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## **THE LANGUAGE OF WATERBORNE TRANSPORT USED IN SYGURD WIŚNIEWSKI'S *DZIESIĘĆ LAT W AUSTRALII* (TEN YEARS IN AUSTRALIA)**

**ABSTRACT:** This article presents translations and paraphrases of fragments of Sygurd Wiśniowski's eighteenth-century Polish memoir *Dziesięć lat w Australii* (Ten Years in Australia) that deal with sea voyages and trips on inland waters. Interestingly, these relatively short subplots, which serve to illustrate the wide spectrum of Wiśniowski's talents, share certain distinctive attributes: not poetic means of expression, but rather Wiśniowski's ability to use everyday language and to appeal to readers who are not well-versed in travel on water. Wiśniowski strove to portray scenes connected with waterborne travel as unusual for the European reader yet at the same time as ordinary for the white settlers involved. In short, despite writing in Polish and hailing from a land without longstanding maritime traditions, Wiśniowski's prose in *Dziesięć lat w Australii* (Ten Years in Australia) consistently demonstrates a clear, easy and knowledgeable command of maritime language.

**KEYWORDS:** Sygurd Wiśniowski, coasts and rivers of northeastern New South Wales and eastern Queensland, voyages along sea and ocean coasts, trips on inland waters

### **PREFACE**

This article presents English paraphrases and/or translations of some fragments of Sygurd Wiśniowski's<sup>1</sup> book *Dziesięć lat w Australii* (Ten Years in

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<sup>1</sup> Sygurd Wiśniowski, born on 6 Apr. 1841, died on 23 Apr. 1892. Cf. B. Olszewicz, *Przedmowa* (Preface), [in:] *Dzieci królowej Oceanii* (Children of the Queen of Oceania), S. Wiśniowski, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1956, pp. 5-31; D. McEldowney, *Introduction*, [in:] *Tikera or Children of the Queen of Oceania*, S. Wiśniowski, trans. J. Podstolski, Auckland University Press, Auckland 1972, p. vii and passim.

Australia)<sup>2</sup> that deal with waterborne travel and analyses the style of language used therein. This project forms part of my longstanding efforts to translate various pieces of prose by Sygurd Wiśniowski from Polish into English.<sup>3</sup> This work has been guided by my own three-pronged background: my thirty years of international scientific research on navigation, my lifelong experience in sea and ocean sports sailing, and my thirty-year research into the humanistic aspects of navigation and waterborne discovery.<sup>4</sup> In particular, I am interested in the process of translation and paraphrasing of various texts that lie in the realm of the humanities but deal with practical navigation. In those interdisciplinary studies I have been inspired by M. Gibbons et al.<sup>5</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

This article presents my own translations and/or paraphrases from the quasi-colloquial Polish language of the eastern borderlands of the 1870s into modern literary English. The texts in question are chosen fragments of Sygurd Wiśniowski's book *Dziesięć lat w Australii* (Ten Years in Australia; hereafter: *Ten Years* [...]) dealing with waterborne navigation along the coasts and on some rivers in Eastern New South Wales as well as Eastern Queensland. The aim of presenting the selected fragments here is to illustrate Wiśniowski's extraordinary ability to write in his native language about issues pertaining to waterborne travel typically unknown to people such as him, brought up by the landed gentry in the Eastern European landlocked territories, situated far away from the open sea-borne and major river-borne culture. The research question is whether presented fragments share certain distinctive attributes.

In view of the above aim and research question it is worthwhile to remind the truism that Ukraine, where Sygurd was born, was a land deprived of maritime traditions stretching back many generations in ship- and boat-building

<sup>2</sup> S. Wiśniowski, *Dziesięć lat w Australii* (Ten Years in Australia), Gubrynowicz i Schmidt, Lwów 1873.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. K. K. Vorbrich, *Figurative Language in the Interpretation of Storm and Stranding in Twofold Bay, Australia, in the Translation of Sygurd Wiśniowski's Novel Światelka w Ciemnym Kraju (Little Lights in the Dark Country)*, [in:] *Translation Landscapes – Internationale Schriften zur Übersetzungswissenschaft*, ed. P. Sulikowski, A. Sulikowska and E. Lesner, vol. 2, Verlag Dr. Kovač, Hamburg 2018, pp. 385-417; K. K. Vorbrich, *Translation of Sygurd Wiśniowski's Short Story Pani Jeziora (The Lady of the Lake) from Polish Into English – Some Cultural Problems and an Analysis of Apparent Inaccuracies in Sygurd's Literal Meaning*, [in:] *Translation Landscapes – Internationale Schriften zur Übersetzungswissenschaft*, ed. P. Sulikowski, A. Sulikowska and E. Lesner, vol. 4, Verlag Dr. Kovač, Hamburg 2020, pp. 289-330 (in press).

<sup>4</sup> I have published more than a hundred articles on scientific navigation while conducting research at the Polish Academy of Sciences, the Institut für Flugführung, Braunschweig, Germany and the GPS Centre at the University of Singapore. Holding the highest ocean sport yacht certificate, I have practiced navigation on four oceans and major rivers, sailing also in the wake of Cook and Wiśniowski, and publishing academic humanistic books and articles on this theme. I have practical experience in commanding ocean-going yachts and helming small dinghies during very long-distance sea and inland sailing.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. M. Gibbons et al., *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*, Sage, London 2010 [Forskningsråfdämnden (FRN) 1994], p. 179.

and handling. As such, Sygurd Wiśniowski's Polish prose might be seen as amateur when it comes to the specialized maritime/sailing expressions and descriptions. My endeavours to translate it into English are even more difficult because the target language is so rich in expressions of this kind, and hypothetical Anglophone reader is expected to be well versed and interested in any aspect connected with boating, sailing and navigation.<sup>6</sup>

Due to space constraints, this study is geographically restricted to the east coast of Australia. I concentrate on the waterborne travel issues and will consequently pass over any question of the local culture or issues related to Australia's indigenous peoples (the latter appear in the article only to the extent Wiśniowski mentioned them). I will stick to the technique of paraphrasing presented for example by Collins in his editing of the Journals of Flinders and Bass<sup>7</sup> and explained succinctly by Sprod.<sup>8</sup>

Whenever possible given the space limitations, I will supplement fragments of the English text with the corresponding original text in Polish. This technical device is intended to serve at least two purposes. First, it will hopefully show which fragment is a paraphrase bordering on a summary, which is a simple paraphrase, and which is a more or less close translation. Second, readers who understand Polish will be able to grasp the spirit of the original without having to search for either the printed or digitalized book.

