



And Their Ghosts May Be Heard

Up to 270 Dutch sailors and passengers were marooned as a result of shipwrecks and deliberate abandonment on the coast of WA during the 1600s and early 1700s. There has been considerable interest over many years regarding the possibility that they interacted with local Aboriginal people and became integrated into their societies.

And Their Ghosts May Be Heard explores the fate of these mariners, firstly by examining the circumstances that lead to their marooning and the archaeological evidence pointing to their presence on Australian soil.

And Their Ghosts May Be Heard then puts forward the case that a proportion of the people stranded on the shores of Western Australia survived by identifying indications of their presences, such as the anomalous presence of a species of yam, and discerning their impacts on Aboriginal groups in various areas. These impacts included the atypical physical appearance of some of the Aboriginal people in areas where the lost mariners were known to have been, myths and legends, unusual features in local social organisation, linguistic influences pointing to a foreign infusion and anomalous technological innovations.

It is in fact argued that in one region in particular, the Victoria District centred on Geraldton, that these intruders triggered an agricultural revolution in which an introduced yam plant was being planted and harvested on a large scale, especially in the Hutt River area. By time British explorers entered this district, yam fields square kilometres in extent were observed, and the Nhanda and Amangu people were reported to be living in habitations large enough for 10-12 people, and forming large, permanent, villages.

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