**Website Script**

**Passages I highlighted with blue have not been changed, anything else should be updated**

**Questions on edits are in yellow**

**Home**

\*I am not sure what year the American songs were written. Can you confirm if it was 19th-20th or earlier? If not, can we get a more accurate approximation? If you can find it, can you replae the highlighted line in the introduction?

Songs of Colonization is a project that analyzes a select corpus of US-American and German South-West African “folk songs” that highlight collective ideas of nationalism and colonialism during approximately the late 19th and early 20th century. After selecting our songs, our team analyzed them using XML technologies to produce this website and the data presented on it.

This project was completed during our semester-long Computational Methods in Humanities Course at the University of Pittsburgh by Lilly Forrest, Evan Ressel, and Maja Lynn. Our thanks to our professors David Birnbaum, James Pickett, and UTA Mitchell Luckman for all of their guidance.

* Lilly, Evan, Maja

**About**

In this project, we explore how nationalism is expressed through the colonial narrative of folk songs in the American West and *Reiterlieder* in German Southwest Africa, present-day Namibia. Our team analyzed a corpus of texts to understand the expression of collective colonial identity in both Germany and the US, and how those contexts may be related. We determined that songs would be particularly effective in communicating the collective ideas of these groups because they are composed for the “common man”. Soldiers and settlers alike were supposed to identify with these songs, and the songs themselves were meant to solidify and encourage their concepts of national identity.

One of the main goals in analyzing these songs is understanding what these collective ideas are and how they may translate to the justification of violence. In many of the songs, you might notice derogatory, violent, or negative language surrounding the peoples that were native to the land being colonized. Genocide is part of the history of colonization in both the US and German Southwest Africa. Can songs offer us an insight into the mentality and hatred that supported and encouraged these inhuman acts of violence? Can we see expressions of nationalism that promote an “us-vs-them” mentality that laid the seeds of racism, xenophobia, and eventually acts of genocide? Did romantic depictions of colonial expansion blind people to the severity of the crimes committed?

Go to our historical context tab to learn more about this, and the relationship between the American West and the German Southwest Africa.

Through our research, we determined that colonization’s main tenets include possession of land, resources, bodies, and labor based upon concepts of racial/ethnic superiority that are driven by a love of country, unity and the “us vs. them” mentality. When analyzing our texts, we decided to search for five main themes: homeland, violence, national unity, possession, and other significant acts. Within these main categories, we evaluated whether song lyrics were instances of, for example, patriotism or xenophobia. We also made note of whether these statements had positive or negative inflections. Through collecting data based on the metrics we choose to categorize; we hope to identify patterns and to compare types of nationalism that American and German colonizers expressed.

You can read about this and our analysis under the “results” and “conclusions” pages.

**Historical Context:**

**American Colonial history**

North America was first colonized in 1607, with the founding of Jamestown. What followed was centuries of conflict between indigenous peoples and European colonizers which led to massive population losses and the Genocide of many Native American tribes. Though colonization was around for a long time, the move of American settlers westward that has been glamorized in movies, plays, and music started after the revolutionary war when the US was founded in 1776. The legacy of Westward expansion fueled by the belief in manifest destiny lasted from 1803, when the Louisiana Purchase was signed, until the early 1900s.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Many of the settlers who moved out west in search of economic opportunity and land, believed in American Exceptionalism. This was the belief that the west was filled with empty, unused land, and that saw the native peoples as “savages” who didn’t know how to properly use it.[[2]](#footnote-2) The reality was of course much different, and the idea that they had a rightful claim to the land had detrimental effects on the native peoples. Despite this brutality, the idea of the American west and life on the frontier became idealized. In his article titled “Capturing the American West: The Cowboy Song and the Archive,” Michael Slowik writes: “during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, essays, frontier plays, and novels all helped shape the belief that the cowboy was a key representation of "true" American character.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

**German Fantasy**

The popularity of the image of the Cowboy was not contained only to the United States. In fact, this image became wildly popular in the entertainment industry in Germany. Karl May was a popular author whose books and plays depicting the American frontier, which he had never visited, sparked a cultural phenomenon in Germany still seen today[[4]](#footnote-4). Among others, May’s depictions of the American west created collective German fantasies about colonization and imperial expansion[[5]](#footnote-5).