The present article deals with the following themes of the prose found in *Ten Years* [...]:

- Coastal sailing on canvas aboard the sailing ship *Terrara* from Sydney to the Macleay River mouth in Trial Bay
- The Macleay River mouth in Trial Bay up to Kempsey township and the Darkwater River tributary up to the Mac-Mahon river-station (sailing and canoeing)
- Sailing on board the *Terrara* bound for Sydney. The Clarence River from the river Harbour of Grafton downstream towards its mouth
- Coastal sailing on steam from Sydney to Brisbane
- Coastal sailing on steam from Brisbane to Port Denison via the mouth of the Rockhampton River
- Coastal sailing on steam from the Herbert River mouth to Sydney via Brisbane

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<sup>6</sup> Note that the English translation of another of Sygurd Wiśniowski's books was welcomed in New Zealand: S. Wiśniowski, *Tikera or Children of the Queen of Oceania*, trans. J. Podstolski, Auckland University Press, Auckland 1972.

<sup>7</sup> D. Collins, *An Account of the Voyage Performed by Captain Flinders and Mr. Bass; By Which the Existence of a Strait Separating van Dieman's [sic] Land from the Continent of New Holland Was Ascertained. As Abstracted from the Journal of Mr. Bass by Lieutenant-Colonel Collins [...]*, [in:] *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales [...] from January 1788 to August 1801*, Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, London 1802.

<sup>8</sup> D. Sprod, ed., *Van Diemen's Land Revealed: Flinders and Bass and Their Circumnavigation of the Island in the Colonial Sloop Norfolk 1798-1799*, Blubber Head Press, Hobart 2009, pp. 71-73.

- A boat rowing to Gould (Goold) Island in Rockingham Bay, Queensland and a 'naval' battle there
- The Endeavour River – a French sailing expedition.

Whenever I deem it appropriate, in the section on each of the themes I supply an explanation on the geographical settings, the translation/paraphrase techniques used and the rationale behind using them. The article is illustrated by maps of the discussed region.

### **System of notation and formatting**

Due to the limited room I use four ways of introducing the text of Sygurd Wiśniowski to the Anglophone reader: comments, summaries, paraphrases, and translations. Throughout the text in English I use a uniform system of notation and the mode of continuous narration. However, for the direct translation and for the original text in Polish I use the formatting with a smaller font and margin indentation.

### **Maps**

Maps used throughout the article are listed at the end of the article. Here I would like to mention that as I searched for the map of Australia from the 1870s I was looking for a contemporary and highly accurate map that was published as closely as possible to the year of the first publication of *Ten Years* [...] in 1873. I found that the map titled *Australien* created by August Petermann, published in 1875 in Gotha, in the scale of 69.16 English Statue Miles or 15.0 German Geographical Miles to one degree of the great circle, and now available online via David Rumsey Map Collection, would be ideal for my purposes.

### **COASTAL SAILING ABOARD THE SAILING SHIP *TERRARA* FROM SYDNEY TO THE MACLEAY RIVER MOUTH IN TRIAL BAY**

Sygurd wrote that he had left Sydney on board the Northbound small coastal schooner *Terrara*.<sup>9</sup> She had been in poor seaworthy condition, with her hull half rotten. She usually sailed along the East Australian coast with corn and wool southwards towards Sydney from the harbours positioned to the North of the New South Wales capital. On her return trip, she usually managed under the ballast, and in addition, on request took passengers on board. During the

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<sup>9</sup> S. Wiśniowski, *Dziesięć lat w Australii*, pp. 56-57.

Northbound voyage with Sygurd on board, the *Terrara* experienced contrary winds, which obliged the captain to tack<sup>10</sup> all the time and at times to sail comparatively close to the shore. For this reason, the voyage, which normally takes 24 hours by steamer, took the *Terrara* nine days.

Sygurd had time to observe in detail some fragments of the coast of New South Wales. He relates his observations to the following effect: the sandstone rocks are steep and sheer. The Pacific swell-generated spray reaches the very tops of the rocks. Here and there, a river mouth or just a bay shows running in between the hills. The white coasts around such a river mouth or bay contrast with the colour of the ocean and the Blue Mountains to the West.

Opuściłem Sydney udając się do rzeki Macleay małym okrętem żaglowym „Terrara,” należącym do klasy zwanej szunery. [sic] Wątła ta i na wpół zbutwiała barka przywoziła zboże i wełnę z nabrzeża północnego do miasta a wracała zwykle próżna, czyli jak to mówią na morzu, z balastem. Przeciwne wiatry zmusiły nas do ciągłego lawirowania a podróż, którą dziś parowcem w 24 godzinach się odbywa, trwała dni dziewięć. Napatrzyłem się na brzegi Australii, po największej części złożone z urwistych skał piaskowych, o które Spokojny ocean bije bezustannie i ciska pianę bałwanów po nad [sic] szczyty skał. Tu i ówdzie odnoga wbiega między wzgórze. Płaskie jej brzegi z białego piasku tworzą kontrast z siną topielą morza i tłem gór Niebieskich na zachodnim widnokręgu.<sup>11</sup>

These mountains appear located far away. In reality, the Blue Mountains are positioned not far from the coasting mariner and the slopes of the ridges always appear greenish.

In some of those river mouths one can see, by means of a glass, a house with a pole and a flag. It is a river pilot station. The river pilot takes care of the navigation at the mouth leading to a wide river. The mouth of the river there is usually full of shallows and rocks. Due to that, no captain will risk entering this mouth without the help of the river pilot, who possesses an adequate local knowledge. Apart from those river pilot stations and the fires of the indigenous people, the voyager watching from the sea would not see any other signs of human habitation on the Australian coast. It is because all white men's townships and settlements are built on the banks of the rivers at some distance from the coast. Finally, the schooner reaches Trial Bay. Into this bay enters the Macleay River. After approximately several hours, the river pilot manages to sail the *Terrara* into the river mouth and further, amongst the shallows and rocks, into the river basin where the water is as clear and smooth as a mirror.

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<sup>10</sup> To tack means to sail towards the point positioned either towards the wind or with the wind and to cross the line of the wind. The vessel usually tacks towards the wind. The vessel may tack sailing with the wind (the so-called broad reach course), when sailing directly with the wind is deemed dangerous. The *Terrara* with Sygurd on board tacked against the wind.

<sup>11</sup> S. Wiśniowski, *Dziesięć lat w Australii*, pp. 56-57.

