
THE CARTOGRAPHIC MIGRATION OF *WESEL(S) EIJLAND*

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Abstract: The *Wessel Islands* group off the north-eastern coast of Arnhem Land has a rather abstruse history in terms of its naming and ultimate cartographic location. Cartographic evidence, and some primary documentary evidence points to a *Wesel(s) Eijland* initially referring to an island off the southern coast of present-day West Papua. Up until the name *Wessel Islands* was finally conferred upon its present location by Matthew Flinders, cartographic evidence indicates *Wesel(s) Eijland* was positioned in a number of other locations. This article traces the cartographic and documentary history of the island's name and location.

INTRODUCTION

The *Wessel Islands* are a chain of islands off the north-eastern coast of Arnhem Land, and the traditional home of the Nango or Nhungu people. The islands extend in a diagonal line from Elcho Island, Buckingham Bay, and Arnhem Bay, to the northeast. Marchinbar Island is the largest of the group. Other islands include Rimbija Island (the most outlying island), Guluwuru, Raragala, Stevens Island, Burgunngura, Djeergaree, Yargara, Drysdale Island, Jirrgari Island, Graham Island, Alger Island, Abbott Island, and Howard Island.

The naming, and indeed the charting, of the Wessel Islands has a rather abstruse history. It is often claimed the island (probably Marchinbar) was named by Pieter Pieterszoon aboard the *VOC* vessel (*Klein/Cleen*) *Wesel* during the exploration expedition of Gerrit Thomaszoon Pool and Pieterszoon in 1636.¹ *Wikipedia* (2019), for instance states:

The islands were mapped and named by a Dutch expedition that sailed from Banda Neira to explore the coasts of New Guinea and the South Land [...]. Besides the *Wesel Eilanden*, named after the ship, Pietersen described the Cobourg Peninsula, Melville Island (*Roode hoek*), and Dundas Strait (which he misidentified as a bay). 170 years later Matthew Flinders decided to retain the name of the islands, though he slightly modified it to *Wessel*.

Apart from Pieterszoon never having ventured anywhere near the present day Wessel Islands, the *Wikipedia* entry is also incorrect in using the plural form *Eilanden*: the Dutch only ever referred to a singular island, and never used the name to refer to the current islands (at least, not until the mid-nineteenth century). Instead, as will be seen, the name *Wesel(s) Eijland* was originally bestowed to a small island (*Pulau Adi*) situated just off the south-eastern coast of the Bomberai Peninsula on the south coast of today's West Papua Province.²

Other sources, such as Reed (1974:224) and the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1998) web entry for the *Wessel Islands*, are somewhat more circumspect, refraining from stating who initially named the islands, and simply claim the islands were named after Pieterszoon's ship. The Northern Territory Place Names Register is even hesitant to say the islands were named after the ship; its website states:

The island could have been named after the vessel 'Wesel' which in 1636, under the command of Pieter Pieterszoon with the 'Klein Amsterdam' sailed south from New Guinea to what is known today as Cobourg Peninsula and Melville Island. (NT Place Names Register *n.d.*)

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HISTORICAL BACKDROP

In order to put into context and unravel the convoluted history of the charting and naming of the *Wessel Islands*, the chronology of the exploration of the northern coastline of Australia is in order. Of the seven expeditions of exploration conducted along the northern coastlines (Janszoon 1606, Carstenszoon & van Coolsteerdt 1623, Pool & Pieterszoon 1636, Tasman 1644, van Delft 1705, Gonzal & van Asschens 1756, Flinders 1803), only five charted parts of the northern coastline of present-day Northern Territory and Arnhem Land before the *Wessel Islands* were named. A brief outline of these five expeditions is provided here.

van Coolsteerdt (1623)

The first to chart the northern coastline of present-day Northern Territory was Willem Joosten van Coolsteerdt (a.k.a. van Colster), master of the *Arnhem*, after having abandoned the Jan Carstenszoon expedition off the west coast of Cape York Peninsula between Staaten Rivier and nearby Rivier Nassou to the north. He headed westwards, across what would become known as the Gulf of Carpentaria, in order to return to Ambon via the Aru and Kai islands. Although neither the journal nor original chart of the *Arnhem's* voyage has survived, a few documents and an anonymous manuscript chart made c.1670 (Anon. 1670) (Fig. 1., see also Tent 2019, Fig.2 later in this issue), representing the discoveries made by van Coolsteerdt, provide evidence that he subsequently came across the eastern coast of Arnhem Land, and charted part of its coastline. The chart shows the label *AERNHEM* on what we now know is the mainland, where the current Arnhem Land is, and *Het Eijlandt Spült* ['The Island Speult'], named after Herman van Speult the then Governor of Amboyna (Ambon). Because it was not clear whether these features were islands or parts of the mainland, the Council of the *VOC* in Batavia originally referred to them as islands. For instance, in a missive from the Governor-General and Governors of the *VOC*, in reference to the 1636 voyage of Gerrit Thomaszoon Pool and Pieter Pieterszoon, reference is made to *Arnhems of Speults Eijlanden* ['Arnhems or Speults Islands'] (Leupe 1868:48), and in the sailing instructions for Tasman's 1644 voyage: *de grote Eijlanden, Arnhem ende Speult* ['the large Islands, Arnhem and Speult'] (Leupe 1868:48). However, the sailing instructions to Marten van Delft (see Leupe 1868:187; Heeres 1899:88; and Robert 1973:137) for his voyage of exploration of the coasts of Melville Island and the Coburg Peninsula in 1705 (then referred to as *Van Diemens Land* and *Marias Landt*) refer to the two features as *Aarnemslant* and *Drooge eyland* (see below).

It is not clear to which island *Het Eylandt Spült/Speult* refers. Heeres (1899:vi) believes it could have been Groote Eylandt, which seems [*pace*] unlikely. In contrast, Robert (1973:26) more reasonably thinks it refers to Marchinbar Island.

Pool & Pieterszoon (1636)

Pool and Pieterszoon, aboard the *Klein/Cleen Amsterdam* and (*Klein/Cleen*) *Wesel*, were instructed to follow the track of Carstenszoon and van Coolsteerdt along the southern coast of what is now known as West Papua, then cross the Arafura Sea to Arnhem Land and survey its northern coastline. After Pool was killed in West Papua, Pieterszoon continued the expedition but only explored the northern coasts of Melville Island and the Coburg Peninsula naming them *Van Diemensland* and *Marias Land* respectively. He did not venture as far as what are now known as the *Wessel Islands* on the north-eastern coast.

Tasman (1644)

Abel Tasman's 1642-43 voyage along the southern coast of *Van Diemensland* (Tasmania; not Pieterszoon's appellation for Melville Island), the western coast of *Staten Land* (New Zealand), and through the Tonga archipelago was considered a failure in the eyes of the Council of the *VOC*. He was subsequently ordered to follow in the tracks of Carstenszoon and Coolsteerdt, and Pieterszoon.

The ‘Bonaparte Tasman’ map (Wieder 1942) (**Fig. 9.**) shows he followed coastline from the *Drooge Bocht* [‘Shallow/Dry Bight’, now Torres Strait] round the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria, past *Arnhemland* and along the north and north-west coast of the South Land as far as the Tropic of Capricorn. He sailed past *Het Eylandt Speult* which is quite crudely represented and left unnamed on the Bonaparte Tasman map.

van Delft (1705)

Marten van Delft was instructed to make an accurate survey of the coasts of Pieterszoon’s *Van Diemensland* and *Marias Land*, and spent three months doing so, making detailed charts of the north coasts of Melville Island and Coburg Peninsula. He did not venture any further east, and therefore did not chart any part of the north-east Arnhem Land coast.

