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Hans Staden's *Warhaftige Historia*: How a Tale of Brazilian Captivity Affirmed Staden's Protestant Identity

Abstract

Hans Staden's *Warhaftige Historia* detailed his experience as a captive to the Tupinambá in Brazil in the 1550s. The text serves as a gateway into the minds of Europeans in Brazil during this time period. After spending years working for the Catholic Portuguese in Brazil and nine months as a captive, native Hessians viewed Staden as a "foreigner" upon his return to his homeland. Staden used his text as a way to confirm his identity as a staunch Protestant and a devoted Hessian through a dedication to Prince Philipp and numerous allusions to his faith. In addition to solidifying his identity as a Protestant, *Warhaftige Historia* also allowed Staden to reaffirm his German identity after spending so many years in Brazil. *Warhaftige Historia* exhibited the tension between French and Portuguese colonizers, who Staden distanced himself from in order to verify his identity as a loyal Hessian. *Warhaftige Historia*, a highly political and propagandistic piece, served the purpose of affirming Staden's loyalty to Hessian Prince Philipp and the Protestant faith after spending many years outside of his native land.

**Hans Staden's *Warhaftige Historia*:
Protestant Identity in a Tale of Brazilian Captivity**
Joy Zanghi | Gettysburg College '21

Hans Staden's *True History*, originally as *Warhaftige Historia*, is a key primary source that historians have used to understand early colonization in Brazil since its publication in 1557. Heavily saturated with the themes of Protestantism, the account is written in narrative form and details the German Hans Staden's time in Brazil. Staden worked as a gunner on the island of San Amaro for two years until he was captured by native peoples known as the Tupinambá. The Tupinambá took him as a prisoner of war with the intention of sacrificing and eating him, but Staden survived his nine-month captivity, which he attributed to the good will of God. Staden's *True History* detailed his encounters with the natives for a European audience, but more importantly, it served as a testament of faith. Returning to Protestant Germany, Staden dedicated his narrative to the strictly devout Landgrave of Hesse, Philipp I, and used stories of faith throughout the account to highlight how he survived.

The religious conflict that accompanied the Protestant Reformation had a foundational impact on *Warhaftige Historia*. By

the mid-sixteenth century, during Staden's time in Brazil, Protestantism had gained traction throughout Europe. Prince Philipp ruled Staden's native territory of Hesse since the early 1500s, and by the middle of the century Prince Philipp had become a strong supporter of the Reformation. While Iberian countries such as Portugal and Spain remained staunchly Catholic, Protestantism had begun its spread to other European nations. Both Lutheran and Calvinist beliefs were circulating in France, and despite the differences between the confessions, Catholic Iberian nations did not distinguish between them and instead viewed both with disdain.¹ This push towards the Reformation led to Protestant princes claiming the "right to determine the faith of their subjects," known by the Latin motto *cujus regio, ejus religio*, meaning that Prince Philipp was able to enforce Protestant beliefs on Hessians such as Staden when he returned from Brazil in 1555.² The legal enforcement of Protestantism became integral to Prince Philipp's rule over Hesse and was a central reason for *Warhaftige Historia's* publication, which this article will discuss in detail.

¹ Charles E. Nowell, "The French in Sixteenth-Century Brazil," *The Americas* 5, no. 4 (1949), 381.

² Luciana Villas-Boas, "Wild Stories of a Pious Travel Writer: The Unruly Example of Hans Staden's *Warhaftig Historia* (Marburg 1557)," *Daphnis - Zeitschrift für Mittlere Deutsche Literatur* 33, no. 1 (2004): 192.

By the time Staden arrived in Brazil, the Portuguese dominated the region and controlled much of the brazilwood trade. Brazilwood was used to create a red dye for luxury cloth.³ Despite the Portuguese monopoly, French forces sought to challenge that control and take advantage of the brazilwood supply.⁴ While both nations vied for power in the South America, they established very different methods of colonization. The Portuguese created settlements and trading posts, as seen in Hans Staden's *True History*, but the French lacked formal settlements and left individuals to serve as go-betweens for French traders and the indigenous groups.⁵ Despite the different approaches, both nations took advantage of relations with the natives. The Portuguese, allied with the Tupiniquin, and the French, allied with the Tupinambá, used native alliances to their advantage in the colonial conflict.

It was in this context that Hans Staden came to Brazil. Despite scholars having researched Staden and his text, much remains unknown about his life prior to his experiences in South America. Hans Staden hailed from the town of Homberg, Hesse, a territory in modern-day Germany. Working as an arquebusier, in 1547 Staden was able to find employment on a Portuguese ship

³ Regina R. Félix and Scott D. Juall, *Cultural Exchanges between Brazil and France* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2016), 20.

⁴ Nowell, "The French in Sixteenth-Century Brazil," 382.

