

Neptune's Trident: An Interpretation of German Mercenaries in the Service of the Dutch West-India Company, 1623-1645

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Foreign mercenaries held a precarious and paradoxical position in Dutch society during the Golden Age (c. 1600-1700). On one hand, the presence of foreigners was evidence of the Republic's economic success and mercenaries were essential to the military conquests and colonial expeditions that sustained the flow of wealth and luxuries into Dutch cities and towns. On the other hand, foreign mercenaries were often characterized as drunkards, gamblers, womanizers, and idlers. Many were displaced, uneducated, and poor, making them easy targets for polemicists who sought to perpetuate myths of cultural superiority through allegories of foreign otherness. This was especially true in the Dutch Republic, where "anyone born outside a given city or province was regarded as a foreigner."¹

Rhetorical distinctions between mercenaries and more socially acceptable occupations can be found in a number of early modern sources.² Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513), describes the mercenary as having "no fear of God, nor loyalty to men . . . they have no other passions or incentives to hold the field, except their desire for a bit of money, and that is not enough to make them die for you."³ Sir William Temple's *Observations upon the United Provinces* (1668) juxtaposed the soldiers with the more respected merchant, suggesting that the soldier was "thoughtless and prodigal," envisioning only a short and merry life, whereas the merchant "thinks upon a long, and a painful [life]."⁴ Similarly, the seventeenth-century German author, Johann Grimmelshausen summed up the lives of mercenaries with an ominous prediction suggesting that if they were lucky enough to survive to old age, they would surely become "beggars and vagabonds."⁵ In art and literature, the mercenary is often associated with criminals, prostitutes, death, and Satan.⁶ The implications of these depictions are obvious, but these

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¹ A. T. van Deursen. *Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular Culture, Religion and Society in Seventeenth-Century Holland*. translated by Maarien Ultee. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. 33.

² In addition to those mentioned in this essay, see also Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan, sive De Materia, Forma, & Potestate Civitatis Ecclesiasticæ et Civilis*. London, England, 1676. XIII. 9. Hobbes argues that when "every man is enemy to every man . . . [one's life becomes] solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short."

³ Niccolò Machiavelli. *The Prince* (1513), translated and edited by Robert M. Adams, second edition. New York City: Norton, 1992. 34.

⁴ Sir William Temple. *Observations Upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands*. First published in 1668. London: J. Tonson, Awynsham, and J. Churchil, 1705. 179-180.

⁵ Johann Grimmelshausen. *Simplicissimus*. Germany, 1668. Translated by Mike Mitchell. Sawtry, UK: Dedalus Limited, 2011. ch. 16. See also, Johann Grimmelshausen. *The Life of Courage, the Notorious Thief, Whore and Vagabond*, Germany, 1670. Translated by Mike Mitchell. Sawtry, UK: Dedalus Limited, 2010.

⁶ See Gert von der Osten and Horst Vey. *Painting and Sculpture in Germany and the Netherlands, 1500 to 1600*. London: Penguin Books, 1969, 100. Urs Graf spent most of his adult life as a *Reislauffer* (Swiss mercenary) and saw himself as "a free soldier rather than a plebeian craftsman." See also, Jochai Rosen. *Soldiers at Leisure: The*

condemnations tell us much more about the anxieties of society than the inherent evils of foreign mercenaries.

Drawing largely from the first volume of the *Reisebeschreibungen von Deutschen Beamten und Kriegsleuten im Dienst der Niederländischen West- und Ost-Indischen Kompagnien 1602-1797*, Vol. 1, this essay analyzes the travel account of Johannes Gregorius Aldenburgk (b.1602), and to a lesser extent, those of his contemporaries, Ambrosius Richshoffer (b. 1612), and Michael Hemmersam (1619-1661). Aldenburgk's travel account is originally titled *West-Indian Travels and [the] Description of the Siege and Conquest of St. Salvador in Bahia, the Bay of All Saints in the Land of Brazil*, however, throughout this essay, I will refer to it by its shortened title, *Reise nach Brasilien, 1623-1626*. By juxtaposing these travel accounts with the rhetoric of Dutch polemicists, this paper will show that *Reise nach Brasilien, 1623-1626* represents a counter-hegemonic voice, one which denounced Brazilian natives, Spanish tyranny, Dutch leadership, and institutional authority in general. Aldenburgk's travel account rebelliously promoted individual spiritualism and enlightenment, a significant departure from the modus operandi of most early modern mercenaries.

This thesis is developed using three main arguments: First, Dutch merchants during the first half of the seventeenth century engaged in an aggressive campaign of pro patria propaganda, which explicitly promoted war against Spain, while largely relying on foreign soldiers to carry out the mission. As a result, a clear dichotomy developed between low-ranking German soldiers and higher-ranking Dutch officers. Second, In Brazil, the Dutch lacked the institutions necessary to centralize authority. Access to food and resources was dependent upon a complicated transatlantic supply chain as well as assistance from indigenous allies. The interactions - whether cordial, violent, or otherwise - between Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans perpetuated the mercenaries' vagabond identity. Lastly, like all early modern travel accounts, Aldenburgk presents a dramatic experience that is, for all intents and purposes, off limits to his audience. Very few, if any, of his readers would ever become seafarers, nor would they want to. Yet, while many early modern German travel accounts display a sense of pious optimism, Aldenburgk's narrative combined Christian morality with a humanistic tradition - intermixing Latin and the classics with vernacular German.

Aldenburgk's account presents mercenaries much differently than those stereotyped in early modern art and literature. His rhetoric of conquest and surrender is not the embodiment of moral ineptitude, as other cultural artifacts may imply. Aldenburgk was employed as a mercenary by both the Dutch and the Danish, but his introduction is dedicated to the Duke of Sachsen-Coburg, Johann Casimir. He appealed to an elite Protestant German audience, but his narrative does not ascribe to any singular institutional authority. He is critical not only of his military enemies (i.e. the native Brazilians, Spanish, and Portuguese), but also of his Dutch commanders, and even the German farmers and peasantry. To understand the connection between German mercenaries and their Dutch employers, it is helpful to peel back some of the layers shrouding the Dutch motivation for war, the West-India Company's (WIC) mission in Brazil, and the harsh reality of life in Germany during the Thirty Years' War.

Guardroom Scene in Dutch Genre Painting of the Golden Age. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010, 26-32. For example, Graf's 1524 woodcut, *Two Mercenaries, Whore, and Death* illustrates the early modern attitude towards mercenaries by depicting a *Reislauffer* (Swiss mercenary) and a *Landsknecht* (German mercenary), accompanied by a whore and death.