Wreszcie statek nasz dostał się do zatoki Trial Bay, do której Macleay wpada, a po kilkugodzinnej pracy udało się pilotowi wciągnąć go przez mielizny na rzekę gładką i czystą jak zwierciadło.<sup>12</sup>

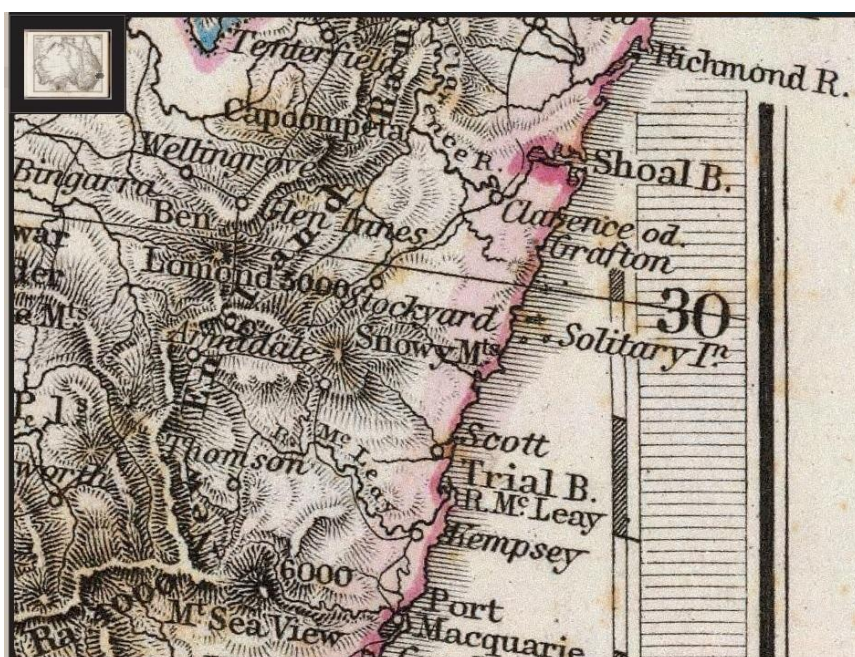


Fig. 1. Macleay River and Clarence River  
(A. Petermann, *Australien*, 1875; fragment with an added inset map).

#### THE MACLEAY RIVER MOUTH IN TRIAL BAY UP TO KEMPSEY TOWNSHIP AND THE DARKWATER RIVER TRIBUTARY UP TO THE MAC-MAHON RIVER-STATION

Sygdur writes that from the navigable basin just after the shallows and rocks at the Macleay River the schooner *Terrara* had the following wind and sailed quickly. The Macleay River, as all East coast rivers in Australia, flows from the highest parts of the Blue Mountains towards the sea cutting the meandering and winding watercourse bed.<sup>13</sup> The current is swift in the upper mountainous parts of the river valley. However, on the coastal plains the river splits into many branches, arms or tributaries.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>13</sup> Strictly writing, not all Eastern Australian rivers behave in this way.

Z wiatrem pomyślnym posuwaliśmy się szybko pod wodę. Rzeka ta, jak wszystkie wschodnie wody australskie, wypływa z najwyższych szczytów gór Niebieskich i dąży krętem korytem ku morzu. Pędzi wartko jak długo z gór spada, na płaszczynach atoli nadmorskich dzieli się na liczne koryta i ramiona [...].<sup>14</sup>

Like on the Thames River in England, here also the river is navigable as far as the tides reach. They reach a dozen or so miles up the river.<sup>15</sup> According to Sygurd, with reference to the tidal effect on the navigable channel, all East coast Australian rivers resemble the Thames River in England.<sup>16</sup>

The banks of the Macleay River and other rivers which have their mouths on the East coast of Australia rise only a dozen or so feet above the surface of the mean water level in the river.<sup>17</sup> The river's banks are built from the alluvial ground like the banks of the Nile River in Egypt. Consequently, the vegetation is dense and luxuriant. In the ancient forest the trees grow out from the Macleay River's flood mud, the branches of the neighbouring trees almost touch each other and the green is so dark as almost black.

Brzegi Macleay i innych rzek wznoszą się zaledwie kilkanaście stop po nad [sic] powierzchnię wody, a utworzone z ziemi napływowej, jak brzegi Nilu, zadziwiają Europejczyka bujną roślinnością. Las przedwieczny, w którym drzewo prawie drzewa dotyka, i zieleń tak ciemna, że aż czarno, wyrastają z rzecznoego namułu.<sup>18</sup>

Further Sygurd writes that huge rubber trees, fig trees, cedar trees and the Australian pine trees have trunks up to eight feet in diameter. The trees give shelter to thousands of colourful parrots and doves. Sometimes on the water's edge one sees an Aborigine moving like a snake between the dense trees. Sometimes one sees a white man who is wearing a brilliant woollen shirt and is clearing a path through the jungle with his hatchet or is cutting a huge tree by means of a long American axe. On the river water's surface there are pink pelicans and black swans. It is a pity that these views are becoming rare in Australia. The profiteers replace the dense forest with sugar cane fields. Once in a while, in order to shade and protect the cattle against the sun, a settler leaves a single tree standing. There are visible many terrible, ugly fences made out of rusted iron wire or splinted wood. Houses made of unpainted planks are standing on poles. There are many noisy sugar cane mills with tall chimneys. The Aborigines had retreated back into the interior because of the lack of game. The civilisation of the white man with all its ugliness destroys all the charm of nature. After a few hours of sailing, the *Terrara* reached open ground newly

<sup>14</sup> S. Wiśniowski, *Dziesięć lat w Australii*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>15</sup> Sygurd does not define the miles.

<sup>16</sup> Sygurd writes West.

<sup>17</sup> Sygurd does not specify whether at high or low water.

<sup>18</sup> S. Wiśniowski, *Dziesięć lat w Australii*, p. 58.

cleared of trees where a small number of houses were standing. One of them was built out of logs and planks. The windows were not made of glass but of strong shutters. This building had a shingled roof. The house stood on stilts or stakes, which were eight feet high.<sup>19</sup>

Near the place where the Macleay River meets its tributary, the Darkwater River, the *Terrara* halted and moored for a short time so as to allow Sygurd to disembark. The *Terrara* had to turn around and to hurry downstream, otherwise the low water at ebb tide would have forced the schooner to stop and wait overnight.



Fig. 2. Macleay River and Darkwater River  
(K.K. Vorbrich, after G. Hurrell et al., *Macleay River Estuary Process Study*, 2009, p. 26b).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

Further on in *Ten Years* [...], Sygurd wrote that the following day he got a rowing boat and in the morning, with his chests, gun, and miscellaneous personal belongings entered the Darkwater River.<sup>20</sup> After six hours of rowing, he reached the house of Mr Mac-Mahon. The house was built out of white-painted timber and roofed with sheet metal. The construction was placed on poles. These rods, supporting the elevated ground floor, resembled security space or precautions taken to ensure against flood and animals, so Sygurd noted while sailing on board the *Terrara* the day before. The clearing stretched for an English mile inland from the river bank near which Mr Mac-Mahon's house stood. Sygurd made himself at home in the new place. However, a terrible draught swept through the area where the dwelling stood till March. A lot of cattle died due to a lack of food and water.

