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***Comprehending the New World  
in the Early Modern Period:***

***Descriptions of Dutch Brazil (1624-1654)***

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# Introduction

*O que importa não é a verdade intrínseca das coisas,  
mas a maneira como elas vão ser contadas ao povo.<sup>1</sup>*  
Calabar, Chico Buarque



**Figure 1: Cristina Costa Rêgo *O Boi Voador* (1992)**

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<sup>1</sup> 'It is not the intrinsic truth of things that is important, but the way in which they will be narrated to the people'. Buarque and Guerra *Calabar*.



## **0.1 BOI VOADOR**

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1644, Johan Maurits of Nassau Siegen opened the first bridge of Recife, known today as the Ponte Maurício de Nassau.<sup>1</sup> On the occasion of his last days in Brazil, Maurits wanted a large crowd to honor his departure. Because the Dutch West India Company (WIC) refused to support this project financially, Maurits had to invest his own savings. To regain the money invested, he organized an opening feast and asked the visitors to pay a fee to cross the bridge. In order to attract more crowds, the Count also spread the news that an ox would fly over the bridge on the day of the festivities. For this purpose, Maurits borrowed Melchior's ox, famous in colonial Recife because it frequently ran around in the city, walking up steps and entering the houses of the inhabitants. On the morning of the opening ceremony, Melchior's ox was put in front of the Government's palace. Even if the citizens could not believe that the ox would fly, they were curious to see what would happen. In the meantime, Maurits asked his servants to find a piece of leather of the same color as Melchior's ox, to mould it in the shape of an inflatable balloon and to fill it with straw. The fake ox was then attached to ropes, controlled by sailors, who had it bounce in the air. The spectacle took place before a large crowd watching open-mouthed. Maurits had kept his promise: he made the ox fly and was therefore admired by everyone on

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<sup>1</sup> The Ponte Maurício de Nassau –or Maurits of Nassau Bridge- is the oldest bridge of Latin America. The original bridge was made of wood and built by the Jewish engineer Baltazar da Fonseca. In 1917 the original structure was replaced by a reinforced concrete one and the bridge, after having undergone different name changes over the past few centuries, regained its original name. More about the Maurits of Nassau Bridge, see: Hannadea Van Nederveen Meerkerk (1989) *Recife: the rise of a 17<sup>th</sup> century trade city from a cultural-historical perspective*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 100-04 and Fernando Antônio Gonçalves (1997) *O Capibaribe e as pontes: dos ontens bravios aos futuros já chegados*, Recife: Comunigraf.

account of this sample of creativity and astuteness. The performance of the flying ox was also a great success for the colonial money trunks, resulting in no less than 20.800 florins.<sup>2</sup> Until today, the flying ox is a recurrent symbol in Brazil, appearing in many songs and children's books. It still participates every year in Recife's carnival parade and the ox is also kept alive in the Portuguese idiomatic expression: 'Isto é coisa de boi voador!' (This is a flying ox thing!), referring to promises that are being kept.<sup>3</sup>

The ox is not the only remnant of the Dutch colonization of North-Eastern Brazil that still resonates in the memory of the present-day country. Many disparate symbols from that period continue to circulate. It is noteworthy that throughout the centuries the legacy of Dutch Brazil received more attention in Brazil than in the Netherlands. For example, Brazilian children still learn about the early-modern Dutch occupation in their history courses at school, and Brazilians are in contact with their Dutch legacy via *telenovelas*, novels, documentaries and various other publications. Unlike the Brazilians, many Dutch have never heard of a colony in Brazil. The discrepancy in attention for the subject on both sides of the Atlantic may be due to the fact that these colonial adventures were and are still perceived by the Dutch as less glorious than their Asian and North-American counterparts, and consequently that it is not worthy enough to become an important chapter in history books. However, the Dutch presence in South-America had a crucial impact, not only on colonial Brazil, but also on different levels of Dutch and European intellectual life, as I will try to demonstrate.

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<sup>2</sup> Ramos Tinhorão *As festas*: 64-65; Dantas Silva *Holandeses*: 203.

<sup>3</sup> 'Mas boi voador não pode. É fora do ar. É fora da lei. Por isso, o povo canta:

- *Manda prender esse boi, seja esse boi o que for!*' Buarque and Guerra 'Boi Voador não pode' in: *Calabar*.

## 0.2 THE DESIRE TO DESCRIBE

I chose to discuss four 17<sup>th</sup>-century books wherein the significance of the Dutch presence in Brazil is displayed. These writings not only demonstrate the Dutch impact on Brazil, but were in their turn products of a particular Dutch approach whereby the colony was appropriated and understood through descriptions, or what I will refer to as the *comprehension* of Dutch Brazil:

1. Johannes de Laet's *Nieuwe Wereldt ofte beschrijvinghe van West-Indien* (Leiden 1625)
2. Johannes de Laet's *Historie ofte iaerlijck verhael van de verrichtinghen der geoctroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie, zedert haer begin, tot het eynde van 't jaer seshien-hondert ses-en-dertich; begrepen in derthien boecken, ende met verscheyden koperen platen verciert* (Leiden 1644)
3. Caspar Barlaeus' *Rerum per Octennium in Brasilia et alibi nuper gestarum sub praefectura comitis I. Mauritii historia* (Amsterdam 1647)
4. Georg Marckgrave and Willem Piso their *Historia naturalis Brasiliae: auspicio et beneficio illustriss. I. Mauriti Com. Nassau illius provinciae et maris summi praefecti adornata: in qua non tantum plantae et animalia sed et indigenarum morbi ingenia et mores describuntur et iconibus supra quingentas illustrantur* (Amsterdam 1648)

Each chapter of this study will focus on one book, following the chronological order of their publication, in order to sketch an evolution of the descriptions of Dutch Brazil. Throughout these chapters the *act of describing* will be my central theme. My hypothesis is that the Dutch descriptions of the other and the otherness of Brazil made a certain *comprehension* of the colony possible. *To comprehend* means in my argumentation, for which I was for the most part inspired by the French thinker Michel de Certeau, both to take possession and to understand the nature of something. The Latin verb *comprehendere* already had this double meaning of to seize and perceive. De Certeau argued that the colonizing process consists of writing, literally and metaphorically, on a blank page. In his introduction of *L'écriture de l'histoire* he narrates the story represented in Jan van der Straet's etching (1679) of Amerigo Vespucci's arrival in



could lay claim on and appropriate foreign territory—but this specific act also led to a new kind of understanding of Brazil's exotic reality. On the one hand, the Dutch managed to occupy different parts of Brazil, especially between 1630 and 1654, and during those years they collected all kinds of artifacts and exotic specimens that they brought back home. All these items also functioned as proof that they possessed the territory. On the other hand, through their descriptions of Brazil, the Dutch managed to understand a broad range of local phenomena.

Following Patricia Seed, I am convinced that the Dutch had their own peculiar manner to represent their colonies. In *Ceremonies of Possession* (1995), Seed explores how the different European authorities manifested their claim upon the newly discovered territories in the New World. Each nation had its own conception of colonization and created this right by means of specific symbolic actions according to their own legal and cultural traditions. The French, for example, organized public ceremonies of alliance in which the native people participated. The Dutch, however, manifested possession by describing, drawing maps, and inscribing names. Seed points out the connotative equivalencies in Dutch between 'describing' and 'claiming' ('beschrijven'), i.e. between the description and the legal possession of something.<sup>5</sup> The Dutch claimed their overseas possession by means of descriptions. Their maps and texts circulated in early modern Europe and served as proof of their colonial expansion. I want to build on Seed's theory in order to find out whether we can speak of an 'art of describing' when we look at the descriptions of Dutch Brazil, more specifically the ones encountered in the four above-mentioned works. The phrase echoes Svetlana Alpers' central—and controversial—thesis in *The Art of Describing* (1983). Alpers argued that Dutch 17<sup>th</sup>-century painters produced knowledge through their descriptions of reality. She drew a parallel between the observations made by natural scientists and the observant eyes of a number of Dutch painters.<sup>6</sup> Without

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<sup>5</sup> Seed *Ceremonies of Possession*: 161-65.

<sup>6</sup> Svetlana Alpers *The Art of Describing. Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (1983), Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

going into the debate about Alpers' view, I will try to show to which extent this thesis can be related to the descriptions that will be central to this study.<sup>7</sup>

These descriptions, which demonstrated a new kind of *comprehension* of Brazil, initiated a new paradigm in the writings about (Dutch) Brazil, characterized by what I will refer to as *disenchantment* on the one hand and by an evolution from mapping to classifying on the other hand. My aim is to lay bare how the reality of Dutch Brazil was captured in descriptions and to demonstrate how an evolution can be traced, more specifically from the publication of *Nieuwe Wereldt* until that of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*.

By *disenchantment*, which I will discuss at length in the first chapter, I mean the (almost complete) disappearance of fabulous phenomena in contrast with most previous works on Brazil. Indeed, the majority of descriptions I will discuss did not confirm circulating myths and fables about the Americas. Moreover, the Dutch authors were not consciously lying about what they saw, as for example the author of *The travels of Sir John Mandeville* did three centuries before them. This does not mean that they were telling the truth and nothing but the truth nor that they could not experience wonder anymore. The Dutch authors were still enchanted by God's creations. They felt wonder towards Brazilian marvels, which they wanted to grasp, understand and appropriate in collections –as the ones assembled by Johan Maurits—and descriptions. In the descriptions they created knowledge about a broad range of local phenomena, a knowledge obtained by wondering and looking behind the veil of circulating myths and fables.

Another characteristic of the Dutch descriptions of Brazil in my corpus is a shift in emphasis from mapping the territory to classifying the local reality. I will show how this paradigm was already dimly present in *Nieuwe Wereldt* yet became encompassing in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. As the paradigm attained maturity these Dutch descriptions *comprehended* Brazilian phenomena by labeling, ordering and classifying following the scientific rules of that period. The

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<sup>7</sup> About this debate see Matthijs Jonker (2008) 'Meaning in Art History. A philosophical analysis of the iconological debate and the Rembrandt Research Project.', *De Zeventiende Eeuw*, Jaargang 24, Hilversum : Uitgeverij Verloren.



descriptions of the local population, however, did not evolve as dramatically as the other descriptions. The local people remained more difficult to *comprehend* even in Dutch scientific descriptions, as I will demonstrate in my last chapter.

Throughout my analyses of textual fragments I will highlight three decisive factors in the emergence of this new paradigm of descriptions: the hybridity and heterogeneous character of (Dutch) Brazil, the presence of Johan Maurits in the colony, and the rise of the so-called ‘new sciences’. I will further elaborate on these factors in separate discussions of the four books central to my study. Firstly, the hybridity of Brazil will be central in my analysis of *Iaerlijck Verhael* and *Rerum per Octennium*, treated in my second and third chapters, but it was also indispensable in the creation of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, the subject of the fourth chapter. *Secondly*, the presence of Johan Maurits will be discussed in the third and fourth chapters. And thirdly, the impact of the emerging modern sciences on the Dutch descriptions of Brazil will be the central theme of the fourth and last chapter dealing with *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*.

In order to outline this paradigm and its enabling factors, I will first briefly discuss the creation of the first descriptions of the New World and then sketch the historical context of the Dutch colonization of Brazil.

### **0.3 FIRST WRITINGS ABOUT THE NEW WORLD**

From the moment Columbus set foot on the island of San Salvador, the early modern world started to report extensively on its encounter with the so-called New World. Of course, the Western world had already written abundantly about this other world they were soon to encounter at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century as the history of travel had started well before the great Western expansion took place. Suspicions about the existence of territories beyond the known and inhabited world, or Oikumene, had been circulating since the classical age and the desire to

map the unknown lands, or Terra incognita, had already existed for centuries before the major expeditions of the 16<sup>th</sup> century started to materialize that desire.<sup>8</sup> European powers not only wanted to discover unknown territories but their travels were also driven by economic, religious and political interests. A vast (inter)textual network of letters, reports, maps, drawings and so on bears witness to these voyages. The authors of the first texts about the New World were not only inspired by their contemporaries but also by earlier storytellers, the Bible or classical authors such as Aristotle, Homer and Vergil. This use of different sources led to disparate texts that combined fact and fiction. Columbus, for instance, relied heavily on what he had read beforehand and was therefore for a great deal confirming and identifying what he thought he would find, i.e. he was uncovering more than he was discovering.<sup>9</sup> His expectations had a great impact on his and his contemporaries' perception of the New World. In Columbus' writings, the foreign reality was 'fictionalized by identification' and 'deformed by reduction', as Pastor puts it.<sup>10</sup> Columbus only included data that were consistent with what he was supposed to encounter to which he added known features about for example Asia or the Garden of Eden. With this selection he constructed his fictionalized representation. As more and more travelers reached the Americas, the voyagers who traveled to the New World and wrote about the 'new' territories slowly ceased to merely trust the authoritative texts of the ancients or the Bible. In the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, we can see that in reports and travelogues bookish knowledge was more and more challenged, yet at times still confirmed, by direct experience. By the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, empirical knowledge gradually gained its modern status which led to a new perception of the Americas. This shift is visible

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<sup>8</sup> More on early mapping: J.B. Harley and D. Woodward, D. (eds.) (1987) *The History of Cartography 1: Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press; Alfred Hiatt (2008) *Terra incognita: mapping the Antipodes before 1600*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press; Pascal Arnaud (2014) 'Mapping the Edges of the Earth: Approaches and Cartographical Problems' in A.V. Podossinov (ed.), *The Periphery of the Classical World in Ancient Geography and Cartography*, Leuven: Peeters, 31-58.

<sup>9</sup> Pastor *The Armature*: 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*: 29.

in the descriptions of Dutch Brazil, as I will show throughout my chapters.

The ‘first’, 16th-century, European descriptions of Brazil were still replete with wonders and marvels. Among the most famous reports of the first period are those by Hans Staden, Jean de Léry, Peter Carder, Anthony Knivet, Walter Raleigh, André Thevet, to name only those. These travelogues and reports gave rise to various publications and translations that were also available in the Netherlands and thus known to a Dutch audience. Among this public were Dutch merchants who read or heard about the gold and silver that could be found overseas and they soon wanted to try their own mercantile luck in Brazil.

When the Dutch arrived in Brazil, more than a century had passed since the first encounters and descriptions. The Americas were not that ‘new’ anymore. Moreover, at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Dutch were in the middle of their Golden Age, a period marked by trade, wealth, power and political conflicts. The United Provinces became an economic and military power. This context played a crucial role in their overseas adventures.

#### **0.4 QUA PATET ORBIS<sup>11</sup> - THE DUTCH EXPANSION**

At the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, while the Portuguese and Spanish Golden Age was slowly fading out, the Dutch saw the rise of their own Golden era. These glorious years were marked by cultural flourishing as well as by commercial prosperity and the growth of a Dutch naval power, which allowed them to enter the race of the overseas expansions.<sup>12</sup> After having successfully tried their luck in the East with the East India Company (VOC), they also set their eyes on the Americas and with the creation of the West India Company (WIC) the Dutch saw the opportunity to

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<sup>11</sup> ‘As far as the world extends’: Johan Maurits’ device.

<sup>12</sup> About trade and expansion of the Dutch during the Golden Age, see: Simon Shama (1987) *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, New York: Alfred Knopf; Jonathan Israel (1989) *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585-1740*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; Pieter C. Emmer and Wim Klooster, ‘The Dutch Atlantic, 1600–1800. Expansion Without Empire’, *Itinerario* 23 (1999), 48–69.

conquer a number of Portuguese colonies in South-America.

The WIC was founded on June 2nd 1621, less than two months after the end of the Twelve Years' Truce.<sup>13</sup> As the war resumed between the two belligerent powers, Spain and the Netherlands, there were no obstacles left to the formation of a mirror company of the VOC. Willem Usselinx (1567-1647), one of the founding fathers of the WIC, had been preparing the organization of the Company for many years. Already in his *Bedenckinghen over den staet vande vereenichde Nederlanden: nopende de zeevaert, coop-handel, ende de gemeyne neeringe inde selve: Ingevalle den peys met de aerts-hertogen inde aenstaende vrede-handelinge getroffen wert / Door een lief-hebber eenes oprechten ende bestandighen vredes voorghestelt* (1608) (*Reflections on the state of the United Provinces: on navigation, commerce, and general trade within these countries: should peace be concluded with the Archdukes in the peace negotiations*), Usselinx presented his arguments in favor of the creation of a West India Company. In his text, Usselinx ascribed the prosperity of Spain to their possessions in the West Indies. If the Dutch wanted to obtain the same kind of wealth they should develop a similar or an even more assiduous trade in the West Indies. As the hostilities between Spain and the United Provinces resumed, Usselinx obtained what he was after: a new charter was granted to navigate and trade in the West Indies and Africa. The administration of the WIC was carried out by 74 men divided over 5 chambers (Amsterdam, Zeeland, De Maze, Noorder Kwartier and Staden en Lande) and was presided by a board of directors, the *Heeren XIX*. As their first target, they opted for sugar-rich Brazil. They followed Johannes de Laet's advice, one of the administrators, who had given an exposition on why the Spanish-Portuguese Imperium should be tackled in Brazil, more precisely in the captaincy of Bahia de Todos os Santos. In his *Iaerlijck Verhael* he wrote:

And we could also understand from this that the desire of the Heeren XIX was that Bahia de

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<sup>13</sup> C.R. Boxer (1957) *The Dutch in Brazil, 1624-1654*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; Henk den Heijer (1994) *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, Zutphen: Walburg Pers; Mariane L. Wiesebron (2004) (ed.) *Brazilië in de Nederlandse archieven (1624-1654) / O Brasil em arquivos neerlandeses (1624-1654)*, Leiden: Research School CNWS.

Todos os Santos would be attacked and that all diligence would be used in order to conquer the region. All high officers have promised that they would fulfill this mission with loyalty and piety and that they would do everything in their power to accomplish their task in a manly way, in service of the fatherland and at the benefit of the Company. They have decided how this would be achieved with reflection and deliberation.<sup>14</sup>

The navigator Dierick Ruiters informed the WIC in his *Toortse der Zeevaert* (1623) how the attack on Bahia de Todos os Santos could be prepared. Ruiters travelled to Brazil as early as 1617-1618 and gave a detailed description of the land with extra attention for the coastal access points. He was mapping the territory just like Johannes De Laet did in his *Nieuwe Wereldt en Iaerlijck Verhael*. Ruiters' booklet served as a useful guide during the conquest of Salvador.

About the Bahia de Todos os Santos

The city of Bahia is, as we said, the capital of Brazil and is located in the Bahia de Todos os Santos, which means in our language, the Bay of all saints.

The city is located on the east side of the bay, uphill on the shore of the mountain. The shore is so steep that it is impossible to climb it straight forward and it is 300 fathom high, steep up and down, so it is impossible to carry all heavy goods, like oil and wine pipes, Neurenburg barrels and all kinds of packages [...]

To enter the city there are five roads, two that lead to the middle of the city and on each end of the city there is one to enter it.

The city is about one third of a mile long, lies along the above-mentioned shore of the hill and is about 600 wide, I could count around 1200 houses.

There are more or less 1600 Portuguese men, young and old, if we count all women, men and children, around 3000 souls.

The city lies open without gates that could disturb anyone to enter the city. There is a big empty place in the city, where they keep their market, about 40 steps long, where the black men and women stand before their masters with bananas, bocouas, iniamos, pineapples, potatoes, pumpkins, and more fruit [...].<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*: 15. 'Ende alsoo uyt deselve wierdt verstaen, dat het begeeren van de XIX was, dat men de Bahia de todos os Santos soude aentasten ende alle vlijt aenwenden om deselve te bemachtighe, soo hebben alle de hooge Officieren eensamentlijck den andere beloof, met alle trouwe ende vromigheyt desen last naer te kommen, ende haer uysterste beste te doen om denselven mannelijcken uyt te voeren, tot dienste van 't Vaderland ende nut van de wel-ghemelte Compagnie. Hebben mede voordachtelijck de noodighe ordre ende middelen van uytvoeringhe onder haer beraemt ende besloten.' Unless otherwise noted all translations are mine.

<sup>15</sup> Ruiters *Toortse*: 31-32. 'Van de Baya de todos los sanctos. Dese Stadt Baya ghelijck wy gheseght hebben, is de hooft-Stadt van Bresilien, gheleghen in Baya de todos los sanctos, t'welck in onse tale is te segghen, Alder-Heylighen Baey. Dese Stadt light aen de oost-zijde van de Baey, boven op 't hoochste aen den Oever van den Bergh, desen Oever is soo steyl, dat men daer recht teghen op niet en soude connen climmen, en is ontrent de

After the required preparations had been made in the Netherlands, the first major expedition to Brazil took off in 1623. Jacob Willekens, Piet Hein and Jan van Dorth were in command of the fleet. On May 8 1624, the coast of Bahia de Todos os Santos was sighted and they anchored just off the bay four days later. The Dutch immediately attacked and seized Salvador da Bahia, the capital of the Portuguese colony. Dierick Ruiters also participated in the events and was in command of the attack from land. As the Portuguese in Salvador had held him captive six years earlier he knew the city very well.<sup>16</sup>

Only a year later the Portuguese drove the Dutch away and regained control over their Brazilian colony. But the Dutch did not renounce their Brazilian project and continued to prepare new offensives. In the meantime, Piet Hein, who had also played a crucial role in the attack on Salvador in 1624, captured the Spanish Silverfleet in 1628 in the Matanzas bay. The treasure helped to fund the Dutch army. During those years the Dutch prepared for a new attack and after elaborate deliberations, the *Heeren XIX* decided to make a new attempt in 1630. The target would now be Pernambuco, north of Bahia, a captaincy famous for its sugarcane.

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300. Vamen hooghe, steyl op ende neder, soo dat daer gheen goederen, die van wat wichts zijn, als Oly, ende Wijn pijpen, Neurenburgsche vaten, ende alder-hande packen, [...].

Om in de Stadt te comen zijn vier weghe, twee die recht midden in de Stadt comen, ende op elck eynde van de Stadt is eenen wegh om daer in te comen.

De Stadt is ontrent een derde part van een myle lanck, liggende langs den voornoemden Oever op den Bergh, ende is ontrent de ses hondert breedt, daar staen ontrent de twaelf hondert huysen (soo als ickse ten naesten by) hebbe connen tellen.

De Portugijsen zijnder ontrent seshien hondert zielen sterck, jonck en out wat mannelijck is, maer met vrouw, man ende kinderen, ontrent de 3000. Zielen.

De Stadt light open sonder Poorten, die yets souden connen hinderen om daer in te comen. Daer is een groote leeghe plaetse in de Stadt, diese tot haer marckt houden, ontrent de veertigh treden lanck, al waer de swerten ende swertinnen voor hare meesters voor staen, met Banannos, Bocouas, Iniamos, Annanassis, Patatos, Abobras, ende meer ander fruyt, ende vercoopen t'selve wel ten diersten, want het fruyt daer niet te veel en is, also de Mieren het vernielen, leest hier voor in de Beschrijvinghe der dieren, hoe de Mieren alle dinghen verslinden.'

<sup>16</sup> Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen (1871) *Historia das lutas com os Holandezes no Brazil desde 1624 a 1654*, Viena: C. Finsterbeck; Claudio Skora Rosty (2003) *As Invasões Holandesas (Insurreição Pernambucana): A Batalha do Monte das Tabocas, o Início do Fim*. Recife: EGGCF, Gráfica do Exército.

Van Waerdenburgh and Hendrick Corneliszoon Loncq set foot ashore in Paulo Amarelo on February 16<sup>th</sup> 1630 and subsequently the Dutch took control of Olinda and Recife, the capital of the captaincy. Mathias Albuquerque, the Portuguese governor of Pernambuco had led a strong resistance but finally had to surrender.<sup>17</sup> The Dutch took over Recife with a victory ‘granted by God’ and established a flourishing colony in North-eastern Brazil, which would remain in Dutch hands until 1654.<sup>18</sup>

Pernambuco was in addition to its prosperous sugar industry also known for its beautiful setting. Throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Olinda had become one of the most thriving cities of the Portuguese colony in Brazil, an architectural beauty that would be completely destroyed in 1630. The Dutch did not build a new city on the ruins but they chose the island Antonio Vaz opposite Recife to build their own town: Mauritsstadt.

## 0.5 MAURITIOPOLIS

The new city was named after the cousin of stadtholder Frederick Henry, prince of Orange: Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen (1604-1679), who was appointed governor-general of Dutch Brazil from 1637 until 1644.<sup>19</sup> This Homo Universalis, nicknamed *de Braziliaan*, was well known for his collections of Brazilian and other curiosities, and accordingly invited a number of artists and scientists to make a record of the newly gained territory in an impressive series of texts, paintings and scientific works. Under his impulse, Mauritsstad became a flourishing cultural centre. Johan Maurits also supported the creation of the first botanical garden, the first astronomical observatory and the first zoo of South

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<sup>17</sup> R. Prud'Homme Van Reine (2003) *Admiraal Zilvervloot – Biografie van Piet Hein*. De Arbeiderspers; Leonardo Dantas Silva (2005) *Holandeses em Pernambuco 1630-1654*, São Paulo: Livraria Cultura.

<sup>18</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael* VII: 135. ‘die Godt verleendt hadde’.

<sup>19</sup> On Johan Maurits see: Ernst van den Boogaart (ed.) (1979) *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen 1604-1679. Essays on the occasion of the tercentenary of his death*, The Hague: The Johan Maurits van Nassau Stichting.

America. As I want to show, the scientific and artistic project that took place under Johan Maurits' impulse involved a way of taming the exotic Brazilian reality: local phenomena were displaced into collections, where they could be controlled, admired and studied. On the one hand, the Count's presence in Brazil resulted in a vast arsenal of images, maps and descriptions that served to demonstrate that the Dutch *comprehended* – in the double meaning of to possess and to understand—the region and its inhabitants. On the other hand, all these different *texts*— in the broad meaning of the term as used in semiotics, where a *text* is not merely defined as a written document but as a constructed assemblage of signs- fashioned the image of the New World that circulated in the Netherlands and early modern Europe. Subsequently, the Dutch participated not only in the trading network but also in the knowledge and imagination network that began to develop in the early modern Western World. I will discuss what lay behind this glorious Brazilian era under Johan Maurits further on in this study, but two factors can already be singled out: firstly, he stimulated the sciences and the arts (Johan Maurits was a collector of knowledge) and secondly, he applied a so-called tolerant policy in the colony. To put it in the words of Evan Haefeli, the Dutch colony played a 'transformative role' in Latin America. Dutch Protestantism took over from Roman Catholicism in Brazil, which resulted in a more open policy towards different religious beliefs.<sup>20</sup> The following two significant examples illustrate this peculiar religious situation: the Dutch permitted the construction of the first synagogue in the Americas and the Dutch did not baptize their slaves. As a result African beliefs prevailed for a longer time than in other European slave communities.<sup>21</sup> This tolerant context, enabled by Johan Maurits' impulses,

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<sup>20</sup> Haefeli *Breaking the Christian Atlantic*: 124-125.

<sup>21</sup> Of course this tolerant administration did not meet our standards of tolerance today. But still there was more religious freedom in Dutch Brazil than anywhere else in the Western world. See: José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello (1996) *Gente da Nação: Cristãos-novos e judeus em Pernambuco, 1543-1654*, Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco; Frans L. Schalkwijk (1998) *The Reformed Church in Dutch Brazil (1630-1654)*, Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum; Eva Alexandra, (2001) 'The Participation of New Christians and Crypto-Jews in the Conquest, Colonization, and Trade of Spanish America, 1521-1660', 186-202 and Gunter Böhm (2001) 'Crypto-Jews and New Christians in Colonial Peru and Chile', 203-12, both in Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering (eds.), *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450-1800*, New York: Berghahn Books; Jonathan Israel (2002)



allowed the hybridity and the heterogeneous character of the colony to flourish more than in the decennia before.

## 0.6 HYBRIDITY

Hybridity is in my opinion a key concept that made a *comprehension* of Dutch Brazil possible. The hybrid character of the colony was not only described in the Dutch texts, it was also a decisive factor in the creation of the same descriptions of Dutch Brazil. The Dutch authors made use of the hybridity to describe the colony, more in particular in descriptions found in *Iaerlijck Verhael, Rerum per Octennium* and *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, whereas the situation was different for the creation of *Nieuwe Wereldt* as Dutch Brazil did not yet exist.

The population encountered by the Dutch in Brazil was a very heterogeneous one. The eyewitnesses on whom the Dutch publications were based came from different backgrounds, origins and religions. Many of them had already been living in Brazil before the arrival of the Dutch and some of them chose to work for the WIC. One of the consequences of this cultural variety in colonial Brazil was the existence of people of mixed race who could easily become cultural go-betweens. These mixed-race people frequently spoke different languages and often had a better understanding of their homeland. This was a valuable asset in colonial Brazil: they could circulate between and bridge conflicting colonial spaces. Alida Metcalf analyzed these intermediaries in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Brazil building on the work of Georg Simmel and Stephen Greenblatt.<sup>22</sup> She produced a more nuanced image of the go-between distinguishing three

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*Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires (1540-1740)*, Leiden: Brill, 2002 and Jonathan Israel (2007) 'Religious Toleration in Dutch Brazil (1624-1654)', Jonathan Israel and Stuart B. Schwartz, *The Expansion of Tolerance: Religion in Dutch Brazil, 1624-1654*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press), 28, 30-31.

<sup>22</sup> Alida Metcalf based her analyses in *Go-Betweens in the Colonization of Brazil* (2005) on Georg Simmel's *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung* (1908) and Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvelous Possessions. The wonder of the new world* (1991).

major types: the *physical go-betweens* who crossed the Atlantic, the *transactional go-betweens* who translated, negotiated and traded in the New World, and the *representational go-betweens* who represented the other culture through words or images.<sup>23</sup> I will show, foremost in the second and third chapters, how these different types of go-betweens were still present in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Brazil, sometimes combined in one person, and how these go-betweens played a crucial role in the creation of the descriptions. These—often hybrid—figures were not mere products of Brazil's diversity but could better understand the same hybridity. As I will show, without their expertise, knowledge and hybrid character the Dutch would not have been able to comprehend the colony in the same way.

## 0.7 NATURAL HISTORY

The final important factor that led to the new paradigm that I will be tracing in my study was the presence of prominent modern naturalists in the colony. Willem Piso and Georg Marcgrave, the two most important ones, worked on a groundbreaking volume of tropical natural history: *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. The fourth chapter of this study will deal with the descriptions that can be found in this *magnum opus*. I will demonstrate how all previously discussed factors converge in this work and why it represents the new paradigm of comprehension to the full. However, as I will argue, their study method was only suitable for the comprehension of natural phenomena. They could not understand the natives in the same way.

Written by prominent 17<sup>th</sup>-century scientists who went on expeditions and made their observations in situ, *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* is in the first place a sample of the increasing importance of empirical knowledge in the sciences of the early modern world. As beautifully demonstrated by Harold Cook, global trade

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<sup>23</sup> Metcalf *Go-betweens*: 9-12.

and global science rose together in the early modern period.<sup>24</sup> Cook argued that there was a direct link between the rise of commerce and scientific inquiry in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch Republic. He stated that it was not religion but trade that brought new ways of thinking that led to a quest for 'objective' knowledge. Thanks to their trading activities merchants were able to develop new methods and concepts that would influence scientific research. The *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* exemplifies this idea. The colonization of Brazil was initiated by a trading company (the WIC), yet led to the publication of one of the most influential works about the natural history of South America.

Brian W. Ogilvie analyzed in *The Science of Describing* (2006) how the Renaissance naturalists took their investigation one step further than their predecessors. The latter were merely concerned with description, exemplified by, for instance, the humanist Juan Luis Vives' idea that 'natural history was a form of writing about nature'.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, 17<sup>th</sup>-century scientists were 'increasingly concerned with the classification and the causal explanation that Bacon advocated'.<sup>26</sup> The 17<sup>th</sup>-century scientists had a new approach to knowledge, which consisted in, inter alia, that they did not (solely) decipher the Book of nature anymore but 'were concerned with establishing its text'.<sup>27</sup> *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* belongs to this evolution. The critical observations made by Marcgrave and Piso resulted in the classification of Brazilian phenomena that received a scientific description so that they could be recognized and differentiated. Marcgrave and Piso could do so due to a typical Dutch scientific attitude but also thanks to the social constellation encountered in Brazil, of which the Dutch took advantage. This particular context was created by the rise of modern sciences as well as by impulses given by Johan Maurits and Brazil's hybridity. As I will demonstrate in my last chapter, the Dutch naturalists present in the colony could not have obtained the same amount of information about the phenomena without

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<sup>24</sup> Cook *Matters of exchange*.

<sup>25</sup> Ogilvie *Science of Describing*: 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*: 7.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*: 16.

the social *hybrid* networks of Dutch Brazil, thanks to which native knowledge could be consulted.

## 0.8 EVOLUTION OF THE PARADIGM IN FOUR WORKS

Each of the four texts that I will focus on in what follows give an extensive overview of economic, political and military facts, and treat Brazil's natural history and people. However, the four works differ in style, emphasis, period they cover and in their respective goals. Moreover, they were written over a period of time of almost three decennia wherein, as I hope to make clear, an evolution can be witnessed from mapping to classifying encountered realities:

*Nieuwe Wereldt* and *Iarlijck Verhael* are both written by Johannes de Laet (1581-1649), a Dutch geographer who wrote and edited several influential works about the New World. *Nieuwe Wereldt*, as the title suggests, is a general work about the Americas, whereas *Iaerlyck Verhael's* focus is on the Dutch colonies. In his *Iaerlijck Verhael*, de Laet offers an overview of the history of the WIC from 1623 to 1636, the year in which Johan Maurits took off for Brazil to become the Governor of the colony. As De Laet was one of the directors of the WIC, both works are clearly biased. What makes *Nieuwe Wereldt* and the thirteen volumes of *Iaerlijck Verhael* so valuable is the impressive number of descriptions of the New World both contain. De Laet mainly based his work on primary sources, of which unfortunately many have disappeared. Both works are constructed on the basis of a mosaic of reports, letters and other textual and visual sources from authors with various backgrounds and origins. De Laet brought these together to create his own version of the events, especially concerning the *Iaerlijck Verhael*, a version that was supposed to attract investors for the colonial enterprises of the WIC.

In *Nieuwe Wereldt*, De Laet did not yet lay claim to territory by describing, but he was mapping the sea and the countries, and compiling available information in order to render the country and its inhabitants more comprehensible. In this work, less stereotypical depictions of the overseas world

and their inhabitants can be found than in previous works about the Americas. *Nieuwe Wereldt* already participated in the gradual disenchantment of the marvelous New World that took place in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The absence of wonders and marvels and the use of contemporary empirical sources make this book 'modern'. As the Dutch started the colonization of Brazil, their look and approach towards the foreign realities would evolve gradually.

In *Iaerlijck Verhael*, De Laet managed to go a step further than he could in *Nieuwe Wereldt*. The WIC had already established various trading posts and conquered territory. The mapping of the colony served as proof of the possessions. Dutch men were living for shorter or longer periods of time overseas and thus (parts of) these territories were known to them. De Laet made use of this knowledge to make his descriptions. What is more, thanks to the use of reports made by *hybrid* figures he could not only create less stereotypical depictions, but he could also participate in a further gradual disenchantment of the marvelous New World.

The *Rerum per Octennium in Brasilia* by Caspar Barlaeus (1584-1648) portrays the eight years that Johan Maurits spent in Brazil. On the one hand, the *Rerum per Octennium* is again a clearly biased work; it is a laudatory text that praises all Johan Maurits' accomplishments, who in fact commissioned the work.<sup>28</sup> Yet, on the other hand, Barlaeus was also concerned with general facts and therefore gave an overview of the natural surroundings of the colony and added a number of ethnographic descriptions of the local people. Barlaeus' *Rerum per Octennium* demonstrates how the Brazilian hybridity could continue to flourish thanks to a tolerant Dutch policy that allowed differences between various communities to bloom. The glorification of Johan Maurits in this work may be exaggerated but nevertheless shows the importance of his presence in the colony and how this presence stimulated the *comprehension* of the country.

Finally, during Johan Maurits' reign a vast number of descriptions and images would be assorted and incorporated in the pioneering scientific work

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<sup>28</sup> There is no real proof Johan Maurits financed the work, maybe it was Blaeu. See Harmsen *Barlaeus*: 164-65.

*Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. Edited by De Laet, it is a comprehensive work on the natural history of Brazil. It consists of the contributions of two scientists who accompanied Johan Maurits to Brazil: *De medicina Brasiliensi libri quatuor* by Willem Piso (1611-1678), a Dutch physician and naturalist, and *Historiae rerum naturalium Brasiliae libri octo* by Georg Marcgrave (1610-1644), a German astronomer, cartographer and botanist, and contains illustrations by the artists Frans Post and Albert Eckhout. *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* partakes of the rise of the modern sciences of that era. In descriptions the Brazilian reality was no longer mapped yet ordered and classified. As the knowledge of the ancients and the authority of the canon turned out to be no longer sufficient for a proper understanding of the world, the ‘new scientists’ led their own research about the secrets of nature and what had remained beyond reach started to be discovered by men. The animals, plants and people were not merely catalogued but were put in descriptions that both unveiled and constructed the exotic reality encountered by the (Dutch) colonizers in Brazil. *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* became an influential locus for knowledge transfer and took part in a European knowledge network about foreign natural realities. In addition, the work was again a product of the already existing Brazilian networks and of the *hybridity* of the colony. Piso and Marcgrave could not have led their investigations in the same way without the already present social *hybrid* networks. Johan Maurits played a crucial role to achieve this, not only thanks to his so-called tolerant policies but also thanks to his great interest in the exotic surroundings of Recife and the numerous collections he created.

## **0.9 METHODOLOGY**

The methodology I use throughout this study is marked by my academic background. I am not a historian but a literary scholar and therefore I will

primarily analyze the text more than the realities it tried to capture. Many studies argue that the first conquistadores failed to grasp the American reality.<sup>29</sup> But which reality was there to grasp? There was more than one reality present in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch Brazil. The object of this research are textual representations that were made by contemporaries of the colony. These representations, even if they refer to particular realities, are neither true nor false in their capacity of representations, yet they are interesting and valuable for their own sake.

My aim is to sketch an evolution and to understand why these descriptions had such pioneering force. In order to do so, I will offer a rhetorical analysis of a number of selected fragments. I will point out the different rhetorical techniques used in the selected descriptions in order to shed light upon the different strategies of a so called 'Dutch' discourse. I will also look at the social, political and intellectual position of the different authors and their relations to their sources. Another important feature that will be discussed are not only the relationships between the four works that are central to my study but also the relationships with other contemporary or earlier works. The descriptions I will analyze are based on various voices as they were mostly reported by individuals who went on expeditions. These reports were *re-cycled* by different early modern intellectuals in other writings. These recycled texts were cultural products that negotiated between the local experience of individuals and a bigger colonial strategy. Consequently, these writings do not express a singular experience, but instead they express an experience that can be reiterated. The selected texts were and are still recycled for different purposes. I see this recycling and selection or *re-writing* that resulted in the descriptions as a productive act that leads to *comprehension*. The descriptions of Dutch Brazil assimilated and produced information, but of course only to a certain extent. I want to show how it was possible for the descriptive passages to participate in a chain of knowledge-

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<sup>29</sup> Among other works: Peter Mason (1990) *Deconstructing America: Representations of the Other*, London and New York: Routledge; Anthnoy Grafton (1995) *New Worlds, Ancient Texts. The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery*, Harvard: Harvard University Press; Peter Mason (1998) *Infelicitities: Representations of the Exotic*, Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press.

transfer. Furthermore, I will give special attention to the relation between what was writable and what was un-writable, or between the comprehension of the reality and the inability to grasp or comprehend that same reality and how this relation is given shape in the texts. The four works re-wrote and brought new information about the Americas in their respective descriptions, but the ‘strange reality’ can never be fully comprehensible.

Next to this attention for the rhetorical construction of the texts, I am inspired by different theories concerning the concept of *alterity*, and in particular by three cultural historians and theorists who have written on the early modern conquest of the New World: Tzvetan Todorov (*La conquête de l'Amérique*, 1982), Stephen Greenblatt (*Marvelous Possessions*, 1991) and most of all Michel de Certeau (*L'écriture de l'histoire*, 1975). In their analyses of early modern writings about the new colonies, they all focus centrally on the idea that the confrontation with the New World is particularly revealing with regard to the process of identity formation of the Old World inhabitants.

Todorov refers to the improvisational qualities of the first conquistadores: in the encounter with natives of the New World, they were more capable of playing with the borders of their identity than the local people. The Europeans could more easily adapt to different attitudes and behaviors and play different roles in society. Todorov's structuralist analysis of the transmission of signs focused on the confrontation of the Spanish conquistadores with the native peoples of Mexico. Language, as used by Cortés, was a tool to manipulate and subjugate the other: ‘Language has always been the companion of empire’, Todorov writes.<sup>30</sup> The written language gave power and more appropriate tools to understand the other. Writing proved to be superior to a pictogram-based system. But in the end, according to Todorov, the Spaniards failed to understand the other, as they only assimilated him and in this process only acquired self-knowledge. Todorov's work has been challenged over the years but undeniably his

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<sup>30</sup> Todorov *La conquête*: 123.



work has been groundbreaking.<sup>31</sup> His ideas provided the basis for a more nuanced image over the years and in the studies of the discoveries Todorov's work remains an important conceptual source and many scholars acknowledge the complexity of the interactions that took place in that era. Among them there is for instance Serge Gruzinski, who mitigated Todorov's claims in his research about colonial Mexico. In *La pensée métisse* (1999) he described how a *mestizo* reality was woven from the interaction between the two cultures.<sup>32</sup> Another example is Walter Mignolo, who, inspired by Todorov but also by Foucault's epistemology, studied the relationship between knowledge and power in colonial context. Mignolo's main argument in *The darker side of the Renaissance* (2003) is that colonialism was constitutive for modernity and allowed the self-representation of the West as the leader of humanity.<sup>33</sup>

Stephen Greenblatt travelled down a similar road. He demonstrated how in the early modern world, through the representation of the other, the formation of the self was unveiled. The individuals living in the Renaissance questioned for the first time in history and on this scale their own identity. For Greenblatt, this formation of the early modern Self was influenced by the discoveries and conquests. The confrontation with the unfamiliar led the voyagers to wonder, supposedly a sign of tolerance towards cultural differences. In *Marvelous Possessions*, Greenblatt treats the representations of the natives made by Columbus and Cortés, in the same way as Todorov did, but Greenblatt challenged

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<sup>31</sup> Todorov's ideas about the relation between language and power and how colonizer and colonized could communicate have been challenged by many scholars. Among them: Inga Clendinnen (1987) *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517-1570*, New York: Cambridge University Press; Anthony Pagden (1993) *European Encounters with the New World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; Frances E. Karttunen (1994) *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press; Walter D. Mignolo (1994) "Signs and their Transmission: The Question of the Book in the New World" in Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D. Mignolo, eds., *Writing without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 220-270 and Barbara Fuchs (2001) *Mimesis and Empire: The New World, Islam and European Identities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>32</sup> Serge Gruzinski (1999) *La pensée métisse*, Paris: Fayard.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Mignolo (2003) *The darker side of the Renaissance. Literacy, territoriality and colonization*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

the former's theory. In Greenblatt's view, Todorov minimized the importance of Aztec signs as well as the Aztec abilities to improvise.

Foremost and finally I am indebted to the work of Michel de Certeau. What I found especially insightful for my research is his notion of 'économie scripturaire'.<sup>34</sup> What he meant by this concept is that during the period of the first discoveries in America a new way of thinking emerged that crystallized into the colonial experience. During this period there was a proliferation of the written word in Europe. Within this notion of 'économie scripturaire' de Certeau merges the two major imperatives of the early modern colonial project: the economic motives on the one hand and the religious ones on the other. The way in which the first colonial experiences have been written down and represented bears witness to the various aspects of this 'économie scripturaire': in the first texts the non-western other is being portrayed as a godless savage without any culture, who has to be—depending on the authors—either domesticated, converted, or 'tolerated'. Writing for de Certeau is a way of exercising power while the subject of this writing has his own tactics to influence that power.

The four books I discuss were written more than a century after the first encounters. But there was still an 'économie scripturaire' at work. Even if many native people were already 'known' and even if the Dutch had greater economic than religious motives than their predecessors, they also wrote down what they wanted to domesticate. The descriptions show a will to comprehend the other and the otherness. *Nieuwe Wereldt* displays a future desire to possess and the other three works serve as proof of the possessions of land and people.

## 0.10 CURIOSITAS

A final element, contained in the *économie scripturaire*, and in my view essential to achieve the production of information to be found in the different texts I will

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<sup>34</sup> De Certeau *L'invention du quotidien*: 195-224.

discuss was *curiositas*. At work at each level, *curiositas* gave the impulse to go on expeditions and gave the impetus to write. Each individual gave a different answer to the strange new reality. I think this notion of *curiositas* is crucial to understand the creation process of the descriptions of Dutch Brazil.



Figure 3: Title page Francis Bacon *Instauratio Magna*, London (1620)

On the engraved title page of Sir Francis Bacon's *Instauratio Magna* (London, 1620) we can see a ship navigating through the two pillars of Hercules in the direction of the open sea. According to Plato, the lost realm of Atlantis was to be found behind these pillars. A symbolic frontier is crossed: that of the limits of the classical erudition. The ship follows the course of unlimited scientific knowledge. There is a clear demarcation between the known and the unknown world. Under the image is written a quotation from the book of Daniel (12:4) in the Latin Vulgate: 'Multi pertransibunt & augebitur scientia' ('Many will pass through and (our) knowledge will increase'). Bacon gave this quote his own interpretation: with the discoveries experience is triumphing. The voyages reveal how many old theories have to be revised about, for instance, what the earth looks like and where it is inhabited. Bacon was one of the representatives of this new scientific thinking that was emphasizing experimental methods. In *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) Bacon put it as follows:

But to circle the earth, as the heavenly bodies do, was not done or enterprised till these latter times: and therefore these times may justly bear in their word, not only PLUS ULTRA, in precedence of the ancient NON ULTRA, and IMITABILE FULMEN, in precedence of the ancient NON IMITABILE FULMEN, emens qui nimbos et non imitabile fulmen; etc. but likewise IMITABILE COELUM; in respect of the many memorable voyages after the manner of heaven about the globe of the earth.<sup>35</sup>

Bacon treated curiosity as a positive attitude, if it is used in a moral way and for the right purposes. While in Antiquity and especially in the Middle Ages curiosity was seen as a vice, in the early modern time curiosity shifted little by little to the category of the virtuous traits of character.<sup>36</sup> This shift in the perception of *curiositas* initiated in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Thanks to the humanist interest in what was happening in the world and their enthusiasm towards voyages, *curiositas* received more positive connotations. This shift in mentalities prepared for the so-called *Age of Discoveries*.<sup>37</sup>

Hans Blumenberg, among others, developed this idea in his *The Legitimacy of the modern age (Die Legitimität der Neuzeit, 1966)*. He explained how the question of *curiositas* is one of the keys to understand the development that took place in the Modern world. This development brings a new form of curiosity about nature in relation to theoretical knowledge. Blumenberg affirms that in the early modern period curiosity about the world becomes fundamental to obtain useful knowledge and to understand the world. *Curiositas* is no longer a contemplative act but becomes an active and positive operation. By doing so the early modern man would become the master of his own destiny. This attitude of the modern self is characterized by Blumenberg as *Selbstbehauptung* or self-assertion. He also linked these ideas to the discoveries of the Modern Age. The *curiositas* attracted

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<sup>35</sup> Bacon *The advancement of learning*: 77-78.

<sup>36</sup> The same kind of ideas can be found with Descartes in his *Discours sur la methode* (1637). See Harrison *Curiosity*: 284-85.

<sup>37</sup> Stagl *A history of curiosity*: 49.

travelers to voyage beyond the limits of the known world. They transgressed boundaries to discover the unknown and undisclosed.<sup>38</sup>

This *curiositas* is enclosed in the *économie scripturaire*. De Certeau speaks of a ‘writing that conquers’ closely linked to a ‘curiosity that conquers’—*une curiosité conquérante et jouissante, occupée à dévoiler le cache*—at work in 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>39</sup> This new form of curiosity is made possible thanks to a new attitude towards the Text. In the early modern period a new relation between speech and writing emerged. In Medieval Times, according to de Certeau, the instance of Writing was the Bible and readers were expected to listen to the voices of the scriptures. The Text and the Voice were then one and the same token. Yet in the early modern period a rupture takes place and the Voice and the Text are no longer one same token. De Certeau refers here to the text and voice of God but at the same time it implies a larger metaphor concerning society and the power of Church and State. The power regarding the sacred or the power to define the truth about God and life was no longer solely in the hands of religious authorities but was passing to new political institutions.<sup>40</sup> This shift fractured coherent belief systems and initiated a dispute over truth . De Certeau magnificently exemplifies this fight in his book about the possessed of Loudun.<sup>41</sup> One of the consequences of this metaphoric rupture between the voice and the text is that in this period the *économie scpripturaire* gradually comes into being. But even if state and church were a source of power and authority in medieval and still in modern times, there were always alternatives or counter-forces, as for example mysticism—where

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<sup>38</sup> Blumenberg *Legitimacy*: 440.

<sup>39</sup> de Certeau *L'écriture de l'histoire*: 276.

<sup>40</sup> De Certeau described the French context with the appointment of Cardinal Richelieu as Louis XIII's chief minister the power to define the truth about God and life was passing from the religious institutions to the political institutions of the French monarchy. *Ibid*, 210.

<sup>41</sup> In *La Possession de Loudun* (1970) de Certeau documented in detail the alleged diabolic possession of 17 nuns in the Ursuline convent of Loudun in the 1630s. De Certeau described the observations made by the various witnesses: the physicians who explained the behavior of the women by melancholy humors, other spoke of lovesickness or imagination, while the ecclesiasts were convinced of the presence of the devil. The public exorcisms were described by de Certeau as a theatre in which the priests still try to prove their authority, they demand the devils to speak, but in fact they are losing their grip on the community and are forced to witness the rise of science and reason. Michel de Certeau (1970) *La Possession de Loudun*, Paris: Julliard.

there is a struggle to find a voice to express one's own experience—or wanderers and nomads living at the borders of society. De Certeau was always in search of this disruptive presence of 'the other'—*the alien, the subversive, the radically different—in systems of power and thought*.<sup>42</sup> Such borderline figures were also to be found in Dutch Brazil. They were often hybrid figures that lived on the margins of society and I am convinced that it was in part, but not only, thanks to these subversive figures that new knowledge about the strange reality of the new world could be acquired.<sup>43</sup>

I will demonstrate in my second and third chapter the subversive roles taken up by Jacob Rabe and Manoel de Moraes. Coming from mixed backgrounds and upbringings or education systems, they possessed the tools to play different roles in society. But their hybridity also led to a certain nomadism and could explain why they always got caught 'in between', in between different social spaces and in between different identities.

### 0.11 AN ABSENCE

The object of my research, just as the starting point of most historiographic studies, is absent. De Certeau stressed the absence of the object of historiography in several works.<sup>44</sup> Yet it is at the same time this absence that is the starting point of historiography. When we study old texts we are like Robinson Crusoe:

Tel Robinson Crusoe sur la grève de son île, devant 'le vestige d'un pied nu empreint sur le sable', l'historien parcourt les bords de son présent ; il visite ces plages où l'autre apparaît seulement comme une trace de ce qui a passé. Il y installe son industrie. À partir d'empreintes définitivement muettes (ce qui a passé ne reviendra plus, et la voix est à jamais

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<sup>42</sup> Zemon Davies *The quest* : 1.

<sup>43</sup> One of these wanderers studied by de Certeau was Jean de Labadie, a Jesuit who after a long voyage through Europe in search of the true faith, ended up in the Netherlands where he founded his religious community. Michel de Certeau (1982) *La fable mystique: XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVII<sup>e</sup>*. Paris: Gallimard, 374-405.

<sup>44</sup> 'Il m'échappait ou plutôt je commençais à m'apercevoir qu'il m'échappait. C'est de ce moment, toujours réparti dans le temps, que date la naissance de l'historien. C'est cette absence qui constitue le discours historique.' Michel de Certeau (1970) 'Histoire et structure', *Recherches et Débats* : 168.

perdue), se fabrique une littérature : elle construit une mise en scène de l'opération qui confronte l'intelligence à cette perte. Ainsi se produit le discours qu'organise une présence manquante.<sup>45</sup>

These imprints or traces before me are also marked by distance. I am confronted with a double distance, the gap before me is twofold. On the one hand, there is a gap between the 17<sup>th</sup>-century travelers and myself. On the other hand, there is a gap between the travelers and the other and otherness of the New World. Moreover, there is also the mediation of the authors -in my research De Laet, Barlaeus, Marcgrave, Piso and the other quoted or paraphrased sources- who were the go-betweens thanks to whom we can still read the first-hand experiences of the Dutch in Brazil today.

The two gaps are bridged by representations but the distance is still there and may and cannot be annihilated. I am writing from a specific place but so were the 17<sup>th</sup>-century authors. I have to be aware of the specific place from which I am writing, as I have to be aware of the place from which De Laet, Barlaeus, Marcgrave and Piso were writing. What is more, just like the 17<sup>th</sup>-century authors I am creating a text through re-writing, I *set apart*.

En histoire, tout commence avec le geste de *mettre à part*, de rassembler, de muer ainsi en 'documents' certains objets répartis autrement. Cette nouvelle répartition culturelle est le premier travail. En réalité elle consiste à *produire* de tels documents, par le fait de recopier, transcrire ou photographier ces objets en changeant à la fois leur place et leur statut. Ce geste consiste à isoler un corps, comme on le fait en physique, et à 'dénaturer' les choses pour les constituer en pièces qui viennent combler les lacunes d'un ensemble posé a priori. Il forme la 'collection'.<sup>46</sup>

I want to describe what happened in descriptions, i.e. what happened in and through the act of writing. I am not concerned with the Brazilian otherness *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, instead I am interested in how this otherness was described, because I want to *comprehend*, i.e. to grasp and understand, in my way the encounter with the *other* and the *otherness* in Brazil. I thus want to describe how

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<sup>45</sup> de Certeau *L'absent de l'histoire*: 8-9.

<sup>46</sup> de Certeau *L'écriture* : 100.

this encounter was described, how it was re-created in contemporary texts, and how it was *comprehended* in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This double bind is not necessarily problematic. De Certeau saw it as a part of the *historiographic experience*, because *l'histoire n'est jamais sûre*.<sup>47</sup> From these various descriptions many voices erupt. As a historiographer, or in my case a literary scholar concerned with the early modern period, I am confronted with voices from the past that can be captured by a 'heterological' perspective. My own voice from the present and the different ones from the past fuse, 'each of [the] halves say[ing] what is missing from the other.'<sup>48</sup>

Ainsi fondée sur la coupure entre un passé qui est son objet, et un présent, qui est le lieu de sa pratique, l'histoire ne cesse de retrouver le présent dans son objet, et le passé dans ses pratiques. Elle est habitée par l'étrangeté qu'elle cherche, et elle impose sa loi aux régions lointaines qu'elle conquiert en croyant leur rendre vie.<sup>49</sup>

What follows is my description of one of these distant regions; I will try to capture its strangeness and make it speak through my voice from the present.

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<sup>47</sup> de Certeau *La possession*: intro.

<sup>48</sup> Zemon Davies *The quest*: 10.

<sup>49</sup> de Certeau *L'écriture*: 58.



# *Nieuwe Wereldt*



Figure 4: Titelpage Johannes De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*, Leiden (1625)



*Il nous faudrait des topographes  
qui nous fissent narration particulière  
des endroits où ils ont été.*  
Montaigne, 'Des Cannibales'

## 1.1 DISENCHANTMENT

Johannes De Laet's *Nieuwe Wereldt* (Leiden, 1625) was written at the threshold of what I consider to be a new paradigm in the Dutch encounter with the New World. The Dutch descriptions of Brazil that I chose to discuss were, as I intend to show, characterized by *disenchantment* and marked by an evolution: from (distant) mapping to (close) classifying. In the course of this evolution the descriptions gradually came to produce a closer comprehension of what became the Dutch colony. This new descriptive approach towards the exotic reality can already be traced in the period prior to the WIC's first expeditions to Brazil; seeds of this new paradigm can be found in *Nieuwe Wereldt*. The paradigm came to maturity more than 20 years later with the publication of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* (1648). In this book about natural history, which I will discuss in my fourth chapter, the descriptions not only map but also classify the exotic reality and, most importantly, by the act of describing the reality overseas is *comprehended*, i.e. appropriated and understood, in a more nuanced way than before. In *Nieuwe Wereldt* De Laet initiated the new paradigm firstly by mapping the territories he hoped would become future trading posts or colonies and secondly by incorporating fragments of texts that contributed to the *disenchantment* of the New World.

In an effort to compose *Nieuwe Wereldt* De Laet gathered sources from different European origins. Before 1621, the founding year of the WIC, there was almost no Dutch presence in the New World, with the exception of a few individuals. De Laet thus had to rely largely on reports made by French, Spanish or English voyagers. Consequently, *Nieuwe Wereldt* does not offer 'new' information about the Americas. What makes this compilation work nonetheless

interesting and additionally an early participant of the new paradigm in the descriptions of Brazilian reality is the almost complete absence of myths and marvelous elements and the abundant use of practical and contemporary information. This is what I refer to as *disenchantment*. In *Nieuwe Wereldt* we no longer encounter many fabulous animals or extraordinary people. The reader will feel less fear or astonishment than in Hans Staden's or Jean de Léry's descriptions about the local American population. Even if 16<sup>th</sup>-century travelers like Staden and de Léry were direct eyewitnesses, this did not guarantee more accuracy: their descriptions of the New World included many incongruities, despite the fact that they claimed to merely report and depict realities. An important factor that contributed to this marked difference is that the credibility of the myths and fables about the New World that had been circulating in the 16<sup>th</sup> century was fading at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The descriptions in *Nieuwe Wereldt* bear witness to this gradual disenchantment of the New World. De Laet created fewer stereotypical depictions of the overseas world, but not always of its inhabitants, as I shall show.

De Laet's ordering and mapping of the encountered material resulted from what Michel Foucault labeled as a 'will to know'. Foucault situated the emergence of this 'volonté de savoir' at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century: a knowing subject in a certain position was looking for useful and verifiable knowledge he could classify in order to get a firmer hold of reality.<sup>1</sup> Like a cartographer, which he also really was, De Laet was primarily mapping what he hoped to become future territories that could be exploited by the WIC. What I mean by mapping is that the

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<sup>1</sup> Foucault *L'ordre* : 18-19. 'Au tournant du XVI<sup>e</sup> et du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle (et en Angleterre surtout) est apparue une volonté de savoir qui, anticipant sur ces contenus actuels, dessinait des plans d'objets possibles, observables, mesurables, classables; une volonté de savoir qui imposait au sujet connaissant (et en quelque sorte avant tout expérience) une certaine position, un certain regard et une certaine fonction (voir plutôt que lire, vérifier plutôt que commenter); une volonté de savoir que prescrivait (et sur un mode plus général que tout instrument déterminé) le niveau technique où les connaissances devraient s'investir pour être vérifiables et utiles [...] Or cette volonté de vérité, comme les autres systèmes d'exclusion, s'appuie sur un support institutionnel: elle est à la fois renforcée et reconduite pour toute une épaisseur de pratiques comme la pédagogie, bien sûr, comme le système des livres, de l'édition, des bibliothèques, comme les sociétés savantes autrefois, les laboratoires aujourd'hui.'

descriptions read like maps: places and people are traced, located and outlined. We get information about where to find all known territorial features; from sea routes to mountains over villages and possible export products. Moreover, De Laet integrated parcels of circulating imagery about the New World that he found in texts focusing on instructions and other practical features that would be useful for future expeditions instead of focusing on the narration of the travel experience of his authors or instead of using myths and fables. Entertaining stories or enchanting phenomena were put in the background while practical information was put in the foreground. De Laet's utilitarian point of view, which he shared with contemporary Dutch writers, can be linked to the 17<sup>th</sup>-century anthropocentric view of the world.<sup>2</sup> In contrast with Thevet, the French cosmographer who constructed an incoherent patchwork of 'singularities' of Brazil, De Laet made a structured chorography of the regions overseas.<sup>3</sup> The Dutch cartographer worked in the same vein as Jan Huygen van Linschoten, who had shared his knowledge on trade and travel routes in the East almost three decennia before in *Itinerario: Voyage ofte schipvaert van Jan Huyghen van Linschoten naar Oost ofte Portugaels Indien* (1596). Van Linschoten wanted to inform merchants and navigators on how to get to the East and where they could find which products. De Laet, who, unlike Van Linschoten, never made it to the places he described, gathered what he thought would be of commercial and navigational interest. Therefore, De Laet left out fragments of texts that did not fit his editorial agenda of convincing investors to support the new enterprise.

I will focus on De Laet's descriptions of New Netherland and Brazil, to be found in book 3 and 13 of *Nieuwe Wereldt*. I will also comment briefly on the North American colony because Johannes De Laet was personally engaged in that

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<sup>2</sup> Jacobs 'The Hudson': 5.

<sup>3</sup> Even if Thevet already questioned the ancients and put experience forward, his ambitious project failed. His challenge was to incorporate in his cosmography not only all available geographical information but to reconcile it with historical background and features about nature and people of the overseas world. His scholarly standards were not sufficient for the task. An analysis of Thevet's *Les Singularitez de la France antarctique* (1557) was made by Frank Lestringant (1994) *Mapping the Renaissance world*, Cambridge/Oxford: Polity Press.

region and New Netherland was of considerable economic importance to the Dutch Republic.<sup>4</sup> It also allows me to adopt a comparative approach: both territories had already been colonized by different European powers and many texts describing their lands and inhabitants were already circulating. However, New Netherland and Brazil offered completely different realities. The moderate or humid continental climate of North America contrasted sharply with the exotic exuberance of the tropical wet and dry climate of Brazil. The WIC would thus have to adopt different strategies to colonize these territories and De Laet would have to approach them differently in order to make them attractive for future investors.

## 1.2 JOHANNES DE LAET

Johannes De Laet (1581-1649) was a renowned humanist. He was born in Antwerp as the son of the wealthy merchant Hans De Laet. After the fall of Antwerp (1585) his family fled to the Northern Netherlands, where they began a new life in Amsterdam.<sup>5</sup> Johannes de Laet studied theology and philosophy in Leiden, where he soon became a student of the prominent humanist Joseph Justus Scaliger, and

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<sup>4</sup> Even if in the long term the Dutch trade in the Atlantic never reached the economic significance it could attain in the East, it had nevertheless an impact on the Dutch economy. The importance of New Netherland for the Dutch economy is sometimes overestimated. For a critical approach see Johannes Postma and Victor Enthoven (eds.) (2003) *Riches from Atlantic Commerce: Dutch Transatlantic Trade and Shipping, 1585-1817*, Leiden: Brill and Jaap Jacobs (2005) *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America*, Leiden and Boston (Mass.): Brill, 475-482.

<sup>5</sup> Thousands of Flemings moved to the recently independent Dutch Republic after Spain had recaptured some parts of Flanders and Brabant and consequently the Roman Catholic religion was restored. See: Gustaaf Asaert (2004) *De val van Antwerpen en de uittocht van Vlamingen en Brabanders*, Tiel: Lannoo; Oscar Gelderblom (2000) *Zuid-Nederlandse kooplieden en de opkomst van de stapelmarkt (1578-1630)*, Hilversum: Verloren; Jonathan Israël (1994) *The Dutch Republic. Its rise, greatness and fall. 1477-1806*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 205-20; Jan van Roey (1985) *De val van Antwerpen. 17 augustus 1585 – voor en na*, Antwerpen: Dageraad; Jan Briels (1978) *Zuidnederlandse immigratie 1572-1630*, Haarlem: Fibula-Van Dishoeck.

matriculated in 1597.<sup>6</sup> In 1618-1619 he participated in the Synod of Dordrecht as an elder-delegate for the city of Leiden. He supported the Gomarists (Counter Remonstrants) against the Arminians (Remonstrants) in their famous doctrinal dispute. He was probably chosen to fulfill this position of delegate thanks to his book on patristic writing *Commentarius de Pelagianis* (Harderwijk 1617), in which he demonstrated he had become an expert on the subject.<sup>7</sup> De Laet's humanist background resonated strongly in his work, especially the theological and philological knowledge that he must have acquired during his study time with Scaliger.

After becoming a shareholder of the VOC—the Dutch East India Company—De Laet became one of the first directors of the WIC—the West India Company—in 1621. From that moment on his interest in geography, botany, linguistics and the New World in general increased. His fascination for the West Indies would continue until the end of his life: he retained his position on the board of directors of the WIC and kept on writing about the New World in various publications.<sup>8</sup> As an editor, his most interesting work in this respect is without doubt *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* (1648), which will be discussed in the last chapter of this study. Before, he had written about the colony in his *Iaerlijck Verhael* (1644), the subject of my second chapter, and in the *Nieuwe Wereldt*, the subject of the present chapter.

Johannes de Laet was both an important merchant and an esteemed scholar, well trained in classical philology, who wrote about contemporary politics, economics and religious matters. His career can be divided into two periods: before 1621 he was primarily interested in theological matters and after

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<sup>6</sup> Joseph Justus Scaliger (1550-1609) was a Dutch religious scholar of Italian descent. He is considered as one of the founders of historical textual criticism. See: Anthony Grafton (1983-1993) *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, Oxford-Warburg Studies, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Bremmer *Correspondance*: 149. For more about Johannes de Laet and the Synod of Dordt see: Henk Florijn (1998) 'Johannes de Laet (1581-1649) and the Synod of Dordt, 1618-1619' in: *Johannes de Laet (1581-1649): a Leiden polymath*, Rolf H. Bremmer and Jr, Paul Hoftijzer Jr. (eds.), special issue of *Lias*, vol. 25 (1998), 165-76.

<sup>8</sup> J.A. Jacobs (1996) 'Johannes de Laet en de Nieuwe Wereld' *Jaarboek van het Centraal Bureau voor Genealogie* 50, 108-130; R. H. Bremmer (1998) 'The correspondance of Johannes De Laet.' *Lias* 25: 139-164; Hoftijzer 1998: 201-16.

that he would dedicate most of his time to the study of geography, natural history, philology and classical authors.<sup>9</sup> In the course of his life, De Laet participated in many ambitious projects, among which the international series of the Leiden publisher Elzevier. For this *Respublica* series he composed several volumes: the ones about Spain, France, the Turkish Empire, Mongolia, India and Persia, among others.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, he also published an edition of Plinius' *Naturalis historia* (1635), a book about stones and minerals in 1647, and *M. Vitruvii Pollionis de architectura libri decem*, a reference work on architecture (Amsterdam: Elzevier, 1649). De Laet was also a famous collector—he assembled an impressive library—and gathered numerous *naturalia* from the Old and the New Worlds. This resulted in a vast collection similar to that of the Danish collector Ole Worm, with whom De Laet conducted an extensive correspondence and exchanged all kinds of curiosities.<sup>11</sup> A last activity worth mentioning was his fascination for languages, in particular the Anglo-Saxon ones. During his entire life he worked on the compilation of a dictionary of Old English, which was unfortunately never published.<sup>12</sup>

One of De Laet's major works is *De Nieuwe Wereldt ofte Beschrijvinghe van West-Indien, uit veelerhande Schriften ende Aen-teekeningen van verscheyden Natien* (1625) (*New World or Description of the West-Indies, out of many Writings and Annotations from different Nations*), dedicated to the States General and the first extensive compendium in the Dutch language about the New

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<sup>9</sup> Jacobs 'Johannes de Laet': 109.

<sup>10</sup> J.A. Gruys 'De reeks 'Republieken' van de Elzeviers en Johannes de Laet', B.P.M. Dongelmans [et al.], *Boekverkopers van Europa: het 17de-eeuwse Nederlandse uitgevershuis Elzevier*, Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2000: 77-106.

<sup>11</sup> Ole Worm (1558-1658) was a Danish physician who became famous for his work as an archivist and antiquarian. He travelled extensively, collected almost everything he came across and so assembled a vast collection of curiosities. His 'Museum Wormanium' was Denmark's first museum.

<sup>12</sup> Hoftijzer 1998: 201-216; Bremmer *Correspondence*, 159-60; Ottenheym 1998: 217-229.

For more about Johannes De Laet as a collector see: Eric Jorink (2008), *Het 'Boeck der Natuere'. Nederlandse geleerden en de wonderen van Gods schepping 1575-1715*, Leiden: Primavera Pers, 307-21 and Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr. (2008) 'Mine Is Bigger Than Yours': The Anglo-Saxon Collections of Johannes de Laet (1581-1649) and Sir Simonds D'Ewes (1602-50)', T.N. Hall and D. Scragg (eds.), *Anglo-Saxon Books and Their Readers*, Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 136-74.



World. The book is a compilation of earlier works about the Americas, among which the lost journals of Henry Hudson and Adriaen Block.<sup>13</sup> It deals mainly with geographical topics and gives an overview of the natural resources of the different regions. De Laet also included a great deal of information about trade and presented his general ideas about colonization, i.e. how to expel the Spanish and what can be learned from the latter's presence overseas to exceed them. With *Nieuwe Wereldt*, De Laet wanted to convince future investors to join the overseas enterprise. He therefore focused on the economic potentialities of the American countries. The publication was a commercial success and three new editions followed. Five years later, in 1630, the work saw a second, extended edition. In it, De Laet made use of supplementary sources and also expanded the book's title, adding *In ontallijcke plaetsen verbeteret, met eenige nieuwe caerten, beelden van verscheyen dieren ende planten verciert* (*Improved in many places, embellished with some new maps and images of various animals and plants*). The subsequent editions, in Latin (1633) and in French (1640), also contained extra materials.<sup>14</sup>

In what follows, I will make use of the first edition of 1625. It was thus published before the other works I will treat in the following chapters, which gives me the opportunity to trace an evolution in the descriptions of Brazil. *Nieuwe Wereldt* was first published at a time when the Dutch did not physically comprehend Brazil; they did not possess any territory yet. It was thus not possible

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<sup>13</sup> Henry Hudson was an English explorer and navigator in the early 17th century. In 1608 he was sent by the English East Company and Muscovy Company to find an easterly route to Asia, after which he was hired by the Dutch East India Company to find a northerly one. The Hudson River, the Hudson Bay and the Hudson Strait are named after him. He kept notes on all his voyages, which resulted in many journals that were published later on.

Adriaen Block was a Dutch merchant who sailed four times to the Americas. He became famous for his explorations of present-day New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts.

<sup>14</sup> All editions were published by Bonaventure & Abraham Elsevier: *Beschrijvinghe van West-Indien door Johannes de Laet. Tweede druk: In ontallycke placesen verbeteret, vermeerdert, met eenige nieuwe caerten, beelden van verscheyden dieren ende planten verciert* (Leiden, 1630), *Novus Orbis seu descriptionis Indiae Occidentalis Libri XVIII authore Joanne de Laet Antverp. Novis talulis geographicis et variis animantium, Plantarum Fructuumque iconibus illustrata* (Leiden, 1633), *L'Histoire du Nouveau Monde ou description des Indes Occidentales, contenant dix-huit livres ... enrichi de nouvelles tables geographiques & Figures des Animaux, Plantes & Fruits* (Leiden, 1640).

for De Laet to lay claim to territory through his descriptions, as he would do a few years later in his *Iaerlijck Verhael*. Nonetheless, the descriptions in *Nieuwe Wereldt* announce the new paradigm of comprehension of Brazil by rendering a less stereotypical and less marvelous representation of the country. This approach resulted in a new kind of description meant to better understand and to appropriate the Brazilian reality; it led to a new kind of comprehension.

### 1.3 NIEUWE WERELDT

In *Nieuwe Wereldt*, De Laet mapped the different regions of the New World, among which places he and his fellow WIC members hoped would become future colonies. He gathered, selected and organized the available knowledge about the New World, not solely out of personal interest but mainly for commercial purposes. His New World was no longer a world of wonders and marvels, as it had been in the previous tradition. Theodore De Bry's *Grand Voyages* (1590-1634), to mention one of the most famous examples, were still replete with fabulous creatures and other phenomena, such as mermaids, monsters or miraculous trees. These imaginary figures stressed the otherness and inspired amazement, wonder and sometimes fear.<sup>15</sup> In the fragments of texts which De Laet chose to include in his *Nieuwe Wereldt* the otherness of the newly discovered environment is no longer stressed and the marvelous does not appear, at least not in the foreground. De Laet did not want to induce fear, on the contrary. The descriptions in *Nieuwe Wereldt* show the disenchantment of the marvelous that was taking place concerning America: fabulous places, animals or people are almost absent in these descriptions. Also mythical creatures that populated 16<sup>th</sup>-century accounts of the New World and enchanted texts are relatively absent.

The *Great Voyages* were also published to stimulate colonization but in *Nieuwe Wereldt* new strategies are used to convince investors and voyagers. To

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<sup>15</sup> Groesen *De Bry*: 13.

attain his goal he relied more on contemporary writers and eyewitnesses than on the classics—Pliny the Elder, Herodotus or Virgil are no longer in the foreground. This path in the writings about foreign countries had already been taken before him, as for example in the famous *roteiros*, a genre in which *Nieuwe Wereldt* participated.<sup>16</sup>

The *roteiros* originated in Portugal when navigators started to explore the oceans in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and thus participated in a more empirical approach, paying more attention to useful facts and indications. During their long voyages along the coasts of Africa, Asia and America different authors took note of what they saw. *Roteiros* contained navigational and commercial information. At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as the Dutch became important trading people, the first Dutch *roteiro* came to press: *Itinerario, voyage ofte schipvaert naar Oost ofte Portugaels Indien* (Jan Huygen van Linschoten 1595). Two other important *roteiros* followed: Dierick Ruiters' *Toortse der zeevaart* (Flushing 1623) and Nicolaas van Geelkercken's *Reysboeck van het rijcke Brasiliën* (Dordrecht: Jan Canin [?] 1624). *Nieuwe Wereldt*, published just after the creation of the WIC, was published one year after Geelkercken's *Reysboek*.<sup>17</sup> The descriptions that appear in these *roteiros* mapped the recently discovered territories and were almost exempt of fabulous elements.

Another indication of this utilitarian or practical approach, more meant to inform navigators and investors rather than to entertain the reader, is that *Nieuwe Wereldt* was written in Dutch, not in Latin. Aside from his *Iaerlijck Verhael*, De Laet wrote mostly in Latin, for an audience of intelligentsia. It is clear that he wanted *Nieuwe Wereldt* to be read not only by intellectuals but also by the representatives of the mercantile public.

In the course of fifteen books, *Nieuwe Wereldt* offers an overview of the different known territories in America at the time, each book giving an *aperçu* of a certain country with descriptions of the coastline, the cities, the harbors, the fortifications

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<sup>16</sup> Teensma *Braziliaanse roteiros*: 47.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 43-47.