Justifications for War

In 1624, the merchant Jan Andries Moerbeek published a proposal titled *Redenen Waeromme de west-Indische Compagnie dient te trachten het Land van Brasilia den Coninck van Spangien te ontmachtigen* (Reasons why the West-India Company should try to capture the land of Brazil to depose the King of Spain), which argued that the conquest of Brazil, was a relatively low-risk endeavor when compared to the economic returns that the Dutch West-India Company could realize.⁷ These notions were reinforced by the Dutch minister Samuel Ampzing, who in 1629, praised the Admiral/Privateer Piet Hein in his *Westindische triumphbazuin op de verovering van de zilveren vloot* (West-India Triumph on the conquering of the silver fleet). Drawing on biblical rhetoric, Ampzing described King Philip IV as the “Spaensche Pharao” and juxtaposed him to Piet Hein who he declared was “een nieuwen Sinte Pieter.”⁸

One of the Dutch West-India Company’s most outspoken supporters, Willem Usselinx (1567-1647), continually argued that Dutch colonialism and aggression towards Spain was both morally and economically beneficial. In his *Mercurius Germaniae* (1633), Usselinx specifically addressed the German populace, proclaiming that prosperity was attainable through their support and participation in the Dutch West-India Company.⁹ For Usselinx, Moerbeek, and Ampzing, financial gains at the expense of the Spanish crown were economically, politically, and spiritually rewarding. Furthermore, successful disruptions of Spanish trade - Dutch piracy - were evidence of Divine Providence. But even with this reassurance that the Dutch were God’s elite, Calvinist doctrine also required continuous human initiative.

It was along these lines in 1638, that the Calvinist minister, Godefridus Udemans published ‘t *Geestelyck roer van koopmanschap* (The Spiritual Rudder of the Merchant Ship), which argued that a just war could be conducted if that conflict began as a defensive war.¹⁰ Aggression against the Habsburgs was easily justified by Calvinist ministers when compared to the insidious nature of Spanish Catholicism. Udemans cited Samuel, arguing that it was an unjust and unprovoked attack that forced David to fight both a defensive war and an offensive war. Likewise, “Our war is mixed . . . it is still defensive . . . but because the King of Spain has, through public violence, torn ten provinces from the General Union, there is an added offensive war.”¹¹

Propaganda that included a Christian justification for war helped to build a consensus of support for continuing war against Spain, it encouraged wealthy burghers to invest in the WIC,

⁷ Jan Andries Moerbeek. *Spaenschen Raedt. Om die Geunieerde Provincien, te Water Ende te Lande te Benauwen om de Selvige Weder Onder de Spaensche Tyrannije te Brengen*. Aert Meuris, 1624.

⁸ Samuel Ampzing. *Westindische triumphbazuin op de verovering van de zilveren vloot*. Adriaen Rooman, Haarlem. 1629. Full text available at: http://www.dbnl.org/tekstampz001west01_01/ampz001west01_01.pdf Last accessed 14 February 2015. “O Spaensche Pharao! O Roomsche Leugen-gieter! Ik sie van Pieter Heyn een nieuwen Sinte Pieter.” (O’ Spanish Pharaoh! O’ Roman Lier! I see in Pieter Heyn, a new Saint Peter.) My translation.

⁹ John Franklin Jameson. *Willem Usselinx: Founder of the Dutch and Swedish West India Companies*. New York City. G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1887.164-165.

¹⁰ Godefridus Udemans. ‘t *Geestelyck roer van koopmanschap, dat is: trouw bericht hoe dat een koopman en koopvaardij zichzelf gedragen moeten in zijn handelingen in Vrede en in oorlog, voor God en de mensen, te water en te land, inzonderheid onder de heidenen in Oost- en West-Indië; ter ere Gods, stichting Zijner gemeente, en zaligheid zijner ziel; mitsgaders tot het tijdelijke welvaren van het vaderland en zijn familie*. Dordrecht, 1640. Stichting de Gihonbron Middelburg, 2004. Text available at: <http://www.theologienet.nl/documenten/Udemans%20geestelijk%20roer.pdf> Last accessed 14 February 2015.

¹¹ Ibid., “Onze oorlog is gemengd . . . is geweest defensief . . . maar omdat de koning van Spanje . . . door openbaar geweld tien provinces van de Generale Unie heeft afgescheurd, so is er ook offensieve oorlog bijgekomen.” My translation.

and it signified that the Dutch revolt was not simply a political rebellion. Military and economic successes were undoubtedly motivating factors for new recruits; the *fait accompli* who carried out the calamitous missions purposed by Dutch officials. This was an important consideration as turnover in these occupations was high. A recent study by Heijden and Heuvel estimates that the earnings of soldiers and sailors in the Republic “were two to three times less than the salaries of common laborers ashore.”¹² Meager wages, poor living conditions, and better opportunities on land most likely contributed to the attrition. Despite this, many Germans, both skilled and unskilled, took their chances with the WIC rather than endure the devastation of the Thirty Years’ War. And if religious conviction was not enough to compel one to fight with a Protestant faction, there were other reasons why one would avoid the imperialists. Peter Wilson has argued that the Habsburgs had an “appalling record as employers,” and when Rudolph II died in 1612, he still owed “two and a half million florins in back pay to his officials and servants.”¹³

While Germany was engulfed in war, the Dutch Republic wrestled with an uneasy peace. The Twelve Years’ Truce (1609-1621) forbade the interruption of Spanish trade in the West Indies. As a result, Dutch privateering was suspended and the navy was downsized. The Truce was also a point of contention among Dutch political and spiritual leaders, and a locus for *pro patria* sentiment. What began as a theological discourse on predestination within the upper echelons of Dutch society transitioned into a violent debate of political ideologies. On one side, the Remonstrants and their allies, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt and the jurist, Hugo Grotius, supported the Truce and argued for free trade. Their adversaries, the Gomarists, also known as the Counter-Remonstrants or the “War-Party,” allied with the House of Orange and vehemently opposed the Truce. The Counter-Remonstrants argued that supporters of the Truce were “Spaangezind - partial to Spain.”¹⁴ In 1618, the Counter-Remonstrants, executed Oldenbarnevelt, and imprisoned Grotius. The end of the Truce in April 1621 coincided with the WIC’s official charter in June of the same year, and by 1623, renewed tensions between Spain and the Republic boosted demand for soldiers and sailors.

It has been estimated that by the seventeenth century, roughly 25% of the sailors aboard Dutch ships were foreigners, many of whom were Lutherans from Scandinavia.¹⁵ Similarly, foreign soldiers from Germany made up a large percentage of the Dutch military. A recently published study of 304 soldiers who had served in the Dutch West-India Company during the mid-seventeenth century in Nieu Nederlandt shows that, “only 32.6% originated from the Dutch Republic” while the highest percentage, “35.5% came from Germany.”¹⁶ Yet, despite their proportionally large numbers, German soldiers “were constantly kept out of the higher ranks, both in the administrative and military arms of the companies.”¹⁷

If being a mercenary meant being stigmatized as a low life, than being a German mercenary would only double the insults. Van Deursen writes that Germans “were nearly always found at

¹² Manon van der Heijden and Danielle van den Heuvel. “Sailors’ Families and the Urban Institutional Framework in Early Modern Holland.” *The History of the Family*, 12 (2007): 301.

¹³ Peter H. Wilson. *The Thirty Years War: Europe’s Tragedy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. 56.

¹⁴ Benjamin Schmidt. *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570-1670*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 188.