At the end of March, at Mac-Mahon's, they were caught up in a sudden and long-lasting downpour. During one single night, the floodwater in the Macleay River reached a historically high level. In response, the Darkwater River broke its banks. As mentioned above, the ground floor of Mac-Mahon's house rested on poles. Despite that, the flood had covered the storey with several feet of water. The household, including Sygurd, boarded rowing boats and skiffs and moored them with ropes fastened to the largest trees. In the meantime, the floodwater level approached the attic. On the floor of this loft, there had been previously placed the most precious objects and personal belongings. On board boats, the members of Mac-Mahon's household spent two nights and one whole day.

Z końcem marca zaczęły się ogromne ulewy, a rzeka Macleay wezbrała tak wysoko, że najstarsi ludzie nie pamiętali takiej powodzi. W ciągu jednej nocy woda na kilka stóp wysoko nappełniła mieszkanie nasze. Obawiając się ażeby pale nie usunęły się w rozmokłej ziemi i dom wraz z nami [sic] nie runął, wsiedliśmy w czółna, w które każdy fermer [sic] jest zaopatrzony, i przywiązawszy je do drzew olbrzymich, spędziliśmy w nich dwie noce i dzień jeden.<sup>21</sup>

In their neighbourhood, nine people drowned because they had no boats. The inundation of the land was so extensive that up to the horizon Sygurd saw only water. As the best swimmer, Sygurd swam the crawl several times to the house so as to salvage some wet food. He could not use either paddle boat or row boat to salvage the most precious items and other things from the house, however, because small paddles and row crafts had been kept moored to the largest trees in order to avoid being taken away by the current.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 66. I have found out that "In 1870 the township of Darkwater became known as Gladstone and Darkwater Creek became known as Belmore River" (*Gladstone: Kempsey Shire Heritage*, "Kempsey Shire Council", [www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/heritage/Gladstone.html](http://www.kempsey.nsw.gov.au/heritage/Gladstone.html)).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

The members of Mac-Mahon's household had also been afraid that drifting tree trunks would collide with any free-gliding paddle or row boats. Anyway, elsewhere an extremely strong ebbing current began to cause sea-going ships, anchored up the river, to drift. This stream eventually carried the ships with their anchors cast towards the shallows and rocks at the Macleay River mouth and further out to sea. The strength of the ebbing current was so enormous that some of the drifting ships, which were drifting with their anchors cast, lost manoeuvrability and wrecked on the rocks at the mouth of the river. When the floodwater level subsided, the household returned to a much tilted house full of wild animals, mud and debris. Therefore, ridding the house of all sorts of pollution left from the floodwater proved to be a tedious and lengthy task.

Some time later, Sygurd took a rowing boat and rowed to the Macleay River's township of Kempsey. He described it as a township typical for its kind and purpose in this part of Australia. The central point of this river port was a communal red-brick building. In addition, two huge warehouses provided the entire district with "all the articles of the civilised world" such as flour, wine, silk, dresses, shoes, needles, anchors, etc. There were also the houses of a shoemaker, a smith, a physician, etc. The township had also two wooden hotels and the barracks of the military police. In the latter only two policemen had been quartered.<sup>22</sup> Sygurd also travelled up the river from Kempsey on horseback, following a footpath by the Macleay River's bank. The footpath was as a rule trailing the river's direction or course and was more or less straight. Still, the river did meander in places. As a result, Sygurd had to swim across the river:

Ścieżka ta szła prosto, a rzeka płynęła kręto, kilkanaście więc razy przecinały się z sobą, i musiałem brnąć przez wodę. W jednym [sic] miejscu było tak głęboko, że musiałem rzekę przepłynąć.<sup>23</sup>

On his way along the Macleay River, Sygurd rarely came across cedar trees. Colonists had thinned the cedars out; these trees had used to be very abundant, including the areas close to the banks of the navigable Australian rivers. Nowadays [1865] the woodcutters had to search for cedars hard and to wait for a big flood to float the cedar wood along lesser streams, the tributaries of the main navigable river. However, according to Sygurd, there were still huge cedars rising on the banks of the navigable Australian rivers in some secluded areas. Sygurd reports a case when a giant cedar tree, which had been growing relatively close to the riverbank, was cut down. Subsequently the wood was floated and rafted, and then loaded to full capacity on board the ship with a

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 80-81.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

displacement of 30 barrels (660 quintals).<sup>24</sup> Sygurd's story is an important contribution to the history of deforestation in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Australia.

SAILING ON BOARD THE *TERRARA* BOUND FOR SYDNEY. THE CLARENCE RIVER FROM THE RIVER HARBOUR OF GRAFTON DOWNSTREAM TOWARDS ITS MOUTH

Sygurd wrote that the river port of Grafton lies 20 miles from the sea on the banks of the "huge" Clarence River, which at the level of the town is a quarter of a mile wide.<sup>25</sup> According to Sygurd, it is the largest river in the area, which is adjoining to the East coast of Australia. The fairwater is navigable for large steamers up to thirty geographic miles upriver.<sup>26</sup>

Grafton leży o 20 mil od morza nad ogromną rzeką Clarence, największą z rzek wschodniej Australii [sic]. Parowce wielkie mogą się dostać jej wodami o trzydzieści mil geograficznych w głąb kraju.<sup>27</sup> Na przestrzeni od Grafton aż do morza ma ta rzeka ćwierć mili szerokości [...].<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 90. According to *PWN – Oxford Wielki Słownik Polsko-Angielski* (Great Polish-English Dictionary), ed. J. Linde-Usiekniewicz, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2004, quintal is a unit of weight equal to 100 kilograms, in this case it refers to Polish centnar/cetnar.

<sup>25</sup> Sygurd does not define the unit of mile here.

<sup>26</sup> Spelling 'farwater' is used by modern Polish sailors and means 'tor wodny', 'szlak żeglowny'. Fairwater is an international English spelling used by sailors worldwide (origin – Netherlands) and means 'fairway'; the modern term used also by laymen is 'shipping line'.