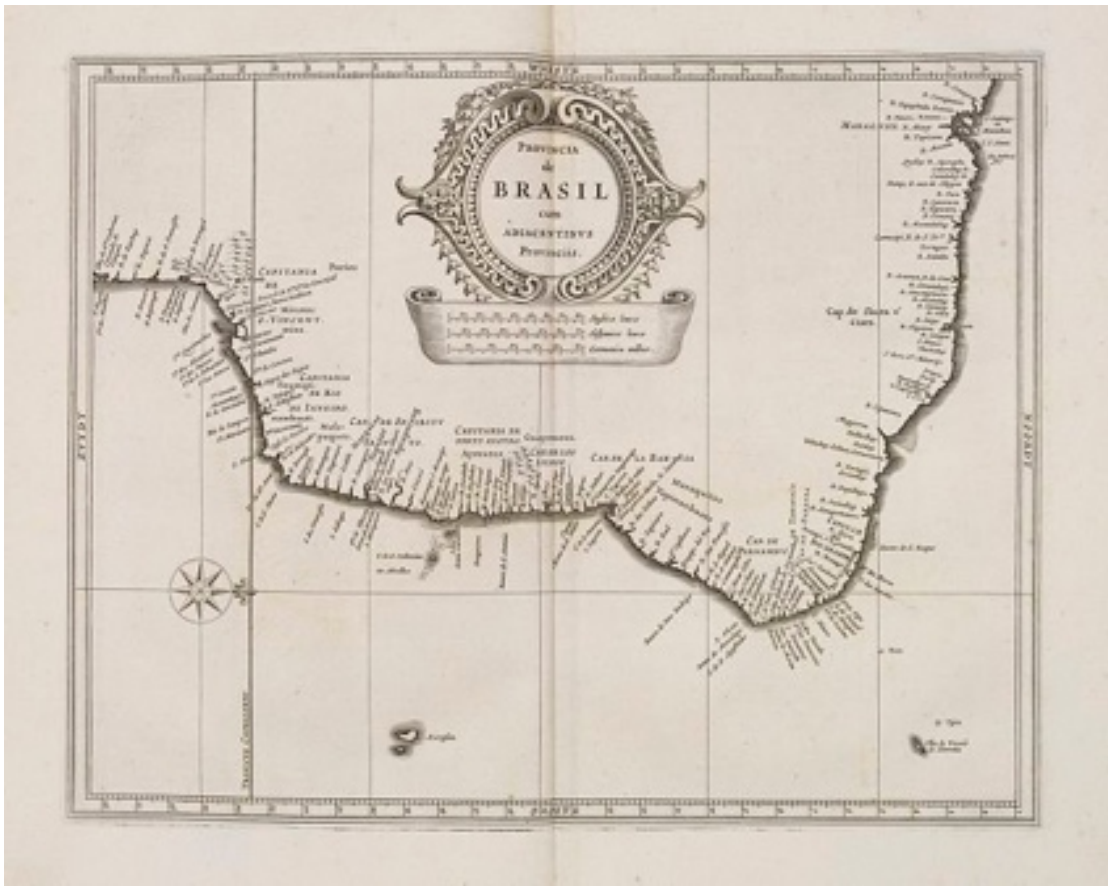
and so on, sometimes including information about fauna, flora and local people, if data were available, or considered trustworthy and noteworthy by De Laet. What obviously received closer attention were the 'target' territories, the future New Netherland and Brazil, with special attention not only to geographical data but also to travels (*voyagien*) and expeditions (*landtochten*). In *Nieuwe Wereldt* De Laet drew connections between sea routes, rivers and locations, towards and within the American continent.

In his work he included 10 maps, among which one of Brazil. This literal mapping—next to the descriptive mapping in the text—functioned as a promise of future ownership. A sort of *comprehension* was already fulfilled in the maps in the way that the territory had been grasped in drawings, before it could be better understood and finally possessed, i.e. *comprehended* in the textual descriptions. The maps in Caspar Barlaeus' *Rerum per Octennium* that were published a few years later and that will be discussed in chapter 3 went a step further than the ones in *Nieuwe Wereldt* and did no longer just promise but functioned as proof of ownership. The maps in *Rerum per Octennium* contained more details that underscored the Dutch *comprehension* of their Brazilian colony. On for example Blaeu's maps of Pernambuco, published in *Rerum per Octennium*, a scene at a sugar mill is depicted: on the road leading to the plantation there is a man on a horse followed by a woman carried by slaves, people are working at the mill and at the plantation house behind the mill more slaves are waving to welcome their owners. The drawing on the map not only illustrates a specific place, similar to what Google Streetview offers today, it also represents Brazil as a peaceful and lucrative colony. What is emphasized is human ingenuity by means of the mechanization of the mill, instead of forced human labor, which is relegated to the background. The emblem showing a woman holding sugar cane, Pernambuco's main commodity, and above her Johan Maurits' crown and wings demonstrate the Dutch control over the territory.<sup>18</sup> The maps in *Nieuwe Wereldt*, by contrast, did not take the *comprehension* that far yet. They are very basic compared to the ones

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<sup>18</sup> For an extensive analysis of the different maps see: Sutton *Possessing Brazil*: 1-17.

in *Rerum per Octennium*, only including ground plans with topographical names and no additional pictorial means like in *Rerum per Octennium*.



**Figure 5: Provincia de Brasil cum Adiacentibvs Provinciis J. De Laet/H. Geritsz. Leiden : Elsevier (1625)**

De Laet intended to offer as much accurate information as possible and he wanted to achieve this through the use of accounts of reliable eyewitnesses. In his introduction, he shared his working method with the reader. Aware of the difference in trustworthiness of his sources, he kept in mind that some witnesses were better observers than others, some more trustworthy than others and some more able to judge than others.<sup>19</sup> Not only the shortcomings of some accounts were stressed in his introduction, De Laet also mentioned his own limitations and

<sup>19</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: ii.

the possible mistakes that could slip into his own account. He therefore chose a comparative approach towards his sources and focused on the ‘onderlinghe vergelijkinghe van alles’ (‘the mutual comparison of everything’).<sup>20</sup> His purpose was to inform the reader as accurately as possible and if anyone noticed some error, De Laet wanted to be notified. In De Laet’s view this comparative approach, using mostly contemporary sources, was a condition to achieve his goal of truthful and correct descriptions. It was thus De Laet’s purpose to ‘describe’ as he stated in his *Tot den Leser*. He wanted to do so in order to help his reader to understand which opportunities lay in the described territories. This comprehension of the regions had to support the future development of trade in America.

The dedicatory letter to the States General stresses, again, that De Laet wanted to publish up-to-date information about the West Indies. De Laet’s main purpose was to inform the administrators of the recently founded WIC about the known territories of North and South America and the Caribbean. Since the charter to develop trade, included at the beginning of *Nieuwe Wereldt*, had already been granted, the recently founded Company not only needed financial resources to attain its goals but also useful knowledge:

... therefore it is time now for all the faithful lovers of the Fatherland to do their utmost to acquire the necessary funds to produce a work as big and weighty as this. The required resources are twofold: on the one hand a large capital must be acquired to gather a considerable number of ships, necessary to navigate and to visit so many widespread countries, as they are included in the aforementioned charter; on the other hand good knowledge of aforementioned countries and peoples is required for the instruction of those who are put in charge of the WIC as well as for those who will carry out the resolutions made here in this country [...]<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: inl 2.

<sup>21</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 2. ‘... zoo was het nu tijdt dat alle ghetrouwe lief-hebbers des Vaderlandst, haer uysterste beste souden doen, om te vervorderen de middelen die noodigh zijn tot uyt-voeringhe van zoo grooten ende ghewichtighen werck; welcke middelen alzoo sy bestaen in twee deelen, te weten, in’t opbrenghen van een groot Capitael, tot uyt-rustinghe van een aensienlijck ghetal van Schepen, hooghnoedigh tot het bevaren ende besoecken van zo vele ende wijdt-verspreyde Landen, als in den voorschreven Octroye begrepen zijn; ende ten anderen, in goede kennisse van de voorschreven Landen ende Luyden, tot onderrechtinge van de ghene die de directie van dese West-Indische Compagnie bevolen is, als mede die, de welcke de resolutien hier te Landen ghenomen, sullen gaen uyt-voeren [...]

With ‘good knowledge’ De Laet referred to useful knowledge for future commercial endeavors. It is clear from the very beginning that this utilitarian approach would allow little space for enchantment. The need for accurate information is highlighted, along with proof of his comparative method. De Laet collected an impressive number of reports and journals from diverse authors in various languages. In his *Tot den Leser* he mentioned that he used Italian, Spanish and English sources.<sup>22</sup> He gathered a collection of reports of the West Indies from all over Europe and made a selection in order to compose his description (*beschrijvinghe*). No less than 37 publications are mentioned as his main sources, from which only seven were strictly speaking Dutch: Jan Huyghen van Linschoten, Laurens Bicker, Barent Jansz. Chirurgijn, Olivier van Noort, Joris van Spilbergen, Willem Schouten en Dirck Ruyters. These were seven Dutch travelers who had established a reputation as navigators.

In his *Tot den Lezer (To the reader)* section De Laet further demonstrated his comparative method. He pointed out some contradictions found between the works of different authors and even mentions a few minor errata. De Laet did not want to become involved in the ongoing dispute about the legitimacy of the name ‘America’. Rather, he wanted to display all that was described, and in doing so he offered a general and brief overview of the discussion about the naming of the territory:

The countries that I intend to describe are named by many America, West Indies by others while also receiving other names. I will not elaborate on the naming, meaning whether it has been rightfully named or not. The reader has to understand that my intention is to write about the fourth part of the world, which was unknown by the ancients, as far as it appears in their writings (although I do not deny that in some writers we can trace some recognition as we also can see in Joseph de Acosta, who treated many matters in his *Natural and Moral History of the West Indies*) and was first discovered in the year 1492 by Christopher Colon or Columbus: although Americus Verspucius who arrived some time after him got the honor that many named the countries after him. The king of Spain or actually of Castilla and Leon claims that all these countries belong to him [...].<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 4.

<sup>23</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 1. ‘De landen die mij voor-genomen hebben te beschrijven worden by vele America, ende van vele West-Indien, ende van andere oock anders ghenaeemt: mijn meyninghe en is niet vele woorden

#### 1.4 VENISTI TANDEM

De Laet does not maintain this detached attitude throughout his work. A little further in his text he set out his views on the Spanish Conquista of the New World. After quoting Antonio de Herrera's *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las Islas y Tierra Firme del mar Océano que llaman Indias Occidentales* (1601-1615), specifically his passage justifying the possessions of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella in the Americas, he criticized the Iberian behavior, especially exposing their cruelty towards the natives.<sup>24</sup> De Laet's response starts as follows:

From which insinuation and protestation we can see the undoubted right of the Spanish King upon the countries in the West Indies. Upon which were rooted the terrible wastes, destructions and injuries of the poor inhabitants of these countries, the taking of their places, the robbing of all their goods and the usurpation of all they found in these countries [...]<sup>25</sup>

De Laet's critique of the Spanish behavior is part of a larger discourse that emanated in the Netherlands some decades before the publication of *Nieuwe Wereldt* when the Netherlands were still under Spanish rule. In *Innocence Abroad* (2001), Benjamin Schmidt points to an evolution in the Dutch discourse

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de maken over den naem te weten ofte die recht ghegeven is ofte niet my zal ghenoech weten. Dat de Lezer verstaet dat mijn voornemen is te schrijven van dat vierde gedeelte des wereldts welck den Ouderen onbekend is gheweest voor zoo vele by haer schriften is blyckende (hoewel ick niet en ontkenne dat eenighe lichte erkentnisse bij eenighe gespeurt wordt als 'tselve te sien is by Iosephus de Acosta, die vele saecke verhandelt in syn Historie Naturael ende Morael van West-Indien) ende sints de jare veerthien hondert twee en tneghentich door Don Christopher Colon ofte Columbus eerst is ontdeckt: hoewel Americus Vespucius die eenigen tijt daernaer is ghekomen de eere heeft dat dese Landen vele naer synen naem worden ghe-naemt. Den Koninck van Spaegnen ofte om eyghentlijcker te spreecken van Castilien ende Leon, pretendeert alle dese Landen hem toe te behooren.'

<sup>24</sup> Antonio de Herrera (1559-1625) was a Spanish historian. His most famous work is *Historia general de los hechos de los Castellanos en las islas y Tierra Firme del Mar Oceano*, 4 vols., Madrid, 1601-15.

<sup>25</sup> Uit welke insinuatie ende protestatie men kan sien het ongetwijfelt recht van den koninck van Spaegnen op de Landen van West-Indien / ende waer op ghegrondt zijn gheweest de schrickelijcke verstroyinghen / vernielinghen ende verscheuringhen van de arme Inghesetenen van die Landen / in-neminghe van hare plaetsen / beroovinghe van alle hare goederen / ende toe-eygheninghe van alles tghene daer in die Landen wordt ghevonden; [...]. (De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: inl 2)



about the natives.<sup>26</sup> He demonstrates how the image of the Native American that circulated in the Low Countries was influenced by the rule of the Habsburg dynasty over the Netherlands and served clear political goals. From the beginning of the rebellion against the Spanish, the Dutch stressed similarities between themselves and the natives, as both were victims of the Spanish tyranny and, therefore, were struggling against a mutual enemy. Visual and textual representations of suffering Native Americans were used as propaganda tools against Habsburg Spain. Furthermore, many books and pamphlets that promoted the creation of the WIC used the idea of the liberation of natives as an argument that the indigenous people were *innocent victims* of Spanish cruelties and had to be liberated.<sup>27</sup>

An example of these prevailing ideas is provided by the first translations of the best-selling *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1552) by friar Bartolomé de las Casas (1484-1576) that appeared in Dutch by the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Eleven other editions followed and most appeared under the significant title *Mirror of the Spanish Tyranny*. This text contained abundant references to the ‘atrocities’ committed by the Spaniards against the ‘innocent’ natives of the New World. Also, the text was frequently cited in Dutch patriotic pamphlets. The rebels identified themselves with the Native Americans and applied the twin topoi of *innocence* and *tyranny* to their own situation. Of course, the Dutch were not the only ones to demonize the activities of the Spanish conquistadores. Other European countries also used the *Leyenda Negra* or *Black Legend* as a polemical instrument. But with their use of this specific anti-Spanish rhetoric, the Dutch rebels firmly shaped the image of the natives that circulated in the Low Countries. These stereotypical images became more nuanced when the Dutch presence in the New World increased.<sup>28</sup>

In De Laet’s text, this traditional critique of the Spanish is still obvious and

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<sup>26</sup> Benjamin Schmidt (2001) *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570-1670* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid: 68-122.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid: 95-96, 114-21 and 160-70.

the *poor inhabitants of these countries*<sup>29</sup> are still used as an argument to defeat the Spanish abroad in order to free the natives, just as the Dutch had freed themselves. De Laet still used this as an argument to sail off to the Americas, but it no longer occupied a central place in his plea throughout *Nieuwe Wereldt*. The Dutch themselves were no longer suffering under the Spanish ‘tyranny’ at the time of the publication of *Nieuwe Wereldt*. More importantly, at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century they entered the colonial race in the Americas themselves. Once Dutch colonists started to make the voyage to the Americas and brought their own stories about the natives back home, writers like De Laet could begin to edit new compendia about the Americas based on contemporary Dutch sources. On the basis of these sources it became clear that it would not be as easy as they first thought to create alliances with the natives. Besides, in the 1620s and especially in the 1630s, the Dutch interest in trade and possible investments became more important than the possible liberation of the ‘suffering’ Native Americans.<sup>30</sup> During the sixteenth century, most compendia about the New World published in the Low Countries based their descriptions on foreign and classical sources. For *Nieuwe Wereldt*, published in 1625, De Laet still had to rely on a variety of foreign accounts. Almost 20 years later, to compose his *Iaerlijck Verhael*, which will be the subject of the following chapter, he had new descriptions made by employees of the WIC at his disposal. As a consequence, the representation of America developed over these years. The title page of the 1630 edition of De Laet’s *Nieuwe Wereldt* shows an image of three Native Americans offering presents to a woman who is the personification of the Low Countries with the banner *Venisti tandem* (‘You came at last’) in the background. In the allegory the woman sits on a throne and on the ground weapons are displayed around her. The Native Americans are escorted by an armadillo and are offering pearls and gold. The relationship between the Dutch and the Native Americans is clearly not one of equals. After their liberation by the Dutch the Indians will offer them their support in their expansion. No such image can be found in *Iaerlijck Verhael*. In 1630 the Dutch

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<sup>29</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: inl 2.

<sup>30</sup> Schmidt *Innocence*: 215-28.

still came to ‘liberate’ the ‘suffering Native Americans’. It was not merely a shift in mentality due to the political context that made an evolution of the descriptions possible, but also the availability of more Dutch contemporary sources. *Nieuwe Wereldt* was at the threshold of this evolution; the descriptions already showed the signs of what was emerging little by little. I will demonstrate that elements of this more nuanced vision were already present in *Nieuwe Wereldt*, more specifically in the description of New Netherland and Brazil. First I will treat De Laet’s book on Virginia, where New Netherland is described, a region in which De Laet also made personal investments.



Figure 6: Detail title page *Nieuwe Wereldt* (1630)

## 1.5 NEW NETHERLAND: HET DERDE BOECK VIRGINIA

In 1602 the States General chartered the VOC—the Dutch East India Company that just had received the Dutch monopoly on Asian trade—to explore a Northern passage to the Indies. Seven years later, they hired Henry Hudson for the mission. It was his third expedition. The two previous ones, financed by English investors, had failed. Henry Hudson tried his luck north of Russia in search of an ice-free passage. No navigable route was found during this expedition, but he decided to go further west and came ashore with his ship *Halve Maen* at what is today known as Nova Scotia. Henry Hudson made the preliminary work for future Dutch

colonization. After his passage new expeditions followed and soon New Netherland became an important trading post, mostly due to the profitable beaver fur.<sup>31</sup>

The WIC, the West India Company, was created after Hudson's journey in 1621. De Laet himself was not only involved in the creation of the Company but he also invested personally in New Netherland. After taking over Albert Coenraetsz Burgh's share, he became owner of a 'patroonship'.<sup>32</sup> However, his relationship with the important 'patroon' Kiliaen van Rensselaer became problematic on account of a personal conflict that started in the early 1640s.<sup>33</sup> The basis of their discussion concerned their different views of the privileges that could be given to the 'patroons'. Van Rensselaer wanted more autonomy and power and De Laet, together with other board members, disapproved. The latter wanted to be more involved in the management of the patroonships. Despite this conflict, De Laet remained a shareholder in the Rensselaerswijck for the rest of his life and stayed involved in New Netherland until he died in 1649.<sup>34</sup> The conflict lasted even after

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<sup>31</sup> For the importance of beaver fur in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century commercial network, see Jacobs *The colony*: 109-135.

<sup>32</sup> The *patroons* system was introduced by the Dutch West India Company in 1629. Through the Charter of 'Freedoms and Exemptions for the Patroons and Masters or Private Persons who would plant a colony and cattle in New Netherland'. From then on invested members could become *patroons* (landholders) of a *patroonship* and thus could receive manorial rights. One of the major implications of the instauration of the *patroons* system was that private investments in the colony become possible and that the West India Company lost its monopoly. See: Jaap Jacobs (2007) 'Dutch proprietary manors in America: the patroonships in New Netherland', *The Atlantic World. Europe, Africa and the Americas, 1500-1830* volume 11 of: *Constructing Early Modern Empires Proprietary Ventures in the Atlantic World 1500-1750*, L.H. Roper and B. van Ruymbeke (e-ds.) Leiden/Boston: Brill, 301-26 and Henk den Heijer (1994) *De geschiedenis van de WIC*, Zutphen: Walburg Pers.

<sup>33</sup> Kiliaen van Rensselaer (1586-1643) was a merchant from Amsterdam and one of the founding directors of the WIC. His carrier in America was very prosperous and he became one of the most successful *patroons*. About Kiliaen van Rensselaer see: Janny Venema (2011) *Kiliaen van Rensselaer (1586-1643) Designing a New World*, Hilversum/New York: Uitgeverij Verloren/The State University of New York Press.

'The Rensselaerswijck' was located in the present-day state of New York. More about the Rensselaers family: Janny Venema (2003) *Beverwijck: A Dutch Village on the American Frontier, 1652-1664*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press; Oliver A. Rink (1986) *Holland on the Hudson. An economic and social history of Dutch New York* (New York: Cornell University Press); L. Van Nierop (1949) 'Rensselaerswijck 1629-1704', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 60: 1-39 and 187-219.

<sup>34</sup> Jacobs 'Johannes de Laet': 113-16.

both men died and was finally solved in 1650 by a verdict of the Hof van Holland in favor of the shareholders, which was accepted by the Staten Generaal.<sup>35</sup>

## 1.6 THE AMERICAN LAND

De Laet's book about *Virginia* starts with a brief introduction in which he gave the exact location of the region, followed by the story of Sir Walter Raleigh's expedition of 1584.<sup>36</sup> He also added a short explanation about the origin of the name of the country given after the exploration in 1606 by the English Virginia Company.

Then, in the course of twenty-five chapters, the various regions of Virginia are mapped as for example in the following description of New England:

The situation of this part of America called now New England by the English, described by Captain Smith

The part that we call New England lies between the fortieth-first and the fortieth-fifth grade by Northern Line, though the part I am writing about extends from Penobscot to Cabe Cod, some seventy-five Spanish miles by straight line distance from one another; between which poles I saw at least forty different habitations on the coast and also about twenty-five harbors.<sup>37</sup>

First, we are given a detailed description of the location of the region, similar to the previous one of New England. Then the text continues with the description of the shore, the availability of goods and food, the local people and the presence of

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<sup>35</sup> Jacobs 'Patroonships': 312-14.

<sup>36</sup> Sir Walter Raleigh (1554-1618) was a famous English poet, explorer and courtier of Queen Elizabeth. In 1584 he received a patent to regions discovered in the name of the English Crown. He led expeditions to North and South America and established colonies on Roanoke island. In 1618 he was executed for allegedly plotting to dethrone James I.

<sup>37</sup> De Laet 1625: 75. 'De Ghelegentheyte van dit deel van America welck de Engelse nu noemen New England, by Capteyn Smith beschreven. T'Ghedeelte (seght hy) welck wy noemen New England, is ghelegen tusschen den een en veertichsten grade ende den vijf en veertichsten by Noorden de Linie doch het deel daer dit discours van spreeckt streckt sich van Pennobseot tot Cabe Cod, eenighe vijf en seventich spaensche mijle by een rechte Linie distandt de een van d'ander; tussche welcke palen ick ghesien hebbbe ten minsten veertich differente woon-plaetse op de Zee custe ende ghesondeert by de vijf en twintich seer goed havenen.'

animals. Through his descriptions of the different regions De Laet drew connections between sea routes, rivers and locations towards and within the American continent, mapping the country for possible future expeditions and exploitations. To achieve this, De Laet incorporated accounts from various explorers, carefully choosing passages from authors who gave in his view the most accurate possible depictions of the land, alternating between direct quotations mostly in translation and his own comments. The focus was directed on the mainly positive aspects of future trade and colonization. Moreover, participants of future Dutch expeditions were well informed about how they should arrive at the proper destination, where to land, which places to explore and where to settle. At times, De Laet also included historical background of the regions, for example about how the previous mainly English and French colonizers battled for land and how alliances were built with the local population, as I will illustrate in the following pages.

The first account De Laet commented upon in detail is the journey led by the Florentine explorer Giovanni da Verrazano in 1524. Sent by the French King on an expedition to North America, Verrazano explored the Northern Atlantic coast of the continent. De Laet translated and transcribed the passages on fauna and flora, including various descriptions of plants and trees and also paying close attention to the coastline, i.e. mapping the coast for future Dutch sailors to come.

In the second, third and fourth chapters about *Nieuw Engelandt (New England)*, as described by Captain Smith,<sup>38</sup> De Laet again mapped the region. He began by mentioning all longitudes and latitudes, exact borders, together with an enumeration of the Native American settlements in their original names. The mapping continues with practical features such as where to find wood, fruits, crops and animals like beavers, otters or fish, and the best places to go on shore. When supposedly useful for future settlers, local aspects are closely depicted,

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<sup>38</sup> John Smith (1580-1631), an English explorer, was hired in 1606 by the Virginia Company to lead an expedition to North America. He helped to establish the first permanent English settlement in Virginia. In his numerous writings about the New World he expressed his own observations about America and advised about further colonization.

including animals as for example the moose. This animal was hunted by native people not only for its flesh but also for its skin that was used as leather for different purposes:

There is also a certain animal, called *mosse* by the local people, with a body as large as an ox, a head like a billy with wide horns, which he renews every year like the billies, has a neck as a deer with short manes running along his back. His hair is as long as that of an elk, though he is better suited for the use of saddles. He also has a big bulge hanging under his throat. He has long legs, feet as big as those of an ox and a longer tail than the billies. His skin makes very good buff and his flesh makes good food, which the savages use to dry to store. We saw a big number of these animals, on a big island along the coast, called Mount Mansell by the English, this is the place where the savages go to hunt them at proper times [...].<sup>39</sup>

Apart from the abundant detailed descriptions, many comparisons with European examples are added to make his close descriptions more understandable for a European public:

the land around the Cape is hilly, like the Dutch dunes, but it is a lot better since it has black soil at one spit deep and it is overgrown by trees without creepers.<sup>40</sup>

The text is full of these kinds of comparisons. Not only do they make the overseas reality more comprehensible, they are also an argument in favor of easy adjustment in Virginia. Dutch colonists could settle there and easily adapt to the environment thanks to the many similarities between climate and nature of the Netherlands and North America.

The importance of the fertility of the land and the moderate climate are stressed throughout the chapters on North America. Not only were all the

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<sup>39</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 81. 'Daer is oock een seecker dier welck de ingheboorne noemen mosse, is soo groot van lijf als een os thooft als een buck met een breede hoorn welc hij alle jaer verandert als de bucken den neck als een hert met korte manen loopende langhs den rugghe. T'hayr lanck als een elandt doch beter geacht voor t'ghebruyck van sadel-makers. Heeft insgelijcr een groote bult hangende onder syn stroot. Heeft lange beenen ende voeten soo groote als ossen voeten, langher steert als die van de bucken. Syn huydt maeckt seer goet buffels en syn vleesch is seer goet eten, welck de wilden zijn ghewoon ghedrooght te bewaren. Men heeft een groote menichte van dese beesten ghesien op een groot Eylandt by de custe ghenaeamt by de Enghelsche Mount Mansell. Daer de wilden op seker tijden trecken om dese dieren te jaghen [...].'

<sup>40</sup> De Laet 1625: 82. 't'landt ontrent de Cape zijn landt-berghen seer ghelijck de Hollandsche duynen dan veel beter want hebben wel een spit diep seer geode swarte aerde al met boomen begroeyt doch sonder onderghewas'.

conditions for growing crops fulfilled, there was also an abundance of good wood for ship building. Most of De Laet's praise goes to Massachusetts, referred to as the *paradise* ('paradijs') of this land.<sup>41</sup> De Laet clearly wanted to convince the readers of the region's great potential. In the fourth chapter he added information about how the English had managed to organize their settlements and cultivate the lands, clearly to indicate how the Dutch could do the same.

The seventh chapter, 'Eerste ontdeckinge ende generale beschrijvinghe van 'tquartier welck bij onse Nieuw-Nederlandt wordt ghenoeemt' ('First discovery and general description of the region that we call New Netherland'), deals specifically with New Netherland. This section begins with the historical background. Significantly, the history starts with the arrival of the first colonizers, as if there were no history before European men arrived in the New World and wrote down their descriptions of it. This approach shows De Laet's western feeling of superiority towards the local people. De Laet explained how the region had first been taken by the French and later by the Dutch and argues why it deserved to be called New Netherland: Dutch merchants had already been granted a charter by the States General to sail and trade on the Manhattes river and had since continued their affairs with the local people, even building a fort in 1615.<sup>42</sup>

After this historical introduction, which is also a form of mapping in the sense that the historical facts are pinpointed on a timeline to be better understood, de Laet continues his mapping of the land. There are no signs of enchantment in this text, only useful facts. He gives the exact location of the region, points out where the ships should land before the coast, offers precise descriptions of the various bays, paying special attention to the expedition of the Dutchman Adriaan Block<sup>43</sup> and to the *Groote Riviere/Manhattes/Montaines* river, to which the entire chapter ten is dedicated, based on Henry Hudson's

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<sup>41</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 78.

<sup>42</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 84.

<sup>43</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 84-87.



report.<sup>44</sup> The latter was one of De Laet's main sources for the description of New Netherland, more in particular the report of the voyage Hudson made in 1609. Hired by the Dutch to seek for a Northeast Passage, Hudson had explored the coast of North America. The reward of 25,000 guilders offered by the States-General to the person who would find a Northeast passage to Asia must have attracted the Englishman to Amsterdam, where he met the prominent Flemish cartographers Peter Plancius and Jodocus Hondius. His discoveries in North America were one of the reasons that encouraged the Dutch to claim the territory and that set the stage for the first Dutch settlements a few years later. As a sign of respect for the country that hired him, Hudson named the now known Hudson river *Mauritius river*, in honor of Prince Maurits van Nassau, stadtholder of Holland.

In his accounts, the English explorer praised a country that possessed all necessary qualities for future trade and colonization. Many primary sources were available such as trees to build houses and ships, animals such as beavers and bears that could be used for their furs, fruits and vegetables, and so on. The only thing to be imported from the Old World was cattle.

To conclude this country is very appropriate to be inhabited by people of our nation because of the similarities in climate: especially because of the availability of all that is necessary to support people except tame cattle that could easily be imported because there is sufficient pasture here to sustain them. Wine could be made here with necessary effort. There are already vineyards to be found there that only need to be cultivated.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> More about Hudson see: Jaap Jacobs and L.H. Roper (2014, eds.) *The Worlds of the seventeenth-century Hudson Valley*, Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press; Douglas Hunter (2009) *Half Moon: Henry Hudson and the voyage that redrew the map of the world*, New York: Bloomsbury Press; Peter C. Mancall (2009) *Fatal Journey. The Final Expedition of Henry Hudson. A Tale of Mutiny and Murder in the Arctic*, New York: Basic Books; Douglas Hunter (2007) *God's Mercies: Rivalry, Betrayal and the Dream of Discovery*, Anchor: Doubleday Canada ; Donald Johnson (1993) *Charting the Sea of Darkness: The Four Voyages of Henry Hudson*, New York: Kodansha International ; Hen. C. Murphy (1909) *Henry Hudson in Holland. An inquiry into the origins of the voyage which led to the discovery of the Hudson River*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

<sup>45</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 89. 'In somma het is een landt dat seer bequaem is om by onse natie door ghelijckheit van de ghestalte des luchts ende weder bewoondt te worden: in sonderheyt de wijl daer niets en schijnt te ontbreken dat tot onderhoudt van de menschen leven van noode is dan tam vee welck daer licht waer te brenghen ende voorts d'een ende d'ander daer onse landen van herwaerts over selfs behoeflich van zijn: ende de wijn soude door industrie hier wel konnen ghewonnen worden. De wijle men de wijngaerden daer reede vindt die niet dan culture en ontbreect.'

In his descriptions of the land, De Laet stressed the similarities with the homeland. Dutch settlements could therefore easily be further implanted. The local nature offered the products and the Dutch would import the knowledge to cultivate the fertile land and develop industry. De Laet also demonstrated how trade had already proven to be lucrative and could easily be further developed. Less familiar aspects to his European audience, as unknown animals or plants, are mentioned but their strangeness is not stressed. As I see it, the descriptions partake in the disenchantment of the New World. Not only did De Laet leave out descriptions about fabulous creatures, typical American aspects are not described as something to be afraid of. The strangeness is not stressed in the representation and no anomalous cases are presented. On the contrary, in De Laet's approach to the natural world unknown natural phenomena or animals are rendered fairly neutrally and their practicality or economic value is stressed. Wood can be used for ships, animals can be hunted, and crops can be cultivated. This utilitarian approach leaves little room neither for fabulous elements nor for aesthetic praise of the natural surroundings, and can be found in all contemporary descriptions of New Netherland. Value judgments are added to phenomena in order to refer to their practical use only and not to their possible beauty.<sup>46</sup> In the descriptions of the natives, by contrast, value judgements are more abundant.

## **1.7 THE PEOPLE OF NORTH AMERICA**

Already in the first expedition commented on by De Laet in this book, the voyage led by Verazzano, special attention is given to how the European men encountered local people. The indigenous were initially afraid of the former, De Laet stressed:

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<sup>46</sup> Jacobs 'The Hudson': 5.

They found many people on the beach who fled and at times stood gaping with wonder at the Christians. When they were finally assured by signs that nothing wrong would happen, they pointed at a good place to land and also presented them some of their own food.<sup>47</sup>

In the first chapters about Virginia we find only brief descriptions of people ‘who ran naked except from their pubic parts that were covered’.<sup>48</sup> The different people that the European travelers encountered are enumerated; some are in contrast to the ones described above ‘very rough’ and ‘barbaric’, which made it impossible to negotiate with them. They even shot at the Europeans, according to De Laet.<sup>49</sup> The region in which these tribes lived was a mirror of their nature: very rough, inhospitable and furthermore not suited for any cultivation. The only available trading goods in the region were minerals, as the Europeans could deduce from the jewels made from copper that the local people were wearing.<sup>50</sup>

In the descriptions of the local people, some tribes are rendered according to a dichotomous logic: either as to be feared or as to be trusted. With some tribes the Europeans had already established a trade relation. In his descriptions, De Laet highlighted how the Dutch could rely on and thus trust the knowledge of the local population, especially concerning practical information, such as the medicinal use of plants, the preparation and cooking of local fruits and vegetables, and where to find passages, good hunting sites or water:

The savages say that there is no canal over there but that the drought begins on the main land at Pawmer until the island Nausit and it spreads beyond their knowledge far away in the sea.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 74. ‘[...] vonden sy daer veel volcks aen strandt die de vlucht namen ende somtijts met verwonderingh op de Christenen bleven staen gapen. Dan eyndelijck door teekenen verseeckert zijnde dat haer niets en soude misshieven, soo wesen sy haer een goede plaets om te landen ende presenteerden hun oock van haer victualie.’

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> ‘zeer rouw volk ende barbaris’ (De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 74-75)

<sup>50</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 74-75.

<sup>51</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 78. ‘De wilden segghen dat daer gheen canael en is maer dat de drooghten aen t’vaste landt beginnen by Pawmer tot het Eylandt van Nausit, ende soo hem uyt streckt buyten haer kennis ver in de Zee.’

The knowledge of the natives about certain aspects of the natural world they lived in could be trusted and was considered valuable enough by the Laet to be incorporated in the text. Yet, we can not verify to which extent the natives also gave misleading information. The fact that this kind of information was emphasized much more than fearful practices or extraordinary phenomena is again a sign of what I have called disenchantment. Moreover, this local knowledge circulating in European reports indicates that a certain form of communication had been installed over the years between Europeans and local tribes. Some people had become allies and were no longer perceived as strange exotic figures, even if other tribes would remain strange, such as the cannibals that I will treat later. It is furthermore noteworthy that on the one hand, many original Native American names are used for all things that are not known in Europe (especially names of tribes, animals and plants), as is the case in many contemporary texts. On the other hand, when it comes to known phenomena, a European denomination is used such as for grapes ('druyven') and pumpkins ('pompoenen').<sup>52</sup> Even if Europeans were not inscribing new names on everything anymore, in the way Columbus had done, their own denomination of known things and features was still considered to be of a higher value than the one used by the local people.

De Laet not only mentioned practical information directly useful for commercial purposes, he also selected reports treating the relationships among the local people and included fragments of texts about alliances and conflicts with European conquerors.<sup>53</sup> This offers interesting information in view of future Dutch alliances with locals, but in some fragments stories about strange practices do appear as for example the existence of cannibal tribes:

These people spoke about some Cannibals in the neighborhood of Sagadahoc, with teeth of three thumbs long, but did not see them.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 89.

<sup>53</sup> More about these alliances see Meuwese *Brothers in Arms*: 55–124 and 228–285.

<sup>54</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 79. 'Dit volck sprack van eenighe canibals ontrent *Sagadohoc*, met tanden dry duymen langh maar saghense niet.'

The cannibals are mentioned here in a fairly detached way. De Laet added that nobody saw them, thus even questioned their existence. He did not elaborate on the subject and did not present them as a great threat, even if he mentioned their teeth of 'three thumbs long', it is only in passing. As he wanted to convince people in his text to join the overseas enterprise, it would have been counterproductive to shed further light on frightening figures such as cannibals.

The tribes in New Netherland receive the closest attention in the book about Virginia and De Laet clearly highlighted their hospitality. From the moment they arrived Hudson and his companions were well received by friendly 'savages':

[...] two savages came to visit them, clothed in elk-skins, and they showed them every sign of friendship. On the land they found an abundance of blue plums and the most beautiful oaks in height and thickness that one can contemplate, and also poplars and linden trees, together with all other of wood useful in ship-building.<sup>55</sup>

Next to the many contributions of Henry Hudson, some Dutch sources appear, mainly Adriaen Block's reports. The descriptions of the local people in the latter's fragment are more nuanced than the previous ones. Longer descriptions on daily life and on the physical appearances of the natives are presented in order to better differentiate between several native tribes. As I already mentioned, De Laet not only included positive descriptions of the Native American people: some people are described as 'completely not working and others are very nasty thieves; and bad people.'<sup>56</sup> De Laet transcribed passages from Hudson who described how he managed to come closer to some tribes:

'I sailed to the shore', he says, 'with one of their canoes, together with an old man who was the chief of forty men and seventeen women. I saw them in a house well constructed of oak-bark, and shaped circularly in such a way that it looked like it had been built with an arched roof. It contained a big amount of maize or Indian corn, and beans from last year's harvest; and near the house food being dried, enough to fill three ships, besides what was still in cultivation on the fields. [...]

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<sup>55</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 83-84. '...daer quamen twee Wilden by haer in Elands vellen ghekleet die haer alle teekenen van vrientschap bethoonden. Vonden daer aent landt menichte van blau pluymen ende de schoonste Eycken van lenghte ende dicke die men sien konde, poplieren, lonen ende alderhande houdt dat van noode is tot de schepen te bouwen.'

<sup>56</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 88. 'zijn gantsch niet arbeydtsaem, ende eenighe van haer zijn seer snoode dieven; ende quaet volck.'

These natives are very good people; because when they saw that I would not stay, they thought I was afraid of their bows; they took their arrows, broke them to pieces and threw them into the fire.<sup>57</sup>

Significantly, the arrows symbolizing violence and thus inspiring fear are destroyed by the natives. Their benignity is underscored, an amiability necessary in order to obtain useful information, which they receive. Crucial here are that the contacts led to some knowledge about how to find metals like copper:

It is such a beautiful country as one may put one's feet on, very abundant with all kinds of wood for shipbuilding and making large barrels. The people there have copper tobacco pipes from which I gathered that there must be copper to find as well as iron according to the savages but they have no knowledge of how to make use of it.<sup>58</sup>

After the mapping of the different regions, De Laet chose to add in his last chapters on Virginia some parts of the reports of Captain Smith and Walter Raleigh. In these chapters we also find longer descriptions of the local people. An example is this passage wherein the *Sasquesahanock* (Susquehanna) are described, following the writings of Captain Smith:

Tall and well-proportioned people because they looked like giants to the English and their neighbors but looked to be humble and simple in disposition and it cannot be held against them that they worship the English as Gods. They are the strangest people in this region in matter of speech and clothes. The quality of their voice is to the proportion of their body, as it would sound coming from a hollow walnut. Their clothes are made from skins of bears and wolves. Some have coats of bearskin, with the head and everything, with their neck through the neck of the bear and the ears of the bear are tied up behind the shoulders. The snout and teeth are hanging on the chest and then the claws likewise on the arm until the elbows. One of them had a wolf's head hanging on a chain as a jewel; his tobacco pipe had the length of three quarters of an ell cut in transverse at the upper part and strong enough to throw someone's

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<sup>57</sup> De Laet 1625: 89. 'ik voer', zegt hy, 'met een van haer prauwen aen landt met een oudt man die daer overste was van veertich mans ende seventhien vrouwen die ick daer sagh; in een huys van basten van Eycken boomen welghemaectt ende rondtom soo ghelijck oft het een verwest hadde gheweest. Was oververvloedich van maiz ende boonen vant voor-gaende jaer ende daer lagh by het huys wel soo veel te drooghen als dry schepen mochten voeren sonder dat noch stontt en wies [...] ende is seer goet volck, want doen sy sagen dat ick niet blijven en wilde meenden dat ick van haer boghen vervaert was, namen de pijlen braken die aen stucken ende worpen die int vier, etc.'

<sup>58</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 88-89. 'Is soo schoonen landt als men met voeten betreden mach, over-vloedigh van allerhande houdt, om schepen te bouwen ende om groote vaten van te maken; t volc hadde daer koperen Toback pijpen waer uyt ick vermoede dat daer koper moet zijn als oock yser near der Wilden beduydinghe dan sy en hebben gheen wetenschap om t seve te bereyden.'

brains out. Furthermore they have bows, arrows and maces to their proportion. These people are hardly known by the Powhatan. Their villages are inhabited by up to six hundred people and are surrounded by palisades as protection against their deadly enemy, the Massawomckes. There is a drawing of one of the biggest on the map: his calves were three quarter of a rod thick and his other members were in the same proportion so that it was a very fine man to look at. His hair was very long on one side and on the other shaved very short with a strip over his crown as the comb of a rooster. His arrows were five quarters long, with sharp stone, a thumb broad and with the length of one and a half thumb.<sup>59</sup>

Again, the description is given in a way to avoid sentiments as terror or awe. There are no signs of (mutual) fear. Descriptions made by previous explorers that report these encounters were included in *Nieuwe Wereldt* when they were helpful to gain information about useful resources, not to elaborate on their strangeness or fantastic features. Nonetheless, the reader also gets a glimpse of the natives' way of life and general habits. He is given general assumptions about these peoples' religion for example, assumptions colored by the European view:

These people did seem to have desire for our devotion and said that King James was a good King and his God a good God and Tanto was angry. That is how they call a bad Spirit who manipulates them every month and makes them serve him out of fear.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> De Laet, *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 94. 'Groot ende wel ghepropotioneert volck want het geleken reuzen te wesen by de Engelsche ende haer gebueren doch schenen te wesen van een eerbiedighe ende simple dispositie konden qualijck achter ghehouden worden van de Enghelsche ghelijck als Goden aen te bidden. Is het vreemste volck van alle dit quartier in sprake ende kleeding. Spreken near de proportie van haer lichaem ghelijck als oft in een holle welssel klonck. Haer kleedingh is van beyren en wolven huyden; sommighe hebben cassacken van beyren huyden met hoofd en al soo dat haer hals gaet door des beyrs hals ende des beyrs ooren zijn achter op de schouderen vast. De snuyt ende tanden hanghen op de borst ende daer een beyren klauw ende dan ghelijcken op de armen tot den elleboghe toe. Een van haer had een wolfs hoofd hanghende aen een keten voor een juweel syn tabac pijp dry vierendeel van een elle lanck sraey ghesneden aent opper eyndt sterck ghenoech om iemandt de hersenen uyt te smijten. Hadden voorts boghen, pijlen ende knodsen naer haer proportie. Dit volck is nauwelijks bekent aen Powhatan. Konnen ses hondert man uytmaken, haer dorpen zijn met palissaden omcingelt tot haer bescherminghe teghen Massawomckes, die haer doodtlijcke vyanden zijn. De schilderije van een van de grootste state by de caerte: wiens kuyten waren dry vierendeel van een gaerde dick ende de rest van syn leden near advenant soo dat het een seer fraey man was om aen te sien. Syn hayr was aen d'een zijde lanck aen d'ander dicht af gheschoren met een streeck over syn kruyn al seen hanen kam. Syn pijlen waren vijf vierendeel lang, met scherp van steen een duym breedt ende anderhalf duym langh. Welcke hy in een wolfs vel op den rugh droegh. Syn boogh in de eene ende syn knodse in d'ander handt.'

<sup>60</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 79. 'T'volck scheen lust te hebben in ons volcks devotie ende seyden dat dat de koninck lames een goed Koninck was ende syn God een geode Godt ende Tanto boos. Soo noemnse een boosen Geest die haer elcke meant hanteert ende doet hem van haer dienen uyt vrese. Dit volck sprack van eenighe canibals ontrent Sagadahoc, met tanden dry duymen langh maer saghense niet.'

Trying to understand their ‘religion’ required a European framework and necessitated European phenomena to be put into words, as in the above-mentioned passage: God and Spirit. Moreover, in other passages the stress on the ‘lack of religion’ implicates that they would easily be converted to Christianity. In various passages the natives are rendered as a white page, without religion, or with a very basic form of religion:<sup>61</sup>

These people are fairly good of reason. They have some sort of religion. They state that there are many Gods, which they call *Mantoac*, of different qualities and types. Though there is one God above all the aforementioned, and this has always been that way.

They honor him in human shapes and call the images *Kewasowok*, and *Kewas*, and they put them in houses suitable for them, which they call *Machicomuck*. They believe in the immortality of the souls and that after this life each will have what he wishes for or will be in peace and pleasure or will burn in a hole called *Popogusso*.<sup>62</sup>

The Western feeling of superiority is underscored with the use of ‘fairly good’ and ‘some sort’ that implicitly refer to the (fully) good reason and religion of the European, here the English and by extension the Dutch. The *gentiles* are in general unharmful and will easily be converted to the real religion –even if conversion is far from a central theme in this book– or could be helpful to fulfill certain goals of future trade and colonization. Their form of religion is by no means a threat to the Dutch. The passage gives the impression that De Laet just added the description of religion in passing, to make his text more colorful. Apart from these short descriptions of religion, we only very rarely find ‘ethnographic’ information in this book. The different tribes are enumerated region by region. They are *mapped* and only occasionally additional material is put forward. The local people are part of the scenery; they are in general unharmful and will not

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<sup>61</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 89. ‘En hebben gantsch gheen Religie ofte eenighen Godt dienst.’

<sup>62</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 108-9. ‘t’Volck is tamelijck goet van verstandt ; hebben eenighe forme van religie. Houdende dat daer veel Goden zijn dieze noemen *Mantoac*, van diversche qualiteyten ende graden, doch maer een Godt boven al dese, welck van eeuwicheyt gheweest is: Eeren die inde ghedaente van menschen; noemen de beelden *Kewasowok*, ende *Kewas*, ende setten die in huysen daer toe gheappropriert diese noemen *Machicomuck*. Sy gheloven de onsterflijckheyt der sielen ende dat naer dit leven elck naer syn doen oft in ruste ende playsier sal wesen ofte in een put branden die sy noemen *Popogusso*.’



become a serious obstacle in the fulfilling of the goals of exploitation. On the contrary, they could even, with hardly any opposition, be very helpful to establish future trade. The people to be frightened of –the ones described in the first chapters– lived in inhospitable areas that where of no economic or other colonial interest for the Company. De Laet does not elaborate on these regions or peoples. Even if the locals were to be feared over there, there was no reason to go there and thus no reason to be afraid.

Nonetheless, in the descriptions the ‘godless’ people were considered to be more than this blank page. De Laet did insert details about daily life and customs of the natives. In doing so, he demonstrated an interest beyond the commercial; they were thus not only part of the scenery in this book, even if only in a limited way. Outside of this publication, however, De Laet showed a livelier curiosity about their descent. He even had a long discussion with Hugo De Groot on this subject, which exemplifies the larger debate at stake in the seventeenth century between ‘Old’ and ‘New’ working methods.

## 1.8 CONTROVERSY WITH HUGO DE GROOT

The question at stake was the origin of the American people. The dispute started soon after the publication of De Groot’s *De origine gentium Americanarum dissertatio* (Paris, 1642) and resulted in four publications.<sup>63</sup> The two men not only had different ideas about the matter, they also—and this is more important in the light of my research—had different approaches to resolve the question. De Groot, who had a more traditional and conservative approach, mainly based his theory

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<sup>63</sup> Hugo de Groot’s publication was in fact an assault on La Peyrère who was writing his *Preadamitae* (1655). Before its publication the manuscript was read by many contemporaries, among them De Groot. To construct his argument La Peyrère made for a large part use of materials he got from Ole Worm and Claude Saumaise about foreign people and non biblical chronologies. Hugo De Groot’s text was meant to refute La Peyrère’s pre-adamic assumptions. (Jorink *Het ‘boeck’*: 311-18)

According to Joan-Pau Rubiés it is possible that de Groot wrote his *Dissertatio* implicitly demanding or at least expecting a counter attack from De Laet. (Rubiés *Hugo Grotius*: 234-241)

on classical sources such as Tacitus, Plinius, Lucan and Quintillian, whereas De Laet, who adopted a modern approach, privileged contemporary Dutch sources and 16<sup>th</sup>-century Iberian authors to construct his response. To rephrase, we could say that De Laet's opinion rested more on empirical data whereas he considered De Groot's working method archaic and questioned his sources.

Both authors rooted their theories in the Old Testament, but they filled the gaps about the history of the origins differently. Following the Calvinist Orthodoxy, the truth about the origin had to be found in the biblical stories of creation. As there was a single origin of mankind, all humans must be descendants of Adam and Eve. Therefore, the American people must have been connected with people known to the Europeans and have their roots in the Middle East. At some point in Prehistory, there must have been a passage to go from the Old World to the New. The core of the discussion between De Laet and De Groot concerned the question of how these people had ended up in America. In *De origine* De Groot claimed to be the first one to approach the matter, which was not the case, and offered a chaotic argumentation. His main argument was that the Northamerican natives descended from the Normans and that roots of the Southamerican natives lay for most people in Ethiopia with the exception of the Peruvians who descended from the Chinese. To arrive to this conclusion, he had compared the different cultures. De Laet, however, felt that De Groot had constructed his argument too hastily and inelegantly and that he had jumped too easily to conclusions on a matter that still required further investigation. In his first answer, *Notae ad dissertationem Hugonis Grotii De origine gentium americanarum, et observationes aliquot ad meliorem indaginem difficillimae illius quaestionis* (Leiden 1643), De Laet systematically pointed out all the incongruities to be found in the *Dissertatio* and offered more plausible theories, referring to a wider variety of sources and including more contemporary ones. De Laet argued in favor of the Scythian theory that was for a large part rooted in the recently published argumentation of Acosta in *Historia natural y moral de Indias* (Sevilla: Casa de Iuan de Leon, 1590). The Spanish Father José de Acosta investigated how the Native American People could have made the voyage from East to West and concluded that it was likely that there had been a land bridge between the two continents. De Groot had only argued in favor of a trans-atlantic

migration but De Laet displayed several alternative possibilities of how this migration could have occurred. After having read De Laet's *Notae De Groot* responded whereupon De Laet reacted again, but neither author added new arguments.<sup>64</sup>

The debate between De Laet and De Groot exemplifies the battle between 'Old' and 'New'. The 'New' method of scientific learning emphasized experience while the 'Old' still relied on ancient sources.<sup>65</sup> De Laet was more skeptical than De Groot and represented what Bacon had demonstrated in his *Advancement of Learning* (1605) and in *Great Restauration* (1620), i.e. a new inductive reasoning that would replace Aristotle's method. As I have already pointed out in the introduction to my dissertation, the frontispiece of the latter work shows a ship travelling beyond the pillars of Hercules. The analogy between the voyages of discovery and the new 'scientific' learning method is obvious: new ideas were brought back from the new world. Similar to the participants of the so-called *Scientific Revolution* De Laet looked forward and backwards. They were looking beyond the pillars yet at the same time also behind them, in the sense that they did not reject all classical knowledge. De Laet was not entirely 'Modern' yet, or perhaps just a little as he stood at the threshold of this revolution.<sup>66</sup> In *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, a text edited by De Laet and the subject of the fourth chapter of this study, the impact of the scientific revolution became obvious. To construct his *Nieuwe Wereldt* De Laet could not yet rely on the same kind of scientific documents as he would for *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. In 1625, the Dutch

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<sup>64</sup> Bijl *De herkomst*: 21-30.

<sup>65</sup> Joan-Pau Rubiés emphasizes the theological background of the discussion -without seeing this matter as the core of the disagreement between de Laet en De Groot. In the religious controversy between remonstrants and counter-remonstrants De Groot openly supported the former while De Laet defended the positions of the counter-remonstrants. (Rubiés 1991: 221-244) Benjamin Schmidt stressed in his argument that the debate between De Laet and De Groot not only rooted in a theological dispute but also in a patriotic discourse about the young republic. (Schmidt 1998: 183-199) About the controversy also see Christian Laes and Toon Van Houdt (2009) 'Over Goten, Germanen en indianen: de controverse Grotius-De Laet', *De zeventiende eeuw: cultuur in de Nederlanden in interdisciplinair perspectief: tijdschrift van de Werkgroep Zeventiende Eeuw*, Jaargang 25, nr. 1, 120-136.

<sup>66</sup> Schmidt *Innocence*: 177-199.

colonization was still at a very early stage, and he could not yet consult many contemporary Dutch descriptions, as he could later on due to the presence of the WIC and Johan Maurits.

*Nieuwe Wereldt* was also published several years before the dispute with De Groot, but to compose *Nieuwe Wereldt* De Laet already used the texts of Acosta and Herrera who appear on many occasions in the work and by doing so he already showed, even if only in a hesitant way, that he had a more modern approach than many of his predecessors. In the same way as he would do later in his discussion with De Groot, De Laet used contemporary texts and relied more on empirical data than on ancient texts or the Bible, which not only made him more 'modern', it also served his utilitarian approach on the subject: convincing to invest in the American enterprise.

### **1.9 DESCRIPTION OF BRAZIL: THE LAND, THE FAUNA AND FLORA**

In the book about Virginia and its inhabitants, the focus is directed towards the feasibility of the project of further exploitation and colonization. Dutch people could easily adapt to the local environment. The land is perfectly suited for the implantations of more settlements thanks to similar climate and crops, good hunting sites and apart from profitable trading goods, there is plenty of food available to consume in situ. De Laet thus emphasized the similarities as an argument pro colonization. In his book about Brazil, in contrast, a completely different approach would be necessary to convince his Dutch audience to invest and sail off. The tropical reality of Brazil resembled by no means the Dutch, and thus demanded a different strategy that I will try to uncover now.

In contrast with North America, Brazil showed far less resemblance with the Netherlands. The tropical condition, with all its exuberance, stood in stark contrast to the moderate climate of Northern Europe. Brazil would thus ask for different colonial strategies. It seemed more difficult to adapt to the local

circumstances than in New Netherland due to meteorological and geographical differences and thus botanical and zoological differences. Nonetheless, the southern part of the continent had already been colonized by different European powers over the course of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century—at least, the coastal area had been. The French, Spanish and Portuguese had been cultivating crops, creating plantations, raising cattle, importing slaves to do their hard work and had made contacts with local people. This also meant that a huge amount of information about the region was already circulating when the Dutch first set their eyes on Brazil. They saw an opportunity to take over the lucrative sugar trade from the Portuguese. In an attempt to draw up the 40 pages in *Nieuwe Wereldt* dedicated to this country, De Laet consulted a great number of Portuguese, French and English sources and a large part of his account was based on Antonio de Herrera’s *Historia general de los hechos de los Castellanos en las islas y Tierra Firme del Mar Oceano que llaman Indias Occidentales (General history of the deeds of the Spanish on the islands and mainland of the Ocean named West Indies, Madrid, 1601-15)*.<sup>67</sup>

Similarly to the other books of *Nieuwe Wereldt*, the one about Brazil begins with an attempt at mapping. De Laet first pins down the exact location of the territory. This mapping is, once again, a way to be able to comprehend the territory better in the future. Once mapped, things will be easier to control. Then follows a short history—again, based on the writings of Herrera—of the discovery of the country by Vicente Yañez Pinzón and Diogo de Lepe, before Pedro Alvaraz Cabral explored it.<sup>68</sup> From the very beginning, the land’s fertility and abundance are emphasized:

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<sup>67</sup> My translation of the title.

<sup>68</sup> The official Brazilian history attributes the ‘discovery’ of the country to Pedro Alvarez Cabral in April 1500. The controversy on this subject however endures until today. The official histories of Brazil have been mainly written by the Portuguese colonizer and this is why Cabral and not Pinzón -who is supposed to have landed in January 1500 near present-day Recife-, or even Vespucci -who was in Northern Brazil at the end of 1499- appears in most history books. Pedro Alvarez Cabral was certainly the first to lay claim on the territory for the Portuguese in 1500. More on this subject: Capistrano de Abreu (1883), *O descobrimento do Brasil e seu desenvolvimento no século XVI*, Rio de Janeiro: G. Leuzinger & Filhos; Rodolfo Espínola (2001) *Vincente Pinzón e*

[...] the country is partly plain and partly hilly, of fat and fertile soil which thanks to the humidity produces fruits in great abundance, and that it is particularly abundant in sugarcane which is the most important trading good of the Portuguese, as we shall see.<sup>69</sup>

Then, the reader is given a survey of local trees, plants and fruits, containing information on how they can be used. Added to this are descriptions of various animals, with a special focus on different species of parrots and fish. This general informative section is closed off by a listing of issues related to climate and weather. The conclusion is clear: Brazil is characterized by a hot and humid climate and has all the ingredients of a very pleasant country. This motif of Brazil as an Eden-like country was already present in the first description of the country and perpetuates until today. De Laet participated in this tradition.<sup>70</sup> He clearly focuses on positive features and celebrates the abundance and fertility of Brazil. But even if Brazil is a country remote from the Netherlands in distance and conditions, it offers many possibilities for future exploitation. With this focus on the country's positive aspects, De Laet obviously wanted to attract investors.

This utilitarian approach is maintained in the subsequent chapters. A list of functional facts, such as which crops to cultivate and how to make bread, is presented, as these will help the future Dutch colonizer to prepare for future daily life in Brazil. Moreover, the economic value of the region is stressed on many occasions and in many respects. Especially sugar, cotton and brazil wood are praised, products that were already being used as profitable trade goods by the Portuguese. The Portuguese were not only economically successful in overseas trading, they had also installed prosperous farms with cows, sheep, oxen, chickens, horses and pigs for the colonizers who lived on the new continent. They

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*o descobrimento do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks and Roberto Lopes (2012), 1500-1501, *A Intriga do Descobrimento*, São Paulo: Editora Discovery

<sup>69</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 413. '[...] het landt ten deele vlack is ende ten deele heuvelachtich van vette ende vruchtbare grondt welcke door de vochticheyt syn vruchten voort-brenght in groote abundantie; ende insonderheyt ist seer overvloedich van suycker-riedt welck de principale neeringh is van de Portugeesen als hier naer breeder sal blijcken.'

<sup>70</sup>For an overview of the presence of the mythical motives of earthly paradise in the early-modern descriptions of Brazil see Sérgio Buarque de Holanda's seminal work *Visão do Paraíso. Os motivos edênicos no descobrimento e colonização do Brasil* (1959), São Paulo: José Olympio.

had followed the prophetic words of Pero Vaz de Caminha, clerk of the mission of Pedro Alvares Cabral, who ended his letter to King Dom Manuel with praise to this *land of the future*: a country, ‘so well-favored that if it were rightly cultivated it would yield everything’.<sup>71</sup> Over the years, the Portuguese organized well functioning settlements, but they had some trouble managing slave labor as many local slaves were running away. De Laet explained how the Dutch could improve the Portuguese system if they could find a way to prevent these escapes. Even if the Brazilian country and climate resembled the homeland less than the Northern part of the continent, there were still some similarities to be found. As he did in the other parts of his work, De Laet made use of analogies to make some natural phenomena more understandable for his reading public. This can be seen as a kind of ‘principle of attachment’ to borrow Anthony Pagden’s term, a principle that ‘served to make the incommensurable seem commensurable’ and

allowed for the creation of an initial (if also sometimes troubling) familiarity. It also allowed the discoverer to make some measure of classification. Above all, it allowed him to name, and by naming to take cognitive possession of what he had seen, in particular if that was not an island, a promontory or even a plant, but instead a complex social world, which offered very few outward signs as to what the inside might ultimately contain.<sup>72</sup>

This ‘principle of attachment’ used in *Nieuwe Wereldt* partakes of the general process of disenchantment that I have referred to at several occasions in this chapter. The ‘familiarity’ or similarities are highlighted, whereas the differences, which could inspire fear or wonder, are neglected. The comparisons also helped De Laet to map the natural world and allowed the contemporary reader to comprehend, to recognize and to better understand the foreign world. A good example of this procedure is given in the following description of the cashew fruit:

There was also another fruit like the pear, which they call *Caiouz*. It is very juicy and good to eat, therefore very helpful when the weather is at its hottest. In the lower part of the pear

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<sup>71</sup> Title of a book by Stefan Zweig about Brazilian history and the future of the country. *Brazil, Land of the Future* (Stefan Zweig (1941) *Brasilien. Ein Land der Zukunft*, Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer); Pedro Vaz de Caminha, quoted in Charles David Ley (ed.) (1947) *Portuguese Voyages, 1498-1663*, New York: Dutton & Co., 59.

<sup>72</sup> Pagden *European encounters*: 36.

there is a bean that protrudes, with a bitter shell and a sweet core when roasted: the pear cools down and the bean warms up.<sup>73</sup>

In his descriptions De Laet focused more on parallels than on tropical features that contrasted too much with the homeland. He highlighted instrumental features that helped to present Brazil as a suitable space for future trade and colonization. Throughout the book about Brazil the natural world is classified and the country is mapped not only in drawn maps but also in the written text, in the same way as in the book about New Netherland. We are given an overview of all the Brazilian *capitanias* with all the important geographical data, mostly in their original Native American names, which is how De Laet found them in his sources.<sup>74</sup> The coastline is also described in great detail, from north to south and from south to north, as well as rivers, Native American settlements, crop locations, animals, minerals and other trading goods inland. De Laet's text reads as cartographic material. He made a choreography of Brazil: sentence after sentence, region per region, all places are pinned down, delineated as on a detailed cartographic map.

In the 1620s not many Dutch images of Brazil existed, even if some Dutch travelers had already travelled overseas. Jan Mostaert's (ca 1475 – ca 1555) famous *West Indies Landscape* (ca 1545) was created without the painter ever going to the New World. Furthermore, it is very unlikely that Mostaert depicted his scene—of what most probably represents Zuni Pueblos in New Mexico—based on sketches or drawings made in situ but we can assume that he was inspired by written and oral accounts.<sup>75</sup> Even the famous De Bry collections were made

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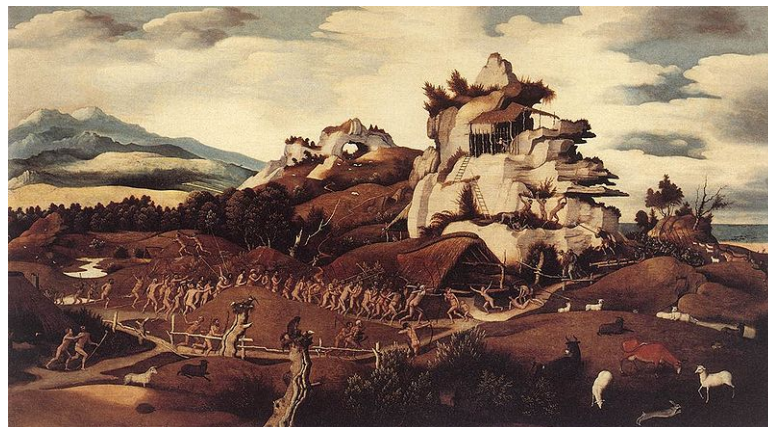
<sup>73</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 414. 'Daer was oock een ander vruchte als peeren welck sy noemen *Caiouzi*, die seer sappich zijn ende goet om te eeten zoo datse in de meeste hitte seer dienstich zijn. In't onderste van de peere is een sekere boone uyt-stekende met een seer bitteren bast ende keerne is soet ghebraden zijnde: de peere verkoelt maer de boone verwermt.'

<sup>74</sup> The Portuguese divided their Brazilian colony in *capitanias* (or captaincies). These administrative divisions were leased to merchants at first hereditary, the crown retained the final power upon them.

<sup>75</sup> There are three main interpretations of the painting. The most common one is that it depicts Francesco Vázquez Coronado at the entrance of a native Mexican village. Coronado, in search of the seven golden cities of Cibola, was stoned by the native inhabitants of the Zuni village. Another interpretation is that it represents the



without the engravers ever crossing the Atlantic. Their images were for a great part based on accounts of eyewitnesses and their cartographic material was therefore very accurate for the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Father and sons De Bry illustrated the 1598 Latin edition of Las Casas' *Brevísima relación* that circulated in the Netherlands and worked on the editions of Hans Staden and Jean de Léry. Their engravings show knowledge of contemporary scientific developments, from astronomy to geology over meteorology, botany and anatomy. This new learning received even more emphasis with the use of perspective, which accentuated the shift from the theocratic vision of the world towards a more anthropocentric view. In the De Bry images human beings are central instead of natural surroundings. Nature is rendered in a more objective way, while the human subject receives a more important place in the engravings, giving man more power than nature. The engravings made for the *Brevísima relación* reflect the ideas and narrative strategies of Las Casas' text: by using the same repetition in the images as in the text, the cruelty of the Spanish against the innocent local people is emphasized.<sup>76</sup> But the De Brys, in the same way as De Laet, had specific editorial strategies; they adjusted and modified the content of their books for commercial and political purposes.<sup>77</sup>



**Figure 7: Jan Mostaert *West Indies Landscape* (ca. 1640)**

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landing of Columbus on the island of Goanin, others argue that it depicts the Portuguese invasion of Brazil. See Cuttler 'Errata': 191-97.

<sup>76</sup> Deolinda de Jesus Freire *Theodor de Bry*: 200-15.

<sup>77</sup> Michiel van Groesen *Representations*: 377-88.

De Laet also had an anthropocentric view on the New World. Nature was a product of God's creation that necessitated human labor to be fruitful. Like the De Brys, De Laet depicted men as masters of nature. However, De Laet did not put the human subject in the center of his descriptions in his *Nieuwe Wereldt*. Instead, he emphasized geographic and commercial matters, which are domains that could be mastered by human beings. The descriptions wanted to comprehend, in the sense of to tame or to get a hold of, the Brazilian nature and its (trading) products. Local people remained in the margins of commercial goals. These people are most of all enumerated and located on the Brazilian map. In these long enumerations Brazil's nature and living species are described as carefully as possible when sources are at hand. The stress is on what had actually been seen and could be of use for future colonization. The disenchantment continues indeed. Wonders and marvels were no longer of any interest to De Laet and they were not part of his editorial strategy. Focusing on fabulous creatures would neither attract nor persuade investors and it might even create the opposite effect. He used the same strategy as in the book about Virginia and based his account on various travelogues, carefully selecting the passages he would use mainly from a utilitarian viewpoint.

De Laet was not yet classifying as he would in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. In the descriptions of *Nieuwe Wereldt* he wanted to get a hold of the American reality by collecting all the information he found and then selecting and classifying for utilitarian purposes mainly. His descriptions of the natural surroundings of Brazil were mostly based on the accounts of Herrera, Van Linschoten, de Léry and d'Abbéville. He chose and ordered already circulating information about the region in order to convince a Dutch audience of the (commercial) potentialities lying there for grasp.

The mapping of Brazil is at times interrupted by longer descriptions where more information or small anecdotes are added. For example, in the long descriptions dedicated to the capitania Maranhão, mainly based on the reports of the French Capuchins and more in particular Claude d'Abbéville, a vision of Eden is displayed. Here we find a primitive untamed nature, characterized by abundance and diversity, not only with regard to fauna and flora but also with regard to local tribes.

There is no weather to be wished for (says the same history) that is more beautiful and clearer than the one to be found in this region. Because great colds or droughts never occur, nor fog or harmful brume, nor tempests or excessive winds, nor snow or hail, and seldom some thunder and this during rainy times.<sup>78</sup>

The fertility of the capitania is stressed over and over again in the course of eleven chapters: there is an abundance of fruittrees, herbs, crops, fish, birds, ... Most species to be found are enumerated in long lists. The last chapter about Maranhão breaks with this pattern and gives a transcription (in translation) of the journey made by the French captain Riffaut, taken from d'Abbeville. The book about Brazil ends with a final praise of the country, more in particular of a hill in the capitania of Maranhão:

There are lots of beautiful fountains and rivers of fresh water full of diverse fish, which are unknown here. There are large fields, lots of woods and very healthy air, which is why this mountain was populated by many, there were at least two hundred Indian villages. Around this mountain lay another smaller one, which they called *Cotioia*, where six or seven Indian villages were settled.<sup>79</sup>

Even if, unlike New Netherland, the Brazilian land showed almost no resemblance with the Netherlands, the fertility of the country offered a gigantic resource of plants and crops, edible animals and of course trading goods. The lucrative aspects of a possible colonization remained central in De Laet's argument.

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<sup>78</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 446. 'Men soude (seght de selve historie) gheen schooner ende helderer weder kunnen wenschen als men ordinaerlijck heeft in dit gheweste, want men en heeft nimmermeer eenighe groote koude ofte drooghte; gheene misten ofte schadelijcke dampen, gheen tempeesten ofte eccessive winden, gheen sneeuw ofte haghel, ende wel selden eenighe donder ende dat ten tijde dat het daer reghent.'

<sup>79</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 454. 'Daer zijn veel schoone fonteynen ende rievieren van versch water vol van alderhande visch hier te lande onbekent: daer zijn seer groote velden veel bosschagien ende een seer ghoesonde lucht zo dat desen bergh seer bewoont was ende daer waren wel twee hondert Indiaensche dorpen. Ontrent dese bergh leght noch een kleynder die sy noemen *Cotioia*, daer ses oft seven dorpen van Indianen waren.'

## 1.10 THE PEOPLE OF BRAZIL

Nature did not show many obstacles, but it would be more problematic to fit the Brazilian natives into the commercial project of the colonization. To describe them, De Laet still used many 16<sup>th</sup>-century sources and again carefully chose the passages that would fit his own argument. Only two of his main sources were Dutch: Dierick Ruyters and Jan van Linschoten. His other sources were Spanish, Portuguese, French or English. In the descriptions Brazil's inhabitants are given the same treatment as the natural world: they are named, enumerated and pinned down on the map.

The entire third chapter is dedicated to the local people: 'gheleghenthey van de volckeren ende ingheboorne van 't landt van Brasil in't ghemeyn' ('the common condition of the people and natives of the country of Brasil'). This chapter is based on Herrera, and De Laet only added a bit of history about how the Portuguese chased the natives away from the coast. The first picture sketched is mainly negative. The people run around completely naked, are polygamous, and do not show any sign of religion. In short, they resemble animals. Their appearance is depicted in detail, such as how their bodies are shaped, where they wear piercings, how they color their bodies and how they do their hair. As far as their character is concerned, their bellicose nature and cruelty are stressed:

These people are very cruel and never show any compassion with anyone: they are very licentious, prone to carnal lust and other vices: although men and women show some shame in their gatherings. They eat all human flesh from their enemies: and whatever they are eating they invite all bystanders to join and this is all the love they show. [...] The people have no concerns apart from eating and drinking.<sup>80</sup>

The people described in the first chapters of the book seem very hostile, unlike the land which is described positively in its fertility and abundance. Cannibalism

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<sup>80</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 416-17. 'Dit volck is seer wreet sonder met yemant medelijden te thoonen: zijn seer oneerbaer ende tot vleeschelijcke lusten gheneyght ende voorts tot alle ghebreken: hoewel dat de mans ende vrouwen in haer bijeenkomsten eenighe schaemte vertoonen. Sy eeten al menschen vleesch van haer vyanden: ende wat sy oock eeten noodighen alle de omstanders daer toe welck is al haer liefden die sy thoonen. [...] Dit volck leeft sonder sorghe anders als om te eeten ende te drincken'

receives a little more attention than in the book about Virginia. De Laet suggested another approach than for New Netherland in order to establish trade relationships with the local people. With the ones described here it would not be easy and maybe impossible to create a partnership. This does not imply that it would not be possible to create partnerships with other tribes. Further on, relations of friendship and animosity between the different tribes are highlighted in order to know with whom future alliances could be built. Nevertheless, De Laet primarily emphasized the barbarity of specific tribes. The cruelest among them are the Aymure, according to Pierre du Jarric (1566-1617), a French Jesuit who never went on a missionary expedition himself but compiled and wrote to instruct his fellows:<sup>81</sup>

Pierre du Jarric testifies that Isleos lies thirty leagues from Bahia to the south. And not far away from there, inland, live the Aymures that I mentioned before. They are the cruelest people that can be found in Brazil, they say that they even eat their own children. This is the same nation as Herrera was talking about here before, although he does not mention their name. The Jesuits say in their stories that this people used to live along the seacoast from Rio San Francisco until Cabo Frio and they were chased away by the Tupinambas and the Tupinachins, who forced them to head inland. From there they are now of a big nuisance to the savages who are allies with the Portuguese and to the Portuguese themselves. The latter even had to abandon their farms, because these savages used to take the slaves away from there. And, as told by Pierre du Jarric, the Capitania was threatened to be abandoned completely. But the relics of Saint George were brought there and his presence gave the Portuguese better chances against the savages, who could not stand up to the power of this dragon slayer.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Pierre du Jarric was a member of the Society of Jesus near Toulouse. His *Histoire des choses plus memorables advenues tante z Indes Orientales, que autres pais de la decouverte des Portugais, en l'establissement & progrez de la Foy Chrestienne & Catholique: Et principalement de ce que les Religieux de la Compagnie de Jésus y ont faict, & enduré pour la mesme fin. Depuis qu'ils y sont entrez jusqu'à lan 1600* (Bordeaux, 1608-1614) was a vast project of about 2500 pages about the work of the Jesuits in the countries discovered by the Portuguese. Ten chapters contain information about Brazil. The descriptions of the natives reflect the apologetic intentions of the author; the evangelization of the 'barbaric savages' for the glory of God is a central argument. See: Annie Molinié-Bertrand (2000) 'Une histoire ancienne des jésuites au Brésil' in *Crouzet l'histoire*: 202-23.

<sup>82</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 423. 'Iarricus ghetuyght mede dat Isleos is ghelegen dertich leguen van de Bahia near het Suyden; ended at niet verre van daer te landtwaert de Aymures boven verhaelt woonen. Welck wel de wreetste natie is die in gantsch Bresil wordt ghevonden soo dat men seght dat sy oock haer eyghen kinderen souden eeten ende is 'tselfe volck daer Herrera hier boven van spreect. Hoewel hy die nieten noemt. De Jesuiten seggen in haer verhalen dat dit volck eertijts plagh te woonen langhs de Zee-custe van Rio de Sant Francisco af tot Cabo Fio toe: dan dat sy van daer zijn verjaeght by de Tupinambas ende Tupinachins, ende

De Laet followed the train of thought about the American people recorded by previous authors who wrote about South America. The strangeness of some natives is, as in the quoted passages, put forward as barbaric and inspiring horror and dismay. De Laet relied on many popular 16<sup>th</sup>-century sources, which still participated in the enchantment of the New World and not only included wonders and marvels in their descriptions but also passages about the extreme barbarity of these other people from America. It is therefore important to sketch the content and impact of these texts used by De Laet.