There is evidence, not only that German fascination with the American West was a factor in popular support for overseas expansion, but also that it influenced the way that Colonial Soldiers treated the Herero and Nama ethnic groups during a war from 1904-1907, which escalated into what is now considered the first genocide of the 20th century.[[6]](#footnote-6) The German colonial government looked to and actively researched American policies concerning the extermination of Native Americans in order to use these policies in their own campaign of Genocide. This included the relocation of Herero, Nama, and other ethnic groups onto reservations. These groups were forced to give up their traditional cultural practices and convert to Christianity.[[7]](#footnote-7) Cultural artifacts and even human remains were stolen and shipped to European and American research institutions and museums. Survivors of the genocide were rounded up and sent to forced labor camps where they were subject to medical experimentation.[[8]](#footnote-8) These unthinkable policies were tolerated by the German people because the same practices in the American West were so idealized.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**German Colonial History**

But why was this colonial fantasy so potent in Germany? It is important to consider that Germany was a new nation, formed only in 1871, a century after the United States. Colonization was an attractive process that could at once help form a sense of national pride and ensure that Germany could compete with other European imperial nations. Germany claimed the territory of German Southwest Africa, along with other land parcels in the Berlin conference of 1884, seen as the beginning of the “scramble for Africa”, where remaining territory on the African continent was partitioned among European Imperial powers[[10]](#footnote-10). The expansion and appropriation of land were seen as a way to strengthen the German nation and identity.

Another method used to encourage German national identity was evoking the romantic depictions of courtly culture and heroic deeds of medieval Germany. For example, Richard Wagner’s famous four-part opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen* was based on ancient German mythology and written in 1876.[[11]](#footnote-11) Ballads resurfaced as popular forms of writing around this time as well[[12]](#footnote-12). These stories, which were sung in verse form set to music had been popular in medieval Germany and often drew upon themes of heroic knights and courtly love that would inspire a sense of German national pride again in the 19th century. The Folk songs and German Reiterlieder we are analyzing through this project are reminiscent of very similar themes and structures. They are songs that have a story-like structured narrative that romanticizes the landscape and the bravery of soldiers and settlers. They are written with the purpose of reinforcing new myths that glorified nationalistic ideas of exploration and exploitation under colonialism.

**Understanding nationalism in American continuous context vs German oversees empire context, and the process of expansion etc.**

These two very different histories, although one was clearly influenced by the other, point to very important differences in forms of nationalism and colonial rule. It is important to consider even the geography of the areas. The Americans were expanding westward in order to establish a continuous empire. Ideas of exceptionalism and the American dream underline that the people in this movement had a strong sense of belonging and subscribed thoroughly to the American National narrative. In fact, they embodied it. The German empire, however, was overseas. Germany and German Southwest Africa were separated by land and water, and this changed how people perceived the land. German colonization of the area was also pushed forward by soldiers, who were fighting in the name of the German government, rather than settlers fighting for their own claims to land.

**Sources:**

\*CAN YOU ADD A CITATION FOR THE AMERICAN SONGS WE FOUND? I figured we could just use the end of this page as a general works cited thing

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**Texts**

**\***Not sure ifI did the German Book name translation very smoothly in the third paragraph

* American Songs

The songs that make up this Corpus were all selected from *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, which was first published in 1910*.* We choose this source because it was easily accessible and was already digitalized on the Project Guttenberg site. We selected songs whose content dealt directly with either expansion and possession of land or with settlers’ relationships with native peoples. You will notice that this corpus is significantly larger than the German songs, this is due to multiple historical and practical reasons. First, we had a much easier time finding and accessing American folk songs online. The American period of expansion was also much longer and has been celebrated in popular culture to this day. This accounts for a greater public interest in these songs, which likely contributed to higher rates of publication and circulation. Due to the time and resource restrictions of this project, we embraced this disparity and went forward with a greater amount of American songs.

