

# Royal Zeeland Scientific Society

## Abstract

Founded in 1796, the Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen (Royal Zeeland Society of Sciences) aims to provide a platform for research on the province of Zeeland and for researchers from Zeeland. In earlier years in particular, scientists and other high-ranking individuals from Zeeland donated large collections to the society.

## History of the society

The Zeeland Society of Sciences was founded in 1769 by the city of Vlissingen to promote science in the region. The regional government in Zeeland at the time (the States of Zeeland – the Dutch Republic was then made up of seven united regional governments) welcomed this initiative, but wanted to give it a regional character, following the example of the Hollandse Maatschappij van Wetenschappen (Dutch Society of Sciences), which had been founded in 1752. These eighteenth-century scientific societies should be placed in the tradition of the Enlightenment, in which science aimed to provide more insight into God and his creation. In order to record its research in publications, the Zeeland Society published a series of [Treatises](#). In conjunction with the knowledge gained and recorded in these writings, all kinds of object collections found their way to Zeeland: plants, shells, utensils, but also coins and medals, books and instruments.

In the beginning, the Zeeland Society had two branches, one in Vlissingen and one in Middelburg. In 1801, it was decided to transfer all of the society's possessions to Middelburg. Here, the collection was exhibited in the newly established Museum Medioburgense, a precursor to the current Zeeland Museum. Under the influence of the French period in the Netherlands (1794-1814), the objective of the Zeeland Society changed, with more emphasis being placed on collecting historical objects, such as old manuscripts, coin discoveries and objects belonging to important people.

Around the beginning of the twentieth century, the management policy of the museum in Middelburg changed, which led to various collections being loaned to other institutions. For example, the book and manuscript collection and the printed maps went to the Provincial Library of Zeeland and the drawn maps to the Dutch National Archives in The Hague. During the bombing of 17 May 1940, a large part of the society's collection in the Provincial Library was lost. The collection of the Zeeland Society of Sciences can still be found in various places: paintings and historical objects can be found at the [Zeeland Museum](#) and the [Zeeland Maritiem muZEEum](#); maps, drawings and prints are held at the [Zeeuws Archief](#); books and manuscripts can be found at the [Zeeuwse Bibliotheek](#) and fossils, shells and minerals, some of which originate from overseas colonies, have been loaned to the Naturalis Biodiversity Centre. The ethnographic objects were on loan to the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (now the [Wereldmuseum Leiden](<https://app.colonialcollections.nl/en/research-aids/https%3A%2F%2Fn2t%252Enet%2Fark%3A%2F27023%2F77c1a0cf982b33b9e88073c4a70404>)) but in 2007 they were transferred to the Zeeuws Museum. Most of the archaeological objects are held by the Zeeland Cultural Heritage Foundation.

[image] *Facade of the Sint Pieter House in Middelburg, where the Royal Zeeland Society of Sciences is located.* ([C.Hoogendijk/The Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands](#))

## Provenance research

The entire collection of the Zeeland Society of Sciences is available online via the society's [collection website](#). The collection website provides extensive information about the collections of the Zeeland Society and allows users to access the collection in various ways. For example, there is a [world map](#) that clearly shows the areas from which different objects and collection items originate. In addition, the collection has been divided into various [sub-collections](#). For example, there is a sub-collection of [ethnographic objects](#) and the collection of [C.J.M. Nagtglas](#) (who collected many objects on the former African Gold Coast) is indexed separately. For each sub-collection, detailed information is provided about the origin of the collection and how it ended up in the Zeeuws Genootschap collection. In addition, there are also various [files](#) and [videos](#) containing more information about the collection.

The archives of the Zeeland Scientific Society are managed by the regional [Zeeland Archives](#). The complete archive up to 1969 is available digitally and can therefore no longer be viewed physically; the more recent archive is managed by the Society itself. The archive is divided into different sections, with the [correspondence archive](#) and the [archive on the society's collections](<https://hdl.handle.net/21.12113/C90772187D2949839D7722B8FFD4BE45>) contain interesting material for provenance research.

The [collection website](#) offers many links to relevant archive material and related objects. For various objects, you will find links to documents in the archive that relate to the object in question, as well as links to objects that were donated by the same person, for example. The availability of relevant information varies per object.

In addition to the archive and the collection website, the Zeeland Scientific Society has published an annual since its foundation. These can be read on the website of the [Zeeland Journal Database](#). Initially, this yearbook mainly contained entries for competitions organised by the society. Each yearbook contains various scientific articles on matters relating to the province of Zeeland, as well as the annual reports of all the society's committees and working groups.

## Related Aids

- [Scientific research in colonised territories](#)
- [Ghana](#)
- [Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen](#)
- [Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies \(KITLV\)](#)
- [Naturalis Biodiversity Center](#)
- [Wereldmuseum Leiden](#)

## Primary sources

Archive:

*26 - Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen (KZGW), 1769-1969 (c. 1985) Archive of the Royal Zeeland Scientific Society. The archive is divided into various sections relating to different subjects.*

<https://hdl.handle.net/21.12113/78C26E38A21C45F4BEDCC0BD68ACA296>

## Secondary sources

#### Collection website:

*KZGW Online Collection website of the Royal Zeeland Scientific Society. Here you will find all objects and manuscripts managed by the society. The collection can be accessed in various ways via the website, such as by geographical origin. Object pages sometimes refer to other relevant objects or (archival) material.*

<https://kzgwonline.nl/>

#### Yearbook:

*Archief. Mededelingen van het Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen (1769-2021) Yearbook of the Royal Zeeland Society of Sciences. Initially, this publication contained the entries submitted to the competitions organised by the society. Nowadays, it contains various scientific articles and the annual reports of the society's various committees and working groups.*

<https://kzgw.nl/publicaties/archief-en-werken/>

#### Magazine:

*Tijdschrift Zeeland Popular scientific journal published by the Royal Zeeland Society of Sciences since 1991. Each edition of the journal covers various historical topics, and articles may contain information relevant to genealogical research.*

<https://kzgw.nl/publicaties/tijdschrift-zeeland/>

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