¹⁵ Sølvi Sogner. “Norwegian-Dutch Migrant Relations in the Seventeenth Century.” *Dutch Light in the Norwegian Night*. (2004). 45.

¹⁶ Hermann Wellenreuther. *Jacob Leisler’s Atlantic World in the Later Seventeenth Century: Essays on Militia, Trade, and Networks*. Münster, Germany: LIT Verlag, 2009. 18.

¹⁷ Hermann Wellenreuther. *Jacob Leisler’s Atlantic World in the Later Seventeenth Century*. 19.

the lowest levels of society, in the worst-paid occupations . . . digging, dyking, and . . . remedying the shortage of sailors.”¹⁸ But during the first half of the seventeenth century, the rising tide of German immigration into the Netherlands had become problematic for the Republic. In 1629, the States of Holland decided against a charitable collection that would benefit German refugees fleeing the Thirty Years’ War.¹⁹ The Dutch Reformed Church took this opposition a step further, demanding that the poor, no matter their origins, apply for poor relief through the local overseers. For the church, begging was a sin and as “willful sinners,” those who engaged in public begging ran the risk of being excluded from communion.²⁰

Poverty was not the only cultural baggage to accompany immigrants, they also brought foreign languages, competing religious doctrine, and other patterns of practice and beliefs that were contentious to Dutch regents. German mercenaries, for example, were not only lower on the socioeconomic ladder than their Dutch counterparts, but they also lacked a clear understanding of the Dutch language, and making matters worse, most were Lutheran or Catholic. Conversely, the Dutch officers were largely Calvinists, usually from wealthy families. For Udemans, officers represented good government and a clear conscience, whereas the common soldier was expected to simply follow orders, presumably for the sake of greed.²¹ And as Jan Lucassen argues, “those who came from the same place as the officers enjoyed a distinct advantage.”²²

This is not to say that it was entirely impossible for a soldier or sailor of fortune to advance in rank, but it was certainly more difficult if he was a foreigner, and he would undoubtedly make enemies along the way. Johann Aldenburgk was neither Dutch, nor an officer. Unfortunately, his travel account does not reveal very much about his early life, nor does he give an explicit reason for his interest in working for the WIC, but the devastation of the Thirty Years War certainly exacerbated German interest in the Dutch Republic during the first half of the seventeenth century. Economic disruptions, disease, and involuntary military conscriptions throughout Germany added to the chaos and diaspora.

In the 1620s, the Catholic military leader, Albrecht von Wallenstein (1583-1634) began conscripting regiments of standing armies rather than relying on temporary garrison troops and personal guards.²³ Machiavellian arguments of the preceding century claimed that traditional standing armies fighting pro patria were fundamentally superior to financially driven mercenaries. Wallenstein’s conscription, however, was more concerned with larger annexations of political power. By 1627, his conscription strategy was formalized in the Verneuerte Landesordnung, a Habsburg decree which “prohibited military recruitment without imperial consent, making violations punishable by death.”²⁴ Wallenstein’s success throughout the 1620s limited the autonomy of mercenary leaders and strengthened the military power of the Austrian Habsburgs at the expense of the provincial estates.²⁵ Evidence from Aldenburgk’s travel account

¹⁸ van Deursen. *Plain Lives in a Golden Age*. 33.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

²¹ Joris van Eijnatten. “War, Piracy and Religion: Godfried Udemans’ Spiritual Helm (1638).” *Grotiana* 27/28 (2007): 192-214. 197.

²² Jan Lucassen. “A Multinational and its Labor Force: the Dutch East India Company, 1595-1795.” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 66 (2004): 28.

²³ John Mears. “The Thirty Years’ War, the “General Crisis,” and the Origins of a Standing Professional Army in the Habsburg Monarchy.” *Central European History* 21.2 (1988): 122-141. 125.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 132.

suggest that he did indeed fear Habsburg military conscription and this may have been the primary reason that he joined the West-India Company. Upon returning to Germany in 1626, Aldenburgk laments that he “rushed to Mülhausen because 10,000 free-land soldiers were pulled [for military service] in the city of Nordhausen,” a fate which he went to great lengths to avoid.²⁶

Aldenburgk was born around 1602 in Coburg, part of the Duchy of Sachsen-Coburg. He visited Casimirianum (a school in Coburg named after Duke Johann Casimir) and graduated from the University of Jena. He does not appear to have been the stock German character described by Dutch polemicists, nor does he seem to fit the disparaging stereotypes of early modern mercenaries. His travel account began in 1623 in Neustadt on the Weser, where he learned of a Dutch fleet preparing to sail for the West Indies. He hurried to Amsterdam, traveling through Germany’s Lower Rhine region. There, a vast network of Habsburg garrisons impeded traffic, challenged the intentions of displaced migrants, and collected tolls, taxes, and levies from the local population. Despite these obstacles, he arrived safely in Amsterdam and was quickly hired by the Dutch West-India Company as a soldier. Aldenburgk was assigned to a ship named *De Hoop* (The Hope) and his fleet was tasked with capturing the city of Salvador da Bahia in Brazil.²⁷

The WIC began planning their attack in 1623, or perhaps earlier, using the intelligence obtained from Dierick Ruiters, a Dutch merchant who while trading in Brazil was captured by the Portuguese and imprisoned in Salvador for two and a half years. Ruiters escaped his captors in 1620 and became a valuable source of military intelligence for WIC strategists. Ruiters provided a detailed map of Bahia as well as information about the strategic importance of Bahia in the trans-Atlantic trading network.²⁸

Armed with this information and an armada of twenty-six ships, the Dutch arrived in the Bay of All Saints in May 1624. More firepower would have been available, but a mishap by Colonel Jan van Dorth (1574-1624) left his ships at sea during the main assault. Nevertheless, Admiral Jacob Willekens (1564-1649) and Vice-Admiral Piet “St. Piet” Hein (1577-1629) began their attack from sea, bombarding the Portuguese stronghold with intense and sustained cannon fire. According to the Portuguese Jesuit António Vieira, the garrison defenders “were so petrified that the fiery glow and inspiration of the Father could not call them to order.”²⁹ The troops aboard Piet Hein’s flagship, *Neptune*, and the other troops under his command boarded the Portuguese ships in the harbor and then led the charge up the hill to the gates of the garrison. The Portuguese soldiers, along with most of the other inhabitants, fled the city, while a small contingent of African slaves remained in Bahia. Rather than opposing the Dutch soldiers, the Africans welcomed them, opened the gates of the city, and offered work, weapons and supplies.³⁰

²⁶ Aldenburgk. *Reise Nach Brasilien 1623-1626*. 95. “eilete ich auff Glettenburgk durch das Kriegsvolck die halbe Nacht nach Mülhausen, weil für der Stadt Nordhausen 10000. Friedländische Soldaten zogen.” (I rushed on Glettenburg through the soldiers half of the night to Mülhausen, because 10,000 free-land soldiers were pulled for the city of Nordhausen). My translation.

²⁷ Aldenburgk. *Reise Nach Brasilien 1623-1626*. 8.