The natives were often pictured as ‘barbarians’ by the early chroniclers. Pêro de Magalhães Gândavo (c.1540-c.1580), known for what is considered to be the first history of Brazil, was partly responsible for the creation and circulation of this picture. In his *História da província Santa Cruz a que vulgarmente chamamos Brasil* (Lisbon 1576) he referred to the *gentiles* as being very aggressive, cruel and dishonest, although he added that they could easily be used as slaves. From this book one sentence has been (and still is) quoted over and over again:

The language of these people living along the coast is one: it lacks three letters – there is no F, nor L, nor R to find, which is astonishing, because therefore they don’t have Faith, nor Law, nor King (‘Rei’); and live chaotically [...].<sup>83</sup>

Subsequent texts about Brazil soon started to dichotomize what they considered to be the tropical reality of the place. The land and people are rendered in simple bipolar opposites. The coast being a very habitable place with good climate and soil inhabited by docile and friendly people whereas more inland the country and its people were violent, barbaric and indomitable, a true *Heart of Darkness*.

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ghedwonghen haer dieper in’t landt te begeven van waer sy nu grooten overlast doen aen de wilde die het met de Portugesen houden ende aen de Portugesen selfs. Soo dat sy veel van haer Ingenios hebben moeten verlaten. Voordien dese wilden op syn onversienste de slaven van daer quamen wech halen. Ende near dat larricus verhaelt soo lede dese Capitania selve groote last om gantsch verlaten te worden ten ware daer gebracht waren de reliquien van S. Ioris door welckes tegenwoordicheyt de Portugesen nu beter kants hebben teghen de wilden, die de macht van den Draeck-steecker nieten kunnen weder-staen.’

<sup>83</sup> Gandávo 1576: cap X. ‘A língua deste gentio toda pela costa é uma: carece de três letras – não se acha nelas F, nem L, nem R, coisa digna de espanto, porque assim não têm Fé, nem Lei, nem Rei; e desta maneira vivem desordenadamente [...]’.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, many Brazilian people were described as a blank page, who would become more ‘civilized’ after receiving religious education. Spanish and Portuguese colonizers planted their cross when they arrived in the New World and in that way the Iberian colonization and religion went hand in hand. Many missionaries crossed the Atlantic in the 16<sup>th</sup> century to convert the native people. Books written by or for missionaries took the evangelization of the natives as their central theme. In *La Conquête de l’Amérique* (1982) Tzvetan Todorov pointed out an important aspect of the Spanish colonial project. He analyzed the symbolic nature of the interactions between Native Americans and conquerors. In his view, the colonizer resorted to familiar images from his own culture to explain the culture of the other. But the colonizers could never really comprehend the other that was encountered and therefore their mission was doomed to fail. That they could never totally comprehend the other did not mean that they could not subdue him. The other was perceived as the same and as different at the same time. When seen as identical, for example concerning moral values, the otherness of the locals was not perceived nor understood. When the other was not perceived as equal the local people were considered and treated as inferior. The written word gave men as Cortés the ultimate weapon for subjugation of the other, which does not mean in Todorov’s analysis that any other culture can be subjugated that easily. To put it in a simplified way, many of the encountered people were either destroyed—which is what happened in Mexico during the invasion led by Cortés—or subjugated, and, since their culture was destroyed, consequently no complete comprehension of this other culture could ever be attained. The authors used by De Laet wrote in the aftermath of the first encounters that are central in Todorov’s analysis. Their texts are colored by this western hegemonic self-image. Consequently, the passages used by De Laet are marked by this discourse. It is important to be aware of the context of De Laet’s sources. Nevertheless, De Laet’s approach was different from that of his sources. He wanted less to demonstrate which local people could be subjugated, than to

show which ones could become allies.<sup>84</sup> To obtain this information he had to consult sources that unlike him did aim at the subjection of the local people and therefore this hegemonic discourse is still present in passages used in *Nieuwe Wereldt*.

De Laet's description of the Miramumins, for example, is clearly based on Iberian Jesuit sources, even though he does not always cite the name of these authors. These 'wild and barbaric' nomadic people first caused a lot of damage to Portuguese settlements but then received an 'education' from the Jesuits and were converted.<sup>85</sup> Despite opposition from the members of the Society of Jesus in Brazil, the Portuguese still forced many natives into slave labor, which they obviously rebelled against.<sup>86</sup> Here as well, De Laet follows his Jesuit sources, which fitted perfectly the previously mentioned discourse that circulated in the Netherlands about the natives' liberation from Spanish cruelty. He clearly does not argue for an alliance with the Jesuits. It is only their attitude towards the natives and especially against the Portuguese that is underscored in order to stress the Spanish behavior.

The Jesuits played an important role in the first century of the Portuguese colonization of Brazil. Manoel de Nóbrega –a Portuguese Jesuit Priest who arrived in Brazil in 1549 and who participated in the formation of various Brazilian cities—was one of the main actors in the Portuguese colony in defense of the local people against their enslavement.<sup>87</sup> He convinced the Portuguese King to support the creation of an episcopacy in Brazil, which was founded in 1551. There is much to say about the involvement of the Jesuits in the local people's 'emancipation' or 'Europeanization'. Some even refer to their actions as having resulted in a kind of ethnocide.<sup>88</sup> Following Todorov, we could say that the

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<sup>84</sup> More about these alliances see: Meuwese *Brothers in Arms*: 55-124.

<sup>85</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 418. 'wildt ende barbarisc volck'.

<sup>86</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 418-19.

<sup>87</sup> The general views of the Jesuits on slavery was not that clear, see: Charlotte Castelnau-L'estoile (2002) '*Les ouvriers d'une vigne stérile*' *Les jésuites et la conversion des Indiens au Brésil (1580-1620)*, Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

<sup>88</sup> John Hemming (1987) *Amazon frontier: The Defeat of the Brazilian Indians*, London: Macmillan.



otherness of the other was never completely perceived, but destroyed instead. Many postcolonial thinkers argue that the so-called 'liberation' through evangelization of the South-American people led to the destruction of their cultures and that the Jesuit's ethical convictions, even if they had an ideal of emancipation, led to a kind of oppression. I do not want to venture on this ethical ground, yet the reality, that we cannot redraw today, was that missionaries and natives were in a situation where they had to try out ways to communicate and cope with each other. In his *Cartas Jesuíticas* and his *Diálogo sobre a conversão do gentio* (1557) Manoel de Nóbrega explained the missionary strategies that had to be deployed to convert the locals to the Catholic faith. The head of the Jesuit order in Brazil lived among natives in the missions and could therefore make many notes of their customs and practices. As a defender of the local people he saw them as a blank page that had to go through an educational process and most importantly be converted at the end of this formation.<sup>89</sup>

they say that being a Christian means not to eat human flesh, nor to have more than one woman and other things: that one only needs to go to war and capture and sell the people of this land and use them, because these people are always at war with others and so they are all in conflict. They eat each other; this is what the adversary says. These are people that have no knowledge of God whatsoever, nor idols, they do everything you tell them.<sup>90</sup>

A similar discourse can be found in the writings of the French Franciscan monk Claude d'Abbeville, who is also mentioned on different occasions by De Laet. In 1612, d'Abbeville participated in the French invasion of Maranhão in the North of Brazil. He only stayed in Brazil for four months but he gathered enough information to compile his *Histoire de la Mission des Peres Capucins en l'Isle de*

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<sup>89</sup> More about the Jesuit Missions in Brazil in the 16th Century: John Hemming (1995) *Red Gold. The conquest of the Brazilian Indians*. London: Papermac; Stuart B. Schwartz (2005) *Segredos Internos. Engenhos e Escravos na Sociedade Colonial 1550-1835*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras; José Eisenberg (2007) 'Cultural Encounters, Theoretical Adventures: The Jesuit Missions to the New World and the Justification of voluntary slavery', in: Matthias Kaufmann, Robert Schnepf (eds.) *Politische Metaphysik. Die Entstehung moderner Rechtskonzeptionen in der spanischen Scholastik*, Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 357-385.

<sup>90</sup> Manuel de Nóbrega, *Paim*: 72. 'Diz que quer ser cristão é não comer carne humana, nem ter mais de uma mulher e outras coisas: somente que há de ir à guerra e os que cativar vendê-los e servir-se deles, porque estes desta terra sempre tem guerra com outros e assim andam todos em discórdia. Comem-se uns aos outros, digo os contrários. É gente que nenhum conhecimento tem de Deus, nem ídolos, fazem tudo quanto lhe dizem.'

*Maragnan et terres circonuoisines* (Paris: François Hubis, 1614). This work contains much information on the daily life of the local people of Maranhão, even on some aspects of the natives' astronomy. D'abbéville's main argument resembles that of Nóbrega: the French Capuchin father wanted to convince the reader that the local people could easily be converted and that their souls would be freed in the process leading to baptism. His letters contain propagandistic material to serve the religious purpose of the mission. However, d'Abbéville's initial unconditionally positive attitude towards the innocent declined. Throughout his text, he takes a more hesitant stance, emphasizing the cruelty – mostly the practices of cannibalism and 'immoral behavior' conflicting with Christian values. Nonetheless, he remained hopeful for a future French colonization, although his expectations were never fulfilled as the French colony in the Maranhão only lasted for three years.<sup>91</sup>

There is thus a clear proselytic agenda in the texts De Laet made use of, an agenda that is less conspicuous in De Laet's descriptions. But in my view it is important to be aware of the undertone of his sources. De Laet chose many religious authors to gain information about the local people. This choice of authors is not a coincidence, as previous colonizers of Brazil were mostly Portuguese, who wrote prolifically about their conquest and brought the cross overseas, or French, who had an ongoing war of religions in the Old World at the time. The French Jean de Léry and André Thevet—both appear in the book about Brazil—took part in Admiral de Villegagnon's expedition, which promised to offer religious freedom to its participants. But soon the protestant participants, including de Léry, were persecuted and forced to flee, whereupon they tried to build up their own colony. Back in France, Thevet, a Catholic and cosmographer of the French King, and de Léry would argue against each other in their respective publications.<sup>92</sup> Abbéville, finally, was a Franciscan. Together with Yves d'Evreux

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<sup>91</sup> Whitehead *Historical writing*: 654-55.

<sup>92</sup> The writings of de Léry and Thevet were circulating in the Netherlands in the 16th century. Jan Huygen van Linschoten also based a large part of his description of Brazil in *Itinerario, Voyage ofte Schipvaert van Jan*

he worked at the establishment of the short-lived mission of France Antarctique in Maranhão. This expedition took place at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Catholic faith had already regained its dominion over Protestantism in France.

Many of De Laet's sources for *Nieuwe Wereldt* contain a very clear religious message—coming from different denominations—which is (almost) not visible in his transcriptions. To avoid any religious discussion in his text, he primarily extracted practical information that could be useful, such as concerning where the people lived, how they could be recognized and with which tribe possible alliances could be built. Similar to the descriptions of the land's fauna and flora, the descriptions of the natives result in an enumeration and *mapping* of features, even if at times some longer descriptions and anecdotes are added. The Native Americans are treated as being part of nature and, with the exception of the few passages about Spanish or Portuguese misbehavior towards the natives, the descriptions are very short to avoid becoming involved in any religious debate, which was not the purpose of his book.

The descriptions of Brazilian people made by the French de Léry and Thevet were analyzed by Michel de Certeau in *L'écriture de l'histoire* (1975) and it is interesting to have a closer look at de Certeau's insights. Having analyzed 16<sup>th</sup>-century travel literature, de Certeau was convinced that an ethnologic knowledge (*savoir ethnologique*) emerged from these texts and he spoke in this respect of a heterology (*hétérologie*). This discourse of the other was at the same time a discourse about the other and from where the other spoke. Heterology thus creates a space in between two places where the first subject of the discourse never has control over the final meaning of the utterance.<sup>93</sup> Clear examples of this can also be found in Montaigne's 'Des Cannibales' and 'Des Coches'. We can of

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Huygen van Linschoten *naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien 1579-1592* (1596, Amsterdam: Cornelis Claesz.) on their writings.

<sup>93</sup> More on de Certeau's concept of heterology, see Stephen Greenblatt (ed.) (1993) *New World Encounters*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press; Jeremy Ahearne (1995) *Michel de Certeau. Interpretation and its Other*, Cambridge/Malden: Polity Press and Ian Buchanan (2000) 'Heterology, or the book we'll never read', *Michel de Certeau. Cultural theorist*, London/Thousand Oaks/New Delhi: Sage Publications, 68-85.

course only speak of an ethnology *avant la lettre*, but the 16<sup>th</sup>-century authors managed to produce valuable knowledge about foreign cultures. Even if their accounts on matters such as idolatry and cannibalism were colored by their European backgrounds, we are offered a lot of valuable information on the daily lives of the people encountered in the New World. From 16<sup>th</sup>-century texts we also learn about the differences between the peoples living in the New World in that epoch. I would argue that this heterology is almost completely absent in *Nieuwe Wereldt*. De Laet did not want to include fragments that could inspire dismay and thus filtered out many interesting passages on local practices. A great deal had already been said about the local people, and he only inserted basic information about the different tribes, repeating what had already been written before him. He focused on the physical appearance and daily habits, i.e. what could easily be understood by comparison or familiarity by his audience. Strange cultural practices, as for example cannibalism or spiritual beliefs, only appeared in the background and almost vanish in his transcriptions because they did not serve his commercial agenda. In the works that will be discussed in the following chapter – *Iaerlijck Verhael* and *Rerum per Octennium*- more valuable information and a vaster comprehension of the other will emanate from the descriptions thanks to two crucial factors. A first factor is Johan Maurits' presence in the colony and a second is its hybridity. In *Nieuwe Wereldt* we only read superficial descriptions of the Native American people, even the famous dichotomy Tupi – Tapuya is watered down.<sup>94</sup>

At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Tupi Indians were the best-known people in Brazil and many authors had depicted their appearance and habits. De Laet chose to give them more attention than the other tribes, maybe because the information about this tribe was to be found in many contemporary books:

These Toupinambas are in general of average height, although you could find some who are very tall and beefy. They have most often a flat nose, which is made like that by the midwives at birth. They stand straight on their limbs and are very strong so that they can carry heavy charges. They are not very subjected to illnesses because they are moderate in their eating

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<sup>94</sup> More than three centuries later Claude Lévi-Strauss also mentioned those two tribes in his *Anthrologie Structurale*. See Claude Lévi-Strauss *Anthropologie*: 117, 119, 125, 130.

and enjoy healthy air, so in general they reach a high age without becoming grey or bald and women get the age of eighty or more. The children are born white, then, after being rubbed in with oil and urucu they turn brown and get an olive kind of color. For the rest they have well built limbs and have a handsome face. They have the habit to tear off all their hair except on their heads, which is smooth and not curly like that of the Moors. The men have short hair on the front and let it grow longer above the ears and on the back of their heads. The women have waist long hair and comb and strike it with urucu to be elegant and wash it afterwards with uapacari water, which is a root that gives foam like soap. They have a strange way to pierce the lower lip and to make a hole where they put a green stone or something else. Some also pierce their nose and wear bones or pieces of wood in the hole. The women do not pierce their lips but their ears and wear little rolls of wood as piercings with which they look wonderful. The Tupinambas go naked without any shame. They dye their bodies with diverse colors and figures. And make their legs black with the juice of genipap.<sup>95</sup>

The Tupinamba, mentioned in this passage by Du Jarric, were and are certainly the best known and most described Brazilian peoples of the 16<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. *Tupi or not Tupi?* That was the question for the Dutch and the Portuguese colonizers in Brazil. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, the native population was divided by Europeans into two groups: the civilized or Tupi and the non-civilized or Tapuya. The Portuguese conquered and subjugated many of the Tupi peoples. As a result, some of these peoples gave up their semi-nomadic existence and started living along the coast in small villages. Tapuya means ‘from

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<sup>95</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*: 450-451. ‘Dese Toupinambas zijn doorgaen van middelbare stature hoewel men der oock vindt die heel langh ende vroom zijn: zijn meest camuz van neuse welck komt by de vroe-vrouwen die dat soo maken in de geboorte: gaen recht op haer leden ende zijn seer sterck soo dat sy seer sware lasten kunnen draghen: zijn weynich siekten onderworpen door dien sy matigh zijn in haer eaten ende ghenieten een ghesonde lucht soo dat sy ghemeynlijkce oudt worden sonder dat sy grijs ofte kael worden: ende de vrouwen kinderen daer tot haer tachtentich jaren ende over: de kinderen worden wit gheboren dan door het strijcken met olye ende roucou worden sy bruyn ende van een olijfverwigh couleur. Zijn anders van leden wel ghemaectt ende fraey van aensicht; hebben een ghewoonte van ‘thayr allenthalve uyt te trecken uytgehenomen op’t hooft: welck glad is ende niet ghekrult als dat van de Mooren. De mans korten haer hayr voor ende latent tamelijck lanck aen de ooren ende achter. De vrouwen draghen lanck heyr tot haer middelt ende zijn curieus in ‘tseve te kemmen ende te strijcken met roucou, welck sy weder wassen met ouapacari water, welck een wortel is die een schuym van hem geeft ghelijck de zeepe. Hebben een vreemde maniere van de onderste lippe door te boren ende een gat in te maecten daer sy een groen steentjes oft yet anders in draghen: eenighe maecten oock gaten in haer neus ende draghen daer beentjens ofte houtjens in. De vrouwen en door-boren de lippe niet maer wel de ooren ende draghen daer rollekens van hout aen daer sy wonder moy mede zijn. De Toupinambas gaen gantsch naeckt sonder eenighe schaemte te hebben. Schilderen haer lichaem met diversche coupleuren ende figuren; ende de beenen maeckense swart met ‘tsap van iunipap.’

a different tongue' or 'enemy' in Tupi language and the Portuguese used the same term referring to the natives they were unable to conquer. Despite their savageness and their resistance to Christianization or European education, many Tapuya supported the Dutch in an alliance against the Portuguese. But the Dutch would also manage to convince some Tupi people to become allies, among them the Potiguar.<sup>96</sup> In 1625, after he had tried to conquer Salvador da Bahia, Boudewijn Hendriksz was in Paraíba where he encountered Potiguares who had settled in the Bay of Traison. Before returning to the Netherlands, he chose to take some Native Americans with him on the journey, among which Caspar and Antonio Paraupaba, Andries Francisco and Pieter Potí. They would receive an 'education' in the Low Countries before going back to Brazil where they could later operate as translators and go-betweenes.<sup>97</sup> (Cfr. Chapter 2 and 3)

This dichotomy between the Tupi and the Tapuya is almost invisible in De Laet's descriptions. He certainly did not want to elaborate on the fearful Tapuya (yet), not wanting to lose investors. Still he renders the Brazilian people by means of two other dichotomies: friendly versus savage, or allies versus enemies of the Portuguese. He thus chose for another unnuanced duality. Behind these simple oppositions lies the same information that was circulating before about the people concerned with an emphasis on valuable information about land and people of the future colony. In later publications about Brazil, as I will demonstrate in the

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<sup>96</sup>This troubled relationship is described by Mark Meuwese (2009) in 'Subjects or Allies: The Contentious Status of the Tupi Indians in Dutch Brazil, 1625-1654', Caroline A. Williams (ed.), *Bridging the Early Modern Atlantic World. People, Products, and Practices on the Move*, Farnham, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 113-30.

The conversion of the Tupi and Tapuya peoples was an arduous process, as many natives held on to their traditional beliefs. The missionaries of the Dutch Reformed Church often complained about this in their letters and reports. More about the relation between the indigenous peoples and the Dutch: Ernst van den Boogaart, 'Infernal Allies: The Dutch West India Company and the Tarairiu, 1630-1654' in: Ernst van den Boogaart (ed.) (1979), *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen*: pp. 519-38; Frans Leonard Schalkwijk, *The Reformed Church in Dutch Brazil, 1630-1654*, Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum; Danny L. Noorlander (2011), *Serving God and Mammon: the Reformed Church and the Dutch West India Company in the Atlantic World, 1621-1674*, Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University.

On the different representations of Brazilian Indians: Brienens *Visions*: 19-23; and on the dichotomy Tupi-Tapuya as it was rendered by Eckhout in his famous portraits: Brienens *Visions*: 95-111.

<sup>97</sup> More about the Brazilian indians before the Dutch arrived: Pereira, Moacyr Soares (2000) *Índios Tupi Guarani na Pré-história: Suas Invasões do Brasil e do Paraguai, Seu Destino após o Descobrimento*, Macéio: EDUFAL.

following chapters, Dutch publications will surpass *Nieuwe Wereldt* in their approach of the exotic reality of Brazil and the new paradigm in the descriptions of Dutch Brazil will come to maturity. The descriptions in *Iaerlijck Verhael* and *Rerum per Octennium* are more nuanced and show that the comprehension of the colony was taken one step further. Not only did they continue to participate in the gradual disenchantment of the New World, but some descriptions also managed to capture and render the hybridity of Brazil.

### 1.11 MAPPING A DISENCHANTED NEW WORLD

In *Nieuwe Wereldt* De Laet did not lay claim by describing yet, but he was mapping sea and land, nature and people in order to render the country and its inhabitants more comprehensible for his readers. He did not dwell on religious or political matters, with the exception of criticism expressed regarding the Spanish attitude towards the natives. On the contrary, he carefully chose passages that would offer the necessary practical information for future trade and colonization. Neither did he linger on the marvelous and therefore he participated in the disenchantment of the New World.

De Laet mapped the natural world and based his descriptions more on empirical data and less on classical sources than most of his predecessors. The absence of the marvelous and the use of contemporary empirical data are two aspects that make his book ‘modern’ in my view and that is why I argued that it took part in the gradual disenchantment of the New World. He was not interested in the prevailing myths and fables about America but in the creation of a lucrative commercial network with the continent.

The ‘ethnological’ information in the descriptions of *Nieuwe Wereldt* is treated in the same way as the knowledge about the land, the nature and the animals of the New World. The descriptions were certainly colored by cultural projections and did not offer new information about the natives, which resulted in stereotypical images of the natives. Nonetheless, when we look specifically at the descriptions of the indigenous people, we notice a shift in the means of portrayal.

The *otherness* or strangeness of the natives is not at the core of the descriptions, as it was in many 16<sup>th</sup>-century texts. This otherness could inspire fear and did not serve De Laet's commercial project of the WIC. De Laet only included scarce details on their habits and customs and was more interested in where they could be found and how they could be identified. The Dutch had already established trade relations with some people of Virginia and De Laet tried to show how these could be further extended. Brazil, on the other side, was an almost unexplored territory by the Dutch so far. However, this remote and exotic country was, together with its inhabitants, known through many European texts that were circulating from which De Laet would extract the information he found useful. A different approach was therefore necessary to describe the South American country, and he focused on the fertility of the country and the lucrative aspects of sugar cane and Brazil wood. The natives were described as part of the décor of Brazil and not yet as trading partners.

In the analyses of the following books that I will discuss, I intend to show how the natives became more central in the descriptions and how the descriptions rendered a more nuanced portrait of their otherness. I will demonstrate that, as the Dutch started and continued the colonization of Brazil, their descriptions of the foreign realities would change gradually, most importantly thanks to their tolerant policy and how they dealt with hybridity. This evolution in the descriptions of Brazil was already at work in De Laet's next publication about Brazil, *Iaerlijck Verhael*.



# *Iaerlijck Verhael*



Figure 8: Title page Johannes De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael* (1644)



## 2.1 ENCOUNTER WITH A HYBRID REALITY

‘I am a Christian and a better Christian than you, not contaminating myself with the idolatry that you rely on.’<sup>1</sup> These words were uttered during the period that is under the scrutiny in this work, but not by a Dutch priest addressing an audience of infidels. They were written down by Pieter Poti, a Brazilian Potiguar Indian, in a letter to his relative Felipe Camarão on October 31<sup>st</sup> 1645. Pieter Poti wrote this as a response to the accusation, made by Felipe Camarão, that he was a heretic. Pieter Poti and Felipe Camarão were both Brazilian Potiguar Indians and both were allies of a European invader, but they chose different sides in the colonial conflict. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Potiguar Indians were first allies of the French, but when the latter lost Maranhão in 1615, part of them became allies of the Portuguese while others fled. This division within the Indian nation grew even more salient with the arrival of the Dutch, when many Potiguar chose to fight on the Batavian side, against the Portuguese. In 1625, Pieter Poti traveled to the Netherlands where he received an education from the WIC. He became an important translator and intermediary during the Dutch occupation of Brazil. Another Potiguar, Antonio Paraupaba, also an ally of the Dutch, claimed that Pieter Poti had died as a (Protestant) martyr after being captured in the important battle of Guararapes in 1649.<sup>2</sup> Felipe Camarão, on the other hand, converted to

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the only letter written by Pedro Poti to Felipe Camarão. Translation by Meuwese *For the peace*: 197.

<sup>2</sup> Paraupaba was a Potiguar Indian who had been educated in the Netherlands together with other natives at the expense of the WIC. After his years as interpreter and mediator, he became an important leader of his native community in Brazil. He wrote two essays in which he gave an overview of the alliances between the Potiguar-tribes and the Dutch. His *remonstrances* were recently edited by Lodewijk Hulsman (2005) in: ‘Brazilian Indians in the Dutch Republic. The remonstrances of Antonio Paraupaba to the States General in 1654 and 1656’, *Itinerario* 29/1: 51-78. See also: Meuwese (2009) ‘Subjects or Allies, 113-130.

Christianity in 1612 after a Jesuit education. Also born Poti, meaning ‘shrimp’ in the Tupi language, he adopted the Portuguese version of his tribal name, Camarão. He became one of the heroes of the Portuguese insurrection against the Dutch: for his bravery, the Portuguese even honored him with the title ‘Dom’ and gave him a medal. The exchange of letters between Pedro Poti and Felipe Camarão was of great diplomatic and theological importance during the Brazilian Luso-Dutch wars. The two men regularly tried to convince each other to change sides, in political and religious matters. Their correspondence was and is still very interesting in many other ways. The letters are the only ones by Brazilian Indians of that epoch. Moreover, they are written in Tupi language. It is difficult to trace the real intentions of the two men: were they written under pressure of the European colonizer or did they result from the Potiguar leaders’ own initiatives instead? In any case, Poti and Camarão became important symbols of colonial Brazil thanks to their abilities to adapt to the European culture. Whether these adaptations happened intentionally or not, parts of the culture of the other had been incorporated and rearticulated over the years during a complex process. Moreover, Poti and Camarão had acquired literacy skills that allowed them to create new kinds of (power) relationships between and among colonizers and local people. Being fluent in different languages gave them a certain power that they could wield within the indigenous and the colonial communities; they became political and military leaders with a great deal of influence in colonial Brazil.<sup>3</sup>

Poti and Camarão were representatives of the hybridity of colonial Brazil. Both were born within an Indian community and had contacts with and assimilated (parts of) the culture of the colonial invader. They could circulate in different colonial communities due to this mixed education and background. More and more hybrid figures appeared during the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil and

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<sup>3</sup> Meuwese *For the peace*: 85-86, 195-203; Cerno and Overmeier *Cartas*: 1-7; Hulsman *Brazilian Indians*: 51-78; van den Boogaart ‘Infernal allies’: 519-38; see also Regina Célia Gonçalves, Halisson Seabra Cardoso e João Paulo C. R. Pereira (2009) ‘Povos indígenas no período do domínio holandês: uma análise dos documentos tupis (1630-1656)’ in: *Ensaio sobre a América Portuguesa*, Paraíba: Editora Universitária; about the ethnological and linguistic value of the letters see: Beatriz G. Dantas, José Augusto L. Sampaio, and Maria Rosário G. de Carvalho (1992), ‘Os povos indígenas no Nordeste brasileiro: um esboço histórico,’ in Manuela Carneiro de Cunha et al, *História dos índios no Brasil*, São Paulo: Companhia das Letras: 431-456.

many of them operated as intermediaries. These people, often from mixed race, frequently spoke different languages and could have a deeper understanding of their homeland than those who had no hybrid background. Their ambivalence was a valuable asset in colonial Brazil: they had a wider range of strategies at hand that enabled them to circulate between and bridge conflictual colonial spaces, i.e. to operate as go-betweens. Their cooperation was crucial in the Dutch conquest of territory in Brazil. They could share their knowledge about the country and help in the negotiations with local people. Go-betweens were therefore an important source, directly and indirectly, for the descriptions in De Laet's *Iaerlijck Verhael*.

## **2.2 *IAERLIJCK VERHAEL* AND THE HYBRIDITY OF COLONIAL BRAZIL**

In *Iaerlijck Verhael*, the work I will discuss in this chapter, De Laet was still mapping the New World as he did in *Nieuwe Wereldt*. Through the use of logbooks with detailed descriptions of the lands he still created a chorography, but in between the mapping of the countries he managed to present a less stereotypical image in his descriptions than he had done before. The image of Brazil given in *Nieuwe Wereldt* had evolved over the years as different 'contact zones' had come into being. In these spaces people with different cultural backgrounds could interact: African slaves, Indians, different European colonizers were in contact with each other and created new colonial dynamics.

Before the Dutch arrived, (Northeastern) Brazil was already populated by people from diverse origins: men and women with different and sometimes mixed ethnical and sociological backgrounds. The occupation of Northeast Brazil by the WIC is considered a key moment in the early modern colonialism in South America. In Brazil, the period is still remembered as a very turbulent, but

nevertheless very decisive chapter of the national history.<sup>4</sup> The existing colonial, social and religious frameworks—established mainly by the Portuguese and the French during the 16th century—were fragmented and refreshed. On the one hand, the Dutch arrived with their religion and ceremonies, which differed from the ones established by the Portuguese inhabitants. On the other hand, they made use of existing (trade) relations, e.g. on the sugar plantations, but imposed their own managing strategies. As a consequence, complex relations were woven between inhabitants of different social backgrounds: Europeans of different geographical and social origins, the local Indian population and the African slaves interacted and influenced each other. When the WIC started the occupation of Northeastern Brazil some inhabitants became partners of the Dutch, others fled and joined the Portuguese in the war, some never chose sides, and finally some went from one side to the other. These new relations created a new colonial dynamic that was carried out in most part by people who were the fruit of this cultural blend: *hybrids* or *mestizos*. They had already been important actors in the formation of the colony under the French, Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch rules and gave shape to the colony on different levels as I will demonstrate with the case studies of Manoel de Moraes and Calabar.

Hybrid people were a crucial factor in the evolution of the new paradigm of descriptions of Brazil in which the comprehension of the colony was brought to a new level. Hybrids were able to read the signs of the other better. They could avoid many possible misinterpretations and could help the colonizers and the natives to understand each other better. Directly, thanks to reports made by hybrids, and indirectly, thanks to reports that could be created as a result of their preliminary work as go-betweens, De Laet could offer descriptions that gave a more nuanced portrait of the natives and the natural surroundings of the country.

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<sup>4</sup> References in this respect i.a.: Charles R. Boxer (1977) *De Nederlanders in Brazilië, 1624-1654*, Alphen aan den Rijn: Sijthoff; J.A. Gonsalves de Mello (2001) *Nederlanders in Brazilië, 1624-1654. De invloed van de Hollandse bezetting op het leven en de cultuur in Noord-Brazilië*, Zutphen: Walburg Press and Marianne Wiesebron (2008) *Brazilië in de Nederlandse archieven (1624-1654): documenten in het koninklijk huisarchief en in het archief van de Staten-Generaal*, Leiden: CNWS.

Even if hybridity played a fundamental role in the descriptions of the colony, as I shall argue, I do not want to give the impression that Dutch Brazil was an ideal multicultural society, it was not.

### 2.3 HYBRIDITY TODAY

Hybridity is until today a major factor in the organization of the country but it has to be used carefully as it is a loaded term. The heterogeneous character of colonial Brazil received much attention, especially after the publication of Gilberto Freyre's *Casa Grande e Senzala* (1933; *The Masters and the Slaves*, 1946). Brazil's famous social historian made clear how the different cultures and races lived together during the colonial period and nourished Brazil's multiracial identity concept. By means of an anthropological analysis of the relationship between the Portuguese plantation owners and their slaves, he gave an idealized portrait of Brazil's miscegenation, seeing Brazilian mixtures of races as a strength. His celebration of racial mixing has been criticized by many scholars, the most important argument being that his so-called 'racial democracy' masked the real social issues of twenty-first century Brazil.<sup>5</sup> The Brazilian hybrid (*mestiço*) was glorified by Freyre as an ideal person who combined the best characteristics of European, Amerindian and African people. Freyre's book *The Masters and the Slaves* (1933) had the effect of an earthquake after its publication but his theories have been problematized over the years, for good reason. His descriptions of the colonial system were idealizations of what really existed and the racist undertone

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<sup>5</sup> Many Brazilian and non-Brazilian intellectuals problematized Freyre's book, see: Ronaldo Vainfas (1989) *Trópicos dos pecados: moral, sexualidade e inquisição no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Campus; Young, Robert J.C. (1995) *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in heory, Culture, and Race*. London: Routledge; Peter Burke and Maria Lúcia G. Pallares-Burke (2008) *Gilberto Freyre: Social heory in the Tropics*, Oxford: Peter Lang (2006) *Gilberto Freyre e os estudos latino-americanos*, Joshua Lund and Malcolm McNee (eds.), Pittsburg (PA): Críticas: 99–121 and Jeroen Dewulf recently analyzed the influence of Nietzsche on Freyre 'New man in the tropics. The Nietzschean roots of Gilberto Freyre's multiracial identity concept.' (2014) *Luso-Brazilian review* 51:1, University of Wisconsin: 93-111.

of his discourse soon became clear. Abdias do Nascimento even referred to Freyre's multiracial identity concept as a genocide in *O genocídio do Negro Brasileiro* (1978). Moreover, he built up his theory in a binary way, regarding race, class and gender. A polarity already visible in the title of his book and that let little room for nuance.

Freyre's hybrid identity concept finds its roots in the acknowledgement of the racial and social hybridity of the (Portuguese) colonizer—Portugal being the product of Moorish, Mediterranean and Nordic elements:

Hybrid from the beginning, Brazilian society is, of all those in the Americas, the one most harmoniously constituted so far as racial relations are concerned, within the environment of a practical cultural reciprocity that results in the advanced deriving the maximum of profit from the values and experiences of the backward ones, and in a maximum of conformity between the foreign and the native cultures, that of the conqueror and that of the conquered.<sup>6</sup>

The 'harmoniously constituted' country was already questioned in the title of the book *The Masters and the Slaves*. The encounter between races is an encounter, in his perspective, of an advanced one (Europeans), with two backward ones (Amerindians and Africans). The 'sexual intercourses' that would create the harmonious society are between 'the best stocks' and weaker specimens:

The sexual intercourse of whites of the best stocks—including ecclesiastics, undoubtedly one of the most select and eugenic elements in the formation of Brazilian society—with Negroes and mulattoes attained formidable proportions, and the result was a great multitude of illegitimate offspring, in the form of young mulattoes, who very frequently were brought up with the children of lawful wedlock in accordance with the liberal attitude of the patriarchal Big Houses. Others were reared on the plantations conducted by friars, or in foundling-asylums ('rodas') and orphanages.<sup>7</sup>

Freyre argues in his book that the close relationships of different races, together with continued miscegenation between masters and slaves on the plantations

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<sup>6</sup> Freyre *The masters and the slaves*: 83.

Freyre *The masters and the slaves*: 446.

<sup>7</sup> 'O intercurso sexual de brancos dos melhores estoques – inclusive eclesiásticos, sem dúvida nenhuma, dos elementos maus seletos e eugênicos na formação brasileira – com escravos negros e mulatos foi formidável. Resultou daí grossa multidão de filhos ilegítimos – mulatinhos criados muitas vezes com a prole legítima, dentro do liberal patriacalismo das casas-grandes; outros à sombra dos engenhos de frades; ou então nas 'rodas' e orfanato'



resulted in the latter's emancipation. He was one of the first intellectuals to see the Brazilian hybrid identity not as a problem but as a solution. The popular term 'racial democracy'—referring to contemporary Brazilian society—was (probably) spread or at least fed by Freyre's ideas.<sup>8</sup> I will not elaborate on this matter, since in doing so I would go beyond the scope of my research. What is certain is that until today, Brazil still has not attained the level of being a racial democracy, even if the myth still perpetuates.

In postcolonial theories the notion of hybridity is a central theme. Hybrid figures inhabit what Homi K. Bhabha defined as 'in-between spaces', that:

provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.<sup>9</sup>

For Bhabha hybridity is the result of cultural collisions and interchanges. In his theory the culture's in-between is put forward as an ongoing process of cultural identity within an interstitial space. In this liminal space a negotiation of identity is made possible across differences of gender, race or traditions in an ongoing process of exchange. Cultural differences are based on these hybridities and take shape in moments of historical transformation. I do not want to walk too far onto post-colonial ground neither, but Bhabha's thinking helps us to take into account this vast in-between zone where many colonial subjects circulated. I would like to suggest that Dutch Brazil was such a moment of historical transformation. Not only thanks to Johan Maurits' so-called tolerant policy that I will discuss in the next chapters, nor only thanks to the many key figures of Dutch Brazil that had a hybrid background, but also through the different descriptions I chose to analyze.

The hybridity and heterogeneous character of Dutch Brazil were crucial factors in the creation of De Laet's descriptions. These descriptions were products of the same hybridity which they were meant to underscore. De Laet incorporated

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<sup>8</sup> There are ongoing discussions about the question whether the term was created by Freyre. See: David Lehmann (2008) 'Gilberto Freyre: The Reassessment Continues', *Latin American Research Review*, V. 43-1, 2008: 208-18.

<sup>9</sup> Bhabha *Location of culture*: 1-2.

some reports made by hybrid figures but also by European adventurers who could manage to grasp and render (pieces of) the Brazilian reality in descriptions.

In what follows I want to have a closer look at some of the reports made by Colonel Arciszewski, a Polish commander, and at the life and writings of Manoel de Moraes, a Portuguese Jesuit, to demonstrate their influence on De Laet's descriptions. The lives of these two men were marked by many fault lines and conflicts, but they were also able to hold different positions in society and most importantly for the colonial reality: they could function as go-betweens. Arciszewski was not a colonial hybrid, yet he represents the heterogeneous character of the Dutch WIC. This Polish refugee managed to climb the Dutch social ladder in an impressive way. Moreover, with the crucial help of translators he managed to negotiate with and gain information about local people. Moraes, in contrast, did have Portuguese and Indian blood in his veins and was thus a product of the colonial hybrid reality. Alida Metcalf's analysis of the *go-between* and Stephen Greenblatt's concept of *self-fashioning* will allow me to shed a particular light on these two figures. In the case of Moraes their theories will also provide the tools to understand the meaning and functioning of betrayal in early modern colonial environment.<sup>10</sup> When someone considers himself or herself more an inhabitant of a certain territory than a subject of a colonial authority, which can be replaced at any time by any other, is he or she then unfaithful when he or she betrays that colonizing power?

I will first sketch the overall tone of *Iaerlijck Verhael* and then show the importance of hybridity in the construction of Arciszewski's and Moraes' reports and their impact on De Laet's descriptions.

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<sup>10</sup> Alida Metcalf (2005) *Go-betweens in the colonization of Brazil. 1500-1600*, Austin: University of Texas Press and Stephen Greenblatt (1980) *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press).

## 2.4 IAERLIJCK VERHAEL: A 13-YEAR CHRONICLE

After the creation of the West India Company (WIC) in 1621, the Dutch began to organize more voyages to the West. The WIC was looking for someone to write down their achievements in a chronicle and De Laet seemed to fit the job perfectly. He would make notes of the daily accomplishments of the WIC in what turned out to be the *Iaerlijck Verhael*, a 13-volume history of the WIC from 1623 to 1636, i.e. until Johan Maurits took off for Brazil to become the Governor of the colony. Each book presents the day-by-day activities of the WIC based on the reports of eyewitnesses. In his *Rerum per Octennium*, Barlaeus refers to De Laet's working method as follows:

Johannes de Laet, a man of high position and great renown, has written a history of their daily activities as told by those who were present at the event. His history is based on a truthful interpretation, without hearsay or foolish gossip.<sup>11</sup>

The fact that the *Iaerlijck Verhael* is based on reports made by men 'present at the events' should be taken, then, as a proof of the veracity of the work. *Iaerlijck Verhael* does not contain 'hearsay or foolish gossip' and neither does it contain narrations of elements that would merely enchant the reader. The working method thus resembles the one used for *Nieuwe Wereldt*, as De Laet continues on the path of disenchantment. But while *Nieuwe Wereldt* covered all known territories in America and gave an overview of the different European colonial enterprises, *Iaerlijck Verhael* focuses solely on the endeavors of the West India Company, more specifically in Brazil and Africa. Other European expeditions are only mentioned when they intersect with the activities of the Dutch Company such as—to trade, battle with, or inform the Dutch.

Similar to *Nieuwe Wereldt*, *Iaerlijck Verhael* is clearly a biased opus supposed to attract investors for the colonial enterprises of the WIC. But in contrast with his approach for *Nieuwe Wereldt*, which was based on accounts made by authors of diverse European origins who were at the service of diverse companies and

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<sup>11</sup> van Baerle *History*: 20.

investors, De Laet used many contemporary sources from people at the service of the WIC for his *Iaerlijck Verhael*. This means that he consulted sources found in the archives of the WIC, of which unfortunately many have disappeared. Some of his sources were hybrid figures—or could rely on hybrids to construct their reports—and, as I will show, these had an important impact on his descriptions. Thanks to their input he could create less stereotyped representations of the colonial realities.

The 13 books of *Iaerlijck Verhael* sketch the territorial growth of the company and the profits that were made by trading. Until 1630, there were no real Dutch settlements in South America. Thus, the first 7 books, covering the years between 1623 and 1629, recount for the most part the histories of Dutch heroic battles and sea journeys. After 1630, the life and the organization of the colony became more important in the descriptions. From 1630, the Dutch controlled a vast part of Brazil and held their headquarters in Recife. In the last 3 books, covering the years from 1634 to 1636, life in the colony in and around Recife becomes the work's central theme. The last book's chronological year is 1636, the year of Johan Maurits' departure to Brazil. This is the moment when Barlaeus took over from De Laet. Barlaeus' *Rerum per Octennium*, the book I will discuss in the next chapter, covers the years from 1636 to 1644 and is dedicated to Johan Maurits' glorious days in Brazil.

## 2.5 EYES ON BRAZIL AND AFRICA

The activities of the WIC during the years 1623-1636 were not restricted to the American continent; the *Groot Desseyn*<sup>12</sup> of the Company was to seize all Portuguese possessions, including African territories. These latter lands were necessary to establish a lucrative trans-Atlantic trade. Throughout the 16<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The 'Groot Desseyn' was a plan to establish a lucrative transatlantic trade by seizing Portuguese possessions in Africa and the Americas. The purpose was to break the power of the Iberian countries while making profit.

century, slave labor had proven to be indispensable on the plantations. When it became clear that it would be too difficult to enslave local populations on a large scale—if only because these populations resisted or suffered from diseases, as I will explain in the next chapter—colonizers started to ‘import’ slaves from Africa. Moreover, a papal bull of 1537, even if often disregarded, forbade the enslavement of Indians. African slaves showed a more robust constitution and had a better immunity system, which protected them against European diseases. Slaves were not the only reason for the WIC to head to West Africa; commerce was also a very important factor. The Portuguese had already built various trade factories and trading posts and the WIC wanted to take over their lucrative enterprises. The activities in Africa thus also receive attention throughout the different volumes of *Iaerlijck Verhael*.

The expansion of trade in Africa and in South-America was clearly the main focus of De Laet. While there was an emphasis on the beauty, abundance and fertility of the lands in *Nieuwe Wereldt*, De Laet chose to put the mapping of this triangular trading route more central in *Iaerlijck Verhael*.

Even though Africa receives much attention in De Laet’s *Iaerlijck Verhael*, Brazil is still the main subject of the 13 books. The country had become the main goal of the WIC and Bahia was the first target to be aimed at. In the introduction to his work, De Laet, speaking as one of the administrators of the WIC, explained why the Spanish-Portuguese empire had to be attacked in Brazil, more precisely in the captaincy of Bahia de Todos os Santos:

And we could also understand from this that the desire of the Lords XIX was that Bahia de Todos os Santos would be attacked and that all diligence would be used in order to conquer the region. All high officers have promised together that they would fulfill this mission with loyalty and piety and that they would do everything in their power to accomplish their task in a manly way, in service of the fatherland and at the benefit of the Company. They have decided how this would be achieved with reflection and deliberation.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*-I: 11. ‘Ende alsoo uyt deselve wierdt verstaen, dat het begeeren van de XIX was, dat men de Bahia de todos os Santos soude aentasten ende alle de hooge Officieren eensamentlijck den anderen belooft, met alle trouwe ende vromigheyt desen last naer te kommen, ende haer uysterste beste te doen om denselven mannelijcken uyt te voeren, tot dienste van ’t Vaderland ende nut van de wel-ghemelte Compagnie.

Bahia was the first target but after less than a year the Dutch were already driven out of Salvador. A few years later they would set their eyes on the captaincy of Pernambuco and Recife, up North in the colony.

## 2.6 PRELUDE

The introduction of *Iaerlijck Verhael* starts with an appeal to the members of the States General followed by the *Privilegie*, which is the privilege that he was granted to print and publish the book, the charter of the WIC and finally a list with the names of the Company's directors. In his appeal, De Laet explained how the Spanish King became so powerful and could fight the Dutch so vigorously through the wealth he gained from his rich American colonies. The profit that could be made from the trade of silver and gold had proved to be immense. In De Laet's opinion, the Company should undertake the same kind of trade and at the same time try to weaken the power of the Spanish Crown. Since the creation of the WIC, the Dutch had already managed to attack small posts and lower the Spanish profits. De Laet argues that they should continue to do so in the same vein. The States General should therefore support the WIC in its endeavors, not only to weaken the enemy but primarily for its own financial profit.

In the charter that follows the appeal we can read that at its creation in 1621 the WIC received a trade monopoly that covered all countries West of the Cape of Good Hope and East of the Strait of Magellan. A similar charter had been granted to the VOC in 1602, except for the fact that the WIC needed approval from the States General to conduct military operations. The year of the WIC's creation, 1621, is historically significant. The Company could be erected as the 12-years

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Hebben mede voordachtelijck de noodighe ordre ende middelen van uytvoeringhe onder haer beraemt ende besloten.'

Truce between Spain and the Netherlands then expired, which is why the war of independence could from then on be carried on at sea.<sup>14</sup>

After this overview of the WIC's importance and general goals, De Laet closes the introduction pointing at his own limitations and shortcomings as a compiler of texts:

The journals are so numerous, and, because of many other pastimes, I did not have enough time to include everything in the following History; also because of some defaults in many writings I could not transcribe as correctly as I had wished to, and as the reader would expect to. Therefore, it is possible that someone who was at the service of the WIC during those years will not be mentioned or that his actions will not be described entirely. If this happens to someone he has to believe that this did not happen on purpose nor to lessen his strength and piety, but from a lack of evidence.<sup>15</sup>

De Laet not only points at his own limitations but also suggests that his sources could have flaws due to this 'lack of evidence'. What he implies is that evidence could be extracted from the reports of direct witnesses and not from the Ancients.

De Laet obviously could not include all available information but he managed to publish no fewer than thirteen volumes. An important similarity with *Nieuwe Wereldt* is that one of the most recurrent sources used to construct this work were logbooks from employees of the WIC. These were primarily used because they

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<sup>14</sup> These years in the Dutch history were also marked by the dispute between the Arminians (or Remonstrants) and the Gomarists (or Counter Remonstrants). The controversy ended after the execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, one of the leaders of the Arminians who professed religious tolerance and a continuation of the truce with the Hapsburg Empire. His beheading symbolized the victory of the war party, i.e. the Orthodox and Orangists monarchists, led by Maurits Prince of Orange. More on this subject, which was also a broader religious controversy, see: Geoffrey Parker (1972) *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road 1567–1659*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Jonathan Israel (1995) *The Dutch Republic: It's Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 450-477; Jan Glete (2002) *War and the State in Early Modern Europe. Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States, 1500–1660*, London and New York: Routledge and Simon Groenveld, M.E.H.N. Mout, H.Ph. Leeuwenberg (2008) *De Tachtigjarige Oorlog: opstand en consolidatie in de Nederlanden (ca. 1560-1650)*, Zutphen : Walburg Pers.

<sup>15</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael-'Waerschouwinghe'*. 'Alsoo de Journalen soo veel zijn, ende mijn tijdt, weghe menighfuldighe andere occupatien, soo kort ghevallen, soo en hebbe niet alles in dese volgende Historie kunnen invoeghen; oock somtijdt by eenighe ghebreken, die in verscheyden schriften voor quamen, niet kunnen alles soo exactelijck aenteeckenen als wel ghewenst hadde, ende de Leser veellicht sal verwachten. Insonderheyt soudt kunnen ghebeuren, dat yemandt, die in dese Jaeren, ten dienste van de Compagnie sich heeft laten ghebruycken, en yets voor de selve verricht, overgheslaghen mochte wesen, ofte sijn verrichtinghe niet soo volkomentlijck verhaelt. Soo yemandt sulcx mochte voorkomen, de sulcke sal ghelieven te gheloven dat sulcx niet en is gheschiet voordachtelijck, ofte om sijn kloeckheyt ende vroomigheyt te verminderen, maer by ghebreck van aenwijsinge.'

were the best sources of information to depict day-to-day facts and achievements. Furthermore, the amount of detail they contained made them very helpful to stress the feasibility of future expeditions to the Brazilian coast or West Africa. De Laet gives clear indications for incoming ships with perfect descriptions of the coastline. He outlines how and where ships can arrive safely at the coast and where the crew should beware of islands or reefs. In his description of rivers, he indicates whether and where they are navigable and he mentions all other topographical information with exact locations. The following description of the coastline of Olinda to be found in book VII is but one illustration of many:

*Description of the Coast of Olinda Southwards.*

One mile south of Recife there is an opening, which was named Potpitange by the Portuguese, the entrance is four, five and six fathoms deep, yet very narrow, and because of the strong current that comes and goes, one has to depart with still water. One mile South of this opening there is a big and rough angle, which was named Cabo Pero Caprigo by the Portuguese; from this angle one mile Southwards there is a river named Rio Estreme where longboats or little yachts can sail, because even when there is high tide the water is never deeper than seven or eight foot deep.<sup>16</sup>

In these kinds of descriptions, De Laet is mapping the country as he was in *Iaerlijck Verhael*, but as he could consult more contemporary sources this mapping is even more precise with respect to the functionality of the described places.

Apart from the detailed attention for topographical information, De Laet also at times stresses the fertility and richness of the countries and the available trading goods. This was also a strategy he used in *Nieuwe Wereldt* in order to convince possible investors. However, this strategy is less applied in *Iaerlijck Verhael* as the work focuses more on geographical mapping of the lands to

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<sup>16</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*-VII, 222. 'Beschrijvinghe van de Custe van Olinda Zuydwaerts.

Een mijle by Zuyden het Reciff is een Gat, welck by de Portugesen wordt genaemt Popitange, het inkommen is vier, vijf, ende ses vademen diep, doch heel nauw, soo dat men weggen te stercke stroom dieder uyt ende in valt met stil water daer uyt dient te kommen. Een groote mijl by Zuyden dit Gat leght een grooten groven hoeck, welck de Portugesen noemen Cabo Pero Caprigo; van desen hoeck, welck de Portugesen noemen Capo Pero Caprigo; van desen hoeck noch een groote mijle Zuydtwaerts is de Rivier by haer ghenamt Rio Estreme, bequaem voor Chaloupen ofte kleyne Jachten, want men daer selfs met het hooge water maer ten uystersten seven ofte acht voeten diepte en vindt.'



conquer in the future, at least in the first books. Geographical, maritime, topographical and ethnographic facts follow each other as being necessary for trade and colonization.

De Laet does not shy away from political debates, however. In Book 1 of the *Iaerlijck Verhael* he provides the justification for the American endeavors in the light of the war against the king of Spain that resumed in 1621. The Black Legend is still used as a plea for the conquest of Spanish territories in the New World, in the same way as in *Nieuwe Wereldt*:

Among all the wonderful things that were accomplished in our time in the State of these United Provinces, for the preservation of the true religion and the protection of our freedom, against the king of Spain, the achievements of the chartered West India Company seemed to me very noteworthy: because the Company could accomplish and successfully execute, with little power and effort of the community and thanks to the implementation of resources brought by a small number of subjects of the State, deeds that the whole world had to be amazed of and that the pride of Spain had to yield. From these accomplishments could be noticed in which way this powerful enemy can be offended with his own means and how to withhold or make a drawback from his American treasures, with which he injured and held in incessant discomfort the whole of Christianity during so many years.<sup>17</sup>

The religious context of the narrated actions is also stressed. The Company has been blessed by God to whom most honors must be addressed and without whom the Company would not have been so successful in its undertakings:

The main honor must be addressed to God, who blessed the scant resources of this Company with his Mercy, repaired passed matters by new chances and against the judgment and expectations of most of the crowd, managed with weak resources to achieve big things, that benefited the prosperity of this State.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*-I: 3. 'Onder all de wonderlijcke dinghen, die in onsen tijdt by den Staet van dese Vereenighde Provintien, tot handhavinghe van de ware Ware Religie ende bescherminghe onser Vryheyt, syn uytgericht, tegen den Koningh van Spagnien, hebben my seer aen-merckenswaardigh ghedocht de verrichtinghen van de Gheoctroyeerde West-Indische Compagnie: omdat de selve met kleyne macht ende gheringhe beswaringhe van het Ghemeyn, door de bybrachte middelen van een kleyn aen-tal van Ondersaten deses Staets, soo geluckelijck zijn uyt-gevoert, dat de gantsche Werelt sich daer over heeft moeten verwonderen, ende den hooghmoet van Spagnien swichten; ende datmen daer uyt naecktelijck heeft kunnen speuren, op wat wijze men dien machtigen Vyandt door syn eyghen middelen kan krencken, ende hem de Americaensche Schatten onttrecken ofte onnut maecken, met de welcke hy de gantsche Christenheyt soo vele Jaren heeft geplaeght ende in gheduyrighe onrust gehouden.'

<sup>18</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*-I: 4. 'De voornaemste eere moet Godt alleen toegeschreven werden, de welcke de geringhe middelen van dese Compagnie ghenaedelijck heeft gheseghent, de verlopen saecken door nieuwe

In addition, De Laet gives an economic argumentation, praising the past accomplishments of the WIC. The company had already proven to be very successful. With more financial support it could even surpass past achievements and be even more profitable. Being such a prosperous enterprise, the WIC's history had to be written down for the next generations and he, Johannes de Laet, as co-founder and member had the required competences to take up the task:

Moreover, I think that these astonishing deeds that the West India Company displayed to assure the prosperity of our beloved fatherland, cannot be concealed or kept secret from its descendants. And that you cannot blame me, who was in service of the Company since the beginning and who attended and participated in all meetings and who saw and read all journals, letters and writings, for describing the Company and only to articulate the naked truth (which I know best) in separate books by year, and also for preparing the matter to be better understood, in order to be better written by the Company in accordance with their merits and be set out for the whole world to see.<sup>19</sup>

De Laet clarifies that the focus in the books will be on the achievements of the Company in Brazil and reiterates that he will only write the truth. He does not want to stress the *sapientia veterum* but instead events and facts as narrated by men who worked for the company. He will not

write what is untrue nor conceal something that is known to be true. I will narrate the plain truth of what happened to those at the service of the Company. The readers can judge in accordance with the respective merits of these men.<sup>20</sup>

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toevallen herstelt, ende teghen het oordeel ende verwachtinghe van de meeste menichte, door swacke middelen groote dingen, tot welstandt van desen state, uyt gevoert.'

<sup>19</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-I: 3. 'My docht daer benevens dat dese wonderlijcke daden by de West-Indische Compagnie tot welstandt van onse lieve Vaderlandt uyt-ghewroght, de naerkomelinghen niet en konden offte behoorden versweghen te worden; ende dat my, die van den beginne in bedieninge van de selve was geweest, alle de ghewichtighe raetslagen hadde bygewoont ende helpen bevorderen, ende alle de Journalen, Brieven ende Geschriften ghesien ende ghelesen, niet qualijck en konde af-ghenomen worden de Beschrijvinghe van de selve by der handt te nemen, ende de naeckte waerheyt alleen (die my ten besten bekend was) in onderscheyden Boecken volgens de ordre der Jaren te vervatten, ende alsoo de stoffe te bereyden voor beter verstanden, die de selve hier naer met een beter penne naer hun verdiensten mochten ten thoone stellen voor de gantsche wereltd.'

<sup>20</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-I: 4. 'niet te schrijven wat onwaer is, oock niets dat waerachtigh wete te wesen, voordachtelijck verswijgen; het doen ende laten van de gene die de Compagnie hebben ghedient, sal naecktelijck verhalen, die het lesen ghelieven daarvan te oordeelen naer jeders verdienste '

The employees of the WIC are thus considered to be trustworthy eyewitnesses. Moreover, De Laet will focus on endeavors and facts, not on fabulous phenomena. This emphasizes the ongoing disenchantment as already put forward in *Nieuwe Wereldt*. In the course of the books of *Iaerlijck Verhael* De Laet will give more and more nuanced descriptions. In between the cartographer's mapping longer descriptions appear, which were made possible thanks to the local hybridity and show at the same time that same hybridity. This double movement will result in a better comprehension of (Dutch) Brazil.

However, not only Brazil is given attention in *Iaerlijck Verhael*. De Laet also treats the trading posts in Africa and the Caribbean as they participated in the triangular trading routes. Nonetheless, the treatment of these lands will be more superficial than the descriptions of Brazil as I will show in the following paragraphs.

## 2.6 BLACK GOLD

*Een man van desen lande  
sal meer wercks aflegghen,  
als dry Swerten, die groot gelt kosten*  
Willem Usselinx (1608)

The importance of the African West coast for the WIC is made clear throughout the various volumes of *Iaerlijck Verhael*: West Africa was an important link in the trading chain, as proven by the Iberian rivals. Throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Portuguese were in control of the trade in Africa. The treaty of Tordesillas (1494) stipulated that the entire African continent fell under Portuguese influence. They held their monopoly until the 1550s, when other European nations (especially the French, English and Dutch) also started to trade in ivory and gold. Even though the Portuguese lost their trade monopoly, they still possessed the most powerful settlements, militarily speaking. Weakening the Portuguese enemy meant that it would be easier to conquer Brazil in a next stage. Without slaves imported from Africa, Portuguese plantations would be less lucrative. The WIC made different

attempts to attack posts on the African West coast, more precisely Loanda and Elmina in present-day Angola and Ghana. Apart from these military actions the WIC also tried to find allies on the Gold Coast. Over the years they managed to create alliances with local Kingdoms against the Portuguese and to build local factories to trade mostly gold.<sup>21</sup>

Serious involvement of the Dutch in West Africa started in 1590 when Dutch sailor Barent Ericksz. left the homeland with the firm goal to acquire sugar from Brazil. The expedition failed as Ericksz. and his crew had to interrupt their voyage and came to land on Principe, an island off the coast of Guinea. Soon they were captured by the Portuguese, by whom the Dutch presence was considered as a violation of their trade monopoly in West Africa. During his two years in captivity, Ericksz. could collect valuable information about the Portuguese gold trade, which enabled him, back in the Netherlands, to convince Dutch merchants to invest in an African enterprise. The first Dutch expedition to West Africa returned with a large amount of gold, ivory and pepper and the trading would continue.<sup>22</sup> Balthasar de Moucheron was one of the first Dutch merchants to focus on the trade in West Africa. In 1596, he led a first attack on the fort of São Jorge da Mina, the first trading post build by the Portuguese on the gulf on Guinea. The attempt failed, but the following years various Dutch posts were established (Gold Coast, Slave Coast and Angola). The fort of São Jorge was finally taken over in 1637: it was renamed Elmina and became the capital of the Dutch Gold Coast.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For a history of the Portuguese and Dutch involvement in West Africa, see: Filipa Ribeiro da Silva (2011) *Dutch and Portuguese in Western Africa. Empires, Merchants and the Atlantic System, 1580-1674*, Leiden: Brill.

<sup>22</sup> Marcel van Engelen (2013) *Het kasteel van Elmina. In het spoor van de Nederlandse slavenhandel in Afrika*, Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij; Henk den Heijer (1997) *Goud, Ivoor en Slaven. Scheepvaart en Handel van de Tweede Westindische Compagnie op Afrika, 1674-1740*, Zutphen: Walburg.

<sup>23</sup> More about the Dutch trading posts during the 17<sup>th</sup> century in West Africa: Marcel van Engelen (2013) *Het kasteel van Elmina*, Antwerpen: De Bezige Bij; Henk den Heijer (intro) (2006) *Expeditie naar de Goudkust: het journaal van Jan Dircksz Lam over de Nederlandse aanval op Elmina, 1624-1626*, Zutphen: Walburg Pers; P.C. Emmer (2000) *De nederlandse slavenhandel 1500-1850*, Amsterdam: Querido/De Arbeiderspers; M. Geary Christraud & Andrea Nicolis (1992) *Elmina: art and trade on the West African coast*, Washington: National museum of African art.

The first recorded trade activities already took place in 1619, when 20 African slaves were brought to Virginia. Real slave trade began later, when the Dutch conquered Pernambuco and were confronted with labor shortage on the sugar plantations. From 1635, the Dutch slave trade became better organized. Slave depots on the African coast had dispatched up to 30 000 men to Brazil by 1650.<sup>24</sup>

Despite their economic importance for the colony, the slaves themselves receive almost no attention in *Iaerlijck Verhael*. However, the Dutch had to negotiate with African people in the same way as with the American people. In order to establish trading post and to obtain black slaves, contacts with the local African population were indispensable. The Dutch vision on these people and on slavery developed over the years, together with their relationship with the various tribes. Willem Usselinx, along with other board members of the WIC, was first in favor of local labor in America.<sup>25</sup> In one of his pamphlets—in which he also argued in favor of a Dutch liberation from Spanish rule that could be achieved if overseas trade was improved—he stated that the importation of African people would be too expensive: *A man of these lands will be able to accomplish more work than three blacks, who cost a lot of money.*<sup>26</sup> In his argument, economic interests prevailed—next to political arguments against peace with Spain—and moral reasons were not taken into account. Nonetheless, he changed his mind about

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<sup>24</sup> More about Slavery and the WIC: Johannes Postma (1990) *The Dutch in the Atlantic Slave Trade. 1600-1815*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; P.C. Emmer (2000) *De Nederlandse Slavenhandel 1500-1850*, Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers and Wim Klooster (ed.) (2009) *Migration, Trade, and Slavery in an Expanding World: Essays in Honor of Pieter Emmer*, Leiden & Boston: Brill.

<sup>25</sup> Willem Usselinx (1567-1647) was, just like Johannes de Laet, one of the founding fathers of the Dutch West India Company. Born in Antwerp, he moved to the Northern Netherlands after the fall of Antwerp. He spent some time in Spain, Portugal and the Azores, where he witnessed the success of the colonial enterprises. It inspired him to outline how a Dutch company could surpass the Spanish one. His ideas on colonialism were very influential at the time. More about Willem Usselinx: J.F. Jameson (1887) 'The Life of Willem Usselinx: Founder of the Dutch and Swedish West India Companies', *Papers of the American Historical Association*, II, New York; A.C. Meijer (1986) "'Liefhebbers des vaderlands ende beminders van de Commercie". De plannen tot oprichting van een geenrale Westindische Compagnie gedurende de jaren 1606-1609', *Archief. Mededelingen van eht Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap der Wetenschappen*, 21-70 and Heijer *Geschiedenis*, 27-28.

<sup>26</sup> Usselinx *Bedenckinge*. 'Een man van desen lande sal meer wrecks aflegghen als dry swarten, die groot gelt kosten.'

who should work in the overseas territories a few years later and became a defender of Indian people and advocated pro African slavery. And so did the WIC, as its members began to favor the importation of African slaves to Brazil for economic reasons: African slaves were vital for the plantations as the Amerindian population, mostly due to diseases and uprisings, seemed unfit to do the hard work on the plantations. The Dutch would follow the Portuguese example and increase slave trade. In this respect the Heeren XIX wrote in 1635 to the administration in Pernambuco:

The order is given to trade some blacks on the African coast and we also know that they are very necessary in Brazil and cannot be missed by the Portuguese. [...] thus we will dictate to our commander on the coast of Guinea, to send the traded blacks to you.<sup>27</sup>

The Dutch not only wanted to block Portuguese slave trade, they also needed their own laborers to work on their recently conquered Brazilian territories. Besides economic there were also theological arguments to justify slavery. In *Geestelijck Roer vant Coopmanschip (The Spiritual Rudder of the Merchant's Ship)* preacher Godfried Udemans (1581-1649) pleaded in favor of African slavery. Following Saint Augustine, among others, Udemans stated that slavery had been justified in the Bible and that there was a difference between spiritual and physical slavery. Udemans argued that 'unspoiled souls' should be converted to the true religion instead of remaining under papal influence. If slaves converted into Christianity they should be liberated after 7 years, because real Christians should not be enslaved. It was thus better to free slaves from the spiritual slavery under Catholic slave-owners and initiate them in the real Christian faith.<sup>28</sup>

This was an important discussion for the further development of the WIC, even though the African slaves never received the same attention in *Iaerlijck Verhael* as the Amerindian population. Even if both peoples were suffering under

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<sup>27</sup> 'Daer is voor desen ordre gegeven op de custe van Africa om eenige zwarten te handelen, ende alsoo wij wel weten dat deselve in Brasil seer noodich sijn ende bij de Portugesen niet en connen gemist worden, [...], soo sullen wij met den eersten ordonneren aen onsen commandeur op de custe van Guinea, de gehandelde zwarten aen U.E. over te zenden.' Letter from Amsterdam dated April 19<sup>th</sup> 1635 quoted in: Gonsalves de Mello *Nederlanders in Brazilië*: 185.

<sup>28</sup> Godfried Udemans *Geestelyck Roer*.

Spanish cruelties, the interest in and the comprehension of the African people would never reach the same level as with the Amerindian ones.

In his *Iaerlijck Verhael* De Laet mentions several expeditions to West Africa. These voyages receive the same kind of attention as those to America. The sea routes, coastlines and exact locations of settlements are depicted meticulously. De Laet is above all mapping the lands again. In the first book, for example, he narrates the expeditions of Piet Heyn to Lower Guinea and to Angola and the adventures of Philips van Zuylen to lower Guinea with a special focus on, again, routes and topographical information.<sup>29</sup> Next to attempts at mapping we also find descriptions of encounters and battles with the Portuguese enemy and with the local population. For example, in the first book we read how Piet Heyn offers presents to the King of Sonho in order to try to create an alliance at the request of the Africans.<sup>30</sup>

Despite these similarities in approach, the descriptions of the African population differ from those of the Amerindian population. In contrast to the long descriptions of the local people of Brazil, the African people are hardly described at all. We only find scarce information and never a detailed account, unlike the ones we are offered of the Indians in the New World. De Laet does not incorporate enchanting elements neither does he show in the descriptions an attempt to comprehend the African people. This lack of attention is directly proportional with his interest for the region: at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century it was not the WIC's purpose to conquer parts of Africa. The Dutch only wanted to occupy trading posts in order to be able to have a flourishing triangular trade. Africa and its inhabitants thus receive less attention than Brazil.

Nevertheless, some interesting descriptions of African people do appear in *Iaerlijck Verhael*. For example, in passages describing communication difficulties with Africans and their animosity towards the Dutch. In van Zuylen's account it is stated that:

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<sup>29</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*-I: 19-20, 37-41.

<sup>30</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*-I: 41.

The black people who lived there in the neighborhood, were very shy, also we could not understand their language.<sup>31</sup>

#### Piet Heyn encounters the same problem in Angola:

When we arrived on shore we noticed some black people on top of the mountain; we went with a peace banner until the foot of the mountain, but they did not want to come down, moreover, we could not understand them, therefore we could not obtain information. We only saw a little house on the mountain, with a cross on top [...]<sup>32</sup>

This difficult communication was also a reason why only few descriptions could be made. There was simply not enough information at hand. When described, African people are mostly depicted as ‘tools’ to trade with and with whom it is difficult to establish any kind of contact:

The people from this land could not speak Benguela and declared that their chiefs forbade them to trade with foreign nations, so they came back on board without having found out anything.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, the African people are in many cases described as not being trustworthy:

They saw at least a hundred blacks over there, whom they did not trust. Thus they sent their black ashore with a line around the body and some samples of goods to trade for refreshments. The black man stayed up to his knees in the water and someone came to him and spoke with him for a while. Then he returned to his troops and after having spoken to them he came back with someone else who carried a bow and an arrow. They immediately aimed at our black man. When the commander saw this he ordered his people who were in front at the ropes that they should take off, but the rope was loose, due to carelessness, and the black drew the boat to their side with the line, nevertheless our troops cut it and started to take off. Then, the rope got caught behind a stone and the boat lay across the shore. The blacks of the country shot so terribly with arrows as if it was hailing and wounded 9 of our men. Our men lost three pieces of stone and some muskets disappeared. Meanwhile the rope

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<sup>31</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-I: 33. ‘De swarten die daer ontrent woonden, waren seer schouw, oock ende konde men hare Taele niet verstaen’

<sup>32</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-I: 39-40. ‘Aen land kommende vernamen eenighe swarten op ‘t hoogste van den bergh ; gingen met een vredevaene tot aen de voet van den bergh, maer sy en wilden niet afkommen, oock en konden haer niet verstaen, soo dat daer niets konden vernemen. Saghen alleen een huysken op de bergh staende, met een kruys daer op [...]’

<sup>33</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-I: 40. ‘T volck van de lande en wist van gheen Benguela te spreecken, ende verklaerden haer verboden te wesen by haren overste, met gheen vreemde natien t e handelen, soodat weder near boord voeren sonder yets vernomen te hebben.’



was taken off and the boat could advance three oars in the water and could therefore escape with God's help. The commander and a land captain and one more had three injuries each. There were so many arrows in the boat (some of them had pierced the boat with their points) that it hindered the rowing.<sup>34</sup>

Anecdotes such as these give us some insight into African war making but descriptions including information about daily life, habits and customs are very rare. In the second book there is some digression on local animals and African habits when De Laet relates Andries Veron's expedition to Sierra Leone. On their way to the castle of Elmina, the Dutch took an animal on board of their ship:

Before I continue, I will narrate only en passant, what our men wrote down; about an animal they had brought on their ship and which is found in many parts of the country. It looked more like a human being than a beast, as it had hands, feet, also heels, eyes and ears as human beings. It drank tobacco with the people and when it was harmed, it screamed as a child. The inhabitants of the land believe that the souls of the dead live there inside. I think I saw this animal here in the land, a female one, and it had its periods like women.<sup>35</sup>

De Laet mentions this short anecdote only in passing. Facts about fauna or flora are only interesting when De Laet considers them useful for trade and the same is

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<sup>34</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael* -I: 40-41. 'Saghen daer wel hondert Swarten, ende also die niet vertrouwden, soo sonden hare Swarte aen land met een lijn om't lijf en eenighe monsters van Waeren om teghen verversinghe te verhandelen. De Swarte bleef tot de knien in 't water staen, en daer quam een tot hem af, en sprack langh met hem, en keerde weer tot sijn Troupe, ende naer eenighe spraecke onder den anderen quam die Swarte weder af, en hem volghde noch een met boogh en pijl in de hand. Sy tasten datelijck near onse Swarte. De commandeur sulcx siende, belaste 't volck welck voor by de drechtouw was dat sy afhalen souden, maer also de drechtouw door onachtsaemheyt los had gheleghen, haelden de swarte 't boot met de lijn haer toe, doch de onse sneden die af en begonden af te halen. Dan, de drechtouw was achter een steen vast gheraect, soo dat dwers teghen de wal laghen. De Swarten van 't land schooten vreeslijck met Pijlen alsof 't ghehagelt hadde soo datter strax neghen van de onse gequest wierden. De onse losten dry steenstucken en eenighe Musquetten onder haer verduysterde. Ondertusschen werd de drechtouw afgehaelt en kreghen dry riemen in 't water, en gheraecten soo met Godes hulpe af. De commandeur ende een land-capiteyn, ende noch een, hadden elck dry quetsuren. Daer staecken soo veel pijlen in de boot (waer van eenighe met de punten deur quamen) dat het hinderde aen het roeyen.' ( )

<sup>35</sup> 'Doch eer voortvare, sal hier alleen in 't voorbygaen verhalen, 'thene vinde by de onse aeghetekent, wegghen seker Dier d'welck sy in haer Schip hadden bekommen, ende welcker vele daer in't land worden ghevonden. Was soodanich, dat meer een mensch gheleek al seen beeste, want hadde handen, voeten, oock hielen, ooghen ende ooren als de menschen, ende dronck met het volck Tobac, ende wanneer men het quaedt dede, soo kreet ende gaf gheluydt als een kindt. De Inwoonders van dat Landt gheloven dat haer afghestorvene Zielen daer in wonen. My gedenckt een der selver hier te lande ghesien te hebben, wesende een wijfken, ende hebbende sijne stonden als de vrouwen.' (De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-II: 66)

true concerning people. Apart from very rare passages such as the previously mentioned ones, De Laet gives only scarce information about people living in West Africa. They are mostly described as ‘savages’ or ‘barbarians’. As is the case in the New World, many tribes were already allies of the Portuguese. The Dutch tried to create their own alliances in West Africa, and managed to do so with the little information they had about them, but they needed less cooperation in Africa. Knowledge about the people was necessary to be able to collaborate, but basic information sufficed as only trading posts were on the agenda and not a full colonization of the lands.

Before the Dutch managed to properly organize their own slave depots in Africa, many slaves were intercepted and stolen from Portuguese ships. In these cases it was thus not even necessary to establish any contact and create alliances with Africans. In *Iaerlijck Verhael* De Laet describes how in 1626, at sea not far from Ilheus in Bahia, there was an encounter with a Portuguese ship:

The Portuguese were so astonished that they lost control over their boat and came to lay right in front of ours. The sea was very wild and they did not know how to escape so their ship sank with 58 blacks who remained on the ship. The Portuguese and 90 blacks were brought on our ship. It came from Angola and was heading for Bahia.<sup>36</sup>

Again, we only receive scarce information about the appearance or habits of the African people. What matters is their future ‘usefulness’, which is why their necessity on the sugar plantations is repeated on various occasions and demonstrated:

To keep the mills working, a big number of black men was required. In order to do so many ships from Angola and other parts of Africa came yearly and went back. In the registers that were kept of these voyages it is written that only from Angola in the years 1620 to 1623, i.e. during four years, 15430 black men were transported to the captaincy of Pernambuco, of whom the king of Spain could make very good use.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> ‘De Portugesen door de groote verbaestheyt van ‘t roer lopende, verviel het recht voor de bouch van ons schip; ende de zee seer aenschietende, en wisten gheen raedt om weder van den anderen te kommen, soo dat het wechsonck met acht en vijftich swarten die der noch in waren. De Portugesen ende tnegentich swarten wierden by de onse ghebercht. Het quam van Angola ende wilde naer de Bahia.’ (De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*-III: 91-92)

<sup>37</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*-VII: 192. ‘Om dese meulens aen ‘t wercken te houden wierden gerequireert een seer groot getal van swarten; soo dat jaerlijckx vele schepen van Angola ende andere ghewesten van Africa, af ende

The same kind of superficial descriptions are found in the fragments on the Caribbean region.

