

JOHANNES VAN DER HOEVEN
1802-1868

Van der Hoeven was born in 1802 (although some sources give 1801) into a wealthy Rotterdam merchant family. After his secondary education, presumably in Rotterdam, he matriculated in philosophy and medicine at the university of Leiden in 1819. There he obtained his Ph.D. in 1822 and his medical doctorate in 1824. In 1822, at the age of 20, he was appointed honorary custodian of the Rijksmuseum voor Natuurlijke Historie (National Museum of Natural History). In this capacity he went to Paris and Frankfurt to meet and study comparative anatomy with Cuvier and Sömmerring respectively. After his studies, Van der Hoeven opened a medical practice in Rotterdam. There he became lecturer in physics of the Bataafsch Genootschap voor Proefondervindelijke Wijsbegeerte (Batavian Society for Experimental Philosophy) in 1825. In 1826 he married Anna van Stolk, who bore him seven children.

The university of Leiden made Van der Hoeven extraordinary professor in 1826, and from 1830 he taught comparative anatomy, general zoology, and anthropology full-time. He became ordinary professor of zoology in 1835 and, in 1839, added geology and mineralogy to his teaching load. Van der Hoeven placed great emphasis on teaching and therefore produced many original handbooks and textbooks, which were widely acclaimed. His zoological ideas, based on a descriptive approach, were published in the three-volume *Handboek der Dierkunde* (1828-1833), the second edition of which (1849-1855) was quickly translated into German and English. This textbook begins with a description of the lower animals and ascends to the vertebrates. With this original arrangement Van der Hoeven tried to illustrate the increasing complexity in the animal kingdom. He summarized his zoological ideas in the *Philosophia zoologica* (1864).

Van der Hoeven not only adopted Cuvier's ideas in his zoological work, but also adhered to his theory of catastrophism. As an active member of the Remonstrant church Van der Hoeven could not accept the consequences of Darwin's theory of evolution. In his popular writings, he expressed his conviction in the primacy of religion over science and his belief in the Creation. Van der Hoeven wrote articles in the popular *Album der Natuur*, a zoology textbook for young people, and a natural history for a wider audience. Because of his emphasis on teaching, Van der Hoeven got into a conflict about

the availability of the rich collections of the Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie for teaching purposes—a conflict he lost.

Van der Hoeven created a large correspondence network with colleagues all over Europe, with whom he exchanged information and zoological specimens. A prominent place among these exchanges was occupied by the human skulls Van der Hoeven had collected. He was especially interested in the morphology of the skull. For him, the important question was whether human races had one single origin or if there were more than one species. This problem also led him to study the linguistic aspects of the variety in mankind. Van der Hoeven was a member of more than forty scientific societies. One of the best-known zoologists of his time, he died in Leiden in 1868.

Primary works

Practically complete bibliography in Harting, 'Levensbericht', and a list of his most important writings in Smit, *DSB* (see below).

Letters in the libraries of the universities of Amsterdam, Groningen, and Leiden, in the Provincial Library of Friesland at Leeuwarden, in the Museum Boerhaave at Leiden, and the Utrecht University Museum.

Secondary sources

Catalogue de la bibliothèque délaissée par Mr. J. van der Hoeven (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1869); C.P.L. Groshans, 'Levensbericht van Jan van der Hoeven', *Levensberichten van de Maatschappij der Nederlandse Letterkunde* (1870) 52-121; P. Harting, 'Levensbericht van Jan van der Hoeven', *Jaarboek der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen* (1868) 1-34; C.J. van der Klaauw, *Het hooger onderwijs in de zoölogie en zijne hulpmiddelen te Leiden. Een historische schets naar aanleiding van het 50-jarig bestaan van het tegenwoordige zoölogisch laboratorium* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1926) esp. 8-20, 64-94; 'Dagverhaal van Prof. dr. J. van der Hoeven van zijn reis in 1824, naverteld door zijn kleinzoon', *Rotterdamsch Jaarboekje* (1926); C.J. van der Klaauw, 'The scientific correspondence between professor Jan van der Hoeven and professor Richard Owen', *Janus* 36 (1932) 327-351; W.A.D. van der Hoeven, 'De reisdagboeken van Jan van der Hoeven', *TGGNWT* 12 (1989) 85-93; W. Otterspeer, *De wiekslag van*

hun geest. De Leidse universiteit in de negentiende eeuw (The Hague/Haarlem: Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1992); B. Theunissen, 'Biologie en *Bildung*: Jan van der Hoeven (1802-1868)', *Gewina* 21 (1998) 108-126. *DMB*, 880-881; P. Smit, in: *DSB*, vol. 6, 453-455; P.H. Simon Thomas, in: *NNBW*, vol. 4, 754-756.

[L.C.P.]