²⁸ Michiel van Groesen. “A Week to Remember: Dutch Publishers and the Competition for News from Brazil, 26 August-2 September 1624.” *Quaerendo* 40 (2010): 26-49: 39.

²⁹ Padre António Vieira. *Een natte hel. Brieven en preken van een Portugese Jezuiet, Privé-domein Nr. 241*. Translated to Dutch by Harrie Lemmens. Amsterdam: Ardeiderspers, 2001. My translation.

³⁰ Aldenburgk. *Reise nach Brasilien* For information on the chain of command and the initial capture of Bahia, see pages 8, 19-21, 25-30. For additional information on the initial capture of Bahia, see ³⁰ Padre António Vieira. *Een natte hel* as well as Mark Meuwese. *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595-1674*. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2011. 126-131.

Despite this initial victory, Aldenburgk's travels were fraught with danger. Work was mechanized and slave-like. To maintain discipline and order, Aldenburgk describes six types of "puniendis malis," which the officers relied upon. These punishments included flogging, detainment, solitary confinement, stabbing, keelhauling, and strangulation.³¹ Godefridus Udemans wrote that obedience and belief in the "true faith" were essential for foreign soldiers. According to Udemans, a mercenary without these traits, was simply an "evil dog willfully pulled by the ears."³² For Dutch military commanders and Calvinist ministers, strict discipline was the glue that held their motley crews together.

Misery, Strange Bedfellows, and Vagabond Identity

The occupation of Bahia revealed deep divisions between officers and soldiers. Aldenburgk writes that, "the Army had to endure great hunger and other dangers."³³ Admiral Willekens rationed food among the soldiers, but there was still not enough to go around. To supplement the shortage, soldiers relied on plunder - stealing from natives, capturing Portuguese and Spanish ships whenever possible - and living on the meat of domesticated animals, such as cats, dogs, and horses within the city.³⁴ While Aldenburgk writes at length regarding the hunger that was experienced by the lower ranking men, officers are rarely described in such misery. This trend is echoed in Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*, who laments that, "more of the lower ones [soldiers] died of hunger than by the hand of the enemy, a danger to which those above [officers] seemed immune."³⁵ Grimmelshausen described officers as climbing up a "silver ladder known as the Bribery Backstairs, or by some other bridge that Fortune had made for them" and they "lard[ed] their purses with slices of the fat which they cut with a knife called War Levy."³⁶

Aldenburgk's most significant complaint regarding his Dutch officers involved the brothers, Albert and Arnt [Willem] Schouten, who were placed in command of Bahia following the death of General Johan van Dorth in 1624. The Schouten brothers had a reputation for being irresponsible; a habit that reached its zenith in March 1625. While the lower-ranking soldiers and indentured Africans foraged for food, the Schouten brothers spent eight days eating, drinking, and celebrating carnival.³⁷ Making matters worse, the brothers allowed the ships in the harbor to fire celebratory cannon shots above Bahia. Aldenburgk writes that, "50, 80, 100, 120 shots . . .

³¹ Aldenburgk. *Reise Nach Brasilien 1623-1626*. 20-21.

³² Udemans, Godefridus. "t Geestelyck roer van koopmanschip." "een kwade hond, moedwillig bij de oren trok." (an evil dog, willfully pulled by the ears) Text available at: <http://www.theologienet.nl/documenten/Udemans%20geestelijk%20roer.pdf> Last accessed 14 February 2015 My translation.

³³ Aldenburgk. *Reise Nach Brasilien 1623-1626*. 34. "die Armee grosse Hungers vnd andere Gefahr außstehen müssen." My translation.

³⁴ Ibid., 57. "Es gieng nach diesem ein Verbot bey hoher Leibsstraff auß, keine Katzen mehr zu schiessen, vnd vmbzubringen, denn grosser mangel an victualien, sonderlich an Fleisch vorfiel, welcher causirt, daß man Pferd, Hund vnd Katzen in der Stadt verzehrete." (It goes in accordance to the prohibition with high corporal punishment, to shoot anymore cats, and to kill, because of great lack of victuals, especially for meat, that one consumes horse, dog, and cats in the city.) My translation.

³⁵ Grimmelshausen. *Simplicissimus*. 16.

³⁶ Ibid., 16.

³⁷ Aldenburgk. *Reise Nach Brasilien 1623-1626*. 58. "lenger als acht Tag nach einander mit essen, trincken, prechtige Faßnacht" ([for] longer than eight days, they [the Schouten brothers] ate, drank, and celebrated carnival). My translation.

[were fired] against the mountain above the city, frightening the inhabitants in the living quarters.”³⁸ The merrymaking finally ended when Albert Schouten succumbed to an illness, which Aldenburgk described as an infection of worms, and died some twenty-four hours later. Soon after, Arnt [Willem] Schouten was placed in command of Bahia, but he was no more suited to lead than his brother, and within two months, the Dutch stronghold was forced to capitulate to the Spanish and Portuguese.³⁹

The entire collapse of Bahia happened in swift and dramatic fashion. On Easter morning 1625, a Spanish and Portuguese fleet known as the “Voyage of the Vassals” made its way into Bahia’s Bay of All Saints. Aldenburgk was clearly shocked by the size of the enemy force. He wrote that, “we felt that there were 30,000 men besieging our 1,500 on [both] land and water.”⁴⁰ In actuality, the armada consisted of over 50 ships and about 12,500 men; the largest fleet to date to cross the Atlantic.⁴¹ The Dutch made a few futile attempts to resist, digging defensive trenches, launching fireships, and taking shots with cannons and muskets, but it was to no avail.⁴²

In May 1625, the Dutch surrendered Bahia and members of the WIC were placed on ships and sent back to Europe. Upon his arrival in the Republic, Willem Schouten was imprisoned for his mismanagement of Bahia. He was later tried and sentenced to death, but the verdict was overturned by the Prince of Orange. The Africans, however, were not so lucky. Despite having fought alongside the Dutch in exchange for their freedom, Aldenburgk writes that, “the African men . . . who were with us in the city, were captured [by the Spanish], their bodies burnt [branded] with the Spanish seal, and sold into slavery to the Portuguese allies [moradores (free Portuguese settlers) in the Recôncavo].”⁴³ The sugar and slave trades went hand in hand, and as the international demand for sugar grew in the first half of the seventeenth century, so did the demand for African slaves.

As Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, reminds us, “Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows.”⁴⁴ Indeed, misery and strange bedfellows are common themes in early modern travel accounts. Ambrosius Richshoffer’s *Reise nach Brasilien, 1629-1632*, for example, which is both a narrative and a sort of obituary, accounted for the fatalities of over one hundred soldiers and sailors in his fleet. The first and perhaps most dramatic of these involved a soldier named Hanß Linckhoß, who, for many days, attempted to dissuade Death by repeatedly screaming “Hanß

³⁸ Ibid., 58. “50. 80. 100. 120. Schüß . . . gegen den Berg hinauff in die Stadt, welches zimliche vnsicherheit in den Quartiren brachte” My translation.