⁵ Félix and Juall, *Cultural Exchanges*, 21.

sailing for Brazil, although he made it clear in the beginning of his account that his initial desire was to sail to India.⁶ On his second journey to Brazil in 1549, he sailed with a Portuguese crew and served as a gunner in a new fort after landing in São Vicente. It was during this time that he was taken into captivity, which he explained in detail in *Warhaftige Historia*. Upon his return to Europe in 1555, very little is known about Staden other than the fact that he retired to Hesse where he was questioned by Prince Philipp about his experience in the New World and subsequently published *Warhaftige Historia*.

An interdisciplinary approach is needed to analyze the relationships depicted in *Warhaftige Historia* and to understand what the text reveals about Europe and the New World during the sixteenth century. In addition to a historical approach, anthropological and literary techniques have been utilized in the investigation of Staden's narrative. The analysis will follow the narrative of *Warhaftige Historia* in the order of which Staden documented the events.

⁶ Hans L. Staden, *Hans Staden's True History: An Account of Cannibal Captivity in Brazil*, trans. and ed. Neil L. Whitehead and Michael L. Harbsmeier (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 21.

Historiography

As one of the only existing accounts of colonial Brazil not written by the French or Portuguese, Staden's *True History* provided a more expansive understanding of sixteenth-century Brazil and Europe. From the late 1970s to the turn of the present century, the academic works surrounding Staden largely considered whether his story was true and if he was a trustworthy source. Throughout this discourse, the topic of cannibalism was central to much of the debate. Scholarly work in the twenty-first century has looked beyond the legitimacy of the narrative and has instead used Staden's account as evidence to unlock the minds of sixteenth-century Europeans during the colonization of the New World.

Early scholarship about Staden's *True History* debated the factual accuracy and legitimacy of the source, and many other scholars wrote articles in response to such claims. William Arens's *Man Eating Myth* from 1979 served as a cornerstone in the debate.⁷ Arens challenged the evidence presented by Staden to argue that sixteenth-century depictions of natives, specifically regarding claims of cannibalism, were not rooted in fact. Similarly, Annerose Menninger used literary analysis in 1995 to disprove the usefulness

⁷ William Arens, *The Man-Eating Myth: Anthropology and Anthropophagy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

of *Warhaftige Historia*.⁸ By placing Staden's account alongside other popular travel stories contemporary to *Warhaftige Historia*, Menninger argued that Staden's narrative was intentionally constructed to become a bestseller, rather than depict the truth of life in colonial Brazil.⁹ The scholars mentioned above formed the central group that argued against using *Warhaftige Historia* as an academic source and sought to discredit Staden's narrative. Numerous scholars wrote contrasting articles in response to those who doubted Staden's authenticity, but at the turn of the century, the scholarship around *Warhaftige Historia* began to change.

As scholarship entered the 2000s, academic work on *Warhaftige Historia* centered less on debating or upholding Arens's claims of Staden's illegitimacy. Neil Whitehead has been one of the more prominent researchers of Staden in the twenty-first century. In "Hans Staden and the Cultural Politics of Cannibalism," Whitehead dismissed the debate of whether or not there is truth to be found in *True History*.¹⁰ Instead of addressing and arguing against previous scholarship, Whitehead has taken a

⁸ Annerose Menninger, *Die Macht der Augenzeugen: Neue Welt und Kannibalen-Mythos, 1492-1600* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1995).

⁹ Eve M. Duffy and Alida C. Metcalf, *The Return of Hans Staden: A Go-Between in the Atlantic World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 7.

¹⁰ Whitehead, Neil L. "Hans Staden and the Cultural Politics of Cannibalism," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 80, no. 4 (2000): 721-51.

more modern approach and investigated what information Staden's text could provide about European and Brazilian society in the mid-sixteenth century. Whitehead expanded the discussion by highlighting the importance of religion in Staden's narrative in a way that had not been done by scholars before him.¹¹ Other historians such as Luciana Villas-Boas followed similar paths, arguing that the Protestant message behind *Warhaftige Historia* and its publication were critical to understanding the production of the book as a whole.¹² H. E. Martel came to a similar conclusion, emphasizing the importance of "competing Christianities" in the role of Brazilian colonization and in Staden's account.¹³ Martel further argued that Staden's depiction of the Tupinambá provided an "other against which to define" Staden's values, specifically the values of Reformation-era Protestantism.¹⁴ The majority of the scholarly work on Staden in the twenty-first century has centered less on his factual accuracy and instead focused on the insight that

¹¹ Whitehead expanded the discussion regarding Hans Staden by highlighting the importance of religion in the narrative in a way that had not been done by scholars prior to him. In addition to this, Whitehead continued to play a very important role in the historiography of Hans Staden by being the co-editor and translator of the most modern English translation of *Warhaftige Historia* in 2008.

¹² Villas-Boas, "Wild Stories of a Pious Travel Writer," 187-212.

¹³ H. E. Martel, "Hans Staden's Captive Soul: Identity, Imperialism, and Rumors of Cannibalism in Sixteenth-Century Brazil," *Journal of World History* 17, no. 1 (2006): 51-69.

