Hans Staden, *Wahrhaftige Historia* (1557)

Abstract

The Hessian soldier Hans Staden (around 1525-after 1558) reports in his “Warhaftige Historia” [“True History”] about his two journeys from Portugal and Spain to Brazil, a territory claimed by the Portuguese crown. Staden described how he was attacked, injured and abducted by “savages,” Tupinambá, during his second journey in 1549 near the Portuguese fortress São Vicente. His nine and a half months in captivity were characterized by the constant fear of being killed and eaten. The woodcut featured blends a map and an exotic adventure scene: In the midst of stylized indigenous huts, Staden is surrounded by dancing women, who had previously led him to the square (visible in the background). As in all the illustrations, the European is immediately recognizable by his full beard. This woodcut was formative for the image that educated readers would form of “savages”: naked Indian women dancing around and threatening a European stripped of their clothes.

In a later part of the report, a French merchant puts Staden in danger by advising the Tubinambá to kill Staden, since Staden was not French but Portuguese. Unlike the French, the Portuguese were enemies of the Tubinambá. It is noteworthy that here the line of conflict is not between “Europeans” and “indigenous peoples” but between European migrants.

Hans Staden has a particularly lively legacy in comics and youth literature: Not only in Germany have several simplified and abridged reading versions been published, but in Brazil, too; especially the 1927 version by Monterio Lobato has reached a large audience. An early comic about Staden’s journeys was included in the comic “The Conquest of the World - How our globe was discovered by brave men,” which was published in 1981 based on a French model.

Source

Source: Hans Staden, *Warhaftige Historia und beschreibung eyner Landtschafft der Wilden Nacketen, Grimmigen Menschfresser-Leuthen*. Marpurg: Andreas Kolbe, 1557. Digitized by Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro. http://www.etnolinguistica.org/biblio:staden-1557-warhaftige

Recommended Citation: Hans Staden, Wahrhaftige Historia (1557), published in: German History Intersections, <https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/migration/ghis:image-97> [October 12, 2024].