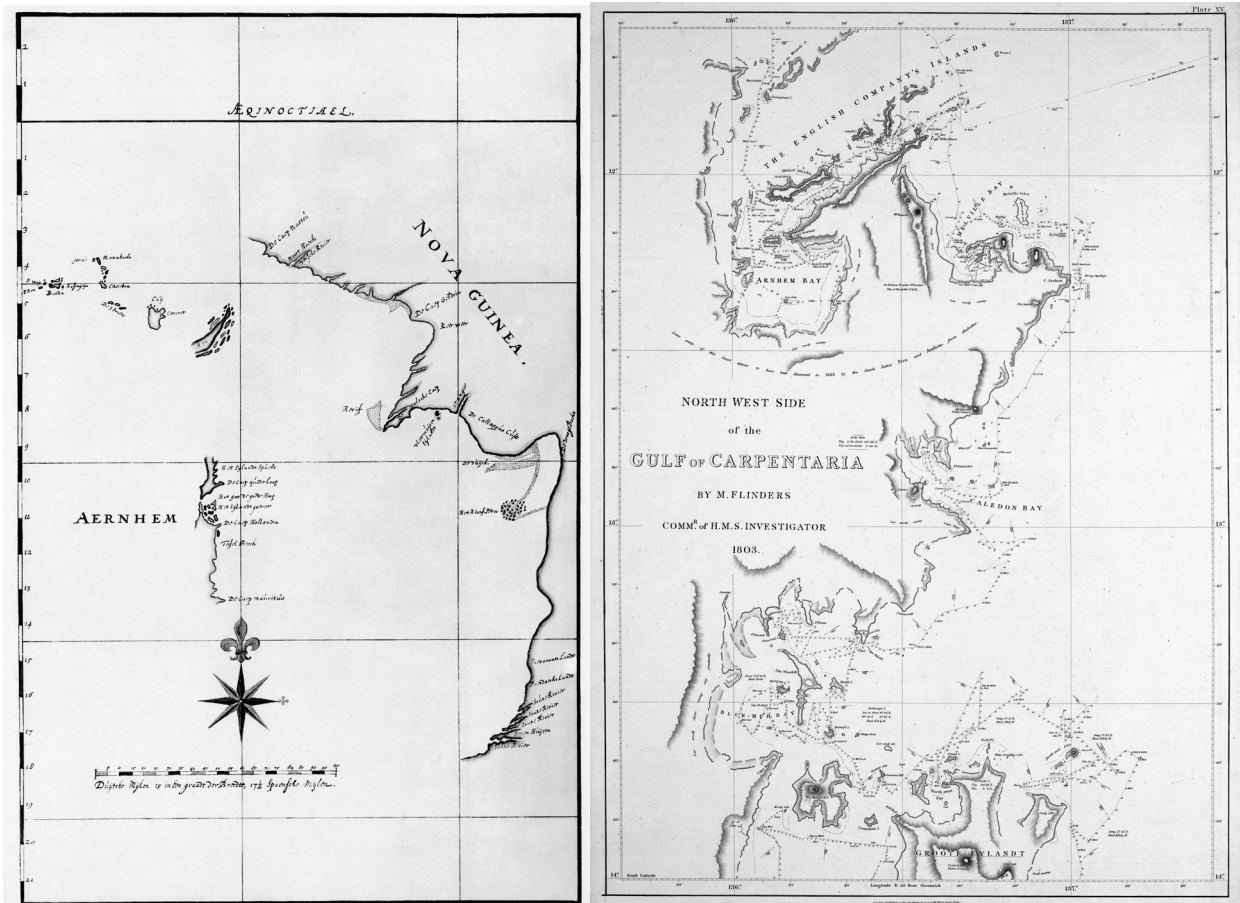


Figure 1. (Left) Anon. [c.1670]. *The discovery of Arnhemland, Australia, by the Yacht Arnhem, 1623 – from the secret atlas of the East India Company, c. 1670.* Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague [1925-33]. (Nat. Lib. of Australia, MAP Ra 265 Plate 126. Online at <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1066940560>)

Figure 2. (Right) Flinders, M. (1814a). *North west side of the Gulf of Carpentaria.* G. and W. Nicol, London. (Nat. Lib. of Australia, MAP T 584. Online at <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-232590528>).

Flinders (1803)

During Matthew Flinders’ voyage to circumnavigate continent, he made very detailed and accurate charts of the coasts of the Gulf of Carpentaria and Arnhem Land (see **Fig. 2.**). His journal entries of 19 February and 6 March state the following:

[SATURDAY 19 FEBRUARY 1803]

The Dutch chart contains an island of great extent, lying off this part of the North Coast; it has no name in Thevenot, but in some authors bears that of Wessel’s or Wezel’s Eylandt, probably from the vessel which discovered Arnhem’s Land in 1636; and from the south end of Cotton’s Island distant land was seen to the

N. W., which I judged to be a part of it; but no bearings could be taken at this time, from the heavy clouds and rain by which it was obscured. (Flinders 1814, 2:234)

[SUNDAY 6 MARCH 1803]

A third chain of islands commences here, which, like Bromby's and the English Company's Islands, extend out north-eastward from the coast. I have frequently observed a great similarity both in the ground plans and elevations of hills, and of islands in the vicinity of each other; but do not recollect another instance of such a likeness in the arrangement of clusters of islands. This third chain is doubtless what is marked in the Dutch chart as one long island, and in some charts is called Wessel's Eylandt; which name I retain with a slight modification, calling them WESSEL'S ISLANDS. They had been seen from the north end of Cotton's Island to reach as far as thirty miles out from the main coast; but this is not more than half their extent, if the Dutch chart be at all correct. (Flinders 1814, 2:246)

EXCURSUS: WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE DENOTATION OF THE SHIP'S NAME?

If the Wessel Islands are ultimately and indirectly named after Pieterszoon's ship, it would be of interest to the toponymist to know whence the ship's name is derived. The answer to this question is not as straightforward as one might first imagine. Some sources (e.g. see Wikipedia 2019) suggest it was ostensibly named after the German town of Wesel, near the Dutch border. During the Eighty Years War with Spain (1568-1648), the town changed hands several times between the Dutch and Spanish. Therefore, the ship *may* have been named after this town. However, there are also two localities in the Netherlands, within 30 km of Arnhem, named *Wessel* and *Wezel* respectively. (*Wezel* may also refer to a weasel or stoat – see below). It seems unlikely the ship's name derives from *Wessel*, because the *ss* would indicate the preceding vowel is pronounced with a short [ɛ]. A single *s*, as in the German town's name and in most cases the spelling of the ship's name, indicates a long [e:]. The single *s* would also indicate it is pronounced as [z]. This may account for the occasional spelling of the ship's name as *Wezel*, as seen on the VOC website's entry for the ship (De VOCsite 2019b). Bearing this in mind, the ship's name could derive from the nearby locality of *Wezel*.

The VOC website also claims Pool and Pieterszoon's ships were prefabricated, so-called *afbreekboten* ['breakdown boats/ships'], made in the Dutch Republic and shipped to the East Indies where they were (re)assembled to form part of the exploratory expedition fleet. Because both vessels were prefabricated and transported, they were relatively small, perhaps explaining the premodifier *Klein/Cleen* ['small'] always associated with the *Amsterdam*. However, some sources, including Parthesius (2010:82), refer to the *Wesel/Wezel* as the *Klein/Cleen Wezel*.

Further evidence for the premodified *Wesel* comes from the mid-nineteenth century historical geographer, and functionary at the Dutch National Archives in The Hague, Pieter Arend Leupe (Molhuysen *et al.* 1930: 1037-38), who published a book in 1868, as well as lengthy journal articles, on the voyages of the Dutch to New Guinea and the South Land during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In his book, Leupe refers to the yachts *Cleyn Amsterdam* and *Cleyn Wesel* (Leupe 1868:67). He also cites parts of Pieterszoon's journal, in which reference is made to his ship, e.g. the entry of Friday 6 June 1636, "*Cleen Wesel*" (Leupe 1868:71; 1875:10). Robert (1973:27) also refers to Pieterszoon's vessel as the *Cleen Wesel*, as does Wichmann (1909:80 & fn.5). However, perhaps more authoritative proof of the *Wesel* sometimes having the premodifier *Cleen* comes from the VOC Daily Register at Batavia Castle. This is a register of all incoming and outgoing shipping in the Dutch East Indies. The Register of 1636 records the ship's name as *Cleijn/Cleen Wesel* (see Colenbrander 1899:11, 216, 226, 230), however it also refers to it as simply the *Wesel*. It therefore unclear whether *Cleijn/Cleen* was part of the ship's name.

The spelling of the name with a *z* – i.e. by Parthesius and the VOC website – may also suggest the name denotes a 'weasel'. Although it was common for VOC ships to be named after towns and cities, it was

also extremely common for them to bear the names of animals (at times unflattering ones), e.g. *Duyfken* ['Little Dove'], *Aap* ['Monkey'], *Zwarte Beer* ['Black Bear'], *Dolfijn* ['Dolphin'], *Valk* ['Falcon'], *Haas* ['Hare'], *Hazewind* ['Greyhound'], *Haring* ['Herring'], *Os* ['Ox'], *Koe* ['Cow'], *de Creeft* ['the Lobster'] etc. (see De VOCsite 2019a). Major (1859:75) cites the Dutch historian and cartographer François Valentijn's short description of Pool and Pieterszoon's voyage, in which the *Wesel's* name is spelled *Weasel*. Of course this is an English translation; however, it illustrates the uncertainty of the source for the ship's name. Finally, in connection to this, it must not be forgotten that one of Willem de Vlamingh's vessels was named *'t Wezeltje* ['The Little Weasel'] which clearly shows the name was probably not derived from a toponym.

DOCUMENTARY & CARTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

There are two possible sources through which the cartographic migration of *Wesel(s) Eijland* can be deduced: documentary (in the form of entries in journals or sailing instructions) and cartographic.

Documentary

Overall, there are relatively few primary documentary sources that refer to *Wesel(s)Eijland*. The first are found in the 1678 *Dagregister, gehouden bij den opperkoopman Johannes Keyts, op de reis van Banda naar de kust van Nova Guinea enz.* ['Journal of the chief merchant Johannes Keyts, on the journey from Banda to the coast of Nova Guinea etc.'] (Leupe 1868:115-157). In it Keyts makes numerous references to *Wesel(s) Eiland* situated just off the south-east coast of the Bomberai Peninsula. A few citations of his journal entries will suffice to illustrate its existence:

Vrydags. 9's [Julij 1678] Morgens wierd dese hoek van 't land N.O. omtrent 9 mijlen en Wesels eylant N.O. ten O. ¼ O. 5 mijlen van ons gepeylt.

['Friday 9 (July 1678) In the morning this point/peninsula of the land at N.E. about 9 miles and Wesels island N.E. at E. ¼ E. was plotted 5 miles from us.'] (Leupe 1868:148)

Saterdagh 10. Met sonsopganch peylden 't Wesels eylant O.N.O. 4 mijlen van ons, [...]

['Saturday 10. At sunrise Wesels island was plotted 4 miles E.N.E from us,'] (Leupe 1868:148)

Sondagh 11 [...] Omtrent de middag kregen het Wesels eyland weder in 't gezigt N.O. ten O. en de N.O. hoek N.N.O. omtrent 5 mijlen van ons; [...]

