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978-1-108-01237-9 - Captivity of Hans Stade of Hesse in A.D. 1547-1555, Among
the Wild Tribes of Eastern Brazil

Hans Stade

Excerpt

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VERITABLE HISTORIE

And description of a country belonging to the wild, naked,
savage, man-eating people, situated in the
New World, America ;

Unknown in the Land of Hesse before and since Christ's birth, until
the two past years, after the day when Hans Stade, from
Homburg in Hesse, has, through his own experience,
learned them, and now, by means of the press,
brings them to light.

DEDICATED TO HIS SERENE HIGHNESS,

The high-born LORD H. PHILIPSEN, Landgrave of Hesse, Count of
Catzenellenbogen, Dietz, Ziegenhain, and Nidda,
his gracious Lord.

WITH A PREFACE

BY

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*To the Serene and Highborn Prince and Lord, the LORD
PHILIPSEN, Landgrave in Hesse, Count of Catzen-
ellenbogen, Dietz, Ziegenhain, and Nidda, etc.,
my gracious Prince and Master.*

MERCY and peace in Christ Jesu our Saviour, Gracious Prince and Master! So speaks the holy and kingly prophet David in the hundred and seventh psalm: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth and ariseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the Heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

"Then are they glad because they be quiet; so He bringeth them unto their desired haven.

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men.

"Let them exalt Him also in the congregation of the people, and praise Him in the assembly of the elders."

In this manner do I thank the Almighty Creator of Heaven, Earth and Sea, his son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, for the great mercy and compassion which, among the savage people of the country Brazil, called the Tuppin

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Imba,¹ who ate men, and whose prisoner I was for nine months, and amidst many other dangers, were through their Holy Trinity quite unexpectedly and wonderfully vouchsafed to me, and that after long misery, peril of life and body, I am again, after past travels and sea voyages, in the Grand Duchy of Hesse, my much beloved fatherland, where I dutifully announce myself without delay. Would Your Highness, at your leisure, allow to be read to you this narrative about the by me traversed land and sea, on account of the wonderful deeds that Almighty God vouchsafed

¹ For Tupinamba, see the introduction. The author of the “Somp-tueuse Entrée,” etc., writes “Toupinabaulx”: Thevet calls them “Toupinambaux” (plural); Jean de Lery, *Tooupinambaoults*, meaning a “noble people of God”; the diphthong “aou” denoting “admirable”; Malherbe softened the word to *Topinambous*, adopted in the age of Louis XIV. Claude d’Abbeville (early in the seventeenth century) prefers *Topynambas*; Yves d’Evreux (chapter vii et passim), *Topinambos* and *Tapinambos*.

Pero Lopes (A.D. 1531) when at Bahia saw an action amongst these people of fifty canoes on each side, and averaging sixty men in each (300 + 300): the braves, who had pavises or large shields painted after the European fashion, fought from noon to sunset. The prisoners were tied with cords, put to death with much ceremony, roasted and eaten. Hans Stade extends them from Rio de Janeiro to the great province of São Paulo. In the *Caramurú* of Fr. Rita Durão (x, 22) we find them upon the Bahian seaboard. Southey (1, 42, 429), following d’Abbeville and Yves d’Evreux assigns to them a habitat from Pará and Maranhão to Bahia, where they held the islands of the Bay of All the Saints, and they are spoken of in other captaincies. The introduction has explained these discrepancies by showing the word to be used by themselves and their friends, not by their enemies.

Part 2 of Hans Stade’s volume is devoted to describing their manners and customs. It must be noted that he says nothing of the artificially flattened noses of the infants, described by Jean de Lery, Claude d’Abbeville and other old travellers in the Brazil.

The Tupinambas sided in early times with the French against the Portuguese. They boasted to be the principal tribe, planted manioc, and had better wigwams than their neighbours. Yet they were cannibals, like the Mpángwe (Fans) of the Gaboon river, a comparatively civilised negro tribe, and they ate their enemies slain in battle, probably for the usual superstitious reasons.

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IN EASTERN BRAZIL.

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me in my distress? That Your Highness may not doubt me, and suppose that I put forward untrue things, I would personally offer you a passport to assist this recital. To God alone be in all Honour and Glory!

And I herewith hasten to express my humble submission.

Dated Wolffhagen, the twentieth day of June,
Anno Domini, Fifteen hundred
and fifty-six.

The born subject of Your Highness Hans
Stade from Homberg in Hesse,
now citizen of Wolffhagen.

To the Highborn Lord, the Lord Philipsen, Count of Nassau and Sarprück, etc., his Gracious Prince, sends D. Joh. Dryander much greeting, with offer of his services.