## 2.8 FURTHER ON THE WAY TO BRAZIL

The inhabitants of the Caribbean region or other islands lying on the route to Brazil receive a similar treatment as the Africans. De Laet did not incorporate detailed descriptions and the people are mostly referred to as *savages*. At times he adds a little more information about their appearances. For example, he describes the inhabitants of Florida as follows:

These people looked very frightening, because they colored their bodies and faces in many colors. Otherwise completely naked, only their private parts covered with a little mat made of bark and behind they use a tail with a knot attached to it. They had nothing to trade except some gum that was of no value.<sup>38</sup>

De Laet has the same approach towards the people encountered in the Caribbean:

The day after, floating quietly until the Martyres, came on board a canoe full of savages. They were of a great size and of good proportions of their body parts. Their private parts were covered by little clothes woven with barks from trees. They had long beards but no mustache. They seemed to be ingenious and more polite than the Caribbean.<sup>39</sup>

The routes to Brazil are mapped and only what will benefit trade is highlighted. What interested De Laet and his fellow members of the WIC most of all was the

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aen voeren. Bevinde by de registers daervan ghehouden, dat van Angola alleen in de jaren 1620, 21, 22 , 23, wesende vier jaren, op de Capitania van Parnambuc zijn afghescheept 15430 swarten, uyt de welcke de Koningh van Spagnien seer groote nuttigheden ontfingh.'

<sup>38</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-III: 89. 'Dit volck was schrickelijck om aen te sien, want waren 't lichaem ende aensicht gheverwet met veelderhande couleuren; daer benefens heel naeck, alleen de schamelheyt bedeckt met een matjen ghemaect van basten van boomen, en achter met een staert daer een quast aen hongh; hadden niets te verhandelen als sekere gumme die niet weerdich was; [...]'

<sup>39</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-IV: 119. 'Des anderen daeghs driven door stilte tot ontrent de Martyres, ende daer quaem hun aen boordt een canoe met wilden, wesende groot van stature, ende wel gheproportioneert van leden, de schaemlijckheyt bedeckt met kleetjens ghewrocht van basten van boomen, met langhe baerden sonder knevels; schenen van redelijck vernuft te wesen, ende beleefder als de Caribes.'

development of commerce, and in order to achieve this they had to weaken the Iberian power and prepare attacks at sea and on land. Geographical and topographical data are mapped in detail. Local people, on the other hand, were not of main interest and therefore did not receive much attention in his text, in contrast to the more detailed descriptions of the natural surroundings. We find for example long descriptions of the islands of Cape Verde in book VI.<sup>40</sup> Dutch merchants had already established trade relations with inhabitants of these islands and they remained important for the WIC in order to weaken the Iberian trade. Further in that same book De Laet included a long depiction of the island of Saint Vincent:

There are plenty of fish, of very good taste and good lobster, many turtles, in the right season. Now there are not a lot of bucks. It seems like the inhabitants of the island S. Antonio took them away, from this island and from S. Lucia (where our people also went, but they only could capture 5) and on S. Vincent they captured more or less 300 but with a lot of effort. There are major valleys, though no rivers or brooks. To get fresh water you have to dig wells. Our people were well received by the inhabitants of S. Antonio. They are mostly black and sometimes yellow. They live on the North East side, where they have a village of more or less 53 families, ruled by a captain. They also have a priest and already speak Portuguese well. They are poor and have little livelihood, just a nice orchard with oranges, lemons and figs, which lies about 400 to 500 steps off the beach, next to a flat protruding corner. You have to approach the island from the East side with the sloops, because the water is very bad over there. The point is easily recognizable because it is an empty, flat and rough corner and a little on the West inland there are two big hills. The garden lies in a deep valley and is on one side surrounded by mountains and on the other by a wall. The steersmen determined the perfect position: on the North side it lies on 16 degrees and 53 minutes on the Northern line. Santiago is the main island, the most fertile and best inhabited. Some islands are uninhabited and totally infertile. Some are scarcely inhabited, with inhabitants who are mostly bandits from Portugal or Spain.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*-VI: 176.

<sup>41</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-VI: 176. 'Daer is overvloet aen visch, seer goedt van smaeck, ende goede kreeften, menichte van schildtpadden, als het in de tijdt is; daer zijn nu seer weynich bocken. 't schijnt de inwoorders van 't Eylandt S. Anthonio die afgehaelt hebben, soo van dit Eylandt als van S. Lucia (daer ons volck oock aen was geweest, maer haddender maer vijf konnen vanghen) en op S. Vincent vongen ontrent dryhondert doch mer seer groote moeyte. Daer zijn wel groote valleyen, doch gheen rievieren ofte beecxkens, men moet om versch water te bekommen, putten graven. Ons volck waren mede aen S. Antonio, wierden van de inwoorders wel onthaelt; zijn meest swarte, ende sommige geele; houden haer aen de noordtwestzijde, alwaer een dorp hebben van ontrent 52 huysgesinnen onder een capiteyn. Hebben mede een priester, spreken al goedt Portugees, is een arm volcxken, ende hebben weynich lijftocht; alleen een schoonen boomgaerd van Oragnien,

In the descriptions De Laet only mentioned facts of practical importance: the exact location, where to approach the island and where to find food and fresh water to survive. He gives no real descriptions of the inhabitants.

Throughout the 13 books, Brazil is increasingly highlighted as more and more land is conquered in the country—while sea voyages and expeditions to the Caribbean and West Africa move to the background. The descriptions of places and people on the route to Brazil are vague as only general traits are mentioned, which is in sharp contrast with some very elaborated descriptions of Brazil. African and Caribbean phenomena are secondary to the most important goal: the expansion of commerce, based on Brazilian products. The eyes are thus set on this South American country that will be described in more detailed descriptions and comprehending more practical information about daily life than in the passages on West Africa and the Caribbean. The conquest of the land of sugar and wood started with the occupation of Bahia and I will therefore first have a look at these ‘first steps’ in Brazil.

## **2.9 BAHIA**

Bahia was the first region of Brazil the WIC wanted to approach and conquer. The reasons for this are manifold and explained on various occasions throughout the

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limoenen, ende vijghen, liggende ontrent 400 tot 500 treden van het strandt, nevens vlacken uytstekenden hoeck; men moet aen de Oostzijde van deselve landen met de chaloupen, omdat daer heel slecht water is, de punt is wel te kennen want is een leeghe, vlacke rudtsachtigen hoeck, en een weynich by westen te landtwaert in, ligghe twee groote heuvels. Den tuyn light in een diepe valleje, en is aen d'een zijde met Bergen en aen d'ander zijde met een muyr omringht. De stierlieden nemende perfectte hooghde van 't eylandt, bevonden de noordzijde te ligghe op 16 graden ende 53 minuten by noorder linie. Het eylandt S. Jago is 't voornaemste, het vruchtbaerste en best bewoonde. Sommighe zijn onbewoont ende gantsch onvruchtbaer, ende die eenighsins bewoont zijn, hare inwoonders zijn meest banditen uyt Portugal ende Spagnien daer ghesonden.'

first book of *Iaerlijck Verhael*: Bahia and its capital Salvador were the center of the Portuguese colony and various settlements and flowering sugar plantations had already been established. Trade had been and still was very lucrative. Bahia had thus proven its potentials over the years. The WIC decided to attack Bahia first:

Because this place was located in such a way that it was easy to access and enter, and from there easily jump unforeseen onto all other parts of America and the islands. Also because we would be confronted with Portuguese people over there, who then were less feared than the Spanish, and who would be easier to allure or force into friendship, yet most of all for the trade of sugar and Brazil wood, which we considered to be very appropriate and beneficial for the Netherlands. Together with many more reasons, which out of prudence I will not mention here, in order not to make them public prematurely and not to warn the enemy, for fear that he could prepare himself.<sup>42</sup>

De Laet wants to convince the reader that Salvador was the best choice to make and does this by reiterating his point of view: the flourishing captaincy of Bahia was the capital of the Portuguese colony and the hub of the Portuguese sugar and slave trade, and in his view the Portuguese dominion should be tackled in its center in order to be destabilized and destroyed. He also makes clear that he does not only express his personal ideas, but that it was the common desire of the Lords XIX of the WIC to attack Bahia. Men should be sent overseas not only in order to benefit the WIC, but more importantly to serve the fatherland:

And we could also understand from this that the desire of the Lords XIX was that Bahia de Todos os Santos would be attacked and that all diligence would be used in order to conquer the region. All high officers have promised together that they would fulfill this mission with loyalty and piety and that they would do everything in their power to accomplish their task in a manly way, in service of the fatherland and at the benefit of the Company. They have decided how this would be achieved with reflection and deliberation.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> De Laet *Nieuwe Wereldt*-I: 6. 'Soo omdat dese plaetse soo ghelegen was, dat men der licht konde aen ende inkomen, ende vandaer gemakelijck alle de andere ghedeelten van America ende de Eylanden op sijn onversiens bespringen; alsmede omdat men hier met Portugesen soude te doen hebben, die men doen minder vreesde, als de Spagnaerden ende bequaemer oordeelde om tot onse vriendschap ofte te locken ofte te dwinghen, doch meest om den handel van de Suyckeren ende Brasilie-hout, dewelcke men achtete seer bequaem ende voordelijck te wesen voor deze Nederlanden; benevens andere redenen meer, die voordaghtelick hier sal verswijghen, om deselve niet ontijdelick te openbaren ende de vyandt te waerschouwen waervoor hy sich soude hebben te voorsien.'

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

The first descriptions of Bahia in *Nieuwe Wereldt* follow the same known pattern in De Laet's texts on the overseas world: the captaincy is mapped. Carefully choosing from the logbooks, reports and letters at his disposal, De Laet renders in detail the expeditions that crossed the ocean to arrive in Brazil and he gives descriptions of Bahia. First he depicts the land and then the people, yet with less scrutiny than in other parts of his books. When treating Bahia, De Laet clearly put military aspects in the spotlight. What is given first are the exact locations of Bahia, the shores, borders, rivers, of the mainland and of all islands in the bay, of the city of Salvador and its forts, of the sugar mills and storehouses and finally also of Jesuit centers. These latter played an important role in the colony, not only due their spiritual role towards the Portuguese population but they also had close ties with many local tribes. In this specific part of De Laet's text, the description of the actual attack receives more attention than the mapping of the land. First the preparation of the expedition and conquest are narrated and then how the glorious Dutch beat the 'barbaric' Portuguese.

The first attack of Brazil had been well prepared in advance. It took the Dutch three years to obtain the necessary capital and tackle the Habsburg's territories in Brazil. In addition, they established contact with some local 'savages', who could inform them on the locations of the Portuguese forces. The expedition to attack Bahia was led by admiral Jacob Willekens and vice-admiral Piet Heyn and arrived on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1624 in Salvador. The glorious expedition managed to conquer and occupy the city of Salvador with ease, giving the impression that the Portuguese did not offer any serious resistance. This was mainly due to the fact that the Dutch were well prepared and could surprise their enemy with their attack, yet some argue that the Portuguese defeat was due to cowardice and treason. The confusion and disarray among the Portuguese citizens were depicted in many contemporary texts from both sides, as for example in a letter of an eyewitness, Padre António Vieira, who took some liberties in his description of the attack and depicted the event with hyperboles to emphasize the chaos among the citizens:

During the night, off-the-cuff, you could hear a voice throughout the whole city (without knowing where it came from). *The enemies are already entering, they already entered, the*

*enemies already entered*; and, because during these shocking events others came saying that they came through this and that door, you could find accidentally one of them with our flag motionless locks, with fear and very credulous, and noticeable temerity. And so, fighting during the night, for the opposite side, no one knew each other, they ran away from each other, and as many Dutch appeared in front of them as they could have imagined.<sup>44</sup>

Vieira uses the biblical reference of the Hebraic people's exodus. Even if he depicted the scene hyperbolically, the truth is that many Portuguese fled out of fear. Life was not easy for them once the Dutch took over, and some who had stayed that night left in the following weeks. The glorious Dutch occupation of Bahia soon started to dwindle however. The Dutch underestimated the organization and costs of daily life in Bahia and rapidly began to suffer from food shortages. Furthermore, they never received the reinforcements they repeatedly asked for. A few months later the Spanish came to support the Portuguese and together they chased the Dutch out of Salvador.<sup>45</sup>

The battles of the conquest and the loss of Salvador da Bahia are narrated in detail in De Laet's texts. The victorious deeds of the Dutch are highlighted to give proof of their strength, which had to convince investors to continue their support. But on April 30<sup>th</sup> 1625 Salvador was already recaptured by the joined Iberian forces of Spain and Portugal. The city remained the Portuguese capital of Brazil until 1763, when Rio de Janeiro achieved that status. During the Dutch presence in Northeast Brazil, Salvador was the strategic center of the combined Spanish-Portuguese forces. Due to its key importance, the capture and recapture of the city in 1624 and 1625 was accompanied by various publications on both sides. In these texts the descriptions of the battles are intertwined with religious issues, each side

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<sup>44</sup> Vieira *Cartas*: 41. 'Era já nesse tempo alta noite quando, de improviso, se ouviu por toda a cidade (sem se saber donde teve princípio) uma voz: já entraram os inimigos, já entram, os inimigos já entram; e, como no meio deste sobresalto viessem outros dizendo que já vinham por tal e tal porta, e acaso pela mesma se recolhesse neste tempo uma bandeira nossa com mechas caladas, como o medo é mui crédulo, verificou-se esta temeridade; e'assim, pelejando a noite, pela parte contrária, ninguém se conhecia, fugiam uns dos outros, e quantos cada um via tantos holandeses se lhe representavam.'

<sup>45</sup> More about the recapture of Salvador by the Iberian forces: Carlos Ziller Camenietzki and Gianriccardo Grassia Pastore (2006) '1625, fire and ink: the battle of Salvador in accounts of the war', *Topoi* vol.2, Rio de Janeiro.



defending their own point of view. Both sides needed ongoing help from the homeland and tried to convince investors and respective churches to continue their support in the wars. Each country highlighted its own achievements and prowess in a rhetoric that was meant to derive support from the homeland.<sup>46</sup>

## **2.10 RECIFE –A NEW LEVEL OF COMPREHENSION**

After the loss of Salvador in 1625, the Dutch prepared the conquest of another part of Brazil and were determined to be successful this time. The Northeastern captaincy of Pernambuco, famous for its sugarcane, became the new target and the WIC planned its conquest even more carefully. It took the WIC four years and a long series of failures to finally conquer the territory. The Dutch arrived better prepared for their attack on Pernambuco. In 1628, the seizure of a Spanish silver convoy in Matanzas Bay provided the WIC with the funds for another attempt to conquer Brazil. In 1630, a Dutch fleet heading for Pernambuco was led by Hendrick Corneliszoon Loncq and conquered first Olinda and soon thereafter Recife and António Vaz. Pernambuco came into Dutch hands and was subsequently renamed Nieuw-Holland. The beautiful city of Olinda, the Portuguese capital of Pernambuco which had been founded in the 1530s on a hill overlooking the bay, was almost completely destroyed in the battles. Olinda was burned down and pillaged in an act of symbolic destruction to fully erase the

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<sup>46</sup> More about the Dutch occupation of Bahia, i.a.: Juan Antonio Correa (1670) 'La Perdida e Restauración de La Bahía de Todos Los Santos', *Uma peça desconhecida sobre os holandeses na Bahia* (intro. and trad. By J. Carlos Lisboa), Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação e Cultura / Instituto Nacionaldo Livro, (1961); Johann Gregor Aldenburgk (1961) *Relação da conquista e perda da cidade de Salvador pelos holandeses em 1624-1625*, Salvador: Revista dos Tribunais; Frei Vicente do Salvador (1982) *História do Brasil: 1500-1627* Belo Horizonte: Itatiaia; Michiel van Groesen (2010) 'A Week to Remember: Dutch Publishers and the Competition for News from Brazil, 26 August-2 September 1624', *Quaerendo*, V.40-1, 26-49; Michiel van Groesen (2011) 'Lessons Learned. The Second Dutch Conquest of Brazil and the Memory of the First', *Colonial American Review*, V.20-2, 167-193; Ricardo Behrens (2013) 'Salvador e a invasão holandesa de 1624-1625', Salvador: Editora Pontocom.

Portuguese presence from memory.<sup>47</sup> By 1631, the Dutch left Olinda as the city was in ruins and they built their headquarters in Recife. In 1634 the captaincy of Paraíba and its capital would follow; Filipeia was not destroyed but renamed Frederickstad.

In the passages about Pernambuco time and time again territories are first mapped, as we can read here in a description of Fernando de Noronha, an archipelago (in De Laet's text a single island)—off the coast of Rio Grande do Norte:

This island is situated on the height of 3 degrees and 34 minutes on the southern line, about 70 miles off the coast of Brazil. To approach this island by ship, you have to go north East, to go with the stream and find it at its height. When you see it for the first time, it appears as a tower or sail, as if there was a peak or steep mountain on top, which you see when you start to see a bit of land. Coming closer you can see another mountain on the Westside of the previous one, which together depict a church with its tower. Afterwards you see three more hills and then the rest of the land. The Northeastern part is cut into four or five small islands, very close to each other, more or less, and because of shallow water ships may not get through. On the East side there is a reef at two thirds of a mile in the sea, on which the sea increases heavily, as these are stones lying between wind and water. [...] In the surroundings of these cut islands you can catch many steenbras and other fish, you can find many seabirds and turtle doves. There are also bucks and goats, imported by the Spanish.<sup>48</sup>

This passage is clearly taken from a logbook and can be of use for future incoming ships. Pure practical information is outlined. In the coastal descriptions De Laet depicts in detail the landscape and gives clear indications for future expeditions.

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<sup>47</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-VIII: 248.

<sup>48</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-IV: 110-111. 'Dit Eylandt licht op de hooghde van 3 graden ende 34 minuten by Zuyden de Linie, ontrent 70 mijlen van de Custe van Brasil. Om 't selve vandaer te beseylen, dient men wel N.O. aen te gaen om des strooms wille, ende dan 't selve op zijn hooghde soecken. Alsmen het eerst komt te sien, soo verthoont het sich als een Toorn oft Zeyl, alsoo daer een spits ofte steylen bergh op staet, de welcke hem verthoont eer men eenigh landt kan sien. Wat naerder kommende siet men noch een bergh aen de Westzijde van de voorgaende, de welcke te samen niet qualijck van verre een Kerck met haer Toorn afbeelden; daarnaer siet men noch dry heuvelen, ende voorts het vordere landt. Het N.O.-eynde is ghebroken in vier ofte vijf Eylandekes, een roerscheut d'een van d'ander liggende, min ofte meer, tusschen dewelcke weggen de ondiepten gheen Schepen deur en moghen. Van de Oostzijde steeckt een riff af twee derde van een mijl in zee, daer de Zee gheweldigh op verheft, alsoo het steenen zijn, liggende tusschen windt ende water. [...] By die ghebroken Eylandekes valt veel Steenbraessem ende andere Visch te vanghen, Zeevoghels ende Torreluyven zijn daer by menichte; daer zijn oock Bocken ende Geyten op, die de Spagnaerden daer gebracht hebben.'

In addition, he also mentions the presence of fish and cattle, which is important information for future Dutch settlers.

Despite the conquest of Recife, the first years in Pernambuco were rough. The scenario of the first years in Bahia was repeated. There was shortage of food and other supplies, only scarce explorations of the inlands were made due to lack of arms, and as a consequence of the scarce resources diseases among the population were reported. The same complaints that were heard after the capture of Salvador returned. The first years in Recife were difficult for the Dutch, yet year after year improvements were seen and with the arrival of Johan Maurits in 1637 living conditions changed in a drastic and positive way.<sup>49</sup>

Already in the book about the year 1630, the descriptions are beginning to be more elaborated. De Laet continues his attempts at mapping but over the years he clearly begins to insert more and longer descriptions comprehending local features. This was made possible thanks to the availability of a wider range of sources and the heterogeneous character of the region and its inhabitants, which the Dutch were able to employ to their advantage.

In order to conquer Recife, the WIC had already made use of a large variety of documents and people. The Company had collected information from various logbooks of Dutch sailors, among them Hessel Gerritsz, but they also collected intercepted letters from Portuguese sailors.<sup>50</sup> In addition, Willem Usselinx conducted studies on the economic situation of the sugar trade in Pernambuco.<sup>51</sup> The Dutch could also count on the support of local inhabitants to fulfill their aim, even becoming allies with some tribes—the importance of local people who had been to Holland to receive an education was immense. Moreover, in addition to useful assistance from the Jewish community, some Portuguese had changed sides and supported the Dutch. At first the Portuguese resistance, led by their governor Matias de Albuquerque, appeared to be very strong, which impeded the Dutch to really expand their territory with forts and other fortifications. But little

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<sup>49</sup> Gonsalves de Mello *Nederlanders in Brazilië*: 40-65.

<sup>50</sup> Hessel Gerritsz was an employer of the WIC who gathered the information in service of the Company. See: Zandvliet *Mapping* and Schilder *Hessel Gerritsz*.

<sup>51</sup> Gonsalves de Mello *Nederlanders in Brazilië*: 37.

by little the Dutch conquered more land and some Portuguese colonizers chose to remain on Dutch territory, especially since they were granted freedom of religion and protection of their properties. The Portuguese staying on Dutch occupied land were offered economic possibilities but they could also function as informants. Their expertise on the land was very useful and they could operate as go-betweens in negotiations between the *moradores* and the Dutch occupier.

The descriptions in the books treating Pernambuco are thus by far the most interesting as they bear witness to and participate in a better comprehension of the overseas world. These more elaborated descriptions could not have been constructed without the help of go-betweens, as I will make clear in the following pages. In contrast with the books about the first years of the Brazilian conquest, where the accounts of sea expeditions and battles received more attention, the passages about Pernambuco contain more details of daily life and also reports of expeditions undertaken to explore the rest of Brazil. These reports often mention negotiations with local people, which would have been impossible without the help of go-betweens offering De Laet a less stereotypical picture of Brazil than in the previous books. Their knowledge of different cultures allowed these go-betweens to help the Dutch to grasp the present heterogeneity of the newly conquered lands.

## **2.11 GO-BETWEENS**

Already before the arrival of the Count, the Dutch had established a well functioning colony for the most part owing to the help of informants, renegades and traitors, coming from diverse origins and already living in Brazil. Some Portuguese chose to switch sides, even if doing so meant betraying their fatherland. Groups of slaves and Indians also chose to help the Dutch, as did Jews who had fled from Europe under the pressures of the Iberian Inquisition. The Dutch could make use of the heterogeneous character of all these 'inwoonders' to expand their colony.

Many Portuguese inhabitants were in doubt about who to choose as allies. Being allies of the Portuguese at the time, they had suffered during the Dutch—Portuguese battles. After negotiations with the enemy they saw some opportunities in the arrival of the WIC and Dutch merchants and settlers. Some changed sides, some were captured, others fled. But the renegades who stayed could become very helpful informants, as De Laet stresses in the following passage about the feelings of the *moradores* towards the journeys made by the Dutch to invade the country:

These journeys brought a huge dismay among the inhabitants of the country; whereas they thought to have lived in places that could be considered safe, they now began to feel the presence of our weapons. And they realized that their soldiers were not strong enough to free them. Hence it came about that in the letters, which were found now and then in the captured ships, one could read instead of praise, a lot of deep and sad complaints about their bad situation and what little hope they had to be freed from our men. Their dismay was caused not only because of the damage they suffered, but most of all because they had little hope, or even despaired, that no big fleet had come from Portugal. Moreover, the news spread by our men that a powerful fleet would come from the Netherlands, which frightened them even more since they already could not resist our forces and did not know what to expect. This not only bothered the common inhabitants, but also the principal chiefs of the Portuguese. And so it happened that, during these rainy months, Pedro Alvarez came to us. This man had been our captive for a long time and was well known by most officers. Pedro Alvarez admitted to having suffered under Duarte D'Albuquerque, Lord of the captaincy of Pernambuco, and Mathias d'Albuquerque [...].<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-IX: 291. 'Dese tochten brochten een groote verslaghentheynt onder de Inwoonderen van 't Landt, dewijl sy nu in plaetsen daer sy haer meynden buyten gevaer te woonen, onse wapenen hadden beginnen te voelen, ende bevonden dat hare Soldaten hun daer van niet machtich ghenoech waren te bevrijden; sulcx dat men in de brieven die nu en dan in de genomene Schepen wierden ghevonden, in plaetse van roemen, veel hooghe ende droevighe klachten vernam, over haer slechten toestandt, ende de kleyne hoope die hadden van de onse ontslaghen te konnen werden. Dese verlagentheynt ontstondt niet alleen uyt de gheledene schaden, maer meest uyt de kleyne hope, ofte eer wanhope die sy hadden, datter gheen groote Vloote, en hadde te kommen uyt Portugal tot haer ontset. Hier quam by, dat by de onse was uytgegeven ende verspreyt datter een machtighe Vloote uyt Nederlandt hadde te kommen; 't welck haer noch benauwder maeckte, konnende licht oordeelen, dewijl sy reede de onse niet konden wederstaen, wat te verwachten hadden. Dit wrocht niet alleen op de ghemeyne Inwoonders, maer oock op de voornaemste Hoofden van de Portugesen, soo dat in dese reghenmaenden by de onse quam eenen Pedro Alvarez, die langhe by ons ghevanghen was gheweest, ende oversulcx met de meest Officieren wel bekendt was. Dese gaf voor last te hebben van Duarte d'Albuquerque, Heer van de Capitanie van Pernambuco, ende den Gouverneur Mathias d'Albuquerque, [...].'

Some Portuguese chose to be renegades, but there were also Dutch traitors who began to work and live under the Portuguese. When these Dutch renegades repented and went back to their former camp, they became perfect informants for the ones they had first betrayed:

Some of our defectors who had chosen to side with the Portuguese came back and declared that during the night two troops of the enemy came to watch the city of Olinda, but that there were no guards during the day. Moreover, they also told us that close to the Arrayal there were nine troops of the enemy of which in general only one stayed inside and the others in the surroundings, but that nevertheless during the night another came inside to keep watch. They also told us that of the new people coming from Spain there were no more than 800 men, in the Arrayal it was the Portuguese merchants who escaped from the city of Olinda. They told us that it was situated on a hill, as high as our fort de Bruyne, but not as steep and with shallow canals, that it was in a square form without reinforced flanks, the rivers flow at a musket shot away, that more inland woods surround it. They also told us that most Brazilians ran away and were very afraid of the Tapuya that would arrive [...] <sup>53</sup>

Ancient traitors were more than useful. After having lived some period of time among the Portuguese, they had acquired information about daily life, military matters or religious affairs, and the Dutch could make use of their knowledge. These former allies of the Portuguese could provide information about the cultivation of the lands, trading possibilities, the presence of animals, the life of the Indians and so on. They could also inform the Dutch about the location of for instance Portuguese forts and armies.

Recife was a heterogeneous environment where everyone could be a spy or an informant and where even slaves and mulattoes played that role. In the following passage De Laet described how difficult it was to convince some

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<sup>53</sup> De Laet 1644-VIII: 284. 'Daer waren eenighe van onse Overlopers weder ghekommen, dewelcke verklaerden *dat* alleen des nachts twee van des vyandts Compagnien quamen waken in de Stadt Olinda, maer datter des daeghs geen wacht en wierde gehouden; *dat* by het Arrayal laghen negen van des vyandts Compagnien, van de welcke maer een deurgaens daer in lach, ende de ander daer omher, doch *datter* des nachts noch een introck om de wacht te bestellen; *dat* het volck nieuwljck haer uyt Spagnien toeghekommen, uysterlijck bestaen hadde, in 800 man, van de welcke binnen het Arrayal lach, waren Portugesche Kooplieden, die uyt de Stadt Olinda ontkommen waren; *dat* het selve ghelegen was op een heuvel, de wal soo hoogh als die van ons Fort de Bruyne, maer niet soo steyl opghewrocht, ende de grachten niet veel te bedieden; *dat* 'tselve vierkant was sonder flanckeringen; de Rieviere een musquetscheut daer af lopende, ende 'tlandtwaert rondtom vol Bosschagie; *dat* de Brasilianen meest al waren verlopen, ende seer bevreesst voor de komste van de Tapuyes [...].'

*moradores* to become allies of the Dutch, who even tried to write letters in order to persuade Portuguese inhabitants:

But it did not help a lot, the inhabitants were so dominated by the soldiers and Governor Albuquerque wanted to risk the utmost and came to give solace with the support of the Spanish. As for example the fact that, despite the presence of our guard, now and then some caravels with food supplies and soldiers came into the harbor of S. Agostin, being the place where the enemy fortified and where they had a fort, which was the place from which they expected most supplies. The governor had been warned repeatedly by a certain captive that there was a mulatto who went constantly to the enemy and back and he demonstrated due diligence to find him, which he did. And he admitted having made various journeys in the woods, sent by his master Leonardt van Lom [...]<sup>54</sup>

Dutch Brazil was a multicultural society, but not as we conceive of it today. 17<sup>th</sup> century Brazil did certainly not fit our modern view of this kind of blend in society: there was no general miscegenation and certainly no equality of all people, —which of course is until today not the case. Nevertheless, some people could move between different cultural spaces and even belligerent parties, while others chose to stay within another cultural group than the one they were born in. In the letters of the Portuguese Father Vieira, for instance, there are examples of Portuguese women who adapted to Dutch customs, converted to Protestantism and married Dutch men.<sup>55</sup>

Over time more and more negotiations between the Dutch and the local indigenous population took place. The Dutch could not only trade goods with some tribes but also information. The discourse about the liberation of the suffering Indians, the so-called ‘Black Legend’ or ‘Leyenda Negra’, is less conspicuous than in *Nieuwe Wereldt*, but still visible at times. The goal from 1624

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<sup>54</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-IX: 298 ‘Doch dit dede weynich vruchten, doordien de Inwooners soo overheert waren van ‘t krijghsvolck, ende de Gouverneur Albuquerque het uysterste wilde waeghen, ende haer altijdt met het secours uyt Spagnien te kommen trooste. Ghelijck dan al eenighe Carveelen met Vivres ende Soldaten nu en dan, niet tegenstaende onse Wachten, in de Haven achter de Cabo S. Augustin in quamen wesweghen de vyandt sich in dat Quartier seer versterckte, ende aldaer een groot Fort leyde, wesende de voornaemste Plaetse waer sijn toevoer hadde te verwachten. De Gouverneur nu meermaels gewaerschouwt zijnde by sekere ghevangenen datter, een Mulaet was, die continuelijck by de vyandt over ende weder gingh soo heeft grooten yver aenghewendt om die uyt te vinden, ende heeft die eyndelijck bekommen; dewelcke beleden heeft verscheyden reysen in ‘t Bosch gheweest te zijn ghesonden by sijn Meester Leonardt van Lom [...].’

<sup>55</sup> See Gonsalves de Mello *Nederlanders in Brazilië*: 171.

onwards, when Salvador was conquered, was to find new trading partners to create alliances in the battles against the Portuguese. These allies could also function as informants, as for example during an expedition led by Commander Smient, who went by boat to the captaincy of Ceará, north of Recife, to negotiate with Tapuya:

Commander Smient went back to Recife on November 25<sup>th</sup>. He reported to the Counsel how Brazilians had been brought to land and that three others on the way to Ceará encountered a Portuguese who traveled with 17 Tapuya women and children, that he was bringing to Rio Grande to sell. He was also in possession of 8 Brazilians from Goiania, lying two miles away from Ceará. Our men happened to come by these 8 men, who told them why they came, and preferred to stay with them. They all agreed to kill the Portuguese man, which they did. Hereafter the Tapuya came on board of the New Netherland with Andries Tacou while the others continued their journey. They were convinced that negotiations with the Tapuya and other Brazilians had already come so far, that the former proposed to deliver us the castle in Ceará [...].<sup>56</sup>

The most important Indian figures in this respect are Antonio Paraupaba and Pieter Poti whom I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Pieter Poti had accompanied Paraupaba to the Netherlands and would become the leader of the Indian troops in the Dutch-Luso wars, fighting against the Portuguese. These two are examples of *hybridity* at work in the colony, not only among the colonizers but also among the indigenous people. They chose to become allies with the colonizers. The Dutch even convinced some Indian tribes to accompany them on an African expedition. More than 200 Tapuya Indians took part in the attack on Luanda in August 1641. Unfortunately, most of them did not survive the journey. Thereupon, the Heeren XIX decided to refrain from further deploying Indians for

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<sup>56</sup> De Laet 1644-VIII: 256. 'De Commandeur Smient keerde den 25sten November aen 't Reciff; rapporteerde aen den Raedt, hoe dat de Brasilianen aen landt hadde gheset, ende dat dry van deselve op den wegh naer Siara ghemoet hadden een Portugees, by sich hebbende seventhien soo vrouwen als kinderen van de Tapujas, die hy leyde naer Rio Grande om te verkopen, ended at by de selve noch waren acht Brasilianen van Goana twee mijlen van Siara gheleghen. De onse by dese acht ghekommen zijnde, en hun verhaalt hebbende de oorsaek van hun komste, zijn deselve stracx gheneghen gheweest het met de onse te houden, ende wierden onder den anderen eens, den Portugees te dooden; 't welck ghedaen hebbende, soo zijn de Tapujas met Andries Tacou aenboordt ghekommen van Nieuw-Nederlandt ende de andere hebben haer reyse vervordert. Meynde dat nu soo verre was ghebracht met onderhandelinghe met de Tapujas ende andere Brasilanen, dat de selve presenteerden 't Casteel te Siara in onse handen te leveren.'



military actions.<sup>57</sup>

The Jewish community must also be mentioned as they represented an important group of people in the colony and played a crucial role in the Dutch community. Living in various Brazilian cities, these so-called 'New Christians' had suffered from the Iberian inquisition in Europe. After becoming 'conversos' or 'maranos' they were obliged to convert to Roman Catholicism after the Inquisition had been installed in Spain (1492) and later on in Portugal (1536). 'New Christians' already began to leave Spain in 1391, after having been forced to convert. In 1492 they were finally expelled from the country. In Portugal such forced conversions took place in 1497. In various decrees both Iberian countries forbade 'New Christians' to emigrate, except to South America. The Jews who fled to Brazil were mostly Sephardic (*Sefarad* being the biblical term for Spain). Later on the Inquisition also arrived in Brazil, the first inquisitional act taking place in 1591. But the 'New Christians' managed to stay under Dutch occupation. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, many Jews were merchants who traded with the Caribbean and the Netherlands, yet they also had other functions in the colony, mostly involving the sugar or slave trade. During the reign of Maurice of Nassau, they controlled 40% of the sugar trade. The first synagogue of the New World was built in Recife in 1636 and the first rabbi was Isaac Aboab da Fonseca (1605-1693) from Amsterdam. The end of the reign of Johan Maurits initiated the decline of the Jewish presence in the colony. When the Portuguese took over from the Dutch in 1654, the Jews were persecuted again and had three months to leave the Brazilian colony. A new diaspora began. Many stayed on the American continent, while some went back to Europe (mainly to England and the Netherlands).<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> See: Hulsman 'Brazilian Indians': 51-78 and Frans Leonard Schalkwijk (1986) *Igreja e estado no Brasil Holandês*, Recife: FUNDAPE.

<sup>58</sup> Cosme 2010: 77-82.

About the Portuguese inquisition in Portugal see: Alexandre Herculano (1854-59) *História da origem e estabelecimento da Inquisição em Portugal* Lisboa: Bertrand; João Lúcio Azavedo (1921) *História dos cristãos-novos portugueses*, Lisboa: Teixeira; Israel S. Révah & A. J. Saraiva (1985) 'Polémica acerca de 'Inquisição e cristãos-novos' entre I. S. Révah e António José Saraiva', *Inquisição e cristãos-novos*, A. J. Saraiva (ed.), 5da ed., Lisboa: Editora Estampa :211-291; Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering (2001) *The jews and the expansion of*

Gaspar Dias Ferreira, a Portuguese merchant who probably had Jewish roots, was a personal friend of the Count of Nassau and an important figure during the Dutch occupation. His correspondence with the Count not only bears witness to his hybrid character but also to his versatility and his multifaceted nature. Ferreira played a double game: he collaborated on both sides and was not always a reliable go-between. For example, in the negotiations between Johan Maurits and the sugar planters, he sometimes kept for himself sugar crates that had been given as gifts for the Count.<sup>59</sup> Ferreira was not the only protagonist in the Jewish community; in general Jews or ‘New Christians’ played an important role during the Dutch presence in North East Brazil.<sup>60</sup>

I will have a closer look at the individual trajectories of two men who played central roles in the Dutch colonization of Brazil: the Polish commander Christopher Arciszewski and the Portuguese Father Moraes. Both men left many written documents and appear as sources in De Laet’s *Iaerlijck Verhael*. They demonstrate the key role of the country’s heterogeneity and of hybrid characters in the construction of the descriptions of Dutch Brazil as their descriptions show a new kind of comprehension compared to the ones made of West Africa and the Caribbean.

De Laet’s transcriptions of Arciszewski’s and Moraes’ reports make clear that he was not only interested in policymaking but that he also showed a

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*Europe to the west, 1450-1800*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books; Francisco Bethencourt *História das Inquisições. Portugal, Espanha e Itália*, Lisboa: Companhia das Letras.

About the Inquisition in Brazil see: Rodolfo Garcia (Ed.) (1929) *Primeira visitaçao do Santo Ofício às partes do Brasil pelo Licenciado Heitor Furtado de Mendonça. Denúncias de Pernambuco, 1593-1595*. São Paulo: Paulo Prado; Anita Novinsky (1972) *Cristãos-Novos na Bahia*, São Paulo: Perspectiva; Laura de Mello e Souza (1986) *O Diabo e a Terra de Santa Cruz*, São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

And finally about the Jews in the Netherlands: Ludo Abicht (2006) *Geschiedenis van de joden van de Lage Landen*, Amsterdam/Antwerpen: Meulenhoff/Manteau.

<sup>59</sup> Cabral de Mello *O negócio*: 5, 137-39, 189-90.

<sup>60</sup> Maria Cristian Cavalcânti (2004) dedicated a historical novel to Gaspar Dias Ferreira: *Príncipe e corsário. Quase tudo que Gaspar Dias Ferreira escreveu sobre João Maurício de Nassau, o brasileiro*, São Paulo: A Girafa.

About the role of New Christians in the Portuguese mercantile organisations: Leonor Freire Costa (2004) ‘Merchant groups in the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Brazilian sugar trade. Reappraising old topics with new research insights’, e-JHP vol 2-1.

humanist curiosity toward the strange and new reality. We know that De Laet at a personal level was interested in all kinds of information about the New World and that he collected all kinds of *naturalia*.<sup>61</sup> This is also reflected in his *Iaerlijck Verhael* in different transcriptions of anecdotes and in various details about the land and the people of Brazil. Because he chose to transcribe those passages, he manifested a will to *comprehend* the country: a will to understand and appropriate the tropical reality. De Laet could construct these descriptions thanks to employees of the WIC like Arciszewski, who in their turn could make use of information gathered by colonial hybrids like Manoel de Moraes.

## 2.12 CHRISTOPHER ARCISZEWSKI

Christopher Arciszewski (1592-1656) was a Polish commander who spent several years at the service of the WIC in Dutch Brazil and who played a crucial role in the conquest of the colony. Arciszewski made several voyages to Brazil and is therefore mentioned on various occasions in *Iaerlijck Verhael*. Moreover, his military accomplishments were praised by the WIC and he could have become governor of the colony, where it not for the decision of the Heeren XIX to assign the position to the Count of Nassau instead of him. Until today he remains a controversial figure in colonial historiography: according to Dutch and Polish sources he was an outstanding strategist, while Portuguese sources portray him as a mere pirate leader.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Even in America there were complaints about the fact that De Laet was more interested in 'rariteiten' (exotic objects) and 'geschriften' (texts) in the New World than in the policymaking of the WIC. Eric Jorink (2006) *Het boeck der nature: Nederlandse geleerden en de wonderen van Gods schepping 1575–1715*, Leiden: Primavera Pers; 226; Rolf Bremmer Jr., 'The Correspondence of Joannes De Laet,' *Lias* Nr. 25 (1998): 139-64; Jacobs *De Laet*: 108-30.

<sup>62</sup> Urbański *Military adventures*: 63.



**Figure 9: Hirszel Henryk Krzysztof Arciszewski, National Museum Krakow**

During his journeys in the colony, Arciszewski registered the *new* land and people and made inquiries about the customs of the Tarairiu-tribe in order to be able to forge alliances with the natives against the Portuguese. He was a prolific writer: he wrote several official letters, various reports, a diary and an important *Memorie* (1637) and an *Apologie* (1639). His ethnographic notes were transcribed in the magnum opus of the Dutch theologian Gerardus Vossius (1577-1649) *De Theologia Gentili et physiologia Christiana sive de origine et progressu idolatriae* (1642), a work about natural phenomena, the ancient pagan world and all known religions of that time. Some of his letters were quoted in Barlaeus' *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia et alibi nuper gestarum sub prefectur* (1647) and passages of his reports were used by Johannes De Laet in his *Iaerlijck Verhael*.

Like many other employees of the WIC, Arciszewski was not Dutch—even Johan Maurits who had German roots was strictly speaking not Dutch. All colonists participating in the Brazilian adventure were different with regard to their country of origin, their religion or their social status. Unlike Manoel de Moraes, who will be discussed further on, Arciszewski was not a colonial hybrid in

the sense that he was not born in the colonial world, nor did his parents pertain to different colonial backgrounds. However, he represents the heterogeneity within the WIC.

What made him such a good describer of the colonial reality, which is also why I chose to have a closer look at his writings about Brazil, is his ability to understand and describe (parts of) the colonial reality more accurately than others had done before him. This was in part due to his high literacy skills: he wrote in outstanding Latin, Polish and Dutch. Arciszewski also excelled in negotiations with the native people. During these encounters he had to rely on go-betweens to help him communicate with the people, as he did not speak any local language. Nonetheless, he managed to convince some tribes to support the Dutch and was able to obtain information about the culture of these natives. Arciszewski's writings exercised power not only within the WIC—for whom he wrote reports—but also over the natives—whom he was able to convince through letters, as I will show further on. In de Certeau's terms: Arciszewski's writing skills helped him to better understand and conquer.

Different influential contemporary authors made use of Arciszewski's Brazilian writings. Barlaeus and De Laet relied on his notes to construct their respective histories of the Dutch colony in Brazil. It is for a great part thanks to their references to Arciszewski that his writings became influential loci of knowledge transfer and that they took part in a European knowledge and imagination network about foreign realities. His descriptions followed the generic conventions as prescribed by the WIC but as an eyewitness he was indispensable for authors such as De Laet and Barlaeus, who never set foot in Brazil. Through the reading of his Brazilian writings we detect his gaze upon the exotic reality he encountered in the New World and behind his critical comments we get a glimpse of his own experience in Dutch Brazil.

Arciszewski's tumultuous life started in Rogalin, Western Poland, where he grew up in an Arian protestant family that belonged to the Polish *szlachta* or

noble class.<sup>63</sup> In the years 1621-1622 he took part in different Polish war campaigns against the Swedes in the Baltic region. In 1623, he had to flee from his home country after having murdered a lawyer named Brzeznicki, a crime he committed because the man had ruined his family. This event had a great impact on his life. On the one hand, it marked him on a psychological level, since for the rest of his life Arciszewski would be feeling guilty for this only (reported) crime he ever committed: in various poems he reflected upon his barbaric act. Not only did he shoot the man, he also cut off his tongue. On the other hand, the event had severe legal consequences, since the Polish authorities accused Arciszewski of murder, seized his properties and sentenced him to prison. He immediately fled from his native country and sought asylum abroad.<sup>64</sup>

He found refuge in the Netherlands in 1624. At Leiden University, he studied military engineering and soon participated as a soldier in Dutch offensives in Europe after having enlisted in the army of Prince Maurice of Nassau. His first experience in a Western European battle was in the war against the Spaniards during the siege of Breda (1625). He also fought with the Dutch in La Rochelle (1629), on the side of the Cardinal Richelieu against the Protestant rebels and participated in the conquest of Hertogenbosch (1629). Meanwhile, he was a diplomatic agent for the Polish-Lithuanian prince Radziwill for whom he wrote different accounts of the political and military situation in Western Europe.<sup>65</sup>

In November 1629, he enlisted as a captain in the Dutch West India Company. In the years 1630-1639 he played a decisive role in Dutch Brazil, not only as a military commander but also as a critic of the economic policies of the WIC. Regarding economic issues, he always declared himself to be in favor of free

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<sup>63</sup> Arianism is a Christian doctrine that was condemned by the first council of Nicaea (325) and again by the council of Constantinople (381). Arianists criticized the position of the Pope regarding the Holy Trinity, in particular the holy character of Jesus Christ. In Poland the movement received renewed attention in the XVIIe Century thanks to the philosopher Socino who wanted to return to the origins of the gospel. Arciszewski's father was an active member of the Polish Arian community Arciszewski himself was a very moderate adept. See: E. Fischlowitz *Cristóforo Arciszewski*: 146.

<sup>64</sup> Fischlowitz *Cristóforo Arciszewski*, 31-39.

<sup>65</sup> Fischlowitz *Cristóforo Arciszewski*, 40-42; Urbański *Military adventures*: 63-64.

trade and defended absolute freedom of commerce. In doing so, he went against the grain of the WIC policy that forbade its employees to engage in personal commercial transactions. Arciszewski supported this measure, yet he proposed to attract as much private funding as possible. Since the country was too large to be only populated and exploited by the funds of the WIC, private investors could be beneficiary for the health and growth of the colony.<sup>66</sup> He even suggested applying a similar strategy to VOC (the Dutch East India Company) activities.<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, Arciszewski was a loyal soldier who fulfilled his duties in an exemplary manner, which contrasts with his turbulent youth in Poland. In service of the Oranje-house he rapidly made it to the highest military ranks. By 1637 he had become vice-governor of Dutch Brazil. However, once he reached the top of the military hierarchy he got involved in a bitter dispute with Count Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, as I will further show. This conflict turned out to have a deep impact on his career overseas as in 1638 he was forced to leave Dutch Brazil for good.<sup>68</sup> Arciszewski first returned to Holland, where he stayed until 1646. Afterwards, he went back to Poland, where he spent the last years of his life writing poetry and defending his native country in military campaigns against the Tartars and Cossacks as a general of the royal artillery under the King Wladyslaw IV. Arciszewski died in 1656 in Gdansk.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> His theory was proven right by the results of the edicts of October 1630 and January 1634. Both edicts granted freedom of commerce for everybody in Brazil who submitted to the Dutch and consequently the real estate prices doubled 10 times in Recife. See Boxer, *De Nederlanders in Brazilië*: 100.

<sup>67</sup> C. Arciszewski, 'Missive van den kolonel Artichofsky aan Graaf Maurits en den Hoogen Raad in Brazilië. 24 juli 1637. Klachten over de West-Indische Compagnie.', in: *Kroniek Historisch Genootschap Utrecht*, XXV (1869):222-248.

<sup>68</sup> Cabral de Mello *Olinda restaurada*: 90; Fischlowitz *Cristóforo Arciszewski*: 43-116; Urbański *Military adventures*: 67-69.

<sup>69</sup> Fischlowitz *Cristóforo Arciszewski*: 42-43.

### 2.13 A POLISH COMMANDER IN BRAZIL

Arciszewski travelled to Brazil on three occasions. At his first arrival in 1629, he participated in the attack of Pernambuco that took place during the second Dutch invasion of Brazil. In the following years, he participated in all major battles but only played a minor role in the field. His major achievement during his first journey was building Fortress Orange, which was erected under his direction on the island Itamaracá in May 1631.<sup>70</sup>

Soon after his return to the Netherlands at the beginning of 1633, he received a golden medallion and a silver medal and was promoted captain in April 1634.<sup>71</sup> When he returned to Brazil in August 1634, he was second in command to colonel Sigismund von Schkoppe. In this capacity he obtained his first major military success with the siege of Arraial do Bom Jesus, one of the greatest victories of the Dutch in Brazil.<sup>72</sup>

During his second Brazilian journey Arciszewski was sent by the Brazilian Council on various expeditions to the interior ‘to investigate which profit could be obtained from these savages’,<sup>73</sup> i.e. how the local Indian tribes could provide them with (strategic) information and to see if alliances with some of these tribes were possible. During these excursions he was several times in contact with Antonio Paraupaba, who gave him valuable information about the Tapuya-Indians, in particular about the Tarairiu-tribe. De Laet uses one of Arciszewski’s reports in his *Iaerlijck Verhael* to describe the different Tapuya-tribes living in the region of

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<sup>70</sup> C.R. Boxer *De Nederlanders in Brazilië*: 49-66.

Named in honor of the House of Orange, Fort Orange was built in 1631 on the southern tip of the island Itamaracá (Pernambuco). The Portuguese took it over in 1654 and turned it into a larger fort, which can still be visited today. More about this fort see: Ana Lúcia do Nascimento Oliveira Josué Lopes dos Santos (2014) ‘A ilha de Itamaracá e a organização da defesa no período colonial (séculos XVI e XVII): contribuição para a história do litoral norte de Pernambuco, Brasil.’ *Cadernos do Lepaarq*, vol. XI, Nr. 21, Pelotas: UFPL, 222-46.

<sup>71</sup> Some sources also mention an obelisk that was erected in his honor of his military endeavors in Recife: « la compagnie fut tellement reconnaissante que pour immortaliser la gloire qu’Artischofsky s’était acquise. Par tous ses beaux exploits, elle lui fit ériger dans ce pays un trophée de Pierre, orné de différentes armes et de l’écusson du Portugal ». Loon, vol. II, 235, quoted in: Fischlowitz *Cristóforo Arciszewski*, 63.

<sup>72</sup> J.C.M. Warnsinck, ‘Christoffel Artichofski, in: De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*-IV, xxv-lxxiii.

<sup>73</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*-XI: 401.



Rio Grande. In his report, Arciszewski mentions his first meeting with Carcará, brother of Nhandui and chief of the Tarairiu, who informed the Colonel about the land and people of the region. This gave De Laet the opportunity to portray these Indians in a more detailed manner. De Laet, paraphrasing Arciszewski, describes the Tarairiu as a nomadic tribe who occupies an area lying between five rivers. They live in peace with five other tribes of the region and are hostile towards four other ones, three of which being allies of the Portuguese. The soil of the land they inhabit is very fertile, which is proven by the presence of many different fruit trees and the abundance of Brazil wood. At that moment, there were only a few settlements around the Rio Grande as most previous inhabitants had fled out of fear for the savage Tapuya-tribes, who were feared

[...]more than the Devil, knowing that they leave no one in peace, and that they not only kill and destroy human beings but also Beasts.<sup>74</sup>

In these passages De Laet is mostly still mapping the territory by pinpointing the villages on the Brazilian map by means of brief descriptions. Next to this mapping, the descriptions offer the common stereotypes about the Tapuya. These tribes live behind the border of the known colonial world. Behind this frontier there is a still enchanted but also at times horrifying world, where the Tapuya live.

The mapping and stereotypical descriptions are interrupted, however, by interesting anecdotes that give the reader some insights into the habitat and daily life of the natives. For example, in his report Arciszewski complains that Carcará was hardly understood by the interpreter, which is remarkable as, according to De Laet,<sup>75</sup> the translator was Paraupaba, also a Tapuya-Indian. There were probably some lexical and grammatical variations within the language used by the different tribes, but even if there were some communication problems, all words used in the transcription of the report that refer to the exotic reality such as mountains

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<sup>74</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael*-XI: 402 and De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael* -XI: 401-03.

<sup>75</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael* -XI: 401.

and rivers are transcriptions of indigenous words. The names of the tribes are even in two different indigenous idioms, Tupi and Tapuya.<sup>76</sup>

At first, De Laet renders a typical description of the Tapuya and their customs as found in most contemporary texts. Using the information he obtained from Arciszewski, he built a description in complete coherence with the other descriptions of Tapuya-tribes in his *Iaerlijck Verhael*, i.e. the Tapuya are nomads and savages but thanks to their cruelty they are the perfect allies of the Dutch on the battlefields against the Portuguese.<sup>77</sup> Nevertheless, De Laet goes a step further than in his previous works. The use of anecdotes, like the ones he received from Arciszewski, give a tinge of authenticity to *Iaerlijck Verhael*. Arciszewski excelled in observation and communication, qualities that enabled him to add small details that contain valuable ethnographic information, as for example in the transcriptions of local words to refer to the exotic reality.

The following anecdote that I want to focus upon mentions another encounter of the Polish commander with Indian people. In September 1634, Arciszewski wants to meet Nhandui, 'King' of the Tarairiu, to ask for friendship and support in the battles against the Portuguese. Nhandui was unable to attend the appointment and sent his nephew, Commendaoura, instead. As Arciszewski wants to negotiate directly with the chief he decides to write a letter together with the political counselor Jacob Stachouwer, a document translated by Paraupaba in Tapuya-language. In the letter Arciszewski asks for a new appointment with Nhandui and urges him to convince 'other Kings, so that they will bring as many people with them as they can, for there will be enough loot for everybody.'<sup>78</sup> Arciszewski explains how they can conquer the Captaincy of Paraíba together: if local tribes

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2.1 <sup>76</sup> H.V.van Nederveen Meerkerk (2000) 'Relationship between the Indians and the Dutch in XVII century Brazil' in: *Índios do Nordeste: Temas e Problemas 2*, Maceió: UFAL: 36.

<sup>77</sup> See a.o. Ernst van den Boogaart (1979), 'Infernal allies. The Dutch West India Company and the Tarairiu 1631-1654', in: Ernst van den Boogaart (ed.), *Johan-Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, A humanist prince in Europe and Brazil*, Den Haag: De Johan Maurits stichting, 519-538.

<sup>78</sup> Translated by Meuwese in: M.P. Meuwese (2003), *For the peace and well-being of the country: intercultural mediatos and Dutch-Indian relations in New Netherland and Dutch Brazil, 1600-1664* (unpublished dissertation), Indiana: 122.

plunder the remaining Portuguese settlements while the Dutch occupy the coast, the Portuguese will no longer be able to provide for themselves and they will in the end be able to drive away the enemy easily. The letter ends with an enumeration of all the gifts for Nhandui that are delivered to Commendaoura. Not only will Nhandui receive innumerable presents such as precious metals and cloths from the Dutch, but every Tapuya that accompanied Commendaoura to the meeting will receive clothes, knives and wine.<sup>79</sup>

In the descriptions of West Africa and the Caribbean such long anecdotes do not appear, which indicates more interest in Brazil and results in a broader comprehension of its local environment. This anecdote provides information on the communication and negotiation skills of Arciszewski, which were once again excellent. He understood how to proceed in order to obtain the support of the Tarairiu. Thanks to these alliances, the Dutch would be able to obtain local knowledge. In a way, Arciszewski—but he was not alone in doing so—paved the way for the scientific expeditions that would take place only a few years later.

#### 2.14 ARCISZEWSKI'S MEMORIE & APOLOGIE

In March 1637, when Count Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen arrived in Brazil to become governor of the colony, Arciszewski returned to the Netherlands. At the time of his departure he wrote his *Memorie door den kolonnel Artichofsky, bij zijn vertrek uit Brazilië in 1637 overgeleverd aan Graaf Maurits en zijnen Geheimen Raad*. (*Memorandum written by the colonel Arciszewski, at his departure from Brazil in 1637 handed over to the Count Maurits and his Secret Council*).<sup>80</sup> The document contains his economic and political ideas about colonial administration. I will have a closer look at this text because it sheds light upon the

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<sup>79</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael* –XI: 403-05.

<sup>80</sup> C. Arciszewski, 'Memorie door den kolonnel Artichofsky, bij zijn vertrek uit Brazilië in 1637 overgeleverd aan Graaf Maurits en zijnen Geheimen Raad', *Kroniek Historisch Genootschap Utrecht*, XXV (1869): 253-349.

writing qualities and political views of Arciszewski, which both helped him to better conquer and understand the country.

With this text the Polish commander wanted to present a true and objective story of the events, but the *Memorie* is a very biased document. The author uttered his personal ideas, opinions and strategies on how to conquer and rule the colony. Arciszewski did not agree with the economic vision of the WIC or the Heeren XIX, who were mostly interested in increasing their profit in Brazil. Arciszewski accused them to merely support the Dutch merchants and not the other inhabitants of the colony. The Polish commander was also a vehement critic of the abuses made by employees of the WIC in Brazil, but it is important to be aware that in the first place he had had several collisions with the Count of Nassau, whose command he had never accepted as he had wanted to obtain the post of governor-general of the colony.

In his *Memorie*, Arciszewski not only severely judged the WIC's military strategies and the colony's social organization, he also displayed his knowledge and comprehension of the Brazilian colony. In his text he stressed the importance of the *rei militares* and the *scientia politica* to demonstrate that without good governance all republics are doomed to disappear. In his opinion, the colonial system in Dutch Brazil was an example of misgovernment: the administration was ineffective, too much time was wasted in unnecessary meetings, there was a shortage of competent employees, laborers and soldiers, and, finally, there was an urgent need for a central authority. He stresses the importance of good governance and a correct treatment of citizens, 'regis ad exemplum totus componitur orbis':<sup>81</sup> if the King is virtuous the entire world will follow his example. Similarly, the governor's vices will become the governed's vices and ill treatment will lead to misbehavior such as plundering.<sup>82</sup>

On various occasions Arciszewski displays his knowledge of Antiquity. For example, when complaining about the weaknesses of the Dutch army in the colony and the lack of discipline among the soldiers, he refers to the Romans and

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<sup>81</sup> Arciszewsky *Memorie*: 345.

<sup>82</sup> Arciszewsky *Memorie*: 337-347.

a rule of Julius Caesar that should be obeyed by the soldiers: *exercitum non esuriat, non algeat* (the army does not feel hunger nor cold).<sup>83</sup>

Even if he held different views on the colony's administration and governance than the WIC he criticized, he shared Johan Maurits' ideas on freedom of religion. In his text he mentions a contract composed after the conquest of the Fortress of Cabodelo (1635) wherein freedom of religion was guaranteed to the inhabitants. In 1636 the inhabitants of Serinhaém received a similar contract. These contracts were lost and therefore the freedom of religion is often unfairly only attributed to the deeds of Nassau.<sup>84</sup> Arciszewski's views were most probably reflected in his actions and his *tolerance*—which should be not be overestimated as we speak of the 17<sup>th</sup> century—made various contacts with Portuguese and local people possible, contributing to the stimulation and recognition of the local hybridity.

The *Memorie* is in the first place a document on political, economic and military matters; however, it displays a certain knowledge of the writer about foreign realities which is visible for example in the names used to describe the perceived reality. Words that refer to typical Brazilian facts are written down in Portuguese or are transcriptions from the indigenous language. Some examples are *moradores*<sup>85</sup> (residents of Dutch Brazil, mainly Portuguese), *ingenio*<sup>86</sup> (sugar plantation), *lavrador*<sup>87</sup> (farmer), *negros*<sup>88</sup> (African slaves), *farinha*<sup>89</sup> (flour), *Capivaribi*<sup>90</sup> (river) and *Tapicura*<sup>91</sup> (cliff). Arciszewski is not the only employee of the WIC who used these foreign words in reports, words that were copied by De Laet in his text. By using vernacular names De Laet stressed on the one hand the alien aspect of the Brazilian phenomena. On the other hand, he emphasized that

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<sup>83</sup> Arciszewsky *Memorie*: 319 and Arciszewsky *Memorie*: 263-319.

<sup>84</sup> Werneck 'egodocumenten': 134-136.

<sup>85</sup> Arciszewsky *Memorie*: 309.

<sup>86</sup> Arciszewsky *Memorie*: 286, 340, 341.

<sup>87</sup> Arciszewsky *Memorie*: 341.

<sup>88</sup> Arciszewsky *Memorie*: 316.

<sup>89</sup> Arciszewsky *Memorie*: 287, 288, 344.

<sup>90</sup> Arciszewsky *Memorie*: 298.

<sup>91</sup> Arciszewsky *Memorie*: 301.

the possession of this knowledge leads to the comprehension of these phenomena, as the Dutch wanted the *moradores* and the *lavradores* to collaborate with them and the *negros* to work for them in the *ingenios* they wanted to control.

Only a year after he came back to the Netherlands, the directors of the WIC asked Arciszewski to return to Brazil, as they were skeptical of Nassau's military strategies in the colony.<sup>92</sup> In May 1638 Nassau was defeated in Salvador and in August 1638, Arciszewski was promoted general of the artillery, which meant that he was the head of the military in Brazil and thus in command of all land and naval forces. With 9 ships and 1600 soldiers Arciszewski sailed for the third time to Latin America in December 1638 and arrived on March 20<sup>th</sup> 1639.<sup>93</sup> Maybe he should not have gone back, since this third Brazilian journey turned out to be a disaster for the Polish colonel and indirectly put an end to his military career in service of the WIC. Arciszewski had hoped to obtain Nassau's position thanks to the experience he had acquired during his previous stays and the bravery he had demonstrated in various colonial battles. Furthermore, he was very popular among the troops. Even some of the directors of the WIC supported his nomination, but the Heeren XIX finally decided to send Nassau instead.<sup>94</sup> In Brazil, the Count and the Brazilian Council perceived Arciszewski's return to the colony as a sign of mistrust of their policy. Nassau and Arciszewski had different views on how to run the colony. The former showing a more gentle approach than the latter who favored more military presence.<sup>95</sup>

Dutch Brazil soon became too small for these two men, who had begun a bitter dispute. The quarrel reached its culmination point after the Count and the Brazilian Council discovered a letter, which was written by Arciszewski to Albert Koenraad Burch, the Mayor of Amsterdam and one of the most important directors of the WIC. In the letter, Arciszewski criticized Nassau's colonial policy.

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<sup>92</sup> van Baerle *History*: 102-119.

<sup>93</sup> Fischlowitz *Cristóforo Arciszewski*, 97.

<sup>94</sup> Cabral de Mello *Nassau*, 66-67.

<sup>95</sup> van Baerle *History*: 102-119.

In particular he complained about the lack of military supplies, weapons, soldiers and laborers.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, Arciszewski accused Nassau of transferring many of his soldiers undeservedly and without previous warning. The reason Arciszewski did not complain about these issues directly to Nassau is that he had been impeded by illness, but he felt that he had to report these facts to be truthful to his military function and because he did not want to see his name fall in disgrace.<sup>97</sup>

Barlaeus described in his *Rerum per Octennium* the meeting that was organized after the discovery of this letter (May 18th 1639) and quoted Nassau's speech in front of the Council of Brazil.<sup>98</sup> Nassau defended himself against all allegations made by the Colonel in the letter and accused Arciszewski of barefaced lies. Furthermore, the Count reproached Arciszewski for inciting his soldiers to disobedience towards the Count and to act as if he held the highest position in the colony, i.e. to act as a *generalissimo*.<sup>99</sup> As he thought the distrust and discord between them would lead to the loss of the colony, Nassau asked the Council to choose between Arciszewski and him, because 'This small part of Brazil cannot support two governors'. One of them had to return to the mother country.<sup>100</sup> After the incident, Nassau wrote a letter to the directors of the WIC, also quoted in the *Rerum per Octennium*.<sup>101</sup> On the whole, he repeated the arguments he had made earlier in his speech. Among other things, he justified the transfers of soldiers claiming they were necessary and additionally stating it was his task as supreme commander to make such decisions. Arciszewski had to obey him but never did. In response to Arciszewski's complaint on the lack of soldiers, the Count claimed that there had been a shortage of soldiers and manpower in general in the colony.

After the incident, the Council first wanted to reconcile both men, but two days later finally decided to discharge Arciszewski of all his functions and send

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<sup>96</sup> van Baerle *History*: 114.

<sup>97</sup> van Baerle *History*: 112.

<sup>98</sup> van Baerle *History*: 103.

<sup>99</sup> van Baerle *History*: 104.

<sup>100</sup> van Baerle *History*: 105.

<sup>101</sup> van Baerle *History*: 106.

him back to the Old Continent on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 1639. By discharging him, they put a premature end to Arciszewski's Brazilian career.

In his *Apologie*, written in 1639 immediately after he was dismissed, Arciszewski defended himself against all allegations made by the Count and the Brazilian Council. In addition, he harshly judged the administration in Brazil, again referring to abuses and frauds committed by officials and soldiers towards the local population or *moradores* and also to outraging behavior of merchants who only tried to enrich themselves.

The *Apologie* is written in sophisticated literary Dutch. The text is interspersed with Latin quotes, rhetorical flourishes and metaphors that are used as strategies to demand rehabilitation to the States-General to whom the *Apologie* is addressed. Arciszewski proves that he is not only a skilled military leader, but also a man of letters, and, and this is why he is so important in *Iaerlijck Verhael*, a connoisseur of Brazilian colonial life.

In his text, Arciszewski presents himself as an honest man who has difficulties to express his feelings about what he went through. 'Curae leves loquuntur, ingente stupent' ('minor grief talks, bigger ones are speechless').<sup>102</sup> Since the incident with the vexed letter he had been unable to frame his thoughts. But now he will do it in order to give the opportunity to the States-General to judge as well as possible the way he was treated in Brazil. Arciszewski wants to bring his version of what happened before he was dismissed.

Throughout his text he describes the causes of the allegations, depicts how he was treated by the Count and the Council of the WIC and treats juridical matters, giving examples of right violations committed by employees of the WIC, whose attitudes contrast with his own innocence. 'Actiones mentales in juri non dari',<sup>103</sup> no man was ever judged for his thoughts, consequently he cannot be found guilty. He has always been innocent and was falsely accused. What is more,

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<sup>102</sup> C. Arciszewski, 'Apologie van Artichofsky. Tegen de beschuldiging van den Raad van Brazilië. Ingeleverd aan de Staten Generaal in augustus 1639', *Kroniek Historisch Genootschap Utrecht*, XXV (1869), 352

<sup>103</sup> Arciszewski *Apologie*: 376.



his prosecutors are in his view the true criminals. Arciszewski emphasizes on various occasions the point of his argument: his punishment was unjust and the true criminals are still in Brazil. ‘Rancidulum aliquid balba sub nare loquutus’, the Brazilian Council misuses its power and only God is the Giver of all good things.<sup>104</sup> The *Apologie* closes upon the affirmation that during his 16 years of service he has always been a loyal subject of the WIC and therefore should be rehabilitated as soon as possible. This never happened and after a short stay in the Netherlands in 1646 he accepted the offer of Ladislau IV, king of Poland, to become general of the artillery for his native country.

Ironically, Arciszewski left Brazil when the golden years of the colony started under the rule of the Count Maurits van Nassau-Siegen (1637-1643) and even more important, he helped, not single-handedly, to make this glorious epoch possible.

Even after his Brazilian career, Arciszewski remained a soldier with a pen as mighty as his sword. At the end of the notorious letter he wrote to the Major of Amsterdam he already alluded to a possible change of career. If the WIC refused to allow him to be a soldier, he would devote his life to ‘the Muses’:

[...] he seems to congratulate himself on his leisure, and does not hope for any other destiny, once he is free of concern for the military, than to return to the good graces of the muses.<sup>105</sup>

Arciszewski never chose between the pen and the sword but continued to handle both. He left many manuscripts. In 1643 he wrote a pamphlet ‘*Epístola de podagra curata*’ dedicated to Johannes de Laet, in which he analyses his own health problems and cures for his disease.<sup>106</sup> He left a scientific treatise about artillery.<sup>107</sup> He wrote a huge number of letters in three different languages (Dutch,

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<sup>104</sup> Arciszewski *Apologie*: 386. This is a quote from Persius 1.33 ‘the stammer speaks stench from his nose’ and Arciszewski *Apologie*: 387.

<sup>105</sup> van Baerle *History*: 116.

<sup>106</sup> Fischlowitz *Cristóforo Arciszewski*, 116.

<sup>107</sup> Fischlowitz *Cristóforo Arciszewski*, 135.

Polish and Latin). He carried on a very intense correspondence with frei Manoel do Salvador about colonial and religious subjects and also with the Polish-Lithuanian prince Radziwill II about diplomatic matters. Finally, he wrote many poems in Polish. Poetry was the place where he found refuge during the most difficult moments of his life.<sup>108</sup> He never had the purpose to publish his poetical work but it was collected by Jacob Trembeck and published in 1675 in *Wiridarz Poeticki*.

Arciszewski's singularity within the network of WIC writings is due to how he described the New World, i.e. in his descriptions as others transcribed these, and in his economic, political and religious criticism of the Dutch colonial policy, in which he was original and very progressive for his time. Arciszewski was a very religious man who was at the same time very tolerant with respect to religious matters. It was thus not only Johan Maurits, whom I will discuss more in detail in the following chapters, who had progressive views and promoted a more tolerant colony. Arciszewski was also an aficionado of Brazil and a connoisseur of Brazilian realities, as he proved in his writings. On the one hand, his *tolerant* approach allowed the present hybridity to thrive—even if Arciszewski's approach was meant to serve his military and political agenda, i.e. to conquer parts of Brazil. On the other hand, his writing skills gave him the ability to control—as it was the case with his letter to Nandhui—and describe the hybrid Brazilian realities.

Through the reports of this Polish commander, De Laet could offer a more nuanced portrait of Brazil and its inhabitants than before. Even though the image given of the natives contained more details about daily life than in *Nieuwe Wereldt*, De Laet still gave a mainly positive description of the Tapuya in order not to frighten possible investors. Nonetheless, he transcribed much ethnological information about the native tribes, knowledge not only valuable for future colonization but also of anthropological value. It was only thanks to the efforts made by Arciszewski that this knowledge could be obtained.

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<sup>108</sup> Fischlowitz *Cristóforo Arciszewski*, 140.

In the seventh book, covering the year 1635, a colonial hybrid is mentioned as one of Arciszewski's sources. To describe the local Brazilian people, they needed information from an insider. Manoel de Moraes—who I will discuss at length in the following pages—used to live among the Indians, knew them well and had recently 'voluntarily' joined the Dutch:<sup>109</sup>

We will have to report often from these Brazilians, it will thus be necessary to speak to some extent of their villages, as it was related by the previously mentioned Manoel de Moraes and accurately written down by colonel Arciszewski.<sup>110</sup>

The description of the Brazilian Indians follows the same pattern as many others in the *Iaerlijck Verhael*. First, De Laet is mapping the territory. The various Indian villages are enumerated per capitania with their exact location, presence of rivers, the name of the head of the tribe, number of inhabitants and the possibility or impossibility to create alliances. In this passage comprehension of the inhabitants is not taken a step further. It is very detailed but we do not find extra information about daily life or habits. Nevertheless, just as Colonel Arciszewski, Manoel de Moraes exercised his influence on some descriptions in an indirect way, as his presence in the colony had an impact on the Dutch comprehension of their Brazilian colony. It is therefore interesting to have a look at his meandering life.

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<sup>109</sup> De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael-XII*: 452

<sup>110</sup> 'Alsoo wy nu dickwils van dese Brasilianen sullen moeten ghewagh maecken sal het noodich wesen dat wy van hare Woon-steden een weynich aen-roeren: ghelijck doen 't selve by den voornoemden Emanuel de Morais wierdt verhaelt ende by den Colonel Artichau curioselijck aen-gheteckent.' (De Laet *Iaerlijck Verhael-XII*: 452)

**2.15 MANOEL DE MORAES:  
HYBRIDITY AND THE MEANING OF BETRAYAL**

Ceux qui s'emploient à examiner les actions humaines  
ne rencontrent jamais autant de difficultés  
que lorsqu'il s'agit de les rassembler  
et de les présenter sous le même jour.  
C'est qu'elles se contredisent de telle façon  
qu'il semble impossible  
qu'elles fassent partie du même fonds.

**Montaigne, Sur l'inconstance de nos actions**

Due to his extreme versatility Manoel de Moraes was one of the most interesting hybrid inhabitants of the Dutch colony. During the course of his life he assumed various social positions: from priest to teacher, and from military leader to wood trader. Moreover, he appeared twice before the Inquisition Tribunal. Manoel's professional career was less contradictory than it seems at first sight. His trials are very meaningful in this respect, in particular the last one, as I will demonstrate.

Manoel's hybridity enabled him to improvise and adjust to different scenarios. His background is thus very significant and enables us to understand his versatile behavior later in his life. Manoel de Moraes was born in 1596 in São Paulo. On his mother's side he descended from a rich Portuguese family, while his father—a 'mameluco' or half-blood Indian—was of a more modest descent. From the latter, Manoel inherited his *métis* appearance. He spent his youth in the South of the Portuguese colony among Jesuits, Indians and different types of adventurers in a city where the lingua franca was not Portuguese but the *lingua geral*, a kind of general Tupi. He grew up in a very heterogeneous environment where he acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to perform as an intercultural mediator later in his life.

At the age of 17, he entered the Jesuit order and moved to Bahia, in the North of the colony, to study theology at the *Colégio Baiano*. As from 1622, after

his Jesuit education, he worked as a father missionary in Pernambuco, mostly devoting himself to catechism instruction of the Tupi Indians.<sup>111</sup> When the Dutch invaded the region, he became the commander of the Indian troops, in the service of the Portuguese.<sup>112</sup> In the following years, Manoel displayed true chameleon-like behavior. In 1634, he became an informant for the Dutch and one year later he moved, either forced or out of free will,<sup>113</sup> to the Netherlands and converted to Calvinism. His sudden departure from the colony was most probably due to his past as a Jesuit father. Calvinist authorities in Brazil were not very thrilled by the presence of the Jesuit Society, whose members were thought to have close ties with the Spanish Crown and the Pope. While the Catholic clergy and other orders such as the Dominicans were tolerated in the colony as long as they did not disturb the Calvinist order, Jesuits were driven out of Brazil, sometimes after severe torture.<sup>114</sup> It would thus not have been possible for Manoel to stay in the colony as a Jesuit Father.<sup>115</sup> In the Netherlands, he was very well received by the local intellectual elite and settled first in Amsterdam, where he wrote down a policy plan for a better administration of the Brazilian Indian villages. In that same period, he composed a Tupi-Latin dictionary and, under the supervision of Johannes de Laet, he wrote a history of Brazil. After the death of his first wife, Margriet van Dehait, he married Adriana Smetz in 1640. In the meantime various

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<sup>111</sup> He was, among other duties, responsible for the catechetical education of Hij was er onder andere Felipe Camarão. This Tupi leader played an important role in the war against the Dutch occupier. See Serafim Leite (1945) *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil V*, Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 349-351 and Gonsalves de Mello (1954) *D. Antônio Felipe Camarão, Capitão-mor dos Índios da Costa do Nordeste do Brasil*, Recife: Universidade de Recife.