['Around noon, Wesels eyland came back into view N.E. by E. and the N.E. point N.N.E. about 5 miles from us;'] (Leupe 1868:149)

Donderdag 22, [...] In consideratie genomen zijnde, hoe dat wij in 't oversteken van 't Wesels eyland naer Arou, [...]

['Having taken into consideration, how we in the crossing from Wesels island Aru,'] (Leupe 1868:156)

The second primary source I have been able to trace occurs in the sailing instructions issued to van Delft on 20 January 1705, as cited by Leupe (1868:187), Heeres (1899:88) and Robert (1973:137). For his return journey along the west coast of Cape York Peninsula and up along the southern coast of New Guinea, van Delft was directed to:

[...] run along the bogt ['bight'] van Keerweer then following always along the coast in a westerly direction and thus past the Doodslagersrevier ['Manslaughters River'], the Waterplaets ['Watering-place'], till beyond the Goening Apy, Moordenaersrevier ['Murderers River'], and the Weseleijland ['Wesel Island'], and also beyond Speelmansrevier ['Speelmans River'] and Rijkloffsbaijen ['Rijkloffs Bays'] [...]

Various secondary sources are found in Leupe (1875) who provides a report on the Pool/Pieterszoon voyage, and is based on their original journals.³ Leupe (pp.12-13) notes that on 24 April 1636, Pool and Pieterszoon came across a small island and named it Amsterdam. There are only two maps on which it seems to be recorded (both close to the original *Wesel(s) Eijland* off Bomberai Peninsula): the

first is the so-called ‘Bonaparte Tasman’ map (Fig. 9. but see Fig. 3.), however, due to the small scale of the map it not clear to which island it refers. The second is Jacob Swart’s map of 1859, where it appears as a small island to the west of the unlabelled Wesel(s) Eijland (Pulau Adi). In all likelihood Amsterdam Eylant as depicted on Swart’s map refers to the current Pulau Nasaulang; however, it cannot be claimed with any certainty that this was Pool and Pieterszoon’s Amsterdam Eylant.

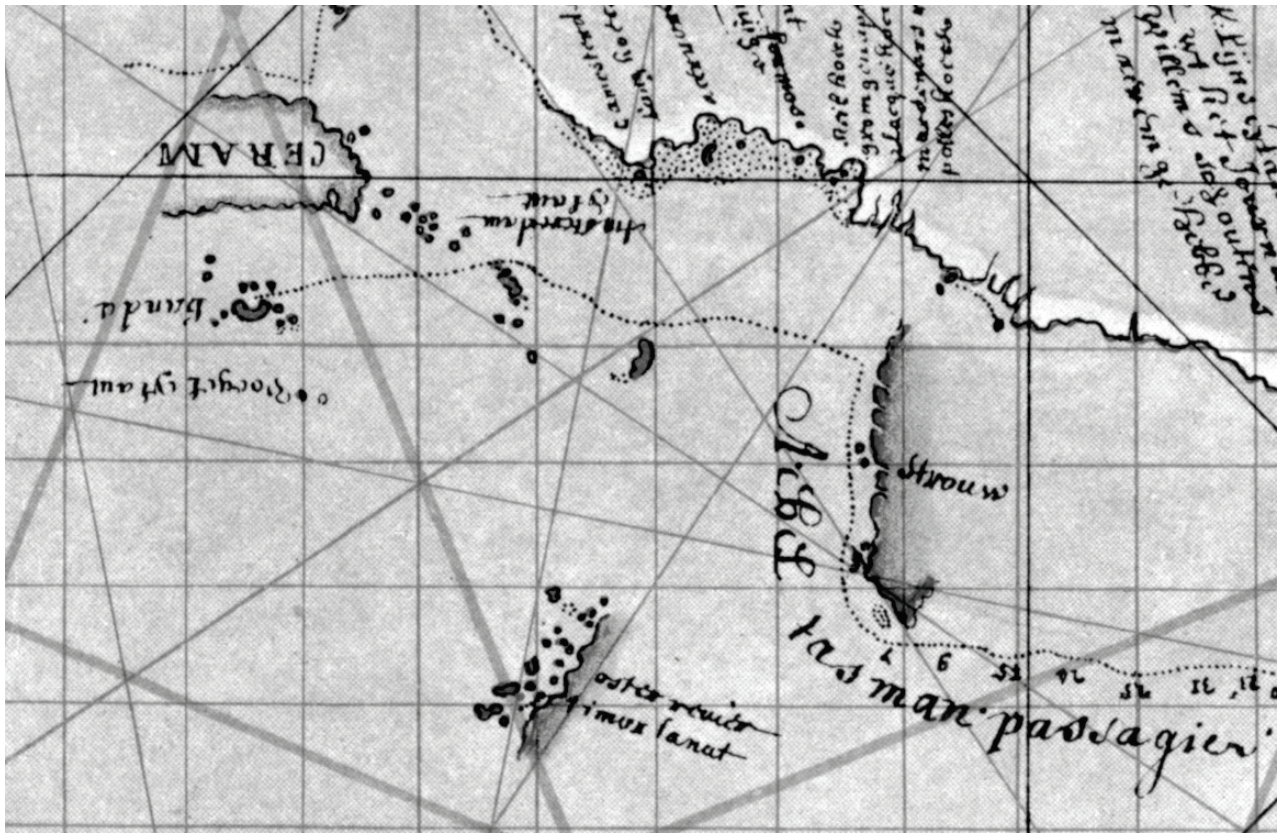


Figure 3. WIEDER, F.C. (1942). *Tasman's kaart van zijn Australische ontdekkingen 1644 "de Bonaparte-kaart"...* 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff.
(Nat. Lib. of Australia, NLq 994.601 WIE. Online at <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-230600464>)

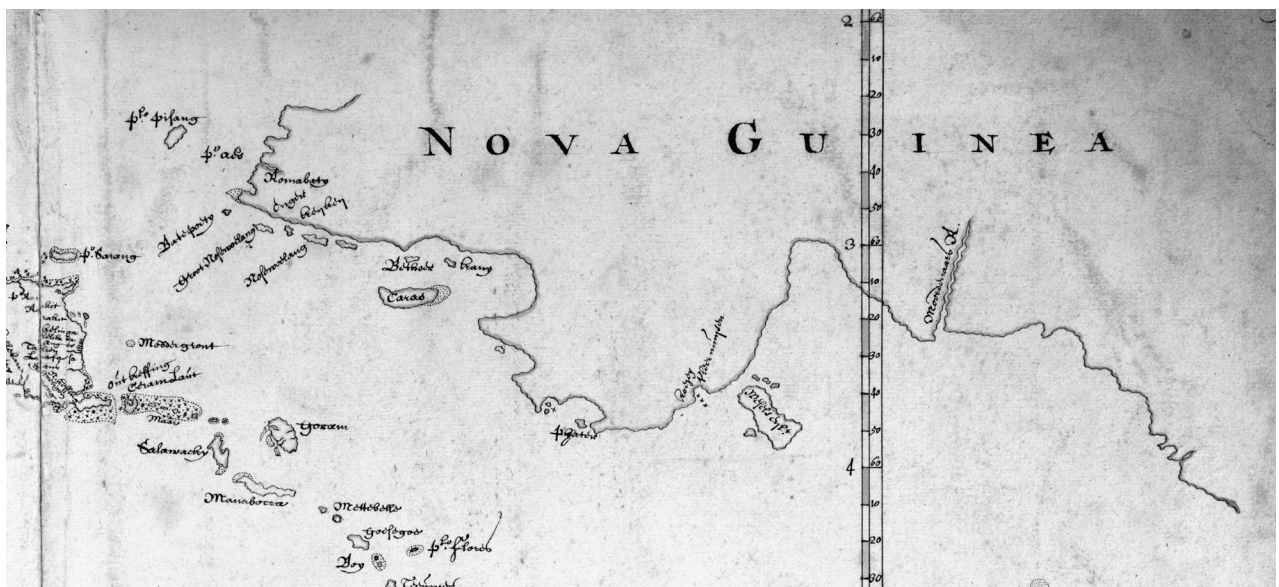


Figure 4. ANON. [1669-1700] [*Kaart van het Eiland Ceram, Bouro, een gedeelte van de Westkust van Nova Guinea, de Arouw Eilanden, Timor-laut, het Oostelykste gedeelte van Tymor en de daartusschen gelegen Eilanden*] (detail).
(Nationaal Archief, The Hague. Kaartcollectie Buitenland, Leupe, NL-HaNA 4.VEL 485).

On the following day, 25 April 1636, Pool and Pieterszoon sighted two other islands off the south-eastern tip of Bomberai Peninsula and named the first *Wesels Eiland* (*Pulau Adi*), and the second, a small neighbouring island, *Vogels Eiland* [‘Bird Island’] (*Pulau Tumbutumbu*). Van Dijk (1859:28) also provides this information.

Cartographic

Even though no map of the Pool/Pieterszoon expedition has survived, there is nevertheless abundant cartographic evidence of the existence of a *Wesel(s) Eijland* off Bomberai Peninsula.

Schilder (1976:130, 135 & 138) has unearthed an anonymous and undated manuscript chart in the archives of the *VOC* on which some discoveries on the south-west coast of New Guinea have been recorded. On the chart, approximately at the location of the current Pulau Adi, is drawn an island labelled *Wefels Eijl.*¹ (Schilder 1976:135, fig.49) (**Fig. 4.**). This is perhaps the earliest cartographic evidence of the name and the island. Another early map showing the island at this location is de Graaf’s map of c.1690-1743 (map reference #14 in **Table 1.**).