¹⁴ Martel, "Hans Staden's Captive Soul," 55.

the narrative provided into the sixteenth century. In keeping with this trend, it is necessary to explore what *Warhaftige Historia* can reveal about Christianity in the mid 1500s. *Warhaftige Historia* served the purpose of affirming Staden's identity as a Hessian Protestant and depicted a microcosm of Protestant and Catholic conflicts that raged in Europe while highlighting the intensity of the competition between the French and Portuguese in sixteenth-century Brazil.

Prince Philipp: A Source of Dedication and Inspiration

Hans Staden wrote a dedication, a preface, and included an introduction written by his editor Johannes Dryander before recounting his narrative. These early sections of the account exhibit the importance of Staden's Protestant identity in writing *Warhaftige Historia*.¹⁵ Staden started his narrative with a dedication "to the Serene and Highborn Prince and Lord, Lord Philip{p}, Landgrave of Hesse..." which immediately acknowledged his intended audience.¹⁶ Staden's dedication to Prince Philipp and his purpose for writing *Warhaftige Historia*

¹⁵ Many of the quotations in *Warhaftige Historia* include square brackets [] that appear in the Whitehead edition of the text. When quoting directly from the text, those brackets will remain. Curly brackets {} will be used to denote a bracketed section used by the author.

¹⁶ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 7.

were deeply intertwined. In order to understand that, one must first gain insight into the role of Prince Philipp in Hessian history.

In the sixteenth century, German landgraves, princes, and other nobles held power similar to that of monarchs in their respective states. As a result, it was customary for the sovereign to assert control over as many aspects of life as possible.¹⁷ The power of the prince often extended to religion, and Prince Philipp was no exception to this trend. Philipp of Hesse first came into contact with Martin Luther in 1521, and by 1524 he had become “an adherent to the Reformation.”¹⁸ Despite this early introduction to Protestantism, it was not until later in the century, around the 1540s, that Prince Philipp started to strongly back the Reformation and enforce it throughout his territory. In 1546, just prior to Staden’s journey to the New World, Prince Philipp became a leader of the Protestant opposition against the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in the War of the Schmalkaldic League. Following the war, Philipp was imprisoned in the Netherlands for five years.¹⁹ By the time Staden left Hesse to work

¹⁷ Alton O. Hancock, “Philipp of Hesse’s View of the Relationship of Prince and Church,” *Church History* 35, no. 2 (1966): 157.

¹⁸ Hancock, “Philipp of Hesse’s View of the Relationship of Prince and Church,” 160.

¹⁹ Michaela Schmolz-Haberlein and Mark Haberlein, “Hans Staden, Neil L. Whitehead, and the Cultural Politics of Scholarly Publishing,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 81, no. 3 (2001): 750.

in Brazil in 1547, his sovereign was at one of his lowest points of his power.²⁰

When Staden returned to Hesse after his experience in captivity, he came back to a very different territory than the one he had left. Still a fervent Protestant who continued to expect those under his jurisdiction to practice the same religion, Philipp had been returned to Hesse and regained a princely role over his territory, as one can see based on Staden's dedication to the Prince. Upon Staden's return to his native land, he was interrogated by agents of the prince in order to confirm his loyalty to the Prince and the Protestant faith after spending years surrounded by Catholics. This initial questioning played a large role in the production of *Warhaftige Historia*, as the legitimacy of Staden's story became contingent on his statement of faith during this interaction.²¹ Staden's time among the Tupinambá had potentially led to his transformation into a go-between, which in turn made him a "foreigner" in his own land.²² Due to his new status as a "foreigner," Staden had to work to verify his faith and his devotion to Prince Philipp of Hesse; the account of his time in Brazil served that purpose. Therefore, Staden's narrative was a product of the interrogation upon his return to Hesse, implying that the account

²⁰ Duffy and Metcalf, *The Return of Hans Staden*, 79.

²¹ Villas-Boas, "Wild Stories of a Pious Travel Writer," 197.

²² Villas-Boas, "Wild Stories of a Pious Travel Writer," 192.

can be understood as “a strategic offering to an interested and politically powerful audience.”²³ Furthermore, Philipp’s strict Protestantism would have likely placed restrictions on publication, especially since he had been directly involved with the introduction of the printing press to Hesse in 1527.²⁴ It is possible that Staden’s narrative was written under strict expectations and was likely censored to appeal to a Protestant territory. With this context, one can begin to see the interconnectedness between the dedication of *Warhaftige Historia* and the Protestant themes that show up throughout the narrative.

While the dedication to Prince Philipp provided some understanding of Staden’s purpose for writing *Warhaftige Historia* upon his return, the preface and introduction made his purpose abundantly clear. Staden himself wrote that his purpose was to write for Prince Philipp the story of his “travels and voyages... Thus, your Highness may, whenever it pleases you, have the story of how I {Staden} with the help of God have traveled across land and sea.”²⁵ This statement of purpose clearly connected his dedication to Philipp and the role of the narrative as a declaration of faith. Throughout *Warhaftige Historia*, Staden continually attributed his survival to the good will of God, similarly to how it

²³ Martel, “Hans Staden’s Captive Soul,” 57-58.