<sup>112</sup> The chronicles of Duarte de Albuquerque Coelho testify the prominent role of Manoel as commander. See: Duarte de Albuquerque Coelho (1651) *Memórias diárias da guerra do Brasil 1630-1638 (1651)*, Recife: Fundação da cultura da cidade (1981).

<sup>113</sup> Following Johannes de Laet (*Iaerlijck Verhael* IV, and XI-XII) and Schalkwijk (*The Reformed church*) Manoel was trusted by the WIC and was invited in the Dutch Republic. Serafim Leite (*História V*: 500) on the other side is convinced that he was captured by the Dutch and forced to travel to Europe.

<sup>114</sup> Mark P. Meuwese, *For the peace and well-being*: 65.

<sup>115</sup> The Ambassador of Portugal in the Netherlands was convinced that Manoel remained Catholic in his heart and that he only did what he did in the Netherlands 'as a remedy against life' because otherwise it would not have been possible to lead a new life in Leiden, he could have received the death penalty. (*Vainfas Traição*: 200).

Portuguese colonists denounced him to the local representatives of the Inquisition.<sup>116</sup> He was not only suspected of treason, but also of concubinage and heresy. Therefore, the Holy Office sentenced him *in absentia* to a symbolic death: his effigy was burned on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1642.

After 8 years in the Netherlands, he decided in 1643 to return without his wife or children to Brazil. He was playing a double game, though. On the one hand, he asked the Portuguese ambassador in Den Haag for mercy, in exchange for his services in the Pernambucan war, i.e. in the fight against the Dutch occupation. On the other hand, he requested a logging concession with the support of Johannes de Laet from the WIC.<sup>117</sup> He only succeeded in his second aim and thus started a career as trader in Brazil wood, while he lived together with a woman slave. Eventually he openly became Catholic again—he was noticed during various celebrations of Mass—and joined the troops of Antônio Vieira to fight the Dutch.

The Portuguese nevertheless distrusted Manoel and an increasing number of complaints were recorded against him. In 1645, the Portuguese authorities finally arrested him. Manoel applied several times for leniency, renouncing his allegiance to the Dutch, but all in vain as he did not manage to escape this time. He was handed over to the tribunal of the Inquisition and forced to appear. This event was the pivotal point in his life. On the ‘stage’ of the Inquisition Manoel delivered an astonishing performance, driven by his will to prove his innocence. As I want to make clear, his hybrid background gave him the tools to play once again with the borders of his identity.

The list of accusations against Manoel was long and in as far as we can still ascertain this today, they were correct within their context. Of all the charges

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<sup>116</sup> He was denounced five times in Brazil at the to the bishop of Bahia. Ironically his name appeared in between the names of Portuguese Jews with whom he had a dispute in Amsterdam. (Vainfas *Traiçãõ*: 183) Denouncing was since the end of the 16th century the most important method of the Portuguese Inquisition in order to trace religious and moral violations. See a.o. James E. Wadsworth, ‘In the name of the Inquisition: the Portuguese inquisition and delegated authority in colonial Pernambuco, Brasil’, *The Americas*, 61:1 (2004): 19-54.

<sup>117</sup> Gonsalves de Mello *Nederlanders in Brazilië*: 147.

pressed against him, there was only one that he pled guilty of: *luxuria* or lust. The punishment incurred was that his soul would burn eternally in hell, a lighter sentence than to burn at the stake, which he risked if he was convicted of heresy. However, Manoel continued to deny any guilt about possible heretic acts and even asserted having been striving against Jews and Calvinists, even during his stay in the Netherlands. Manoel managed to find 2645 testimonies in his defense, including one by João Vieira but also one by the whole teacher corps of Leiden University.<sup>118</sup>

However, the incriminating evidence that was gathered by the prosecutors prevailed for the judges. Moreover, there were many inconsistencies in Manoel's own statements. At the merest trifle he brought forward new versions of the facts, some being more plausible than others. He invented many details, whereas others were consciously omitted. For example, during the whole trial he stressed that he did not master the Dutch language. Furthermore, he subtracted one year from his life as a Calvinist in the Netherlands. He stated that he only married at the end of 1637 instead of at the end of 1636 and told the judges that he arrived in Amsterdam in December 1636 instead of June 1635. It looked as if he wanted to erase the year 1635 from his existence.<sup>119</sup>

The inquisitors gathered on August 29<sup>th</sup> 1647 to deliberate on the case of Manoel de Moraes. They were unanimous about the presence of mitigating circumstances but were nonetheless convinced that the accused had committed serious crimes, such as eating meat on days on which this was forbidden by the Catholic church, assisting Calvinist celebrations and living thrice in concubinage. As Manoel continued to plead not guilty on the central accusation of heresy—, they unanimously decided to hang him in strappado.<sup>120</sup> This torture method consisted of first tying the victim's hands behind his back, after which he was

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<sup>118</sup> 'Processo de Manoel de Moraes, sacerdote e theologo, natural de villa de S. Paulo, Estado do Brazil, residente que foi nas partes do norte, preso nos carcereiros da Inquisição de Lisboa' (1647), *Revista do Instituto Historico e Geografico Brasileiro*, Tomo LXX-Parte 1 (1908): 20-21.

<sup>119</sup> Vainfas *Traição*: 208-210, 303 and Leite *História*: 367-368.

<sup>120</sup> The judges were unanimous considering the torture method, the intensity of the torture was heavily discussed. (Vainfas *Traição*: 298-99)

hanged by means of a rope attached on one side to his wrists and on the other to a pulley. The body was then repeatedly hoisted and dropped down. After this torture Manoel confessed some of his sins. He confessed that he used to have contact with Calvinists and had adopted some Calvinist customs during that same period. However, he emphasized that he only lived in sin for a period of 4 years (from 1637 to 1641), that he did not speak the language and that after these 4 years he was struck by remorse and asked the Pope for absolution. He confessed to only few of his misdemeanors, but it looked sufficient for the Inquisition. After two years of imprisonment he finally underwent an *autodafé* on December 15<sup>th</sup> 1647. Manoel had to repent of his heretic acts, but there was no mention of him being guilty of high treason. The verdict sounded as follows: life imprisonment and wearing the *sanbenito* or penitential vest without remission. This corresponded to an actual 5 years of imprisonment in Lisbon.<sup>121</sup>

After the *autodafé* he regained in dribs and drabs some of his rights. He was given permission to go to communion and received the long-awaited certificates to be able to request help from the King to start a new life. A year after the *autodafé* he was even freed from the *sanbenito*, the garment of disgrace. From then on he could walk freely in the streets dressed in plain clothes. However, he would never get his possessions back and he would never be able to dress in his father's habit again.<sup>122</sup>

Two years after his conviction he left his final track: a pamphlet titled *Antwoord aan de Hollanders (Response to the Dutch)*, an anti-Dutch pamphlet in which he pleaded for a general war against the Dutch occupier.<sup>123</sup> According to

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<sup>121</sup> Vainfas *Traição*: 304-305.

<sup>122</sup> Vainfas *Traição*: 313-314.

<sup>123</sup> Moraes, 'Resposta que deu o Licenciado Manuel de Moraes a dizerem os Olandezes que a paz era a todos útil mas a Portugal necessária quando por parte deste Reyno se lhes offereceo hũa proposta para a paz' (1648), *Anais do Museu Paulista*, 1 : 119-133, Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa – códice ms. n. 1551, de fls. 59 a 64; ms. n. 2694, de fl. 37 a 42. transcription on [www.arlindo-correia.com/101106.html](http://www.arlindo-correia.com/101106.html).



most historians he died in Lisbon in 1649. However, it is also possible that after he had put off his sanbenito he moved back to his homeland Brazil.<sup>124</sup>

Manoel had the ability to adjust to different situations. Every time he ended up in a new power system he managed to reinvent himself at the same time undergoing a physical transformation. Adopting a new social role was thus accompanied by a metamorphosis. When for example he deserted to the Dutch camp he disposed of his tonsure and beard, grew his hair and started wearing different clothes. He was noticed in Recife in plain clothes with a 'golden necklace and hat [...] as he was not a brother anymore'.<sup>125</sup> He knew how to erase all tracks leading to his past as a Jesuit father. But not for good, because after his 8-year residence in the Republic of the United Provinces he returned to Pernambuco and put on his father's habit again. The city had changed considerably since he left. The Dutch heyday was fading away and Manoel himself was no longer the man he used to be when he left in 1635. In the battle of Tabocas he appeared as the Jesuit he was before, in attitude and appearance.<sup>126</sup>

Manoel is an extremely enigmatic figure whose motives are difficult to uncover. When we look at the story of his life, we remain confronted with a series of questions. I will try to formulate answers to the most important ones.

Was his chaotic existence caused by an unstable and incoherent identity? Was it his mimetic capital that gave him the ability to take in different positions and roles in society? What made him capable of playing with the borders of his personality?

I would like to suggest that it was the specific hybrid environment in which Manoel grew up that provided him with the necessary tools to adopt a protean identity that enabled him to play with the borders of his identity. In the hybrid

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<sup>124</sup> Following other sources he was freed after a couple of years in captivity due to a delicate state of health. (Meuwese *For the peace and well-being*: 66)

<sup>125</sup> This remark was made on various occasions in different testimonies during his trial. *Processo* 8, 10, 32-34.

<sup>126</sup> *Vainfas Traição*: 75.

colonial circumstances he acquired mimetic capital that would enable him to behave like a chameleon, i.e. over time he gained knowledge, consciously or not, about different possible subject positions in society. Moreover, he had a *métis* physical appearance and spoke different languages. Therefore, he circulated effortlessly between different social and ethnic spaces. Thanks to all this he became a go-between, similar to his famous predecessor in Mexico, *La Malinche*.<sup>127</sup>

From the first years on after the discovery of the New World go-betweens were essential in the relations between Europeans and the local population. The first explorers could establish a form of communication that was still based on a feeling of European superiority. Go-betweens such as Manoel were capable to enter the sign system of the other.

‘What is essential is the European’s ability again and again to insinuate themselves into the pre-existing political, religious, even psychic structures of the natives and to turn those structures to their advantage.’<sup>128</sup>

In his *Soziologie* Georg Simmel (1908) made a distinction between the *mediator* and the *arbitrator*. While the former stays neutral and looks for ways to come to an agreement between both parties, the latter will always take sides. *Go-betweens* are often one-sided, prejudiced and biased, and are thus more likely to belong to the second group. Sometimes they go even further and exploit their position to gain profit for themselves. This position is pointed to by Simmel as the *tertius gaudens*, i.e. he who seeks to take advantage of the situation independently of the result.<sup>129</sup> This definition is surely applicable to Manoel.

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<sup>127</sup> This woman slave, princess, interpreter and mistress of Hernán Cortés still resonates in present-day Mexico as a double symbol. On the one hand she symbolizes the mother of all Mexicans, as she gave birth to the first child with mixed blood. On the other, she symbolizes the betrayal that led to the victory of the European invader.

<sup>128</sup> Metcalf, *Go-betweens*.

<sup>129</sup> Metcalf, *Go-betweens*: 2-3.

Alida Metcalf relies for her definition of the *go-between* on the work of Stephen Greenblatt,<sup>130</sup> but refines his analysis. She distinguishes between 3 types of go-betweens:<sup>131</sup>

The *physical go-between*: ‘Those who create material links between worlds; carriers of plants, animals, and disease; bearers of children of mixed race’.

The *transactional go-between*: ‘Those who facilitate social interaction between worlds; translators, cultural brokers, negotiators’, they often demonstrate a changing and complex loyalty.

The *representational go-between*: ‘Those who write, draw maps, and represent the ‘other’ culture through texts, words, or images; historians’.

Manoel fitted, at different moments in his life, the 3 types of *go-between*. When he traded wood from the New to the old World he was a *physical go-between*. As a military leader, but also as a teacher and a merchant, he was a *transactional go-between*. Finally, as a writer he was a *representational go-between*. Manoel was the author of diverse texts in which he displayed his knowledge of the country and its inhabitants. Three texts in particular were very influential. The first one was a detailed report of the mission villages of the Jesuits who came under Dutch rule in 1630.<sup>132</sup> In the report one could find the names of all village chiefs and fighting village members, and additionally the enumeration of all village chiefs who had remained faithful to the Portuguese. Manoel described in fact which Tupi Indians could be used in the fight against the Portuguese. The second text was a note on how the Indian villages should be governed. The WIC accepted the note but asked the Political Counsel in Pernambuco to only use it in case of emergencies and the role he wanted to play in the newly designed governance was rejected.<sup>133</sup> A third important document was a Tupi-Latin dictionary. The text is full of information on the history, physics, geography and ethnology of Brazil. The dictionary was included in the *Historia*

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<sup>130</sup> Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*.

<sup>131</sup> Metcalf, *Go-betweens*: 12.

<sup>132</sup> i.e. the captaincies of Rio Grande, Paraíba, Itamaracá and Pernambuco.

<sup>133</sup> Meuwese *For the peace and well-being*: 66.

*Naturalis Brasiliae* (1648) of Marckgraf and Piso, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century a very influential work about Brazil that I will discuss in chapter 4. Furthermore, Manoel helped Johannes de Laet with the French translation of *Novus Orbis* (1640) and the latter also made use of Manoel's writing in his *Iaerlijck Verhael*. In addition, Manoel also wrote a history of Brazil, (at least) one of his books was published and he wrote (at least) one pamphlet, his *Response to the Dutch*.<sup>134</sup>

His role as a *representational go-between* is persistent until today. While we read his words, fragments of images of Dutch Brazil appear in front of us, even when we run through his Tupi-Latin dictionary. Creating such a document was far from a neutral activity in early modern times. To study the language of the natives served the conquest. Knowledge of recently discovered territories and people could be used as a weapon in the domination of local people and was also a useful instrument in the battle between the different European nations. In service of the Portuguese and the Jesuits Manoel gathered information about the Indian people while he lived among them, first as a teacher and later as an army commander. He passed the knowledge to the Dutch, not so much from a colonial utilitarian viewpoint, but, considering the nature of the book in which it appeared, more from a humanist perspective.

Marckgraf and Piso introduced Manoel's list of words in a short paragraph about the author. They relied on a 'linguae illius peritissimo', a person experienced in the matter and therefore a trustworthy source. The glossary contains the Latin translation of 150 Tupi nouns and 137 verbs, which were included thanks to Manoel's interest in the language and thus also in the culture of the natives. Even if this interest was partly led by a political and especially a religious agenda, the lemmas give us fragments of his encounter with the cultural Other. This kind of encounter was possible thanks to his hybrid personality. Manoel was one of the first ethnographers who registered something of the order of the oral in the written word, thanks to which it did not get lost completely. The

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<sup>134</sup> Pronostico y respuesta a una pregunta de un Caballero muy illustre sobre las cosas de Portugal (Leiden, 1641). It was dedicated to Tristão de Mendonça Furtado, Ambassador of the Portuguese king Joao IV in the Netherlands. In text he pleaded for the Restoration of Portugal (1640) after 60 years of Spanish domination.

spoken word that, following de Certeau, awaits the written word to be able to speak; 'le langage oral attend, pour parler, qu'une écriture le parcourt et sache ce qu'il dit.'<sup>135</sup> The oral of the native is (partly) swallowed in what de Certeau refers to as the *scriptural order*. Without the descriptions made by Manoel and others we would have no traces today of these Indian languages, nor of their utterances, neither of their meaning. But the orality, the *parole*, of the native escaped. The text is only a ruin of the *parole* of the other because there are always parcels of that orality that are lost in the act of writing.<sup>136</sup> What remains are only fragments, such as the ones appearing in Manoel's list of words. It is in these fragments, found in the Dutch descriptions of Brazil that a better comprehension of the Brazilian reality is shown, in casu the culture of an Indian tribe.

*Response to the Dutch*, the last known writing of Manoel, was written in the symbolic year of 1648. The pamphlet was part of a notable dispute in Portugal about the question if the Northeast of Brazil, with the exception of Bahia, should be left to the Dutch. Since the Pernambucan revolt of 1645, a bitter debate was raging at the court of João IV between proponents and opponents of a peace treaty with the Netherlands, in which the defendants were portrayed by the enemy camp as too reckless. Manoel adhered to the reckless ones and used his pen in the battle.

His well-constructed argument started with a praise for peace: 'Fiat pax in virtute tua et abundantia, in turibus tuis' ('Let peace reign inside the city walls and prosperity inside your fortresses').<sup>137</sup> He weakens this assertion soon thereafter; such a peace is only thinkable with trustful partners:

Peace is only possible between people who appreciate peace and who respect its laws; since the Dutch are intermittently agitated and have bad intentions; and since they only respect the

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<sup>135</sup> de Certeau *L'écriture de l'histoire*: 216.

<sup>136</sup> The same idea has been further in *Histoire et anthropologie chez Lafitau* (1985), where de Certeau describes the frontispiece of *Moeurs des sauvages américains comparées aux mœurs des premiers temps*. Lafiteau's work symbolizes a new paradigm in scientific discourse. The anthropologist tried from then on to find a lexicon and read the natives as a sign, meaning only he could construct. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the scriptural order was all-embracing.

<sup>137</sup> Moraes *Resposta*.

law when they have no other option, and in addition they give more value to their own profit than to alliances [...]: consequently, it is better to live with them in an open war than in a feigned peace, ...<sup>138</sup>

Manoel tried to demonstrate that the Dutch were dishonest partners. Ironically for us, and most probably also for some of his contemporaries, the charges that he wanted to press against the Dutch, had been pressed against himself not so long before. But he did not breathe a word about his own issues, as it was only the honesty of the Dutch that had to be challenged: ‘latet anguis in herba’,<sup>139</sup> if we would count on them blindly, ‘then we open the possibility that every time it occurs the peace is broken.’<sup>140</sup> Appearances deceive; Manoel had proven that point during the course of his own life. Meanwhile Manoel had become a loyal subject of the Portuguese King and stressed that by using the ‘we’-form in his writing. Recently, he had also converted to Catholicism again, although without exercising any function, and he believed that fighting was indispensable ‘until all enemies were defeated in order to reinforce the Catholic faith, for the protection of her faithful servants’,<sup>141</sup> including himself. During the plea we can read how he repeatedly emphasizes his feelings of commitment to the Portuguese nation and especially the community of the Catholic Church. The credibility of his discourse is highlighted once more in his conclusion. As an eyewitness he was a trustworthy source concerning the nature of the Dutch, because he ‘walked across the regions, negotiated with these people’ and he experienced ‘their character’.<sup>142</sup>

Manoel succeeded again to reinvent himself. In his writings he could, probably even to a larger extent than in his social activities, play with the different facets of his hybrid identity. When we compare his pamphlet to his lexicon, it is as if two different people wrote them. In his pamphlet he allowed a different version of himself to speak from the one that is present in his lexicon. He put on a new mask, a *persona*, allowing him to construct and take on a new role. His mutable

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

loyalty was perceived by many of his contemporaries as unfaithful, hence the many accusations of betrayal.

But was he a betrayer? Manoel was indisputably a shrewd person but it would be unfair to reduce him to a heretic, deserter or betrayer. He possessed the necessary skills to take advantage of many different situations and to occupy important positions in various social circumstances. His subversive behavior was only subversive towards the institution or authority that he betrayed, whether it be the Catholic Church, the Portuguese, the Dutch, his wife, or the Indians. He confirmed time and time again his improvisational talents, showing that he possessed 'the ability both to capitalize on the unforeseen and to transform given materials into [his] own scenario'.<sup>143</sup> A good example was his ability to repeatedly convince the Indians to fight on his side, either against the Dutch or against the Portuguese. His plea in his *Answer* also testified this.

Manoel's behavior can thus be understood as an example of what Stephen Greenblatt famously labeled *self-fashioning*. Greenblatt refers to the interactions between subjects and ways of power. As a result, the early modern *self* took shape. On the one hand, an individual could shape his own identity as 'the self fashions itself'; on the other hand, that identity was also formed by a power system as 'the self is fashioned'.<sup>144</sup>

This double meaning of *self-fashioning* can be found in the person of Manoel. On the one hand his identity was determined by a specific colonial society. He grew up and resided most of his life in a very heterogeneous environment, which gave shape to his hybrid identity. In that particular early modern colonial society his self was fashioned. On the other hand, he operated his own *self-fashioning* and demonstrated it through his improvisational performances: in his appearance before the tribunal of the Inquisition as well as through the different social roles he adopted, especially as the author of his

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<sup>143</sup> Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*: 327.

<sup>144</sup> Jürgen Pieters en Julie Rogiest, 'Self-fashioning in de vroegmoderne literatuur- en cultuurgeschiedenis: genese en ontwikkeling van een concept', *Frame* 22/1 (2009): 43-59.

writings. These texts were part of the same dialectical operation. They were a product of early modern culture but they also gave shape to that same culture.

The idea of *self-fashioning* enables us to shed new light on the significance of betrayal—and thus also of loyalty—in the early modern New World. Manoel was of course not the only one who changed his loyalty in that same period. Many Portuguese and Dutch chose to collaborate with the other side. These subjects were not only part of the population of Dutch Brazil; they also gave shape to the colony and could help to understand, to comprehend the different social and cultural communities. They appear in the Dutch descriptions and helped to create them. Another famous example was Calabar, a Portuguese *mulatto* from mixed European and Indian descent. De Laet refers to him in book 9 as a trustworthy source because ‘he was born there’.<sup>145</sup> Nonetheless, Calabar also inspired suspicion. After praising his trustworthiness, De Laet refers again to Calabar a few pages later and warns us that he cannot be trusted at all times. Calabar had withheld some information before and was still in contact with the Portuguese. Moreover, he was not always coherent. He could thus be a traitor.<sup>146</sup> A popular Brazilian musical has Calabar’s betrayal as its theme. In *Calabar. O elogio da traição* (*Calabar or the praise of betrayal*, 1973) the historical frame of the conflict between the Dutch and the Portuguese is used in the musical as a metaphor of the dictatorship as experienced by its authors. They feel there are parallels in issues such as freedom of speech, human rights, torture, power and oppression. In the seventies, the musical was perceived as a critique of the dictatorial military regime, which it was indeed, and therefore it was banned by censors until 1980.<sup>147</sup> The main theme of the play is betrayal, the authors wanted

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<sup>145</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-IX: 292.

<sup>146</sup> De Laet *laerlijck Verhael*-IX: 300.

<sup>147</sup> Calabar was written by Chico Buarque and Ruy Guerra during the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985) and banned by censors. Chico Buarque was known for his political engagement and critique of the regime, he spent some months in jail (1968) and lived a period in exile (1969). Many songs by Buarque have been banned by censorship during the dictatorship. About the military dictatorship: Júlio José Chiavenato (1994) *O golpe de '64 e a ditadura military*, São Paulo: Editora Moderna and Maria José de Rezende (2001) *A ditadura no Brasil – Repressão de Legitimidade 1964-1984*, Londrina: eduel.



to demonstrate how betrayal paved the way for the present-day Brazilian nation:

This country has to become independent. From the Dutch, from the Spanish, from the Portuguese. Someday all countries will be independent, all over the world. But betrayers will be necessary to achieve this. Many Calabars. It is not enough to hang them, cut them into pieces, to chop them... Calabar never dies. Calabar is a slowworm. In popular speech, the slowworm is a kind of lizard that easily recovers after it has been cut in two or three thousand pieces.<sup>148</sup>

What matters is *A terra e não a bandeira (the land and not the flag)*, says Barbara, one of the characters in *Calabar*. Many Latin-American authors share the idea that the roots of Brazilian identity, and of other Latin-American identities, can be found in pivots who were betrayers. These 'slowworms' were fashioned by the colonial system and possessed the necessary capacities to improvise and demonstrate subversive behavior, which is *self-fashioning*. Manoel was thus not the only 'slowworm'; his contemporary Calabar is by far the most famous one in Brazilian colonial history.

Calabar was born in Brazil in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century of a Portuguese father and an Indian mother.<sup>149</sup> He was thus a *mameluco* or *caboclo*, as are called people of mixed European and Indian descent in Brazil. He was baptized and went to a Jesuit school before becoming a landowner. At first he joined the Portuguese army in different fights to expel the Dutch from Brazil.<sup>150</sup> In 1632, he switched sides and chose to cooperate with the Calvinist invader. By becoming an ally of the Dutch he was considered a traitor by the Portuguese. The Dutch could rely on his knowledge of the region and he played a crucial role in the conquest of the North Coast. Calabar adapted very well to the Dutch society in Brazil and baptized his son in the reformed Church in Recife in 1634. Calabar did not experience the Dutch glory days in Brazil. In 1635, 3 years after his so-called desertion, Calabar was captured by the Portuguese and had to appear in military court. He was found

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<sup>148</sup> Buarque and Guerra *Calabar*: 90.

<sup>149</sup> Calabar's father was probably a mulatto from African descent. Calabar is a west-african name. Calabar is a city in Nigeria from where many slaves were deported to Brazil.

<sup>150</sup> Reino unido iberico 1580-1640, war Spain-Netherlands 1568-1648, 3 fases Dutch in Brazil 1630-36, 1637-44, 1645-54.

guilty of high treason, was hanged and his body was dismembered. His case served as a deterrent for possible future betrayers. The myth goes that thanks to him the Dutch could conquer a vast region of the North Brazilian coast, which led to the glorious time of the Count of Nassau in Brazil. Unfortunately for Calabar, he died before the Count arrived in Brazil. In the Netherlands the figure is as good as unknown, but in Brazil Calabar has appeared for many years in history books, as the symbol of betrayal. Only in recent years some critics have tried to restore his image from the blemish of being a national traitor. Little by little his reputation is being rebuilt and there is a debate over the question whether he was a hero or a traitor.

But why did Calabar choose to join the Dutch side? We can only guess, as the answer is not to be found in historical documents. Yet he was no exception. There were many examples of men and women switching sides at the time and some people even changed various times during their life, as we saw in the case of Manoel de Moraes. Many reasons can be put forward: from economic advantage and glory to political or religious preference and perhaps patriotic feelings. Some sources tell us that in his confession just before his execution, Calabar told the priest that he could not be a traitor because he felt like a patriot, in love with his homeland. It raises some questions of course. How can a man who was not a citizen of any independent nation, and who thus had no legal citizenship, be accused of treason at all? (Portugal was then under Spanish occupation) What is the significance of the trial? Is a case like Calabar a prefiguration of Brazilian patriotism, as the authors of the play wanted to suggest? These are questions to which the final answer might never be found.

To return to Manoel, he played an active role in the Pernambucan revolt of 1645.<sup>151</sup> This was a general uprising in Dutch Brazil against the Calvinistic occupier. In the end this revolt also inaugurated the end of the Dutch colony—the WIC would shakily hang on until 1653. The initiators of the revolt were primarily

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<sup>151</sup> Gonsalves de Mello, *Nederlanders in Brazilië*: 174.

rural dwellers: sugarcane planters, small farmers, slaves, wood merchants, and so on. These colonizers had been living in the interior for years and had built up their own lives.<sup>152</sup> It is very significant that Manoel, once back in Brazil after his eight-year stay in the Netherlands, joined this revolt. It is a symbol of the only thing he stayed faithful to: *his land and not the flag*. Interesting detail is that he then lived together with an African woman slave. It is not known if they had any children, but if so they would have been the fruit of the threefold Brazilian racial mix.

Time after time Manoel thus chose for his native land, which is why it is also a possibility that he hid after his second Inquisitional trial dictating his return to his *patria*.<sup>153</sup> He was led by a feeling of *saudade* that according to legend finds its roots in Brazil and refers to nostalgia for the fatherland.

Similar to Calabar's, we can only guess what Manoel's motives were. He only left scarce tracks in his writings. Reading the fragments he left behind brings us in contact with the shreds of his shattered identity. In other texts we can also catch a glimpse of Manoel. He is quoted by some 17<sup>th</sup>-century scientists and historians (De Laet, Piso, Marckgraf, Montanus), and later he appears in history books and novels, especially since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>154</sup> Recently he was the protagonist of a Brazilian bestseller.<sup>155</sup>

Manoel's behavior was nor incoherent, nor the result of an unstable identity, but was mainly an effect of his hybrid structure. His *mestizo* mind enabled far-reaching improvisation and performance. Every time Manoel entered a new social space, he subjected himself (consciously) to a social modeling. Time after time he followed changing rules of conduct. These rules had a restrictive effect, but also offered him possibilities. This interaction can be explained through the principle

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<sup>152</sup> More about the Pernambucan revolt: Boxer (1977) *De Nederlanders in Brazilië*; José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello (1978) *Tempo dos Flamengos Influência da ocupação holandesa na vida e na cultura do Norte do Brasil*, Recife: SEC-DC and Cabral de Mello (1998) *O negócio do Brasil* São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

<sup>153</sup> Antônio Vieira, the most famous Brazilian jesuit of that period, also went back to Bahia after appearing before the Portuguese Inquisition in Lisbon. Because there were no serious allegations against him he was not heavily sentenced. He thus was not obliged to hide like Manoel.

<sup>154</sup> He appears for instance in a Brazilian historical novel in 1920 written by Paulo Setúbal: *O Príncipe de Nassau* (São Paulo).

<sup>155</sup> Vainfas: *Traição*.

of *self-fashioning*. Manoel was a nomad, and as a go-between he was always on the verge of leaving. Therefore he was always caught between different cultures, never at home, wandering between different religions and between different nations. Being caught in a nomadic *inbetweenness* is the destiny of the hybrid figure.

## 2.16 A LOST AMULET

21<sup>st</sup>-century Brazil is a multicultural society still struggling to go beyond the binary opposition of colonizer-colonized, master-slave or oppressor-oppressed. Socio-economic inequalities persist and are mostly racial yet some of the seeds planted during the Dutch occupation of Northeastern Brazil in the 17<sup>th</sup> century bring Brazil closer to a real multicultural society.

Present-day Brazilians are still searching for these seeds. In his novel *Macunaíma* (1928) Mário de Andrade used the anti-hero Macunaíma as protagonist to symbolize this (failed) hybridity. Macunaíma is a hybrid figure who combines the three races but the miscegenation led to the emergence of a *malandro* (a scamp). He is *um herói sem nenhum caráter* (a hero without character) born in the fictional Amerindian tribe Tapanhumas. He takes off from the wilderness to initiate a long journey through different regions, myths, folk stories and legends that constitute Brazilian history. The purpose of the voyage is a quest for a lost amulet. He departs from his hometown, a primitive environment, and goes to São Paulo and back. The clash between the wilderness of the Amazon and the modern city of São Paulo, marked by velocity, buildings, fast cars, smoke and obtrusiveness, is immense. The lost amulet in the story represents the lost identity of the Brazilian people. It will be found by Macunaíma but lost again at the end. The novel is replete with fairy tales, legends and myths of European, Afro-Brazilian and Amerindian origin. Even the language used in the text is a mix of the different idioms, spoken and written. These different components are incorporated in order to comprehend the lost Brazilian identity,

which is a product of miscegenation. But even when all cultures are absorbed and digested, comprehension is never complete.

### **2.17 *IAERLIJCK VERHAEL*: MORE THAN A SIMPLE CHRONICLE OR A COMPILATION OF LOGBOOKS**

De Laet's use of various reports made by Dutch eyewitnesses, foreign employees of the WIC and hybrid figures not only allowed the creation of less stereotypical depictions of the natives, it also nurtured a further gradual disenchantment of the marvelous New World in general. Hybrids had an impact on colonial society and on the texts written about that same society. Manoel de Moraes, Paraupaba, Pieter Poti, Felipe Camarão and Calabar were not the only hybrid figures in the colony. I used them as case studies to demonstrate the impact of their presence. On the one hand, they modeled colonial society as they could play different roles within the community: they could adapt more easily to different rules of command and they could operate as go-betweens. Hybrid figures could exercise power in different colonial spaces. On the other hand, their reports about the colonial reality show a deeper understanding of this reality.

The descriptions in *Iaerlijck Verhael* reveal the colonial reality but at the same time create that reality through the text. De Laet's main goal still was to convince investors and therefore he gave a mainly positive image of the country and its inhabitants, as he had done for his *Nieuwe Wereldt* he selected passages where the positive aspects of the colonial world were highlighted. However, the descriptions evolved since *Nieuwe Wereldt*. For his *Iaerlijck Verhael* he could consult more contemporary sources and thus give more accurate information about the overseas world. Moreover, he could rely on exceptional go-betweens like Colonel Arciszewski and Manoel de Moraes who could, the first mostly thanks to his tolerant approach and writing skills, the second thanks to his extreme versatility, capture parts of the colonial reality in descriptions. But De Laet could not yet capture the colonial reality in the same way as Barlaeus, or Piso and Marckgrave would a few years later. The reason is twofold. On the one hand, De

Laet wanted to give attractive descriptions for the investors, therefore he only showed one side of the medal and most probably omitted valuable information, intentionally or not. On the other hand, neither Johan Maurits nor skilled European scientist were yet present in the colony. Their presence will have an impact on the way in which the Dutch will grasp Brazilian phenomena and understand local people and will result in Barlaeus' *Rerum per Octennium* and Marckgraf and Piso's *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, two works that contain unique and pioneering descriptions of Dutch Brazil and that will be discussed in the following chapters. With the publication of his *Iaerlijck Verhael*, De Laet transmitted his desire to comprehend and gave hereby a double impetus for future exploration and comprehension of Northeastern Brazil. It was a major forerunner of what would come soon thereafter.

# *Rerum per Octennium*

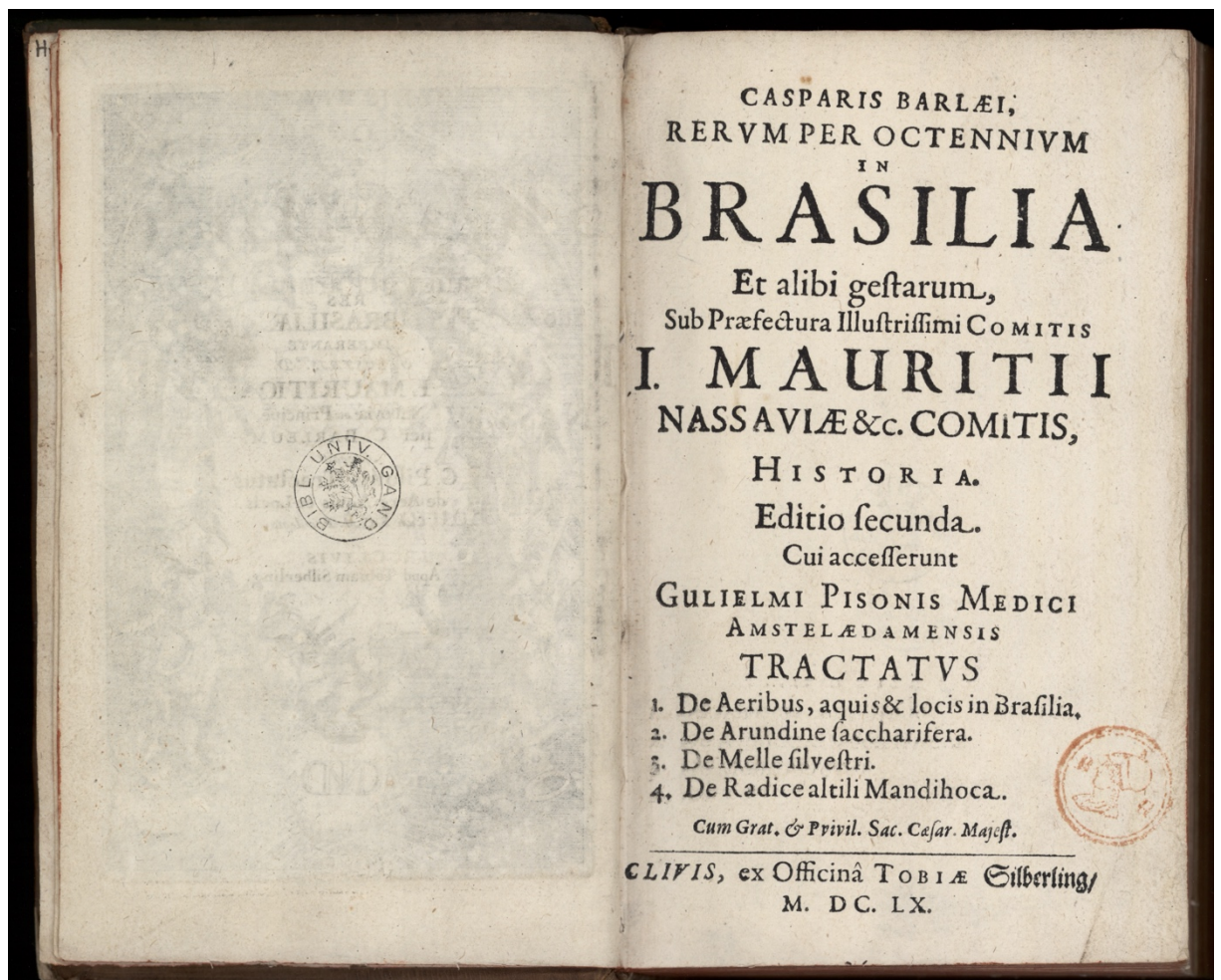


Figure 10: Table of Contents Caspar Barlaeus *Rerum per Octennium* (1660)





### 3.1 ‘OH LINDA!’

‘The beautiful city of Olinda grieved when it was doomed by fate to be pulled down, not by the furor of war but intentionally, and its buildings, monasteries, and churches wept at their ruin. This was not considered sacrilege by our people, unlike the furor of the Phocians in the temple at Delphi, but rather a transferring of sacred objects. [...]

Because we are human and are touched by what is beautiful, dismantling Olinda was an unhappy task for those who were charged with breaking up the city, especially when the roofs of buildings sacred and profane, public and private, radiating with the last rays of the setting sun, were torn off and thrown down. Anyone now looking at what is left would swear the remnants of Troy, the ruins of Carthage or of Persepolis had been strewn over this deserted place. Nothing contrived by man is stable or everlasting, whether it is so intended or the madness of war is the reason that even stone capitols or basilicas reaching to the heavens are not granted eternity. The rubble of this great city was sold as merchandise, for a price, after its transfer to Recife, and was used there as material for new buildings. From the remnants of Olinda, like a rejected mother figure, rose the daughter city of Mauritiopolis, although there was no resemblance between them.<sup>1</sup>

The story goes that when the Portuguese Captain Duarte Coelho first viewed the sea from the top of the hill where Olinda would be built, he exclaimed: ‘Oh, linda situação para construir uma vila’ (‘What a beautiful place to build a town’).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Caspar van Baerle (1660) *The History of Brazil under the Governorship of Count Johan Maurits of Nassau, 1636–1644*, Ed. and Trans. Blanche T. van Berckel-Ebeling (2011) Gainesville: University Press of Florida: 144-145. (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 247-248) I will make use of her translation throughout this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> This urban legend still resonates in today Recife ([www.recifepernambuco.com.br/olinda.html](http://www.recifepernambuco.com.br/olinda.html)). Nevertheless, there is also a less legendary explanation attached to the naming of the city. Probably Duarte Coelho, or one of his servants, gave the name Olinda while referring to a character of Garci Rodriguez de Montalvo’s novel *Amadis de Gaula* (probably 1496). The original novel was written a century before by various Portuguese

Throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, Olinda was one of the most prosperous cities of the Portuguese colony in Brazil. A century later, the Dutch captured the city under the command of Hendrick Lonck (1630) and then destroyed it during the government of Diederick van Waerdenburgh (1631). Soon thereafter, the whole captaincy of Pernambuco was under Dutch control and the Dutch established a flourishing colony in Northeastern Brazil that would remain in their hands until 1654.

Olinda was destroyed, as we can read in the epigraph above, but the Dutch built a new city. On the island Antônio Vaz, next to the ashes of glorious Olinda, they constructed *Mauritsstadt*. This city was named after Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen (1604-1679), who was appointed governor-general of Dutch Brazil in 1637, a function which he fulfilled until 1644. Johan Maurits left the Netherlands on October 25<sup>th</sup> 1636 and arrived in Pernambuco on January 23<sup>th</sup> 1637. After two weeks of siege, the Portuguese, under command of Bagnuoli, were defeated and Porto Calvo was captured by a force of 4.000 Dutch soldiers and 1.000 Indians. Recife became the capital of the WIC empire.

The destruction of Olinda was a symbolic act on a materialistic and political level. The Dutch may have destroyed a beautiful city with its churches and houses, they did not destroy the already established social networks. Stones, bricks and tiles were demolished but human relations were kept unharmed. Also, the heterogeneous character of this early 17<sup>th</sup>-century empire survived. The Dutch even made use of and gave extra impulses to the existing hybridity in such a way that they could profit from this special feature in their administration and in their writings about the region. It helped them to *comprehend* the country better: it helped them to conquer and to understand the region better. When Johan Maurits and his entourage arrived in Brazil in 1637, they encountered luxurious surroundings and a mixed population of Europeans, Indians and Africans. This

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authors, among which João de Lobeira. More on this subject see: Gilberto Freyre (1968) *Olinda: 2° guia prático, histórico e sentimental de cidade brasileira*, Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio: 3; Evaldo Cabral de Mello (2002) *Um imenso Portugal. História e historiografia*, São Paulo: Editora 34, 71 and Eliana Maria Vasconcelos do Nascimento (2008) *Olinda: Uma leitura Histórica e psicanalítica da memória sobre a cidade*, Phd thesis defended at the Faculdade de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas da Universidade Federal da Bahia (Salvador).

heterogeneous character of the land and people of Brazil was articulated in the Dutch colony on a social, economic and scientific level and captured in descriptions and paintings. The most famous accounts of this diverse natural and human reality were made by the artists Albert Eckhout and Frans Post. The latter's life-size portraits of eight non-European people in Brazil constitute one of the first visual records of Native South Americans.<sup>3</sup> The depicted individuals symbolize the five different non-European groups that played a role in the construction of early colonial Brazil: a Tapuya man and woman, a Tupi man and woman, a Mulatto man, a Mameluco woman and an African man and woman.<sup>4</sup> Next to this visible hybridity—i.e. the different physical aspects of these different groups—there was also the very heterogeneous character of the colonizers, coming from different backgrounds, countries and adopting different religions, as I have already demonstrated in the previous chapter. This hybridity could continue to flourish under Johan Maurits thanks to a so-called tolerant policy that allowed the differences to bloom, up to a certain level of course, as I will try to illustrate in what follows.

In the previous chapter I have discussed how Dutch colonizers with a heterogeneous background and hybrid figures could better understand the colonial realities and function as go-betweens. I had a closer look at the lives and works of Colonel Arciszewski and Manoel de Moraes, both appearing in *Iaerlijck Verhael*. I will discuss these heterogeneous figures again in this chapter and will demonstrate the impact of Johan Maurits' policy on hybridity. The author of *Rerum per Octennium*, Caspar Barlaeus, could, in the same way as De Laet, rely on these kinds of figures, i.e. men who displayed a great and capable versatility in functioning in different colonial spaces. *Iaerlijck Verhael* discussed the years prior to Johan Maurits' arrival, whereas *Rerum per Octennium* begins with the Count's arrival in the colony. In a sense, it gives us the sequel of *Iaerlijck Verhael*.

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<sup>3</sup> A detailed analysis of Eckhout's paintings can be found in Rebecca Parker Brienen (2006) *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil, 1637-1644*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

<sup>4</sup> Mameluco is a Portuguese term to refer to the offspring of a European and an Amerindian.

On the one hand it is a chronological sequel as *Rerum per Octennium* starts where De Laet's account had ended. On the other hand—as I shall argue—it takes the paradigm of descriptions one step further. Brazil's diversity was better comprehended in the descriptions of *Rerum per Octennium* thanks to Johan Maurits' presence who stimulated different kinds of research and implemented a tolerant policy. The descriptions show a similarly disenchanted world as in the two works that I previously discussed but the mapping of the colony, which was still salient in *Nieuwe Wereldt* and *Iaerlijck Verhael*, becomes secondary here, giving way to more anecdotal representations of the 'real'.<sup>5</sup> *Rerum per Octennium*, which was not written by a scientist, does not exude the same urge for classification as the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* that I will discuss in the next chapter. However, *Rerum per Octennium* contains many anecdotes in which the colonial world is better comprehended as these anecdotes contain 'new' information gathered—through the intermediary of go-betweens—by scientists or exceptional writers, like Jacob Rabe and Elias Herckmans. These two figures who appear in Barlaeus' work deserve closer attention on account of their versatile character and their capacity to comprehend in descriptions this new amount of information and more in particular to comprehend the hybridity of Brazil. Jacob Rabe was, similar to Arciszewski, a foreign employee of the WIC. This adventurer with German origins lived for four years among Tarairiu Indians, almost as a Tarairiu Indian himself. He wrote down his experiences, on the basis of which he could offer a different view of the Brazilian people from the one portrayed by many of his contemporaries. The second one is Elias Herckmans, a Dutch poet who had neither a hybrid background nor foreign origins—as far as we know, at least—but he was an adventurer making several expeditions on the American continent. He also offered a different, more 'poetic' gaze of Dutch Brazil. However, in contrast to Rabe, Herckmans had to rely on multilingual go-betweens who could communicate with local people in order to gather information to construct his descriptions of the local realities.

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<sup>5</sup> More about the anecdote and the effect of reality see Joel Fineman (1989) 'The History of the Anecdote. Fiction and Fiction', Aram Veeseer (ed.) *The New Historicism*, New York/London: Routledge.

Throughout our discussion of Barlaeus' text we should not forget that, as was the case in the works that I discussed in the previous chapters, it is a clearly biased work. Whereas De Laet omitted information so as not to frighten investors, Barlaeus did the same in order not to tarnish the reputation of Johan Maurits. Also, and again, the text has a double authorship. Two voices are speaking in it: the direct observer and the transcriber Barlaeus. However, there is a difference, here, with the descriptions in the previous works. I want to suggest that this becomes particularly clear in the ethnographic descriptions made by Rabe, who was a special kind of hybrid: Rabe assimilated the culture of the other to such an extent that he (almost) became one himself. Therefore, there is a more acute tension between the direct experience of Rabe and the transcriptions by Barlaeus, both of whom are trying to comprehend the absolute alterity of the other. As I will show in the analysis of Barlaeus' transcriptions of Rabe's reports, the tension between the hybrid eyewitness and the transcriber of these experiences raise specific questions about the boundaries between the self and the other: to which extent one can understand the absolute otherness without oneself becoming one of the 'others'. When the boundaries between self and other are so blurred, as they are within the identity of the hybrid Rabe, how is it possible to render or to rewrite his comprehension in a new description?

In *Rerum per Octennium* Barlaeus not only wrote down facts and events about Dutch Brazil, he also gave further shape to the colony. In some descriptions Barlaeus is still mapping the region, but the mapping is more elaborated and goes further than the simple pinpointing of places. Additionally, he offers anecdotal information. This is visible in the textual fragments but also on the maps themselves—as I already argued in chapter 1 analyzing the map of Pernambuco. The maps of the country, made by Blaeu, do not serve as a promise anymore but as a direct proof of ownership. On the drawings, the possessed territory is depicted together with the natural resources, the location of cities and villages and at times drawings of fauna, flora and local people. The visual language suggests

that the Dutch controlled the land.<sup>6</sup> In the textual descriptions this same evolution becomes salient: as a large region had been literally appropriated the mapping is secondary to more nuanced descriptions in which the heterogeneous character of the country comes to the foreground.



Figure 11: Blaeu Map of Pernambuco in *Rerum per Octennium* (1647)

As I have already argued in the previous chapter, the period of Dutch Brazil marked in my view a turning point in the history of Brazilian colonization.

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<sup>6</sup> Sutton *Possessing Brazil*: 1-12.

There is an interesting study by Daniel de Souza Leão Vieira of Frans Post's visual strategies. Vieira analyzes the painter's landscapes, of which some are incorporated in the *Rerum per Octennium*. He demonstrates how the landscapes are sociologically and politically constructed and represent Brazil as a New Holland overseas. See: Daniel de Souza Leão Vieira (2010) *Topografias imaginárias : a paisagem política do Brasil Holandês em Frans Post, 1637-1669*, Doctoral Thesis, Leiden University.

Hybridity—the racial and cultural mixture on different levels—was a crucial factor during this period. Dutch texts, as *Rerum per Octennium* that I will discuss here, are part of this evolution in the colonial attitude but these texts also fed the creation of the myth of Dutch Brazil that perpetrates and resonates until today. In some descriptions of *Rerum per Octennium*, the Brazilian otherness was comprehended to a specific extent but never completely, which would be impossible as the absolute otherness cannot be fully comprehended. Nevertheless, Barlaeus did try to capture the otherness of Brazil through his descriptions in *Rerum per Octennium*. Even though he failed, he managed to comprehend this otherness better than many of his contemporaries, especially concerning the comprehension of the other. Two major factors made this evolution possible: the skillful deployment of the hybridity of Brazil—which also played a role in the writing of Johannes De Laet’s *Iaerlijck Verhael*—and the presence of Johan Maurits in the colony, a man whose name and fame resonates until today in (Northeastern) Brazil. Let me begin with the latter.

### 3.2 JOHAN MAURITS VAN NASSAU-SIEGEN

The pivotal figure of Dutch Brazil is without any doubt Johan Maurits. This Homo Universalis was born in a noble German family and grew up in artistic circles.<sup>7</sup> It was most probably during his years at the court of Kessel that his interest in the sciences arose; he would cultivate this interest for the rest of his life.<sup>8</sup>

In Brazil he fell in love with the country and started to develop the region in many ways. Johan Maurits wanted to go a step further than simple possession; he also wanted to collect information about the region. Therefore, he invited a number of artists and scientists, among them Albert Eckhout and Frans Post, to

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<sup>7</sup> More about Johan Maurits’s early life, see: M.E.H.N. Mout (1979) ‘The youth of Johan Maurits and aristocratic culture in the early seventeenth century’, *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen 1604-1679. A humanist prince in Europe and Brazil*, The Hague: The Johan Maurits van Nassau Stichting: 13-38.

<sup>8</sup> Hoetink *Some Remarks*: 7-11.

record the territory in an impressive series of texts, paintings and scientific works. Under his impulse, *Mauritsstad* became a flourishing cultural center. Johan Maurits supported the creation of the first botanical garden, the first astronomical observatory and the first zoo of South America. Johan Maurits' rule is also known for being very 'tolerant': he showed respect for the Portuguese planters (the 'moradores') and authorized the presence of Roman Catholic priests and Jewish rabbanim. According to Evan Haefeli, the Dutch colony played a 'transformative role' in Latin America with its tolerant policy towards different religious beliefs. Haefeli, inspired by Jonathan Israel's work, points to significant examples: the Dutch permitted the construction of the first synagogue in the Americas and they did not baptize their slaves, which is why African beliefs prevailed for a longer time than in other European slave communities.<sup>9</sup> Without wanting to overly celebrate the Dutch rule, it has been argued that Dutch Brazil demonstrated an unprecedented tolerance, but each group had its own status and the Dutch Reformed did receive the most socio-economic benefits:

To say there was tolerance in a particular colony is simply to indicate that there was a relationship between two or more groups in which one did not fully suppress the others. [...] Among the problems facing interpretations of tolerance in Dutch Brazil is that no group related to it in quite the same manner as any other. It had obvious benefits for the Dutch Reformed, whose main complaint was that it overly indulged Catholics and Jews and failed to convert Africans. For Jews it presented a unique religious opportunity. For Catholics, it brought a loss of power together with the threat of losing members to conversion either to Judaism or Protestantism. Non-Reformed Protestants had no recognition at all, and there is little record of them trying to obtain it.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Several scholars have highlighted that there was more religious freedom in Dutch Brazil than anywhere else on the American continent. See; Eva Alexandra, 'The Participation of New Christians and Crypto-Jews in the Conquest, Colonization, and Trade of Spanish America, 1521-1660,' in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450-1800*, ed. Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 186-202; Gunter Böhm, 'Crypto-Jews and New Christians in Colonial Peru and Chile,' in *The Jews and the Expansion of Europe to the West, 1450-1800*, eds. Paolo Bernardini and Norman Fiering (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 203-12; Jonathan Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires, 1540-1740* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 97-123 and 125-50; Frans L. Schalkwijk, *The Reformed Church in Dutch Brazil, 1630-1654* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 1998); José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello, *Gente da Nação: Cristãos-novos e Judeus em Pernambuco, 1543-1654* (Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> Haefeli *Breaking the Christian Atlantic*: 133-34.



The implementation of this tolerance was not solely, but in great part, the work of Johan Maurits.<sup>11</sup>

In Brazil, the Dutch period is still viewed as a symbolic turning point in their colonial history. Gilberto Freyre, one of Brazil's most famous historians, sang the praise of Johan Maurits as follows:

Surely, the Brazilians had their first taste of a democratic and broadly representative government during the Dutch rule, under the administration of a German prince from the house of Nassau, Johan Maurits. It was also Johan Maurits who strove to create an atmosphere of religious tolerance in Dutch Brazil, which was outrageously new for Portuguese America and even irritating for his own Calvinist entourage. Nassau was the first one who systematically took care of liberating the Brazilian economy of the monoculture of sugar to develop polyculture among us [...].<sup>12</sup>

Freyre was not the only Brazilian intellectual to glorify the reign of Johan Maurits in Northeastern Brazil. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this Brazilian fascination for the Dutch period remained. New research was and is still being set up. In 2011 there were manifestations, exhibitions and colloquia for the festivities around the *Year of the Dutch (Ano da Holanda no Brasil)*. In this respect the work of José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello must be mentioned. This Brazilian historian was a prolific writer and dedicated almost 60 years of his life to the history of Pernambuco. Gonsalves de Mello spent a great deal of time in European archives and wrote extensively on the subject—among which a biography of João Fernandes Vieira. He was also the editor of many 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century texts written in or about colonial Brazil. His major book about Dutch Brazil, *Tempo dos*

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<sup>11</sup> This tolerance was not solely the work of the Count of Nassau. The WIC already guaranteed freedom for the Jews and the Catholics in its regulations of 1629. See: Jonathan Israel (2007), 'Religious Toleration in Dutch Brazil (1624-1654),' *The Expansion of Tolerance: Religion in Dutch Brazil, 1624-1654*, Jonathan Israel and Stuart B. Schwartz (eds.), Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

<sup>12</sup> 'O certo é que o primeiro gosto de governo democrático e largamente representativo, experimentaram-no os brasileiros durante o domínio holandês e sob a administração de um príncipe alemão da casa de Nassau, João Maurício. Foi também Nassau quem se esmerou em criar no Brasil holandês um ambiente de tolerância religiosa escandalosamente novo para a América portuguesa e irritante para os próprios calvinistas do seu séquito. Nassau foi quem primeiro cuidou sistematicamente de libertar a economia da área brasileira produtora de açúcar, da monocultura, para desenvolver entre nós a policultura'...(Gonsalves de Mello *Tempo dos Flamengos*: 17).

*Flamengos* (1947), which was an immense success in Brazil, was only translated into Dutch in 2000. *Tempo dos Flamengos* depicts daily life in the Dutch colony and has been the key work on the subject for a long time. With all his publications Gonsalves de Mello also nourished the often-heard adagio in Pernambuco that Brazil would have become a different (and better) country if it had remained a colony controlled by the Dutch—even if to my knowledge he never expressed this idea himself. There is still a myth circulating today in Recife about Johan Maurits as a national hero. Yet it is only a myth and no one can say how Brazil would have evolved if it had stayed under Dutch rule.<sup>13</sup> The difference with the Portuguese colonization lay not only in a more tolerant policy. Dutch colonization, especially under Johan Maurits, was very urban in contrast to the agrarian settlements of the Portuguese. Which administration would have turned ‘better’ or ‘worse’ for Brazil is impossible to ascertain but what is indisputable is that between 1630 and 1654 the Brazilian Northeast knew another socio-economic system and that this system was dismantled the moment the Dutch departed. Another fact is that the Dutch descriptions of Dutch Brazil, such as the ones found in *Rerum per Octennium*, contributed to the creation of this myth about the Count. Johan Maurits’ presence in Brazil resulted in a vast arsenal of images, maps and descriptions that served to demonstrate that Johan Maurits and thus by extension the Dutch *comprehended*—in the double meaning of to control and to understand—the region and its inhabitants. On the other hand, these different *texts*—in the broad meaning of the term—fashioned the image of the New World that circulated in the Netherlands and Early Modern Europe. The early modern trading network in which the Dutch participated was also a knowledge and imagination network, which received a considerable impulse from Johan Maurits. Two works of major importance were published under Johan Maurits’ patronage: Caspar Barlaeus’ *Rerum per Octennium in Brasilia et alibi gestarum* (1647), which I will discuss in this chapter, and Georg Marckgraf and Willem Piso’s

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<sup>13</sup> Evaldo Cabral de Mello deconstructed this myth in *Rubro Veio. O Imaginário da Restauração Pernambucana* (1986). Going back to the creation of the myth more than 200 years ago he analyzed how the myth was and is still used on a sociological and political level.

*Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* (1648), which I will discuss in the next. Both works contain descriptions in which the evolution within the paradigm is taken to a next level. Not only do they demonstrate disenchantment towards the exotic realities similar to the previously discussed works, the descriptions in *Rerum per Octennium* and *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* also classify—in a ‘scientific’ way in the latter work and through the use of anecdotes in the former—these realities so they could be better understood. However, I will argue that the evolution in the descriptions of local people already stops with the *Rerum per Octennium* whereas the ones of natural phenomena reach their utmost level of *comprehension* in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*.

I chose to work with the second richly illustrated edition in folio of *Rerum per Octennium* (1660), also known as the ‘little Barlaeus’. The format of this second edition was smaller but it is an extended version as the author not only added maps and illustrations but also four texts on natural history.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Blanche Ebeling-Konings made an excellent English translation in 2011 on which I will rely. I want to have a closer look at how the descriptions in this text create knowledge and are at the same time part of a larger cultural process in which knowledge is communicated. Furthermore, I want to further uncover the importance of hybridity in these processes and show how hybridity can lead to a different kind of comprehension.

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<sup>14</sup> Other editions are also worth mentioning: Claudio Brandãos’ Portuguese translation of 1940 (*História dos feitos recentemente praticados durante oito anos no Brazil*, Rio de Janeiro: Ministério da Educação) and Blanche T. van Berckel Ebeling-Konings *The History of Brazil under the Governship of Count Johan Maurits of Nassau, 1636-1644* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011). Unfortunately, the English translator never saw the book in print as she died just after the final edition was completed. I will make use of her translation.

### 3.3 RERUM PER OCTENNIUM IN BRASILIA ET ALIBI NUPER GESTARUM, SUB PRAEFECTURA ILLUSTRISSIMI COMITIS I. MAURITII, NASSOUVIAE, &C. COMITIS ...

As the title suggests, *Rerum per Octennium* gives an account of the eight years of Johan Maurits' reign in Brazil. The work praises all the Count's accomplishments — unsurprisingly, as it was he who commissioned it.<sup>15</sup> But Barlaeus (1584-1648) was also concerned with facts, giving careful political and military descriptions as well as an overview of the natural surroundings of the new colony, such as the climate and its flora and fauna. He also added a number of ethnographic descriptions of Brazil's local people. In order to achieve this, he consulted the extensive archive made available to him by Johan Maurits. More correctly, it was Johan Maurits who presented the works he considered pertinent to be included. When the count returned to the homeland, he wanted to present a positive image of his eight years in Brazil and dispel the rumors saying his Brazilian endeavor had failed.<sup>16</sup> In his view, it was the Company that had failed him by not sending the necessary support and reinforcements to the colony. The Company was held responsible by the Count for the Portuguese rebellions and the subsequent loss of territory. This may be the reason why Johan Maurits did not choose Johannes De Laet, one of the directors of the company, to write the story of his Brazilian accomplishments, but Barlaeus, a well-known and respected scholar.

Barlaeus was an important Dutch intellectual authority in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, who corresponded extensively with several prominent Dutch humanists such as Constantijn Huygens, Johannes Saeckma, P. C. Hooft, and numerous others. He

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<sup>15</sup> Most historians agree that *Rerum per Octennium* was commissioned by Johan Maurits. However, many questions remain unanswered as there is no real proof that Johan Maurits financed the work. Perhaps it was Johannes Blaeu. See A.J.E. Harmsen (1994) 'Barlaeus' Descriptions of the Dutch Colony in Brazil', *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction: Studies on Fiction, Literary Tradition, Scholarly Discovery, and Observation in Travel Writing*, ed. Zweder von Martels, Leiden: E.J. Brill: 164-65.

<sup>16</sup> In various pamphlets of that epoch the Brazilian enterprise was mocked and criticized, for example in *Basilsche gelt-sack. Waer in dat klaerlijkck vertoont wort, waer dat de participanten van de West- Indische Compagnie haer geldt ghebleven is* (1647), which pretends to have been written in Brazil but was not. The author accused 'in partical the Jews and other dishonest persons' to rob the money of the Company. See: Wiesebron *Muitas facetas*: 17.

was a preacher, a poet and he also studied medicine in Caen. This stay in France was the only time he left the Low Countries. In 1621, he was dismissed from the University of Leiden because he supported the Arminians.<sup>17</sup> In 1632, he became a professor of philosophy at the newly created Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam. *Rerum per Octennium* was first published in folio by Joan Blaeu, in one Latin and two German editions, and circulated among the 17<sup>th</sup>-century elite. It was not Barlaeus' first work about the New World. In 1622, he translated Antonio de Herrera's descriptions of the Antilles.<sup>18</sup> His private library in Leiden contained many American travelogues and demonstrated his interest in the New World.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, he wrote among others a eulogy on Elias Herckmans (*Der Zeevaert Lof*, 1634), a book about the entrance of Maria de Medicis in Amsterdam (*Medicea hospes*, 1638) and a poem about Johan Maurits' presence in Brazil (*Mauritius Redux*, 1644). In this elegiac poem Johan Maurits' reign in Brazil is depicted as a battle in the war against Spain. On account of his success, Barlaeus argues, Johan should be acclaimed at his return as 'Nassovius trans aequor adest, reducemque salutat, Belga Ducem'. (The sea brought Nassau back, the Dutch leader who should be greeted)

The main goal of *Rerum per Octennium* was to portray the years Johan Maurits spent in Brazil. *Rerum per Octennium* is thus clearly a biased work; it is a laudatory text that praises Johan Maurits in all his deeds. It was Johan Maurits'

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<sup>17</sup> The Arminians or Remonstrants, followers of Arminius (1560-1609), were involved in a dispute with the Gomarists or Counter-Remonstrants, followers of Gomarus (1563-1641). The Synod of Dordrecht (1618-19) condemned the doctrine of Arminianism as heresy. Ground of the debate was the doctrine of predestination. The controversy was addressed at the Synod of Dorth (1618-19), a meeting involving representatives from the Reformed Churches from all over Europe. The doctrine of the Arminians was then condemned as heresy. More about this dispute see: Willem Otterspeer (2000) *Groepsportret met Dame I. Het bolwerk van de vrijheid. De Leidse Universiteit, 1575-1672*, Amsterdam: Bert Bakker. More about Barlaeus in this context: 'Knibbelige tijden, 1609-1618' in Otterspeer (2000) and Eric Jorink (2006) *Het 'Boeck der Natuere'. Nederlandse geleerden en de wonderen van Gods' schepping 1575-1715*, Leiden: Primavera Pers: 32-33, 38, 148, 267-68, 299.

<sup>18</sup> Antonio de Herrera (1559-1625) was a Spanish historian. His most famous work is *Historia general de los hechos de los Castellanos en las islas y Tierra Firme del Mar Oceano* (4 vols., Madrid, 1601-15).

<sup>19</sup> Harmsen *Barlaeus' description*: 158-169.

More about Barlaeus and his private library, see: J. A. Worp, (1886) 'Caspar Barlaeus', *Oud Holland* 4 (1886), 172-89.

choice to work with this Dutch polymath who would glorify his deeds, which Barlaeus did from the very beginning of the text in his dedication to the Count:

I offer you Brazil, Most Illustrious Count, radiating the brilliance of your supreme rule and military glory. If the country were capable of speech and could address you, it would surrender itself to you. You have shown exemplary courage defending and enlarging the territory conquered by the Dutch, and inspired the Spaniards with fear of your military prowess. As protector of one and terror of the other, you have gained the admiration of both nations.<sup>20</sup>

This glorification of Johan Maurits is found throughout the book. His military deeds and other accomplishments are stressed over and over again. Johan Maurits is repeatedly compared to ancient leaders such as Hannibal, Antiochus, and others. Following Barlaeus, Johan Maurits beholds a divine disposition to achieve fabulous deeds overseas. Even if Barlaeus states he wants to render the facts truthfully, he tends at times to forget his own rule. He uses original documents to create a livelier narrative, offering a space for the eyewitness to speak directly to the reader. Even if these official documents stress the trustworthiness of Barlaeus' text, the result is a sometimes incoherent patchwork of citations—often even without mentioning the author—, facts, glorifications of Johan Maurits and digressions to Antiquity leading to some historical incongruities. In these digressions, Barlaeus can show off his knowledge: he often quotes or refers to his predecessors such as de Léry and Herrera, mentions classical sources such as Seneca and Aristotle, or refers to biblical sources. For example, in the various ethnographic descriptions Barlaeus draws parallels with customs or events from classical Antiquity or the Bible. At first sight, *Rerum per Octennium* does not seem to offer a better comprehension of the colony in his descriptions than *Iaerlijck Verhael*. However, Barlaeus went further than merely proving his intellectual capacities and celebrating the actions of the Count.

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<sup>20</sup> Barlaeus *History*: 1. 'Brasiliam, imperio tuo armisque fulgidam, tibi offero, Comes Illustrissime. Si loqui illa posset & tecum pacisci, traderet seipsam Tibi. qui insigni fortitudine asseruisti & auxisti Belgicam; & Martis tui famâ metuque implesti Hispanicam, alterius vindex, alterius terror, utriusque admiratio.' (Barlaeus *Rerum: Dedicatio*)

Beyond the panegyric narrative and descriptions of *Rerum per Octennium* one can read about political and military facts, natural surroundings, and Amerindian tribes. Barlaeus transcribed texts he received from Johan Maurits. He thus had access to and could make use of more elaborated reports than De Laet could. Furthermore, he wrote his text using not only the notes that he received from Johan Maurits, but also the many texts of the ancients that were lying on his writing table and from which he selected those he found relevant to his work on the New World. These ancients are only trusted when their ideas or theories can be confirmed by contemporary trustworthy sources.

*Rerum per Octennium* contains three main topics: economy, natural science, and interest in the *humanitas*. Barlaeus thus intertwined the interest of the WIC (economy) with the ones of Johan Maurits (natural sciences and *humanitas*). Barlaeus managed not only to stress the mercantile importance of the Dutch colonial enterprise for his home country but he also managed to insert scientific information. Already on the first pages these different aspects are made clear. The dedication to Johan Maurits is a panegyric for the count who seems to embody Barlaeus' definition of the *Mercator Sapiens*. In the oration he gave at the opening of the Athenaeum Illustre in Amsterdam in 1632, *Mercator sapiens, sive oratio de conjungendis mercaturae et philosophiae studiis* (*The wise merchant, how commerce and philosophy should be practiced together*), Barlaeus stressed that a good interaction between commerce and philosophy is not only possible but actually desirable. The merchant should not only pursue economic goals, he should combine commercial skills with (intellectual) virtue and eloquence, following the example of Mercury—the ancient God of commerce and wisdom. This is exactly what Barlaeus himself tried to demonstrate in his writing about the Brazilian colony. In *Rerum per Octennium*, Barlaeus wrote in defense of Johan Maurits who was blamed by WIC members to have spent too much time promoting the arts and sciences in the colony. Barlaeus, however, implies that all the knowledge—which leads to intellectual virtue—accumulated by Johan Maurits about Brazil served and could continue to serve the mercantile goals of the WIC.

### 3.4 RE-WRITING

Barlaeus' goal was to present the colony in descriptions. In the first chapter of the *Rerum per Octennium*, he clarifies how he wanted to proceed in his book by referring to De Laet's working method for the *Iaerlijck Verhael*:

Johannes de Laet, a man of high position and great renown, has written a history of their daily activities as told by those who were present at the event. His history is based on a truthful interpretation, without hearsay or foolish gossip.<sup>21</sup>

Barlaeus shows a deep respect towards De Laet and states that he wants to work in the same vein. In his view, De Laet's and his own writings can be trusted because they both made careful choices in their selection of documents to incorporate in their respective works. They relied on reports made by contemporaries of the events:

However, I write under the eyes of those who were present or actively involved in these events. Records that are used by the public are considered true accounts. I wish to be accorded the same trust, but I do not ask for more, since I will not indulge in futilities. I will put together a report written with a calm disposition and in tranquility of mind. I have a large collection of recorded facts and numerous official documents from which I will make a selection, so that the labor of a long and difficult search can be avoided, and I will make certain that brevity does not detract in any way from memorable and important events. I consider it unnecessary to pay attention to small details, for an excess of zeal is wrong, and can do as much harm to a very important matter as to an unimportant one.<sup>22</sup>

Barlaeus informs the reader that he will give a selection of facts and events, yet this selection is also one of the conditions to give a truthful account. With his

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<sup>21</sup> van Baerle: 20. 'Retulit illa in monumenta Vir Amplissimus & clarissimus, Iohannes Latus, liberam veritatem pefessus, no levi auditione aut fabulis inanibus, verum illorum, qui ebus interfuere, narratione & diurna actorum scriptura.'(Barlaeus *Rerum*: 29)

<sup>22</sup> van Baerle *History*: 22. 'Mihi simplici narratione & ex rerum fide haec tradidisse, sufficet. Aliquot retro seculis gesta scribas confidentius, remotis seculis gesta scribas confidentius, remotis autoribus & testibus. mihi in eorum oculis vivitur & scribitur, qui haec aut gessere ipsi, aut gestis intersuere. Quantum chartis publicis creditur à veri studiosis, tantum mihi, nec ultra, credi cupiam nec enim vagis oculis usurpata, sed scripta domi à tranquillis & sedates mentib referem. In maximo reru cumulo & chartarum immensis fascibus, ut harum reru curiosis longae inquisitionis labor absit, utar delectu, & ea brevitate, quae nihil magnum & memorabilia factis subducet. minuta persequi supervacaneum credidi. anxia sedulitas sedultaris error est, & summae tantum decedit, quantum minus necessariis impenditur.'(Barlaeus *Rerum*: 31-32)



patchwork of ‘recorded facts’ and ‘documents’—terms that refer to accuracy—he will give a truthful image of reality. What Barlaeus does not mention, however, is that the accounts he consulted had already profited from Johan Maurits’ presence in the colony and could thus offer more accuracy than the ones selected by De Laet. Barlaeus only stresses the fact that he based his account on the reports of various eyewitnesses who were to be trusted, which is a proof of his own trustworthiness. He was *rewriting* what had been written elsewhere. Philippe Hamon points at a relation between *rewriting* and the Latin verb *de-scribere*:

First we have to be aware that knowledge (of words or things) is not only a text that was already learned but also a text that was *already written* elsewhere, and that description can always be considered, more or less, as the place of a rewriting, as an operator of intertextuality; remember that the etymological origin of *de-scribere* is writing *from* a model.<sup>23</sup>

In *Rerum per Octennium* we encounter this double meaning of ‘rewriting’ and ‘describing’. Barlaeus ‘re-wrote’ the information he received in order to create his own version, a more appealing but no less truthful one, of Johan Maurits’ eight years in Brazil. Through *re-writing* or *de-scribing* he gave shape to the Dutch colony. In the following passage Harold Cook affirms that since the so-called scientific revolution, resulting from travels and the discovery of the world, knowledge was transferred by means of plain speech. If Cook by plain speech means straightforward language without adornments, I want to emphasize that this kind of speech was not always used by everyone.

Trust and credibility rooted in modesty and work, supported by plain speech and the rule of law, oriented toward finding out and accumulating a knowledge of the exact details of the material world and exchanging them commensurably: these constituted the values of the hard-headed merchant and his fellow travelers just as much as they did the values of the naturalists and physicians. Indeed, these values supported the very fabric of the Dutch Republic, making it a bastion of safety against their enemies and a place of refuge for those who lived from knowing about how best to transform worldly things into valued specimens of consumer taste and personal good. Objectivity had the power to whet the appetites, even

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<sup>23</sup> Philippe Hamon, *Du descriptif*: 48. ‘Notons d’abord qu’un savoir (de mots, de choses) est non seulement un texte déjà appris, mais aussi un texte *déjà écrit* ailleurs, et la description peut donc être considérée toujours, peu ou prou, comme le lieu d’une réécriture, comme un opérateur d’intertextualité ; *de-scribere* rappelons-le, étymologiquement, c’est écrire *d’après* un modèle.’

to alter perceptions, concepts, and moral strictures. It did not float above the world but was deeply involved with it.<sup>24</sup>

This thesis may be applicable to most of the scientific writings of the period, as for instance the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* that I will discuss in the next chapter, but Barlaeus used other rhetorical tactics in *Rerum per Octennium* to transfer knowledge and plain speech was not one of them. Of course, unlike Marckgraf and Piso—the contributors of the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*—Barlaeus was not and never claimed to be a scientist. As a man of letters he used different rhetorical strategies to construct his descriptions, which does not subvert his claim to veracity but emphasize his credibility. With these strategies Barlaeus not only wanted to captivate but also to persuade his readers of the veracity of what he was describing. He wanted to give the impression that he gave the only possible and truthful description of the colony, but instead he gave one of the many possible descriptions and thus created his own version of the exotic reality. Another author could have comprehended—i.e. understood and appropriated—this same reality differently, using different sources or composing the same information in another way. This would have created another colonial reality for the reader. In addition, Barlaeus did not want his book to participate in the contemporary political debate on the role of the WIC in Brazil. After the departure of Johan Maurits a Luso-Brazilian rebellion erupted in 1645. The siege lasted several years and the Dutch lost an increasing number of territories. By the end of the 1640s, many Dutch pamphleteers criticized the Dutch presence in Brazil, especially pointing out the financial losses of the WIC.<sup>25</sup> Barlaeus avoided any participation in this debate by writing in scholarly Latin and by limiting the scope of his story to the eight glorious years of Johan Maurits in the colony.

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<sup>24</sup> Cook *Matters of Exchange*: 81.

<sup>25</sup> den Heijer *Geschiedenis van de WIC* : 49-54.

### 3.5 EVOLUTION IN THE DESCRIPTIONS OF THE NATIVES

After the elucidation of his working method at the beginning of his book Barlaeus inserted a long geographical description of the new colony, to which he added a paragraph about the origins of the natives of South America:

It is wrong to assume that the entire population of America originated on that continent, for our faith teaches that all mankind is descended from Asiatic peoples. Who were the first inhabitants and how they reached this continent from the Old World is not known. Perhaps it was along the Straits of Anian, or a continuous landmass, or a series of islands that stretched along northern Europe. Perhaps it was the island known as Atlantis, which formerly was believed to be located close to the Strait of Gibraltar, and according to Plato was thought to be America. Perhaps it was a storm that drove them there. You can add or detract from these stories just as you please, but I am not inclined to choose sides and attack one theory or defend another when the truth is so obscured.<sup>26</sup>

Barlaeus could not rely on trustworthy sources about this subject and therefore did not draw any conclusion on the origins of the American natives. In this passage he also makes clear that one may not rely blindly on the ancients. He refers to the contemporary Dutch discussion about the origins of the American Indians without engaging in the lively polemic between Johannes de Laet and Hugo de Groot—which I discussed in chapter 1—because he could not consult contemporary sources.