Hans Stade, who now through the press publishes this book and history, has begged me that I will look through his work and writing of these stories previously to printing, correct them, and, if necessary, improve them. To this, his wish, I have from several causes assented. Firstly, I have known this author's father now for more than fifty years (for he and I were born and brought up in one city, namely, Wetter), and not otherwise the same, at home and in Homberg of Hesse, where he now resides, than as an upright, pious and honest man, who was also learned in good arts. As a well known proverb says, "the apple always tastes of the trunk," and, as may be expected, Hans Stade, this honest man's son, is reported to be like his father in virtue and piety.

Moreover, I accept the task of correcting this little book with the more pleasure and satisfaction, inasmuch as I willingly occupy myself with those matters which concern mathematics, such as cosmography, that is, the description and measurement of counties, cities and roads, some of which are in many ways brought forward in this book. I

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most willingly look into such matters, when I find that any one uprightly and truly reveals and brings to light the things which he has undergone, and I now noways doubt that this Hans Stade writes and makes known an account of his history and travels, not from the statements of other men, but thoroughly and correctly from his own experience without falsehood, the cause being that he therein seeks no glory or worldly fame, but alone God's honour and praise, and gratitude for favours and deliverances vouchsafed to him. And it is his principal object to make known this history, that all may see how mercifully and against every hope our Lord God has delivered this Hans Stade from out of so much peril, because he called unto Him, and rescuing him from the ferocity of those savage peoples (by whom he for ten months daily and hourly had to expect that he would be unmercifully struck dead and eaten), again allowed him to return to his beloved fatherland, Hesse.

For this inexpressible mercy of God he would wish, as much as lies in his limited power, to be duly thankful to Him, and for His praise to disclose openly the favours vouchsafed him. And in fulfilling this pleasant task, the order of events leads him to describe the itinerary and the different things that happened during the two years whilst he was out of his own country.

And as he tells his tale in a simple manner, and not with flowery style, or fine words and arguments, this gives me great belief that it is authentic and veritable; nor could he derive any benefit even if he preferred lying to telling the truth.

Besides, he is now settled, together with his parents, in this country; and he is not, as is the usage of rovers and liars, accustomed to vagabondize, gipsy-like, from one country to another. Therefore he must expect, that should other travelled people who have been in the islands arrive here, these would (presently) prove him a liar.

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And this is to me a sound argument that his account and the description of this history is truthful, inasmuch as he states the time, country and place where Heliodorus,¹ son of the learned and widely known Eoban of Hesse, who has now been long absent on discovery in foreign lands, and was by us here believed to be dead, was with this Hans Stade in the country of the savages, and saw how pitifully he was captured and led away. This Heliodorus, I say, may sooner or later (as is hoped shall happen) return home, and if Hans Stade's story be false or lying, he will put him to shame and denounce him as a worthless man.

From these and similar strong arguments and conjectures towards defending and sustaining the truthfulness of Hans Stade, I will now turn aside, and further briefly point out the reasons for which this and similar such-like histories gain but little credence and belief.

Firstly, travellers have, with their unlimited lies and spreading of false and invented stories, brought matters to such a pass, that but little belief is accorded, even to those honest and truthful men who come from foreign lands. Moreover, it has become a general saying: "Whosoever would lie, let him lie about things far off and out of the country," for nobody will go thither to verify his statements, nay, rather than take this trouble he (the listener) will believe them.

Nothing, however, is gained by discrediting truth on account of lies. Here it is to be noted that though to the

¹ Also mentioned in the conclusion of this book as "one of the sons of the late Eoban of Hesse." Helias (originally Elias, a Jew) Eoban, born in A.D. 1488, died in A.D. 1540, was a German poet of distinction in his day (Southey 1, 45 note and 191), but as he wrote in Latin, he was presently forgotten. According to Monsignor Pizarro (*Memorias historicas do Rio de Janeiro*, viii, 309), the son of this Eliodoro Ebano was Theodoro Ebano Pereira, captain of the war canoes, who, after reestablishing Rio de Janeiro founded Iguápe of São Paulo in A.D. 1554, and Coritygbe, the modern Curitiba, capital of the province of Paraná.

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commonalty many recounted matters appear impossible, yet when those matters are laid before men of knowledge, and are well weighed, they are found to be correct and consistent, and they also prove themselves so to be.

This observe from one or two examples taken from astronomy. We people who live here in Germany, or near by, know from long experience how long winter and summer, as well as the other two seasons, autumn and spring, endure; therefore how long and how short are the longest day in summer and the shortest day in winter, and through this, also, what the nights are.

Now, for instance, when it is said that there are certain parts of the world where the sun for half a year does not set, and where the longest day with those people is six months, that is half a year long; likewise that places are found in the world, where in one year the "quatuor tempora," that is, the four seasons, are doubled, therefore that two winters and two summers certainly exist there in one year. Likewise that the sun with all the stars, small as they appear to us here to be, yet that the smallest star in the heavens is larger than the whole earth, and that there are innumerable many of them.

Now when the common man hears these things, he greatly despises them and he believes them not, and considers them as things which are impossible. Yet these matters are so thoroughly proved by astronomers, that those having knowledge of the science do not doubt them.