²⁴ Villas-Boas, “Wild Stories of a Pious Travel Writer,” 195.

²⁵ Staden, *Hans Staden’s True History*, 8.

was written in the quote above. While Staden never directly referred to Protestantism in the entirety of the account, the text was heavily saturated with the concept of Staden's salvation through faith in God, rather than salvation earned by good deeds, which was central to Protestant beliefs. Since the Prince had direct control over Church affairs, this turned "the profession of faith into a political gesture."²⁶ The religiosity of *Warhaftige Historia* served a political and almost propagandistic purpose. With Prince Philipp as Staden's intended audience and his purpose being to reveal how God helped him throughout his perilous journey, it is clear that upholding his legitimacy as a Protestant and supporting Prince Philipp's dedication to the Protestant faith was instrumental in the creation of *Warhaftige Historia*.

The importance of legitimizing Staden's Protestant identity to Prince Philipp is also present in the Introduction to *Warhaftige Historia*. Doctor Johannes Dryander, who served as an advisor to Prince Philipp and a friend to Staden's father, wrote the introduction for Staden's account. Dryander vouched for Staden's legitimacy and assured readers that *Warhaftige Historia* was full of nothing but the truth, insiting that Staden sought to publish his account "only to praise the glory of God and express his

²⁶ Villas-Boas, "Wild Stories of a Pious Travel Writer," 195.

thankfulness for his salvation.”²⁷ Dryander repeated this in numerous ways throughout his brief introduction, which accentuated the critical importance of Protestantism with relation to Staden’s publication of *Warhaftige Historia*. Although his experience as a captive created a fascinating tale that would appeal to readers, the heart of Staden’s text was truly centered on a declaration of faith that would prove his loyalty to Prince Philipp during a time when Europe was divided by the “Christian contest for souls” between Protestants and Catholics.²⁸

Dryander’s introduction served to legitimize *Warhaftige Historia* in a several respects. First of all, according to the introduction, Staden asked Dryander to “look at his work and written stories, correct them, and wherever necessary, improve them.”²⁹ As an advisor to Prince Philipp and a moderately well-known Hessian scholar in his day, Dryander’s involvement lent a legitimacy to *Warhaftige Historia* that readers of the time would have wanted to see.³⁰ In addition to this, Dryander noted that he took part in the interrogation that Staden went through upon his return from Brazil which provided evidence of Dryander’s connection to the Prince as well as his knowledge of Staden’s

²⁷ Staden, *Hans Staden’s True History*, 10.

²⁸ Martel, “Hans Staden’s Captive Soul,” 58.

²⁹ Staden, *Hans Staden’s True History*, 9.

³⁰ Duffy and Metcalf, *The Return of Hans Staden*, 77.

experience.³¹ The second way in which Dryander legitimized the text was his restatement of Staden's purpose; "to praise the glory of God and express thankfulness for his salvation... to enable everyone to see how mercifully God, our Lord, against all hope delivered this man, Hans Staden, from so many dangers."³²

Dryander's introduction thus provided another statement of purpose that highlighted the importance of Staden's support of Protestantism and Prince Philipp after returning from the New World dominated by Catholic empires. The dedication to Prince Philipp, Staden's preface, and the Dryander's introduction provide key insight into the Staden's reasoning to publish *Warhaftige Historia*.

Staden's Conflict with European Identities

After making clear his intentions in the dedication, the story of Staden's capture by the Tupinambá provides additional information about religious conflicts in the New World. While much of the account produced valuable information about inter-European colonial relations, indigenous groups, and examples of Staden's faith, the interactions with the Tupinambá and the French

³¹ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 15-16.

³² Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 10.

man, Caruatá-uára, shortly after Staden's capture provides useful insight into all three of these topics within a brief encounter.

After the Tupinambá took Staden captive and brought him back to their home of Ipperu Wasu, his captors explained their reasoning behind the abduction. This explanation offers valuable information about the indigenous-European relations in sixteenth-century Brazil and how the indigenous groups influenced the European struggle for control of Brazil. In the exchange between Staden and the Tupi brothers who had caught him, the latter revealed that his people's "idols" had predicted that they would capture a Portuguese. The act of taking captives was a popular practice and source of revenge at that time, and the Tupinambá delineated the numerous reasons they sought revenge on the Portuguese, highlighting many important aspects of the relationship between the two groups.³³ Upon arrival in Brazil, the Portuguese had "made friends" with the enemies of the Tupinambá, known as the Tupiniquin, which caused Staden's captives to view the Portuguese as enemies.³⁴ Having spent two years at the Portuguese fort of Bertioga in São Vicente, Staden would have been well aware of the enmity between the indigenous groups, but the exchange provides even deeper insight into the

³³ Duffy and Metcalf, *The Return of Hans Staden*, 48.