Barlaeus does not elaborate on their origins but mentions the local people on various occasions in brief comments in between the first descriptions of the land. When he writes about the abundance and beauty of the country, he states that despite the fertile soil and the healthy air, the natives are ‘cruel and brutal’.<sup>27</sup> In this description of the ‘Brazilians’, he only mentions briefly and superficially their

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<sup>26</sup> van Baerle *History*: 23. ‘Populos ejus, ut & totius Americae, aborigenes esse, esas creditu: cum ex Asiaticis parentibus totum genus humanum fluxisse, fide constet, qui primi hominum, & quomodo ex Veteri orbe huc pervenerint, an per Anianis Fretum, an per continuas ad Arctum Europae terras, an per Septentrionalium Insularum trajectus, an per vicinam olim & objectam Gaditano Freto Atlanticam (quam Americam esse ex Platonis Critia & Timaeo quidem autumant) an tempstate, in incerto est. Pro ingeio suo quisque demat vel addat fidem tot placitis, mihi in partes ire, aut hoc prae illo vel impugnare vel asserere, tanta veri caligine, animus non est’ (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 33)

<sup>27</sup> ‘tam crudos & feros esse gentibus animos’ (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 34)

most important features. He starts with the language, which is ‘difficult to learn’ but similar among the different peoples,<sup>28</sup> then he talks about their customs, which are ‘varying from tribe to tribe’,<sup>29</sup> and their physical appearance in detail, to continue with concise comments on their beliefs, housing, food, swimming capacities, fishing, drinking, hunting, cruelty, weapons, funeral rituals, and he ends with longer descriptions of their morals.

In this passage at the beginning of *Rerum per Octennium*, the description of the natives is very general and vague, which contrasts with the longer nuanced descriptions that appear further in the book. It seems in these first passages as though Barlaeus describes all *Brazilians* as being one tribe with the same appearance and customs. In other parts of *Rerum per Octennium* he sketches the natives not as one heterogeneous group but distinguishes between the different tribes and gives more information about customs and habits, as I will show later in this chapter. In the first pages Barlaeus does not go further than previous descriptions and does not demonstrate a better comprehension of the natives, which will be possible in the longer and more nuanced description further on. Nonetheless, in his introductory chapter he creates a first general image of the Indians for his European readers. Moreover, he mentions that he is describing the *Brazilians*. In most contemporary texts the term *Brazilians* is used to refer to the Tupi-Indians, who differ in appearance and custom from the Tapuya Indians. Albert Eckhout made this very clear in his life-size portraits of members of the respective peoples. Many Tupi were brought under control of the Portuguese—at least to a certain extent—while some Tapuya were allies of the Dutch. It seems as though Barlaeus is describing one specific group of natives, the ‘enemy-tribes’, but further in this chapter he will make clear that he is describing all Brazilian Indians and that he is well aware of the differences between the peoples. In the introduction there is thus no fuller comprehension yet:

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Lingua cognitu difficilis’, ‘Mores Brasiliensium, indoles, habitus, vel communes sunt, vel pro nationum diversitate peculiare’. (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 35)

<sup>29</sup> ‘Mores Brasiliensium, indoles, habitus, vel communes sunt, vel pro nationum diversitate peculiare’ (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 35)

Once religion and basic education had been introduced, those Indians who were settled in villages and townships along the coast accepted European customs, so that here Tacitus's saying that along the coast life is more civilized holds true once more.<sup>30</sup>

Barlaeus not only uses the term *Brazilians* to refer to all native tribes, when he describes their religion or spirituality, the description coincides with many other stereotypical descriptions of Tapuya Indians, and less with most previous descriptions of Tupi tribes:<sup>31</sup>

They do not worship any gods or supernatural beings, but thunder and lightning seem to inspire them with great respect. They have a horror of evil spirits.[...] Soothsayers are esteemed.<sup>32</sup>

This description is very general and Barlaeus does not mention which specific tribe he is describing. He mentions that the Tupi tribes are more 'civilized' and that they do not worship ghosts anymore nor believe in the prophecies of augurs. This was common knowledge that circulated about the Brazilian natives: by the time the Dutch arrived in Brazil, most of these people believed in the Catholic God, or at least pretended they did. In these passages, Barlaeus only gives vague descriptions showing no further comprehension. Nonetheless, in these same pages he also gives some valuable ethnographic information, e.g. when he is describing how these people bury their dead, showing he is already in possession of more knowledge which will enable him—or the Dutch in Brazil—and the reader to better comprehend them:

They believe that the person, who has left this life, whether his body is whole or mutilated and pierced with wounds, will descend to the underworld. Therefore they do not cremate the dead but bury the body, adding a hammock for sleeping and food for several days, for they are convinced that the spirit of the dead needs rest and sustenance for a while. They mourn the death of their fellow men immoderately, spending a whole month lamenting and

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<sup>30</sup> van Baerle *History*: 26. 'Postillata religionem & atrium liberalium studia, in vicis & oppida tributi, Europaeorum moribus adsuevere illi, qui mare acculunt, ut & hic illud Taciti usurpare liceat, *mitius circa Oceanum vivitur*'. (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 38)

<sup>31</sup> The distinction between Tupi and Tapuya peoples is not always very clear, see Cristina Pompa, *Religião coço tradução: missionários, Tupi e Tapuya no Brasil colonial* (Bauru, SP: EDUSC/ANPOCS, 2003).

<sup>32</sup> van Baerle *History*: 24. 'Numina nulla, deos nullos colunt, nisi Tonitrua forte aut fulmina, quorum magna animos incessit veneratio. Spiritus malignos horrent. [...] Sagas in pretio habent'. (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 36)

foolishly throwing themselves on the ground, and conclude this display of grief by dancing and getting drunk.<sup>33</sup>

In his introduction he gives a general yet very sloppy description of all Brazilian natives while in the following chapters of the *Rerum per Octennium* he will acknowledge their diversity and go a step further in the comprehension of the people. If the first descriptions do not differ much from the ones in *Iaerlijck Verhael* there is one salient difference. In *Rerum per Octennium* the *Leyenda Negra* is not used as a political instrument as it was in both De Laet's *Nieuwe Wereldt* and in his *Iaerlijck Verhael*. From the beginning Barlaeus neither offers representations of suffering Indians nor comparisons of the Dutch situation with Indian people. There is a shift in the way in which the Indians are portrayed in *Rerum per Octennium*, a shift that becomes more visible after the general introduction. The images of the Indian that circulated in 1630s and 1640s are less stereotypical than before. On the one hand the political situation in the Netherlands had changed—the independence of the Republic would be recognized in 1648—, on the other hand, as more knowledge was acquired about the natives more nuanced portraits of them could begin to develop. Dutch men, such as Jacob Rabe, living among Indians could assemble that kind of knowledge in order to comprehend these people better. They could do so thanks to their own and the surrounding hybridity.

### 3.6 HUMAN PATCHWORK

Brazil's diversity had been there from the very beginning of the discoveries and conquest: the exuberant nature on the one hand and on the other the human

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<sup>33</sup> van Baerle *History*: 25. 'Qui e vita discessere vel integro corpore, vel mutilatos membra, aut vulneribus confossos, descendere ad inferas sedes putant. Quamobrem incremata cadavera condunt terra, addito reti cubandi causa, nec non cibariis in aliquot dies, quod persuasum habeant, & dormire interim & cibos capere manes mortuorum. Obitus suorum immodice lugent, mensem integrum ejolatibus exigent in terram se excordes projiciunt, & mox tragicos hosce motus computatione & saltibus finiunt'. (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 38)

heterogeneity of its population. Of course the three populations—I'm making the subdivision here between people from European, African and Amerindian descent—did not really blend and they lived, with the exception of very few, separated from each other. Indians, Africans and the different Europeans were not living in perfect harmony, nor did they have the same freedom, obligations or rights. Under Dutch rule, as shown by Haefeli, the Dutch Reformed had the most privileges. However, the Dutch made use of this heterogeneous environment they encountered in a different way than the Portuguese had done before them. Their more tolerant rule allowed for more differences than the policies of their predecessors—even if the choice of their governance was also a clear political strategy to obtain more easily allies against the Portuguese troops.

The Dutch population itself in Brazil could be divided into two categories: on the one hand there are the employees of the WIC (being soldiers, bureaucrats or ministers) referred to as 'dienaaren' and on the other the 'vrijburghers' or 'vrijluiden' (merchants, artisans and settlers). In the latter group one could find many former soldiers who had settled down and Dutch immigrants in search of a new life in Brazil. A majority of colonists were Portuguese 'moradores', living under Dutch domination. Among the population were thus many Portuguese people who chose to stay where they had created or found a new life. Johan Maurits displayed some tolerance towards Catholics, but also Jews could, up to a certain level, practice their faith, which contrasted with their level of freedom under the Portuguese.

Already for almost a century there were Sephardic Jews living in Brazil. Before the Portuguese Inquisition was installed, they played an important role in Portuguese society but also in Portuguese colonial expansions: they gave financial support and helped with technical knowledge of the naval construction or navigational instruments.<sup>34</sup> Many Sephardic Jews became *marranos* or *cristãos-novos* and occupied important positions as cartographers, merchants or religious

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<sup>34</sup> Mendes Pinto *terra mítica*: 89-97.

teachers providing catholic catechesis in Portuguese colonies.<sup>35</sup> The Inquisition arrived later in Portugal than in other European countries, in 1536 only. But from then on many Sephardic Jews started to flee from Portugal to Brazil, feeling threatened in the Old World. When New Christians were perceived as a menace to the Portuguese kingdom and Roman Catholicism they appeared on the lists of auto-da-fé.<sup>36</sup> As a consequence, many New Christians were banished to Brazil, because the country was considered to be some sort of Purgatory, the sentence being a forced exile.<sup>37</sup> In Brazil, they could start a new life and they held different positions in the colonial society, for example as wood or slave traders or as plantation owners. These *cryptojudeos* (crypto-jews), i.e. Jews who continued to practice their customs in secret, could live in peace in the colony until the arrival of the Inquisition in Brazil, in 1591. Before that moment, various reports mention the celebration of mixed marriages, especially of catholic men with new Christian women.<sup>38</sup> When the Inquisition arrived in Brazil, their daily life was scrutinized again by informers, the Inquisitors having installed a practice of denunciation in the New World. Suspicion was enough to appear on the list. The Portuguese Jesuit Antônio Vieira criticized these actions of the Holy Office, but his arguments were hardly taken into account. The Dutch era in Pernambuco initiated a short break from persecutions, as Johan Maurits offered the Jews more liberties. Many people of Jewish background, the New Christians, converted back to Judaism under the Dutch rule as more religious freedom was implemented.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Falbel *Judeos no Brasil*: 93 and Gonsalves de Mello *Gente da nação*: 9-11.

<sup>36</sup> About the Portuguese Inquisition see: José Pedro Paiva and Giuseppe Marcocci (2013) *História da inquisição Portuguesa. 1536-1821*, Lisbon: A Esfera dos Livros.

<sup>37</sup> Bernardini and Fiering *The Jews and the Expansion*: 246.

<sup>38</sup> Cabral de Mello *O nome*: 106-107.

<sup>39</sup> More about the situation of the Jews under Portuguese rule in Brazil during the 16th and 17th century: Marques da Almeida, António Augusto (2009)(dir.). *Dicionário Histórico dos Sefarditas Portugueses. Mercadores e Gente de Trato*. Lisboa: Campo da Comunicação ; Novinsky, Anita W. (1972) *Cristãos Novos na Bahia: 1624-1654*. São Paulo: Perspectiva/Ed. da Universidade de São Paulo ; Schwartz, Stuart B. (2009) *Cada uma na sua lei: Tolerância religiosa e salvação no mundo atlântico ibérico*. São Paulo/ Santa Catarina: Cia. das Letras/ Edusc ; Vainfas, Ronaldo (1997) *Santo Ofício da Inquisição de Lisboa: Confissões da Bahia* (org.). São Paulo: Companhia das Letras ; Leonor Freire Costa 'Merchant groups in the 17th-century Brazilian sugar trade: Reappraising old topics with new research insights' (*e-JPH*, vol.2-1: 2004).



Not only Jews held important positions in the Dutch colonial administration. Other (Catholic) European inhabitants of the colony helped the Dutch and played key roles. I will single out three who were very close to Johan Maurits. Their proximity to Johan Maurits bears witness to his so-called tolerant policy.

Vincent Joachim Soler (1590-1665) was a French Augustinian friar who converted to Calvinism. He was appointed minister to soldiers of the WIC in Pernambuco and lived in Mauritsstad with his wife and daughter. The latter became a mistress of Johan Maurits. Vincent Joachim Soler wrote many letters to Holland during his stay in Brazil. Some of his letters can still be found in Dutch libraries. Soler is one of the important figures who helped construct the heterogeneity of Dutch Brazil in which he also participated.<sup>40</sup>

Frei Manuel Calado (1584-1654) was also a key-figure who chose to collaborate with the Batavian invader, in a personal way that is. Calado supported the Portuguese after the Dutch invasion but was also a good friend of Johan Maurits. The Portuguese father became a famous chronicler of the Portuguese resistance. In 1648 his writings were published under the title *O Valeroso Lucideno e o Triunfo da Liberdade*, an important source of information, until today, about this key period.

Finally, the already mentioned Gaspar Dias Ferreira (1595–1659) was born in Lisbon and emigrated to Brazil in 1618. In Calado's *O Valeroso Lucideno*, Ferreira is reported to have been the first *morador* (Luso-Brazilian inhabitant) to switch sides and collaborate with the Dutch. He lived in Recife with his wife and family and became a close friend of Johan Maurits. He was a town councilor for Olinda and Mauritsstad, and took part in the construction of the bridge between Mauritsstad and Recife in 1644. When Johan Maurits had to leave Pernambuco, Ferreira accompanied him and became a citizen of the United Provinces. Even if he was an important contact person for Johan Maurits, Ferreira never stopped

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<sup>40</sup> See: B.N. Teensma (1997) 'De Braziliaanse brieven van ds Vincent Joachim Soler', *Documentatieblad voor de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse zending en overzeese kerken*, 1: 1-21.

corresponding with Portuguese rulers. In 1645 he was found guilty of high treason and was arrested in October of that year.<sup>41</sup>

Johan Maurits was thus surrounded by people from a diverse background that represented the heterogeneity of the colony, or at least the diversity within the higher social classes. Next to this European patchwork of people, different groups of Amerindians, Africans and people of mixed race were living throughout the country. In *Rerum per Octennium*, Barlaeus depicts the everyday life of this hybrid community. The different groups of people are displayed in the narration of the events and in the descriptions of the country. Each group had their own protagonists playing their role in the Dutch colonial enterprise. The eyewitnesses who wrote the reports used and transcribed by Barlaeus, were helped in making their description of the land by the present hybridity. They could count on go-betweens who spoke different languages, often knew how to function in different colonial spaces and therefore could operate as intermediaries. Some of the eyewitnesses were hybrid figures themselves, holding different subject positions in the Brazilian society articulating the cultural differences of the colonial reality.

One of these figures I want to have a closer look at is Jacob Rabe, an *enfant terrible* who lived among the Brazilian Indians. He could provide Barlaeus with valuable information about the fearful Tapuya.

### **3.7 DESCRIPTION OF THE TAPUYA - JACOB RABE'S REPORT**

Jacob Rabe was a German adventurer employed by the West India Company. Little is known about his life before he enlisted, besides the fact that he grew up in the region of Waldeck in Germany and that he most probably accompanied Johan Maurits in 1637 to cross the ocean. The only further information that can be found

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.wilfriedlantz.com/INS/TXT/21/Mauritsscript-english.pdf>

about him is that he was most probably not a Jew—despite his name—and that he held a good social status in Brazil, as he had a ‘Dutch boy’ as servant.<sup>42</sup> He rapidly established close ties with the Indian community and married an Indian woman. From 1639, he had close contacts with the Tapuya Indians and in 1642 he became supervisor of a Tarairiu village, one of the Tapuya tribes, in Rio Grande do Norte. His mission was to negotiate with this tribe in order to obtain their support in the war against the Portuguese. He lived several years among the Tarairiu and some sources say that he became alienated from European values and started to behave as a *savage* among the *savages*.<sup>43</sup> Under his leadership the Tarairiu did not become more *civilized* and continued to plunder and destroy European settlements. In February 1643 the West India Company gave him a warning: if he continued to organize these raids he would lose his salary. Rabe never put an end to the destructive attacks and was eventually dismissed.<sup>44</sup> After his discharge, he remained in contact with the natives and lived together with an Indian woman. In 1646 he was killed by two armed Dutchmen, probably sent by Major Joris Garstman, who accused him of the murder of his parents in law.<sup>45</sup> He did not receive an honorable funeral: right after his death he was undressed and buried by two slaves, without any further regards.<sup>46</sup> In Recife another rumor about Rabe

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<sup>42</sup> Meuwese *For the peace*: 266 and van den Boogaart *Infernal allies*: 528.

<sup>43</sup> Meuwese *For the peace*: 265-86.

<sup>44</sup> J. A. Gonsalves de Mello, *Nederlanders in Brazilië (1624-1654). De invloed van de Hollandse bezetting op het leven en de cultuur in Noord-Brazilië* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2001), p. 22; A. de Carvalho, *Aventuras e aventureiros no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Paulo Pongetti, 1930), 168-204.

<sup>45</sup> Johan Nieuwhof, *Gedenkwaardige Brasiliaense Zee- en Lant-Reize: Behelzende al het geen op dezelve is voorgevallen. beneffens een bondige beschrijving van gantsch Neerlants Brasil* (Amsterdam, 1682), p. 186: ‘Ondertussen waren de Tapoyers van d’onzes, met wien zy altijd in vrientschap geleeft hadden, afgevallen: uit oorzaak d’overste Garsman, eenen Jakob Rabbi, hunnen oversten, vermoort had. Deeze was een Duitscher, en had de zeden der Tapoyers zoodanig aangenomen, dat hy byna, in ommevang van leven, in alles geleek: waer over de Tapoyers sich van hen, als hunnen overste, hadden laten gebieden. Geweldig speet den Tapoyers de doot van Jakob Rabbi, die dezen Garsman dreighden, in weerwrake, te dooden’.

<sup>46</sup> Carvalho, *Aventuras*: 174-204.

circulated: he supposedly collected many treasures during his raids, treasures that Garstman was eager to acquire.<sup>47</sup>

It is interesting to note that Garstman was married to a Portuguese woman and had close ties with the Portuguese community in Rio Grande. This is most probably the reason why he urged Rabe to put an end to the Tarairiu raids on Portuguese villages. Garstman's parents in law had been killed in the massacre that took place in Cunhau in 1645 and he held Rabe responsible for their death.<sup>48</sup> The two enemies thus exemplify the diversity of Dutch Brazil, one living among the Portuguese and the other among the Indians. Rabe, living among the most *savage* Indians, was obviously more of an exception than Garstman, as more Dutch had close ties with Portuguese men and women.

We can no longer verify to what extent the rumors about this *enfant terrible* were true, but it is a fact that after his death the Tarairiu were very disappointed in the Dutch. The latter had to negotiate very hard to regain the support of the Tarairiu against the Portuguese. During his four years as a supervisor, Rabe was commissioned by the West India Company to write a report about the natives. Barlaeus used this report. That is to say, he *re-wrote* it in his *Rerum per Octennium*. The transcription starts as follows:

While I am writing about the Brazilians, I must not forget the Tapuyas and will include a description of their history. The name of the Tapuyas is famous among the Dutch in Brazil because of their hatred of the Portuguese, their wars with their neighbors, and the support they have given us on several occasions. They live deep in the Brazilian wilderness known as *sertão*, far removed from the coastal areas ruled by the Dutch. They are distinguished by their names, dialects, customs, and boundaries.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> H.C. van Nederveen Meerkerk, 'Indian Tales: Relationship between the Indians and the Dutch in XVII-th century Brazil', in: Luiz Sávio de Almeida, Marcos Galindo, and Juliana Lopes Elias (eds.), *Índios do Nordeste: Temas e Problemas 2* (Maceió: EDUFAL, 2000): 17.

More about Rabe in Mark Meuwese, 'The Murder of Jacob Rabe: Contesting Dutch Colonial Authority in the Borderlands of Northeastern Brazil,' in *New World Orders: Violence, Sanction, and Authority in the Colonial Americas*, eds. John Smolenski and Thomas J. Humphrey (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005): 133-156 (endnotes at: 317-323).

<sup>48</sup> Meuwese *For the peace*: 276.

<sup>49</sup> van Baerle *History*: 242. 'Verum ne scribenti de Brasilianis, elabantur Tapujae, horum memoranda quoque historia est. Tapujarum nomen celebre est inter Brasilienses Belgas, ob odia in Lusitanos, cum vicinis bella &

This first sentence is very meaningful. The *I* refers to Barlaeus himself. He stresses the fact that *he* is writing. He will base his account on Rabe's report, but he will give us *his* description of the Tapuya. The history of these people has to be written down. Barlaeus' writing about the natives functions as an act of appropriation, the description will help him to *comprehend* them. However, it seems that Barlaeus (again) does not offer a very nuanced portrait but gives a somewhat stereotypical description of the Tarairiu, notwithstanding the fact that he based his account on the report of an eyewitness, who lived among the natives for several years. He describes the natives as 'savage animals' who are 'ferocious', just like their environment. They lead a nomadic existence and are feared by everyone. Moreover, they are 'lazy, cunning, impious' and hold cannibalistic rituals.<sup>50</sup> The original ethnographic report has disappeared, thus we only have Barlaeus' transcription of this account, but Rabe's descriptions, even in transcription, are of immense value as Rabe was a privileged witness.<sup>51</sup> He was probably the only European who lived almost like a Tarairiu among the Tarairiu and moreover was granted some prestige among this Indian community.<sup>52</sup> Rabe became a hybrid figure who assimilated parcels of another culture and could adjust to different socio-cultural environments.

Returning to the abovementioned passage, the possible comprehension that Rabe could have felt and displayed is not visible. Similar to many other early modern writings about Dutch Brazil, this passage, re-written by Barlaeus, wants to make clear that the Tapuya Indians live beyond the border. As allies of the Dutch, they were a part of the colonial community, but in their way of life they remained incomprehensible. Unlike his statement in the first sentence of the passage, the Indians are also incomprehensible for Barlaeus, in the double sense

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praebita nobis non semel auxilia. Interiora Brasiliae incolunt, remotiores a littore, ubi Lusitani vel Belgae rerum potiuntur. Nominibus, dialectis, moribus, finibus discernuntur'. (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 418)

<sup>50</sup> Barlaeus *Rerum*: 418-20.

<sup>51</sup> Meuwese *For the peace*: 267.

<sup>52</sup> Meuwese *For the peace*: 300.

of the word: he cannot grasp them nor appropriate them even if Rabe was probably one of the only 17<sup>th</sup>-century Europeans who could comprehend them—to the extent of almost becoming one of them.

The stereotypical images—in which he does not add more details than De Laet before him—alternate with paragraphs in which Barlaeus makes comparisons between Indian practices, events or phenomena and similar ones from Antiquity. These references are found throughout the whole *Rerum per Octennium*. On various occasions Barlaeus compares the heroism of Johan Maurits and the combativity of the Dutch with classical examples to stress the superiority of his compatriots. As I mentioned earlier, *Rerum per Octennium* in its entirety is an accolade for Johan Maurits, who is depicted as a model ruler, surpassing all ancient emperors in his achievements. Customs of the natives, however, are also compared with habits from antiquity. In the following paragraph, Barlaeus puts forward the similarities between the natives and antiquity concerning daily life: the natives organize games that resemble the Olympic games. But similarities extend even further. Similar to the Greeks and Romans, the Tarairiu believe in omens, augurs, medicine men, etc. What Barlaeus seems to imply is that both are pagan:

When they prepare for a new undertaking, they interpret the future based on the song of birds, and they call out in response to the birds' songs, asking them if they bring anything new. The dreams of their priests are treated with great respect, and explained to the king, and used as a source for favorable predictions. This makes it clear that the multitude is ruled above all by superstition and no matter how absurd the predictions, people would rather obey their soothsayers than their rulers. Aristotle, who was a very wise man, refers to this in his *Politics*, calling this the secret of the state and the ruler, or the art of governing.<sup>53</sup>

The comparison is made with Antiquity, but Barlaeus does not show any reverence towards Indian customs, as he does at times towards important ancient

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<sup>53</sup> van Baerle *History*: 244. 'Cum ad res novas se parent, auspicia ex avium vocibus petunt. Clamantibus acclamant, rogitantque, num quid novi apportent. Etiam prophetatum somnia admirationi sunt. Qui Regi illa exponunt, & prosperos exitus affingunt. Hic manifestum nulla re magis multitudinem, quam superstitione regi. Ab hac captam, etiam si vanissima sit, magis vatibus quam ducibus suis parere. Id arcuam imperii & dominationis vocat prudentissimus scriptor Aristoteles in politicis sophismata imperiorum.' (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 422)

authors. There is no ‘spoliatio’ at work here; the Dutch did not re-appropriate Indian religious materials for Christian use. Indigenous practices are compared with Greco-Roman ones to show their inferiority to Dutch ones. Similar to ‘the crowd’ in ancient Rome, the natives are superstitious and believe in predictions. Even though he does not mention it, Barlaeus insinuates here that the Dutch do not believe in superstitions anymore: they are not pagans and are therefore superior to natives and to ‘the crowd’ of ancient Rome. Barlaeus is thus inspired by Rabe’s report, but he adds value judgments and many comparisons that serve to prove his erudition and knowledge of the ancients, as he does throughout the whole book.

Another feature in the transcription of Rabe’s report that was already to be found in previous works is Barlaeus’ frequent use of words in the Indian language such as *kabitu* (bird), *manuah* (the flesh of serpents), *attouch* (root), etc. This demonstrates again the importance given to the names of the perceived reality. Words that refer to typical Brazilian facts are written down in Portuguese or are transcriptions from the indigenous language. This occurs when no translation exists because the Dutch are not familiar with Brazilian phenomena. The alien and unknown reality does not receive a new name but is referred to by the original foreign word. Other typical examples include *moradores* (residents of Dutch Brazil, mainly Portuguese), *engenho* (sugar mill), *lavrador* (farmer), *negros* (African slaves), and *farinha* (manioc flour).<sup>54</sup> The difference with the previous works is that Barlaeus could use even more of these Indian words, thanks to a larger network of go-betweens and the researches in situ made by Piso and Marckgrave. Barlaeus does not give a full description of local fauna and flora, like Piso and Marcgrave did, but already mentions the local phenomena using the Indian word. By using the original denomination, the alien aspect of a typical Brazilian phenomenon is stressed. This contrasts with Columbus who gave new

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<sup>54</sup> At the end of *Rerum per Octennium* Barlaeus included a glossary of more than 400 Chilean words. The list also gives ethnological information about the natives of Chile. More about Barlaeus’ description of Chile, see Britt Dams, ‘Elias Herckmans. A poet at the borders of Dutch Brazil’ in *The Dutch Trading Companies as Knowledge Networks* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 17-38.

names to all new things he saw and by doing so created a new world. Through the (re-)naming of the exotic reality Columbus rejected the alien character of the perceived reality. Similar to many of his contemporary (Dutch) writers, Barlaeus, on the other hand, not only demonstrated that he knew the indigenous nomenclature—which Columbus obviously could not have known during his first encounters—but also accepted the alien character by using the alien word. Doing so they could better appropriate and understand foreign phenomena. In *Rerum per Octennium* Barlaeus used this nomenclature to order and classify the existing alien world, which helped to comprehend it. Only cities or other geographic names were sometimes re-baptized by the Dutch. Barlaeus reuses Indian terms he read in Rabe's report without ever having seen the animals and plants he mentions. He thus fully trusts the information he received from the eyewitness Rabe, and therefore the information Rabe had obtained from the natives, who are also to be trusted in this context.

In the following passage Barlaeus inserts a complete quote in the Indian language:

The priests who want to consult the devil withdraw into the woods, mumbling to themselves. When they return they call out in a loud voice *Ga, Ga, Ga en Annes, Annes, Annes, Iedas, Iedas, Iedas, Congdeg*, to which the people respond with *Houh*. A devil or some similar creature comes in with the priest and gives his pronouncement about the result of an expedition, about the sentiments, whether favorable or hostile shown by the people they will encounter on their journey, about the animals they will capture, and the abundance of wild honey. If the pronouncements are unwelcome or unfavorable, the people attack and beat the priest and the devil.<sup>55</sup>

Something completely different is at work here. Even if Barlaeus uses the Indian terms he fails to comprehend the Other. Why? On the one hand, we see that in this passage some phenomena are reduced to correspond to the environment of

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<sup>55</sup> Barlaeus, *Rerum per Octennium*, pp. 421-22: 'Daemonem consulturi in silvam secedunt, secum murmurant. Reversi in clamat alata voce *Ga, Ga, Ga, & Annes, Annes, Annes, Iedas, Iedas, Hade, Congdeg*. Quibus vocibus acclamat populus. *Houb*. Adducitur cum sacerdote Daemon aliquis, aut daemonis specie, qui de expeditionis evetu, populorum, ad quos abeunt, erga ipsos aequiore vel iniquiore affectu, ferarum captura & mellis abundantia pronuntiat. Quod si ingrata infausta que edat, verberibus prophetam & Daemonem contundunt.'. Translation by Ebeling Koning, p. 244.



the self. Words as ‘priests’ and ‘devil’ are European phenomena that certainly cannot be equated with the former Indian phenomena. Yet Barlaeus does not use the Indian terms; instead he relies on the European denominations. On the other hand, some sayings of the *priests* are quoted literally. But unlike the words from the fauna and flora context, these quotes do have an alienating effect. They are reminiscent of a passage from Jean de Léry’s report, commented on in detail by Michel de Certeau.<sup>56</sup>

Jean de Léry, a French Protestant, took off for Brazil almost a century earlier, in 1556, to work as a missionary in the French colony, France Antarctique. Together with his fellow Calvinist missionaries, he was expelled from the colony, situated in the bay of present-day Rio de Janeiro, by the Catholic founder of the colony, Nicolas Durand de Villegagnon, due to differences in their doctrinal background. De Léry spent two months among Tupi Indians before heading back to France. He wrote down his experiences in the autobiographical account *Histoire d’un voyage faict en la terre du Brésil (1578) (History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Also Called America)*. It is a passage from this book, in which de Léry narrates an encounter with the alterity of the Indian culture, that de Certeau analyzed at length in his *L’écriture de l’histoire* (1975). De Léry narrates a Tupi ceremony during which a ritual chant struck him with ‘rapture’:

[...] such a joy that not only, when I heard the beautifully measured harmonies of such a multitude –especially the cadence and refrain of the ballad, all of them together raising their voices at each couplet, and going: *heu, heuaüre, heüra, heuaüre, heüra, oueh-* did I remain totally ravished; but also, every time the memory comes back to me, my heart thrills and it seems as though their music is still ringing in my ears.<sup>57</sup>

The chant has at first no meaning for de Léry; it is reduced to mere sounds. Therefore, he cannot transcribe the sounds in scripture. Afterwards, he asks his interpreter to translate the song for him so that he will be able to understand it. De Certeau argues that the writing is arrested during the moment in between the

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<sup>56</sup> de Certeau *L’écriture de l’histoire*: 245-83.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in English in Jeremy Ahearne *Michel de Certeau*: 67.

utterance of the enchanting words and the translation. This moment of incomprehension is also a moment of pleasure: de Léry is 'ravished' ('tout ravi').<sup>58</sup>

Rabe had, most probably, a different experience than de Léry. Rabe spent seven years among the Tarairiu, de Léry only lived two months among natives. Moreover, Rabe did more than merely live with them, he was their leader. However, in Barlaeus's transcriptions of the ceremony it seems like Rabe was also confronted with a frontier, behind which no comprehension was possible, in the same way as de Léry. We have to be aware though that we read the experience of this encounter in a transcription, made by Barlaeus, for whom it would have been even more difficult to comprehend this alterity if he had been directly confronted with it. I would suggest that Rabe was able to comprehend more than is visible in the transcription. In general this border of comprehension had been displaced over the century, as more and more contacts were made with tribes and more knowledge was acquired about them, but the confrontation with the absolute other still led to wonder as the absolute otherness cannot be reduced to fit in the environment of the self. It is not clear however where this border lay for Rabe. He became, if we believe the sources, partially other and fell (partially) in what de Certeau would refer to as *l'oralité*, which cannot be grasped in written words. His experience could not be comprehended in a description and it was therefore impossible to obtain knowledge about it. In the passage quoted from *Rerum per Octennium* it was not Rabe, but Barlaeus who was ravished. The absolute otherness, in which Rabe partially fell, escapes the descriptions.

Rabe reminds me of Kurtz, the protagonist in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Kurtz also confronts us with the complexity of human nature. In the same way as Kurtz, Rabe became one of the savages, one of 'them', but not just one of them, both became leaders of 'savages'. The denominations 'savageness' and 'madness' are both used as labels to refer to human beings with a behavior that Western thought cannot understand, cannot *comprehend*. We label them to

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<sup>58</sup> de Certeau *L'écriture de l'histoire*: 251.

categorize them as different from ourselves, to accentuate their otherness, but also to grasp something of the ungraspable. We cannot know if Rabe—or Kurtz—was already ‘savage’ or ‘mad’ before entering the wilderness. It is of no importance to know if both became savages because they lived among ‘savages’, or if they already were ‘savage’, ‘wild’ or ‘mad’ and therefore attracted by the ‘savageness’. What we do know is that both were eventually, just like Léry, confronted with ‘the horror’ and that this confrontation inspires fear because it confronts with something that is not *comprehensible*. *Heart of Darkness* ends with *the horror*, a signifier of something that cannot be described, nothing can be written about it, just like *the horror* of the Tarairiu in *Rerum per Octennium*.

Through the reading of this passage we perceive a tension between Rabe’s experience and the description given by Barlaeus, i.e. between the eyewitness and the historian. We do not get access to the experience of the eyewitness. Contrary to other fragments where for example we can read the transcriptions of local words we do get in touch with fragments of the life of the other, not only of the Indian who pronounced them but especially of the one who wrote them down, Rabe. In the transcription of the ceremony however, we are confronted with a border behind which no comprehension is possible.

In other fragments of the transcription of Rabe’s report Barlaeus mentions the devil, the appearance of spirits, and cannibalism with neither wonder nor ravishment. Any reference to *the horror* that could have been felt by Rabe is left out of the text. The following passage is a very detailed description of a cannibalistic practice:

The priests cut the bodies of the deceased into parts. Old women stoke the fire to roast the pieces, crying and lamenting while they celebrate the funeral rites. They conclude these quickly but take longer to recover from their grief. The women chew the remaining meat off the bones, not as a sign of savagery but out of affection and fidelity. The bodies of highly placed members of the tribe are devoured by those in high positions, especially the head, hand, and feet. The bones are carefully preserved until they can be used for a solemn celebration, when they are pulverized, mixed with water and swallowed. They do the same with the hair of the deceased, which the relatives also drink, and they do not return to their

dancing and singing until they have consumed every part of the body.<sup>59</sup>

The satanic and cannibalistic motives appear on different occasions in this corpus of Dutch texts about Brazil, as they already did in 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish and Portuguese texts. The satanic theme, identified as such by Catholic Iberian chroniclers, was used to demonize the Indian divinities. It gave them a justification for the ‘massacres’ perpetrated against the local population.<sup>60</sup> No such discourse can be found in the corpus under scrutiny here. In the abovementioned passage stereotypical features of barbarism such as nakedness and cruelty are ascribed to the Tapuya, who are perceived as ‘savages’ and as being part of an untamed nature but no destruction of the fearful other is implied. This untamed Brazilian nature remained for the most part uncontrollable, but this did not mean it had to be destroyed. Nevertheless, Barlaeus, in his transcription of Rabe’s report, still represents the Brazilian reality through the dialectic of the Edenic and the diabolic: the coast and the Tupi Indians (Eden), i.e. the tamed or controllable part of the colony, is contrasted with the interior and the Tapuya Indians (Hell) who are uncontrollable. However, *Rerum per Octennium* also offers very detailed (new) ethnological information and demonstrates thereby a further comprehension of the local people, but there is still a border of comprehension and behind this border Barlaeus does not give an accurate representation of the reality of the Tarairiu. When confronted with an absolute alterity or incomprehension of the otherness, or *the horror*, phenomena are (most probably) silenced or reduced to European ones—they receive a label known from a European frame of reference—to be able to describe and comprehend them. Doing so, Barlaeus, through Rabes’ words, proves the difficulties in obtaining

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<sup>59</sup> van Baerle *History*: 248. ‘Defunctorum cadavera sacerdotes membratim dissecant. Vetulae assandis artubus ignes struunt, lachrymisque ejulatu exequias celebrant. Illas cito, dolorem tardius deponunt. Feminae ossa tenus carnem dentibus abradunt, non saevitiae signo, sed affectus & fidei. Magnatum cadavera a magnatibus devorantur, caput puta manus, pedesque. Ossa sollicite asservant, usqui in sestis solennis celebritatem, tunc illa in pulverem redacta & aquis diluta deglutiunt. Idem fit corporis pilis, quos consanguinei bibunt. Nec ad faltus suos cantusque redeunt nisi absumptis omnibus, quae a cadavers reliqua suere’. (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 428-29)

<sup>60</sup> Ronaldo Vainfas analyzed this discourse in *A Heresia dos Índios: catolicismo e rebeldia no Brasil colonial* (1995), São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

knowledge about the Indian reality. The absolute otherness is reduced to the order of the self and disappears from the description. Once again, parcels of otherness remain incomprehensible.

The inland of Brazil functions as the counter-image of the colony. The wilderness is something out there, something alien. Between what is known or comprehensible—the colony—and what is not—the wilderness—lies a clear frontier. The unknown territory simultaneously generates curiosity and threat, resulting in an ambivalent desire to seek and frame the wilderness. To cross the border is to penetrate the obscure, a frightening space where barbarism and savageness reign. During the centuries of colonization this border was gradually displaced, as more territories and Indians were incorporated in the space of the self. The complete domestication of the wilderness, however, never took place. Up to this very day, parts of the Brazilian interior are still unknown.

Observation always occurs through the mediation of familiar cultural schemes and Rabe's gaze is no exception. He does not render a totally reliable description of Indian tribes and still uses some stereotypical images of for instance the barbarian, the cannibal, the sorcerer, etc. In this way, he strongly reduces or disregards aspects of the cultural diversity in the same way as Columbus did, and even more so because we read his representation in a transcription made by Barlaeus. The Indian is incorporated in the Western imagery and is given a classification and value during this process; parcels of the Indian culture become stereotypical images. The symbolic value of the incomprehensible Indian practices is negated. This value does not exist in the Western world and cannot be grasped, and therefore cannot be defined in terms of the self. The absolute cultural difference, or absolute alterity, of the Indian is unreachable, which makes the acquisition of knowledge about the absolute otherness impossible.<sup>61</sup> Barlaeus

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<sup>61</sup> Using stereotypes not only blocks access to knowledge about the other but at the same time, through reiteration, disavows cultural differences. Homi K. Bhabha reads stereotypes in colonial discourse in terms of fetishism. The stereotype assumes a totalized fixity of the image of the other: 'The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation', see H. K. Bhabha (1994) 'The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism', *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge: 74-75.

gives more information about the habits and customs of the local people than De Laet. Nonetheless, similar to the author of *Nieuwe Wereldt* and *Iaerlijck Verhael*, Barlaeus makes use of the ‘principle of attachment’ to describe the colonial reality. Pagden used this term to explain how, when faced with the unknown, conquistadores tried to attach what they saw to familiar elements. In this process the other was reduced to the categories of the self, impeding the conquistadores to recognize the otherness of the other.<sup>62</sup> It is not clear whether it was Barlaeus himself who made use of this principle or Rabe. Rabe’s report was written on behalf of the WIC and Rabe wanted to please his superiors in order to be able to remain among the Indians. Therefore, he did not want to confront them with *the horror*. Even if he concealed *the horror*—on purpose or not—he did more than offer the common stereotypes about the local people. Rabe also added fragments of very valuable information about their daily life. He could do so because he had become a hybrid figure and could understand great parts of the culture of the other. These fragments of otherness were transcribed in *Rerum per Octennium* where they function on a new level, in a new description, as proof of Barlaeus’ comprehension of fragments of the alien reality.

### **3.8 INCOMPREHENSION OF THE AFRICAN SLAVES?**

The *Rerum per Octennium* not only contains various descriptions of Indian practices, but fragments about African customs also appear. I will now investigate the comprehension in Barlaeus’ text of African slaves, who were indispensable for the economy of Brazil at the time of the arrival of the WIC.

As already discussed in the previous chapter, Africans were considered to be better fitting the circumstances and necessities of hard labor on the plantations than the Amerindian people, who suffered more from diseases. Nonetheless, there were other factors that led to the use of African slaves on the Brazilian

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<sup>62</sup> Pagden *Encounters*: 17-49.

plantations. First, the African slave trade was already a widespread phenomenon well before the colonization of Brazil. Second, the local Brazilian population resisted and at times responded with armed resistance to slavery. Third, the cultivation of the land was usually a feminine task in the Tupi culture. Finally, to think that indigenous people escaped slavery is a misconception. There were also Amerindians who were enslaved by Portuguese and Dutch colonizers.<sup>63</sup> Subsequently, Africans were massively imported to South America to do hard work on plantations. Five to eight million Africans were deported to Brazil from the 16<sup>th</sup> century on. During their reign, the Dutch increased the transatlantic human trade. In comparison with the lengthy reports on the Amerindian people, they appear only intermittently in *Rerum per Octennium*, in the same way as in Johannes de Laet's *Iaerlijck Verhael*. This seems remarkable, as thousands of slaves who were essential for the sugar trade worked on Brazilian plantations in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast with the indigenous people, African slaves were often merely considered as tools, not as potential allies. Moreover, the knowledge of the African people about the Brazilian or the African home country was not considered at all by Barlaeus.

What Barlaeus did choose to incorporate in *Rerum per Octennium* were reports of expeditions to Africa. These reports were meant to justify the actions of Johan Maurits at the West Coast of Africa:

These were the events taking place in Brazil, in the New World, but others of greater consequence occurred in the Old World, in Africa. The Company attached great importance in obtaining Negroes from the kingdom of Angola, without whom neither the work in the king's mines nor that in the sugar mills could be carried out. Therefore, Count Johan Maurits considered it worthwhile to carry the war to that region as well. The Company would reap greater benefits from the buying and selling of slaves, if it could also gain control over the trade in that region and enjoy its profits.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> More about the enslavement of the local population see: John Hemming (1978) *Red Gold. The conquest of the Brazilian Indians: 1500-1760*, Harvard: Harvard University Press; John Manuel Monteiro (1994) *Negros da terra – índios e bandeirantes nas origens de São Paulo*, São Paulo: Companhia das Letras; Luiz Felipe de Alencastro (2000) *O trato dos viventes: formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul*, São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

<sup>64</sup> van Baerle *History*: 199. 'Atque in Novo Orbe per Brasilianorum terras evenere. Verùm majora in veteri Orbe apud Afros. Illic cum maximum esset momentum Nigritarum in Angolae regno, sine quibus nec Regiis sodinis, nec Brasiliensium molis suus constat labor, placuit Mauritio eò quoque bellum mitti; quo ejus mercaturae vim

In 1637, by order of Johan Maurits, the Portuguese fort of Elmina on the Gold Coast was conquered. It soon became the center of Dutch slave trade. The Atlantic voyage was hard for the Africans, and many men and women died during the voyage. After disembarkation most of them were sold to *senhores de engenho* (plantation owners) after which they had to endure tough labor on the plantations. It was literally a survival of the fittest.

Barlaeus included a long report by Johan Maurits to the board of WIC on how the slaves should be sold, bought and treated.<sup>65</sup> Johan Maurits is again put forward as an exemplary ruler—who would offer better conditions to the slaves than the Portuguese—and he is compared with the ancients to whom he bears resemblance. Barlaeus quotes Seneca to stress the more moderate master-slave relations under Dutch colonizers than under Pagan or Christian rule:

‘Are they slaves? No, they are human beings. Are they slaves? No, they are your companions, who share your household. Are they slaves? No, they are your humble friends. Are they slaves? No, they share your condition if you remember that Fortune holds the same power over you as over them. It is as possible for you to see the slave as a free man as for him to see in you a slave. It is cruel and inhuman for us to abuse them as though they were animals rather than human beings. Remember that the one you call your slave is sprung from the same seed as you and on equal terms enjoys the same sky, the same air as you, and lives and dies like you. Live with your inferiors as you want your superiors to live with you. Every time you remember how much you are permitted with regard to your slave think what your superior is permitted with regard to you. Live with your slave in amity and with clemency.’<sup>66</sup>

This quote is taken from Seneca’s letter to Lucilius (Letter 47) in which Seneca addresses the master-slave relationship in Roman society. Seneca pleaded for a

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commodaque ad se transferret Societas. quae Nigritarum venditione & emptione istic quàm maximè viget.’ (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 342)

<sup>65</sup> Barlaeus *Rerum*: 534-551.

<sup>66</sup> van Baerle *History*: 180-181. ‘*Servi sunt?* inquit, *imò homine. Servi sunt? imo contubernales. Servi sunt? imo humiles amici. Servi sunt? imo conservi, si coget averis, tantumdem in utrosquelicere fortunae. Tam enim tu illum ingenuum videre potes, quàm ille te servum. Crudele & inhumanum est, quod nec tanquam hominibus quidem, sed tanquam iumentis abutimur. Cogita, istum, quem tu servum tuum vocas, ex iisdem seminibus ortum, eodem frui coelo, aequè spirare, aequè vivere, aequè mori. Sic cum inferiore vivas, queadmodum tecum superiorem velles vivere. Quoties in menem venerit, quantum tibi in servum liceat: veniat in mentem, tantundem in te domine tuo licere. Vive conservo clementer & comiter.*’ (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 310)



better understanding of the treatment of slaves and encouraged a more moderate and gentle approach. The Roman philosopher did certainly not argue against slavery as an institution—slavery in Roman times had a different significance than in the 17<sup>th</sup> century—but he stated that master and slave are both human beings and that the latter should also be treated as such.<sup>67</sup>

Quoting Seneca, Barlaeus criticizes the Portuguese policy on slavery for being too hard and ruthless. The more moderate attitude of the Dutch towards the slaves, as promoted by Johan Maurits, is seen as the more humane and acceptable approach. There are testimonies of the Iberian ‘barbaric’ approach towards slaves. Pierre Moreau, a contemporary French traveler, describes in his *Klare en waarachtige beschryving van de leste beroerten en afval der Portugezen in Brasil* (1652) horrifying Portuguese practices towards the slaves. Earlier Dutch documents already condemned the cruelty of slavery: Bredero attacked the Iberian practices in *Moortje* (1615) as did the traveler Dierick Ruiters in *Toortse der Zeevaert* (1623).<sup>68</sup> The previously mentioned Usselinx and Hugo De Groot also argued against African slave trade—but not against slavery in itself.<sup>69</sup> Despite these counter voices the Dutch eagerly participated in the slave trade during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>70</sup> In Brazil they witnessed the necessity of slaves for the hard labor on the fields. The local economy could not flourish without them and as the plantation owners were still primarily Portuguese, the master-slave relationships previously installed were practically maintained. The Dutch initially based their slavery policies in the African trading posts and in the Brazilian colony on Portuguese models.<sup>71</sup> After the Dutch invasion, many plantation owners had fled from Pernambuco. The remaining ones were crucial as they possessed the necessary know-how to cultivate sugar cane. The tolerant policy towards these Portuguese plantation owners, allowing them to worship freely inside catholic

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<sup>67</sup> Morford *Roman Philosophers*: 179.

<sup>68</sup> Emmer *Buitenlandse invloeden*: 41-51.

<sup>69</sup> Emmer *De Nederlandse slavenhandel*: 34-36.

<sup>70</sup> About the crucial role of slavery and trade for the development of the second WIC see: Henk den Heijer (1997) *Goud, ivoor en slaven*, Zutphen: Walburg Pers.

<sup>71</sup> Dewulf *Emulating a Portuguese model*: 7.

chapels and churches, facilitated collaboration in the colony but also on the African coast.<sup>72</sup>

Despite the crucial role of the slaves for the prosperity of the colony and for the transatlantic trade and despite the more tolerant Dutch approach descriptions of African men and women are rare in *Rerum per Octennium*. When they are mentioned they often appear as a mere trading commodity. Descriptions of their appearance stress their strength in labor and serve to justify slavery:

They tolerate hard labor very well, and need little in the way of food. Born as though destined to endure natural hardships and the miseries of slavery, they are traded for large sums of money.<sup>73</sup>

In passages such as this one, the tolerant discourse elaborated by Seneca and Johan Maurits is totally absent. Nonetheless, in some brief descriptions Barlaeus shows an interest in certain aspects of the culture of African people. As, for example, in the following general description of the customs and habits of the people of Sonho (Angola):

Sonho is located on the Zaire River; it has an abundance of elephants, monkeys, tigers, civet cats, snakes, and all kinds of parrots, particularly the green and gray varieties. The capital city is known as Songo or Sonho. The province of Sondi covers the area from the city of Congo to the Zaire River. There are many different kinds of metals, but steel is preferred and used to make swords, knives, and weapons. Animals such as sable and martens and other kinds are also found in the neighboring provinces. [...] The Count of Congo is the most powerful among the nobles of Congo. The wife of the king is called *Mani mombanda*, which means queen, or the most eminent among the multitude of women concubines. They claim to be Christians, primarily when it is useful to do so among Christians, but in reality they are heathens and idolaters, who would rather kneel in adoration before their king than before God. The country produces wheat, millet, rice, and fruit trees in great quantities. There are many different kinds of palm trees, one of which produces dates, and another coconuts, while a third variety is used to make oil, wine, vinegar, and bread. The top of the tree is tapped for its milklike sap which is sweet at first, and then turns acid. The pulp of the fruit is pressed to produce an oil-like substance, somewhat like our butter, which is used in food, in ointments, and in lamps.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Dewulf *Emulating a Portuguese model*, 20.

<sup>73</sup> van Baerle *History*: 63. 'Laborum tolerantissimi parvo victitant, & in naturae inclementia & miseram servitutem nata mancipia magno aere pensantur.' (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 105)

<sup>74</sup> van Baerle *History*: 239. 'Zongo ad flumen Zaire est. abundat elephantis, simiis, tigridibus, zibethis, viperis, omnique avatii genere, in primis psittacis viridibus & cineritiis. Metropolis est *Songo*, aut *Sonho*. Sundi à Congo

These brief fragments only offer practical information about the region and its inhabitants. They express the will to *comprehend* the area only in a geographic and geopolitical way. The differences with Europe that matter, and thus are mentioned, concern useful trading goods and beside the fact that they are heathens their religion is not analyzed. No attempt whatsoever is made at understanding the people of Sonho.

When we look at the descriptions of the African slaves in the Brazilian colony, Barlaeus does not incorporate much more information. When enumerating the three different groups of slaves he explains the main characteristics of the three. The first two groups are Indian slaves, the third African slaves. This latter group can be subdivided again, on the basis of their origin, their price and their capacity to adjust to hard labor:

A third group of slaves is made up of Africans; of these the ones from Angola are the best workers. The slaves from a tribe called Ardres are very lazy, stubborn, and stupid, and detest work, with the exception of a very few who cost more because they tolerate labor better. The slaves from Calabar are worth little owing to their laziness and stupidity. The Negroes from Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Cape Verde are not well suited for slave labor, but they are more civilized and show more taste for neatness and elegance, particularly the women, for which reason the Portuguese use them as domestic servants. The Negroes from the Congo and Sonho are most suited to slave labor; this is the reason why it is in the Company's interest to take such trafficking into account and to unite the counts of the Congo and Sonho in friendship.<sup>75</sup>

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urbe ad fluvium usque Zaire extenditur, metallis bundans, inter quae praefertur ferrum, è quo gladios, cultros, arma cudunt. habent Zebelinos & Martes, aliaque animalia, quae in ceteris quoque provinciis sepeas. Praecipua omnium est Congensis Hisce titulis appellatibusque suberbit: *Manni-Congo Dei gratia Rex Congi, Angolae, Macamba, Ocanga, Cumbae, Lullae, Zouzae, Dominus Ducatus Buttae, Sudaë, Bamba, Amboillae, eiusque provinciarum, Dominus Comitatus Songensis, Angoiae, & Cacongi, & Monarchiae Ambondarum & magni stupendique fluminis Zaire*. Inter Congeses potenssimus est Songensis iste Comes, Reiam conjugem *Manimombandam* vocant, quasi dicas Reginam sive Eminentissimam, inter tot concubinarum agmina & greges. Christianos se vulgò jactant, verùm tunc, cum apud Christianos simulari religionem expedit. cetera gentiles & idolatrae, purpurae magis cultores quàm Dei tritico, milio, oryza, & arboribus fugiferis abundat. Palmarum plures habet species. nam quae dactylos fert, qui initio dulcis post acescit. Ex fructuum pulpa oleum exprimitur nostro butyro haud absimile, cujus usus est in cibus, unctioibus, lucernis.' (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 411-12)

<sup>75</sup> van Baerle *History*: 126. 'Tertia mancipiorum classis Afrorum est, quorum omnium laboriosissimi Angolenses. Ardrenses ignavissimi, pertinaces, stupidi, labores horrent, si paucissimus exceperis, qui laborum patientissimi sui precium augent. Calabrenses parum pensi habent, obignaviam & socordiam. Nigritae Guinaenses, Serrae

Already 40.000 slaves were at work in Pernambuco before the Dutch took over the captaincy and some were organized in black militias that provided support to European forces. The most famous leader of such a black slave militia was Henrique Dias, a free man from African descent, nicknamed ‘o capitão dos negros’. In 1633 he offered his support to Matias de Albuquerque in the battle against the Dutch. Henrique Dias’ support during the Luso-Dutch wars was considerable and he hoped to be compensated for his dedication, but when the Dutch surrendered in 1654 he did not receive the promised rewards. He had to travel to Portugal in 1656 to obtain the remuneration that was granted to him by Dom João IV. Back in Recife he died in extreme poverty in 1662 and was buried in an unknown place.<sup>76</sup> Nonetheless, he is today considered a hero of the Portuguese resistance and a symbol of Brazilian nationality.<sup>77</sup>

Not only the Portuguese could count on black militias. The Dutch also received the same kind of support:

These blacks came to us from their masters, some served us for four, five, six even seven years faithfully, many of them carried arms in support of our case... If we would now return them to the hands of their embittered masters, we would be very ungrateful.<sup>78</sup>

Many slaves ran away during the first years of the Dutch presence. While the Portuguese landowners were busy fighting the Dutch newcomers, many slaves found the opportunity to escape.<sup>79</sup> They gathered inland in *quilombos* or

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Lionae, & quos Caput viride mittit, minus ad servitia prompti, attemen politiores, plus elegantiae & nitori student, praesertim sexus muliebris, quamobrem eos demesticis officiis adhibent Lusitani. Nigritae Congenses & Sonhenses aptissimi ad operas, ut es re Societatis si, hujus mercatus rationem haberi & amicitia jungi Comites Sonhensem & Congensem.’ (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 115)

<sup>76</sup> Cabral de Mello, *Olinda Restaurada*, 166-8.

<sup>77</sup> More about Henrique Dias, see: José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello (1988) *Henrique Dias governador dos crioulos, negros e mulatos do Brasil*, Recife: FUNDAJ - Editora Massangana.

<sup>78</sup> ‘Dese negers van hare meesters tot ons gekomen sijnde, hebben sommige 4, 5, 6, jae 7 jaren gedient ende trouwelijck tegen ons gequeten; sij hebben ooc veele de wapenen onder ons gedragen; ... Souden wij dan nu die negers weder in handen van hare verbit- terde meesters leveren, soo waren wij wel dapper ondancckaer’, in ‘Dagelijckse Notulen, Recife’ (25 May 1637), quoted in Mello, *Nederlanders in Brazilië*, 198. Translated by Jeroen Dewulf *emulating*: 17.

<sup>79</sup> Gonsalves de Mello *Nederlanders*, 184.

*mocambos*, self-sustained communities of runaway slaves; Quilombo meant resistance.<sup>80</sup> There were only two choices: being a slave or being a free man, inside a quilombo.<sup>81</sup> The most famous community during the Dutch rule was the quilombo of Palmares, a name given by the members of the quilombo meaning ‘Angola janga’ (little Angola) referring to their origins. The Palmares communities are described as follows in *Rerum per Octennium*:

The Palmares are villages and settlements of the Negroes. They are two, Greater Palmares and little Palmares. They are hidden in the woods on the bank of the Gungouí River, which runs into the famous Paraíba River, about twenty miles from the Alagoas and about six miles north of Paraíba. It is said that there are six thousands inhabitants, living in houses close together made of simple materials such as straw and branches, behind which are fields of palm trees. They follow the religion and governmental system of the Portuguese; the priests preside over religious affairs, and the judges over the rules of government. If one of their slaves brings in a Negro captured elsewhere, the former is set free, but whoever joins this society of his own free will is considered a free man.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Quilombo and Mocambo are often used interchangeably to refer to fugitive slave communities. However the term quilombo is most frequently used—also in Portuguese. Etymologically they differ in meaning though. Mocambo (Mu-kambo) is (probably) an Umbundu word that means “hideout” while Quilombo (Kilombo) is (probably) Kimbundo and was used in the 18<sup>th</sup> century to refer to boys’ initiation ceremonies in Angola. Mocambo was used in the first century following the colonization of Brazil while quilombo appeared a century later as a synonym. See: Stuart B. Schwartz (1970) *The Mocambo: Slave Resistance in Colonial Bahia*, *Journal of Social History* 3 (4): 313-333; idem. (1992) *Slaves, Peasants and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery*, Urbana: University of Illinois, chapter 4; Luís Felipe de Alencastro (2000) *O trato dos viventes: formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul*, São Paulo: Companhia das Letras and Flávio dos Santos Gomes (2005) *A Hidra e os Pântanos. Mocambos, Quilombos e comunidades de fugitivos no Brasil (séculos XVII-XIX)*, São Paulo: UNESP.

<sup>81</sup> Alfredo Bosi (1992) *Dialética da colonização*, São Paulo: Companhia das Letras ; Kabengele Munanga (1996) ‘Mestiçagem e experiências interculturais no Brasil’, Lilia Moritz Scharwcz, Reis, Letícia Vidor de Sousa Reis (org.) *Negras imagens: ensaios sobre cultura e escravidão no Brasil*, São Paulo: Edusp: 179-193 ; Luís Felipe de Alencastro (2000) *O trato dos viventes: formação do Brasil no Atlântico Sul*, São Paulo: Companhia das Letras ; Clóvis Moura (2004) *Dicionário da escravidão negra no Brasil*, São Paulo: Edusp ; Marina de Mello Souza e.a. (2007) *África e Brasil africano*, São Paulo: Atica.

<sup>82</sup> van Baerle *History*: 236. ‘Palmares pagi sunt & Nigritarum contubernia. Suntque duplices, Majores & minores. Hi silvis adduntur, ad fluvium Gungohuy, qui se in celeberrimum Paraybam exonerat & viginti ab Allagois milliaribus, à Paraybensibus Boream versus sex absunt. Inhabitant eas, ut fama est, incolarum millia sex, domiciliis densis sed levis structurae è stramine & virgultis. post quae horti sunt & agri palmis consiti. religionis Lusitanorum mimi sunt, ut & regiminis. illi praesunt sacrificuli, huis sui judices. Quisquis servorum Nigritam aliunde captivum adducit manumitti tur. at ultrò in Societatem recipi volentes sui juris habent.’ (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 407)

Their exact location is given as well as some additional practical information and the decision to destroy Palmares.<sup>83</sup> But apart from some military information to plan the attack, we do not learn much about the inhabitants of the Palmares quilombo, which is unfortunate, as this community was another example of Brazilian hybridity since some sources mention the presence of not only black fugitive slaves but also of Indians, ‘mestiços’ and even European men and women.<sup>84</sup>



Figure 12: Albert Eckhout *African Woman with child* (1641)

Whereas Barlaeus did not give any detailed descriptions of the African people, Albert Eckhout did. He pictured an African man and an African woman with a child in his series of life-size portraits of the Brazilian population. The woman and

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<sup>83</sup> Van Baerle *History*: 236. ‘Habita quoque tunc consilia de turbandis Palmarium sedibus, ubi praedonum & fugitivorum mancipiorum colluvies, latrociniorum & rapinarum Societate frequens coiverat. hunc in Allagoam emissi Barbari agrorum culturae incommodabant.’ (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 407)

<sup>84</sup> More about the hybridity of the Palmares quilombo see: João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes (1996)(eds.) *Liberdade por um fio. Histórias dos quilombos no Brasil*: São Paulo: Companhia das Letras and Pedro Paulo Funari and Aline Vieira de Carvalho (2005) *Palmares, ontem e hoje*, Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Editor.

her son are not dressed in their usual attire. The woman is dressed with and surrounded by items that symbolize her as a trans-Atlantic figure. Her primary attributes are African, but, as Rebecca Parker Brienen remarked, she and her son ‘wear and carry other ornaments and objects that are recognizably European or American’: the fruits are Brazilian, the coral beaded necklace is African and the pearl earrings and necklace are Dutch.<sup>85</sup> Her son is naked except for a string of beads he is wearing around his neck and in his ears. The painting shows a scenery wherein the different origins of the Brazilian population are shown: the surroundings of mother and son are Brazilian, the tropical abundance of Pernambuco, but Africa and Europe resonate in the painting as European ships can be seen on the horizon..

The painting of the African woman and her son comes in a pair with that of an African man. He received less adornments and is depicted nearly nude to emphasize his (sexual) virility and strength. The wealth of trade is less present in this painting but his utility in the colonial enterprise is made clear. Moreover, both paintings refer to the fertility of the subjects: the child holds a phallic corn between the legs of his mother and behind the man stands a phallic palm tree. Eckhout pictured the woman, child and man as ideal Afro-Brazilians, healthy and strong, and by doing so masked the hard reality of slavery. The child’s skin color is slightly lighter than that of his mother, symbolizing the child’s hybridity. Maybe the woman was a maidservant at the house of a WIC employee, which was a common practice. The child could have been the result of their union, which also happened of course, even if it was disapproved of by the local clergy. The hybridity of Africans—as pictured in the painting of the African woman and her son—is not visible in *Rerum per Octennium*. But what both depictions want to stress is the tolerance and gentle approach towards slavery. In the painting the hybrid character is displayed as peaceful and harmonious and slavery receives, in the same way as in Barlaeus’ description of Johan Maurits’ approach, a non-violent and moderate connotation.

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<sup>85</sup> Brienen *Visions*: 148.

Compared to the attention given to the local population, the Africans, in their homeland or in the colony, do not receive a lot of attention in Barlaeus' text. *Rerum per Octennium* does not show a better comprehension of the Africans than *Iaerlijck Verhael*. The Amerindians were indispensable for the political, military and commercial comprehension of Brazil, in contrast to the Africans. The local Amerindian population could become allies in the colony, as they knew their own territory better. Moreover, they were still 'new' people, in the sense that America was still the 'new' continent. Africans and Europeans had already been in contact with each other for centuries. Reports with new information about customs and habits of Amerindians were precious tools in the Luso-Dutch wars. Such valuable reports could only be made by eyewitnesses who could go beyond the surface of stereotypical descriptions. I already discussed the reports made by colonel Arciszewski, Manoel de Moraes and Jacob Rabe. Now I will have a look at the writings of another privileged eyewitness, whose reports were transcribed by Barlaeus in his *Rerum per Octennium*: Elias Herckmans.

### 3.9 A POET ADVENTURER GAZING AT THE BORDERS

There are many reasons why Dutch colonists participated in the Brazilian adventure. Some of these men were mere traders, seeking for profit, who were neither interested in the founding of settlements nor in a proper understanding of the local reality. They did not try to adjust to their new environment. They stuck to their old habits and customs and imported essential goods from their home country, from building material over food to prostitutes.<sup>86</sup> Yet others chose to adapt. Men like Jacob Rabe adjusted, in their way, to the local environment. Rabe lived among Indian people and, as far as we can tell, did not impose on them a

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<sup>86</sup> Gonsalvez de Mello *Nederlanders*: 95.



European way of living and thinking.

Another man who showed a deeper interest in local phenomena was Elias Herckmans (1596 – 1644), a poet adventurer who left us some peculiar texts.<sup>87</sup> In what follows, I want to present a reading of three texts related to this Dutch poet-adventurer, two of which appear as such in *Rerum per Octennium*.

Born in Amsterdam, Herckmans studied history and Latin before he began his professional career as a trader in Russia for the firm De Vogelaer. In the meantime, he established a reputation as a writer with the *Slach van Vlaenderen* (1624), a homage to Maurits van Oranje, and as a poet with *Sweedsche zeegetrompet* (1631) and *Lof der kael-koppen* (1635), dedicated to Constantijn Huygens. His masterpiece is the *Der Zeevaert Lof* (1634), which in part derived its fame on account of one of its illustrations by Rembrandt van Rijn.

In 1635 Herckmans went into the service of the Dutch West India Company. He arrived in Recife on the 23rd of December. One year later, he was appointed governor of the provinces of Paraíba, Itamaracá and Rio Grande. In 1641, he accompanied Admiral Lichthardt to Bahia, where the Dutch took revenge against the Portuguese for burning down Dutch sugar cane fields and sugar mills in Pernambuco. He undertook an inland expedition lasting two and a half months to Copacoba in search of silver mines. After returning to Holland for a brief stay in 1642, he accompanied Hendrik Brouwer as vice-general in the Dutch expedition to Chile. After Brouwer's death, he took control of the expedition and conquered Valdivia in 1643. But the expedition failed and since Herckmans was in charge, he was blamed for the defeat. He died soon after returning to Recife on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1644. In that same year, Johan Maurits left Pernambuco. In 1645 the tides turned and the economic and political situation of the Dutch in Brazil became more and more fragile. In 1654, Recife finally surrendered and after a peace treaty in 1661, the Dutch Republic recognized Portuguese sovereignty over Brazil.

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<sup>87</sup> The denomination was used by Alfred de Carvalho in his essay on Elias Herckmans in Alfred de Carvalho (1930) *Aventuras e aventureiros no Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro: Paulo Pongetti & co, 97-108.

The work of a member of Johan Maurits' scientific entourage, Herckmans' writings are embedded in the imagery created by the various Dutch artists in Brazil, but his texts also give an account of the experience of a single human being.<sup>88</sup> All colonists were different according to the period they lived in, their country of origin, or their social status. Herckmans' case therefore may not be exemplary for the Dutch attitude in the Brazilian colony, assuming that there was a specific, singular Dutch attitude. As a writer, was he gifted with a special gaze? And if so, is this reflected in his attitude and writings? What were his answers to the *other* reality displayed in the New World? I will try to answer these questions by reading Herckmans' *General Description of the Captaincy Paraíba* and the accounts of two expeditions led by him to the interior of Brazil and to Chile, as they were transcribed by Barlaeus in his *Rerum per Octennium*.

### 3.10 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE CAPTAINCY PARAÍBA

In July 1639, Elias Herckmans wrote his *Journal. Algemene Beschrijvinghe van Paraíba*. The *Journal* was written on behalf of the High Council, which wanted an inventory of the sugar mills in order to impose proper taxation. In the text, Herckmans gives a very detailed description of the captaincy. The official report begins with an outline of the colonial history and a brief account of the administration. After this short introduction, Herckmans depicts all apparent features of the captaincy: from nature (landscape, rivers, animals and plants) over buildings (villages, forts, churches, convents, sugar mills...) to the indigenous population. The *Journal* ends with a long description of the Tapuya, people with whom the Dutch wanted to create alliances. There is some degree of mapping in this text, but again, compared to De Laet's mapping in *Nieuwe Wereldt* and

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<sup>88</sup> See: B. Schmidt (2001) *Innocence Abroad. The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670*, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press ; Quentin Buvelot (ed.) (2004), *Albert Eckhout. A Dutch artist in Brazil*, Zwolle: Waanders Publishers and Rebecca Parker Brienen (2006) *Visions of savage paradise. Albert Eckhout, court painter in colonial Dutch Brazil*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

*Iaerlijck Verhael*, it is less prominent. What does receive the same emphasis in all texts is the beauty and fertility of the country. But overall, similar to the descriptions in Rabe's report, the comprehension is taken a step further as Herckmans also incorporated interesting tales and anecdotes that, to use Stephen Greenblatt's famous phrase give 'a touch of the real'.<sup>89</sup>

In the first sentences, the image drawn of the region is, once again, that of an earthly paradise. This paradisiacal view originated from the first Europeans who set foot in the New World. Regarding Brazil, the Edenic image was already present in the letter sent by Pero Vaz de Caminha to the Portuguese king in 1500 and it is still part of the Brazilian imagery today.<sup>90</sup> Herckmans inscribes his text in this tradition by emphasizing the fertility of the land and the healthy air of the country. Paraíba is a small paradise with fresh air, green and fertile soil producing the best sugar cane, clean rivers containing plenty of fish, and so on. It seems as though all plants and creatures are mentioned in a long enumeration, resulting in a very picturesque description of Paraíba.

Both in terms of style and themes, this text is remarkably similar to those of other Dutch chroniclers of the same period. One of the recurring examples of this shared rhetoric that also appeared in the previously discussed texts is the importance given to the names of the perceived reality. Herckmans mentions words that define a typical Brazilian reality in their original language: in Portuguese (for example 'farinha', 'aldeia', 'capitania') or in the indigenous language, defined by Herckmans as the 'Brazilian' language. Words in Herckmans' vernacular language alternate with the indigenous ones, creating a hybrid speech, for instance in his depiction of the bay still known today as the Bahia da Traição. He mentions both the Portuguese name, 'Bahia de Tracaon', and the 'Brazilian' one, 'Tibira Caioutuba' or 'Caeioael de Tibera'.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Stephen Greenblatt (1997) 'The Touch of the Real', *Representations* 59: 14.

<sup>90</sup> Until today, the image of a tropical paradise persists in Brazilian popular culture. It is still used as a theme in songs and tv-shows, often ironically. About the construction of the myth: S. Buarque de Holanda S. (1959) *Visão do Paraíso*, Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio.

<sup>91</sup> Herckmans 'Journaal': 347.

Herckmans' description takes the comprehension further in passages where names are etymologically explained. In fact, we owe for example the first account of the origin of the word Paraíba to him:

This region (or Captaincy) is named Paraíba; a Barbaric or, better, a Brazilian word meaning rough sea, arduous water, also a rough harbor to come in, [...] because *Para* is slithering harbor or river and *yba* is rough, whereof it appears that this river, which is the largest of the landscape, takes its name from its slithering mouth, and in the same way the landscape takes its name from the river, that is named, Paraíba.<sup>92</sup>

Explaining the etymology leads to ethnology *avant la lettre*. It gives him a pretext to insert Indian tales in his exposition. One of the most enchanting examples is the following one:

The Potiguaras caught a young man from a hostile tribe and handed him over to a woman in the village to look after him, ordering her to guard him and to feed him well, for they wanted to eat him in the future. The woman acquitted herself so well of this task that she and the young man, whose name was Guará, fell in love with each other. For a long time the villagers couldn't get hold of Guará, because the elders of the village did not want to disturb the woman and letting her become a testimony for future violence. So they waited, until on a certain day she left the *aldeia*. The men took the opportunity and caught the young man taking him with them to slay him at a place near the river. The woman – it is uncertain if she came back earlier than foreseen or for other reasons – hearing what was happening, came running to the riverside, took the victim in her arms and, embracing him, screamed: 'Ó Guara mama', meaning: my Guará, they want to kill you. That is how this river got its name.<sup>93</sup>

Through these descriptions we also learn more about the natives of Paraíba, the Pitiguaries. Herckmans gives information about a typical Brazilian fruit, the cashew nut, and describes the effect caused by the drinking of a cashew concoction. The liquor makes the Brazilians so drunk that it makes them lazy and

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<sup>92</sup> 'Dit landschap (anders Capitania) wort genaemt Paraiba; is een Barbarische ofte, om beter te seggen, een Brasilaens woort ende betekent een verdorven see, een quaet water, item een quade haven om in te comen, [...] want *Para* is een haven ofte rivier met een bocht, en *yba* is quaet te seggen, waer uyt blijktt dat die reviere, die de grootste is van dit landschap, haren naem heeft nae de mont ofte bochtige incomen derselver, ende wederom het landschap sijnen naem nae de revier, dat is Paraiba, genaemt.' Herckmans 'Journaal': 319.

<sup>93</sup> Nederveen Meerkerk H.C. van, 'Indian tales. Relationship between the Indians and the Dutch in XVII century Brazil', *Indians do Nordeste: Temas e Problemas 2*, UFAL (Maceió: 2000) 79.

leads them to ‘barbaric sins’.<sup>94</sup>

In explaining the origin of the word Tiberoy, he also informs us about sexual ‘deviances’:

The word Tiberoy comes from Tiberoy, which means Sodomitic sins. Long time ago, in the neighbourhood of this water, the Pitiguares (fighting against the Tapuya, who are another kind of Indians who come from higher in the country) took a young Tapoeia-Indian as a prisoner and they abused him there. Hence they named the place Tiberoy, which means water of the Buggery.<sup>95</sup>

It would be tempting to attribute this colorful writing to Herckmans’ poetical background, but most Dutch chronicles apply similar strategies. Especially chronicles that could profit from the network of go-between active under the rule of Johan Maurits.

Even if Herckmans throws some light upon habits among the Pitiguares or ‘Brazilians’, he focuses more on another tribe, the Tapuya. Why did he choose to give a full description of the Tapuya tribe instead of focusing on the Pitiguares?

The distinction *Tupi or not Tupi*—already made by De Laet in *Nieuwe Wereldt* but also in other contemporary texts—is made again. The Pitiguares were Tupi and therefore considered more ‘civilized’. On the other side, in the wilderness, remained the ‘uncivilized’ Tapuya. For the Europeans who never left the *civilized* part of the colony the wilderness with its inhabitants signified the unknown and the inaccessible. The Tapuya lived on the border of Dutch Brazil. As allies, they were part of the colonial community, but their habits and customs were for a great part *incomprehensible*, partly because they were always on the move and never gave up their nomadic existence, but most of all because their beliefs and rituals

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<sup>94</sup> ‘...waerin sij haer gansch droncken drincken, ende als dan vervallen tot grove ende barbarische sonden.’ Herckmans ‘Journaal’: 347-48.