<sup>27</sup> Here S. Wiśniowski is not precise enough because he does not define the unit of the geographical mile that he uses. Other contemporary sources might be more precise. For example the map "Australien" (1875) made by A. Petermann, publisher J. Perthes, Gotha, uses "Deutsche Geogr. Meilen" and defines them: 15=1°. According to the present definition, the geographical mile is a unit of length determined by 1 minute of arc along the Earth's equator. For the 1924 International Spheroid this equals 1855.4 metres.

<sup>28</sup> S. Wiśniowski, *Dziesięć lat w Australii*, p. 99.

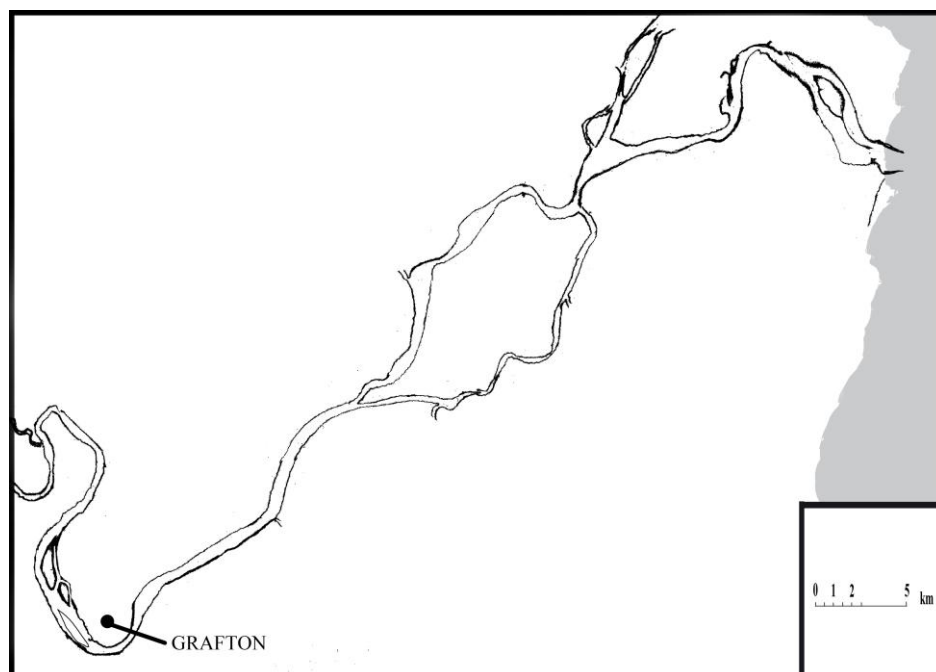


Fig. 3. Clarence River and Grafton  
(K.K. Vorbrich, after Roads and Maritime Services, *Clarence River – Grafton to Yamba Area*, 2011).

In Grafton, Sygurd boarded the *Terrara* bound for Sydney. While sailing on board the *Terrara* along the Clarence River Sygurd observed the surroundings. He noted that about half-way up the river he had come by substantial, well-populated, and well-cultivated islands. The soil on the banks of the Clarence River and its islands had the same good quality as that found on the banks of the Macleay River. However, due to the excellent river communication and transportation, the population density nearby the Clarence River was higher than that found by the Macleay River.

The only crop cultivated close to the Clarence River was sugar cane. The value of the land suitable for the cultivation of sugar cane had risen substantially, and many farmers became wealthy as a result.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

## COASTAL SAILING UNDER STEAM FROM BRISBANE TO PORT DENISON VIA THE MOUTH OF THE ROCKHAMPTON RIVER

From Grafton Sygurd sailed on board the *Terrara* to Sydney and then from Sydney to Fiji and then back to Sydney. While in that town, Sygurd decided to try his luck in the gold mines in North Queensland. He sailed there via Brisbane.<sup>30</sup> The number of the gold miners eager to sail towards the North from Brisbane had been so great that all places on board the mail-steamers were sold off. Sygurd and the other members of his six-men association had to sail on board a half rotten coastal steamer of dubious seaworthiness (“[...] na starym na wpeł zbutwiałym parowcu”<sup>31</sup>). In addition, they had to sail under the command of a captain whom they did not like. The only detail from this voyage which Sygurd described was a brawl amounting to a mutiny at the mouth of the Rockhampton River, positioned halfway from Brisbane to Port Denison. Then the captain first threw Alf, a member of Sygurd’s ‘association’ into the crocodile-infested water. Then another member of the ‘association,’ called Wright, did the same to the captain. Sygurd dedicated three pages to describing this accident. The cause of the ‘dispute with the captain’ had been the manner in which Alf should pay the fare due to the voyage.

At Port Denison, the captain brought an accusation against Wright. One can assume that the captain reasoned that the gold miners had extended the lawlessness to the deck of the ship. It had been a breach of the basic rules of conduct at sea. Sygurd wrote that any passenger who had pushed a captain overboard would have been sentenced in Melbourne to several years of imprisonment. However, at Port Denison several hundred gold miners testified against the two policemen and the captain of the steamer. The gold miners forced the captain to forget the incident.

Oczywiście, że za przybyciem do Port Denison, [kapitan] oskarżył nas o bunt. Gdyby taką skargę zaniósł był w Sydney lub w Melbourne, być może, że kilku latami więzienia ukaranoby [sic] nas za porwanie się na świętą osobę kapitana. Tu atoli gdzie władza przeciw kilkuset solidarnym i butnym ludziom mogła zaledwie dwóch żandarmów wystawić, poradził mu sędzia aby zaniechał skargi i wybaczył czyn, własną spowodowany nieroztropnością.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 305.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 327.