³⁹ Ibid., 58. “Kurtz nach diesem überfiel den Coronell Albert Schout eine Kranckheit, welchen reverenter die Würme in 24. Stunden lebendig zu todt gefressen haben, der folgender Zeit zur Erden bestattet, vnd auff vorher gehaltenen Kriegsraht desselben Bruder Arnt Schout auff offenen Marck für Coronell.” (Shortly after this, the colonel Albert Schout was attacked with an illness, which infested him with worms that in 24 hours had brought him from living to dead, the following time he was buried in the earth, and at previously held council of war the same as his brother Arnt [Willem] Schout on opening marks for colonel.) My translation.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 61. “30000. Mann gewesen, welche vns mit 1500. Stücken zu Land vnd Wasser belägerten” My translation.

⁴¹ For detailed descriptions of the Spanish/Portuguese armada and siege of Bahia, see: S.B. Schwartz. “The Voyage of the Vassals.” *American Historical Review* 96 (1991), 735-762. George Edmundson. “The Dutch Power in Brazil, 1624-54.” *English Historical Review* 11 (1896), 231-259; 14 (1899), 676-699; & 15 (1900), 38-57.

⁴² Aldenburgk. *Reise nach Brasilien*, 1623-1626. 61-62.

⁴³ Ibid., 74. “Die Moren Mann . . . welche bey uns in der Stadt gewesen, wurden gefangen, Hispanische Zeichen an ihre Leiber gebrennet, wider vnter die Portugaleser vor Slaven verkauffet.” My translation.

⁴⁴ William Shakespeare. Edited by Bernhard Tauchnitz. *The Plays of William Shakespeare: The Tempest*. Leipzig: 1868. Act II, Scene II. 32. Trinculo the jester (alongside Caliban the slave and Stephano the drunken sailor).

Linckhoß ist nicht hier! Hanß Linckhoß ist nicht hier!”⁴⁵ Richshoffer writes that despite his efforts, Death did not reject him. At sea, death visited the crew in many ways (i.e. drowning, disease, war, etc . . .) and it is unclear what killed Linckhoß. But on the evening that he died, his body was sealed in a serge, a prayer was read, and he was thrown overboard.⁴⁶

Richshoffer also recounts the horrific demise of a drummer named Gerhard Joris, who became so infected with lice that his body swelled, he became blind, and he remained tormented by these parasites until his death days later. Richshoffer describes Joris’ unusual suffering as God’s punishment for living a reckless life and for physically abusing his parents.⁴⁷ Udemans made similar warnings to mercenaries who fought only for money, and not out of pious devotion, suggesting that these men would fight poorly due to their weighing conscience as that the wrath of God fell upon them.⁴⁸ Despite being acquainted and surrounded by those Udemans would have labeled, ongelovigen (nonbelievers), Richshoffer maintained an unrelenting faith, even in the presence of enemy fatalities. Upon discovering a dead Spanish officer in Brazil, Richshoffer asks God to give the man’s soul a “happy resurrection,” and in his 30 January 1630 entry, he simply writes, “Gott tröste sie ewiglich.” (God, comfort them forever.)⁴⁹

Like Aldenburgk, Richshoffer describes miserable conditions on sea and land that ultimately result in motley alliances between soldiers and indentured Africans. In March 1630, after a convoy was attacked by Native Brazilians, the Dutch created a black militia by arming their African servants with bows, arrows, and large clubs. Days later, a soldier from Richshoffer’s company was captured on land by “der Feind” (the enemy); a term Richshoffer liberally applies to the Spanish, Portuguese, and Native Brazilians. The prisoner was blinded, his hands cut off, and he was left for dead in his entrenchment. Richshoffer writes that the man struggled for several days to find help and eventually bled to death outside of a nearby town.⁵⁰ In the same year, three other men from Richshoffer’s company set out into the jungle to pick fruit. All three

⁴⁵ Ambrosius Richshoffer. *Reise nach Brasilien, 1629-1632. Reisebeschreibungen von Deutschen Beamten und Kriegsleuten im Dienst der Niederländischen West- und Ost-Indischen Kompagnien 1602-1797*. Vol. 1. Haag Mart. Nijhoff, 1930. 15. My translation.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 16. *wurde er in einer Sergen eingenehet . . . vnd so lang für den grossen Mastbaum gelegt, biß das ordinari Gebett verrichtet ward, darnach nahmen ihn etliche Mann bey dem Kopff vnd Füßen, zähleten eins, zwey, drey, vnd damit warffen sie ihn über das Schiff hinauß ins Meer.*” My translation.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 33. *“ist vnser Trommenschlager gestorben, Gerhard Joris . . . welcher vor seinem Ende (S.V.) so voller Leise geloffen, daß sie ihn schier gefressen, vnd ohnangesehen man denselben gantz naked, in einen Zuber Meerwasser gesetzt, vnd das Ungezifer mit einem Besen abgefegt, auch darauff ein weiß Hembd angezogen, ist er doch gleich wider gantz voll geloffen, auch nicht allein groß geschwollen, sondern gar blind worden, dabey dann Göttliche Raach augenscheinlich zu spüren gewesen, weilen derselbe von Jugend auff ein leichfertiges Leben, soll geführt vnd seine Eltern übel tractirt, ja wie etliche berichtet sie gar solle geschlagen haben.”* (Our drummer has died. Gerhard Joris . . . who before his end was so infested by lice, that they had nearly eaten through and without examination the same one sat entirely naked in a tub of seawater, and swept out the pests with a brush, also dressed in a white shirt, but he continued to be infested, also not only badly swollen, but also became completely blind, obviously he was punished with God’s wrath because since his youth, he lived a reckless life, misguided and mistreated his sick parents, indeed several accounts tell of how he had beaten them.) My translation.

⁴⁸ Godefridus Udemans. *‘t Geestelyck roer van koopmanschip.* “die soldaten zeer kwalijk doen, en dat ze hun consciëte zwaar belasten, en de toorn Gods op hun.” Text available at: <http://www.theologienet.nl/documenten/Udemans%20geestelijk%20roer.pdf> Last accessed 14 February 2015. My translation.