³⁴ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 58.

relationship between the Europeans and the Tupinambá. Staden's captors explained that the Portuguese had routinely taken advantage of their people under the guise of peaceful trade negotiations. Once the Tupinambá were aboard the Portuguese vessel, the Europeans "had attacked and bound them, and carried them away to give them to their enemies", the Tupiniquin.³⁵ This showed that the Portuguese were quite loyal to the Tupiniquin and they took advantage of the Tupinambá in order to gain the favor of their indigenous allies. The Tupinambá brothers that captured Staden also informed him that their father had been killed by the Portuguese. Given his role as a gunner for the Portuguese, Staden's status made him the perfect captive and source of revenge against the enemies of the Tupinambá. This brief encounter reveals information about the relationship between the European powers and the indigenous groups during Staden's time in Brazil which improves an understanding of the European conflict that Staden found himself entangled in.

While information regarding the relationship between the Portuguese and the Tupinambá can be gleaned from this brief section, it also reveals much about the French in colonial Brazil. Since the Tupinambá were allies of the French, Staden insisted that he was French rather than Portuguese to try to save himself. His

³⁵ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 58.

statement only encouraged his Tupi captors to invite a Frenchman to test the Hessian's authenticity. Caruatá-uára, the Frenchman who came to speak with Staden, had been dispatched from French ships to live among the natives and lived just four miles from the settlement that Staden had been brought to. Caruatá-uára served as a go-between for the French traders and the Tupinambá. Unlike the Portuguese, the French did not create permanent trading settlements and instead established connections through men like Caruatá-uára.³⁶ During their interaction, Caruatá-uára was quick to dismiss Staden's claim of being French due to his inability to properly communicate in French. The Tupinambá believed the Frenchman over Staden, further emphasizing the value of the relationship cultivated between the French go-betweens and the Tupinambá. This interaction exemplified the intensity of the competition between the French and Portuguese and the importance of indigenous allyship for European powers.

This brief interaction also reveals the intensity of the competition between the French and the Portuguese in 1550s Brazil. Staden, from Protestant Germany, quickly denied his connection to the Portuguese upon his capture and insisted that he was a friend of the French in the hopes of being released. The Tupinambá were quick to doubt Staden's claim due to the fact that

³⁶ Félix and Juall, *Cultural Exchanges between Brazil and France*, 21.

“they well knew that the French were as much enemies of the Portuguese as they were” and had captured Staden near a Portuguese fort.³⁷ Although the French did not become significantly active in Brazilian trade until the 1540s, the animosity between the Portuguese and French was great enough for the Tupinambá to have a strong understanding of the colonial power relations at play on their land.³⁸ The interaction between Hans Staden and Caruatá-uára also provides insight into the competition that existed between the two European powers. When Staden heard that a Frenchman was coming to see him, he became filled with hope that a fellow Christian would be sure to help him escape from captivity and a likely death. Since Staden was unable to understand French, Caruatá-uára insisted that Staden was indeed Portuguese and advised Staden’s captors to “kill and eat him,” since he was an enemy of both the French and the Tupinambá. Caruatá-uára saw no connection to Staden, despite potentially having the same religion and similar European backgrounds, and had no difficulty instructing the Tupinambá to kill him. This implies that the alliance between the French and the Tupinambá was much more important than the French relations with other Europeans. This is likely due to the fact that the Portuguese posed as a major threat to

³⁷ Staden, *Hans Staden’s True History*, 58.

³⁸ Félix and Juall, *Cultural Exchanges between Brazil and France*, 20.

French trading in Brazil. Moreover, Caruatá-uára's purpose as a go-between was to keep the Franco-Tupinambá relations functional in order to facilitate trade when French ships arrived. Assisting Staden would in no way benefit trade and would create a rift between the Tupinambá and the French. Caruatá-uára's unwillingness to help Staden highlights the critical role that the indigenous groups played in sixteenth-century Brazilian trade. Caruatá-uára would rather condemn a fellow Protestant European to be eaten by cannibals than risk upsetting the balanced relations with the Tupinambá.

Staden's insistence on rejecting the Portuguese label and identifying as a friend of the French also ties into the religious theme present throughout the narrative. The Portuguese were staunchly Catholic, but the German states and France had become influenced by the Reformation. Staden's insistence that he was not Portuguese could also be tied to his German audience with a specific emphasis on Philipp of Hesse. During Staden's time in Brazil, Philipp transformed Hessian life and enforced Protestantism on his subjects.³⁹ Prior to captivity, Staden worked for the Portuguese and had a fair amount of interaction with Catholic Spaniards, and upon his return to Hesse he was treated as a foreigner and questioned by the Prince. With Protestantism much

³⁹ Duffy and Metcalf, *The Return of Hans Staden*, 79.

more central to his native culture than when he left, announcing one's faith became an act of political support due to the connection between Protestantism and the state.⁴⁰ Therefore, it is very possible that while Staden insisted on detaching himself from the Portuguese while in captivity in order to remain alive, his emphasis on not being Portuguese was directed at Prince Philipp and a German audience in order to show allegiance to the Protestant faith and a separation from the Catholic nations. Throughout *Warhaftige Historia*, Staden's identity is continually questioned, and by denying his association with a Catholic nation he affirms his Protestant identity.