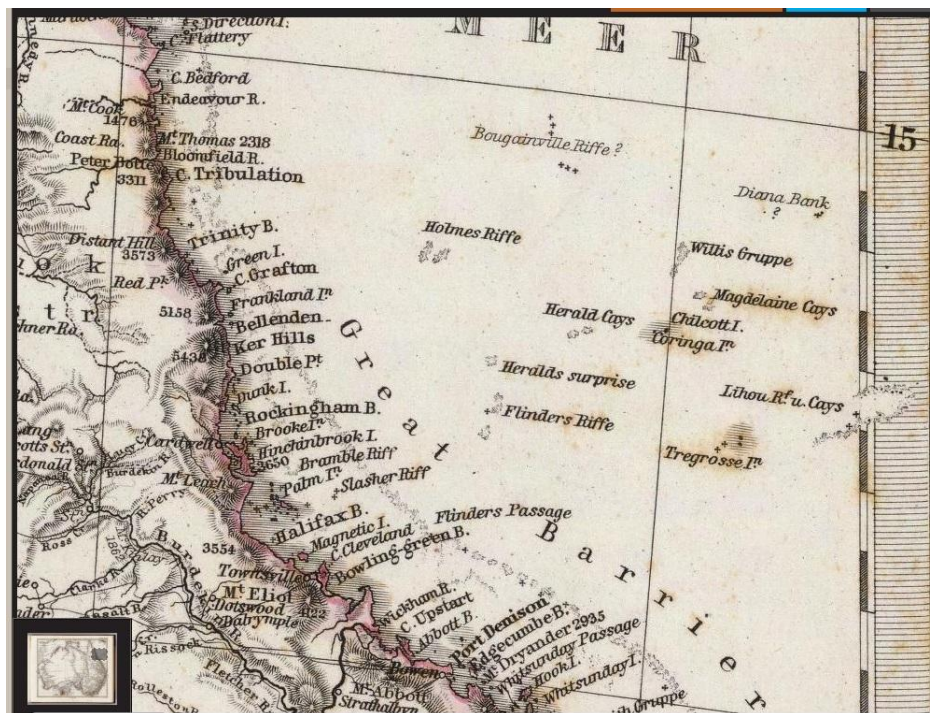


Fig. 4. Port Denison to Endeavour River via Rockingham Bay  
(A. Petermann, *Australien*, 1875; fragment with an added inset map).

## COASTAL SAILING UNDER STEAM FROM THE HERBERT RIVER MOUTH TO SYDNEY VIA BRISBANE

Eventually Sygurd felt sick. In order to recuperate he decided to return to Europe for a while. He at first sailed to Sydney via the Herbert River mouth:

Lecz choroba moja, niegwałtowna już wprawdzie ale chroniczna, trawiąca powoli siły, kazała mi uciekać choćby dla odpoczynku do zimnych klimatów. Rozpocząłem ucieczkę jadąc do Herbertu.<sup>33</sup>

For Sygurd the coastal steam sailing towards the North with the gold miners in 1869 had a completely different character and aspect than the steam coasting voyage towards the South in 1871. During the latter voyage, Sygurd had the

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 449.

leisure time, due to the leisurely character of this shipping line service trip, to note down, and later present in *Ten Years* [...], the facts relating to Queensland farming, industry, and culture.<sup>34</sup> It was even more so because the disease that caused Wiśniowski's acute fever apparently left Sygurd at the moment he stepped on board a steamer in the Herbert River mouth:

Febra porzuciła mnie od chwili gdy wstąpiłem na pokład parowca w Herbert i wciągnąłem w piersi świeżego powietrza morskiego, O, drogie morze, wielokrotnie mój lekarzu, jakże mi jesteś miłe.<sup>35</sup>

Townsville was the first harbour en route. There the steamer stopped for half a day. In Townsville, Sygurd said goodbye to two important people during his time in Queensland. The first was Mr MacCrossan, who had helped Wiśniowski to launch his journalistic career in the "Ravenswood Miner." The second was Mr Stuart, with whom Sygurd had stayed on numerous occasions:

Parowiec stanął w „Cleveland Bay” (Townsville) na pół dnia. Tu pożegnałem Stuarta, owego bogatego owczarza, i Mac Crossana, mego towarzysza z redakcji *Górnika* Ravenswoodu.<sup>36</sup>

Interestingly, Sygurd dedicates three pages in *Ten Years* [...] to the "fascinating achievements" of Australian sheep farming.<sup>37</sup> At one place the author describes how a grazing field had been surrounded with 42 miles of fence which had cost approximately one million zlotys.<sup>38</sup> What is more, during the sheep shearing peak season, which lasted ten weeks, 52 skilled shearers sheared approximately 80,000 sheep. An experienced shearer was capable of shearing up to 120 sheep an hour. In one working day at one particular building the shearers were capable of shearing 3000 sheep.<sup>39</sup>

In Townsville many passengers boarded the ship bound for various ports located to the South of this town. Sygurd wrote that on board the coastal steamer, which sailed from the Herbert River mouth via Townsville to Brisbane, passengers of the opposite sex often became intimate. The next port of call was positioned at the Mackay River (the present-day Mackay town on the Pioneer River).<sup>40</sup> Located there were numerous sugar cane mills producing raw or white sugar. Sygurd describes in more detail one of the sugar cane mills

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 453-456.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 467.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 453-457.

<sup>38</sup> Sygurd does not specify the unit of the mile in this sentence. Throughout this article only the original currency given by Sygurd is cited.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. S. Wiśniowski, *Dziesięć lat w Australii*, pp. 454-456.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 461.

owned by a certain Mr Hewitt. His initial capital had been 20 thousand pounds sterling. Every year the capital of Mr Hewitt doubled.<sup>41</sup> The following port was Rockhampton, famous for its copper mines.<sup>42</sup> Sygurd wrote:

Kopalnie miedzi o 50 mil geograficznych od tego portu odległe należą do najobfitszych w Australii.

The copper mines positioned at a distance of up to 50 geographical miles from this harbour belong to the most abundant in Australia.<sup>43</sup>

There are a lot of plates or sheets of copper lying on the quaysides and waiting for shipment. The copper is shipped to England via Sydney. The population of Rockhampton totals approximately 5000 people. The inhabitants are rich enough to take an interest in sport and culture. Sygurd went to horse races in the park and to the local theatre.

In the disembarking port of Brisbane, Sygurd initially considered boarding the *Young Australia*, which was ready to sail directly to London. Instead, he decided to voyage to Sydney, where he expected to have a broader choice of London-bound ships to consider. The voyage on board another steamer from Brisbane to Sydney took Sygurd nearly 48 hours.<sup>44</sup>

W Brisbanie leżał w porcie okręt „Young-Australian” (Młody Australczyk), mający wkrótce odpłynąć do Anglii [...].<sup>45</sup> [...] Postanowiliśmy więc wrócić na okręt, który szedł wprost do Londynu, lecz odeszła nas znowuż chętka gdyżśmy zobaczyli nieprzyjemną twarz kapitana „Australiana”.<sup>46</sup> [...] [W] *Gazecie Ilustrowanej londyńskiej* [...]: „Doszły nas wieści, iż okręt „Young Australian” płynący z Brisbane do Londynu rozbił się [...]” W 48 godzin po opuszczeniu Brisbane zapuściliśmy kotwicę w przystani Sidneju.<sup>47</sup>

Wiśniowski uses in this short fragment two similar names of ships, however, concerning two diametrically different ships. To my mind this usage is metaphorical and the aim of Wiśniowski is to warn the reader: “I am writing not about one real ship but about maybe several real ships which differ in

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 461-462.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 461. Here Wiśniowski does not define the unit of the geographical mile.

