaen, en dragen, dog egter | naderhand haren vuijlen inborst niet | konden verbergen, als vooren reeds is | aangewesen.

[9] (NL-HaNA 1.04.02 2826 folio 99) Seggende | met seer veel gemak een Stuk twee à drie | mans perZoonen, die dagelijk bij hem | aanboord quamen, soude hebben konnen | medevoeren, en naar Batavia overbreng″ | ″en, maar den Schipper van Vossenbosch, | die Juist volgens de letter vande Instructie | sulk met volkomen Sin vandat volk | of niet met een Soort van geweld het | selve wilde volbragt hebben, heeft hem | daar in belet, dog sonder bedrog, wijl | niemand haar taal verstaan konde, was | sulk niet te doen, en dusdanig sijn Ze in haar Land gebleeven.

[10] Tropenmuseum (Amsterdam), Museum Volkenkunde (Leiden), and Wereldmuseum (Rotterdam) received objects in 1873 (via the Koloniaal Museum, Haarlem), 1914, 1915, 1916, 1922, 1923, 1934, 1935 and 1936.

[11] (NL-HaNA 1.04.02 1158 folio 385) [...], gelijck door de Macasaren | en vordere Westerlingen sonder eenige molestie gedaen | wort, van welcke het seecker sij, als hier voren aen″ | gewesen is, datse niet een eijlant onbesocht laten, | gelijck dat hare navigatien tot op Arouw (het | oostelicke eijlant) bevestigen, en 't is oock eenichsints | te gelooven, datse de grootste Zuijder eijlanden, | gelijck dat van U Eds name van Diemenslant genoemt | is, mitsgaders Speuls eijlant, ende 't lant bij 't Schip | Arnhem ontdeckt, beneffens alle d'andere frequenteeren, | [...]

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