A catalogue of maps and manuscript charts showing the region of interest can be found in **Table 1.** It notes the creator of the map, its publication date, its title, and provides a brief description of what appears on the map vis-à-vis *Wesel(s) Eijland*. The table shows much variability in terms of the location and naming of *Wesel(s) Eijland* over the 211 year period it covers (1644 to 1855). It will be seen that islands are depicted at four distinct locations (**Fig. 5.**):

- It first appears just off the south-eastern tip of Bomberai Peninsula (POSITION 1) sometimes accompanied by *Vogel(s) Eyland*
- It then migrates to various latitudes and longitudes within the Arafura Sea north of Arnhem Land (POSITION 2)
- After Flinders’ charting of the north coast of Australia, the name migrates to the north-eastern tip of Arnhem Land at or close to its current location (POSITION 3). On the vast majority of maps no specific island in this location bears the name *Wesel(s)* or *Wessel(s)*, rather the whole island group carried this name.
- And, in one case, it appears on the north coast of West Papua (POSITION 4)

The islands depicted at these locations bear the name *Wesel(s)* (or some form of it), another name, or are displayed without a name.

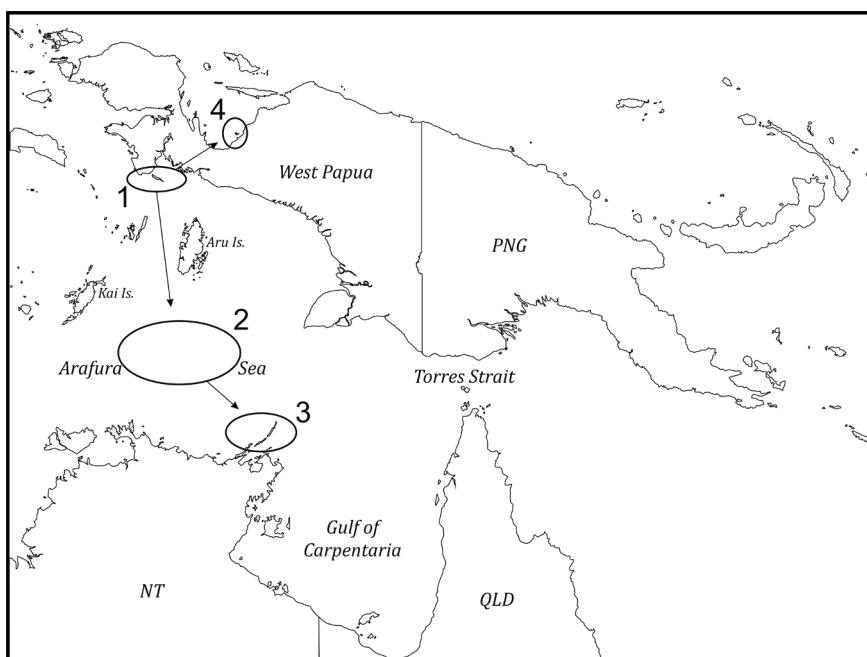


Figure 5. Map summarising the four POSITIONS of the various *Wesel(s) Eijland* shown on maps catalogued in **Table 1.**

Table 1: Maps showing the existence of a *Wesel(s) Eijland*

Map No.	Creator	Date	Title	What appears on the map
1	Wieder, F.C.	[1644]	<i>Tasman's kaart van zijn Australische ontdekkingen 1644 "de Bonaparte-kaart"</i>	Current Wessels Is. crudely shown but not named
2	Anon.	[c.1665]	<i>[Map of the actual trade zone (octrooigebed) of the VOC, between Cape of Good Hope (South Africa) and Japan]</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled
3	de Graaf, I.	1659-1700	<i>Kaart van den Indischen Archipel, tusschen Sumatra en Nova Guinea, zoomede de Westkust van Hollandia Nova enz</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled + a <i>Wesels Eylt</i> further out to the west in the Arafura Sea than on other charts
4	Blaeu, J.	1663	<i>Archipelagus Orientalis, sive Asiaticus</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled
5	Thevenot, M.	1663	<i>Hollandia Nova detecta 1644; Terre Australe decouuerte l'an 1644</i>	Current Wessels Is. crudely shown but not labelled
6	Duval, P.	1665	<i>Carte des Indes Orientales ...</i>	Current Wessels Is. crudely shown but not labelled
7	Anon.	c.1670	<i>The discovery of Arnhemland, Australia, by the Yacht Arnhem, 1623—from the secret atlas of the East India Company, c. 1670</i>	Current Wessels Is. crudely shown and labelled <i>Het Eijlandt Spult</i>
8	Danckerts, J.	1670-1710	<i>India quae Orientalis ditior et Insulae Adiacentes</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled
9	de Wit, F.	1675?	<i>Orientaliora Indiarum Orientalium cum insulis adiacentibus à promontorio C. Comorin ad Japan ...</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled
10	van Keulen, J. & H. van Loon	1680	<i>Nieuwe Pascaert van Oost Indien ...</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled
11	Robijn, J.	1683	<i>Nieuwe wassende graet kaart van Oost Indien van d. C. d Bono Esperanca tot t'Lant Eso ...</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled
12	Van Keulen, J.	1689	<i>Nieuwe Pascaert van Oost Indien ...</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled
13	Goos, P.	1690	<i>Oost Indien wassende-graade paskaart, vertoonende nevens het Oostelyckste van Africa, meede de zee-kusten van Asia, van C. de Bona Esperanca tot Eso, boven Japan</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled
14	de Graaff, I.	1690-1743	<i>Kaart van het Eiland Ceram, Bourro, een gedeelte van de Westkust van Nova Guinea</i>	Map restricted to Ceram, Aru, Kai & Timor-Leste; shows <i>Wesels Eylt</i> ; just off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula, to the north of the Aru and Kai Is.
15	Coronelli, V.	1692 or 1693	[Section of world map]	Current Wessels Is. crudely shown but not labelled
16	Anon.	1696?	<i>Oosterdeel van Oost Indien : streckende van Cilon tot Iapon en tot de Landrones Ilanden</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled
17	Loots, J.	c.1700	<i>Nieuwe Wassende Graadige Passkaarte van Oost Indien ...</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled
18	Loots, J. & R. de Hooghe	c.1707-08	<i>[Unfinished wall map of the world, eastern hemisphere].</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled

19	van Keulen, G.	1720-26	<i>De Oost Indische Zee. Nova Guinea en Nova Hollandia</i>	Crudely drawn current WesseIs. labelled <i>Het Eijland Spult</i> + a <i>WesseIs Eylant</i> just off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula, to the north of the Aru and Kai Is.
20	van Braam, J.	1724-26	<i>Tabula Indiae orientalis et regnorum adjacentium</i>	Current WesseIs. shown and labelled <i>Crocodilis Eylant</i>
21	Valentijn, F.	1724-26	<i>Oud en nieuw Oost-Indien ...</i>	Shows an island near current WesseIs. which is labelled ' <i>Hoog Land</i> [<i>'The High Land</i> '] + a <i>WesseIs Eylant</i> just off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula, to the north of the Aru and Kai Is.
22	Valentijn, F.	1726	<i>De Landvoogdy der Moluccos met de aangrenzende Eylantden</i>	Shows a ' <i>WesseIs Eyl.</i> just off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula, to the north of the Aru and Kai Is. + another ' <i>WesseIs Eylant</i> adjacent the north coast of West Papua
23	van Braam, J.	1726	<i>Kaart der Reyse van Abel Tasman volgens syn eygen opstel ...</i>	Crudely drawn island near current WesseIs. labelled ' <i>Hoogland</i>
24	Bowen, E.	1744	<i>A Complete map of the Southern Continent ...</i>	Current WesseIs. shown but not labelled
25	de L'Isle, G.	1745?	<i>Hemisphere meridional pour voir plus distinctement les Terres Australes ...</i>	Current WesseIs. shown and labelled <i>I. des Crocodilis</i>
26	de Vaugondy, G.R.	1750	<i>Archipel des Indes Orientales: qui comprend les Isles de la Sonde, Moluques et Philippines ...</i>	Map does not quite extend to current WesseIs. but an <i>I WesseIs</i> out in the Arafura Sea
27	Bellin, J.N.	1753	<i>Ins kleine gebrachte karte von den Süd-Ländern : zur Historie der Reisen ...</i>	Current WesseIs. shown and labelled <i>Crocodilien Insel</i>
28	de Vaugondy, D.R.	1756	<i>Carte Réduite de l'Australasie, pour servir à la lecture de l'Histoire des Terres Australes ...</i>	Current WesseIs. shown but not labelled + an <i>I. WesseIs</i> further out to the west in the Arafura Sea
29	de Vaugondy, G.R.	1757-86?	<i>Archipel des Indes Orientales : qui comprend les Isles de la Sonde, Moluques et Philippines ...</i>	Map does not quite extend to current WesseIs. but shows an <i>I WesseIs</i> out in the Arafura Sea
30	de Haan, G.	1760	<i>'t Zuid Landt</i>	Part of current WesseIs. shown and labelled <i>droog Eijl</i> [<i>'dry Is.</i>']
31	Delahaye, G.N.	1761	<i>Hemisphere oriental ou de L'ancien monde</i>	Current WesseIs. shown but not labelled + an <i>I. Wessel</i> out in the Arafura Sea
32	Callander, J.	1766	<i>Reduced Chart of Australasia for the III Volume of the History of the Southern Continent ...</i>	Current WesseIs. shown but not labelled + an <i>I. WesseIs</i> further out to the west in the Arafura Sea than on other charts
33	de L'Isle, G.	1770-79?	<i>Hemisphere oriental</i>	Current WesseIs. not shown
34	Stockdale, J.	1770-1814	<i>A new chart of New Holland on which are delineated New South Wales, and a plan for Botany Bay</i>	Current WesseIs. not shown
35	de Vaugondy, G.R.	1778	<i>Archipel des Indes Orientales, qui comprend les Isles de la Sonde, Moluques et Philippines ...</i>	Map does not quite extend to current WesseIs. but shows an <i>I WesseIs</i> out in the Arafura Sea
36	Whitchurch, W.	1770-79?	<i>Chart of part of the South Sea, shewing the tracts & discoveries made by His Majesty's ships ...</i>	Current <i>Wessel Is.</i> shown but not labelled
37	Zatta, A.	1779-85	<i>Nuove scoperte fatte nel 1765, 67, e 69 nel Mare del Sud ...</i>	Current <i>Wessel Is.</i> shown but not labelled + an <i>I. Wessels</i> out in the Arafura Sea
38	Bonne, R.	1780	<i>Carte des isles de la Sonde et des isles Moluques</i>	A distorted island shown at approx. current <i>WesseIs</i> Is., labelled <i>I. WesseIs</i>
39	Jeffreys, T.	1780	<i>A chart of the Indian Sea and Eastern Ocean</i>	Shows a distorted island at location of <i>WesseIs</i> Is. + a <i>Wessel I.</i> out in the Arafura Sea
40	Anon.	1780-90? ^a	<i>A chart exhibiting the new discoveries in the north & south Pacific Ocean</i>	Current <i>Wessel Is.</i> labelled <i>Crocodile I.</i> + an island out into the Arafura Sea labelled <i>Wessel</i>