* German Songs (English)

The primary source we used for the German songs was *Deutsche Reiter in Südwest: Selbsterlebnisse aus den Kämpfen in Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (German Riders in the Southwest: experiences from the wars in German Southwest Africa) by Friedrich Freiherr von Dincklage-Campe and was published in 1909. This book, which also includes illustrations by C. Becker, V. Huen, and O. Merté, was the inspiration for this project. It details the years of war and genocide from 1904 and 1907, and the songs and illustrations (one of which you will find on our home page) made it apparent that there were many themes and tropes in common with depictions of the American “wild west”. The second song, *Das Südwesterlied*, was the only song we could find readily available on the internet that talked specifically about soldiers’ experiences in German Southwest Africa and that was not taken from the book.

* German Songs (German)

We choose to include the German songs as a language reference because we did our own translations. However, we felt it would be more effective for our project if the markup of the songs was in the same language. We felt this would make our analysis clearer and more accessible.

**Results**

The results we gathered are based on percentages of elements and their relevant attributes, rather than raw counts. This was done to allow for the most accurate comparison of the songs, as the American corpus is much larger than the German corpus.

**Conclusions**

1. **Violence**

We examined depictions of violence between groups of people within the songs as a way to understand how the settlers and soldiers viewed acts of violence, in hopes that it would give us insight into their perspective and how it connects to their ideas about nationalism and their claim to the land they occupied. Many instances of violence were committed upon animals, but this was also interesting to us as it reveals how they perceived the land’s resources. The German songs overall had less violence than the American songs, and that violence more often was ambiguous on which group either the perpetrator or victim belonged to. We believe this might be because they were engaging in formalized, controlled military violence. We know that they raided villages, fought in wars, and committed genocide. However, because the violence took place in a military context their relationship to it was likely very different than for settlers who embraced and took pride in the idea of lawless violence.

1. **Xenophobia**

We coded for instances of xenophobia when native people were directly mentioned in the songs in derogatory ways or hateful contexts. Although there were many mentions of native people in the American songs, the overall percentages showed that there were more instances of xenophobia in the German songs. We think that this could be due to geographical contexts. The American settlers were no doubt highly xenophobic and racist and often acted on these feelings, but why would it be less of a focus in their songs? Perhaps the Germans were more focused on this element because they were part of a continuous empire. Germany was separated by thousands of miles of land and oceans. This was also a time when more formalized theories on race and racial hierarchies became more prevalent. The Germans even inflicted medical experimentation on the native peoples and sent their body parts to Europe for eugenics research. Both groups made xenophobia, the fear and hatred of the other, a defining aspect of their identity. However, perhaps the Germans were more focused on this difference, and perhaps it served them more to spread the ideas of xenophobia in the specific times and contexts of the songs we selected.

1. **National Unity**

We examined national unity in the songs within the contexts of brotherhood, loyalty, pride, patriotism, and solidarity. We found that there was a greater expression of national unity in the German songs and that these expressions were more centered around loyalty whereas the American songs had a stronger focus on brotherhood and solidarity. We believe that this is once again indicative of the political and social contexts of an overseas versus a continuous empire. We also think this is indicative of the fact that Germans had a stronger connection to Germany and the fatherland whereas the Americans were simply connected through their interactions with other settlers. The Germans were serving in an army that required loyalty and reverence to the empire. The same thing was not required of Americans, as many of them choose to band together in and form communities.

1. **Homeland with stacked element of mood**

We coded for mentions of homeland after noticing several references to both the new home and the country or place of origin of the settlers. When examining homeland, we wanted to see if references to homeland had positive, negative or ambiguous connotations to get a better sense of what settlers’ connection to the land was like. We found that the mentions of homeland in the American Songs tended to be more negative, but both groups had around the same percentage of positive mentions. Overall, you may notice that many songs talk about the harsh conditions of the land, but when they directly reference the homeland, the depictions are overwhelmingly positive. We see many examples where they say that they love the home despite how harsh it is and have a sense of pride surrounding it. The fact that positive depictions of the homeland are in the majority tells us that settlers and colonial soldiers had an emotional connection to the land and saw it as their own.

1. **Possession**

When coding for possession, we between land, people, resources, and labor. Our results show that in both German and American contexts, land and resource possession was by far the most mentioned. We know that historically all four categories were common, especially in German Southwest Africa but we can only speculate as to why possession of people and labor were not mentioned in songs. Perhaps they did not fit into the heroic narrative, or maybe there are more songs not in our corpus with different themes that do mention these circumstances.

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