

Databases of the people aboard the VOC ships Batavia (1629) & Zeewijk (1727)-An analysis of the potential for finding the Dutch castaways' human remains in.

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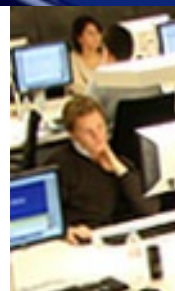


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Abstract: General Introduction The reefs surrounding the Houtman Abrolhos in Western Australia were a notorious hazard to shipping in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (fig. 1). The Dutch East India Company (VOC) made sure to mark this island group on its maps and skippers had strict instructions to avoid coming into contact with these reefs. Even so, the VOC is known to have lost two ships here, Batavia and Zeewijk. Some of the castaways from both of these shipwrecks, although faced by many difficult challenges, managed to reach Batavia, the headquarters of the VOC in the Indies. Their journals and stories have survived in archives. Those who died or were murdered in the Houtman Abrolhos may have left their mark in other ways. Western Australia now possibly possesses a large number of Dutch human remains from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This paper is presented in two sections; the first concerns Batavia and the second focuses on Zeewijk. Each of these sections can be read independently. When Batavia wrecked on Morning Reef on 4 June 1629, its castaways soon spread out over the islands of the Wallabi Group. Depending on how many of the 200 deceased were buried, the islands may have preserved a significant number of human remains from the Batavia castaways. So far, only ten of these have been discovered and tentatively identified. This paper provides an estimate of how many graves may be found, where they could be and who they might belong to. Furthermore, it also lists those people who survived and whose human remains definitely will not be found. Finally, all of this information has been compiled into three databases - of all the murdered individuals (Appendix D) of all who died in Australian territory (Appendix III)


named individuals (appendix I), or all who died in Australian territory (appendix II) and of all named individuals involved in the Batavia tragedy (Appendix III) - excerpts of which are included as appendixes. The information provided for each individual may be useful in identifying the human remains. In 1727, Zeewijk was wrecked on Half-Moon Reef in the Pelsaert Group. A large number of survivors would eventually build a seagoing vessel and successfully reach Batavia, but many died before the rescue. These castaways have also left their marks in the Houtman Abrolhos with camp sites and burial sites. This part of the project began with the construction of a database of all men who were (meant to be) on board Zeewijk and their fates (Appendix IV). As a result it has been possible to fill a number of gaps and put names to a number of deaths that until now had been anonymous. The paper focuses specifically on assessing how many of the Zeewijk's castaways may have been buried in the Houtman Abrolhos on Gun Island and on identifying these victims. In addition, it provides accurate crew lists for each section of the voyage and establishes a framework for further research into the individuals who lived aboard Zeewijk. Significant work has already been undertaken into researching both Batavia and Zeewijk: their wreck sites, land sites and the human remains of the castaways. Henrietta Drake-Brockman's *Voyage to Disaster* provided the first English translation of the journal of the Batavia's journey and her analysis of this journal led to the discovery of the wreck site. The journals have been researched and translated again by Marit van Huystee. Analyses of the victims, including forensic investigations, have been made by Bernadine Hunneybun, Juliette Pasveer, Daniel Franklin, Alistair Paterson, Len Freedman and others. Finally, the staff of the Western Australian Museum has compiled a large number of reports based on their investigations of Batavia and the associated sites over the years. Zeewijk has also been the focus of in depth research by the Western Australian Museum, most notably by Catharina Ingelman-Sundberg. Translations of (segments of) the Zeewijk journals and documents have been made by Willem Timmers, Louis Zuiderbaan and Cornelis de Heer. Some of these projects have focused on the castaways and victims, creating lists or databases. However, all of these databases and lists were made using translations or transcripts as their sources. As such, errors (often based on the difficulty of reading the original handwriting or because of the lack of a uniform spelling) have crept in which have been taken over from list to list. Additionally, information that was - accidentally - omitted from these translations and transcripts is equally absent from these lists. To avoid falling into the same pitfalls, this work and the databases (which can be found in the appendixes) are based on the original documents. Studying the documents on microfilm or in high resolution photographs, the author was able to find new information, sort out mistakes and fill in a number of gaps.

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