⁴⁹ Richshoffer. *Reise nach Brasilien, 1629-1632*. 39, 54-55. *“fröhliche Auffersteheng.”* My translation.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 55-56. *“der Feind einen von vnserm Volck gefangen genommen, welchen sie verblendet . . . haben sie beede Hände abgehauen, vnd wider verblindet ein stuck Wegs von der Schantz geführt, da er dann deß folgenden Tages gar schwach vnd verblutet in die Stadt kommen.”* My translation.

were later found beaten to death.⁵¹ Following these murders, the black militia was assigned to the dangerous task of going into the jungle each day to pick fruit.⁵² Meanwhile, Dutch officers began their own campaign of intimidation; cutting off the ears and noses of defeated Brazilians and Portuguese, and stringing up the body parts on a sort of necklace as evidence of their military prowess.⁵³

Like Aldenburgk and Richshoffer, Michael Hemmersam's *Reise nach Guinea und Brasilien, 1639-1645* describes a wave of death, disease, and violence that overwhelms the crew. Within the first few months, forty of his three hundred man crew had died, and many more were gravely ill with fever and dysentery.⁵⁴ Hemmersam's travel account, however, differs from the others as it is largely a catalog of Mohren society, religion, and daily life. In many respects, it is a book of cultural observations as well as a chronicle of cooperation between European gold merchants and African villagers. This is evident in Hemmersam's interactions with the Akan villagers in Elmina, who welcomed the Dutch West-India Company with fresh fruit, proclamations of brotherhood, and even marriage proposals.⁵⁵

Soldiers and servants from the Dutch West-India Company, often entered into relationships with Akan women out of both lust and survival. This pattern persisted throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even among those men who had wives and children in Europe. Mark Meuwese writes that officials from the Dutch West-India Company not only tolerated these unions, but also formalized them "to secure the vital economic and military support of the African community on the Gold Coast."⁵⁶ This practice, however, was unsettling for Calvinist ministers and senior officials. Udemans, for example, warned against assisting or seeking help from nonbelievers, suggesting that those who engage in such activity, "stelt zichzelf in gevaar van zeer zware zonden" (set themselves in danger of very serious sins).⁵⁷ For moralists and ministers, intimate relationships between European men and African women shattered the myth of an all powerful Dutch conqueror; a myth which was continuously reconstructed through the propaganda of Dutch polemicists.

⁵¹ Ibid., 58. "3. von vnserer Comp. welche in dem Busch Baumfrüchten holen wolten, zu todt geschlagen worden." My translation.

⁵² Ibid., 59. "sie mußten auch täglich in den Waldt, allerhand Früchten für die Verwundten zur erfrischung abholen." My translation.

⁵³ Ibid., 68. "Herr Major von Berstedt . . . seine halbe Kling voller Nasen vnd Ohren . . . deßgleichen ihme auch von andern präsentirt worden." My translation.

⁵⁴ Hemmersam, Michael. *Reise Nach Guinea und Brasilien 1639-1645. Reisebeschreibungen von Deutschen Beamten und Kriegsleuten im Dienst der Niederländischen West- und Ost-Indischen Kompagnien 1602-1797*. Vol. 1. Haag Mart. Nijhoff, 1930. 21-22. "Es waren bey 300. Mann darauf gewesen. Als wir aber hernach bey sie ans Land kamen, waren über 40. schon tod, auch der meiste Theil lag an Fieber und rother Ruhr kranck, daß uns ihr Elend erbarmete, dann sie musten essen und trincken von Mohren handeln." (It was there upon with 300 men. But after we came to the country, there were already 40 dead, also most were so sick with fever and dysentery, that we pitied their misery, then they had to negotiate with the Africans to eat and drink.) My translation.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 29. "[sie] brachte mir auch von deß Landes besten Früchten zum Willkomm." ([she] brought me the best fruit from the country as a welcome). "ihren Mann zu mir in das Castell, welcher mir die Hand bote, und sagte: acko Irmau, das ist, wilkomm Bruder" (her husband approached me in the castle, took me by the hands and said, acko Irmau, that is, welcome brother.)

⁵⁶ Meuwese, Mark. *Brothers in Arms, Partners in Trade: Dutch-Indigenous Alliances in the Atlantic World, 1595-1674*. Leiden. Koninklijke Brill, 2011. 304-305.

⁵⁷ Udemans, Godefridus. 't *Geestelyck roer van koopmanschip*. Text available at: <http://www.theologienet.nl/documenten/Udemans%20geestelijk%20roer.pdf> Last accessed 14 February 2015. My translation.

Aldenburgk and His Readers

Readers undoubtedly expected to hear stories of violence at the hands of devil-worshipping savages and cannibals who mutilated their European victims. Exaggeration and stretching the truth was not only allowed, it was probably encouraged. Annerose Menninger has argued that the authors and publishers of these travel accounts were primarily concerned with creating a book that would become a bestseller.⁵⁸ Similarly, Kees Boterbloem writes that these texts were “intended to entertain and intrigue” by not only appealing to the readers’ expectations, but also by presenting some “novelty.”⁵⁹ In *The Return of Hans Staden*, Eve Duffy and Alida Metcalf suggest that authors of travel accounts were strongly influenced by confessionalization, and therefore perpetuated local hegemony.⁶⁰ Decrees and proclamations, which aimed to control morality and behavior, could be reinforced by the messages embedded in early modern travel accounts. There were hegemonic reciprocities associated with this strategy. Dedicating one’s book to a local prince, and therefore having him as a supporter of one’s claims, would not only help legitimize the story, but could also drive demand and increase sales. In the opening line of *Reise nach Brasilien*, Aldenburgk dedicated his book to the Duke of Sachsen-Coburg, Johann Casimir (1564-1633). This dedication could be seen as reinforcing both his Protestantism as well as his nationalistic affiliations, thus situating himself in the larger chain of being.

Aldenburgk writes that, “These people, which we come in contact with, are called Brazilians, Indians, Savages, Cannibals or Caribbean, are misshapen/deformed, multiply like irrational livestock, believe little in God, do not respect foreigners or non-foreigners, pray to the Devil, have the form of a man-made painting, scamper about stark naked . . . and give tribute to the Spanish.”⁶¹ In his most climactic scene, Aldenburgk uses the violent death and dismemberment of General Jan van Dorth as both a scene of drama as well as a larger turning point in the occupation of Bahia. On June 1624 van Dorth was ambushed by a combined force of Native Brazilians, Portuguese moradores, and Africans; a group which Aldenburgk describes as the “inhuman violent devil-savages.”⁶² In the chaos of the fighting, van Dorth and his horse were struck down with poisonous arrows. He was decapitated, and his hands, feet and other body parts were cutoff and taken by the Natives. Aldenburgk laments that after several days, the head and body were finally returned to the city.⁶³

⁵⁸ Annerose Menninger. “Hans Stadens ‘Wahrhaftige Historia’: Zur Genese eines Bestsellers der Reiseliteratur.” *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 47 (1996): 509-525: 523-524.

⁵⁹ Kees Boterbloem. *The Fiction and Reality of Jan Struys: A Seventeenth-Century Dutch Globetrotter*. NYC: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 136.

⁶⁰ Eve M. Duffy and Alida C. Metcalf. *The Return of Hans Staden: A Go-between in the Atlantic World*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012, 77-80.

⁶¹ Aldenburgk. *Reise Nach Brasilien*. 36. “Dieses Volck, nur etwas zu berühren, genennet, die Brasilianer, Indianer, Wilden, Cannibales oder Carribes, ist vngestalt, mehret sich wie das vnvernünfftige Vieh, glaubet wenig an Gott, achtet Ausz-vnd Innländischer nichts, betet den Teuffel an, hat die Form eines Menschlichen Bildes, gehet splitternacket einher. . . und in Hispanien Tribut geben. . .” My translation.

