LOGGING DEATH AT SEA:
A STUDY OF HOW DEATHS WERE RECORDED IN WOODES ROGERS’ A CRUISING VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD

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Injury and death were quite common at sea but only few historians have ever delved into the question of how deaths aboard vessels were recorded by sea captains. In considering the scale of the topic, it is fairly evident from reading almost any ship’s log or captain’s journal from the eighteenth century that death was virtually an inevitable part of seafaring. Although most entries regarding death within captain’s logs are rather brief, by studying the way in which such events were written about for recording purposes, it can be argued that the manner in which deaths were recorded seem to be primarily reliant on three major factors. The most prevalent of these appears to be the familiarity the captain had with the deceased member of his crew, but the writing styles of the captains, and the events surrounding the deaths also had a clear effect on the way in which deaths are portrayed. By examining the account Woodes Rogers published of his privateering circumnavigation voyage, *A Cruising Voyage Round the World*, this paper seeks to provide evidence supporting the claim that although deaths tended to only be briefly mentioned in the account, the way in which Rogers logged the events offers a historically significant aspect of the work in showing how Rogers viewed and responded to the various deaths of his men.

In considering the significance of the ways in which Woodes Rogers chose to record deaths, one can justify the study of such accounts’ worth in many ways. One of the most obvious reasons it is a worthwhile endeavor comes from the scale of the event, as there were over one hundred deaths that occurred during Rogers’ voyage, and that there was hardly a voyage that went by in the eighteenth century that did not include at least one death. Another, perhaps less considered reason the topic is important is in considering that it is one of the ways that modern readers and those at the time learned about deaths that occurred at sea. In looking at Rogers’ account, the significance for later generations comes partially in later captains imitating the way in which they logged deaths, and it gives readers an understanding of death at sea. Because
captains viewed the events from a position different from the common sailor, their perception of the events and the way in which they logged them was by no means representative of how all sailors wrote about death. By seeing how Woodes Rogers recorded sailors’ deaths in various manners, however, a view of what is and what is not said when discussing deaths in logs can be better reached and help to show the significance of the various manners of presenting such information.

The current historiography surrounding deaths at sea leaves one with a rather sparse bibliography. David J. Stewart’s book, *The Sea Their Graves: An Archaeology of Death and Remembrance in Maritime Culture* (2011), discusses deaths not primarily through written accounts but rather in memorials, although he does give some account of the ways in which American and English sailors’ deaths were perceived and responded to. Marcus Rediker’s book, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (1993) helps to fill in some of the information regarding the maritime culture from a perspective different than Rogers’ as Rediker’s book focuses on the life of lower-ranking members of a ship’s company. This work does well to fill in some of the cultural gaps left in Rogers’ account.

In looking at what has been written about Woodes Rogers, both G.E. Manwaring’s introduction to *A Cruising Voyage Round the World*, and Byron Little’s *Crusoe’s Captain: Being the Life of Woodes Rogers, Seaman, Trader, Colonial Governor* (1960) appear to be two of the most widely referenced accounts of Rogers’ voyage, both of which focus upon Roger himself and what was presented within *A Cruising Voyage Round the World*. Modern scholars such as Jason H. Pearl, an English Professor at Florida International University, wrote on Rogers in his article, “Woodes Rogers and the Boundary of Travel Facts” (2007) and the question of how far
Rogers stretched truth within his account and how he accomplished his goal of keeping his account primarily factual. Timothy Charles Halden Beattie also looked at Rogers’ work in his dissertation, “The Cruising Voyages of William Dampier, Woodes Rogers, and George Shelvocke and their Impact” (2013), which offers a broad view of Rogers’ account and the impact it had upon England, most specifically in the financial sense of the topic along with its influence of impacting the development of the literary forms and naval strategies.

Because there is not much of any historiography on the specific topic this paper seeks to address, there is not much available in the way of counter-arguments. Instead this paper will focus primarily on looking at the question of how Woodes Rogers’ account discussed deceased members of a ship’s company. It will focus especially on what the factors were which surrounded the results and led to the amount and type of information given about the deaths. This paper will argue that there are three significant factors in determining how deaths were recorded. To prove this argument regarding the causes, this paper will look at the Rogers’ *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* with the primary focus being what was written therein, although addressing relevant aspects which other scholars have written upon in order to create a fairly complete picture of the portrayal of death in Rogers’ account. This paper will also discuss the question of Rogers’ general stylistic choices and look slightly into his background to see what role such factors play in determining his choices in accounting the deaths.