Shortly after that series of interactions, Staden was brought by the Tupinambá to a neighboring Tupi village known as Aririó. In this village he met with the highest Tupi king known as Cunhambebe. As in the previous conversation with his captors, Staden's interaction with Cunhambebe also provided ample insight into the conflict between the French and the Portuguese in Brazil, as well as more strong messages regarding Staden's faith. When introducing Staden to Cunhambebe, the Tupi said "Here I bring the slave, the Portuguese," despite Staden's continued denial of being Portuguese.⁴¹ Staden once again attempted to insist that he was no

⁴⁰ Villas-Boas, "Wild Stories of a Pious Travel Writer," 195.

⁴¹ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 62.

enemy of the Tupinambá, despite the fact that he had worked for the Portuguese. Cunhambebe reacted to Staden's claims once more by bringing forth the Frenchman, Caruatá-uára. Staden was then reminded that just earlier, the "[French]man who had seen me, said that I had not been able to speak with him, and claimed that I was a real Portuguese," further proving to the Tupi that Staden was indeed an enemy of theirs.⁴² Cunhambebe further insisted that "he had already helped to capture and eat five Portuguese who had all said they were Frenchmen, and had lied about this."⁴³

Cunhambebe's simple statement further exposes level of animosity between the Portuguese and the French in Brazil, especially in relation to their indigenous allies. It also proves that Europeans would try to manipulate said alliances to their advantage, but based on Cunhambebe's comment, they were rarely successful. Based on this interaction, one can also assume that many Europeans had found themselves in positions similar to Staden and had not survived. Unlike others, Staden was able to survive captivity, lending his narrative the remarkability needed in order to support his religious message.

Staden's interaction with Cunhambebe in *Warhaftige Historia* was littered with Protestant statements of faith and

⁴² Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 62.

⁴³ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 62.

references to God. Immediately after Cunhambebe insisted that he had previously eaten five Portuguese men that had claimed to be French, Staden wrote “this was so bad that I abandoned all hopes of life and commended myself to God.”⁴⁴ This statement is highly demonstrative of the Protestant faith. Staden admits to entrusting God with his life, evoking the Protestant expectation of goodwill from God in response to a strong faith. Also, because it is obvious that he survives his captivity, *Warhaftige Historia* implied to readers that they, too, should commend themselves to God. *Warhaftige Historia* contained numerous woodcuts depicting Staden’s captivity to accompany the narrative, one of which illustrated Staden’s encounter with Cunhambebe. In the woodcut (**Figure 1**), Staden was stripped and bound, standing before Cunhambebe at the center of a Tupi village. With his beard, Staden stood out from the indigenous Tupinambá in all of the woodcuts. His nakedness accentuated his gaunt figure, making him appear almost Christ-like at the center of the image. Staden’s seemingly minor religious remark and the woodcut depicting his interaction with Cunhambebe illustrated an example of Staden’s highly Protestant message in *Warhaftige Historia*.

⁴⁴ Staden, *Hans Staden’s True History*, 62.



Figure 1. Staden, *Warhaftige Historia*, 63.

The previously discussed section that detailed Staden's earliest communication with the Tupinambá, Caruatá-uára the Frenchman, and Cunhambebe provided ample detail on the complexities of the alliances in sixteenth century Brazil. The relationship between the Portuguese and the Tupiniquin and the French and the Tupinambá served as incredibly important alliances

that were valued above alliances with other Europeans. These allegiances also influenced indigenous relations with the Europeans, as seen by the anger of the Tupinambá directed towards the Portuguese. This section of *True History* also acknowledges the tension between French and Portuguese settlers in Brazil due to competition in trade and also possibly due to religious differences. Staden's religious overtones also connect to his purpose of writing his narrative as he repeatedly denied being Portuguese, and by default, Catholic. Overall, this brief segment is a valuable resource for analyzing the dynamics of alliances in sixteenth-century Brazil and the importance of religion in Staden's narrative.

Caruatá-uára served as an important figure for Staden to make religious commentary throughout *Warhaftige Historia*. Sometime later, as a captive of the Tupinambá, Staden encountered Caruatá-uára once more. Similar to their first interaction, the second exchange between the two Europeans is equally significant; it supplies valuable information about European competition in Brazil, how European and Indigenous relationships influenced said conflict, and Staden's identity as a Protestant. Staden and Caruatá-uára crossed paths while the Frenchman "had to pass by the place where I {Staden} was held captive," on a trade-related journey.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 71.

At this point in his captivity, Staden had established himself as of a prophet-like figure among the Tupi based on his religious “predictions,” which had been fueled by his preexisting knowledge of the Portuguese and Tupiniquin.⁴⁶ This situation earned Staden the respect of his Tupi captors and while the Tupi no longer talked to Staden “about [possibly: using me as] food anymore,” they still kept him under careful surveillance and would not free him.⁴⁷ The changed dynamic between Staden and the Tupinambá also played a role in transforming the relationship between Staden and the Frenchman during their second encounter since Staden depended less on Caruatá-uára for safety.

