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Natuur en milieu in Belgische en Nederlandse koloniën

Inhoud:

Ten geleide

Karel Davids, *Nederlanders en de natuur in de Nieuwe Wereld. Een vergelijking van visies op de natuur in Brazilië, Nieuw Nederland en de Wilde Kust in de zeventiende eeuw* [Dutchmen and nature in the New World. A comparison of visions on nature in Brazil, New Netherlands and the Wild Coast in the seventeenth century]

Summary This article engages with recent historiography on 'Dutch' visions on nature in the New World in the seventeenth century, which partly stems from the fields of environmental history and history of science (works by Richard Grove and Harold Cook) and partly proceeds from the perspective of 'cultural geography' (notably, studies by Benjamin Schmidt and Donna Merwick). Key questions of this contribution are: did Dutchmen in the process of constructing their vision on nature build primarily on knowledge and insights accumulated by other Europeans or did they add something of their own as well? And if so, can these novel approaches all be lumped together under a common, 'Dutch' denominator, as Donna Merwick has claimed? And did Dutch colonies on the American mainland eventually see the emergence of a kind of 'environmental awareness' or 'environmental policy', as Richard Grove has detected in European settlements in the regions of the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean?

To answer these questions, 'Dutch' visions on nature in different parts of the New World are compared and traced through time. The comparison concerns three regions: New Netherlands, northeast Brazil (Pernambuco) and the coastal strip between the Amazone and Orinoco rivers, known as the Wild Coast, where Dutchmen in the seventeenth century undertook several attempts at colonization, which eventually resulted in permanent settlements in Surinam, Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice. Although an 'environmental awareness' in the sense as Richard Grove observed for other European settlements overseas did not arise in any of these three regions,

visions on nature in these Dutch colonies in the Atlantic world nevertheless showed a remarkable evolution. The comparison demonstrates that visions on nature in these different regions were determined by more variables than current literature suggests. Reality proves to be more varied than, notably, historians following a 'cultural geographical' approach have assumed.

Alex van Stipriaan, Suriname, *El Dorado van de korte termijn Milieueffecten van de exploitatie van de natuurlijke rijkdommen, 17e-20e eeuw* [Suriname, *Short term El Dorado. The exploitation of natural riches and their environmental effects, 17th-20th century*]

The image of Suriname has always been an El Dorado of natural riches. What were the effects of this image, from an environmental point of view? Did the transformation of the plantation colony towards an industrial mining economy result in another attitude towards the environment? Up to the twentieth century, Suriname was a typical plantation economy. Everything was geared towards large scale production of mainly coffee and sugar. The way the natural factors of production were handled resulted in exhaustion. Production only stopped when soil and crops were depleted. In the new sectors, like gold, gum and bauxite, exhaustion ruled too. Legislation to mitigate the worst effects was often inadequate. Reproduction of the natural environment seems never to have had any actual priority.

Peter boomgaard, *Droefenis en duurzaamheid, Beheer en exploitatie van de bossen op Java onder Daendels (1808-1810)* [Sadness and Sustainability: *Management and Exploitation of the Forests of Java under Governor-General Daendels (1808-1810)*]

Governor-General Daendels established in 1808 a Forest Department for Java. It was the first centralized colonial forest service in Asia, and it came almost a century earlier than a comparable organization in the mother country, the Netherlands. In this article, the developments leading up to the creation of the Forest Department will be dealt with, focusing on the large demand of the Dutch East India Company for timber, locally leading to the depletion of the forests at an early stage. The main sections of the article describe and analyze the measures taken by Daendels to arrive at a better management of the forests, and the way these measures were carried out. The article deals with the European and indigenous employees of the Forest Department, their daily activities, and the technological innovations which Daendels attempted to introduce. Finally Daendels' measures will be assessed in the context of the sustainability of the production of timber under his command.

Patricia Van Schuylenbergh, *Congo Nature Factory, wetenschappelijke netwerken en voorbeelden van Belgisch-Nederlandse uitwisselingen (1885-1940)* [*'Congo Nature Factory': scientific networks and examples of Belgian-Dutch connexions (1885-1940)*]

Could we assert that Congo was a “Belgian Java”? Historical arguments confirm it since, right from the start, the Belgian colonial system borrowed practices from the Dutch colonial model, so as to acquire natural resources at little cost and use them as a tool for promoting metropolitan economy. Environmental knowledge regarding Congo, benefiting from the progress of scientists commissioned by the State or not, boosted its exploitation. This contributed to land structuring but revealed the danger of its excesses as well. Experimental and scientific transfers between colonial Belgium and The Netherlands, their questioning about biodiversity protection, within the international context, stimulated ecological consciousness.

Recensies

English Abstracts