Woodes Rogers’ circumnavigation voyage from 1708 until 1711 was accounted in *A Cruising Voyage Round the World*, first published in 1712. Looking first into Rogers’ background, it is likely that he was born in Poole, England around 1678 or 1679.  

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1 Rogers’ name is not listed in the local church registries, although according to Bryan Little, this is likely due to the relative nonconformity to the practices of the Church of England which the Puritan preacher, Samuel Hardy, taught in his church. Little also notes that it was not uncommon for churches that strayed from the regulations and practices of the Church of England to be less than thorough in completing their local registries.
a rather successful mariner whose merchant endeavors often took him across the channel to Europe, and possibly even down to Africa. The family moved to Bristol just before the turn of the century. Rogers was apprenticed to John Yeamans, a seaman in Bristol when he was eighteen. It is probable that the Rogers family had connections in Bristol which allowed for Woodes Rogers’ marriage in 1705 to Sarah Whetstone, the daughter of Rear Admiral Sir William Whetstone (d. 1711). During his first few years of marriage, Rogers was engaged as a merchant captain, although with the War of the Spanish Succession raging, he suffered losses and soon turned to privateering by the year 1707.²

The expedition of 1708 which Rogers records in *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* was a risky venture that required substantial funding. It is likely that Rogers’ connection with Rear Admiral Whetstone helped to gain the backing necessary to fund the building and supplying of the *Duke* and the *Duchess*. As Rogers records in the account, the *Duke* was a 320 ton vessel that carried 117 men of which he was the captain, while the *Duchess*, captained by Stephan Courtney, was only 260 tons and held 108 men at the beginning of the voyage.³ The proposed plan for their privateering, of extending the plundering of Spanish ships into the South Sea, was a much longer voyage than most of the other privateering expeditions occurring at this time which was why the vessels were so large and contained more men than would normally go out on such a voyage. Where this plan of far-off plundering had the possibility of success, however, was in the fact that the seas near Spain and in the Caribbean were already fairly thoroughly covered by privateers, so there would be less competition for Rogers and his company in venturing into

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³ Woodes Rogers, 3.
relatively unfamiliar territory. At this point in England’s war with Spain, the profit to be had from privateering where few other enemies of Spain were traveling and where quite a few Spanish ships were was quite large. Although there were risks involved in the venture, Woodes Rogers’ circumnavigation voyage wound up lasting for over three years from August 1st 1708 to October 14th 1711, but it yielded a total of at least £148,000 on its return to England.

Turning the attention to the account of the voyage itself, Woodes Rogers wrote near the beginning of *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* of his intentions for the publication and his intentions during the writing of his work. In the beginning of the piece he writes that:

Tho others, who give an Account of their Voyages, do generally attempt to imitate the Stile and Method which is us’d by Authors that write ashore, I rather chuse to keep to the Language of the Sea, which is more genuine, and natural for a Mariner. And because Voyages of this sort have commonly miscarry’d, ‘tis necessary that I should keep to my Original Journal; that the Methods we took to succeed in our Designs, may appear from time to time in their native Light: Therefore without any disguise I shall publish the Copies of all our material Regulations and Agreements, and keep to the usual Method of Sea-Journals, omitting nothing that happen’d remarkable to our selves, or that may serve for Information or Improvement to others in the like Cases… Since Custom has likewise prevail’d for Sailors to give or pass by, I shall so far comply with it as to give a Description of those that occurr’d in the Course of my Navigation, especially of such as are or may be of the most use for enlarging our Trade; wherein I have consulted the best Authors upon the Subject, and the Manuscript Journals of others, as well as inform’d my self by Inquiry upon the Spot, and from those that have been in the respective Countries I treat of.

In looking at how this intention matches up with what Rogers ultimately put in *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* it is clear that he remained overall true to his goal. This is evident in how he inserts both long entries of multiple pages of descriptions of the lands he visited and

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4 Ibid.; G.E. Manwaring; Byron Little.


6 Woodes Rogers, 1-2.
shorter entries such as August 7th’s entry, the entirety of which being: “Yesterday at three in the Afternoon we came to an anchor with our Consort in the Cove, Wind at NNE.” By seeing the alternating brevity and long-windedness of Rogers’ entries in his account, what he chooses to include and what he leaves out have more importance, as it is clear he is willing to include some unnecessary information so when what might seem as pertinent information is left out, one can fairly asked why such things are missing from the account.

