ARE UNPUBLISHED SOURCES BEST? REFLECTIONS ON A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DUTCH SOURCE

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In his excellent edition of the abortive Dutch expedition to capture Elmina Castle on the Gold Coast in 1625, Henk den Heijer has transcribed from records in the Algemeen Rijksarchief the journal by Admiral Jan Dirksz Lam and the resolutions passed by the ships' council.[1] I was puzzled, however, by his decision not to include the anonymous 13-page pamphlet *Waerachtich verhael van den gantsche reyse ghedaen by den eersamen Jan Dircksz Lam...*, published in Amsterdam immediately after the fleet's return to the Netherlands in 1626. He includes a facsimile of the title page and mentions my own translation of the section dealing with Sierra Leone,[2] but offers no explanation for not including it.[3] Could it be that he considered the printed document somehow less "primary"—and hence less valuable—than the manuscript(s)?

Without wishing to compare both texts in detail, we may look at two examples. In the section on Sierra Leone, where the fleet spent three months, the two sources record a number of things in more or less the same way, albeit in quite different wording: both mention meeting a French yacht from Dieppe, negotiating successfully with the "king" for permission to take water, firewood, limes etc.; both report on a "strange beast" (probably

[1]Henk den Heijer, ed., *Expeditie naar de Goudkust. Het journaal van Jan Dirckz Lam over de Nederlandse aanval op Elmina, 1624-1626* (Zutphen, 2006).
[2]Adam Jones, "Sources on Early Sierra Leone (22): the visit of a Dutch Fleet in 1625," *Africana Research Bulletin* 15/2(1986), 43-64.
[3]I made the opposite mistake by overlooking (or not finding the time to consult) the manuscript version, although it is mentioned in M. P. H. Roessingh and W. Visser, *Guide to the Sources of the History of Africa South of the Sahara in the Netherlands* (Munich, 1978), 30-31.

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a chimpanzee) which was caught, teased, and eventually thrown overboard. But the pamphlet (pp. 4-8) gives us a wealth of information on the king's appearance (orange stockings, grey hat with orange plumes, etc.), his wives, the military parade he offered in honor of the Dutch, an African interpreter named Herry who had spent a long time in England, and many other topics. The manuscript (pp. 96-103 in den Heijer's edition) gives us the king's name (Farambore), one toponym which is missing in the pamphlet, and some information on a Portuguese, Thomas Furtado, who had lived there 12 years. But although the two accounts of Sierra Leone are of roughly equal length, the manuscript devotes considerable space to the resolutions taken and hence contains less ethnographic/anecdotal information.

If we turn to the attack launched upon the Portuguese castle of Elmina on 25 October 1625, again the outline of the narrative is basically the same, but there are significant discrepancies. According to the manuscript (pp. 108-12 in den Heijer's edition), the Dutch landed about 1,200 Europeans and 150 Africans from the kingdom of Sabou/Asebu; yet the pamphlet says that about 1,500 Europeans were landed. Both sources complain about the "untrustworthiness of the Blacks," but the manuscript repeatedly attributes events to divine intervention. According to the manuscript, the Dutch captains ran to their disorganized companies shouting "Arm, arm, arm," which den Heijer explains as meaning "To arms!" Yet the pamphlet says they shouted "Alarm, alarm," which might make better sense. The manuscript states that the Dutch lost 441 men, whilst the pamphlet says that "about 800" died.

Both documents are written in the third person. It seems to me unlikely that they were written by the same person. Den Heijer suggests that the manuscript may have been written by the secretary of Admiral Lam. Certainly it was intended as an official document, and this may explain why it gives the names of more people. By contrast, the pamphlet is addressed to a more general readership, and is slightly stronger on incidents which the author apparently witnessed himself.

We are lucky to have den Heijer's transcription of what must have been a very difficult manuscript to read. But the task is far from over.

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