More about the use of cashew liquor among Brazilian natives during the first centuries of colonization see: João Azavedo Fernandes (2004) *Selvagens Bebedeiras. Álcool, Embriaguez e Contatos Culturais no Brasil Colonial*, Phd thesis defended at the Universidade Federal Fluminense (Niterói): 66-71.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Het woort Tiberoy is van Tiberoy affcomstich, dat betekent Sodomitische sonden. Omtrent dit water hebben de Pitiguares in ouden tijden (oorlogende tegens de Taboeyers, dat een ander soort van Brasilianen zijn, die hooger uyt het landt comen) eenen jongen Taboeyer gevangen genomen, dien sy aldaer misbruyckten, noemende de plaets Tiberoy, dat is te seggen het water der Boggery.’ Herckmans ‘Journaal’: 331.

were unknown to the Dutch. The Tapuya were feared by colonizers and other Amerindian people. Leaving these ‘savages’ in the periphery, in an inhospitable and frightening place, was more advantageous for the Dutch.

Herckmans ends his report with a description of this periphery of the colony and draws a negative picture of Edenic Brazil. The Tapuya are not living in paradise; their arid territory resembles hell. The soil is not fertile but stony and barren; there is neither cattle running around nor colorful birds flying in the fresh air. There are only wild pigs and poisonous snakes and the rivers are filled with man-eating fish looking like pigs. There is no caesura in style with the first part of the *Journaal*. The Tapuya, their territory and appearance are described with the same accuracy: they are tall and very strong; they have big heads with black hair; they run around completely naked...<sup>96</sup> Herckmans stresses their qualities by explaining that they are very humble towards their King and that they obey unreservedly, especially when it comes to fighting the enemy. They lead a completely bestial and unconcerned life, but they fight vigorously and are not afraid to kill.<sup>97</sup> He mentions that even if they sometimes visit the center of the colony as friends, it is safer to escort them back to the border, otherwise they could hurt Dutchmen and cause other damage on their way.<sup>98</sup> When it comes to their strength, he exaggerates their physical skills: little children already learn to walk at the age of nine or ten weeks and soon thereafter they run to the water and learn to swim; the oldest members of the tribe reach the age of 160 and some attain the age of 200.<sup>99</sup> In fact, what he does is enumerate the qualities of a good and strong ally. This is an official report for the High Council, to whom this kind of information is of great importance.

Johannes de Laet was the first Dutchman who described the Tapuya. Even though Herckmans probably relied on de Laet’s descriptions, he adds new and valuable ethnological elements, which demonstrates the evolution of the paradigm

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<sup>96</sup> Herckmans ‘Journaal’: 359.

<sup>97</sup> Herckmans ‘Journaal’: 361.

<sup>98</sup> Herckmans ‘Journaal’: 367.

<sup>99</sup> Herckmans ‘Journaal’: 366.

of descriptions.<sup>100</sup> For instance, he explains the reason for the Tapuya migration to the coast in the months of November, December and January. During this period no cashew is to be found, which is why they have to move closer ashore to find their food.<sup>101</sup>

Different aspects of tribal life are mentioned such as rites of passage, marriage (the ceremony, polygamous relationships), burial and cannibalistic practices. Most of the information is not new and can be found in other texts. Although Herckmans never witnessed them himself, his depiction of endocannibalistic practices is (again) very detailed. Most probably he heard the stories in Recife from eyewitnesses. He notes how the Tapuya prepare their dead fellowmen very carefully in a dish during an anthropophagic ritual. Before the ceremony they clean and braise the body. Every part of the body will be eaten, even the bones, which will be burnt and crushed to make flour.<sup>102</sup>

When it comes to their religion, Herckmans states that the Tapuya are 'ignorant' and 'uneducated' and that they have 'no knowledge of the true God' but serve 'the Devil or some evil spirits'.<sup>103</sup> He even stresses that 'they don't know what's baptism, or circumcision'—aspects of the Jewish culture are thus seen as being more 'normal' than the ones of the Tapuya.<sup>104</sup> Sorcerers living among these people can predict the future and get in touch with the (evil) spirit, who can appear in different forms, as an animal or as a fellow Tapuyan. Herckmans never witnessed such appearances himself, but he can rely on the testimony of several Dutch commanders who claim to have seen how the devil appeared among a Tapuya clan.<sup>105</sup>

Similar to Rabe, Herckmans mentions the devil, the appearance of spirits and endocannibalism without any hint of awe or enchantment. The satanic motif

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<sup>100</sup> He relied most probably also on the accounts of previous authors like Staden and Thevet.

<sup>101</sup> Herckmans 'Journaal': 359.

<sup>102</sup> Herckmans 'Journaal': 365.

<sup>103</sup> 'Het syn onwetende ende ongeleerde menschen, geen kennisse hebbende vanden waren Godt ofte sijne geboden, maar integendeel dienen den Duyvel ofte eenigerhande boose geesten.' Herckmans 'Journaal': 360.

<sup>104</sup> 'weten sij oock noch van doop, noch van besnijdenis'. Herckmans 'Journaal': 364.

<sup>105</sup> Herckmans 'Journaal': 360.

also recurs when he describes the Tapuya, who are perceived as being part of the wilderness or untamed nature. The Brazilian reality is here still represented through the Edenic/Diabolic binary: the well known coastal area and the Tupi Indian (Eden) are the opposite token of the unknown territories of the interior and the Tapuya Indian (Hell). Herckmans offers new ethnological information on the local people and demonstrates a fuller comprehension, but even though he does not give an accurate representation of the reality of the Tapuya, and, similar to the account by Rabe, many parts of his *Journaal* still partake of a European worldview. Herckmans proves once again the difficulties in obtaining knowledge about the Indian reality, showing that there is still a limit to *comprehension*, even if he, together with other Dutch in Brazil and with the help of go-betweens, managed to displace this border.

More than a century after the first discoveries the reality of the New World and its inhabitants are no longer an unwritten page; in fact they never were. The first texts encouraged what some call the ‘invention of Latin America’.<sup>106</sup> Before Columbus set foot in the New World, Europe had a long tradition of writing about other cultures. The first representations were based on existing stories and tell us more about European beliefs and value systems of that epoch than about the newly discovered regions. These texts were created within a ‘writing that conquers’ where the savage functioned as a ‘blank page’ that was filled with Old World representations and meanings, as I explained in chapter 1 about *Nieuwe Wereldt*.

However, even if Herckmans’ *Journaal* was written on behalf of the High Council and therefore reflects the Company’s interest and even if Herckmans’ representation relies on common stereotypes, he also adds small new details in which we find new information on Indian customs and habits showing a further comprehension of the other.

When a couple of months later Herckmans ventured across the continent at

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<sup>106</sup> This denomination has been used by many to refer to the Eurocentric approach in colonial texts. In particular I refer here to the influential word by the Mexican author Edmundo O’Gorman (1958) *La invención de América: el universalismo de la cultura de occidente*, Mexico/Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.



the borders of the colony he met on different occasions with natives. Did he manage to cross the cultural boundary and to look behind the veil of stereotypical images?

Herckmans undertook two very different expeditions outside the colony. During the first one (into the interior) he wanted to find silver mines. The second expedition (to Chile) was a military campaign to conquer new territories, to make alliances with the local Indian population and to find gold. Why did he want to explore new regions? Was he led by curiosity, did he want to discover unknown territories or get in touch with natives? Was he in pursuit of personal profit and fame? He cannot tell us anymore, nor will we find an answer in his writings as the original reports were lost. To get an answer to these questions we can only rely on the official chronicles. In Barlaeus' view he was led by patriotic feelings.

Others have opened a way for the authority of the United Provinces with weapons and warfare, but he would attempt to add to its power and wealth by diligently exploring the Brazilian interior and its people. Fortune, however, which is superior to mankind's plans, did not favor this ambitious enterprise.'<sup>107</sup>

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1641, Herckmans left Recife to undertake an inland expedition. His ambition was to find the silver mines reportedly lying in Copaoba. Initially, 53 soldiers accompanied him, together with 60 Indians, some 'Brazilian' women and three or four volunteers 'eager to travel and explore unknown terrain'.<sup>108</sup> Already in the first days, 13 soldiers and 24 Indians had to leave the expedition due to illness. The survivors persevered, crossed rivers, walked through sugar cane fields, climbed mountains and cut their way through the jungle with sickles. During the first weeks of the journey they were still inside the colony. They ventured through known territory, across the homeland of the

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<sup>107</sup> van Baerle *History*: 207. 'Potentiae Belgarum alii viam aperuere armis et bello. hic, studiosa terrarum et populorum indagazione, industria potentiam opesque augetur studuit. Licet egregiis coeptis abnuerit fortuna, humanis consiliis potentior.' (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 358)

<sup>108</sup> van Baerle *History*: 208. 'solo peregrinationis studio et terrarum novitate capti.' (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 360)

accompanying Potiguar.<sup>109</sup>

Once they reached the border of the colony, however, the journey became tougher. On this unknown territory even the Potiguar did no longer feel at ease. Filled with apprehension they were unwilling to enter a region where nobody ever went. They were frightened, refused to go on and advised Herckmans to return.

They said that they had been led where nature denied them a passable road –through dark forests, over steep mountains, and along twisting paths- without any expectation of glory or reward.<sup>110</sup>

The soldiers lost their courage and started to panic. Nonetheless, Herckmans managed to persuade his men to go on. In an impressive oration, he praised their strength and courage and explained how the expedition only began and that they should not listen to their fear. He guaranteed his troops that food would be found easily by hunting and that they would encounter water in the valleys. After sending ten men back to Recife, he convinced the others to strive further for glory and profit.

With renewed energy they resumed the adventure in the direction of Copaoba. However, after an exhausting climb over a steep mountain they realized their final goal was still many miles away. The more they ascended, the more the men became physically tired. In addition, they were afraid their food supplies would not last for many more days. Afflicted by thirst and hunger, the soldiers refused to take another step. Herckmans was eventually forced to turn back. After a journey of two and a half months, they were back in Recife, empty-handed.

The account, i.e. Barlaeus's transcription of the expedition, is characterized by the same hybrid speech—words in latin alternate with words in Portuguese and indigineous language—as Herckmans' *Journaal*. It is difficult to determine which words and etymological clarifications Barlaeus took from Herckmans and which ones he added himself. Barlaeus transcribes many specimens of flora and fauna encountered during the journey to Copaoba and comments on 'Brazilian' and

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<sup>109</sup> The Potiguar used to live in the region before they were forced by the Portuguese to resettle by the coast.

<sup>110</sup> van Baerle *History*: 212. 'duci se, quo viam natura negaret, per opaca silvarum, montium praeurpta, viarum anfractus, nulla gloriae, nulla emolumenti expectatione.' (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 367)

Portuguese names. Some interesting examples are:

- The hill from where the group started their return home received the name *Reditus Mons* (Mount return).<sup>111</sup>
- The torrent *Capiiraguaba* means ‘the stream to water the horses’.<sup>112</sup>
- The ‘Musk River’ received its name from its strong smell of crocodiles and snakes, very similar to the odour of musk.<sup>113</sup>
- The mountaintop *Irupari-bakai* means, ‘here the devil looked back’. The name goes back to an Indian legend: when the devil climbed these mountains he was so overwhelmed by the height that when arriving at the top, he looked back.<sup>114</sup>

After a brief stay in the Netherlands in 1642, Herckmans was sent out to Chile. Admiral Hendrik Brouwer, a former Governor-general for the VOC, asked the WIC permission to organize an expedition to the Southern part of the American continent. The WIC consented and sent a fleet with the instruction to conquer the city of Valdivia, to capture Peru, to occupy the Spanish gold and silver mines and to ‘liberate’ the natives from the ‘Spanish tyranny’. Five ships left the Brazilian coast in January 1643 but only four managed to cross Cape Horn and reached the island Chiloé safely. Soon thereafter, they invaded the city of Valdivia but Brouwer died on the 7th of August. From then on Herckmans, as vice-general of the expedition, took control.

Initially, the situation looked promising. They managed to convince some local tribes to join forces in a partnership against the Spanish. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of August Herckmans showed his diplomatic qualities in a grand oration for about 300 people. He wanted to prove to the natives that the Dutch felt nothing but sympathy towards them. In his speech, he emphasized the Chileans’ heroism against the Spaniards and also told about the earlier Dutch exploits in the Orient and in Brazil. Underlining their military strength, he wanted to make clear how

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<sup>111</sup> van Baerle *History*: 214. ‘Mons unde digressi, reditus Mons dictus.’ (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 372)

<sup>112</sup> van Baerle *History*: 211. ‘torrens equationis equorum’. (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 365)

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> van Baerle *History*: 210. ‘Irupari-bakau. Hic Respexit Diabolus.’ (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 363)

powerful they could be against the Spaniards if they joined forces. As a proof of friendship, he presented them with ceremonial gifts and with the *letters of credential* from the States General to the Chileans.<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately, no copy survives.

Five days later, Herckmans gave a second grand and dramatic speech and proposed an alliance based on friendship and trade. He did, however, make a diplomatic mistake by asking for the Chileans' help to conquer the gold mines. This reminded the Chileans of the Spanish and the tyranny they had inflicted in their pursuit of gold. Afterwards, the alliance with the natives abruptly came to an end. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of September he put it as follows in a letter to Constantijn Huygens:

They affirm that they do not possess any provision of gold, but they pointed out where the mines are. However, they do not want to work there, nor being forced to; the gold being the only cause of the war between them and the Castilians.<sup>116</sup>

As the Dutch were largely outnumbered in men and equipment by the Spanish, Herckmans asked the WIC for support several times, but no reinforcement was sent. Finally, the situation became even more unstable since there was a food shortage and the soldiers began to mutineer. The Chilean adventure ended in failure.<sup>117</sup> Herckmans was constrained to leave Chile and the newly conquered city. In an official letter to Johan Maurits he briefly explained the reasons for the defeat. Back in Brazil, the company blamed Herckmans for the unsuccessful enterprise. There was no time to put him to trial, however, as he died soon after his return to Recife.

Nevertheless, Herckmans did not return empty-handed from Chile, he

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<sup>115</sup> Schmidt 'Exotic Allies': 453.

<sup>116</sup> 'Goud, seyden sy, in voorraat niet te hebben, maer wesen de mijnen aen daer 't is, doch wilden niet aen 't mineren, noch oock daertoe gedwongen wesen; het goud de enigste oorsaeck van den oorlog tusschen haer en de Castellanen tewesen'. *De briefwisseling van Constantijn Huygens (1608-1687)*, Deel III, J.A. Worp (Den Haag: 1911-17) 444-445.

<sup>117</sup> Bruno Miranda demonstrated how Herckmans' expedition failed on the one hand due to desertion and mutiny of his own troops and on the other due to strong resistance of the local Araucanos. See: Bruno Romero Ferreira Miranda (2011) *Gente de Guerra. Origem, cotidiano e resistência dos soldados do exército da Companhia das Índias Ocidentais no Brasil (1630-1654)*, Phd defended at Leiden University: 314-317.

brought back an invaluable treasure: a vocabulary of the Chilean Indians, probably Arouak. Barlaeus inserted the whole document in his *Rerum per Octennium*. The glossary contains over 400 words and more than 40 expressions, which provide ethnological information on the habits of the Indian population.

Barlaeus added general information on the natives of Valdivia and portrays them with the stereotypical features of savages. In his description, Barlaeus noted that they have scarcely any marks of religion and he enumerates their 'bad' qualities: they are lazy, undisciplined and often get drunk. Yet they have one quality, the essential one for an ally, they are good fighters:

Their manner of waging war is quite different from that of other tribes, and more like that of the Europeans, for they are skilled at drawing up an army, staying in line, setting up a fortified camp, and attacking an enemy from ambush or in open territory.<sup>118</sup>

Their general traits resemble those of the Tapuya as described by Herckmans in the *Journal*.

The transcription of the expedition to Chile seems at first to render again a binary vision of the Brazilian reality again and to present the civilized/savage model of colonial identification. It includes some of the common 17<sup>th</sup>-Century European stereotypes about the nature and people of Brazil. Concerning the adventure to Copacoba, Barlaeus sets the atmosphere of the experience. The deeper the expedition penetrates the interior, the more difficult the journey becomes and the more the company and the Potiguar are frightened. Once they enter the unknown territory, they enter the homeland of the Tapuya, the wilderness, a space only inhabited by beasts and vermin:

During the entire journey there were mice, field mice, and snakes in abundance, but no deer or any kind of pigs. They captured no more than three or four armadillos. During these days they never saw any birds in the air.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> van Baerle *History*: 270. 'Id beatius arbirantur, quàm ingemere qgris, illaborare fodinis, suas aliasque fortunas spe metuque versare. Longè aliter ac Barbarorum alii bella gerunt, Europaeorum ferè in morem. nam & actem disponere & ordines servare norunt, castra vallis munire, ex insidiis hostem invadere, modò aperto Marte aggredi.' (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 468-69)

<sup>119</sup> van Baerle *History*: 214. 'murium, gliriumque et anguimum toto itinere abundè fuit. caprearum, aut suilli generis nihil. Armadilliae non nisi tres quatorve captae. Aër quoque per hos dies, absque volucirbu, visus.' (Barlaeus *Rerum*: 372)

The same happens here as in the transcription of Rabe's report of the cannibalistic practices of the natives. The wilderness is the counter image of the colony. There is a frontier running between what is *comprehensible* and what is not, between the known world and the unknown frightening space. This frontier was gradually, displaced thanks to descriptions containing small fragments of this otherness.

A closer reading of the accounts uncovers a more complex reality than in the first descriptions encountered in *Rerum per Octennium*. As in the case of Rabe's report, we have to keep in mind that the *Rerum per Octennium* is made of transcriptions. Barlaeus rewrote in new descriptions what he read in reports made by eyewitnesses. The famous Latinist based his account of the Dutch colonial empire on the abundant sources available in Holland at the time and rewrote Herckmans' report on the basis of a series of humanist conventions of the Golden Age. Nevertheless, the colonial binary discourse is destabilized by the little traces left by Herckmans in Barlaeus' text. The indigeneous words were studied and left by Herckmans. Through these words we see fragments of life of the *other*, not only of the Indian who uttered them but also of Herckmans who was the first to write them down. We owe the glossary to his interest in the Indian language and by extension in the Indian culture. In turn, Herckmans could make his descriptions thanks to the hybridity present in the colony. The more tolerant Dutch approach made a more hybrid society possible wherein people could, if they were able to adapt, circulate between different social and cultural spaces. Without go-betweens that were able to translate and understand the culture of the other, it would not have been possible to make glossaries in the first place.

One can argue that the study of the practices and the language of another culture are in support of the conquest. Knowledge of the newly discovered territories and people was used not only to conquer more effectively, but also as a tool in the competition with other European companies. As was the case with maps—interesting fact is that Herckmans brought back to Recife a second treasure together with the glossary: a shorter route near Strait Magellan in the South of Argentina to the Pacific Ocean that would be called Strait Brouwer—possessing cultural information about native people was far from politically

neutral and could have serious implications.<sup>120</sup> But even if it was Herckmans' goal to give the Company a functional tool for the conquest of Chile, as a patriotic act or to obtain personal fame, and even if as a poet and member of Johan Maurits' entourage, Herckmans was probably driven by a humanist interest in the exotic, the words and idioms were collected and put into the frame of the glossary, the same way Johan Maurits organized his tropical garden in Recife. In the meantime, an encounter took place between Herckmans and the *other*. Fragments of that encounter emerge from the texts as subversive forces and break through the stereotypes giving us what Barthes called 'un effet de réel',<sup>121</sup> i.e. these little details bring us in contact with the reality of that 17<sup>th</sup>-century encounter. These fragments also contrast with the "marvelous" encounters of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in that same New World, showing the disenchantment of (Dutch) Brazil.

### 3.11 THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Dutch Brazil played a *transformative* role in the construction of the country, to use Haefeli's term again. It could do so thanks to a *will to comprehend* the otherness encountered. The count of Nassau was a humanist with on the one hand a great desire for the acquisition of knowledge: he came to Brazil with skilled European scientists and artists who recorded and created their representation of Brazil. On the other hand, his tolerant policy created a space for hybridity to flourish, more than it could under Portuguese rule. Contacts between the different social and cultural habitants were made possible, following the standards of that epoch, and stimulated the emergence of go-betweens who could bridge between the different spaces. In the various descriptions made during Johan Maurits' reign a better comprehension of the colony became possible, even if many voices,

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<sup>120</sup> Burke *A Social History of Knowledge*: 74-77.

<sup>121</sup> R. Barthes, 'L'effet de réel', *Oeuvres Complètes, vol. II: 1966-1973* (1994), Paris: Seuil, 479-84.

especially those of the Africans, were left out. But in *Rerum per Octennium* even the voices of the Amerindians were partly silenced. The Amerindians were and still are these ‘savages’ de Certeau wrote about in his *Writing of History*:

Le sauvage devient la parole insensée qui ravit le discours occidental, mais qui, à cause de cela même, fait écrire indéfiniment la science productrice de sens et d’objets. *La place de l’autre*, qu’il représente, est donc doublement « fable » : au titre d’une coupure métaphorique (*fari*, l’acte de parler qui n’a pas de sujet nommable), et au titre d’un objet à comprendre (la fiction à traduire en termes de savoir). Un dire *arrête* le dit – il est rature de l’écrit-, et *contraint à en étendre* la production – il fait écrire.<sup>122</sup>

The ‘horror’ can never be captured in a description, not even by an almost savage as Rabe. Because the ‘orality’ or absolute alterity of the local people pertains to a logic that cannot be *comprehended* in written words. However, through his writing of *Rerum per Octennium* Barlaeus tried to grasp some elements and managed to go a step further than De Laet. Similar to the lost amulet in *Macunaíma*, hybridity is made *comprehensible* through the act of writing. Through the eyewitnesses’ writings, through Barlaeus’ writings and through my own writing a part of the otherness is *comprehended*. Even if Barlaeus wrote a biased work—*Rerum per Octennium* is written as a glorification and in defense of Johan Maurits—he managed to make use of reports where anecdotal information gave representations of the real and helped to better understand the colonial reality. *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* will take the comprehension of natural phenomena to a next level, as I will demonstrate in the next chapter. In this last work I will discuss, Brazilian realities are grasped and classified in scientific descriptions. However, the local people will not be better comprehended than in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the indigineous people proved to be easier comprehended in anecdotes than in a scientific definitions as I shall argue.

I think the notion of *curiositas* is—as it was for *Nieuwe Wereldt* and *Iaerlijck Verhael*—crucial to understand the creative process of the descriptions in *Rerum*

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<sup>122</sup> de Certeau *l’écriture*: 283.



*per Octennium* and the evolution of the descriptions of (Dutch) Brazil. Barlaeus based his work on the reports of various individuals who went on expeditions, driven by their personal *curiositas*, or what I like to refer to as the *will to comprehend*. Their writings were then recycled by Barlaeus and other early modern intellectuals. These texts were also cultural products that negotiated between the local experience and a bigger strategy. Consequently, these writings do not express a singular experience. On the contrary, they were and still are (strategically) repeated. I see this recycling and selecting or *re-writing* that resulted in the *de-descriptions* as a positive act that leads to *comprehension*. In the same way as in the visual arts the descriptions assimilated and produced information to a certain extent. To achieve this production of information *curiositas* was at work at each level, and it is that *curiositas* that gave the impulse to go on expeditions and that gave the impetus to write. Each gave a different answer to the strange new reality, and each tried to comprehend the otherness of Brazil.

With *Rerum per Octennium* Barlaeus managed to offer a better comprehension than before. He brought new information about the colony but only to a certain extent. The reason is that alien realities are limiting and cannot be defined, and therefore remain *incomprehensible*, as for example the ‘ravishing words’ and the ‘horror’. The other will escape again and again but is also necessary in order to determine and define the Self. This limit between the self and the other is not fixed and that is exactly why *curiositas* can and will be renewed again and again. Therefore, even if it was Rabe’s goal to give the Company a functional tool for the conquest of Brazil, as a patriotic act or to obtain personal fame, it still required his *curiositas*—or will to comprehend—to lead this kind of research.

Rabe cannot be reduced to a mere dissident and, similarly, Elias Herckmans cannot be reduced to a mere ‘poet-adventurer’ who was seeking fame or fortune in the New World. Lingering at the border of the colonial society, he tried, consciously or not, to look behind the veil of stereotypes. The frontiers of the colonial world were real and imaginary at the same time. At this border a double encounter took place: his encounter with the natives and our encounter with him.

Johan Maurits not only became famous for his tolerant policies, he also

stimulated scientific inquiries in the colony. This resulted in the worldwide praised *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, a book on natural history. The disenchantment of the colony is taken a last step further thanks to Georg Marckgrave and Willem Piso, but what that means for the *comprehension* of the exotic reality will be the topic of my final chapter.





#### 4.1 THE SPIX'S MACAW



Figure 14: Blu & Jewel from Carlos Saladanha *Rio 2* (2014)

Jewel: *you're my one and only, Blu*  
Blu: *that's a good thing, since i'm the only other one.*

*Rio 2*, Carlos Saldanha, (2014)

During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Brazil was referred to, among other things, as the 'Land of parrots', on account of the conspicuous presence of these birds in the country.<sup>1</sup> Soon, the parrots became an important trading commodity, very popular at different courts but also in private houses. They were also used for other purposes as they were often eaten by hungry voyagers on their long journeys crossing the Atlantic.

Five centuries later, at the beginning of the 21st century, we encounter Blu and Jewel, the two parrots in the picture above, who are trying to find their way

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<sup>1</sup> Before the arrival of the Portuguese, the land was named 'Pindorama' by the local Tupi people, which means 'land of the palmtrees'. Pedro Alvares Cabral referred to 'Terra de Vera Cruz' and Pero Vaz de Caminha wrote about the 'Ilha de Vera Cruz' in his famous letter to the Portuguese King Manuel I. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, many navigators wrote about the region using the name 'Land of Parrots'. See: Laura de Mello e Souza (2001) *O nome do Brasil. Terra dos papagaios, Santa Cruz... a indefenição em nomear as terras desobertas por Cabral revela a disputa entre humanistas e comerciantes em pleno expansionismo português do século XVI*, Revista da História, n. 145, São Paulo: USP.

into the Amazon by means of a map. They are the protagonists of the animation movies *Rio* and *Rio 2*. In these movies, or at least until the beginning of the second one, they appear to be the last specimens of their species: the Spix's macaw or little blue macaw. The male bird, Blu, has been domesticated and lives in the United States. The female, Jewel, was found in the jungle. A team of Brazilian ornithologists have plans to reunite the parrots and have them mate, in order to allow the species to survive. In the movie, the scientists succeed in their plans, despite the malevolence of a band of smugglers who try to steal the birds on various occasions. *Rio* is based on a real story: in 1985-1986, this endangered species was traced in North Bahia (Brazil), but the three found Spix's macaws were captured for trade only two years later. In 1990, another male specimen was found and ornithologists tried to pair him on three occasions, all of which failed. Since January 2000, no specimen has been found in the wild. Today, less than 100 individual parrots of this species live in captivity or in private ownership.<sup>2</sup> The little blue macaw Presley, most probably the inspiration source for the creators of Blu, had been smuggled out of Brazil in the 1970s and found 30 years later in the United States in a cage and unable to fly. He then returned to Brazil where he recently died, in 2014.<sup>3</sup>

There is very little chance we will ever see a real life Spix's macaw, but at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Georg Marcgrave did. He was probably the first European to observe and make notes on this little blue Macaw (*Cyanopsitta spixii*) in Pernambuco:

Brazilian Maracana. Bird, very similar to the parrot, (mostly its appearance) but larger, the entire plumage is ashy-bluish, shouts like a parrot. It loves fruit, especially passion fruit.<sup>4</sup>

If the parrot described here is the Spix's macaw—if not at least a similar kind of bird—we are still not sure that Marcgrave could observe the animal in its natural

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22685533/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/06/140629-spix-macaw-presley-rio-parrot-brazil-science/> accessed 2014-09-29.

<sup>4</sup> Marcgrave *Historia*, 207. 'MARACANA Brasiliensibus, avis Psittaco planè similis (cuius & species) sed maior, plumae totius ex griseo subcoerulescunt, clamat ut Psittacus. Fructus amat, Murucua imprimis.'

habitat. The fact that he mentioned that the bird had a distinct preference for passion-fruit could indicate it lived in captivity in Johan Maurits' zoo, together with hundreds of other specimens coming from Brazil or elsewhere in the world.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.2 FROM MAPPING TO CLASSIFYING

The description quoted above of the 'Brazilian Maracana' appears in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. The three works that I discussed in the previous chapters (*Nieuwe Wereldt*, *Iaerlijck Verhael* and *Rerum per Octennium*) focused essentially on the Dutch endeavors in the New World, the latter two more specifically on the events in Dutch Brazil. However, the 20 volumes of the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* are not concerned with achievements, but, as the title suggests, with natural history, i.e. with the description of local nature, covering geography, biology, astronomy, meteorology, medicine, botany and ethnography *avant la lettre*.

With *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* the evolution of the descriptions that I have sketched throughout this work reaches its dénouement, since mapping has here finally given way to classifying. Plants and animals were analyzed with scrutiny and the acquired knowledge meticulously categorized in taxonomic groups. The scientific descriptions of the natural phenomena of Brazil show the Dutch comprehension of their colony at its highest level. The scientists managed to comprehend the fauna and flora better than before; however, as I will demonstrate, they did not manage to understand the local people better.

This *magnum opus* was the result of a collaborative endeavor. It was edited and organized by a connoisseur of Dutch Brazil: Johannes de Laet, writer of *Nieuwe Wereldt* and *Iaerlijck Verhael*, and was published by the prestigious firm of Elsevier. In this case, however, De Laet did not compose a text from various and disparate sources, as he did in his previous works about Brazil and as

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.bluemacaws.org/spixart8.htm> accessed 2014-09-30.

Barlaeus did, but he edited the works written by two trained and professional scientists who participated in the Brazilian adventure: Willem Paso's *De medicina brasiliensi*, on Brazilian medicine, and Georg Marcgrave's *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae*, on the fauna, flora, geography and population of Brazil. De Laet added extra sources when he considered it necessary, i.e. when he could not find enough evidence in the works of the scientists, as for example in the section on the local people. It is probable that Piso and Marcgrave went on different expeditions commissioned by the Count to collect the data that are represented in their original works. The *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* was, similar to the *Rerum per Octennium*, published at the request of Johan Maurits, who gave the material to Johannes De Laet. Marcgrave never returned to the Netherlands; he died in Angola, but his notes came back to his home country.<sup>6</sup> They were written in cipher, seriously hampering De Laet's editorial task. De Laet describes his attempts at deciphering the work in the 'ad lectores' of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, where he explains how he first had to 'interpret' and 'transcribe' the notes:

When his comments, though imperfect and disordered, were handed over to me by the illustrious Count Johan Maurits (with whose support, favor and financial expenses they were made), there soon appeared what was not a little obstacle. The author, fearing that others would vindicate his work as their own, if perhaps something would happen to him before the publication of his book, wrote a large part of his work and especially the most important passages, with signs he invented and that had to be interpreted and transcribed first, following a secret alphabet, much to the disturbance of those who would want to work with an unfamiliar work.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Whitehead *Georg Markgraf*: 433.

<sup>7</sup> Marcgrave *Historia*, ad lectores.

*Quum itaque illius commentarii ita indigesti atque imperfecti ab Illustri Comite Jo. MAURITIO (cujus beneficio, favore, atque impensis haec egerat) mihi fuissent traditi, obtullit se statim haud levis difficultas: siquidem Auctor metuens, ne quis ipsius labores sibi vendicaret, si forte quid humanitus ipsi accidisset ante quam ipse illos posset publici juris facere, bonam partem illorum, & quae erant maximi momenti, characteribus quibusdam ab ipso commentis, exaraverat, quae secundum alphabetum secreto relictum, primum enodanda & transcribenda erant, majori molestia, quam quis facile in alieno opere vellet fumere.*



De Laet mentioned that someone ‘unfamiliar’ with the work would not have been able to take up this task, letting on, obviously, that he had the necessary skills to do it.

It is important to emphasize the fact that *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* is more than a collection of mere textual descriptions. The authors and De Laet added visual information in order to exemplify the described species. Images are more predominant in this work than they were in the three previous ones. In *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, the images do not merely support the textual descriptions, they also function as an extra tool to comprehend the described phenomena, which results in an extra proof of the Dutch comprehension of their colony.

*Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* is in the first place a work of natural history. Brazilian phenomena are the main subjects of the descriptions whereas subjects which appeared more often in the previously discussed works, such as historical background, political propaganda, military prowess and commercial interests, are relegated to the background. In this chapter, I want to show how the authors of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* could rely on the so-called tolerant Dutch policies, on a culture of collecting and on local knowledge to achieve this scientific work. The Dutch scientists were not alone on their journeys into the wild: for their research they could rely on go-betweens such as Manoel de Moraes and Jacob Rabe whom I discussed in the previous chapter and who could circulate and bridge different parts of the colony and had or could obtain local knowledge. As such, an exchange took place between the knowledge of the Indians that had been passed on for generations and the the approach of the so-called ‘new sciences’. The authors of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, Marcgrave and Piso, wanted to hold up a mirror to the Brazilian nature in order to represent it as closely as possible. They wanted to represent the wonders of nature not only to reflect on them but also to interpret this book of nature written by God. The scientific knowledge in this work was obtained through experiments performed in situ and by consulting local Indian knowledge. The knowledge of the ancients is still respected but only incorporated if confirmed by experience.

The conjunction of European and ‘Brazilian’ knowledge provokes several questions that I want to address in what follows: what are the implications of

putting knowledge production and the comprehension of the colony in the foreground? As scientists at the threshold of the so-called 'scientific revolution', to which extent did Marcgrave and Piso comprehend the colony differently than their predecessors? Piso worked more specifically on medicine: he looked at plants and dissected animals. Marcgrave worked assiduously, but not solely, on astronomy and during his study hours looked from the observatory with his telescope at the universe. Both were trained in having a different gaze at reality, from a micro and macroscopic viewpoint, which will imply a different comprehension of the colony. But what about the local people? While animals and plants can be grasped and analyzed physically to be comprehended in descriptions, this is not the case with human beings. I will demonstrate that the comprehension of the local people of Dutch Brazil asked for different strategies.

### 4.3 RISE OF NATURAL HISTORY

*Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* is considered by some scholars to be 'the most important contribution to natural history since Aristotle and Pliny the Elder'.<sup>8</sup> First published in 1648 in *in-folio*, it remained the reference work on South American natural history for more than a century. The scientific value of the information in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* was validated by many and some of Piso's and Marcgrave's species were incorporated by Carl Linnaeus in his 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Systema Naturae* (1758).<sup>9</sup> Linnaeus elaborated a classification by means of which he wanted to categorize all species of organisms, animals and plants. To achieve this classification he introduced the so-called Linnaean taxonomy. Marckgrave and Piso had systematized (Brazilian) nature in such a way that they had taken 17<sup>th</sup>-century natural history of the overseas world to a new level, which is the reason their work was of high value to Linnaeus. *Historia*

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<sup>8</sup> Almeida Bruni *Dutch Brazil*: 21-22.

<sup>9</sup> Boeseman *A hidden early source*: 113-25.

*Naturalis Brasiliae* became such an exceptional work thanks to the correlation between 3 factors: first, Johan Maurits' presence in the colony, as the count stimulated the researches on different levels; second, the emergence of the New Sciences, to be found in the working methods of Marckgrave and Piso; and third, skilled go-betweens thanks to whom useful knowledge could be obtained from the natives. The work was pioneering in its genre and participated in the circulation of knowledge on South America. Johan Maurits gave shape and affected this work at different levels. On the one hand he stimulated the creation of various collections and on the other hand he organized a colonial society based on a more tolerant rule than his predecessors. As a collector, he made his collections available for scientists, which stimulated the creation of knowledge. As Daston and Park have argued, early modern natural history and the act of collecting were 'closely connected':

Closely connected with this new surge of interest in natural wonders was the emergence of collecting as an activity not just for patricians and princes, as in the High and later Middle Ages, but of scholars and medical men as well. Unlike princely collectors, who continued to prize precious materials and elaborate workmanship, physicians and apothecaries collected mainly naturalia, which reflected their own interests in therapeutics and were also relatively affordable.<sup>10</sup>

The scientists in Brazil helped Johan Maurits to create his collections and used the same specimens for their own research. The second way in which Johan Maurits stimulated the sciences was his tolerant policy, which gave more space for the heterogeneous and hybrid character of the colony to flourish and, as I showed in the previous chapters, this hybridity was essential not only to establish alliances but also to obtain information from local people about Brazilian phenomena. Thanks to this knowledge the scientists in Brazil could give more accurate descriptions of the various phenomena. Willem Piso and Georg Marcgrave were also a product of the Dutch scientific culture during the Golden Age. During this period, and not only in the Dutch Republic, a shift took place in how nature was perceived, i.e. new sciences emerged and experimentation and observation

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<sup>10</sup> Daston & Park *Wonders*: 149.

became standard methods of inquiry. According to Harold Cook, this scientific culture went hand in hand with the gradual development of global commerce. The ‘scientific revolution’ took place during the rise of global commerce for specific reasons. In *Matters of Exchange* he argues convincingly that the Dutch scientists who participated in VOC and WIC activities were driven by an empirical longing for observation. This new gaze towards the world was inspired by the needs of Dutch merchants who wanted to understand the natural facts exactly. In Cook’s view the rise of trade and that of the sciences—together with the circulation of goods and knowledge—were interconnected and both necessitated an emphasis on objectivity and description. During the Renaissance, practitioners of natural philosophy began to emphasize knowledge that could be obtained through the use of the senses, instead of through speculation. Facts became more important to scientists than the causes of phenomena, ‘*kennen*’ (knowledge that comes from acquaintance with objects) gained a higher status than ‘*weten*’ (knowledge acquired through discourse), i.e. science became more descriptive than analytical.<sup>11</sup> The ‘emergence’ of this new attitude is a consequence of different practices but was most of all present within merchant circles.

I want to add to Cook’s view on the interconnection of trade and sciences—and stress once again—that specifically in the case of Dutch Brazil the present hybridity was of crucial importance. This hybridity gave a vital impetus to the scientific gaze and was interconnected with the Dutch scientific research in Dutch Brazil. *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* could only be achieved thanks to the organization of different expeditions into the colony. During these journeys, the expertise, skills and knowledge of the local population were as indispensable as the flexible character of hybrid figures, such as the ones described in the previous chapters. Thanks to these go-betweens intercultural encounters took place in contact zones where exchanges between the Western and the native communities led to knowledge production. Such exchanges could take place at the periphery as well as at the center of the colony.

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<sup>11</sup> Cook *Matters of exchange*: 20-21.

*Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* is not a hybrid work as it is clearly a western book composed by western scientists for a European audience, but it could be composed thanks to this hybrid background that allowed intercultural encounters and scientific interaction. Indian knowledge and customs could be understood and verified, and they could be domesticated and comprehended. I will not comment on what the different Indian peoples learned from the Dutch, which they surely did, as that would go beyond the scope of my investigation.<sup>12</sup> The main point I want to highlight here concerning this cultural exchange between the Dutch colonizer and the native is that the knowledge construction and circulation of the former depended partially on the latter. Moreover, thanks to this knowledge exchange the comprehension of the natural surroundings of the Dutch colony reached its apogee.

#### **4.4 COMPREHENDING THROUGH COLLECTING & CLASSIFICATION**

‘In 1634 – by the grace of God Almighty – I came from the Old World to the New World of America, to the remote and very famous land of Brazil. As the days passed, I acquired greater knowledge of the new marvels, such as strange fish and unknown birds, useful and harmful animals, beautiful, tasty and wholesome fruits, dangerous and venomous worms, and savages with copper colored or blackened skins. I decided then that it was not fair just to marvel in the contemplation of these magnificent creatures of God, but to also think seriously about divine omnipotence. Using such free time as my duties permitted, I decided to provide as accurate illustrations of these curiosities as I could, which, in most cases, were received as presents from the local savages...’<sup>13</sup>

Zacharias Wagener *Thierbuch*

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<sup>12</sup> This kind of investigation about the role of interactions in knowledge construction in a colonial context has been undertaken by Kapil Raj (2007) *Relocating Modern Science: Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650–1900*, Houndmills and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>13</sup> Zacharias Wagener *Thierbuch*, quoted on [www.wilfriedlantz.com/INS/TXT/21/Mauritsscript-english.pdf](http://www.wilfriedlantz.com/INS/TXT/21/Mauritsscript-english.pdf)

Zacharias Wagener, one of the global travelers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, relates in the above-mentioned fragment his own working method while making drawings of exotic phenomena in Brazil. His approach is very close to that of the authors of the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*: he did not merely want to ‘contemplate’ the Brazilian nature but also wished to investigate these phenomena and acquire more ‘accurate’ information about them.

Wagener traveled from Dresden to the Netherlands in 1633. After having worked for Blaeu in Amsterdam he went to Pernambuco in 1634, thus prior to Johan Maurits, Piso and Marcgrave. In Brazil, he soon became Johan Maurits’ secretary. During his stay in Brazil he made a series of watercolor drawings of animals, known as the ‘Thierbuch’. In 1641, he came back to the Old World. After a short stay he started a new career in the service of the VOC and visited Japan, China and South Africa. His manuscript can still be consulted in Dresden at the Kupferstichkabinett.<sup>14</sup> Wagener recorded Brazilian plants and animals and most probably copied some specimens from Eckhout. Wagener was less ambitious than Piso and Marcgrave: the latter wanted to reach an audience of contemporary scholars, whereas Wagener simply wished to bring back home pictures of Brazilian plants and animals to show to his friends and family. As it does not cover in the same meticulous and organized way a similar number of Brazilian specimens and phenomena, the *Thierbuch* lacks the scientific accuracy of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. Still, like Piso and Marcgrave, Wagener wanted to acquire a ‘greater knowledge of the new marvels, such as strange fish and unknown birds, useful and harmful animals, beautiful, tasty and wholesome fruits, dangerous and venomous worms, and savages with copper-colored or blackened skins’, however, he did not comprehend the phenomena in the same scientific way. Nonetheless, his curiosity exemplifies the attitude of the Dutch scientists in Brazil and why they wanted to capture Dutch Brazil in textual and visual descriptions, as if making a catalogue.

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<sup>14</sup> The *Thierbuch* was published in 1997 by Cristina Ferrão and José Paulo Monteiro (eds.) in *Dutch Brazil vol II: “The Thierbuch” and “Authobiography” of Zacharias Wagener*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora Index.

Roland Barthes once famously compared Dutch still life painting to the French Civil Code or a catalogue that could be consulted.<sup>15</sup> The objects were captured in paint and subordinated to human use. This is also what happened with the Brazilian specimens described in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. I do not want to suggest that *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* is a mere catalogue, yet the animals and plants were objectified and subjected to human use.<sup>16</sup> They were sacrificed for easy comprehension in visual and textual descriptions. The exotic reality was ordered and classified so that its readers could get a grip on reality, in an attempt to domesticate and better comprehend it.

What Zacharias Wagener tried to achieve in drawings, Piso and Marcgrave realized in textual and pictorial descriptions. With respect to fauna and flora, their *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* represents the fully-grown new paradigm of the descriptions of (Dutch) Brazil that I have been sketching in the previous chapters. De Laet's mapping of the colony developed towards a thorough classifying of the Brazilian realities. Brazilian phenomena are not merely pinpointed on a map anymore, but receive a scientific description so that they can be better recognized, differentiated and classified by species and subspecies. Moreover, the disenchantment of the New World is almost complete in these books, in the sense that there is almost no mention of fabulous animals or mythical races, and that no fabulous tales are being narrated any more. Instead, we get a more experimental approach based on direct experience. That the fabulous and mythical character almost completely disappeared does not mean that the Dutch were no longer enchanted by Dutch Brazil and did not experience any wonder; quite the contrary, if one takes wonder in the sense of the first passion as defined by Descartes. Maybe Johan Maurits could, at the sight of some specimens of his collection of Brazilian marvels still be taken by 'a sudden surprise of the soul which makes it

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<sup>15</sup> Barthes 'Le monde-objet': 19-28.

<sup>16</sup> Amy Bueno argued that *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* did pertain to the genre of the catalogue, as opposed to the inventory, see: Amy Bueno (2014) 'Interpretative ingredients: formulating art and natural history in early modern Brazil' *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 10, December, Special Issue Anne Helmreich and Francesco Freddolini (eds.): 1-21

tend to consider attentively those objects which seem to it rare and extraordinary'.<sup>17</sup> In this case, wonder can be seen as sign of appropriation of the object. Not only Johan Maurits but also his entourage could still experience wonder. These scientists were driven by a desire to explore and collect Brazilian specimens and, taken by wonder, they 'decided to provide as accurate' as they could descriptions 'of these curiosities' as in Wagener's quote. Similarly, Aristotle told us that 'philosophy begins with wonder' only after which the search for the truth starts. The Dutch in Brazil did thus not lose the capacity to wonder and to feel *admiratio* towards the natural beauty of Gods' creation when describing Brazil. Nevertheless, an evolution in the way Brazilian phenomena were described had taken place.

While the descriptions in *Nieuwe Wereldt* displayed the comprehension already at work before Dutch Brazil existed, along with the appropriation of the territory the descriptions gradually changed. After more than 20 years of encounters and research in situ, a new kind of description could be made. In *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, specific parcels of the Brazilian reality were comprehended for the first time in scientific descriptions. The Dutch possessed a part of Brazil by then and the challenge was now to retain the possession and expand the appropriations and commercial activities. During Johan Maurits' rule, an extra impulse had been given to the general comprehension of the colony: the Count brought a number of outstanding scientists and artists to Brazil to record, collect and domesticate the Brazilian reality. The appropriation of the surroundings at a physical level was expressed not only in gardens and collections but also in the numerous descriptions and images in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*.

The descriptions are still part of an 'économie scripturaire', though. The curiosity of the Dutch still led to conquest, not only of territory and people, but also of knowledge. To achieve this appropriation, the knowledge and expertise of the natives was of great value. The natives had already been reliable witnesses for previous colonizers who considered them too naïve, ignorant and uncivilized to

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<sup>17</sup> Descartes *The Passions of the Soul*, quoted in Bynum *Wonder*: 3.



lie, as Montaigne's simple fellow in 'Des Cannibales'. Yet, during Johan Maurits' reign the trustworthiness of the natives could be confirmed by natural scientists as well. These scientists put the natives' information forward as evidence, attesting to its reliability for a larger audience. During numerous expeditions specimens of Brazilian fauna and flora were collected, analyzed and then described in notes and images with the help of natives. Samples were brought back to Recife to become part of collections: animals were domesticated in a zoo and plants were brought together in beautiful botanicals gardens. A vast number of descriptions and images was assorted and incorporated in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, which partakes of the 'new philosophy' of that era. The work was financed by the Count, who was interested at a personal level in all scientific knowledge about the country as is made clear in his various collections. His name is thus closely attached to the work, and it is also the only name appearing on the frontispiece of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. There is no mention of the two scientists nor of the compiler and editor Johannes de Laet. Therefore, before turning to Piso's and Marcgrave's descriptions, I will turn to the Count's role and impact on the scientific inquiries in the colony.

#### 4.5 O BRASILEIRO

*Bella ducemque cano, primis qui victor ab annis  
Hesperias invasit opes, ferroque cruento  
Martia Cantabrici convulsit robora sceptri;  
Vasta cui tellus, cui panditur orbis in orbe,  
Claraque Brasilico surgit victoria regno.  
Nassovio molimur opus, rursumque per undas  
Et vastos pelagi fluctus comitamur ovantem  
Caesarea de stirpe ducem; juvat ordine longo  
Pugnaces Batavorum animos, bellique labores*

*Pandere, et exhaustos cantu celebrare triumphos.*<sup>18</sup>

Franciscus Plante, *Mauritias*

Franciscus Plante, who accompanied the Count to Brazil as his personal chaplain, praised Johan Maurits for his victorious belligerent qualities in the epic poem *Mauritias*. As we saw in *Rerum per Octennium*, the Count wanted to be remembered as an outstanding military leader. Still, he has been better remembered for his impressive collections of *Brasiliana* and other naturalia. *O Brasileiro* entered the Dutch as well as the Brazilian collective memory primarily on account of his accumulation of memorabilia and knowledge of Dutch Brazil and only then for the military or economic colonial achievements which ended in failure.

Johan Maurits was a true collector. Similar to many of his contemporaries he was interested in the many new (trading) goods that were introduced to the European market through voyages to the East and West Indies. In this way, many new commodities became available for European buyers, but also various curiosities were brought from overseas. These exotic items stimulated the creation of collections, which was a common practice among aristocratic circles in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Many *naturalia* filled the cabinets of curiosity or other collections, the collector also being driven by a curiosity for knowledge.<sup>19</sup> In Brazil, Johan Maurits

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<sup>18</sup> 'Of war and a captain I sing, who from his earliest year victoriously challenged the might of Spain and with his blood-stained sword shook the belligerent power of the Iberian sceptre. A commander for whom a vast land, a world within the world opens up and whose victory ascends brilliantly in the Brazilian empire.

I perform my labors for a man of Nassau, and follow once more this triumphant leader of royal descent over the waves and the vast reaches of the ocean. In a long series of verses, I shall unfold a tale of the martial bearing and war-like exploits of the Hollanders and my verse shall ring with praise of their victory.' in: Franciscus Plante *The Mauritias*. Translation by R.A. Eekhout ('The Mauritias. A neo-Latin epic by Franciscus Plante.' R. Joppien (1979) 'The Dutch vision of Brazil', *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen 1604-1679. Essays on the occasion of the tercentenary of his death*, E. Van den Boogaart (ed.), The Hague: The Johan Maurits van Nassau Stichting, 377.

<sup>19</sup> The interest for *naturalia* is treated in E. Bergvelt and R. Kistemaker (eds.) (1992) *De wereld binnen handbereik: Nederlandse kunst- en rariteitenverzamelingen, 1585-1735*, 2 vols., Amsterdam: Amsterdams historisch museum. More about the curiosity cabinets, see: Oliver Impey and Arthur MacGregor (1985) *The*

would create his own collections, consisting of all kinds of curiosities from all over the world. What is more important for my research, however, is that he was obviously interested in Brazilian *mirabilia*, animals and plants. In order to be able to identify and collect these scientific objects, he invited the scientists Willem Piso and Georg Marcgrave to Brazil.

He embraced—be it sometimes in a violent way—Dutch Brazil and stimulated the appropriation of (Dutch) Brazil at different levels. His collection of Brazilian artifacts, paintings and books contributed to his fame, most of all for his contemporaries, but it also demonstrates to which extent he, and by extension the Dutch, could control, appropriate, domesticate and understand their territory overseas. Johan Maurits was led by curiosity but most of all by a desire to possess and to know, i.e. a ‘curiosity that conquers’, which led to this comprehension—the understanding and possession—of the colony. The collecting was made possible by close study and careful description of the captured objects and specimens leading to a better understanding of the various phenomena of the country.

The Count thus not only commissioned *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* but he also promoted the natural sciences in other ways, which again supported the creation of the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. He created many collections of Brazilian phenomena: he cultivated a botanical garden, built a private zoo next to one of his four houses in Brazil and sponsored the creation of an astronomic observatory. In the botanical gardens, the Brazilian wilderness was domesticated, so that the tropical nature could be contemplated at ease. He fashioned, ordered and classified exotic phenomena together with experts.<sup>20</sup> Plants and animals were not only studied *in situ* during expeditions but also in these gardens. The result

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*Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; Horst Bredekamp (1995) *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine: The Kunstkammer and the Evolution of Nature, Art and Technology*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers and Michael Wintroub (1999) ‘Taking stock at the end of the world: rites of distinction and practices of collecting in early modern Europe.’ *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 30A(3), Amsterdam: Elsevier, 395-424.

<sup>20</sup> More about Johan Maurits’ different gardens in Brazil, see: Maria Angélica Da Silva and Melissa Mota Alcides (2002) ‘Collecting and framing the wilderness: the garden of Johan Maurits (1604-79) in North-East Brazil’ *Garden History*, 30/2, London: The Garden history society, 153-176

was a microcosmos where pleasure and usefulness were combined: one could feel the aesthetic pleasure of looking at the garden, could indulge in leisure activities such as wandering through the alleys or playing games in the facilities created for this purpose but inside the garden there were also small orchards with fruits and vegetables, fishponds and a henhouse.<sup>21</sup> His gardens and collections attracted many people in and around Recife. Among the visitors were not only WIC-employees and native allies but also Portuguese living in the neighborhood who came to admire this domesticated and ordered fauna and flora.<sup>22</sup> The *moradores* or Luso-Brazilian inhabitants of the colony also offered him many artifacts, so that, according to Father Manuel Calado, ‘there was not a curious thing in Brazil which he did not have, for the *moradores* sent him these with a good will, since they saw that he was kind and well-disposed towards them.’<sup>23</sup> Calado points here once again at Maurits’ tolerant policy, which in this case benefits his accumulation of *brasiliانا*. The collection was not only enriched by presents from distinguished members of the Luso-Brazilian community but also by gifts from Amerindian people, with whom the gift-exchange practice had in the first place the purpose to create or maintain alliances.<sup>24</sup> Finally, one could not only admire Brazilian animals, plants and artifacts in the Count’s collection, the specimens living in his zoo, for example, also included animals from Africa or the East Indies, which had arrived by ship in the harbor of Recife.

Among Johan Maurits’ retinue, one could find the already mentioned painters Frans Post and Albert Eckhout, but also Pieter Post, Frans’s brother, who was responsible for the urban planning of the new cities in the Dutch colony. Although there is no real proof of the fact that he actually was in Brazil, he made the architectural design of the palace Vrijburgh on the island Antônio Vaz. The Mauritshuis in The Hague is one of his other achievements, which he designed

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<sup>21</sup> More about the landscaping of Johan Maurits’ personal garden at Vrijburg Palace, see: Wilhelm Diederhoben (1979) ‘Johan Maurits and his gardens’ *Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen. A humanist prince in Europe and Brazil*, The Hague: The Johan Maurits van Nassau Stichting, 197-236.

<sup>22</sup> Brienens *From Brazil*: 281

<sup>23</sup> Manoel Calado *O Valeroso Lucideno*. Translation by Boxer *Dutch in Brazil*: 116.

<sup>24</sup> Françaço *Global Connections*: 108-109.

together with Jacob van Campen. Together, they were undoubtedly the two most important architects of their time in the Netherlands—one of the most famous designs of these court-affiliated architects was the *Huygenshuis*, i.e. Constantijn Huygens' home, in The Hague.<sup>25</sup> The Mauritshuis, built for Johan Maurits, was a neoclassicist house whose construction started in 1633; it was finished when the Count came back from Brazil in 1644. During the latter's stay in Brazil, the poet Constantijn Huygens supervised the construction.<sup>26</sup> It was nicknamed 'the sugar-palace', referring to the origins of the money that was invested to build it. At his homecoming Johan Maurits wanted his Brazilian sojourn to be remembered as a successful enterprise and therefore he organized a big party in his new 'palace'. The highlight of these week-long festivities was the presence of six Indians who made the voyage from Brazil together with the Count: they performed a naked dance, and their nudity caused consternation to many guests.<sup>27</sup> During these festivities, Johan Maurits also exhibited his collection of artifacts from Brazil in order to increase his (colonial) fame. His 'sugar-palace' was decorated with a range of souvenirs from Brazil, in the same way that he had filled up his summer residence at Boa Vista in Brazil with *naturalia* and other *memorabilia* from America and Africa. Jan van Kessel (1626-1679) depicted in *America* (1666) an imaginary *Kunstkammer* that could have resembled the one in the Mauritshuis. *America* is an allegory but gives an idea of what Johan Maurits' collection looked like. The painting is part of a series of four, representing the known continents—the other three being Europe, Asia and Africa—in the form of *Kunstkammern* or Cabinets of Curiosities. In the foreground of *America* various people are displayed, with animals and artifacts from the New World, yet the central theme is

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<sup>25</sup> More about the architects Jacob van Kampen and Pieter Post, see: Jacobine Huisken, Koen Ottenheim en Gary Schwartz (1995) *Jacob van Campen. Het klassieke ideaal in de Gouden Eeuw*, Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura Pers; F.R.E. Blom, Han G Bruin and Koen Ottenheim (1999) *Domus: Het huis van Constantijn Huygens in Den Haag*, Zutphen: Walburg Pers; Rebecca Tucker (2013) 'Urban Planning and Politics in the City Center: Frederik Hendrik and The Hague Plein', *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art*, JHNA 5:2 (Summer 2013), DOI:10.5092/jhna.2013.5.2.7.

<sup>26</sup> Lunsingh *The Mauritshuis*: 143.

<sup>27</sup> Françaço *Global connections*: 115-117.

Brazil. The statues representing a Tapuya man and woman together with the Indians on the background are modeled on Eckhout's paintings. Moreover, various specimens of fauna and flora depicted on the canvas are taken from *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, specimens that thus maybe also were present in the Count's cabinet at the Mauritshuis.

The Count not only exhibited his Brazilian collections in his own house in The Hague but also on other locations, as for example at Zwanenburg in Cleve for the occasion of the wedding of Princess Albertina Agnes and Willem Frederic van Nassau-Diets. The festivities lasted for a whole week and included theatre, dance, music and tournaments. Among the performances was a reenactment of the battle of Zama (202 BC), marking the end of the second Punic wars, when the forces led by Scipius Africanus, played by the Elector of Brandenburg, were defeated by the Carthaginians led by Hannibal, a role for the Count Georg Friedrich of Waldeck. The spectacle showcased an interesting hybrid feature: the part of the Carthaginians (Africans) was played by Africans and Tapuyas, who were recognizable as Tapuyas as they carried objects symbolizing their own culture such as feathers, lemons, sugar etc. The performance gave Johan Maurits the opportunity to present samples of the foreign lands he governed: the Tapuyas wore feathers and the Africans carried musical instruments. Moreover, this hybrid spectacle functioned as a metaphor for the Dutch colony wherein the Roman Empire/the Dutch conquered the Carthaginians/Africans and Tapuyas.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Françaço de *Olinda*: 204-210.



**Figure 15: Jan van Kessel the Elder *America* (1666)**

The Count did not keep all his souvenirs to fill his own wonder cabinets or his other collections. At his homecoming and also many years later presents were given away, in the same way that he had received many presents to assemble his collections. Gifts were part of a 17<sup>th</sup>-century practice through which personal favors were negotiated, which was common not only among European rulers; indeed, African leaders also took part in this gift exchange practice. Johan Maurits gave presents to the king of Congo, Dom Garcia II, and the Count of Sonho, Dom Daniel da Silva.<sup>29</sup> Some of Johan Maurits' gifts gave an important impetus to the sciences and participated in a network of knowledge transmission. Leiden University, for example, received taxidermy specimens. He also offered many pieces of his Brazilian collection to acquaintances in the Netherlands or abroad. Among the Count's most famous beneficiaries were Louis XIV of France and his cousin Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg, who received a large number of drawings made by Albert Eckhout. Today, many of these drawings can be consulted in the Jagiellon University library in Krakow. He also gave remarkable

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<sup>29</sup> Françoze *Global connections*: 109-15.

pieces, more specifically Eckhout's life-size portraits, to King Frederick III of Denmark, who probably used them to decorate the Copenhagen Kunstkammer.<sup>30</sup> Eckhout's portraits are still part of the permanent collection of the National Museum of Denmark and can be admired in Copenhagen.

Among the presents to the elector of Brandenburg was a remarkable series of Brazilian drawings, ordered by his court physician Georg Mentzel. The most famous four of the seven bindings received the name *Theatrum rerum naturalium Brasiliae*, two others have commentaries made by Johan Maurits and are called the *Handbooks*, and the seventh consists of drawings that Mentzel added from his own collection. The representations in the *Handbooks* give an overview of Johan Maurits' collection of tropical animals and plants in Brazil. The domesticated *brasiliana* are pictured *naer het leven*, but not in their own habitat. There are many handwritten annotations in the *Handbooks* from Johan Maurits and the images are probably for the most part the work of Georg Marcgrave.<sup>31</sup> Johan Maurits used the common methods of his time for his descriptions, mentioning name, color and size. Then, he often compared the Brazilian specimen with a different but known European one as in for example 'the tongue of an anteater is as the thickest string of a cello.'<sup>32</sup> Through making these notes the Count demonstrates once again his curiosity and personal interest and foremost his acquired knowledge of the Brazilian phenomena. The *Handbooks*, paintings and various artifacts were thus not given away out of pure philanthropy.

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<sup>30</sup> For an overview of Johan Maurits' collection and where the works can be found today, see: Whitehead P.J.P. and Boeseman M. (1989) *A portrait of Dutch 17th century Brazil: animals, plants and people by the artists of Johan Maurits of Nassau*, Amsterdam/Oxford/New York: North-Holland Publishing Company.

<sup>31</sup> Brien *Visions*: 53

<sup>32</sup> More about the *Theatrum rerum naturalium Brasiliae* in P. J. P. Whitehead & M. Boeseman (1989) *A portrait of Dutch 17th century Brazil: animals, plants and people by the artists of Johan Maurits of Nassau*. Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing. Also Dante Martins Teixeira of the Museu Nacional da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) published different works about zoology during the Dutch occupation: Dante Martins Teixeira (1993) *Brasil Holandês: Theatrum rerum naturalium Brasiliae*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora Index ; (1995) *Miscellanea Cleyeri, Libri Principis & Theatrum rerum naturalium Brasiliae*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora Index ; (1997) *Documentos da biblioteca universitária de Leiden, o 'Thierbuch'e a 'Autobiografia'de Zacharias Wagener e os quadros do 'Weinbergschlösschen' de Hoflössnitz*, Rio de Janeiro ; (1998) *'Coleção Niedenthal', 'Animauxet Oiseaux' & 'Naturalien-Buch'de Jacob Wilhelm Griebe*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora Index.



#### 4.6 MARCGRAVE'S INQUIRIES

Let us now turn to the quest undertaken by Marcgrave and Piso, this inquiry into the book of nature that they led in Brazil. First, I will have a look at Marcgrave and some of the descriptions he made that were incorporated by De Laet in *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae*; then I will have a look at Piso's books.

For my reading and analysis of the *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* I have used the first edition of 1648. Piso rewrote the work ten years later and made considerable changes. He put his name under all of Marcgrave's notes and, as he did not want to make a literal copy of the *Historia naturalis Brasiliae*, he added and modified information where he should not have, introducing various errors in Marcgrave's part, as I will point out further on.<sup>33</sup>

Marcgrave not only gained fame as an astronomer. Apart from his accomplishments in that field, he made important contributions in cartography, zoology and botany, classifying almost 700 species of plants and animals. At the end of his stay in Brazil, when he departed for Angola, Marcgrave entrusted his notes and his zoological and botanical specimens to Johan Maurits, the principal sponsor of his work. Marcgrave's texts, as published in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, are thus arrangements of the notes he made in Brazil, which had to be ordered and deciphered by De Laet. Marcgrave also left numerous astronomical notes, which he planned to publish as a book. In the introduction to *Historia Rerum Naturalium*, De Laet makes reference to mathematical and astronomical notes that should have been part of another magnum opus in three parts: 'Progymnastica Mathematica Americana'. The preparatory notes had been given to Marcgrave's former Leiden teacher Golius (1596-1667) but Golius never published the book.<sup>34</sup> Only the title page survived. Most probably he wanted to

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<sup>33</sup> Whitehead 1979: 445.

<sup>34</sup> More about Marcgrave's working paper, see Matsuura and Zuidervaart *Astronomical observatory*: 37-39. Jacobus Golius (1596-1667) was a Dutch orientalist who traveled to Morocco, Arabia and Syria before occupying the chair of Arabic and Hebrew in Leiden. He was a friend of Constantijn Huygens, like Johan Maurits, and of Descartes. He founded the first astronomical observatory in Leiden in 1633. More about Golius, see: Jan Just Witkam (1980) *Jacobus Golius (1596-1667) en zijn handschriften*, Leiden: Brill ; Helen

realize the austral version of Tycho Brahe's *Astronomiae Instauratae Progymnasmata* (1598-1602)—Tycho's observation of the celestial realm was made from the northern hemisphere while Marcgrave made his from the southern one—, as suggested by De Laet in the 'ad Benevolos lectores' of *Historia Rerum Naturalium*.<sup>35</sup>

Marcgrave had a solid base in the natural sciences: he made various references to Gessner's *Historia animalium*, to Scaliger's *Historia de animalibus* and also to Aristotle, Pliny and Clusius throughout his descriptions. He clearly had a different intellectual background from De Laet and Barlaeus. Marcgrave's position as a scientist and more in particular as an astronomer raises some questions that I will try to answer in what follows: what was the specificity of his descriptions compared to his predecessors, who also described the Brazilian fauna and flora? After all, he observed nature in a systematic way, influenced by the new 'scientific revolution'. In which way do the scientific descriptions of the same specimens differ from the previously discussed ones in *Nieuwe Wereldt, Iaerlijck Verhael* and *Rerum per Octenniumm*, which were, specifically in the latter work, more poetic? Do they present us with another type of comprehension of the Dutch colony?

Georg Marcgrave (1610-1644) was born in Liebstadt (Saxony). In 1627 he left his hometown to start a wandering life. He studied at the universities of Wittenberg, Strasbourg, Basel, Erlangen, Erfurt, Leipzig, Greifswald, Rostock and Stettin.<sup>36</sup> After this scholarly education in Germany and Switzerland (botany, astronomy, mathematics and medicine) he came to Leiden in 1636, to study botany and astronomy. It was in Leiden that he was first noticed by Willem Piso

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Hattab (2012) *Descartes on Forms and Mechanisms*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 155-159 ; Richard van Leeuwen and Arnoud Vrolijk *Arabic Studies in the Netherlands. A short History in Portraits, 1580-1950*, Leiden: Brill: 41-47.

<sup>35</sup> D. Bento José Pickel (2008) *Flora do Nordeste do Brasil segundo Piso e Marcgrave no século XVII*, Recife: Editora da Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco, 16-17.

Marcgrave himself wanted to be compared to the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe (1546-1601), one of the protagonists of the scientific revolution. See: North *Georg Markgraf*: 406-419.

<sup>36</sup> Phaf-Reinberger *Georg Marckgrave*: 234.

and Johannes De Laet. They introduced him to Johan Maurits and soon thereafter, in 1637, he was appointed astronomer by Johan Maurits, who asked him to join him in the Brazilian adventure.<sup>37</sup> He left the Dutch Republic on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1638 and arrived two months later in Salvador. During his short stay in Bahia, he made some expeditions along the coast, collected animals and plants, and made topographical maps.<sup>38</sup> Afterwards, he moved to Recife, the place that would become his residence for the longest period of his life. In this capital of the North Eastern *capitania* of Pernambuco he practiced medicine, operated a pharmacy and participated in five expeditions into the colony to study the natural history and geography and to gather information to draw a map of Brazil, which was published by Barlaeus in 1647. First, he worked under the supervision of Piso until 1641, but later he started working alone. Probably his most important legacy is the first astronomical observatory of South America in Recife, which was founded at the request of Johan Maurits in order to observe the solar eclipse of 13 November 1640. The observatory was located on the roof of Vrijburg Palace, i.e. Nassau's residence on the island of Antônio Vaz. Marcgrave used the Leiden observatory as a benchmark to organize his own in Brazil and he became the first European scientist to make systematic astronomic observations of the southern hemisphere.<sup>39</sup> In 1643, he was sent to Angola with the task of drawing a map of the Dutch dominion in West Africa, but he died soon after his arrival at the age of 33.<sup>40</sup> Marcgrave never returned to Europe and thus never saw the publication of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*.

Despite his various scientific inquiries, little is known about the private life of

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<sup>37</sup> It is not clear who invited Marcgrave and if he was engaged by the WIC or went as a *vrijburgher* to Brazil. See: J.D. Dorth *Georg Markgraf*: 401.

<sup>38</sup> Whitehead *Georg Markgraf*: 426.

<sup>39</sup> He was not the first astronomer in the New World, as others had already recorded astronomical data before him. See: Dorth *Georg Markgraf*, 394.

About the resemblance between the Leiden and the Recife observatory see: Matsuura and Zuidervaart *Astronomical observatory*: 40-47.

<sup>40</sup> About the reasons of his departure for Angola and the circumstances surrounding his death see Pfaf-Rheinberger *Georg Marckgrave*, 234-236 ; Klaas Ratelband (1943), *De expeditie van Jol naar Angola en São Thomé 30 Mei 1641 – 31 oct. 1641, s'Gravenhage*: Martinus Nijhoff .

Marcgrave—not even a portrait of the man remains. The scarce information we have today is abstracted from his correspondence.<sup>41</sup> We know for example that during his stay in Dutch Brazil he was very poor and frequently had to ask Piso for loans. Some argue that he spent his resources on alcohol, which could also have been the cause of his death.<sup>42</sup>

This pioneer in American natural history left many disparate notes, many of which are still scattered in known and perhaps in still undiscovered places. Research is still ongoing about Marcgrave and his work. In 2010, for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, two conferences were held in Recife and in Leiden.<sup>43</sup> Until today his work is a topic for research in the fields of astronomy, zoology or history of science.

The difference between Marcgrave's descriptions and the ones made by the authors that I discussed previously lies in the systematic way in which he ordered the information that he gathered. He studied and classified meticulously all gathered data for scientific purposes. During his numerous fieldtrips into the colony, Marcgrave registered the territory and the people and made different inquiries about plants, animals and even the climate as he recorded the meteorological data of Recife on a daily basis, giving us probably the first detailed meteorological facts of Latin America. He also investigated the stars of the southern hemisphere and finally the language and customs of the native population. Marcgrave collected data, took notes, made drawings and ordered the information that he had obtained. These notes were (most probably) written in a cipher in order to prevent others from using them. Moreover, they came to Europe in a very disordered way, making it a hard task for De Laet to edit them.<sup>44</sup> Fortunately, De Laet was familiar with the subject, having already written various

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<sup>41</sup> Whitehead *Georg Markgraf*: 446-454.

<sup>42</sup> Whitehead *Georg Markgraf*: 425 and J.D. North *Georg Markgraf*: 406.

<sup>43</sup> The *Simpósio Internacional de Ciência e Tecnologia Georg Marcgrave - 400 anos, a ciência unido velho e novo mundos* took place in September 2010 at the Fundação Joaquim Nabuco (FUNDAJ) in Recife and in Leiden the commemoration conference was held at the Leidse Universiteitsbibliotheek and the Museum Boerhaave.

<sup>44</sup> Françaço *Alguns comentários*.

works about Latin America in general and about Dutch Brazil in particular.<sup>45</sup>

Marcgrave's part in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* is the most substantial one, producing eight books: twice as many as Piso. Bundled in *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae*, Marcgrave's work consists of three books on botany, four on zoology and one about the indigenous population. Similar to his contemporary scientists of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Marcgrave emphasized knowledge based on experience. In his preface to *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* De Laet underlined that Marcgrave drew the images *ad vivum*. Following De Laet, Marcgrave wrote his work:

[...] during his excursions through Brazil, he composed with great effort, described in detail, with illustrations he had himself drawn *ad vivum*, he investigated the indigenous terms, and used them when he found them adequate, he studied the properties, as much as possible, brought together in this history, for the use of the scholars and admirers of natural sciences.<sup>46</sup>

During these 'excursions through Brazil', he depended on native guides and translators. On his first expedition, he was accompanied by '250 Brazilians, 150 Tapuyas and 15 'whites''.<sup>47</sup> The explorations into the interior would not have taken the same course without the help of natives and go-betweens—without whom there would not have been any communication—, but neither without the new approach to nature. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the familiar metaphors of 'the book of nature' and 'the theater of nature' were often used. During the Renaissance, the world surrounding men was seen as a book written by God that could be read, interpreted and manipulated by its readers. Moreover, the Book of Nature challenged the sacred Scripture.<sup>48</sup> Nature became an object of knowledge:

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<sup>45</sup> *Nieuwe Wereldt* (1625) en *laerlijck Verhael* (1644).

<sup>46</sup> 'Suis per brasiliam peregrinationibus indefesso studio inquisivit, accurate descripsit, et quorum icones ad vivum ipse fecit, nomina apud incolas investigavit, et quaedam convenientia imposuit, facultates, quantum fieri potuit, indagavit, et in hanc historiam in omnium naturalis scientiae studiosorum et admiratorum usum diegessit.' Preface to *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*.

<sup>47</sup> Whitehead *Georg Markgraf*: 427.

<sup>48</sup> More on this subject see: Hans Blumenberg (1979) *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp; Peter Harrison (1998) *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*, New York: Cambridge University Press; Peter Dear (2001) *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and Its Ambitions, 1500-1700*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Peter Dear (2006) *The Intelligibility of Nature : How Science makes*

research could be undertaken about everything that could be known about a certain specimen. This new gaze upon nature was closely linked to a new perception of man in his relation to God and nature. Piso's and Marcgrave's collecting and classifying for *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* takes part in this new approach adopted by intellectual circles of that time. The new priority given to experience was in part related to the rising global commerce as Harold Cook made clear, but in their turn the discoveries also gave an impulse. The discoveries and rising commerce and science were clearly intertwined:

The change of attitude caused by the voyages of discovery is a landmark affecting not only geography and cartography, but the whole of 'natural history'. It led to a reform of all scientific disciplines –(not only of the mathematical-physical)- because it influenced the *method* of all the sciences, however much their mathematization might be delayed.<sup>49</sup>

*Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* is to the greatest extent based on empirical knowledge, i.e. on 'new' knowledge, acquired *in situ*. Marcgrave relied on predecessors who wrote about specimens found in Brazil, or the New World in general, only in so far as he could verify the information. One of the authors that appears on different occasions as a reference for natural history is Francisco Hernández, whose texts Marcgrave most probably received through De Laet. The latter possessed a copy of Francisco Ximénes' Spanish edition, which contained quotes from Hernández.<sup>50</sup> Yet most additional information is not from Marcgrave's but from De Laet's hand, whose role in the editing of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* is of prime significance. He not only deciphered Marcgrave's texts but also confronted the information with additional sources in notes,<sup>51</sup> as here in the description of the *Caraguata* or Aloe vera. Marcgrave first gives the names and the general features, the aspect and shape of the plant, which is contrasted by De Laet with other sources about the same plant:

*Caraguata* or *Erva Babosa*. Anonymous herb with the stem of the *Portulaca*

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*Sense of the World*, Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press; Eric Jorink (2006) *Het Boeck der Natuere. Nederlandse geleerden en de wonderen van Gods schepping, 1575-1715*, Leiden: Primavera Pers.

<sup>49</sup> Cook *Matters of exchange*: 5.

<sup>50</sup> Cook *Matters of exchange*: 217-18.

<sup>51</sup> Medeiros & Albuquerque *Food Flora*.

Caraguata (Indigenous term), *Erva Barbosa* (in Portuguese), Aloés (Latin term)

[...]