During the course of the voyage, Rogers recorded the deaths of many personages who were aboard the ships. According to Beattie, the actual number of those who died on the voyage was probably higher than those that Rogers wrote with any specificity about, as Rogers did not delve into specifics for many of the deaths, and “the crew’s petition to the House of Lord’s in August 1715 refers to ‘nearly’ 100 deaths.” Because the nature of the voyage was that of privateering, the types of deaths that Rogers wrote about in his account ranged somewhat wildly, as did the type of people who died. In the piece, Rogers recorded not only the deaths of his original crew, but also those of some of the Spanish prisoners, those from Africa, and other sailors they picked up along the way. With so many deaths to record, there were obvious variations in how much detail was supplied. In looking at one of the earlier deaths noted upon the voyage, the entry goes as follows: “Dec. 18. Cold hazy rainy Weather. Yesterday in the Afternoon one of the Duchess’s Men fell out of the Mizen-Top down on the Quarter-Deck, and broke his Skull: They desir’d the Advice of our Surgeon, and I went on board with our two, where they examin’d the Wound, but found the Man irrecoverable; so that he died, and was

7 Ibid., 3.

8 Timothy Beattie, 119.
buried next day.” What is particularly interesting in this entry is that Rogers did not mention the name of the poor soul whose death marked the third one of the voyage. Although, such might be considered understandable given the fact that the man was a member of the Dutchess’ company and not of Roger’s ship, and one could argue that such information was not pertinent for note by the Duke’s captain, the other two deaths previous to this occurrence were not attached to names either. On September 29th, Rogers recorded the death of “a Sailor going up to furl the Main-Top-Gallant Sail [who] fell suddenly without any noise from the Main-Top over board, occasion’d as I suppos’d by a Fit.” This man was also not dignified in this account with a name, nor was the Indian who was wounded while trying to regain the company’s two runaway Landmen, Michael Jones and James Brown. While one could understand not listing and probably not knowing the name of the Indian they had wounded, the fact that Rogers is occasionally willing to list the names of his crew in the account makes one question why men who died aboard the Duke and the Dutchess were not named.

As the voyage progressed, Rogers remained inconsistent in giving the names of the men lost at sea. On January 7th he noted that: “Yesterday about three in the Afternoon John Veale a Landman died, having lain ill a Fortnight, and had a Swelling in his Legs ever since he left Grande. At nine last night we bury’d him; this is the first that died of Sickness out of both Ships

9 Woodes Rogers., 75.

10 Ibid., 18.

11 As I cannot find a copy of the official log book—the last known information upon it I can find being that in 1828 it was in possession by Gabriel Goldney, the mayor of Bristol, according to G.E. Manwaring on page xxvi of the “Introduction”—or a complete list of the men who had signed aboard for the expedition, it is impossible at this time for this paper to offer a fair conjecture upon this point. It is possible that this was merely an oversight on the part of Rogers and that he simply chose not to log the names without any ulterior motive, perhaps even from simply not knowing the names; but without knowing who the men were who died, not much more can be surmised with any accuracy.
since we left England. Several of the Duchess’s men had contracted Illness by the Wet and Cold."12 This entry does offer a name, but one week later, on January 14th, Rogers wrote that “This day the Duchess bury’d a Man that died of the Scurvy.”13 Again, one could argue that Rogers was simply sticking to recording the names of those aboard the Duke, yet on February 12th his inconsistency remained when he wrote that the crew’s efforts led to “the speedy Recovery of our sick Men, of whom none died but two belonging to the Duchess, viz. Edward Wilts and Christopher Williams.”14 As can be seen just from this small sample of the deaths recorded, Rogers was incredibly mercurial with when he would list names of the men who died among his company. By April of 1709, Rogers settled on primarily listing the names of the departed members unless they were, Africans, Indians, from the captured Spanish ships, or occasionally members of the Duchess. In considering these decisions Rogers made, the choice to only name certain men shows him to have an understandable bias in his concern in favor for the members of his own ship, although still fairly dutifully noting those who died on his voyage, even when they were not immediately his concern.15

One of the most interesting accounts of death that Rogers recorded within A Cruising Voyage Round the World was that of his brother, John Rogers on April 15, 1709. Unlike many of the other deaths within Woodes Rogers’ account where only relatively little information was given regarding the incident; in the 15th’s entry, Rogers described both the surrounding battle with a Spanish ship, as he had done before with other accounts of confrontations, and his own