41	Anon.	1780-90? ^b	<i>A chart exhibiting the new discoveries in the north & south Pacific Ocean</i>	Shows two distorted islands, unlabelled, in approx. position of current Wessel Is. + one labelled <i>Wesel</i> out in the Arafura Sea
42	Bew, J.	1781	<i>The archipelago of the East: being the Sunda, the Molucca, and Phillipp Islands ...</i>	Map does not quite extend to current Wessels Is, but an <i>I. Wessels</i> out into the Arafura Sea
43	Sayer, R.	1787	<i>A new chart of the Indian and Pacific Oceans between the Cape of Good Hope, New Holland and Japan ...</i>	Current Wessel Is. shown and labelled <i>Crocodile I.</i> + a <i>Wesel I.</i> out in the Arafura Sea
44	Jeffreys, T.	1788	<i>A chart of the Indian Sea and Eastern Ocean.</i>	Current Wessel Is. shown but not labelled + a <i>Wesel I</i> out in the Arafura Sea
45	Dalrymple, A.	1788	<i>Plan of the Islands to the Eastward and Southward of Banda with Part of the adjacent Coasts of New Guinea and New Holland</i>	Current Wessel Is. shown and named <i>Wessels Eyl</i> + a <i>Wesel I.</i> just off the just off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula, to the north of the Aru and Kai Is.
46	Dunn, S. & T. Kitchin	1794	<i>A General Map of the World, ...</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled + a <i>Wesel I.</i> out in the Arafura Sea
47	Canzler, F.G.	1795	<i>Karte von Fünfsten Erdtheil Polynaesien insehwelt oder Australien od Sudindien</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown but not labelled + a <i>Wesel I.</i> out in the Arafura Sea
48	von Reilly, F.J.J.	1795	<i>Karte von des Insehvelt Polynesien odei dem Fünfsten Welttheile</i>	Current Wessel Is. shown but not labelled + a <i>Wesel I.</i> out in the Arafura Sea
49	Weigel, C. & A.G. Schneiderschen	1796	<i>Karte von Australien oder Polynesien ...</i>	Current Wessel Is. shown but not labelled + a <i>Wesel I.</i> out in the Arafura Sea
50	Laurie, R. & J. Whittle	1797	<i>Laurie and Whittle's new chart of the Indian and Pacific Oceans between the Cape of Good Hope, New Holland and Japan</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown and labelled <i>Crocodile I.</i> + a <i>Wesel I.</i> out into the Arafura Sea
51	de Freycinet, L.C.D.	1802-03	<i>Carte de la Nouvelle Hollande et des archipels: situés au nord et à l'est de cette île ...</i>	Current Wessel Is. shown but not labelled
52	Lapie, M.	1809	<i>Oceanique.</i>	Current Wessels Is. not shown, instead an <i>I. Wessel</i> just off the just off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula, to the north of the Aru and Kai Is.
53	de Freycinet, L.C.D.	1811	<i>Carte generale de la Nouvelle Hollande ...</i>	Current Wessel Is. shown further to the west but not labelled
54	Flinders, M.	1814 a & b	<i>North west side of the Gulf of Carpentaria & Chart of Terra Australis. Sheet II, North coast</i>	Only south and eastern coasts current Wessels Islands shown and labelled <i>Wessels Islands</i>
55	Walch, J.	1826	<i>Australien (Sudland) auch Polynesien oder Inselwelt, insgemein der fünfte Welttheil ...</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown as a small distorted island but not labelled + a <i>Wesel I.</i> out into the Arafura Sea
56	Stucchi, S	1830	<i>Oceanica o quinta parte del mondo</i>	Current Wessels Is. not shown, but just a few scattered small islands + a crude clump of three islands labelled <i>Wessels</i> just off the just off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula, to the north of the Aru and Kai Is
57	Weiland, C.F.	1830	<i>Australien nach Krusenstern, Flinders, Freycinet, Oxley, Cross ...</i>	Current Wessel Is. shown and labelled <i>Wessels I</i> + a <i>Wessels I.</i> just off the just off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula, to the north of the Aru and Kai Is.
58	Weiland, C.F.	1846	<i>Australien nach Krusenstern, Flinders, Freycinet, Oxley, King, Sturt und Mitchell ...</i>	Current Wessel Is. shown and labelled <i>C. Wessel</i> + an <i>I. Wessel</i> just off the just off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula, to the north of the Aru and Kai Is.
59	Great Britain. Hydrographic Dept.	1849	<i>General chart of Terra Australis, or Australia ...</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown and labelled <i>Weszel I.</i> ^s
60	Melville van Cambee, P.	1855	<i>Algemeene kaart van het Gouvernement der Moluksche Eilanden, 1855</i>	Current Wessels Is. shown and labelled <i>Weszel</i>

However, one cartographic anomaly exists, namely on Valentijn's distorted and inaccurate map of 1726 (**Fig. 6**). It shows a crudely drawn series of small islands labelled 't *Wefels Eyl.*' roughly in POSITION 1, accompanied by a larger island labelled 't *Vogel Eyland* (which in reality is much smaller than *Wesel(s) Eijland*). However, there is also a 't *Wefels Eyland* in POSITION 4, on the north coast of current West Papua. This position also includes a *Speelmans Baey* and *de Moordenaars Rivier* ['the Murderers River'], both of which are in reality located on the south coast of Cendrawasih Bay, near 't *Wefels Eyl.*' in POSITION 1. The POSITION 4 *Wefels Eyland* probably relates to either *Ratewo Island (Pulau Utama)*, or its neighbouring island *Rotomorja Island (Pulau Nuturutomorja)*. Valentijn's map was supposed to depict the discoveries made by Nicolaes Vinck, Secretary of the Council of Justice, during a slave trading voyage to western New Guinea in 1663. Vinck discovered what later became known as the *MacChuer Gulf* (now *Teluk Berau*), yet oddly this bight is not shown on Valentijn's map. Wichman (1909:111) has an interesting take on the map, saying that it is so through and through incorrect that one cannot help but wonder whether the distortion was done with malicious intent. It seems strange to distort a map, unless the intent is to misinform, but who? and why? If Wichmann is correct in his proposition, it could explain the existence of *Wefels Eyland*, *Speelmans Baey* and *de Moordenaars Rivier* on the **north** coast at POSITION 4.⁴

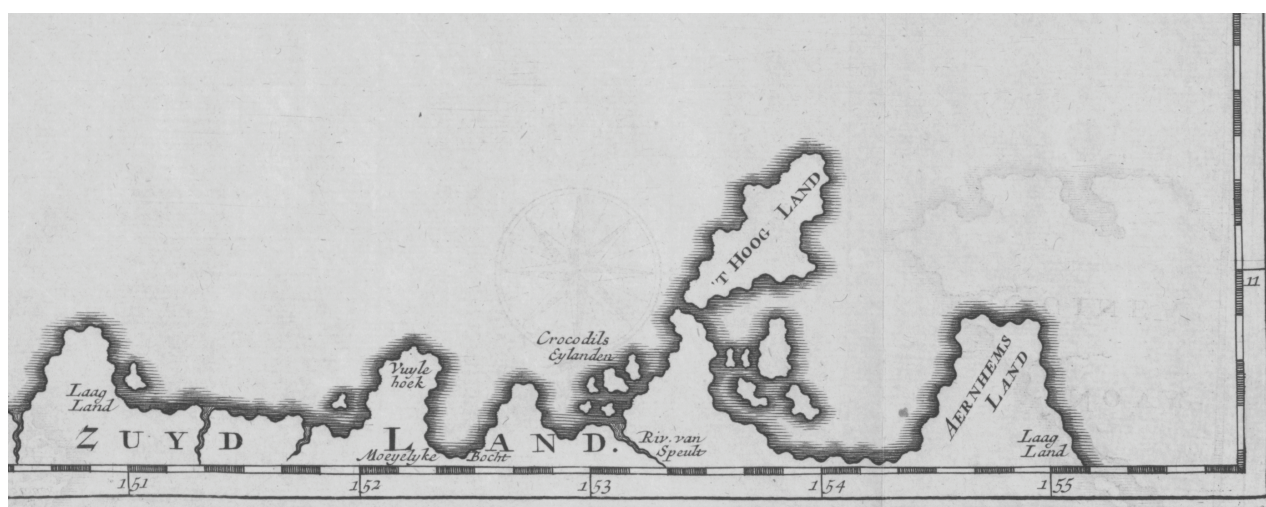


Figure 6. VALENTIJN F. [1726]. *De Landvoogdy der Moluccos met de aangrenzende Eylanden*. (detail).
In F. Valentijn, *Oud en Nieuw Oost Indien*. I. 2. Dordrecht-Amsterdam: F. Valentijn. p.2.
(Nat. Lib. of Australia, MAP RM 3951. Online at <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-232402653>)