<sup>44</sup> Sygurd Wiśniowski narrowly missed the wrecking. The *Young Australia*, which he initially considered boarding, was wrecked on this voyage. Cf. *Wreck of the ship Young Australia*, “Clarence and Richmond Examiner and New England Advertiser”, Grafton, NSW, 4 June 1872, p. 2. Cf. also: “The ‘Young Australia’ wrecked on Moreton Island, June 1, 1872”, J. H. Heaton, *Australian Dictionary of Dates* [...], Sydney 1879, p. 314.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. S. Wiśniowski, *Dziesięć lat w Australii*, p. 467.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 468.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 469.

names, hardware, the space-time and the manner of wrecking". The same mode of artistic expression was used by Wiśniowski in *Lights* [...], when he moved real mountains several hundreds of kilometres and first endowed the captain with special experience and then ordered the same captain to make an elementary and glaring mistake. There is one candidate for the wreck of the real ship the *Young Australia*, wrecked in 1872 and already mentioned in a footnote above. According to my research there are at least two candidates for the wrecks of the *Young Australian*. One ship was wrecked in 1877,<sup>48</sup> but this would be too late for *Ten Years* [...], published in 1873. The second ship was wrecked in 1872 in the Roper River flowing to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Roper River would be an ideal candidate for the metaphor by Wiśniowski, who no doubt would like to recollect his experiences with the region the Gulf of Carpentaria mentioned in elsewhere in *Ten Years* [...]. The wrecking of the *Young Australian* on the Roper River was widely known and probably did not go unnoticed by Wiśniowski.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "Schooner 'Young Australian', trading between Brisbane and Adelaide, wrecked at Curdie's Inlet, near Warrnambool, May 28, 1877", J. H. Heaton, *Australian Dictionary of Dates* [...], Sydney 1879, p. 315.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. S. A. Ashford, *The wreck of the Young Australian, Roper River: Endurance, courage and shipwreck in the Roper River 1871-1872*, Northern Territory, Office of Environment and Heritage, Darwin 2004.

Cf. also:

"During [...] 1870 to 1889 coastal shipping was relied upon to supply [...] supplies for the overland telegraph. [...] The wreckage of the steamship 'Young Australian' which run aground and sank in the Roper River in 1872 bears witness to this period of development", J. J. Faulks, *Roper River Catchment: An Assessment of the Physical and Ecological Condition of the Roper River and Its Major Tributaries*, Top End Waterways Project, Department of Lands, Planning and Environment, Katherine, NT 2001, p. 9.

Cf. also citations from K. Magee, *Captain Sweet's Colonial Imagination: The Ideals of Modernity in South Australian Views Photography 1866-1886*, unpublished PhD dissertation, The University of Adelaide, 2014:

1) "[...] Sweet became the uncelebrated pilot of the Roper River [...]" (p. 171);

2) "At 8am on Sunday 11 February [1872], Sweet photographed the Roper River fleet (Plates 122 and 123): the *Bengal* on the right and the massive *Omeo* on the left, with the *Young Australian* in front of her"; Plate 123 [caption] "The *Omeo*, the *Young Australian* and the *Bengal* at Roper River. 11 February 1872, Roper River, NT"; "[...] hundreds of miles from a settlement, the Roper Depot had all the appearances of a major port [...]" (p. 180).

3) "[...] the Overland Telegraph Line between Adelaide and Darwin was completed 22 August 1872 [...] Todd [astronomer, head of the electric telegraph department] received the BMG from Queen Victoria [...] celebrated with simultaneous banquets in Sydney, Adelaide and London" (p. 185).

Cf. also citations from A. Thomson, *The Singing Line: Tracking the Australian Adventures of My Intrepid Victorian Ancestors*, Anchor Books, New York 2000:

1) "A steam-tug the *Young Australian* would assist the *Omeo* up the Roper" (p. 166);

2) "The boat [the *Omeo*] had now been struck on Maria Island, just off the coast, for several days, with no sign of the *Young Australian* that could have towed it upstream" (p. 190);

3) "[...] on the river. Peterson's cutter, the *Larrakeeyah*, the sailing boat, the *Bengal*, Todd's barque the *Omeo*, and the *Young Australian* paddleboat" (p. 191);

4) "Todd mentions the disaster in his 1884 report on the overland line. When he had evacuated in 1872, he'd left a group of mechanics and stockmen on the Roper to wait with the *Young Australian* for the iron poles. Within weeks they'd crushed her" (p. 200).

## THE PARAPHRASE OF THE STORY ABOUT THE 'NAVAL' BATTLE BY GOULD ISLAND

By way of introduction let me express the following remarks about the toponyms. In the case of Rockingham Bay, Queensland, Sygurd Wiśniowski writes only the name of the town ('miasto' in Polish) – Rockingham.<sup>50</sup> When it comes to Gould Island, Wiśniowski writes "Guld" without "o",<sup>51</sup> whereas some authors write "Goold Island".

I should also explain why I am using the term 'Aborigines', instead of the more politically correct terms 'indigenous Australians' or 'indigenous people'. My intention is to preserve the character of the Polish original, where Wiśniowski writes "blacks": "zginęli z rąk czarnych".<sup>52</sup>

The rowing boat expedition of Sygurd had the following motive and course of events.

Apparently at Rockingham, at Rockingham Bay, Queensland, there lived an emigrant entrepreneur from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth under occupation. He supplied food to the gold mines. In order to do so, he employed local fishermen. Two of them had been killed by the Aborigines on or near Gould Island.<sup>53</sup> Sygurd took part in an expedition with two-rowing-boats, equipped by the citizens of Rockingham Bay [or of the township Rockingham] in order to punish the Aborigines at Gould Island. Thanks to this expedition, the reader learns from Sygurd that the Gould Island's Aborigines used or inhabited the seemingly inaccessible caves in the rocky parts of the island. They employed stone hatchets in order to make kayaks out of the bark. Sygurd took part in a 'naval' battle between the rowing boats of the white settlers and the Aboriginal kayaks. Apparently, Aborigines lost the engagement. All the male Aborigines were slaughtered, but the women and children were spared.

Musiłem czekać jakiś czas na parowiec pocztowy, przybywający z Sydney do Rockingham raz na miesiąc. [...] W mieście tem [sic] żył żydek [sic] polski lecz nie umiejący już i słowa po polsku. Spekulant wielki, najmował on kilku rybaków. Ryby łwione przez nich solił, suszył i wysyłał na kopalnię złota, gdzie dobrze mu za nie płacono. Dwaj jego rybacy udali się pewnego dnia na wyspę Guld [sic], o której już wspomniałem, a gdy po kilku dniach nie wrócili, grono ochotników i sierżant Johnson wybrali się czółnem na wyspę w celu odszukania zaginionych. Obaj biedacy zginęli z rak czarnych [...] Murzyni poukrywali się w niedostępnych jaskiniach [...]. [R]ąbanie kamiennymi toporkami ostrzegło nas, iż czarni robili czółna z kory. [...] Dogoniliśmy czółenka a wkrótce zabójcy bezbronnych rybaków zginęli w głębi morza...<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> S. Wiśniowski, *Dziesięć lat w Australii*, p. 445.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 445-446.