12 Woodes Rogers, 79.
13 Ibid., 80.
14 Ibid., 100.
15 Woodes Rogers.
reaction to the circumstances. As Rogers wrote, “At this Attack my unfortunate Brother was shot thro the Head, and instantly died, to my unspeakable Sorrow: but as I began this Voyage with a Resolution to go thro it, and the greatest Misfortune or Obstacle shall not deter me, I’ll as much as possible avoid being thoughtful and afflicting my self for what can’t be recall’d, but indefatigably pursue the Concerns of the Voyage, which has hitherto allow’d little Respite.”¹⁶ This portion of the account of John Rogers’ death shows Woodes Rogers’ views on the place death held on this voyage quite neatly. Because Rogers had such a close connection with the departed member of his crew, he quite rightly recorded more information on the matter of John Rogers’ death and his burial afterwards. In the entry for April 16th Rogers’ wrote that “About twelve we read the Prayers for the Dead, and threw my dear Brother overboard, with one of our Sailors, another lying dangerously ill. We hoisted our Colours but half-mast up: We began first, and the rest follow’d, firing each some Volleys of small Arms. All our Officers express’d a great Concern for the Loss of my Brother, he being a very hopeful active young Man, a little above twenty Years of Age.”¹⁷ Although Rogers wrote quite clearly in the first mention of his brother’s death that he would not let such a tragedy get in the way of the voyage, by going into depth on the happenings thereafter, it is clear that he was in the process of grieving, despite his rational attempts to avoid letting the “misfortune or obstacle” halt their progress, cloud his mind, or take over his account.

In considering this description of the mourning processes observed by the members of the Duke and Duchess on the death of John Rogers, one needs to keep in mind that such a display could easily not be representative of the standard method of grieving and honoring the departed

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¹⁶ Ibid., 117.

¹⁷ Ibid., 117-118.
aboard Rogers’ vessels. This argument could be made due to the fact that none of the other burials in *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* received such an in-depth description of the occurrences, and as such, John Rogers’ burial could have been more elaborate due to his familial relationship with the captain, and the fact that his rank was at least that of a second Lieutenant aboard the *Duchess*. Where a counterargument could be made, however, is in considering the fact that Rogers quite adamantly professed his desire to avoid delving too deeply into matters not immediately pertinent to keeping an account of his voyage. As Jason H. Pearl offered as a potential for Rogers’ reasoning in the choices made regarding accounting the deaths and burials that occurred, “Expatiating upon tendentious political arguments or powerful emotions would arouse readers’ doubts and invite suspicions that he [Rogers] had tailored the facts to subjective ideas of colonial ambition or heroic pathos. If Rogers does move in this direction, he is at least careful not to move too far.” Keeping this in mind, it is possible to consider that some of the ceremonies described might have been slightly greater as a show of respect for Rogers and the formal way of showing sympathies to the captain of the *Duke* on the death of his brother; however, given Rogers’ desire to stick to truthful facts, it seems unlikely that he would have embellished the details of the ceremonies.

Looking at burial ceremonies as an example of grieving at sea, Rogers’ account does well to show one example of the maritime process of burial which David J. Stewart, a professor of maritime archaeology at East Carolina University, addressed in “‘The Natural Sepulcher of a

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18 Throughout the voyage, sundry rearrangements and reassignments were made with rank and which ship individuals were on. John Rogers was initially listed as second Lieutenant of the *Duchess* and it appears that such was still his rank in April 1709. As *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* is an account that leaves certain pieces of information out, it is possible that a change had been made, though it appears as though nothing had changed with regards to his rank.

Sailor:” Burial at Seas as Ritual Performance,” contained within his book, The Sea Their Graves: An Archaeology of Death and Remembrance in Maritime Culture. In the piece, Stewart discussed the burial process at sea and how it reflected the rituals that were often seen on land. Given many of the superstitious beliefs of sailors, one of the main purposes of the burial process at sea was to separate and place the dead in their final resting place peacefully so that their spirits would not haunt the ship. This desire is reflected in the burial process that is traditionally only hinted at in official logs but which appears to have been a fairly regular practice during the Age of Sail. These respectful burials occurred when events permitted time to be taken to sufficiently and reverently dispose of the bodies of deceased members of the crew. Traditionally, the only time such processes of burial were typically foregone was only when disease or battle necessitated that large numbers of men be removed from the ship at once; something that was never mentioned in any manner within Rogers’ account.20