Table 2 summarises the various depictions of *Wesel(s) Eijland* as catalogued in **Table 1**. It reveals that only three maps do not show any shape or form of an island where the current Wessel Islands are. Thirty-two maps (53%) show an island or islands without a label at or close to the position of the current Wessel Islands. Four maps do not extend far enough eastwards to cover that region; however, they do show an island with the name further out westwards in the Arafura Sea. In all, 20 maps (33%) have a *Wesel Eijland* in this location. There are a further nine maps (15%) that show a *Wesel(s) Eijland* off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula. Eleven maps (18%) show the current Wessel Islands with an alternative name – *Het Eijlandt Spult* (2×), *Crocodils Eyland* ['Crocodile Island'] (6×), 't *Hoog Land* ['The High Land'] (2×, e.g. **Fig. 7**), or *droog Eijl* ['dry Isl.'] (1×). The first of these is clearly a remnant of van Coolsteerdt's probable naming of the island, and the second is quite clearly due to confusing the Wessel Islands chain with the nearby Crocodile Islands group to the west. This is quite understandable given the poor charting practices of the era. The label 't *Hoog Land* (on the maps of Valentijn 1724-26 and van Braam 1726) may well be a confusion with the *Hoog Land/Eijlandt* (originally named by Willem Janszoon in 1606) at the tip of Cape York, but *droog Eijl* currently defies explanation. However, the Valentijn map also shows a *Riv. van Speult* tucked away just south of 't *Hoog Land* (**Fig. 7**). Is this also a mistake, because on other maps (e.g. de Leeuw 1623, Thevenot 1644 & Blaeu 1663) the *Rivier van Speult* appears at the northern end of the west coast of Cape York Peninsula? Or is this perhaps another example intentional cartographic distortion as suggested by Wichmann?

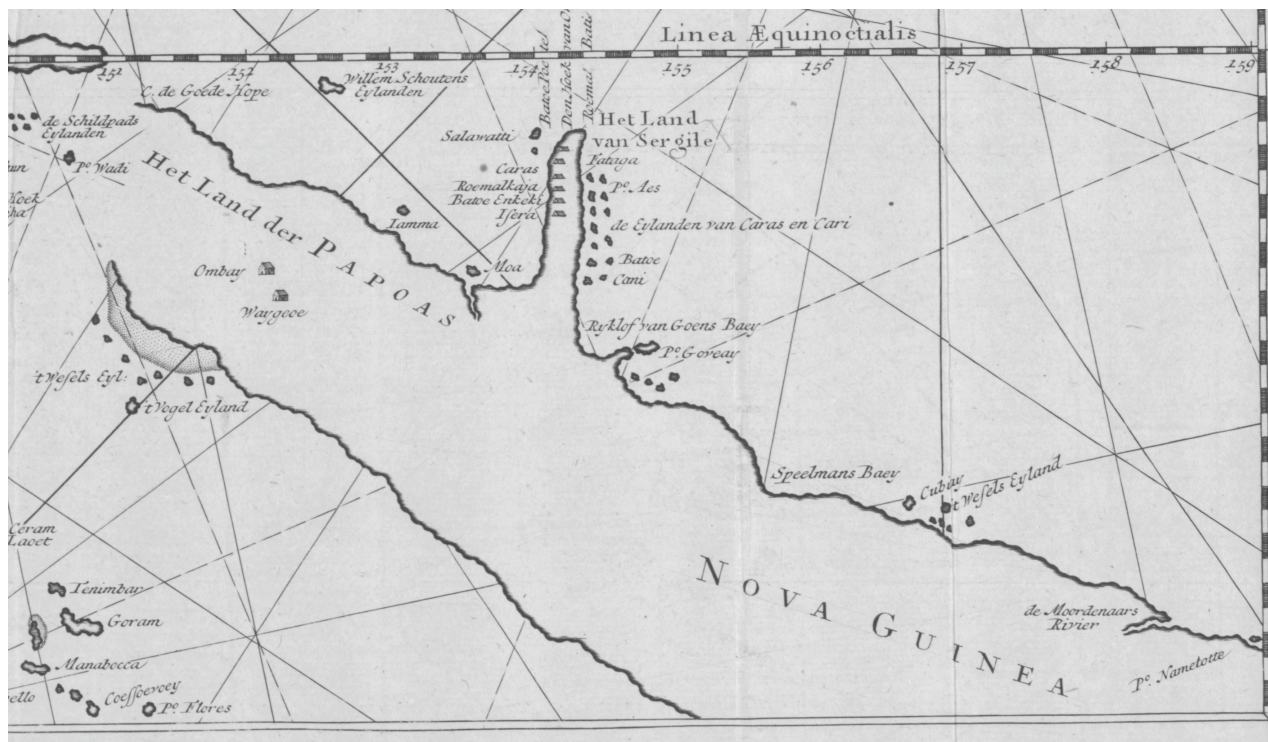


Figure 7. VALENTIJN, F. (1724-26). *Oud en nieuw Oost-Indien : vervettende een naaukeurige en uitvoerige verhandeling van Nederlands mogenthyd in die gewesten, benevens eene wydluftige beschryvinge der Moluccos ...* (detail)
 Joannes van Braam [et al.] , Dordrecht.
 (Nat. Lib. of Australia, RbF 919.2 VAL. Online at <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-52673547/view?partId=nla.obj-52673552>)

Table 2. Summary of various depictions of *Wesel(s) Eijland* on the 60 maps in **Table 1**.⁵

Ref. #	What the maps show	# of maps	Date range
1	A <i>Wesel(s) Eijland</i> shown off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula	9	Late-1600s to mid-1800s ~ 160 year period
2	A <i>Wesel(s) Eijland</i> shown out in the Arafura Sea	20	Mid-1700s to early-1800s ~ 50 year period
3	No island shown at location of current Wessel Is.	3	Late-1700s to early-1800s ~ 30 year period
4	Current Wessel Is. shown but not labelled	32	Mid-1600s to early-1800s ~ 160 year period
5	Current Wessel Is. shown, labelled with another name (in either Dutch, English, French or German forms)	11	Late 1600s to mid-1700s ~ 60 year period
6	Current Wessel Is. shown and thus labelled	7	1780 onwards

There are seven maps (12%) that show a *Wessel Island* at its current location and have been labelled with a like name. With the exception of map #45 (Dalrymple 1788, **Fig. 8.**, who labels it *Wefels Eyl^l*), they are all on post-1814 maps, which is self-explanatory given Flinders bestowed the name *Wessel Islands* in 1803 (**Fig. 2.**).⁶ However, it is not until after 1830 that maps labelled the island group consistency by this name (see maps #57-60 in **Table 1.**).

Perhaps the most intriguing charting of *Wesel(s) Eijland* is its placement in the Arafura Sea where no island exists. Twenty maps show it in this location (POSITION 2, **Fig. 5.**). De Graaf (1659-1700, map #3) shows a *Weßels Eylt* in this location, and predates other maps placing it there by at least 50 years

(see de Vaugondy 1750, 1756 & 1757-86, maps #26, 28 & 29, and especially subsequent maps after the late 1770s). What motivated these cartographers to place an island in the middle of the Arafura Sea where there is none? Was de Graaf's map the source for this placement on all these subsequent maps? The earliest dating of the de Graaf map, 1659, may be brought into question given all other maps in my survey that position *Wesel(s) Eijland* in the Arafura Sea are dated from the mid-1700s. This suggests a later dating of the de Graaf map may be more accurate. Nevertheless, if this is correct, it still predates the other maps and still may have served as a model for the later maps.

