

Basic Detail Report



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Title

Eight Real Mexico coin from the wreck site of the VERGULDE DRAECK

Date

c 1650

Medium

Silver

Dimensions

Overall: 37 x 36 x 3 mm, 24 g

Name

Coin

History

During the 1600s the Dutch East India Company or Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) was a rapidly expanding merchant organisation. The VOC established a trade network throughout Asia by transporting rare spices, exotic textiles and seeking new markets. Asian

goods - especially spices and Chinese ceramics- were highly sought after in Europe, allowing the VOC to establish a profitable enterprise between Europe and the East Indies. The high number of ships travelling between Europe and Batavia, now Jakarta, saw them navigate the waters off the north west coast of Australia. A number of Dutch ships are known to have wrecked along this area leaving evidence of their passing in the form of wreckage coins and pottery. Dutch maps at this time also began to portray the coastline of Australia (New Holland), which would be a great benefit for later explorers. The VOC ship VERGULDE DRAECK was under the command of Pieter Albertszoon on the 28th of April 1656, when it hit a reef off the coast of Western Australia, between the present day towns of Seabird and Ledge Point. It was carrying 193 crew and passengers, of whom only 75 survived the initial event. The ship was also transporting a cargo of trade goods and silver coins for Batavia worth 185,000 guilders. After the wreck a crew of seven men set out for Batavia while 68 remained on the Australian mainland. The party arrived safely in Batavia and numerous search expeditions were sent out to find any survivors. These expeditions all encountered various difficulties themselves and eventually in 1658 the possibility of any future searches was ruled out by the VOC. The eight reales coin originated in the Spanish colonies of South America during the sixteenth century. In an effort to export the silver of the New World back to Spain quickly, the colonial mints produced irregular coinage called cobs. These were made from a bar of silver cut into pieces of the appropriate weight and stamped with official insignia. This production method

resulted in cobs of various sizes, shapes and with inconsistent impressions. Once in Spain, some cobs were melted down to produce other silver items, however many found their way into circulation and were commonly used in trade. It was not uncommon for cobs to be clipped, reducing the weight and value of the piece. The crude production of these coins meant that such practices were hard to stop.