The process of burial at sea quite closely resembled those ceremonial practices seen on land for burials of the dead, as much as time and space would allow. Most of the preparations of the body were taken up by the deceased member’s messmates. These responsibilities included washing and dressing the body. As on land, the sailor was dressed in his best suit of clothes as part of the symbolic separation that much of the burial process sought to display. After the body was washed and dressed, it was wrapped in shrouds, usually the man’s hammock, although spare cloth or old sails could have been used. This was weighted with cannon shot at the feet, or some other heavy object in order to assure that the body sank. Once the individual’s shrouds were weighted and closed up, they would be sewn up. This task usually including putting the last

stitch through the nose, a tradition with Norse and Arab roots, done in order to assure that the man really was dead and that his spirit would not return. These preparations were followed by the body being covered with a flag of the sailor’s or ship’s nationality and the body would be taken on deck where it would be for usually less than twenty-four hours and under the supervision and watch of the crewmember’s messmates or those who were closest to him. The actual burial of sailors was begun by the tolling of the ship’s bell and the Bosun’s call which signaled the start of the funeral. During the service part of the burial process, and the desire for further distinction from how things occurred daily, the ship stopped, yards were cockbilled and the flag would be hung at half-mast. 21 These actions were taken to show a symbolic separation from daily life that the funeral process represented. Once these steps had been taken, the chaplain, captain, or officer in charge of reading the burial service did so from the quarterdeck and the messmates tipped the body overboard. This service was usually followed at some point by an auctioning off of the deceased member’s personal items, usually at much higher prices than they were worth, with the proceeds going to the dead man’s family. 22

The relatively complex process of burying late members of a crew is not often discussed at length within logs; but by knowing the general process that was taken for each of the burials, the curtness of the transcriptions can be better understood in the broader context of voyages, and the importance in the mentions can shift in some circumstances away from what is not said, back to what is written. Because of the rather fluid style that Woodes Rogers took when discussing the deaths of those men aboard the *Duke*, the *Dutchess*, and the other ships they took possession of

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21 According to Stewart, cockedbilled yards would mean that they were tilted at different angles which would have been avoided on most occasions as they look untidy and unseamanlike that way.

22 David Stewart, *The Sea Their Graves: An Archaeology of Death and Remembrance in Maritime Culture*. 
over the course of the voyage, his records of his men’s deaths occasionally showed a solid indication of what place the men personally held to Rogers. This personal difference of what Rogers wrote about his men can be seen quite clearly in his entries in late May of 1709. On May 24\(^{23}\) Rogers wrote that “This Day Tho. Hughes a very good Sailor died, as did Mr. George Underhill, a good Proficient in most parts of the Mathematicks and other Learning, tho’ not much above 21 Years old: He was of a very courteous Temper, and brave, was in the Fight where my Brother was kill’d, and served as Lieutenant in my Company at Guiaquil.”\(^{24}\) This level of detail about the departed member is something that Rogers did not tend to match in many of his other recordings of his deceased crewmembers; however, looking at what Rogers chose to say about George Underhill shows that he was not merely an unfamiliar member of Rogers’ crew known only on a superficial level. Instead, it is clear that Rogers was a least somewhat grieved on the death of Underhill as he listed not only the various talents of the man which could have been seen merely as the mark of a good seaman, but also some of the more praiseworthy aspects of his personality. Given the brevity of other accounts of deaths, the fact that Rogers discussed George Underhill as he did implies an admiration. Whether this feeling of amiability came from Rogers’ personal attachment to the man or was inflated due to Underhill’s connection with John Rogers cannot be known. Despite this lack of an understanding of when their comradery formed or how strong it might have been, because there is the mention of Underhill’s various traits written within the account, it is fair to state that Rogers saw something special enough about the

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23 In the printed 1928 version of *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* the date is listed as May 21, however, there is already an entry for May 21. The entry in question is also listed in between May 23 and May 25 so it is likely just a typo, and shall be treated as such here to minimize any confusion.

24 Woodes Rogers, 153-4.
young man that moved him to account his death with a short eulogy and not merely a brief note of his passing.

While Rogers’ entry from May 24th gave a good view of the specific man who had died, the entry of May 23, 1709 shows how the deaths that occurred on the voyage were within a broader context aboard the ships and affected more than just the departed member. For the May 23rd entry, Rogers wrote that “Last Night died Law. Carney of a malignant Fever. There is hardly a Man in the Ship, who had been ashore at Guaiquil, but has felt something of this Distemper”25 This manner of conveying Lawrence Carney’s death, while not delving into the details of it or the burial, relates his passing to the larger context of the state and health of the crew. While there is definitely a way in which one could argue that this does not give adequate information to dignify Carney’s passing, the way in which Rogers related Carney’s death to the large number of men who were being affected by Distemper is one of the ways in which external circumstances affected the way in which Rogers wrote about his crew and their deaths.