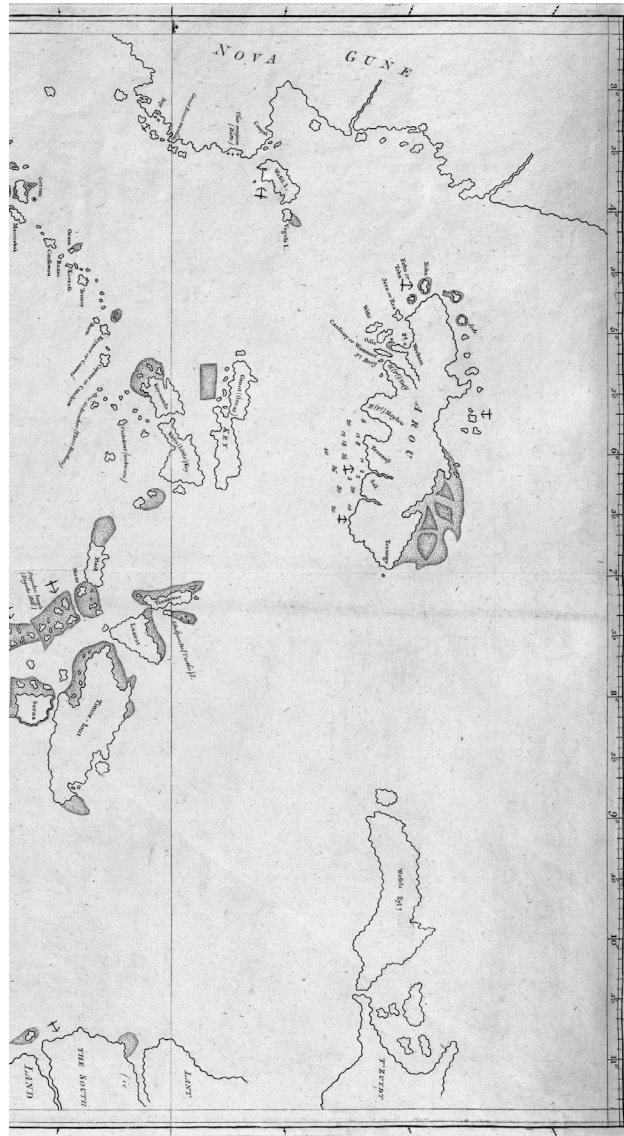


Figure 8. DALRYMPLE, A. (1788). *Plan of the Islands to the Eastward and Southward of Banda with Part of the adjacent Coasts of New Guinea and New Holland from a Dutch Ms. ...* (detail). A. Dalrymple, London. In INGLETON (1986) *Matthew Flinders: Navigator and chart maker*. Genesis Publications, Guildford (Surrey), in association with Hedley Australia. (Nat. Lib. of Australia, MAP RA 29 V. 3, PLATE 137. Online at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-869248458>).

The erroneous placement of an island is not uncommon on early maps. A similar phenomenon can be seen with the early charting and naming of Christmas Island, where various early maps show two or three islands (each with a different name) in the location where there is only one (see Tent 2016a).⁷ Another example closely related to the placement of *Wesel(s) Eijland* in the Arafura Sea is that of Pool and Pieterszoon's *Vogel Eyland* (*I. aux Oiseaux* on Bonne 1780). Its original location was just off the south-west coast of *Wesel(s) Eijland* (i.e. *Pulau Adi*). On some maps, e.g. Valentijn (1724-26, map #21) and Dalrymple (1788, map #45), it is positioned approximately in its correct position, whilst on other maps, e.g. the Bonaparte Tasman map [1644, map #1, see **Fig. 9.**], Bellin (1753, map #27), and

Bonne (1780, map #38, see **Fig. 10.**) it is out on its own in the Arafura Sea, without its accompanying *Wesel(s) Eijland*.

The first cartographic evidence showing an island at the location of the current Wessel Islands is on the anonymous manuscript chart published in 1670, (**Fig. 1.**). The subsequent occasion when this region was charted was during Tasman's voyage of 1644 (**Fig. 9.**). It was not until 159 years later that the next mariner charted the islands in that region – and that was Matthew Flinders (see **Fig. 2.**).

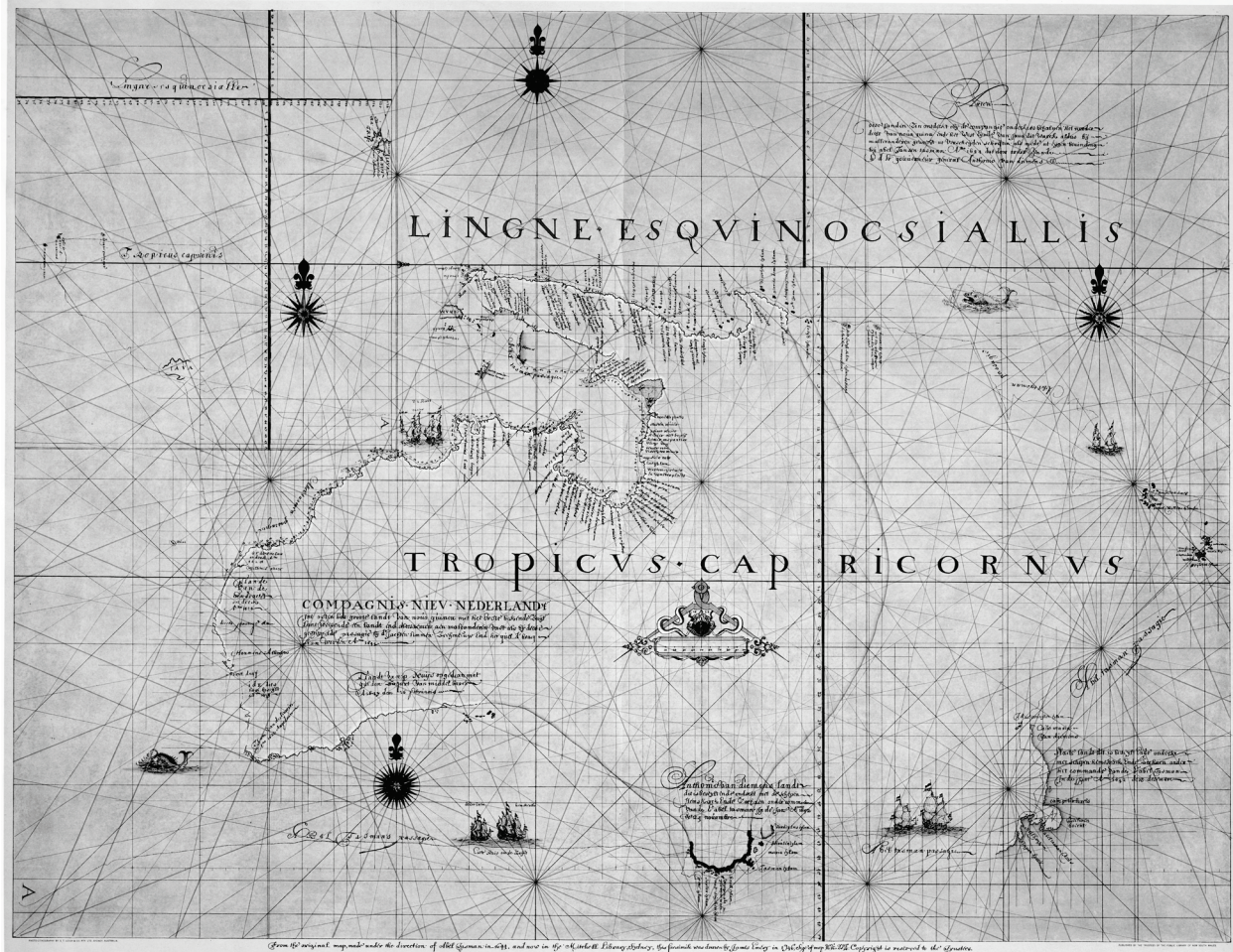


Figure 9. WIEDER, F.C. (1942). *Tasman's kaart van zijn Australische ontdekkingen 1644 "de Bonaparte-kaart"* Martinus Nijhoff, 's-Gravenhage. (Nat. Lib. of Australia, NLq 994.601 WIE. Online at <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-230600464>)

DISCUSSION

There are several possible explanations for the cartographic migration of *Wesel(s) Eijland*. The first may be explained by poor mapping and charting practices during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although latitude was relatively straightforward to calculate, longitude still needed to be developed through more accurate and reliable time keeping. The second reason may be due to careless or inaccurate copying of maps leading to imprecise and distorted delineation of geographic features, or more significantly, their erroneous placement. The duplication of maps that contained inaccuracies would also lead to the perpetuation of cartographic and toponymic errors. The copying and recopying of maps allows for human error to creep in. A good example of this is the naming of *Dinnings Land* near the Swan River (WA), and its appearance on various maps as a result of the inaccurate transcription of the topographic descriptor *Duynig Land* ['Duny Country'] on an earlier manuscript chart (see Tent 2016b).

Another factor perhaps related to the erroneous mapping of *Wesel(s) Eijland* is the similar dimensions and shapes of Pulau Adi and Marchinbar – long and narrow – Pulau Adi being approximately 44 km in

length, with a maximum breadth of nearly 7 km; and Marchinbar Island being roughly 57 km long and 8 km wide. Both islands also lie in a diagonal aspect from their mainlands.

However, an additional noteworthy issue remains, the answer to which perhaps may explain Flinders' bestowal of the name *Wessel* to the island chain off the northeast Arnhem Land coast. Flinders' journal entries of 19 February and 6 March (see above), call for some closer scrutiny. The first entry states: "The Dutch chart contains an island of great extent, lying off this part of the North Coast; it has no name in Thevenot, but in some authors bears that of Wessel's or Wezel's Eylandt, [...]." Flinders' does not say he derived the name from "the Dutch chart", but refers to "some authors" using the name. We have seen at the very least, that Keyts' journal of 1678 and van Delft's sailing instructions of 1705, mention the existence of a *Wesel(s) Eijland*, but they refer to the one off Bomberai Peninsula. Unfortunately, Flinders does not expound as to which Dutch chart or texts he was referring. Could he have been referring to Bonne's map of 1780 (Fig. 10)?



Figure 10. BONNE, R. [1780] *Carte des isles de la Sonde et des isles Moluques*. [Geneve : J.L. Pellet]. Nat. Library of Australia, MAP NK 10182. [<https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-230713492/>].