Therefore it must not on this account follow, that because the mass consider these things untrue, they are really so; and how badly would the art of astronomers fare, if they could not demonstrate these heavenly bodies, and foretell from certain causes the eclipses, that is, the darkenings of the sun and moon, for fixed days and hours when they shall occur. Yes, men have announced them even some hundred years beforehand, and they have been found by experience

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to be correct. "Yes," say they, "who has been in the heavens, and has seen these things, and has measured them?"

Answer: Because daily experience of these things agrees with the demonstration. One must consider them true, even as it is true that if I add together the figures three and two, these will make five.

And from certain reasons and clear proofs in science, it happens that man can measure and calculate how high it is to the moon's firmament, and from there to all the planets, and, last of all, to the starry heavens. Yea, also the dimensions and size of the sun, the moon, and the other heavenly bodies; and from the study of the heavens, or astronomy, with geometry, we can even calculate how wide, round, broad and long the earth is. Yet these things are unknown to the unlearned man, and are considered by him as unworthy of belief. Ignorance would also be pardonable in the common person, as he has not studied much in philosophy. But that the highly important and the almost learned should doubt those things which are proved true is shameful and also harmful, as the ordinary man looks up to these, and their error being thus confirmed to him, says: "If this were true, then it would not have been contradicted by this or the other writer." Ergo, etc.

That St. Augustine and Lactantius Firmianus, the two most learned, holy, and well-experienced men, not only in theology, but also in other arts, doubt and will not admit that the antipodes can exist, viz., that men are found who on the opposite side of the earth, and under us, walk with their feet towards us, and therefore have their head and body hanging underneath them and against the heavens, and yet do not fall off, etc. This sounds strange, and yet it is everywhere held by scientific men to be so, and that it cannot be otherwise, and it is found true, however much the holy and highly learned authors mentioned above have denied it. For this must be the positive fact, that those

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who live *ex diametro per centrum terræ* must be “antipodes,” and a true proposition is the following: *Omne versus cœlum vergens ubicunque locorum sursum est*. And we need not travel to the New World to seek the antipodes, for these antipodes are also here in the upper hemisphere of the globe. For if we compare and place against each other the extreme country of the west, which is Spain and at Finisterre, with the east where India lies, these extreme nations and inhabitants of the earth will almost give a sort of antipodes.

Several pious theologians pretend to prove that the prayer of the mother of the sons of Zebedey (Zebedee) had become true, when she begged the Lord Christ, that of her sons one might sit on his right hand and the other on his left. This, it is said, really so happened, inasmuch as James is supposed to have been buried at Compostela, not far from *Finis Terræ* (Finisterre), which is commonly called *Finstern Stern*, and is held in honour. And that the other apostle rests in India, or towards the rising of the sun. That therefore the antipodes have long existed, and that even without considering that at the time of Augustin the new world America, under the earth, had not been discovered, they would yet in this way have existed. Some theologians, and especially Nicolaus Syra (who otherwise is respected as an excellent man), assert that whereas the earth-ball, or the world, for the half part lies and floats on the water, therefore that the hemisphere upon which we live projects above the waters, yet the other part underneath us is in such a manner surrounded by water that no beings can exist there, all which is against the science of cosmography, and has now, moreover, through the many voyages of the Spanish and Portuguese, been found to be far different; that the earth is everywhere inhabited, yea even in the subtorrid zone, which our forefathers and writers never would admit. Our generally used spices, sugar, pearls, and many similar wares, are brought to us from these countries.

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This paradox of the antipodes and the before mentioned measurement of the heavens, I have purposely brought forward to support the previous argument. Many other things might perhaps be here mentioned if, with my long preface, I wished to be tedious to you.

But many similar arguments will be read in the book written by the worthy and learned Magister Casparus Goldworm, Your Highness's diligent superintendent at Weilburgh, and Predicant, which book, in six parts, treats of many miracles, wonders and paradoxes, such as in former times and the present have happened, and will shortly be put in print. To that book, and to many others, which describe these things, such as the "Libri Galeotti de rebus vulgo incredibilibus", I wish to direct the attention of the indulgent reader, if he wishes to know more of these matters.

And may it be herewith sufficiently asserted, that it is not necessarily straightway a lie when something is stated which to the common man appears strange and unusual, as in this history, where all the people in the islands go about naked; and having no domesticated animals for food, and no such things in usage as we have for preserving life, such as clothes, beds, horses, pigs or cows, nor wine or beer, etc., must live and exist in their own way.

In order to make an end to my preface, I will briefly show what induced this Hans Stade to put his two voyages and travels in print. Many may interpret this to his disadvantage, as if he wished hereby to gain glory and to make a transient name. I know him far differently, and I believe truly that his mind is framed in a very different manner, as may also here and there be noticed in his history.

Because, having passed through so much misery, and suffered so much adversity, in which his life was so often in peril, and he was without hope of being liberated and of ever returning to the home of his parents, yet, God in