In looking at the way in which a crew related to one another especially in regards to death at sea is a matter which is discussed in Marcus Rediker’s book, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750*. Within his work, Rediker, a history professor at the University of Pittsburgh, mainly focused on the common sailor which offers a different view from Rogers’ account, which is in the perspective of the captain figuratively looking down on his crew and their activities from a position above them. One of the important points which Rediker makes in his piece is that during the burial of other common sailors and with the auction of their belongings which followed the funeral, was that “Seamen sought to give value to a life that after years of toil had found no

25 Ibid., 153.
better end than a death in the middle of nowhere and an unceremonious burial in the briny deep.”

Before this point, Rediker mentions that the amount of ceremony which was exhibited in the burial ceremonies at sea was dependent upon class. With that in mind, the fact that Rogers did not often mention the deaths of the lower-ranking members of his crew is more understandable. In looking at this broadening of the comment of Lawrence Carney’s death to remark upon matters more pertinent to Rogers in his role as captain, shows Rogers simply not dwelling on an individual seaman whom he was likely not overly familiar with, and who was not of a comparable rank.

Although crewmen might have been close with one another and their captain’s relationship somewhat further away, Rogers’ piece shows quite clearly that just because someone aboard a ship died, it did not always merit a positive or respectful note in the account of the voyage. This divergence from speaking favorably of the dead can be seen rather clearly in the entry for February 5, 1710 where Rogers wrote, “On the 5th a Negro we named Deptford died, who being very much addicted to stealing of Provisions, his room was more acceptable than his Company at this time.”

This entry, of course, deals with matters beyond merely the death of an average, nondescript crewmember as it does not discuss a European member of the crew. With this entry, questions are raised of what role people of different nationalities held aboard Rogers’ ships, and how this account of an individual’s passing compares with other mentions of deaths within A Cruising Voyage Round the World.

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27 Woodes Rogers, 262.
In determining what role Africans and Indians aboard the *Duke* and *Dutchess* held, one should first note Rogers’ relation with those who were not English nor part of his crew. In his dissertation, Timothy Charles Halden Beattie brings up that Rogers voluntarily participated in the slave trade in 1708, before the voyage contained in *A Cruising Voyage Round the World*, when he brought two hundred and seventy slaves from Africa to Jamaica. There is little mention of the treatment of the Africans or Indians who were aboard the ships. One interesting clue as to how Rogers viewed these men aboard his vessels is that often times Rogers mentioned Africans when discussing what goods he has aboard. Another of the times when it is made clear that Africans did not receive such modest treatment is on March 3, 1709 when Rogers noted that a decision was made to “give 6 Negroes the same Allowance as five of our own Men, which will but just keep those that are in health alive.” Although one perhaps might be able to justify such an action with the context that the convoy was running quite low on provisions and the people who were actually keeping the ship moving would need more sustenance, it also must be noted that the decision was to cut provisions for Africans and not prisoners or non-working personnel in general. Another one of the reasons why this entry could show discriminatory behavior could be if the group in question was not those Africans being held prisoner, but some of the free Africans whom Rogers mentions now and again in passing as being acting members of his crew. In considering all of these aspects of the account, the relatively unkind mention of Deptford’s death seems fitting with much of Rogers’ less favorable treatment and views on Africans and other foreigner individuals aboard his vessels, although the fact that Rogers noted harshly upon it in the man’s death, is something that is unique to this entry.

28 Timothy Charles Halden Beattie, 10.

29 Woodes Rogers, 263.
While on the circumnavigation voyage, Rogers rather freely traded and held prisoner not only Africans, but also Spanish and Indians who had been aboard captured vessels and from some towns they stopped at. On April 18, 1709 Roger mentions that aboard all of their vessels they were holding more than three hundred prisoners. Some of these Spaniards’ who were aboard the Duke or the Dutchess were held as hostages in an attempt to gain further wealth from their capture; however, on occasions such as occurred with the city of Guiaquil, when the hostages and prisoners were not paid for in the time allotted, Rogers made good on his promise, and sailed off. Despite Rogers and his men taking prisoners, in the account Rogers is quite clear that he did not let the Spanish prisoners be mistreated. In his entry for August 8, 1709, Rogers praised the conduct of Lieutenant Connely who “who behav’d himself so modestly to the Ladies of Guiaquil, was some days in possession of Navarre’s Ship before we stopt here, to remove these Prisoners aboard the Galleon, where he gain’d their Thanks and publick Acknowledgments for his Civilities to these Ladies, and even the Husband extols him.” Although such good behavior is discussed when dealing with the Spanish prisoners, this kindness can be seen as being dwelt upon and mentioned only in regards to that group rather than when discussing Indians or Africans. While little evidence is available within the account that shows there was any mistreatment, such praise of the treatment of one group definitely raises questions of what such behavior was being compared to. Because Rogers appeared to moderate his men’s behavior rather thoroughly throughout the voyage, it is entirely possible that the comparison could be to other groups of privateers that had no association with Rogers or his men; however, because there was little said on the matter of how Africans and Indians were treated aboard the vessels, it

