

De Zendingspost Genadendal als bijzonderheid van het negentiende-eeuwse Zuid-Afrika

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The Mission Station Genadendal as a Particularity of South Africa of the Nineteenth Century

Abstract. The missionary society of Moravian Brethren managed to create a prosperous Christian community of indigenous people in South Africa in the 19th century. Their mission station “Genadendal”, which came to be a flourishing center of economy and education in the Cape colony at that time, attracted many distinguished visitors from the Cape as well as from abroad. They witnessed the development of the settlement and observed the organization of life with its inhabitants. The missionaries’ guests kept their own travel diaries, where they recorded their observations concerning their visits to Genadendal. The diaries of the travelers bring to light the whole process of cultural transformation of the Khoi people who inhabited the settlement. At the same time these accounts seem to differ from the missionaries’ memoirs in that they offer a new perspective from which to view the activity of Moravian Brethren in their most prominent South African mission station. Nevertheless, the visitors’ narratives should be analyzed with great caution since they may contain social and political prejudices related to their colonial mentality. In this paper, I shall try to present a collective image of Genadendal as it emerges from the travelers’ diaries in the 19th century.

Keywords: missionary work; Moravian Brethren; travel writing; cultural identity; colonialism; development and modernisation; South Africa

1. Inleiding

De kolonisatie van Zuid-Afrika begon al in de 17^{de} eeuw en gedurende de daaropvolgende honderd vijftig jaar trokken de blanke kolonisten steeds dieper in het binnenland van het vasteland. Hoewel het beleid van de VOC