Note: This plant is of the species of the Maguey or Mexican Metl, of which many species can be encountered in New Spain and of which Fr. Ximenes says: [...] Some writers who made comments about the things of America mentioned this plant, Gomora, Acosta and other, who agree with what was said by Ximénes, following D. Francisco Hernandez. Carolus Clusius must also be mentioned, more specifically his *History of Rare Plants*, book V. It must be a very different plant than the one described by D. Joachim Camerarius, whose image is presented in the summary of plants, under the name American Aloés because he affirms that the leaves contain a bitter juice and other things that do not fit with the descriptions given here above. I think that the description by Camerarius must be the real aloes or at least one of its species, because we know from our fellow men who live in Africa, mainly in S. Paulo de Luanda, that there, many plants like the one described by D. Camerarius can be found.<sup>52</sup>

De Laet's input demonstrates the importance of knowledge circulation in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He produces Marcgrave's research and adds other available information. After De Laet's transcriptions of them, Marcgrave's descriptions started a new life as they began to circulate among the scientific circles of that time. Nonetheless, it is not De Laet's notes, but Marcgrave's investigations that provide the most important source of information in *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae*.

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<sup>52</sup> Marcgrave *Historia*: 37-38.

'*Caraguata seu Erva Babosa. Herba innominata caula Portulacae.*

[...] Annotatio. Haec planta aut eadem est aut eadem est aut ejusdem speciei cum Maguey seu Metl Mexicanorum; cujus plures reperiuntur in Nova Hispania species; de quibus ita Fr. Ximenes: [...] Porro plerique Scriptores qui de rebus Americanis commentati sunt meminerunt hujus plantae, Gomora, Acosta, alii, qui omnes sere consentientia tradunt iis, quae Franc. Ximenes hîc tradit ex Doct. Franc. Hernandez: videndus & Carolus Clusius in Rar. Plant. Historia lib. v. Longe autem aliam platam esse oportet quam D. Iachimus Camerarius describit & cujus Iconem dat in Epitome de plantis, sub nomine Aloës Americanae; quia scribit folia abundare succo amaro, & alia quae minime conveniunt cum superiori descriptione. Credo hanc Camerarii esse veram Aloëna ut faltem ejus speciem; nam & numer accepimus à nostris in Africa & quidem Loandae S. Pauli degentibus ibidem abundare ejusmodi plantas qualem D. Camerarius deseribit.'

## 4.7 THE ARMADILLO



Figure 16: 'Armadillo' *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* (1648)

To be able to accumulate as many data as possible, Marcgrave held expeditions in what today are the states of Pernambuco, Paraíba and Rio Grande do Norte. The specimens he acquired during these expeditions into the *sertão* (or Brazilian hinterland) are described in *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae*, but not only those: some South-American animals and plants that are found outside the Brazilians borders are also mentioned, as well as some West African specimens. In the zoological parts of the books, animals are described in the same meticulous way as plants. These entries begin with the indigenous names of the species, followed by European ones. In the actual description Marcgrave's concern is mostly to present the morphology of the animals and less to analyze the similarities among the different species or their habits. The descriptions cover every detail of shape, color and scale. Marcgrave not only depicted appearance but at times added anatomical notations, as he had carried out a couple of dissections.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, he mentioned which animal or which part of it was edible.

In his description of the Armadillo, for example, we encounter all features mentioned above:

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<sup>53</sup> Whitehead *Johan Maurits*: 440.



## Tatu or Armadillo, and its different species

Tatu and Tatu-peba (indigineous term), *Armadillo* (in Spanish), *Encuberto* (in Portuguese): we, Dutch, call them *Schild-Vercken*. Animal that lives mainly on land, but also in the water and other humid places. There are many species. It has the shape and the size of a little pig. The upper part of the body and the head are covered with a crust, except the tail. The crust is made of cartilage and composed of very elegant scales: there are two joints on the back of the head so that the animal can move its neck: on the back there are seven parts with swarthy intermediary flesh: the other parts are made of one piece.<sup>54</sup>

[...]

Note: we mentioned this animal in the description of America, book XV, chapter V, where, in accordance with the teaching of Monardes and Fr. Ximenes, we observed that the powder from the cartilage, which is of a bony nature and hard, is very useful in medicine: both against venereal diseases and against roaring in the ears or deafness; it is in particular the little bones that are found at the beginning of the tail that have this power. The powder of the tail also has diuretical virtues; the powder from the cartilage can be kneaded into a kind of pasta, that can be useful to extract thorns from any part of the body. One can easily experience this, as the skin of this animal is often brought back from America.<sup>55</sup>

Marcgrave's description of the *tatu* or armadillo is very structured and meticulous. When reading the part that follows the naming and the general information, the mind can construct in detail a precise mental picture of the animal, as if the reader is seeing the armadillo together with the writer, *in casu* Marcgrave. This contrasts with Barlaeus' description of the same animal. Even if Barlaeus may have used Marcgrave's notes for his text, it is clear that he had a completely different approach. The armadillo appears in between other

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<sup>54</sup> Marcgrave *Historia*: 231. *Tatu seu Armadillo, variae illius species.*

*Tatu & Tatu-peba Brasiliensibus, Armadillo Hispanis, Encuberto Lusitanis : Belgae nostri vocant een Schild-Vercken. Animal potissimum in terra degens, quanquam & in aquis & aquosis locis. Reperitur variae molis. Figuram habet porcelli & fere magnitudinem. Totum corpus superius ut & caput loricatum est, nec minus cauda : Lorica autem est ossea ex squamis elegantissimis composita : prope occipitium duas habens junctures, ut collum movere possit : in dorso septem sunt divisurae, cute fusca intermedia : in reliquis partibus integra.*

<sup>55</sup> Marcgrave *Historia*: 232.

*Annotatio. Fecimus animalis mentionem in descriptione Americae lib. xv. cap. V. ubi & hoc è Monarde, & Fr. Ximene annotavimus, pulverem laminarum quae plane sunt osseae & durae, utilissimum esse in Medina: tum contra Luem Veneream, tum contra tinnitum & surditatem aurium: praesertim ossiculi caudae quod proximum est ab illius exortu. Itemque pulverem caudae urinam movere: & pulverem laminarum coactum in massam, extrahere spinas è quavis parte corporis. Cujus experimentum facile capi posset, si quidem saepius exuviae hujus animalis ad nos ex America deferuntur.*

descriptions and receives less attention than in the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. I added the descriptions of other animals to make my point clear:

There is a great abundance of wild and tame animals. Some of these I will mention. The wild swine live in the water and on land, their meat is tasty and healthy. Because their legs are unequal in length, for the front legs are shorter than the hind legs, they advance slowly, so that, when they are pursued by hunters, they dive as rapidly as possible into the nearest water. The *Anta's* make one think of hinnies although they are of smaller size; they have a more slender snout, the lower lip is extended, which makes one think of a trumpet, the ears are rounded, the tail short, the further body ash-grey. They shun light and also only forage by night. The *Cotia's*, as they are named in vernacular, are as big as hares or somewhat smaller and almost without tail. The larger are named *Paca's*, have a mouth as a cat, are of a brown colour with white spots and are on account of their tasty meat considered delicacies. **The Tatu's are as big as a young pig, the skin is covered with scutes, so they seem armoured. They stick out their head in the way of tortoises. The meat, that is tasty, is served during feasts.**<sup>56</sup>

While the sea is extremely rich with fishes, the rivers are famous for the multitude of swimming animals. *Olho de Boy* carries that name on account of its oxen eyes, the epitheton with which Homer usually indicates Juno. This has the size of the tunies of the Spanish and is so fat that the Natives make of its grease oil that resemble butter. One of the most important fishes is the *Camurupi*, of good taste, with terrible spines, of which he carries one on the back that stands upright. The *Piraambu* that emits a snore as someone sleeping, is 8 or 9 palms [1 palm=10cm] long, high in price and of very good taste. In the mouth it has two small stones between which it crushes shell-fish on which it lives. The Natives string them to make necklaces. *Beyupira*, which resembles the Portuguese sturgeon, is frequent here; its shape is slender, its back black, its belly white. This is also known from European waters as the *Tainha's* (Tagana, Taagfish) of the Portuguese. They are beneficial against snakebite. Of the Cyprinids there are many species, like carps and breams, ray and other fishes. The *Dorado's* (gold-mackerels) excel above all; the Natives call them *Waraka Pemme*.<sup>57</sup>

In *Rerum per Octennium* we are offered an overview of animals within a summary of very short descriptions. Reading Barlaeus it is impossible to construct a mental picture of the animal of the sort that we could with Marcgrave's description. Moreover, Barlaeus was more a man of letters than of science and used therefore a different type of rhetorical strategies in his text. Before returning to Marcgrave's armadillo I will have a look at Barlaeus' four main rhetorical strategies in the above quoted description of different animals:

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<sup>56</sup> Boeseman *A hidden early source*: 114-116.

<sup>57</sup> Translation by Boeseman *A hidden early source*: 116-17.

- The first important rhetorical device is the elaboration of the description with anecdotal information, e.g. 'they advance slowly, so that, when they are pursued by hunters, they dive as rapidly as possible into the nearest water'. The added information makes the description livelier and more accessible for a larger audience. Moreover, it is very functional information as Barlaeus also adds what to pay attention to when trying to catch the animal.

- The second important device is the analogy. The shape of the animal is compared with a European phenomenon, which can be an animal but not necessarily. This strategy is used to facilitate the comprehension of what is being described; not only the trained scientist but every (contemporary) reader will easily understand the description, e.g. 'the lower lip is extended, which makes one think of a trumpet'.

- A third rhetorical device is the addition of practical information, i.e. what can be done with an animal or parts of it, most commonly if it is edible and if it has possible medical applicability. Through these kinds of descriptions we also learn something about the habits of local people. It is interesting here to compare Barlaeus' approach with the one used by the painter Eckhout. He adopts an opposite approach in his *Dance of the Tapuia* in which the viewer's eyes are directed from firstly ethnological to secondly zoological information. The men on the painting are armed with clubs to which parrot feathers are attached. They draw our attention not only because they are at the center of the scene but also because they are painted in detail: their hairstyles, necklaces and bracelets are depicted with care and have as a result become a source for later ethnographic research.<sup>58</sup> The ethnographic and pictorial value of this painting has been debated before and the painting is also an interesting document for the study of the natural sciences.<sup>59</sup> Those familiar with exotic fauna and flora will easily recognize the parrot feathers from the scarlet macaw, the coconut

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<sup>58</sup> This kind of alliance between science and the transmission of knowledge has been discussed by Kemp, 'Temples of the Body.' Kemp pointed to the importance of the 'rhetoric of the real for anatomists. See also Kusakawa & Maclean, *Transmitting Knowledge*, which brings forward different case studies on how early modern natural philosophers transmitted knowledge. In some chapters the authors are critical of Kemp's theories and his notion of the 'rhetoric of the real.'

<sup>59</sup> Brienen, *Visions*: 150-51.

palm trees in the back—with one cashew tree in the right corner—and the little animal in the front on the right, the armadillo.<sup>60</sup> In *Dance of the Tapuia*, the Indians are thus the main subject of the painting and the animal—the armadillo—is just a detail in the lower corner of the given image whereas in Barlaeus' description the armadillo is the central subject to which the author adds functional information. These practical examples show that there was an interest in local knowledge and that this knowledge was considered trustworthy. Moreover, valuable ethnological information is translated, e.g. 'Olho de Boy, carries that name on account of its oxen eyes [...] has the size of the tunies of the Spanish and is so fat that the Natives make of its grease oil that resembles butter.'



**Figure 17: Albert Eckhout *Dance of the Tapuya* (1661)**

- Finally, one of the most common rhetoric features that I already discussed in the previous chapters is the importance given to the names of the perceived reality. Words that refer to typical Brazilian facts are written down in Portuguese or are transcriptions from the indigenous language. An alien reality is referred to by the original foreign word, e.g. 'The Dorado's (gold-mackerels) excel above all; the Natives call them Waraka Pemme. Araguagua is a fish with a sword [shaped] beak.' By using the original denomination, the alien aspect of a typical Brazilian phenomenon is stressed. Unlike Columbus who gave new names to all new things

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<sup>60</sup> Whitehead, *Portrait of Dutch 17th Century Brazil*: 76.

he saw and by doing so created a new world, Barlaeus was ordering and classifying the existing alien world.<sup>61</sup> Through the (re-)naming of the exotic reality, Columbus rejected the alien character of the perceived reality. Barlaeus, on the other hand, accepted and stressed the alien character by using the alien word. Barlaeus reused the Indian terms he read in the reports without ever having seen the animals and plants he mentions. He thus fully trusted the information he had received from the different eyewitnesses and ergo the information they had received from the natives, who are also to be trusted in this context.

I highlighted these four rhetorical strategies because they reveal how indigenous information was processed in the descriptions. Local knowledge is trusted and then considered valuable or useful in order to be incorporated in a description. In order to be understood it had to be first translated from the indigenous language to a European one. In this translation of knowledge hybrid figures and go-betweens played a crucial role as I showed in the previous chapters. Local knowledge was then captured in a first description, most frequently a report for the WIC, before it was rewritten or appropriated. In the case of the armadillo Barlaeus *re-wrote* or *described* it in his *Rerum per Octennium* and this *re-writing* led to *comprehension* as I demonstrated in the previous chapter. The excessive number of rhetorical adornments in Barlaeus' descriptions masks the presence of (scientific) information or facts about the colony. But the *Rerum per Octennium* is not only a paragon of humanist rhetoric, it also contains valuable information on the natural history and the ethnography of Dutch Brazil. Concerning natural history, information does not come in the same meticulous way as in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* as shown in the example of the armadillo.

What happens in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*? In Marcgrave's description of the armadillo, we do not encounter an arsenal of rhetorical devices to persuade the reader as in Barlaeus' text. Scientific information in general in *Rerum naturalium Brasiliae* is given without adornments, which of course does not

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<sup>61</sup> In general only cities or other geographic names were sometimes re-baptized by the Dutch.

imply without any rhetorical device. Writing plainly is also a rhetorical choice. Nonetheless, there are important similarities with the *Rerum per Octennium*. First, Marcgrave also made use of comparisons with familiar phenomena, e.g. ‘The head looks like the head of a little pig.’ In the case of the armadillo exactly the same European animal is used in the comparison we read in the *Rerum per Octennium*. Barlaeus based his description on scientific annotations made by the entourage of Johan Maurits, and therefore it is very probable that he consulted Marcgrave’s notes to make his own description of the armadillo. Moreover, both Marcgrave and Barlaeus included many transcriptions from the Indian language. At an ethnographic level, Marcgrave’s translations are more trustworthy because Barlaeus misread some notes and made various mistakes in his transcriptions. Nonetheless, both used vernacular words in their respective *descriptions* and by doing so both represented the tropical world. Thanks to their transcriptions, the vernacular oral word was written down or, in line with de Certeau’s logic, it was *captured* or *comprehended*. Yet Barlaeus only mentions the Indian name, whereas Marcgrave also displayed other known names in Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch, but he still used the Indian term as main entry.

There are not only fewer rhetorical adornments in Marcgrave’s text. Another major difference between the descriptions of the two authors is that in *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae* the drawings are not just mere illustrations of the written text. On the contrary, they attract the attention first, most of all because they occupy much space on the pages. Moreover, the drawings give a very accurate representation of each example—even if some were most probably added by De Laet who was not always as precise as Marcgrave. Throughout *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae*, we encounter more images than in *Rerum per Octennium*. The drawings used by Marcgrave not only illustrate, but they also give extra support to the written text, providing the reader with an exemplification of the written descriptions. In *Rerum per Octennium*, the illustrations are mostly incorporated on the maps and do not illustrate a single phenomenon but have a more decorative function.

Finally, the last salient characteristic of *Historia Rerum Naturalium Brasiliae* that contrasts with Barlaeus’ descriptions is that they enable what Shapin and Schaffer referred to as ‘virtual witnessing’. The construction of

Marcgrave's scientific descriptions follows a clear structure and is always very meticulous. The choice for plain text or naked writing, instead of the use of an arsenal of rhetorical devices, is driven by a clear purpose: to generate verisimilitude, i.e. to convince a scientific audience of the veracity of the matters of fact that are presented and thus to be considered a reliable source.

The technology of virtual witnessing involves the production in a *reader's* mind of such an image of an experimental scene as obviates the necessity for either direct witness or replication. [...] What was required was a technology of trust and assurance that the things had been done and done in the way claimed.<sup>62</sup>

Marcgrave's descriptions were adjusted to the reading practices of a 17<sup>th</sup>-century audience. His discursive approach, endorsed by De Laet, encouraged the possibility of the circulation of knowledge of Brazilian natural history.

#### 4.8 THE ASTRONOMER'S GAZE

'In telescopium  
Dijs, dicas, liceat tandem mortalibus esse,  
si procui et prope, et hic esse ubique queunt.'  
Constantijn Huygens<sup>63</sup>

Marcgrave excelled in many scientific disciplines but he was first and foremost an outstanding trained astronomer and a skilled drawer of maps. The vision, as in the ability to see, is a crucial mediator in these disciplines as it is in the process of describing. In her *The Art of Describing* Svetlana Alpers attributed the Dutch way of painting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to a specific Dutch view. She linked this view to the development of technologies of sight. In medicine and the natural sciences the use

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<sup>62</sup> Shapin and Schaffer *Leviathan*: 60.

<sup>63</sup> Constantijn Huygens (1893) *Gedichten. Deel 2: 1623-1636*, Groningen: J.A. Worp/J.B. Wolters: 236. 'About the telescope. Finally, we could say, people will be able to be like Gods, if they can be close and far away, here and everywhere.'

of the microscope, the telescope and the lens, among other instruments, were introduced and in painting the use of the camera obscura. In *Ut pictura, ita visio*, Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) saw the eye as an optical device, as a 'camera obscura'. He underscored the importance of the vision as a mediator for which previous knowledge of mathematics is necessary. Alpers extended this thinking by distinguishing between the perspectival and the optical perception of the world. In her view, the Dutch 17<sup>th</sup>-century painters possessed the skill of double vision, in which they added the optical to the perspectival vision. Italian painters, on the other hand, saw the painting as an 'object in the world, a framed window' whereby the observer stands outside the frame at a distance of the picture or the observed.<sup>64</sup> For Dutch painters, the observer stood in the middle of the frame. In this way, Alpers suggested that the Dutch eye is immersed in the world:

[...] I want to consider at least three useful terms of comparison between the activity of the microscopist and the artists, terms that are based on notions of seeing held in common and posited on an attentive eye. First and second, the double cutting edge of the world seen microscopically is that it both multiplies and divides. It multiplies when it dwells on the innumerable small elements within a larger body (Leeuwenhoek's animalcules in a drop of liquid) or the differences between individuals of a single species. It divides when it enables us to see an enlargement of a small part of a larger body or surface — as Leeuwenhoek studied the grain in wood or Hooke the weave of a bit of taffeta. Third, it treats everything as a visible surface either by slicing across or through to make a section (as Leeuwenhoek was one of the first to do) or by opening something up to expose the innards to reveal how it is made.<sup>65</sup>

What Marcgrave did, especially as an astronomer and drawer of maps, was making the invisible visible, thanks to the use of the new scientific techniques. He made drawings and descriptions of matters of fact that could only be seen with the use of an instrument. In his observatory, for example, he needed his telescope, next to his knowledge of optics of course. In *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae* his descriptions were made following the same techniques: he made a description in detail of many animals and plants that were not known for the majority of his European audience in a 'scientific' meticulous way. Svetlana Alpers argued that

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<sup>64</sup> Alpers *Art of Describing*, 45.

<sup>65</sup> Alpers *Art of Describing*, 84.



during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, scientists were inspired by the arts in their inquiries. She refers more specifically to the use of the camera obscura, which inspired Kepler's investigations on the workings of the eye.

Is there then a relation between Marcgrave's and Eckhout's visual representations of Dutch Brazil? The representations of the Brazilian natural history by artists and scientists are different and in this case it was the scientist who inspired the artist. Rebecca Parker Brienen argued convincingly that there was a noticeable difference between Marcgrave's representations and the ones made by Eckhout. She used the images of the *tamanduá* as they appear in the *Handbooks* and the *Thierbuch* to make her point clear.<sup>66</sup> Eckhout's *tamanduá* is much larger and most of all more dynamic than Marcgrave's. Yet Marcgrave's is depicted in a more descriptive style and the observer receives extra information in the textual descriptions around the image, in this case handwritten by Johan Maurits. Eckhout 'employed the dynamic and naturalistic vocabulary of a seventeenth-century Netherlandish still-life painter', while Marcgrave made a nature study in an analytic and descriptive vocabulary.<sup>67</sup> Marcgrave's drawings thus use a style to his textual descriptions, following the scientific conventions of the period by only providing essential information about the animal. This becomes even more clear when we look closer at the entry of this same animal in the *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae* where a different yet very similar drawing appears. In this case the image supports Marcgrave's textual description that follows the same structure as all entries in *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae*.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, we can state that there is a different kind of comprehension of the Tamanduá at work in its visual representations. Similarly to the difference in textual description of the Armadillo in Barlaeus' and Marcgrave's texts, Marcgrave comes closer to the animal's scientific essence. He had a more analytical approach and possessed more knowledge of zoology in general, which

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<sup>66</sup> Parker Brienen *Visions*: 221, 286.

<sup>67</sup> Parker Brienen *From Brazil*: 276.

<sup>68</sup> Marcgrave *Historia*: 225-26.

gave him the ability to give such a detailed description and to comprehend Brazilian phenomena differently at a scientific level. But Eckhout gave us a more dynamic artistic representation and positioned us, the observers, in the frame, showing us another possible comprehension of the same animal.

Marcgrave studied many disciplines, among which astronomy, medicine and botany, but also some zoology, which gave him a solid basis for his investigations and which enabled him to give such meticulous descriptions as the one of the Tamanduá. He thus also showed an interest for the world of animals. First, we know that he possessed animals at home, but more importantly, he must have read much on the subject as he made references to such sources as Clusius, Gessner and Pliny.<sup>69</sup> Yet this bookish knowledge is superseded by empirical knowledge, since the *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae* is mainly based on information gathered during his expeditions. Johan Maurits' zoo also functioned as Marcgrave's working place, allowing him to observe specimens that he would never have been able to encounter during his adventures as some of them even came from outside Brazil.<sup>70</sup> Most probably, many of his descriptions of color were based on animals in captivity. When he ventured outside Johan Maurits' garden he could always rely on the assistance of local Indians, who were important not only for their knowledge of the land and the local fauna and flora but also for their capacities, e.g. their hunting skills to catch animals. Marcgrave had hunting experience and carried a gun during his trips, but certainly had less experience than the 'Brazilians' or 'Tapuya' with their bows and arrows.<sup>71</sup> Without their help, the *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae* would have been a completely different work. Traces of these interchanges are still visible in the nomenclature of exotic realities. The indigenous names are mentioned in each case, and, in many cases indigenous knowledge is used in the descriptions. Even today, many exotic phenomena still carry the native name, while the therapeutic value of exotic herbs or animals could not have been transmitted without interaction with the local

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<sup>69</sup> Whitehead *Georg Markgraf*: 426-42.

<sup>70</sup> Whitehead *Georg Markgraf*: 429.

<sup>71</sup> Whitehead *Georg Markgraf*: 426.

population. This trust in the local, ‘simple’ man was already present in the previous works on Dutch Brazil. The road had been paved before and Marcgrave made use of preexisting social networks to obtain information but now this information had been processed, checked and validated by scientists, which served as proof of their scientific value.

An example of this use of the already present socio-cultural networks can be found in the second chapter of the book 8 of *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae*, where there is a description of the São Francisco river by Willem Glimmer, who led an expedition from São Paulo up north to the lower parts of the São Francisco.<sup>72</sup> It is not sure whether De Laet added the logbook to Marcgrave’s notes or whether Marcgrave had received the notes from De Laet.<sup>73</sup> The events took place before the Dutch reign in Brazil but the documents were handed over to the WIC. That part of Brazil had never been occupied by the WIC, but the passages are related to the search for silver mines in the interior of the country and the collaboration of native people in these enterprises. In Glimmer’s account, a certain Francisco de Souza is mentioned, who carries a chunk of blue metal received from a Tupi Indian. This piece functioned as proof of the existence of more silver and initiated Glimmer’s expedition, who was accompanied by Portuguese and Indians on this adventure.

This example makes clear that the Dutch presence did not signify a break with previous colonizers. Again, the Dutch were able to make use of pre-existing social networks, most often based on hybrid interactions as I explained in the previous chapter.

Before finishing my observations on Marcgrave I want to add that he not only captured plants and animals but also territory in maps. His *Brasilia qua parte paret Belgis* (1647) edited by Blaeu, was based on the four maps he made of

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<sup>72</sup> Little is known about Willem Joost Glimmer. He participated in various Brazilian expeditions, among which one from São Paulo to Minas Gerais (1601-1602) and one on the island of Fernando de Noronha (1633). In a letter to the board of the WIC he reported on ‘Rio de la Plata’, i.e. the today state of São Paulo (Brazil). See Teensma *Suiker, verfhout en tabak*: 27 and Françaço *Alguns comentários*: 5.

<sup>73</sup> Teensma *Suiker, verfhout en tabak*: 26-27

the *capitanias* conquered by the Dutch: Sergipe, Paraíba, Rio Grande, Pernambuco and Itamaracá. It appeared in 1647, which is only one year before the peace of Westphalia that put an end to the Thirty Years' War and that forced Spain to recognize the independence of the Netherlands. After the Restoration in 1640 there were heavy negotiations between Portugal and the Netherlands during which it was decided that the Netherlands could keep their previously conquered territories in Brazil. This conquest was thus captured, comprehended, in maps. The connection between mapmaking and hegemony, at a colonial and economic level, did not disappear. Maps were still used as an instrument of possession, similarly to how they were used to lay claim in *Iaerlijck Verhael*.

And, finally, how were the people of Brazil comprehended in Marcgrave's descriptions? Social interactions between the different cultures were a crucial factor for the construction of Johan Maurits' Dutch Brazil, as they were for the comprehension of the land, the plants and the animals. But before having a look at Marcgrave's descriptions of natives, I will first explore the contributions of Marcgrave's colleague in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, Willem Piso.

#### 4.9 PISO – 'THE MEDICINE MAN'

'O Pizo, die tot 's Graven heil  
Naar 't suickerland Brezyl gaat varen,  
Gewenschte wint, die vare in 't zeil  
En zette U vrolick op het strant,  
Daar Nassau nu zijn vaandel plant.'  
Vondel<sup>74</sup>

The second scientist who contributed to *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* was the physician Willem Piso. Even if the two men had much in common, Piso and

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<sup>74</sup> 'Behoude reis aen Willem Pizo, Graef Maurits van Nassaus doctor, staende op sijn vertreck naer Breziji,' in H. Diferee, ed., *De volledige werken van Joost van den Vondel*, II (Utrecht, 1929): 375–76.

Marcgrave left very different footprints in the history of science. Both were part of Johan Maurits' retinue and both worked in situ to compose their descriptions of the local reality.

Willem Piso (1611-1678), son of a German church organist, was born in Leiden. He studied medicine in Caen, France, and after his graduation in 1633 he returned to the Netherlands. For four years he practiced medicine in Amsterdam before being invited to join Johan Maurits' expedition in Brazil, where he became the Count's personal doctor after his predecessor, Willem van Milaenen, had died in 1637. Already during his first years of practice he circulated among the local intellectual elite of Amsterdam and had contacts with Johannes de Laet, with whom he had close ties until the end of his life. He was also acquainted with Barlaeus and with Vondel, who wrote a farewell poem to Piso before his departure for the New World. In Recife, Piso not only ran a medical practice, but he also led a number of scientific and medical investigations. The relationship between Piso and Marcgrave while they both resided in Recife was troublesome.<sup>75</sup> Piso was on the same ship as Marcgrave on the way to Brazil but in 1644, when Marcgrave was sent to Angola, Piso returned to the Netherlands with Johan Maurits. After his return to Europe, Piso became a prominent member of the Dutch scientific community, becoming first inspector and then dean of the Amsterdam Medical College. Piso was a wealthy and respected Dutch citizen who was buried next to Rembrandt in Amsterdam.

Unsatisfied with De Laet's first edition, Piso published a second edition of the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* under his own name ten years later. In *De Indiae Utriusque re naturali et medica, libri quatuordecim* (1658) Piso rewrote Marcgrave's part. He added new information, among which a series of astronomic observations about the southern hemisphere, and he also made considerable changes. As he was doing so, many inaccuracies and mistakes infiltrated in the new edition. Piso declared that he rewrote the first edition because he wanted to

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<sup>75</sup> Fausto *A natureza*: 49.

offer more useful and truthful records.<sup>76</sup> The new version consisted of six books by Piso himself (*Historia naturalis et medica indiae occidentalis* and *Mantissa aromatica*), two by Marcgrave (*Tractatus topographicus et metereologicus brasiliae* and *Commentarius de brasiliensis et chilensis índole ac linguae*) and six by Jacob Bontius.<sup>77</sup> The latter were added in order to create an overview of natural history and tropical medicine, not only of the Americas but also of the East Indies. Many, among whom Marcgrave's brother, criticized the new edition and its author.<sup>78</sup> Most of all Marcgrave's brother accused Piso for having taken credit for the work that his brother had originally accomplished. Piso did not mention where he had used the originals (Marcgrave's and Bontius' parts) and where he had added, deleted or adjusted materials. Carl Linnaeus also noticed the differences between the two editions and therefore used the first one, which he considered more trustworthy, for his *Systema Naturae* (1758). In a letter to Domenico Vandelli—an Italian scientist who spent a large part of his life in Lisbon—Linnaeus wrote in 1765: 'I hope that you yourself can go to Brazil, a land that no one has examined except Marcgrave, with his servant Piso, when there was not a single ray of light illuminating natural history, and for this reason everything needs to be described anew in the light of new discoveries'.<sup>79</sup> Remarkably, Linnaeus inverted the real master servant relation that was at work in Recife between Piso and Marcgrave, making his preference between the two scientists clear.

Piso's own contributions in (the first edition of) *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* are entitled *De Medicina Brasiliensi*. As the title suggests, it consists of four books on tropical medicine and is divided in four parts. The first book covers the air, the water and the topography of Brazil. The second discusses endemic diseases, while the third deals with different types of poison and their remedies. The fourth book, finally, is dedicated to a discussion of medicinal plants. These

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<sup>76</sup> Fausto *A natureza*: 50.

<sup>77</sup> Freedberg *Ciência*: 209.

<sup>78</sup> Cook *Matters of exchange*: 218-19.

<sup>79</sup> Linnaeus as quoted by: Safier *Editorial Itinaries*: 184.

books were of great importance in a colony where, despite the salubrious character of the air, many inhabitants were affected by tropical diseases due to the absence of antibodies but also due to a lack of hygiene. Successfully treating these local diseases necessitated the ability to master this deadly enemy—in military reports many soldiers are mentioned on a sick-list who were unable to fight.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, Piso also added numerous pieces of advice concerning hygiene and diet. His contributions can thus be considered as rules of conduct for a better health in the colony that appear next to cures for common diseases. To obtain this crucial information Piso consulted local people or obtained through go-betweens specific local knowledge, but even nurses working in Recife's hospitals passed information on to him about local diseases.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4.10 DE MEDICINA BRASILIENSI

Piso starts his first book with a general description of the climate, which is similar to that of most of his predecessors. However, the climate is not the main subject of the description, it is part of his findings about the general health of the inhabitants of the colony:

I have to write about the illnesses suffered by the human body and the remedies that are commonly applied in this new part of the world. I consider it worthy to start by giving some data about the air, the waters and the places, or the essential characteristics of the Brazilian climate and soil. This I think to be necessary, so no one will assign it foolhardily to the celestial bodies or to these regions that are in every point extremely fertile and healthy, but it has to be ascribed to ignorance or irresponsible behavior of the inhabitants or foreigners.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Guerra *Medecine*: 474 and Miranda *Gente*: 187-226.

<sup>81</sup> About the importance of nurses see: Cook *Matters of exchange*: 217.

About the interconnections between the different groups of inhabitants of colonial Brazil and the circulation and making of medical knowledge see: Junia Furtado Ferreira (2007) "Tropical Empiricism: Making Medical Knowledge in Colonial Brazil", James Delbourgo and Nicholas Dew (eds.) *Science and Empire in the Atlantic World*, New York: Routledge.

<sup>82</sup> Piso *Historia*: 1. 'Dicturus de humani corporis malis, eorumque remediis in novi illa orbis parte familiaribus, operae pretium facturus video, si de Aere, Aquis & Locis seu de nature coeli solique Brasiliani pauca quaedam praemittam. Quod vel ideo necessarium est, ne sideribus deinceps aut regionibus fertilissimis omnino &

The output of his research is presented as indispensable for the colonial community because so far ‘ignorance’ and ‘irresponsible behavior’ had led to ill health despite the healthy climate. This section is based on much output coming from Marcgrave’s research, who kept records of the weather in Recife on a daily basis and who, we have to remember, worked under Piso’s supervision during his first two years in the colony. The tropical Brazilian climate is, once again, praised for its temperance and healthiness, as in so many other previous and contemporary works about South America. The difference here, is that on the one hand the data are rendered more systematically, i.e. more ‘scientifically’. On the other hand, Piso also describes scrupulously the meteorological circumstances to conclude that diseases are mostly due to ‘ignorance’ and ‘irresponsible behavior’ and thus not primarily to climate factors. The purpose of his book is made clear from the beginning: he will offer a panoply of advice and remedies.

While Marcgrave was very meticulous in his descriptions, Piso was at times slightly less structured. Concerning diseases, he was very careful in explaining symptoms and possible treatments, but with regard to other matters he could be more sloppy. We encounter for example, even if only in passing, the *Iupipiapre* again, this Nereid or sea-nymph commented on at length in *Rerum per Octennium*, albeit only in an enumeration:

A part from these, one can encounter the *Iupipiapre*, or Tritons, named *Peixe Mulhier* by the Portuguese, whales, seacows, and other prodigious specimens of Neptunus’ cattle, among which the dolphins and the tunas, who excel in velocity compared to the others.<sup>83</sup>

Piso did not provide any description of the fabulous fish as he had never seen one or could have dissected one to be able to confirm the information he had received about this phenomenon yet he still mentioned it, in contrast with Marcgrave who did not include mythical plants and animals. Nonetheless, even Marcgrave did

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saluberrimis perperam attribuatur, quod vel incolarum vel advenarum inscitiae at intemperantiae est imputandum.’

<sup>83</sup> Piso *Historia*: 11. ‘Praeter haec denique *Iupipriapre* veluti Tritones, Lusitanis *Peixe Mulhier* dicti, Balenae, Vaccae marinae, aliaque prodigiosa Neptuni pecora, inter quae Delhpini & Thunni insigni velocitate caeteros superantes, conspiciuntur.’



include some ‘strange’ cases—assuming that it was he who had done so and not De Laet—as for example the four-legged bird or ‘gallinaceus monstrosus’.<sup>84</sup>

Diseases are commented on in more detail. The ones that receive more attention throughout the four books are those common under the Dutch inhabitants of the colony: tetanus, different kinds of paralysis, hemarolopia, dysentery... One of the most extensively covered illnesses is eye malfunction, which had a high incidence among the Dutch:

Among the calamities in Brazil the eye diseases are not the least important ones. Eye diseases affect most of all soldiers and the ones oppressed by misery. But they suffer individually and not together in groups, because they are living in addiction and corruption. Among these patients, some lose their sight from the moment the sun goes down, because it delivers less light than necessary, this occurs especially during full moon. Others lose their sight at the twilight in the morning.<sup>85</sup>

Many inhabitants of Recife were suffering from blindness together with other infections. Piso refers to the godfather of western medicine to begin his analysis of the pathology:

With reason, Hippocrates, in his book concerning the air, the waters and the places (p37) and their surroundings proved that diseases of the eyes, most of all the tough and vehement inflammations, are common among the inhabitants of the southern regions, and also among people of warm and dry flesh.<sup>86</sup>

Similar to Marcgrave, Piso also relies on the ancients, Hippocrates in this case. The latter’s findings are trusted, after being tested and having proven their veracity. Hippocrates is throughout *De Medicina Brasiliensi* the most recurrent ancient source. This demonstrates how knowledge of the ancients is still respected even if it can be questioned or elements from experience or experiments can be

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<sup>84</sup> Marcgrave *Historia*: 219.

<sup>85</sup> Piso *Historia*: 18. ‘Inter Brasiliae enim calamitates haud postremum locum sibi vendicant oculorum mala, milites prae caeteris & penuria pressos sparsim non gregatim infestant, vivendi facultate vitiata & corruptale occidente, quod minus lucit praebeatur, quam opus est, maxime tempore pleni lunii: nonnulli crepusculo matutino videre desinunt.’

<sup>86</sup> Piso *Historia*: 18. ‘Merito quidem Hippocrates lib. de Aëre, aquis & locis pag. 37. & alibi, oculorum mala, tum imprimis lippitudines duras ac vehementes meridionalem plagam habitantibus familiares esse, tum quoque iis quibus carnes calidae & siccae sunt, testatum reliquit.’

used to extend this knowledge. Piso's text is in line with the slow advancement of medicine in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. Hippocrates is still the main source of information. For known diseases Piso recommends the same treatment as doctors in Europe would advise but he is often powerless regarding local conditions. In such cases, he consults local knowledge yet with varying degrees of success.<sup>87</sup> Nonetheless, little progress is made in order to fight local diseases from which the Dutch suffered. In what follows, Piso elaborates his descriptions and applies Hippocrates' theories to a disease encountered in Dutch Brazil, to which he adds his own results obtained *in situ*. After mentioning who is affected by the disease and enumerating the symptoms, he remarks that among the native population these symptoms almost did not occur, as is the case, for example, with an eye disease called *amourose*:

This disease attacks the foreigners the year around but especially during dry summers without rain and it spares the young indigenous ones, it affects today more rarely than before (because the previous foreigners did not know anything about the American causes, they did not know yet the origins of many illnesses, but, with time and learning, they learned to avoid them, and to distinguish between the different causes).<sup>88</sup>

Piso concludes that this was due to their diet: local people eat more fresh food—especially fruit, vegetables and fish—than the Dutch who have poor eating habits. The soldiers and the poorest part of the population, for example, eat too much outdated salty food resulting in damaging health effects. Dutch women in general are also blamed, among other things, for their all too sedentary life. Again, Piso offers specific recommendations for the Dutch citizens. As in most other entries where Piso gave instructions for diets to follow in the prevention and healing of diseases, he adds examples of the healthy local diet of the Indian people to prove his point. This local knowledge was thus trusted, as it had been corroborated and

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<sup>87</sup> Miranda *Gente*: 221-25.

<sup>88</sup> Piso *Historia*: 18. *Omni quidem anni tempore, sed aestate potissimum sicca quae aquarum exors fit, invadit hic oculorum affectus advenas, juvenesque vix indigenas infestat, rariusque nunc quam olim dominatur. (Quod nostrates quondam adventitii, rerumque Americanarum ignari, multorum morborum origenes nondum habuere prospectas, quas postea edocti evitarunt, eorumque principia declinare didicerunt.)'*

had proven its efficiency. Local habits and knowledge could thus, when proven, complement the learning obtained from the Ancients.

Piso obtained much information from Indian sources on local animals and plants but it is not certain whether he himself went on expedition—in contrast with Marcgrave who surely did—or obtained this information in and around Recife. Perhaps Piso just took notes from reports and never left the center of the colony. Even if he did not go in person on expedition, he did lead different experiments in Johan Maurits' gardens. One of his research methods was that of dissection. This method could be used for example in order to classify animals on the basis of their reproduction process.<sup>89</sup> The plants in *De Medicina Brasiliensi* are classified in different taxonomic groups. Their definitions not only include (Indian) name, size and habitat but also the different kinds of species, specific properties and possible uses as food or as remedy. In Chapter 65 we can read, for instance, the description of the *ipecacuanha*, that I quote at length here to show his working method in composing his descriptions. Piso claims to be the first one to write down the properties of this Brazilian plant:



**Figure 18: 'Ipecacuanha' *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* (1648)**

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<sup>89</sup> Cook *Matters of exchange*: 213; Meireles Gesteira *O Recife Holandês*: 6-21.

## Chapter 65. Of Ipecacuanha and Its Properties

Finally, the proper order of things brings us to those much-vaunted salutary roots, which, beyond their power of purgation through both the upper and lower passages, are eminently opposed to all poison. Nor do I believe that one could find on this earth a more effective remedy against the many illnesses arising from a long obstruction, and above all for the assuaging of the *fluxus ventris*.

There exist two species, neither having been described, to my knowledge, nor their excellent qualities brought to light. And both are dedicated to the same use, but with different degrees of power, depending upon their figure and their native soil. Indeed, one of them, the smaller one, lying low on the soil, grows in meadows; it is not so different from pennyroyal, for the stalk extends upward with many lanuginous leaves, and is encircled with little white flowers. Its root is coarse, fibrous, whitish, and it is called by the Portuguese, for the sake of distinction, *Ipecacuanha blanca*, which, while agitating the body less, resists most powerfully against poisons, and is likewise given to children and to pregnant women.

The other is a demi-cubit in length, though endowed with only three or four leaves. It delights in dark places, and is found in denser forests. At the top of its stalk it produces black berries, though not many. Its root is fine, winding, knotted, of a dusky color, unpleasant to the taste, bitter, hot, and piercing. In a dried form it is kept for many years, nor is it easy to cut. Its dosage is one drachma if reduced to a powder, or, in an infusion, two drachmae, give or take.

And both [species] are for daily use, though they prefer it diluted, since either in chewing on it at night in the open air or in mixing it in water, it powerfully communicates its medical virtue to the liquors [of the body]. Afterwards a *caput mortuum* is left over, and it is prepared again in the same way and is furnished for the same use; though no longer as effective for purging and vomiting, it is now more effective as an astringent. Thus this root does not only remove even the most tenacious sickness-inducing matter from the affected part, expelling it through the upper passage, but also, functioning as an astringent, restores the tonus of the viscera. Beyond this, it relieves flatulence and other illnesses, Counters the effect of poisons and of venoms both hidden and manifest, immediately expelling them through vomiting. Wherefore it is carefully [*religiose*] guarded by the Brazilians, who first revealed its virtues to us.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Piso *Historia*: 101-2.

### 'CAP. LXV. De Ipecacuanha, ejusque facultatibus.

Tandem ad decantatas has salutiferas radices ordo nos deducit, quae praeter facultatem purgatricem per superiora & inferiora, omni veneno eximie adversantur. Nec credo prestantius remedium adversus plurimos morbos ex longa obstructione ortos, imprimis in ventris fluxibus medendis, in hisce terris reperiri facile.

Duae existunt species, neutra a nemine, quod sciam, descripta, earumve qualitates eximiae in lucem protractae. Utraque eidem usui dicata, sed gradibus facultatum, tum & facie, & natali solo, differunt. Una enim earum humi depressa, exiguior in pratis crescit; Pulegio non admodum dissimilis, nam caulis foliis lanuginosis exsurgit multis: albisq; flosculis cingitur: radix illius est crassa, filosa, albicans, a Lusitanis ad differentiam,

In all the entries concerning plants in *De Medicina Brasiliensi*, first the name of the plant is given, followed by its general properties and how to recognize the different species, if applicable. Finally, the different possible uses are given, stressing the possible medicinal properties. The descriptions are thus very meticulous and provide many details. Similar to passages on medical advice, descriptions of plants are in accordance with the contemporary rules followed by Piso's fellow European scientists. Piso still works in the same vein as Dodoens or Clusius: he gives very precise botanical descriptions that 'capture the distinctions between different kinds of plants.'<sup>91</sup> What makes his descriptions exceptional are the subjects: tropical specimens that, for the most part, cannot be found in Europe.

#### 4.11 SUGAR

Sugarcane is one of the foreign specimens described described in *De Medicina Brasiliensi*. It receives even more thorough attention than most local plants, for

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Ipecacuanha Blanca dicta, quae, quod minus turbet corpus & venenis validissime resistat, aequae pueris ac gravidis exhibetur.

Altera est longitudinis semicubitalis, trinis vel quinis tantum foliis ornata. Gaudet locis opacis, & tantum in densioribus reperitur nemoribus. In summitate caulis baccas producit nigras, sed paucas. Radice est tenui, tortuosa, nodosa, fusci coloris, saporis ingrati, amari, calidi & acris. Exsiccata in multos annos reservatur, nec facile vires deponit. Ejus in pulverem redactae dosis est dragma, in infuso, dragmae, plus, minus, duae.

Utriusque quotidianus est usus, malunt tamen dilutum, quod vel unius noctis sub dio maceratione aut actione in aqua, Medicam suam virtutem abunde liquoribus communicet. Postea caput mortuum reservatum, denuoque eodem modo praeparatum, in eundem usum exhibetur; minus quidem efficax ad purgandum vel vomendum, sed magis adstringens. Ita ut radix haec non solum materiam morbificam, licet tenacissimam, a parte affecta revellat, eamque per superiora expellat, sed & astringendo viscerum tonum restituat. Praeterquam enim quod fluxibus ventris, aliisque morbis medeatur, venenis adversatur, virusque, tum occulta qualitate, tum manifesta, per vomitum statim expellit. Quamobrem religiose a Brasiliensibus reservatur, qui illius virtutes primi nobis revelarunt.'

Translation by Justin E.H. Smith: <http://www.jehsmith.com/philosophy/2010/04/wilhelm-piso-historia-naturalis-brasiliae-1648.html>.

<sup>91</sup> Ogilvie *Science of Describing*: 190.

obvious reasons: the sugar industry thrived in Brazil at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Sugarcane was not a truly local plant since it had been imported to Brazil during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Production and exploitation techniques had first been developed on Madeira and the Canary Islands and the plantation systems in the New World were thus modeled upon those created with success before on the Atlantic Islands. Piso starts book four with a long chapter, containing four pages with illustrations, on sugar.<sup>92</sup> Sugar, in all its facets, is described meticulously:

First, he gives a brief history of sugarcane, in Brazil and worldwide, followed by a long description of the exploitation and preparation process in the Brazilian *engenhos* or sugar mills. The benefits of sugar are praised: the crop has been known to have medicinal powers since Antiquity. Piso gives the different types and lists which beverages can be obtained from the sugar cane. Finally, as he does with other plants, he enumerates the possible medicinal uses, but does not want to elaborate on the matter because they were ‘for the most part already known to Europeans’.<sup>93</sup> Sugar was of course less ‘new’ than a plant such as the *ipecacuanha*.

For research on local specimens Indians had proven to be very helpful to pass on their knowledge and skills on the biodiversity of their original region but, since they had been imported to Brazil, Piso could for obvious reasons not include any Indian knowledge on the subject of sugar. In his long elaboration on sugar, Piso highlights, in contrast to the other specimens, the commercial importance of the product. The medicinal value is also described but is relegated to the background.

#### **4.12 PISO ‘S DESCRIPTIONS OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE**

What about Piso’s description of the local people? These are scarce throughout the *De Medicina Brasiliensi*, compared to the number of pages (an entire book), that

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<sup>92</sup> Piso *Historia*: 49-52.

<sup>93</sup> Piso *Historia*: 52. ‘[...]quoniam maximam partem Europaeis cognita’.

are dedicated to them in Marcgrave's part and that I will discuss below. The few descriptions of Indian people incorporated in *De Medicina Brasiliensi* are constructed differently from Piso's other descriptions. When details are given, for example, the descriptions of the local population are not structured in the same way as those of animals and plants exemplified by the following description depicting fertility and childbirth among Indian women:

The women are marvelously fertile, and give birth with little pain, rarely aborting. At the time of childbirth the husband lies down in the place of the wife for the duration of the labor, and, like a woman about to give birth, enjoys sweetmeats and feasting, citing the necessity of restoring his lapsed vigor. A preposterous custom, of course, which nevertheless appears to them to be most praiseworthy, as many women, immediately after giving birth, with no one having assisted them, get right up to meet [the men]; nay more, they hasten to the nearby river to cleanse their body, and from here they seek out their nourishment.<sup>94</sup>

The descriptions of the natives are composed differently from those of plants and animals in that the people are neither classified nor ordered. The comprehension of the people remains more difficult than that of plants and animals. Piso does not offer an enumeration of details but provides anecdotes instead, in which he offers glimpses of their way of living, the same way Barlaeus did in *Rerum per Octennium*. Moreover, Piso adds value judgments concerning specific habits. In the following passage the brutality of natives' behavior is underscored:

When one of them falls ill, his friends approach, and they conjure a trick, making notice of a remedy that they have already tried out on themselves. Next they scarify and cut deep into the skin of his muscular arms and of parts of his thighs with the spines of the Carnaiba tree, and with the teeth of the fish they also use to sharpen their arrows, so that he bleeds profusely... They bring on vomiting by force by means of the twisted leaves of the Carnaiba, which they force into his throat. With these and similar remedies tried out in vain, they attempt nothing else, nor yet do they relinquish the sick man, but by unanimous consensus, as if desperate for his health, they kill him off with a wooden cudgel, still gratifying him and themselves, that his death has come to pass in a masculine fashion, and that he is liberated of

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<sup>94</sup> Piso *Historia*: 7. 'Foeminae mire foecundae, facili negotio pariunt, rarissime abortientes. Maritus tempore puerperii uxoris loco decumbit primis a partu diebus, & puerperae instar, bellariis & epulis fruitur, subindicans necessitatem lapsas vires restaurandi. Praeposterus sane mos, qui tamen illis laudatissimus videtur, cum pleraeque puerpuerae statim post partum, nemine obstetricante, surgant aut obambulent; imo adfluvium vicinum corpus ablutum properent, victumque hinc inde conquirant.'

Translation by Justin E.H. Smith: <http://www.jehsmith.com/philosophy/2010/04/wilhelm-piso-historia-naturalis-brasiliae-1648.html>.

all suffering. In this way, indeed, they rejoice and glory in this moment of death. It is with great applause among his relatives that his enemies take vengeance upon the cadaver of the victim, this one for a shameful love, that one out of brutal vindictiveness, tearing him to pieces in the most savage manner of wild beasts. Others come forth for the flesh and bones, down to the teeth, scraping them down for their frightful banquet.<sup>95</sup>

In these descriptions of habits and customs, Piso does not offer any ‘new’ information. Even if offering matters of fact about local people, these anecdotes contrast with the meticulous descriptions of the ‘scientific’ entries in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* where plain text is used together with structured information giving the essence of phenomena. Piso obviously did not study or at least did not show specific interest in the natives in order to be able to give more meticulous descriptions of the natives than the ones made before him. In the passages on the local people, Piso’s drive for objectivity makes place for more subjective connotations, as in the previously discussed works. Piso judges their behavior, as he discerns their ‘brutal vindictiveness’ and ‘savage manner’ and describes their banquet as ‘frightful’. The Indians are depicted as ‘descendants of cannibals’ ‘without religion’ but thanks to close contact with the Europeans their behavior improved throughout the years:

Those who live among the Hollanders and the Portuguese follow Christ, though more indifferently, and the adults are very laid-back with respect to our efforts: nor can our pleading make its way much into their heads, unless they are of a tender age, with souls that are not yet preoccupied, and that are remote from their parents. Their languages are hardly different the one from the other. And however much those who are born [there] descend

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<sup>95</sup> Piso *Historia*: 8. ‘Cum in morbum eorum quid incidit, amici accedunt, quisque ingenium advocat, remedia quorum notitiam experientia sibi comparavit, profert. Mox spinis arboris Carnaiba, piscumque dentibus, quibus sagittas asperant, in torosis brachiorum & femorum partibus alte cutem scarificant & incidunt, ut sanguis abunde profluat... Vomitus vi concitant contortis Carnaiba foliis, gulaeque immisis. His & similibus remediis frustra adhibitis, nihil ultra tentant, nec tamen aegrum relinquunt, sed unanimi consensu, tanquam de ejus salute desperantes, clavis ligneis illum ferociter interimunt: gratificantes tamen illi & ille sibi, quod mascule interire ipse contingat, omnibusque miseriis eripiatur.: Hoc enim laetabundi in ipso mortis articulo gloriantur. Non minori cum applausu in parentis quam victi hostis cadaver saeviunt, illud prae turpi amore, hoc prae immani vindicta, crudelissimarum ferarum ritu dilaniantes. Utriusque carnes ossa tenus dentibus abrasae dirae ipsis epulae existunt.’

Translation by Justin E.H. Smith: <http://www.jehsmith.com/philosophy/2010/04/wilhelm-piso-historia-naturalis-brasiliae-1648.html>.



from a lineage of cannibals, nevertheless through mutual exchange with Europeans and through habit they are improved, and they shed their barbarity, attaining to a humanity that is comparable to our own. Unlike Mediterranean peasants, they are truculent, brutal, without law, without religion, they roam in the manner of wild beasts, without any fixed or stable quarters, and here and there will lie in wait, with admirable knowledge and swiftness, for the fish or wild animals that will be their victuals, whether these be abundant or scarce. They know how to hurl javelins, without a bow, with the most admirable strength and with stupendous skill... The men and the women as well go about with nothing covering their pudenda, with their hair dishevelled, though some of them have it clipped, and with the other body parts hairless; and they adorn themselves with the feathers of differently colored birds. They disgracefully paint their bodies with a certain dusky color pressed out of the *lanipapa* apple. And nor is the face free of ornamentation: they affix the most vile and tedious little stones to their ears, which have been pierced since earliest infancy, as well as to the lower and upper lips.<sup>96</sup>

This description is again full of commonplaces, as Piso did not shed new light upon the local people concerning these matters and repeated what had been said before him. He did not offer any further comprehension of the natives. He managed, similarly to Marcgrave, to achieve a scientific comprehension of matters of fact, and in Piso's case foremost of medicinal plants, but did not offer a new approach in his description of local people. The 'ethnological' data in Piso's descriptions did not attain the same level of comprehension as the botanical ones. Piso did extract much local knowledge, mostly about local diseases and how to treat them. This knowledge is not concentrated in one book or chapter; rather, it is dispersed throughout the various entries in *De Medicina Brasiliensi*. However, Piso could not obtain any information about or simply did not show any interest

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<sup>96</sup> Piso *Historia*: 7-8. 'Qui inter Belgas & Lusitanos degunt, Christum sequuntur, sed frigidius, & adulti circa facta nostra valde remissi: nec vix placita nostra, nisi tenellae aetati, nondum praeoccupatis animis, remotisque parentibus instillari possunt. Linguae inter se haud differunt. Et quamvis quondam ex Antrophagorum prosapia orti, tamen mutuo cum Europaeis commerci & consuetudine exultj; exutaque barbari[e], humanitate nonnulli cum nostratibus contendunt. Mediterranei contra agrestes, truculenti, immanes, sine lege, sine religione, ferino prorsus ritu, in hunc usque diem, nulla fixa aut stabili sede, huc illuc, pro victus ubertate aut penuria, piscibus & feris mira sagacitate & celeritate insidiantur: validissimis lacertis jacula, stupenda arte, sine arcu torquere norunt... Viri pariter ac foeminae, nullo circa pudenda velamento, fuis capillis, diversa licet tonsura, caeteris partibus corporis depilatis, incedunt; aviumque discolorium plumis se exornant. Colore quodam fusco ex lanipapa pomo expresso, corpus turpiter pingunt. Et ne facies ornamento destituatur, lapillos vilissimos & longissimos, perforatis a prima infantia auriculis, tu[m] labiis inferioribus & maxillis infigunt.'

Translation by Justin E.H. Smith: <http://www.jehsmith.com/philosophy/2010/04/wilhelm-piso-historia-naturalis-brasiliae-1648.html>.

in the other. Local people were ‘useful’ in order to be able to comprehend the local fauna and flora, but Piso shows no interest in comprehending these people better. The local people were not considered to be an object of research but only a means to obtain knowledge about the Brazilian fauna and flora. *De Medicina Brasiliensi* offers new and groundbreaking descriptions of plants and animals, but not of the Amerindian population. In Marcgrave’s part, the *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae*, a whole chapter is nonetheless dedicated to the ‘region and its inhabitants’. Does that mean that Marcgrave comprehended the local people in a different way than Piso? I will demonstrate in what follows that Marcgrave, just as Piso, will not offer the same groundbreaking insights in his descriptions of local people as in his description of the exotic specimens.

#### 4.13 CAPTURING THE OTHER - BOOK 8

The last and eighth book of *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae* also focuses on the local people. The book contains 13 chapters treating different aspects of the life of the indigenous people and includes an appendix about Chile. But since Marcgrave’s notes on this subject were incomplete, De Laet felt the necessity to add information he found in various other sources to compose this book. With the exception of chapter 11, on religion, De Laet consulted other sources to compose this book. For the chapter on Tupi grammar, De Laet used the notes of Padre José de Anchieta, a Jesuit missionary. For the Tupi vocabulary, De Laet inserted notes made by Manoel de Moraes, one of the hybrid figures of the colony I discussed in chapter 2. When Moraes lived in the Netherlands De Laet was in close contact with him.<sup>97</sup> Finally, De Laet also added an appendix with six supplementary chapters about Chile and its inhabitants, the Mapuche:

I composed the eight book, of which the author only left some notes and for which he had outlined the titles, with at my disposal the different means he left and other resources that

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<sup>97</sup> Vainfas *Traição*: 123.

where handed over to me by the illustrious Count through various persons. Because of the similarity of subject I added a short History of Chile, as it was recently reported by our men, when they perambulated the province and encountered a navigation passage to the Pacific Ocean.<sup>98</sup>

The eighth book can thus not really be attributed to Marcgrave to the same extent as the other parts. De Laet edited this book more than the others and added almost more information from other authors, making this book more his responsibility than Marcgrave's. The text is interrupted on various occasions, which make clear to the reader where De Laet added information, even though not all his sources are mentioned.

The first chapter of book eight is made in De Laet's typical style and shows more analogies with his descriptions in *Iaerlijck Verhael* than with the ones in Marcgrave's *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae*: the descriptions start with the history of the name of the region, followed by its location, the climate, an enumeration of the *capitanias* and rivers, and so on. Even though the first pages are based on Marcgrave's notes, it is clearly De Laet who edited them. Here, De Laet is again primarily mapping the region, in the same way as in his *Iaerlijck Verhael*.

Concerning the more interesting information in this chapter, the ethnographic and linguistic parts, De Laet obviously felt that Marcgrave did not offer enough new and valuable material on the subjects. For the ethnographic information, De Laet not only added Padre de Anchieta's vocabulary, Manoel de Moraes's notes, i.e. two (even if not *stricto sensu*) Portuguese sources, but also made use of Jacob Rabe's description of the Tapuya's, Elias Herckmans' account of his voyage to Chile and Joosten Glimmer's description of the São Francisco river. Moreover, the entire chapter is strewn with references to famous sources

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<sup>98</sup> Marcgrave *Historia*: 'benevolos lectores'. '*Librum autem octavum quem Auctor tantum affectum reliquit, & pene nudos tantum titulos, concinnavi è variis schedis tum ipsius, tum aliorum, qual Illustr. Comes benignè cum variis Iconibus subministravit; & ob vicinatatem argumenti adjeci etiam brevem rerum Chilensium historiam, qualem nostrates dederunt, cum nuper illam provinciam lustrassent, & compendiosiore navigationem ad mare Pacificum invenissent.*'

such as Fernão Cardim, Staden and Léry.<sup>99</sup> The use of these different accounts demonstrates once again De Laet's broad knowledge on the subject, but it also bears witness to the circulating knowledge about the New World at that time. Whereas the rest of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* is first and foremost based on the merits of Willem Piso and Georg Marcgrave, chapter eight of *Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae* and the appendix are mostly based on De Laet's editorial and compositional capacities, but it does not offer any real *new* information. Most reports used in this book were already circulating and known to a certain European audience.

The meteorological records in chapter three of book eight are based on the annotations Marcgrave made during his six-year stay in Brazil. The data and tables are taken from his reports but De Laet adds his own comments to interpret the charts. These comments, which appear with a certain regularity, make De Laet's voice resonate throughout book eight. In chapter four, on 'The inhabitants of Brazil', De Laet even refers to his own previous descriptions, making his voice sound even louder:

I already spoke about a lot of aspects of these tribes, in the description of the West Indies, books XV and XVI, because I strongly think these matters need to be discussed. I do not want to repeat these here, because I think they are evident for us, Dutchmen, or are linked with things we know, meaning that they are better known to us.<sup>100</sup>

This fragment makes clear that the information has been highlighted before and does not need more explanations. If the reader wants to learn more on the subject, he has to consult De Laet's *Nieuwe Wereldt*.

Nonetheless, there are occasions where we find more nuanced portraits than before. An entire section is dedicated to the 'different nations' living in

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<sup>99</sup> Fernão Cardim (1540-1625) was a Jesuit priest who spent two long periods in Brazil (1583-1598 and 1603-1625). The first publication of his treatise was in English translation: 'A treatise of Brasil, written by a Portugall which had long lived there', in Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytys Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625). His work was recently republished in Portugal: Fernão Cardim. *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil*. Lisboa: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1997.

<sup>100</sup> Marcgrave *Historia*: 268. 'Plura de hisce nationibus dixi in Descriptione Indiae Occidentalis lib. xv. & xvj. Quae hic repetere nolo, quia potissimum de iis agendum autumo, quae jam Belgis nostris parent, aut cum nostris confoederatae sunt, si quidem notioribus.'

Brazil. In the following fragment the hybrid figures receive extra attention in their description:

Due to the blend of different nations, one can encounter five types of different human races, namely those who were born here from a European father and mother are called *Mozombo*; those who were born of a European father and an indigenous mother are called *Mameluco*; those who were born from a European father and an African mother are called *Mulato*, those who were born from an indigenous father and an African mother are called *Curiboca and Cabocles*; those who were born from black parents is called *Criolo*.

A black woman who lived here had two twins, one white, the other black. I also saw here an African woman, not black, but with red skin and hair; I could not find out her region of origin, because the blacks did not understand her language. I saw here many black men with long white beards, and so was the hair on their heads. Interesting fact is that when the black beard turns grey on black skin, it looks like it has been sprinkled with flour. I also saw a boy of 18 years with frizzy very blond hair, white eyebrows and very white skin, with a nose that was similar as that of black people; he was the son of black parents.<sup>101</sup>

Marcgrave composes the descriptions of the natives partly through anecdotal information. He is precise regarding their physical appearance but less meticulous than in his descriptions of plants and animals. The hybrid Brazilian population is still seen by Marcgrave, and by De Laet who incorporated the descriptions of hybrids in the text, as a special feature of the colony, but mainly confirms what had been written in previous texts, including by De Laet himself and by Barlaeus. Marcgrave inserted nonetheless extra features in his description, which provides a more detailed picture than the Eckhout portraits.

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<sup>101</sup>Marcgrave *Historia*: 268.

‘Denique ob misturam variarum nationum, aliae quique distinctae hominum species hîc reperientur: nimirum qui ab Europaeis parentibus, patre atque matre, hic natus est, appellatur Mozombo.

Qui natus est ex patre Europaeo & matre Brasiliana nominatur Mameluco.

Natus ex patre Europaeo & matre Aethiopissa dicitur Mulato.

Natus ex patre Brasiliensi & matre Aethiopissa vocatur Curiboca & Cabocles.

Natus hîc ex utrisque parentibus Nigritis appellatur Criolo.

Aethiopissa quaedam hîc gemellos peperit, unum album, alterum nigrum.

Vidi hîc Africanum foeminam, non nigram, sed russa plane cute & pilis ac capillis russis. Ex que regione esset, non potui intelligente, nam linguam ejus non intelligebat reliqui Nigritae.

Multos hîc vidi Aethiopes senes barba magna & totaliter cana, ut & capillis capitis canis. Lepidum spectaculum, atra barba quae incanuit, in nigra cute, videtur quisi farina esset aspersa. Vidi hîc etiam plane albissimum juvenem octodecim annorum, pilis crispis albissimis & perciliis albis, cute albissima, naso plane more Aethiopum, qui natus his è patre & matre Nigritis.’

De Laet inserted many other sources throughout Marcgrave's text but mainly worked in the same vein as in the other books of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. In the eighth book, the information on the inhabitants is structured and classified. Starting from general information such as where they live, in which climate, among which animals and so on, book eight develops towards more specific aspects: first, the physical appearance of the local population, then their habits, clothes, tools, language and finally their religion. For every aspect he referred to other sources to complete the information.

About the religion of the different tribes, or the near lack of religion, there is again no *new* information. Practices of cannibalism within certain tribes are briefly mentioned as are the different kinds of deities worshiped by the 'barbaric Brazilians'.<sup>102</sup> Yet again De Laet refers to his own previous work if someone wants to read more on the matter:

*Note.* In our History or Description of the West Indies, book XV, chapter II, we spoke about the religion of the Brazilians. However, because we were better instructed concerning some facts by some who spent more time later living among them, we put everything about that subject in the second edition.<sup>103</sup>

It is as if Marcgrave is not considered as a real eyewitness by De Laet, or at least not as someone who possessed enough experience and knowledge on the subject to be used as the only source in this book. It is true that in comparison with some fragments of texts from *Iaerlijck Verhael* and *Rerum per Octennium* the reader is not offered descriptions leading to a different or a better comprehension of the natives, in contrast to descriptions of the fauna and flora of Brazil, which are better comprehended by Marcgrave. Both Marcgrave and Piso were able to uncover the realities behind many matters of fact, which could easily be captured, but not behind the human beings, which escaped understanding. The frontier between the known world of natives and the unknown world, their absolute otherness, has not been displaced between the publication of *Rerum per*

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<sup>102</sup> Marcgrave *Historia*: 278-279.

<sup>103</sup> Marcgrave *Historia*: 278. 'ANNOTATIO. In Historia nostra seu Descriptione Indiae Occidentalis lib. XV. Cap.II. diximus de Religione Brasiliensium, verum quia de quibusdam postea melius edocti fuimus ab iis qui diutius inter illos egerant, totum illum locum ita constituimus, pro secunda editione.'

*Octennium* and *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. Neither Piso nor Marcgrave showed any interest in a further investigation of their habits and customs and therefore the ‘ethnological’ parts of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* do not show the same evolution in the comprehension of the colonial reality as the other parts. Obviously, to figure out a human being requires other strategies and methods than the ones used for the understanding of fauna and flora. Piso and Marcgrave did not possess the necessary tools—which would be used by the first ‘real’ ethnographers a century later—and failed to comprehend them. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century tales and anecdotes as they were transcribed in Barlaeus’ *Rerum per Octennium* proved to be the most appropriate means to grasp parts of the people’s reality.

Marcgrave was acquainted with local people but these relations were only kept in order to obtain a better understanding of the native’s surrounding realities. On his expeditions into the interior he was accompanied by indigenous people. They could pass on their knowledge and experience about the Brazilian nature, but not (enough) about themselves. Either Marcgrave’s notes got lost or, more probably, he did not consider them as a proper study object as his main interest remained with the natural phenomena. The local people knew their own environment better than the Europeans and thus could help Marcgrave to trace and capture specimens, they could teach him how to place traps and nets and show him how to kill animals. Moreover, the local population had already named most exotic species, their nomenclature could thus be followed, and they knew in which way which species could be useful in practice.

Marcgrave was a traveler of his time, a nomad. After leaving home at the age of 17 he began a wandering life of intense study and research. He did, however, not just wander at the borders of society. He was not a subversive figure like Moraes and Rabe, border figures who could come closer to these other border (oral) cultures in Brazil of the indigenous populations. Marcgrave did not succeed in better comprehending the local people, in contrast to such figures as Jacob Rabe, Elias Herckmans or Manoel de Moraes, even though he did manage to comprehend Brazilian fauna and flora better than anyone before him. To achieve his goal he needed the local people and go-betweens, as intermediaries or translators. On the one hand, Marcgrave had to rely on go-betweens during his

expeditions to obtain information. On the other hand, he was himself a go-between, just like Rabe and Moraes. If we use Metcalf's categorization again, Marcgrave fits the three major types. He accompanied Johan Maurits to Brazil as a *physical go-between*: he crossed the Atlantic. As a *transactional go-between* he negotiated and translated during the expeditions into the interior of the colony. He functioned as a *representational go-between* when writing the many notes for the *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, in which he represented the otherness in words and images. Marcgrave combined these qualities as a go-between with his knowledge as a scientist.

Marcgrave's work on botanical and zoological aspects of Northeastern Brazil is until this day used as a source in botany, zoology and medicine. Recently, Marcgrave's work was even used in ethnobotany, analyzing the ethnological transmission of knowledge in historical sources.<sup>104</sup> He was thus a real pioneer in his scientific discipline but to a lesser extent in ethnography, in which he was less interested.

#### 4.14 THE LIMITS OF COMPREHENSION

Over the years, *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* became an influential locus for knowledge transfer that occupied an interesting place in a European knowledge network on foreign natural realities. The work was itself a product of the already existing Brazilian networks and of the hybridity of the colony. As I have stressed throughout this chapter, Piso and Marcgrave could not have led their investigations in the same way without the already existing social hybrid networks. These social relations and interactions were of the highest importance for the creation of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. Marcgrave and Piso trusted and

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<sup>104</sup> See: Maria Franco Trindade Medeiros and Ulysses Paulino Albuquerque (2014) 'Food flora in 17th century northeast Brazil in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*', *Journal of ethnobiology and ethnomedicine*, London: BioMed, 10:50.



could rely on local knowledge to lead their investigation and construct their descriptions. Johan Maurits also played a crucial role to achieve this, not only thanks to his so-called tolerant policies but also thanks to his great interest in the exotic surroundings of Recife, which resulted in the creation of many collections, which were closely linked to the new knowledge production of Brazilian realities.

As concerning most study objects the knowledge of the ancients and authority of the canon began to fail to understand the world fully, the 'new scientists' led their research on the secrets of nature and what had remained beyond reach started to be uncovered. Animals, plants and people were not merely catalogued in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*: the descriptions both unveiled and constructed the exotic reality encountered by the (Dutch) colonizers in Brazil. Piso and Marcgrave captured their study objects in description in order to acquire 'greater knowledge of the new marvels' and at the same time, similar to Wagener, to appropriate and to understand them better in order to comprehend them. The two scientists not only made the Brazilian marvels of nature, which were invisible for the majority of their European audience, visible in their textual and visual descriptions but also more comprehensible. The colony was literally grasped in samples and then in descriptions in order to better understand the colony and in order to better take possession of the colony.

Their study method was only suitable for the comprehension of natural phenomena. They could not understand the natives in the same way. Both Marcgrave and Piso were only interested in the local people in so far that they could help them in their investigations, i.e. in order to gain information on Brazilian phenomena. The scientists did not consider the people as a proper object of research. Regarding human beings this would mean to consider them as subjects, which is the only way to be able to understand the other. This approach would only be achieved a century later with the emergence of the field of ethnography. The local people were seen by the Dutch as part of the local reality with whom alliances could be built, from whom information could be extracted and who were showcased in Europe during Johan Maurits' festivities. In all these cases they were objectified and their subject position was not taken into account.

With *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* the Dutch reached the apex of their comprehension of the colony. However, this was only true for the comprehension

of Brazilian natural phenomena, concerning people the evolution in the descriptions had already come to an end with the publication of *Rerum per Octennium*. At the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century people could, not yet, be understood through scientific descriptions. They could only be partly comprehended through tales and anecdotes, which gave and continues to give us today access to traces of their existence.

## Epilogue

It all started some 15 years ago during my first trip to Rio de Janeiro. In the *Cidade Maravilhosa* I felt a strange variety of at-homeness that aroused my curiosity. This desire to understand Brazil has haunted me for many years. Not only did it lead to numerous trips to the country and to a library full of books on the subject, but also to this research in which I chose to have a look at how 17<sup>th</sup>-century Dutch authors looked at their colony. The four books that I analyzed in my dissertation demonstrate the Dutch approach towards Brazil. Through a series of descriptions, the authors of these books not only tried to appropriate and understand the Brazilian reality, they managed to make a certain comprehension of the other and the otherness possible and thereby they initiated a new paradigm. Moreover, there was an evolution in the way the colony was portrayed. On the one hand, this paradigm was characterized by a notable degree of disenchantment, i.e. the (almost) disappearance of mythical and fabulous phenomena in the texts. This disenchantment was already visible in *Nieuwe Wereldt* but became more salient in *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. On the other hand, there was a gradual shift from what I have called ‘mapping’ to a form of ‘classifying’ the colonial realities. I have demonstrated how three factors were indispensable in the emergence of the paradigm: the hybridity and heterogeneity of Dutch Brazil, the presence of Johan Maurits and the rise of the so-called new sciences. Throughout this evolution, the colony became increasingly comprehensible. The descriptions of animals and plants attained a new dimension in the last discussed work, *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*. A new kind of comprehension was reached, whereby the objects of description were captured in very detailed scientific descriptions based on

thorough empirical research, but the absolute otherness of the original inhabitants of Dutch Brazil could not—and would never be—captured, not even in a Dutch 17<sup>th</sup>-century description. The reason is that alien realities are limiting and cannot be defined, remaining incomprehensible to some extent. The absolute otherness, such as the horror with which Rabe was confronted and in which he may have lost himself, fundamentally escapes understanding but is also necessary in order to determine or define the Self. The closest the Dutch came to describing the people was in *Rerum per Octennium*, more specifically through anecdotes that were transcribed by Barlaeus. In these anecdotes we get a glimpse of the other.

The *scriptural economy* that emerged in the early modern period, to use de Certeau's terminology again, was a capitalistic enterprise based on the power of writing. In the case of Dutch writings on Brazil, this power was exercised through descriptions. Within the *scriptural economy*, what remained and remains until today the most difficult to comprehend is the complete otherness, in this case that of the Brazilian native. His voice, following de Certeau, was lost in the act of writing (or describing), as it can never be fully captured by the scriptural system. The writing (*l'écriture*) gave the westerner a powerful tool to colonize the New World, to dominate the *other*, but the orality of the *savages* was (partly) swallowed by the *scriptural order*. The text is only a ruin for the voice (*la parole*) of the natives because something will always be lost in transcription. Even if the scientific descriptions of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* try to be as accurate as possible and even if they represent a milestone in the comprehension of Brazilian phenomena, in their descriptions of the natives something escaped. To some extent, the Dutch descriptions exercised a power to dominate, conquer and trade. They achieved a deeper understanding of the local reality than their predecessors but they did not achieve the same success in comprehending the other. This turns out to be a most difficult task. Three centuries later, the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss was still struggling to find 'a language' to describe local Brazilian people and more precisely to describe what he could not understand. Lévi-Strauss, who was born in 1908, lived in Brazil from 1935 until 1939. In the course of four years of ethnographic research there, he stayed among local tribes twice. On his way to Brazil the young Lévi-Strauss trained himself by describing sunset and sundown:

If I could find a language in which to perpetuate those appearances, at once so unstable and so resistant to description, if it were granted to me to be able to communicate to others the phases and sequences of a unique event which would never recur in the same terms, then—so it seemed to me—I should in one go have discovered the deepest secrets of my profession: however strange and peculiar the experiences to which anthropological research might expose me, there would be none whose meaning and importance I could not eventually make clear to everybody.<sup>1</sup>

Back in France, as he was reflecting upon his work, he realized that the experience was not what he had hoped for. Even though he had collected precious information and his work had been praised internationally, he had the impression that the indigenous reality would remain forever inaccessible.<sup>2</sup> As it was beyond reach for the Dutch and for Lévi-Strauss, so it remains incomprehensible for us.

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<sup>1</sup> Lévi-Strauss *Tristes tropiques*: 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*: 43.



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