30 Ibid., 118.
31 Ibid., 178.
is not too far from likelihood to imagine that there was definitely inequality in the treatment of prisoners dependent upon their nationality.

Another mention within *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* where Spanish prisoners are shown as being given generous treatment is in Rogers’ mention of what he allowed for the practice of the Spaniards’ religion aboard his ship. Rogers wrote on July 11, 1709 that he and those others in positions of authority aboard the ships “allow’d Liberty of Conscience on board our floating Commonwealth to our Prisoners, for there being a Priest in each Ship, they had the Great Cabbin [*sic*] for their Mass, whilst we us’d the Church of *England* Service over them on the Quarter-deck, so that the Papists here were the Low Churchmen.”  

32 This comment shows that although Rogers was willing to let the captured Spanish prisoners practice as they chose, the situation was used as an opportunity to claim the superiority of the Church of England over Catholicism. Throughout the rest of Rogers’ log, there are enough other mentions made of the practices of Rogers’ men that it is evident that there was an importance placed on religion aboard the vessels by those in command. As Rogers writes on October 28, 1708 “This day we began to read Prayers in both Ships Mornings or Evenings, as Opportunity would permit, according to the Church of *England*, designing to continue it the Term of the Voyage.”  

33 This passage implies that there was an expectation of moral behavior among the crews, and that the main religion which would be practiced among the vessels would follow that of the Church of England’s practices; although, given the leniency exhibited in giving the prisoners freedom of conscious, it seems possible that such private beliefs would not have caused major complications in the running of the ship.

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32 Ibid., 165.

33 Ibid., 26.
Considering the religious practices aboard seagoing vessels as a whole and especially in relation to beliefs and practices relating to death, the question of what the individual beliefs were of those on this and other voyages must be raised with the acknowledgement that most of what is known is based on generalizations and speculations. As Rediker writes on the matter,

>Catholics and Protestants had their differences, as reflected on one side by the popularity of seafaring ballads on “popery.” But even this antagonism seems to have abated as the eighteenth century progressed. Since maritime culture did not on the whole take religious forms, coexistence was relatively easy. Indeed, seamen demonstrated remarkable tolerance of the diverse and heterodox beliefs they encountered on nearly every sizable merchant ship, so long as such beliefs did not interfere with work and survival.\(^\text{34}\)

Although Rediker’s focus is on merchant vessels rather than British Naval vessels where it was legally required for prayers to be read regularly, the presence of several different beliefs aboard a single vessel is not far from likely. Part of the reason proving such an existence of various religions aboard the *Duke* and *Dutchess* is in the fact that it appears that someone had decided on the necessity of reading prayers regularly during the voyage, whether it was Rogers, the owners, or someone else. Despite this practice of reading prayers daily, Rogers makes no mention of using it as an attempt to convert any of the members of his crew, although with the enforcement of such a practice it is evident that Protestant devotions were an important aspect of life aboard the ships. As such, freedom of conscious could only go so far aboard the vessels while Protestant practices were required at least to be respectfully tolerated by the members of the ships’ companies, especially when it came to the burial of fellow crew members.

Throughout Rogers’ account, the general tone used while discussing religion is one which shows Rogers’ background to be Protestant; however, in looking at the practices of some of the native people he encountered, the tone used in his descriptions was one that tended to be

\(^{34}\) Marcus Rediker, 173.
focused more on simply giving an account of the practices viewed, rather than being presented with adamant or excessive disdain. This type of uncritical and descriptive voice in Rogers’ account can be seen when Rogers gives a description of Brazil and the people who were living there that he encountered. Rogers writes of their view of death that they, “fancy that after Death their Souls are transplanted into Devils, or enjoy all sorts of Pleasures in lovely Fields beyond the Mountains, if they have kill’d and eat many of their Enemies, but those that never did any thing of moment, they say are to be tormented by Devils.”