⁶² Aldenburgk. *Reise Nach Brasilien*. 33-34. “Herr von Dort mit 200. Mann commandiret . . . Da nun gemeldter General vor hinweg ritte, sich dem Feind präsentirete . . . vnd sich zu weit in ein enges büschigtes Weglein, auff den er sich nicht wenden können, vom Tropp weg begeben, überfallen die wilden Indianer, Portugaleser vnd Morianen den General Herrn von Dort, schiessen ihn mit vielen vergifften Pfeilen, auch sein Pferd . . . das corpus, welches wir den vnmenschlichen Teuffelhafftigen Wilden abjageten.” My translation.

⁶³ Ibid., 33-34. “. . . und brachten mit grossen Trawren desselben Körper vnd Haupt in die Stadt.” My translation.

While the story of the death of van Dorth reinforced notions of Spanish/Portuguese kinship with savages, it was more harmful than helpful for Dutch morale. The re-telling of van Dorth's death was certainly not in the interest of the WIC; bad news in Brazil threatened the WIC's *groot desseyn* and their potential to attract new sources of capital for future missions. In the publishing arena, Piet Hein was often depicted as the patriotic hero, while the mistakes of van Dorth were largely swept under the rug.⁶⁴ Aldenburgk's travel account, however, gives equal weight to both men. He was not following an agenda prescribed by Dutch nationalists or capitalist merchants, and his story was not meant to appeal to a Dutch audience. Instead, Aldenburgk describes van Dorth's death as both an attack on the immorality of Native Brazilians as well as a precursor to the promotion of the Schouten brothers and the subsequent debacle that they engendered.

There were no major Protestant victories in 1622, the year leading up to Aldenburgk's travels.⁶⁵ And on those rare occasions when Aldenburgk, Richshoffer, and Hemmersam experienced victory, the hubris is quickly diluted with Christian modesty. Their travel accounts are cast in a Protestant framework centered on individual relationships with God, rather than institutional ones. Richshoffer's text, for example, is as prescriptive as it is descriptive. He quoted the New Testament often and he continually encouraged others to live a godly life, even in the face of temptation. The exact parameters of Richshoffer's godly life are not explicitly defined, but his relationship with God is one based on scripture rather than on the doctrine of an institutional religious authority. In his concluding paragraph, Richshoffer remained steadfast in his faith, proclaiming unapologetically that he "marched alone in God's name."⁶⁶ Aldenburgk and Hemmersam made similar claims, effectively differentiating themselves not only from their fellow mercenaries, but also from the religious, political, military, and commercial institutions that held sway.

In 1638, the WIC declared that religion "should be taught and practiced" in the same manner as "publicly accepted" in Holland.⁶⁷ Yet, despite this somewhat ostensible reputation for religious tolerance, Jews, Mennonites, Lutherans, Quakers, and Catholics were all treated as second-class citizens in both Holland as well as in the Dutch colonies. In theory, most had freedom of religion within the privacy of their own homes, but few were given permission to import their own ministers, build their own churches, or practice openly. In 1654, Petrus Stuyvesant, the Director-General of New Netherland and a devout Calvinist, attempted to deport twenty-three Jewish refugees, because he saw them as a financial burden and a threat to the morality and stability of the colony. The Heeren XIX, however, did not fully side with Stuyvesant. The Jews were allowed to remain in New Amsterdam with the understanding that they could not exercise "their religion in a synagogue or at a gathering."⁶⁸ But as Paul Finkelman has argued, "it was unlikely that any member of the Dutch Reformed Church would suddenly

⁶⁴ Michiel van Groesen. "A Week to Remember: Dutch Publishers and the Competition for News from Brazil, 26 August-2 September 1624." *Quaerendo* 40 (2010): 26-49: 43.

⁶⁵ Michiel van Groesen. "A Week to Remember." 33.

⁶⁶ Richshoffer. *Reise nach Brasilien, 1629-1632*. 137. "marschirte ich doch in Gottes Namen allein." My translation.

⁶⁷ Paul Finkelman. "Toleration and Diversity in New Netherland and the Duke's Colony: The Roots of America's First Disestablishment." IN T. Jeremy Gunn and John Witte, Jr. eds. *No Establishment of Religion: America's Original Contribution to Religious Liberty*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 129.

⁶⁸ Berthold Fernow, eds. *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York, Volume. 14*. Albany, New York: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1883. 341.

abandon the established church to become Jewish. The Lutherans, however, posed such a threat.”⁶⁹

It is therefore interesting to note that Hemmersam’s greatest loss during his travels came not from violent encounters with savages, but from the dissension wrought from Calvinist ministers. Hemmersam writes that, although the Lutheran religion was not challenged by the Dutch soldiers, Lutherans were excluded from participating in the Lord’s Supper because they refused to receive it from the Reformed (Calvinist) Church.⁷⁰ Hemmersam laments that despite these exclusionary practices, he remained orderly, and for five years he ate food that he purchased from the Africans. Still, this was certainly a damaging blow to his morale. The Lord’s Supper was more than a religious ritual, it was an event meant to encourage community and camaraderie. Lutherans, Catholics, and other denominations were forced to choose between compromising their religious convictions or being excluded from the occasion altogether. It seems that for all three of our German mercenaries studied in this essay, a more individual relationship with God, even at the risk of exclusion, proved more valuable than European companionship.

Rhetorical distinctions between European seafarers and the foreign other are found in nearly every seventeenth-century travel account studied - one would be hard pressed to write a bestseller without including the trope of the savage native – but some authors also vehemently distanced themselves from other Europeans. Their grievances are often related to theological differences and religious intolerance, but at times, include more secular matters. Hemmersam, for example, was disgruntled about his chain of command, lamenting that despite serving as a soldier for two years and an *Adelborst* (experienced sailor/seaman) for three years, he was not promoted. He argued that his experience, “welches so viel als ein Gefreiter oder Rottmeister ist” (which is as much as a corporal or section leader), warranted advancement.⁷¹ Making matters worse, he claimed that his skills were needed so much of the time, that he suffered from being so experienced.⁷² Aldenburgk and Hemmersam were not only voicing their disappointment with the Dutch military commanders, they were also seeking validation.

For Aldenburgk, validation was deeply entrenched in both Protestantism and humanism. He repeatedly attempts to locate God’s presence in elements of the physical world, writing that one “must see and feel God’s omnipotence . . . just as God is in the meadows, gardens, country, and forests with magnificently colored flowers, trees and animals, so too has the trinity of God fashioned the sea with beautiful wonder and decorated [it with] colorful fish.”⁷³ Duffy and Metcalf describe humanists as “armchair adventurers” with “an appreciation of the physical

⁶⁹ Finkelman. “Toleration and Diversity in New Netherland and the Duke’s Colony.” 145.