Flinders' second entry does not really enlighten us any further either: "[...] This third chain is doubtless what is marked in the Dutch chart as one long island, and in some charts is called Wessel's Eylandt; [...]." He states that the island is "marked in the Dutch chart as one long island" and does not say that chart had a name attached to it, but states: "in some charts it is called Wessel's Eylandt", not clarifying whether or not those were Dutch charts.

In researching this article, I have not been able to source any seventeenth or eighteenth century Dutch charts that show the current Marchinbar Island or any other neighbouring island bearing the name *Wesel(s) Eijland*, only *Het Eijlandt Spült*, *Crocodils Eyland*, *'t Hoog Land* or *droog Eijl*. This, of course does not mean there are not any such charts, as hinted at by Ingleton:

While in the INVESTIGATOR, Flinders apparently lacked the detailed narratives of these Dutch voyages [i.e. Janszoon 1606, Carstenszoon and Coolsteerdt 1623, Pieterszoon 1636, Tasman 1644, and Gonzal 1756]; but Dalrymple⁸ had supplied him with some data, including a copy of an old Dutch chart of *Hollandia Nova* by Melschisedec [sic] Thevenot, published in 1663, and possibly other Dutch charts. (Ingleton 1986:207, underlining added).

Ingleton may be correct in his claim that Flinders did not have the journals of Janszoon, Carstenszoon/Coolsteerdt, Pieterszoon, Tasman, and Gonzal. Indeed, the journals of Janszoon and Tasman are no longer extant. Nevertheless, Flinders may have had Keyts' journal and van Delft's sailing instructions. Thevenot's chart, as Flinders points out, shows the island but "it has no name". Thevenot's chart is largely based on the Joan Blaeu's 1663 map *Archipelagus Orientalis, sive Asiaticus* (**Table 1.**, map #4). The Blaeu map copperplates were created 1659, and were based on published Dutch charting of Australia up until that time.⁹ Both Thevenot and Blaeu clearly depict an island where Marchinbar Island is, but it is unnamed.

However, Dalrymple also supplied Flinders with his own chart *Plan of the Islands to the Eastward and Southward of Banda with Part of the adjacent Coasts of New Guinea and New Holland [...]* (Dalrymple 1788, **Fig. 8.**). Prescott (2001:12) notes that Flinders also used materials from Cook's charts as well as Dalrymple's versions of the van Keulen charts; but none of the van Keulen maps I have been able to examine show any island labelled *Wessel*. If Flinders had Dalrymple's chart in his possession, he may have used this as the source for "retaining" the name for the island chain.

The Bonne map of 1780 deserves some comment in relation to Dalrymple's chart. It is a very inaccurate and crudely drawn map, as the relevant section of the map shows (**Fig. 10.**). Its *I. Wesels* is out in the Arafura Sea, but is depicted directly north of the location of the current Wessel Islands. Did the Bonne map influence Dalrymple's placement of his *Wefels Eyl*?¹⁰ If not, on which map did he base it? Alternatively, did Flinders and Dalrymple have maps that showed the island in the Arafura Sea, and, knowing that there was no island there, simply draw the conclusion Marchinbar Island was intended, make that "correction" and move it further southeast to its present and actual location?

The title of Dalrymple's manuscript chart may also hint at an alternative source. He dedicates the chart to "the Hon. Archibald Fraser"¹⁰ who furnished him with "a Dutch Ms." It is not made clear whether this "Ms." was a map or a text; it could have been the latter. Clearly more research on the source of Flinders' naming of the island chain is merited.

I am not the first to query the charting and naming of the Wessel Islands. Perhaps the first to do so was the nineteenth century Dutch historian, Ludovicus Carolus Desiderius van Dijk, whose book of 1859 contains a map (see Tent 2019 later in this issue) which depicts the east and west coasts of the Gulf of Carpentaria, the northern end of the Northern Territory, Torres Strait, Seram and surrounding islands and part of New Guinea. Apart from questioning various contemporary toponymic labels applied to particular geographic features, van Dijk adds the interrogative *Waarom?* ['Why?'] after *Wezel of Wesseleiland* ['Wezel or Wessel Island']. He acknowledges Pieterszoon explored the west and central coast of what is indicated as *VAN DIEMENSLAND* on his map, and correctly points out that Pieterszoon did not venture as far to the east as *Wezel of Wesseleiland*. In addition, on page 28 of his 53-page narrative and commentary, van Dijk refers to the island *Adi of Wezelseiland* ['Adi or Wezels Island'], named by Pool and Pieterszoon. In a footnote, he proposes:

On the maps of Bogaerts, Stieler and others there is a Wessel-island (on Bogaerts even two), near the so-called Arnhems Land. Would not this be a mistake? Probably the island discovered by Pool is meant.

Van Dijk is incorrect in his assertion that the Bogaerts map (1857) shows two Wessel islands; it actually shows *Wessel Eilanden* ['Wessel Islands'], a *Kp. Wessel* ['Cape Wessel'], off the north-eastern coast of Arnhem Land, and labels either current Raragala Island or Elcho Island as *Wessel Eil.* No other *Wessel Eil.* can be discerned on this map; moreover, Pulau Adi is denoted as *Adie*, not as *Wessel Eil.* Stieler's map (1826), on the other hand, inaccurately shows a series of tiny islands approximately at POSITION 3 and labels them with a plural generic *Wessel^m*.¹¹ The last sentence of van Dijk's footnote refers to the *Adi of Wezelseiland* on his map. In an oblique way, van Dijk is correct to suggest the Arnhem Land *Wessel Eilanden* were confused with the *Wesel(s) Eiland* off the coast of Bomberai Peninsula. Indeed the cartographic evidence over the 211-year period of my survey shows there was considerable confusion as to the location of *Wesel(s) Eijland*. Van Dijk's footnote seems to imply that Bogaerts and Stieler were also confused and designated the name to the islands at POSITION 3, while on the contrary, they were merely adhering to Flinders' naming and charting. From this standpoint, Flinders' journal entries more than adequately answer van Dijk's question, *Waarom?* It is likely van Dijk did not have access to Flinders' journal; the only mention he makes of Flinders is via a secondary source to the existence of Torres Strait. If van Dijk had read Flinders' journal he would have understood why this island chain was so named.

By the mid-1800s, all Dutch maps depicting northern Australia recognise the *Wessel Islands*, e.g. Melville van Carnbee (1853; 1855 #60) shows them as *Wezel Eil.*ⁿ or simply as *Wezel*, whilst the Bomberai Peninsula island is shown as *Adie*. The topographic migration of *Wesel(s) Eijland* was complete.

NOTES

- ¹ Pool, who was in overall charge of the 1636 expedition, was murdered by the inhabitants of the southern coast of New Guinea, close to where Dirk Meliszoon of the Jan Carstenszoon expedition was also murdered in 1623. After Pool's death, Pieterszoon took charge and continued the expedition.
- ² The spelling of the island's name had numerous forms. For the sake of consistency, the default name form *Wesel(s) Eijland* will be used throughout this article when referring to the island in general. When another source is being cited, the form used in that source will be used. Note, the spelling of the ship's or island's name with medial *s*, *ss*, or *z* is due to a number of factors. Firstly, throughout the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries Dutch spelling had not yet become standardised, and as a result, disparate spellings of names and words were commonplace. Secondly, the pronunciation of a medial /s/ sound (especially between two vowel sounds) was often, and still is, assimilated to /z/ (which is also the case in English, e.g. *weasel* > /wi:zəl/). The *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal* (the Dutch dictionary on historical principles) shows that the modern Dutch *wezel* ['weasel'] had the following historical forms: *wesel*, *wessel*, *wissel*, *wiezal*, *wijzel*.
- ³ I have not had the luxury of having had access to these journals, so must rely on second-hand reporting. However, given Leupe's impeccable reputation as a researcher, little doubt can be held of the veracity of his reporting.
- ⁴ The southern coast of Bomberai Peninsula was the source of the valuable and much sought after Massoia bark (*Massoia aromatica* Becc., Lauraceae) which was used to make fragrant oil, ointment, medicines, spice, and tannin.
- ⁵ It will be noted that the numbers in this table add up to more than 60. This is because some maps show two *Wesel(s) Eijlands*, with varying naming configurations.
- ⁶ Intriguingly though, Dalrymple also records a *Wefels I.* in POSITION 1.
- ⁷ The history of cartography is replete with depictions of phantom islands, and we are not immune to it even in the 21st century. In 2012 it was discovered, quite by chance, that a certain *Sandy Island* or *Île de Sable* did not actually exist. For more than 100 years it had been charted with specific coordinates (19° 12' 44" S; 159° 56' 21" E) in the Coral Sea, between the Chesterfield Islands and Nereus Reef, northeast of Queensland and west of New Caledonia (see Bonnett 2014:11-16; Brooke-Hitching 2016:206-207). Like *Sandy Island* though, it is unlikely the Arafura Sea *Wesel(s) Eijland* was made up or imagined. More likely they were simply put in the wrong location due to faulty copying, or to protect trading interests.
- ⁸ Alexander Dalrymple (1737-1808), Scottish geographer and the first Hydrographer of the British Admiralty.
- ⁹ Blaeu was chief cartographer for the VOC when Tasman returned from his 1644 voyage.
- ¹⁰ Most probably Archibald Campbell Fraser of Lovat (1736-1815), member of Parliament and Fellow of the Royal Society.
- ¹¹ The ⁿ indicates the German plural, *Inseln*, all other singular islands on his map are indicated by *I.*

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