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THE ORIGIN OF WALCHEREN.

A few centuries before our era the area of the present island of WALCHEREN formed part of the Dutch-Flemish peat landscape. To the south of WALCHEREN a 3 metre thick layer of old moss peat had developed on thinner layers of eutrophic and mesotrophic peat. In the northern part, which lay fairly close behind the old dunes, oligotrophic peat was practically wanting. Here a 1 metre thick layer of eutrophic and mesotrophic peat had come into being, with only locally a thin layer of oligotrophic peat on top of it.

The peat of NORTH WALCHEREN was already inhabited in pre-roman times; people lived on dead peat. This inhabitation was possible on account of the fact that the sea probably already got some influence behind the old dunes, in consequence of which drainage was improved.

Shortly before or about ^{the beginning of} our era NORTH WALCHEREN was flooded by the sea; by this a layer of sandy clay was deposited on the peat. During this same period a new mouth of the Scheldt probably originated at the north-east side of WALCHEREN.

Just as in the WESTLAND the first transgression of the sea across the peat landscape took already place before our era. Also from North Germany an inundation of the peat landscape is already recorded in pre-roman times. With this first transgression the sub-atlantic transgression period commences. A period in which a slow, non-stop rise of the sea-level did not take place, as was supposed formerly, but which consisted of short transgressions separated by short regressions. The regressions had a great influence upon the inhabitableness of the alluvial landscape, because the preceding transgression had mostly left behind a good system of drainage.

In this manner the young sea-clay landscape of NORTH WALCHEREN became again inhabitable towards the end of the first century



just like the peat landscape of SOUTH WALCHEREN, which had not yet been silted up. These habitations were maintained till the third century.

Towards the end of the third century the whole of WALCHEREN was flooded, namely from the north.

The water sought its way through the ebb and flood creeks, formed already at the first transgression and which were now considerably enlarged. About the sixth century this influence from NORTH WALCHEREN decreased considerably. After this time the "island" was attacked from the west.

About the ninth century the unembanked WALCHEREN was inhabited again. So the transgression, which began in the third century, ended before the ninth century.

This course of things may be compared with that in Flanders and in the Westland. To these phenomena we may therefore attribute a more than local significance.

The inhabitants of the ninth century and later settled down on the creek-ridges. At that time namely many creeks lay already as hunches in the landscape, on account of the fact that the surroundings' new marine soils had sagged strongly in consequence of the great shrinkage of the peat in the subsoil. It is true that in most cases a smaller or larger, lower-lying bed of a streamlet was left behind in the ridge. These stream-gullies very strongly put their stamp on the allotment picture and the direction of the ways and water-courses.

About the year 1000 the island was attacked again and this time from the east. Again ebb and flood creeks came into existence, while clay was deposited on the old landscape. The creeks of that time are still lying as valleys in the territory at this moment, a reversal of the relief, as far as these creeks are concerned, has not taken place any more. The well-known HAYMANLANDS are situated in this rejuvenated area.

Probably in the twelfth century the island was surrounded by a dike , in so far at that moment it was not yet protected by dunes .

The creeks which were formed during the inundation of WALCHEREN near VERE and X FLUSHING , originated in old , mediaeval stream-gullies .

Large parts of SOUTH WALCHEREN have been broken up for peat-digging and salt-making . The peat, impregnated with salt-water, was used for salt-making . In the north the layer of peat was too thin and mostly also lay too deep beneath the clay ; here peat-digging was not remunerative .

As regards the dunes of WALCHEREN, these lie nearly all on the young sea-clay landscape . On the spot of the WESTKAPPELE sea-dike they have partly been blown across the landscape lying behind them .

Tekening 1.

Legenda

- 1 zavel
- 2 klei
- 3 eutroof veen
- 4 mesotroof veen
- 5 oligotroof veen
- 6 vroe Romeinse bewoning
- 9 Romeinse bewoning

Tekening 2

Legenda

- 1 zavel (o) } oude blauwe zeeklei
- 2 klei (o) }
- 3 zavel (1) van hout voor onze jaartelling
- 4 klei (2) van 400 - 800 n.Chr.
- 5 zavel en klei (3) van pl.m. 1000 n.Chr.
- 6 veen
- 7 jonge duinen
- 8 vroe-Romeinse bewoning
- 9 Romeinse bewoning
- 10 Merovingische bewoning
- 11 voerput

Figure 1.

Legend

- 1 sandy clay
- 2 clay
- 3 eutrophic peat
- 4 mesotrophic peat
- 5 oligotrophic peat
- 6 pre Roman settlements
- 9 Roman settlements

Figure 2

Legend

- 1 sandy clay } old blue seaclay
- 2 clay }
- 3 sandy clay } from about the beginning of our era
- 4 clay, } from about 400 - 800 p.C.
- 5 sandy clay and clay } from about 1000 p.C.
- 6 peat
- 7 young dunes
- 8 pre Roman settlements
- 9 Roman settlements
- 10 Carolingian settlements
- 11 pit, where the peat have been dug out

Legend A

Legend

1 oude blauwe zandlooi

2 veen

3 zavel

4 klei

----- lijn van de vloedhoogte-----

A veengroei

B opslibbing van zavel in
N. Walcheren

C bewoning van N. Walcheren

D opslibbing van klei over geheel
Walcheren

E bewoning van Walcheren

F opslibbing aan de zuid-en Oost-
rand

Legend B

Legend

1 old blue sand-clay

2 peat

3 sandy clay

4 clay

----- height of the flood-tide-----

A formation of the peat

B silting up of sandy clay in
S. Walcheren

C inhabitation of N. Walcheren

D silting up of the clay over the
whole of Walcheren

E inhabitation of Walcheren

F silting up of the southern-and
eastern border area