⁷⁰ Hemmersam, Michael. *Reise Nach Guinea und Brasilien 1639-1645*. 80-81. “*Auf welchem wir, we Religion wir waren, derselbenwegen nicht angefochten . . . war die Unterlassung des Hochheiligen Abendmals, weil wir es nicht von den Reformirten empfangen möchten, mein und der andern, der Evangelischen Religion zugethanen, grösster Verlust, und Unlust.*” (Our religion was not challenged . . . [however, we] were omitted from participating in the Lord’s Supper, because we do not want to receive it from the Reformed [Calvinist Church], myself and the other Lutherans [felt] great loss and reluctance.) My translation.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 81. “*Ich hab in wärender Zeit, zwei Jahr fur ein Soldaten, und drei Jahr fur ein Adelporsch gedient.*” My translation.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 81. “*und brauchte inzwischen mein Handwerk, so viel die Zeit hat leiden wollen, und so viel, als sich daselbst thun lässt.*” My translation.

⁷³ Aldenburgk. *Reise Nach Brasilien 1623-1626*. 15. “*sie Gottes Allmacht sehen vnnnd spüren musten . . . Gleich wie der liebe Gott die Wiesen, Gärten, Länder und Wälde mit herrlichen colörten Blumen, Bäumen vnd Thieren gezieret, also hat der Dreyeinige Gott das Meer mit schönen wunder gestalten vnd gefärbten Fischen geschmückt.*” My translation.

world and an interest in measuring, cataloging, and understanding it.”⁷⁴ But unlike most humanists, Aldenburgk lived the experience. His ability to make sense of the dynamic between God and nature is a sign of his intimacy with God, but the extent of this bond is shrouded in opacity. Unlike the sixteenth-century seafarer, Hans Staden, Aldenburgk does not explicitly present himself as a prophet or intercessor. And although his articulation of his observations seems tempered by Christian humility, social capital could also accompany an author who was believed to have an extraordinary closeness to God.

Aldenburgk’s account is written almost entirely in the vernacular German, but he does, on occasion, rely on Latin. Having a command of the Latin language separated the author from lower ranking members of society as this skill signified one’s education, sophistication, and social standing. In the opening paragraphs of *Reise Nach Brasilien*, Aldenburgk informs the reader that, “ex adjectis” (by adding [Latin]) to the German text, he hopes to enhance the reader’s understanding of his eyewitness account of the “exercitatos Martis & Neptuni” (practices of Mars and Neptune).⁷⁵ For Aldenburgk, the practices of Mars and Neptune involved both military exercises as well as an attempt to reconcile man’s role in nature. During the first leg of his trans-Atlantic journey, Aldenburgk describes whaling, not simply as a hunt, but as a military battle. “Wallfische,” Aldenburgk writes, blow sea spray like “Musqueten schossen” (musket shots), while the whalers arm themselves with harpoons - Neptune’s trident.⁷⁶ Aldenburgk rhetorically positions himself on the winning side of a dramatic confrontation between a powerful, yet nurturing God (in this instance, a Roman God) and the unpredictable and dangerous forces of nature. With Neptune’s trident, the sea too can be tamed.

The harpoon is a tool with obvious practical hunting purposes, but the metaphor of the Trident has the potential for many layers of meaning. Perhaps it represents technology, knowledge, the holy trinity, or something completely different. There are no cut and dry answers, but Aldenburgk’s interest in the classics is undeniable. Aldenburgk writes that there are only two types of people in the world; those who like Democritus, take interest in the value of traveling without the desire to seize everything they see; and those who are ignorant to traveling, yet judge from the travel accounts, “tanquam cæcus de coloribus” (as the blind judges colors).⁷⁷ He correlates the second group with the donkey and nightingale from Æsop’s fables.⁷⁸ By using the Latin language and referencing classical tales, Aldenburgk attempted to transcend his own social status, presumably to be remembered as a respected and enlightened member of European society, or simply to sell more books. Duffy and Metcalf have argued that the use of Latin or Greek symbolized “respect for the ancients and membership in an international community of learning and inquiry.”⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Eve M. Duffy and Alida C. Metcalf. *The Return of Hans Staden*. 85.

⁷⁵ Aldenburgk, *Reise Nach Brasilien 1623-1626*. 5-6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 15. “*einem Hapon . . . hat die Fazoon wie eine Gabel . . . damit Neptunus pfleget.*” (a harpoon . . . has the shape of a fork . . . with it, Neptune nurtures My translation.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 7. “*Es sind zweyerley art Menschen auff den Erdgloben zu befinden: Theils, welche die Kunst recht vnd wol zu peregriniren, höchlich loben, denen auch nicht vnbillig Democritus, der einmal gefraget worden, wozu, daß man die Land durchreysete, dienlich were? vmb deß grossen darauß gesehenen Nutzes willen. Die übrigen judiciren von der Reysekunst tanquam cæcus de coloribus.*” My translation.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 7. “*oder wie jener Esel bey dem Æsopo, der deß Widhopffen geplerr der Nachtigal Gesang vorzoge. Solche mögen immer ihres gefallens de peregrinationibus ægrè sentiren, vnd den usum einmal mit ihrem Schaden erfahren.*” My translation. The moral of Æsop’s fables: one cannot please everyone (donkey), and one should not mourn what is lost forever (nightingale).

⁷⁹ Duffy and Metcalf. *The Return of Hans Staden*. 85.

Conclusion

It is not altogether surprising that Aldenburgk and some of his contemporaries were so willing to voice their grievances. As a graduate of Jena, Aldenburgk was part of an institution where new discourses of religious cooperation between Lutherans and Calvinists received wide support during the early seventeenth century.⁸⁰ Peter Wilson writes that the University of Jena was “one of the more radical Lutheran universities which taught arguments similar to the Calvinist theory of resistance.”⁸¹ Still, what exactly led Aldenburgk to serve as a mercenary is not entirely clear. Early modern Germany, after all, had many moving parts. Since the sixteenth century, many Lutherans left Catholic provinces to attend Protestant services, a phenomenon known as the *Auslof* (exodus).⁸² From 1621 to 1622, the Kipper and Wipper disrupted the economy. In 1623, Palatine lands and titles were transferred to the Habsburgs, and by 1632, the Duchy of Sachsen-Coburg (Aldenburgk’s hometown) joined forces with Sweden, making them a target for Wallenstein and the Imperialists.⁸³ For many, the German landscape during the Thirty Years’ War must have been as chaotic and unpredictable as the sea, and perhaps Dutch seafaring offered a beacon of hope, however dim, that the continent could no longer muster.

The travel accounts of Aldenburgk, Richshoffer, and Hemmersam display the intrinsic contradictions of early modern warfare. Despite their contributions to Dutch colonialism, mercenaries were still looked upon with disdain and contempt. For Dutch polemicists, mercenaries were a necessary evil. To villagers and townspeople, they were trespassing criminals. To capitalist merchants and investors, they were a disposable commodity. To ministers, they were a threat to the moral fabric of society. These men, and this is especially true of German soldiers during the Thirty Years War, were thrust into a world of religious debate, economic expansion, and colonial ambitions. They sacrificed life and limb for a meager wage, while buttressing the authority of merchants, ministers, and political leaders. In a world engulfed in atrocities, perseverance must have also reinforced notions of self-righteousness. For the mercenaries who survived, sharing their story was both conformation of their divine providence as well as a broadside against the most powerful institutions of the day.

⁸⁰ Wilson. *The Thirty Years War*. 263.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 330.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 58.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 229.