## THE ENDEAVOUR RIVER – A FRENCH SAILING EXPEDITION FROM THE MOUTH TO THE SOURCE

In the fragment of *Ten Years* [...] dedicated to his overland journey to Rockingham Bay Sygurd Wiśniowski showed his fixation with gold and his historical interests reaching as far back in time as the First Voyage of Cook.

[...] trzech Francuzów z małym okrętem szukało złota nad rzeką Endeavour, leżącą o sto mil angielskich on północ od Rockingham. W rzece tej niegdyś naprawił kapitan Cook okręt swój zwany Endeavour (czytaj Endewur), uszkodzony na skałach w cieśninie Torres Strait leżącej pomiędzy Australią i Nową Gwineą. On to ją opisał, jako rzekę piękną, w której aligatorów co nie miara. Niewielu później zwiedziło ją Europejczyków, lecz ci, którzy zapuścili się ku jej źródłom, wychwalali żyzność napływowej ziemi nad jej brzegami, i opisywali pokłady geologiczne, obiecujące dużo złota w okolicznych wzgórzach. Opisy te spowodowały wyprawę Francuzów [...], tak bowiem zbudowali swój okręcik, aby po płytkich mógł żaglować wodach.

[...] three Frenchmen with a small ship were looking for gold on the banks of the Endeavour River. This river is positioned approximately a hundred English miles to the North from Rockingham. On this river Captain Cook repaired some time ago his ship the *Endeavour*. She had been previously damaged on the rocks in the Torres Strait between Australia and New Guinea.<sup>55</sup> Cook wrote that the [Endeavour] river is especially beautiful. It is full of crocodiles, however. Since Cook, not many Europeans have visited this river. However, those who made it through to the source praised the fertile soil of the river's banks and mentioned the geological evidence, which indicates that the hills nearby are potentially gold-bearing. The latter description induced the three Frenchmen to build [...] their small ship capable of sailing on shallow waters.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Here Sygurd made a mistake; in fact Cook stranded his ship on the present-day Great Barrier Reef at the place close to the mouth of the present-day Endeavour River, where he subsequently landed the *Endeavour* for repairs.

<sup>56</sup> S. Wiśniowski, *Dziesięć lat w Australii*, pp. 426-427.

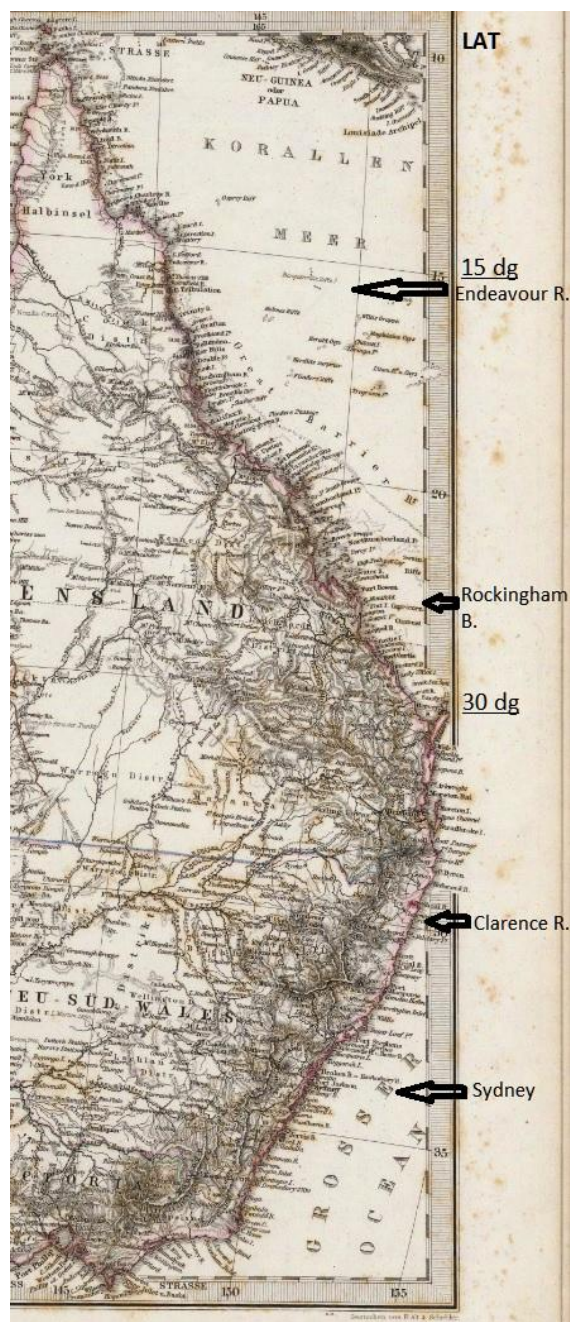


Fig. 5. Australia's East coast, including areas of Figures 1 to 4 (A. Petermann, *Australien*, 1875; fragment with additions).

## CONCLUSION

The chosen fragments of the book *Ten Years* [...] presented above show that Sygurd Wiśniowski was capable of portraying the ocean and sea coasts, as well as river banks, in the greatest detail, showing an expertise typical of somebody with an intimate knowledge of the ocean rim and the banks of non-tidal and tidal rivers, their tides and passing fancies resulting in both draughts and floods, their estuaries placid at leisurely times yet sometimes showing tremendous destructive force. Sygurd portrays all this in everyday language; he does not use many metaphors or other figures of speech. The nature of his prose is probably characteristic for an author who did not spend his life on studying books and writing and publishing them, but who, on the contrary, lived in an atmosphere of a physical struggle for survival. Therefore, for me it has been relatively easy to present the character of this language in English, even in the maritime version of it. When Sygurd Wiśniowski depicts the coast of the ocean or banks of a river, he does so without often resorting to means of artistic expression such as literary allusion or allegory. However, the reader is immediately capable of capturing his artistic message and its enlightening value.

In short, the fragments paraphrased and translated herein have demonstrated that despite writing in Polish and hailing from a land without longstanding maritime traditions, Wiśniowski's prose in *Dziesięć lat w Australii* (Ten Years in Australia) consistently exhibits a clear, easy and knowledgeable command of maritime language.

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