It is under these circumstances that the second encounter between Hans Staden and the Frenchman took place. *Warhaftige Historia*’s role in upholding the Protestant faith is very clear in this section. Caruatá-uára, who had not seen Staden since the first day of his capture, was perplexed to find Staden still alive with his Tupi captors. To the Frenchman’s surprise, Staden remarked that he was only alive because of God’s protection.⁴⁸ This message was one of the main purposes of *Warhaftige Historia* and appeared throughout the text on numerous occasions, but the

⁴⁶ Whitehead, “Hans Staden and the Cultural Politics of Cannibalism,” 728.

⁴⁷ Staden, *Hans Staden’s True History*, 71.

⁴⁸ Staden, *Hans Staden’s True History*, 72.

comment to the Frenchman was especially significant when coupled with the discussion that followed.

Staden reminded Caruatá-uára of their previous interaction and “asked whether he [in the moment] when he had advised the savages to kill me, had also had a Christian heart beating in his body” which directly challenged the Frenchman’s faith.⁴⁹ As mentioned previously, both Lutheranism and Calvinism had taken root in France during the mid-sixteenth century to the displeasure of Catholic nations like Portugal and Spain. Staden’s sharp religious rebuke of Caruatá-uára is significant on a number of levels. The comment tied directly into Staden’s purpose of writing *Warhaftige Historia*, to vindicate the Protestant faith by attributing his survival to the grace of God. In this exchange, Staden drew a parallel between the treachery of a fellow European earlier in the narrative to those who were not Christian and underscored the “un-Christian” nature of the Frenchman’s actions. Staden’s accusation of “un-Christian” behavior also tied into the “Christian contest for souls” occurring throughout Europe and the colonies at this time.⁵⁰ On a deeper level, Staden’s disappointment in the Frenchman’s actions was likely a way for him to appeal directly to Prince Philipp, the intended audience of *Warhaftige Historia*. As one of

⁴⁹ Staden, *Hans Staden’s True History*, 72.

⁵⁰ Martel, “Hans Staden’s Captive Soul,” 58.

the prominent leaders of the Schmalkaldic League, Philipp had turned to the French, specifically King Francis I, to assist in his struggle against the Holy Roman Empire. Instead of aiding Philipp and the Protestant struggle, King Francis I declared peace with Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire in 1544, turning away from an alliance with the Hessian lord.⁵¹ Staden clearly expressed disappointment with the French via his reprimand of Caruatá-uára during this interaction, which was likely a way to please Prince Philipp and affirm the legitimacy of his own Protestant identity. Overall, the second confrontation between Staden and Caruatá-uára provided important insight into the religious tensions in Europe that were being played out on Brazilian land during the sixteenth century as well as a glimpse into Staden's religious identity.

The dialogue between Staden and the Frenchman in this scene additionally revealed the tense reality of European relationships and competition in Brazil, and how indigenous alliances played a role in the conflict. After Staden questioned whether Caruatá-uára had a "Christian heart," the Frenchman was quick to justify his prior actions. Caruatá-uára insisted that he "had been certain that I {Staden} was a Portuguese" and that the French

⁵¹ Schmolz-Haberlein and Haberlein, "Hans Staden, Neil L. Whitehead, and the Cultural Politics of Scholarly Publishing," 750.

considered the Portuguese to be such enemies that “they would hang them {the Portuguese} at once” if they were captured.⁵² The drastic nature of the French response to capturing Portuguese exhibits a glimpse into the raging conflict between the French and Portuguese forces in Brazil, and how Staden had been caught up in this competition. Indigenous alliances were integral for both European nations in their fight to control the colonization of Brazil, and this interaction proves that as well. Immediately after revealing that the French would hang any Portuguese they could find, Caruatá-uára added that the French “had to adapt to the [ways of the] savages and be content with their treatment of their enemies, since they were the traditional enemies of the Portuguese.”⁵³ In this statement the Frenchman justified the violent competition between the European powers present in Brazil and uncovered fascinating details about the European-Tupi alliances. On one hand, the comment demonstrated the agency that the Tupinambá had in their alliance with the French rather than depicting the indigenous groups as passive figures during the process of colonization. On the other hand, Caruatá-uára’s statement also related to the religious issue present between Catholic and non-Catholic countries. Since the Treaty of

⁵² Staden, *Hans Staden’s True History*, 72.

⁵³ Staden, *Hans Staden’s True History*, 72.

Tordesillas only included the Catholic nations of the Iberian Peninsula, the French relied on indigenous relations to maintain their presence in Brazil.⁵⁴ Caruatá-uára's role as a go-between for the French and Tupinambá was critical for French development in Brazil, which connects to his previous interaction with Staden and his desire to please the Tupi. This scene is a prime example of the importance of indigenous allegiance as well as the intensity of the conflict between the European powers in Brazil.

While this was the final interaction directly between Caruatá-uára and Staden, their relationship and Staden's criticism of the Frenchman continued throughout the end of the narrative as a tool to validate Staden's faithfulness to his Prince and his God. To end this exchange between the two men, Staden begged Caruatá-uára "to send for me and take me back to France with the first ship that arrived," and according to *Warhaftige Historia*, Caruatá-uára agreed and also informed Staden's captors that he was indeed a friend of the French.⁵⁵ As the narrative unfolds, Staden continually implored the Tupi to allow him to be freed since he had proven his "friendship" to the French, but the Tupinambá insisted that "they wanted to have many goods [as a ransom]" in exchange for Staden and would not free him yet.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Félix and Juall, *Cultural Exchanges between Brazil and France*, 36.

⁵⁵ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 72-73.

⁵⁶ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 82.

After some time waiting to be freed, in a state of desperation, Staden swam out to a French boat that had been anchored for trade. When he attempted to climb aboard, “the Frenchmen pushed me away, for they thought that if they took me along without the consent of the savages, these might rise against them and become their enemies.”⁵⁷ This encounter echoed the previously mentioned interactions with Caruatá-uára and continued to emphasize the fact that the French relied heavily on their relationship with the Tupinambá and were not willing to put it at risk for the life of another European. The moment in which the French rejected Staden was significant enough to be depicted in one of the woodcuts that Staden included in *Warhaftige Historia*, which can be seen in Figure 2.⁵⁸ In the woodcut, Staden is seen begging the Frenchmen aboard the ship while they sail away without assisting him. Later on, Staden learned that the ship he had attempted to climb onto, which had also held Caruatá-uára onboard, “sank on the voyage home.”⁵⁹ Once Staden was freed by the Tupinambá returned to Europe, he reported the wrongdoings of the Frenchmen aboard the sunken ship and insisted that “there are godless people on board the ship.”⁶⁰ As mentioned previously, it is likely that

⁵⁷ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 82.

⁵⁸ See Figure 2 below.

⁵⁹ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 96.

⁶⁰ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 102.

Staden's harsh commentary on the "godless" nature of these Frenchmen was directed at Prince Philipp of Hesse, as he had also been let down by the "godless" behavior of the French during the War of the Schmalkaldic League. Staden also used the misfortune of the French ship to highlight his Protestant beliefs. Following his accusation of godlessness, he wrote "I now see clearly that the dear Lord wanted to help me... God will not leave such mercilessness and tyranny, as they showed to me on these lands (may God forgive them) unpunished."⁶¹ Staden attributed the bad fate of Caruatá-uára and his crew to the way they had treated Staden, who had been faithful to his God throughout his journey. Staden used that as an opportunity to strengthen the Protestant message of *Warhaftige Historia* and solidify his identity as a Protestant for his Hessian audience.

Conclusion

Hans Staden's *Warhaftige Historia* detailed his experience as a captive among the Tupinambá in Brazil in the 1550s, but most importantly the text served as a gateway into the minds contemporary Europeans. After spending years working for the Catholic Portuguese in Brazil and nine months as a captive, native Hessians viewed Staden as a "foreigner" upon his return to his

⁶¹ Staden, *Hans Staden's True History*, 102.



Figure 2. Staden, *Warhaftige Historia*, 83.

homeland. Prince Philipp, the Protestant prince of Hesse, promptly questioned Staden's loyalty and the legitimacy of his tale once he returned from the New World. This interrogation inspired the creation of *Warhaftige Historia*. Staden used his text as a way to confirm his identity as a staunch Protestant and a devoted Hessian through a dedication to Prince Philipp and numerous allusions to

his faith. The Protestant message of *Warhaftige Historia* remained apparent as Staden often invoked the name of God and thanked Him for his salvation from the cannibalistic Tupinambá.

In addition to solidifying his identity as a Protestant, *Warhaftige Historia* also allowed Staden to reaffirm his Germanic identity after spending so many years in foreign lands. The narrative exhibited the tension between French and Portuguese colonizers as both groups sought control over the trade of brazilwood and trade with the natives, and Staden became entangled in the conflict. As a captive, Staden denied any relation to the Portuguese. His denial of Portuguese identity initially served the purpose of evading death at the hands of the indigenous enemies of the Portuguese. Rejection of any association with the Portuguese also served as a direct comment to Prince Philipp. By repudiating an alliance with the Portuguese Staden also rejected any possible notion of being Catholic. Staden clearly distinguished himself from the French throughout *Warhaftige Historia*, as well. Although not a Catholic nation, the French had failed to join Prince Philipp's Protestant league in the War of the Schmalkaldic League. Staden's portrayal of the French in *Warhaftige Historia* centered on his interactions with Caruatá-uára. Caruatá-uára. A French go-between Caruatá-uára repeatedly betrayed Staden and by the end of *Warhaftige Historia*, Staden renounced the "godless" French

who had abandoned him. His criticism of the French strengthened his connection to Prince Philipp and to Hesse, both of which had also been betrayed by the French. Overall, the religious messages that Staden interjected throughout his account provided insight into the Protestant and Catholic struggle for Christian souls. *Warhaftige Historia*, a highly political piece, served the purpose of affirming Staden's loyalty to Hessian Prince Philipp and the Protestant faith after spending many years outside of his native land.

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