Aside from these mentions, which could be argued to hint at a sense of superiority in its phrasing by saying that their souls were transplanted into “Devils,” Rogers does not give much subjective commentary on the religious practices of those he met with on his voyage. Although these descriptions of the beliefs of natives is one that is rather objective in its account, Rogers’ Christian viewpoint is evident shortly thereafter in his description of the River La Plata, where he writes of the missionaries there. Rogers writes that, “according to the Jesuits they [the natives] go now more merrily to Heaven than formerly they did to Hell.” In looking at these mentions of religion that Rogers puts in his journal, it is evident that while he might have attempted to be fairly objective in his account of what he observed, his Christian worldview definitely came through in his lack of much information given on the matters of the natives’ religions in comparison with his willingness to account other Christian views, with what ultimately amounts to praise of the Catholic Jesuits above the perceived heathen practices of the natives.

By looking at Rogers’ account and his mentions of religion, it is fairly clear that he believed religion to have an important place aboard his ship and was situated as a responsibility

35 Woodes Rogers, 42.

36 Ibid., 63.
of a specific member of the crew, although on May 15, 1709 it is likely there was some change in regards to who was in charge of the task of reading the prayers upon the death of Samuel Hopkins. The entry for the 15th states that, “At 6 last Night Mr. Samuel Hopkins, Dr. Dover’s Kinsman and Assistant, died; he read Prayers once a Day ever since we pass’d the Equinox in the North Sea: He was a very good temper’d sober Man, and very well beloved by the whole Ship’s Company.”37 This account of Hopkins’ death is one that gives a glimpse into the practices of reading prayers aboard the vessel. Given the information presented about Samuel Hopkins, namely that he was an assistant to the doctor and took over Mr. Vanbrugh’s responsibilities as Agent of the Duke, Hopkins would have been of a high enough rank that Rogers would have been at least somewhat familiar with him, and as such would have been well-known enough that such a description of his qualities could be added to the account of his death. Given that Rogers did not specifically note that such was Hopkins’ role aboard the ship, it is probably that the reading of prayers was simply something that was in addition to his duties of working with Dr. Dover and temporarily as a ship’s Agent. Part of this could have come from the wildly ranging views of religion aboard vessels. As Reverend Edward Mangin, who served as a chaplain in the Royal Navy in 1812, over one hundred years after Rogers’ voyage, noted: “nothing can possibly be more unsuitably or more awkwardly situated than a clergyman in a ship of war.”38 Although it is evident that aboard Rogers’ privateering vessels, he attempted to enforce some religious practice, because of the nature of life at sea, the fact that Hopkins was noted in the entry not as

37 Ibid., 151.
officially being the ship’s chaplain shows that both his role and religion’s role aboard the *Duke* and *Duchess* was diverse.³⁹

In considering what rather standard religious practices would have been performed aboard Rogers’ vessels, the differences found within the *Book of Common Prayer* regarding burials at sea versus those performed on land offers an interesting picture of the contrasting sentiments presented in the two services. In *The Sea Their Graves*, David J. Stewart discusses the major variations between the two services. Stewart writes on how the most significant difference was during the committal of the body. The committal for those being buried at sea went as follows according to the 1662 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer*:

> Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed: we therefore commit his body to the Deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body, (when the sea shall give up her dead,) and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who at his coming shall change our vile body, that it may be like his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.⁴⁰

In the version of the committal used for burials on land, there is a mention that those doing the burying “commit his body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternal life.”⁴¹ This variation of the committal offers an acknowledgement of the differences presented with burial at sea and what was important to those experiencing the service. By leaving out the inclusion of dust to dust and ashes to ashes, there is

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⁴¹ Ibid.
a further separation from religion and Biblical language with the emphasis being rather on the
body being in the “deep” and the “sea” with the hope of resurrection being a hope rather than a
certain hope as is present in the committal on land. In looking at these differences in the
committals on land and at sea, there are evident variations which mark the services with two
distinct tones for two distance settings.

Although most of the deaths on Woodes Rogers’ voyage occurred at sea, there were a
few accounts of times when crew members were buried on land rather than at sea. This occurred
on one occasion at Horn Island on a date sometime between the July 23, 1710 and September 15,
1710 while Rogers and his men were engaged in attempting to careen and refit their ships, and to
repackage their goods. Rogers wrote in an extremely summarized section that they “buried here
*John Bridge* our Master, as also the Gunner of the *Dutchess*, with another of her Crew, and one
belonging to the *Batchelor.*”42 This burial on land rather than at sea shows that the normal
method of burial at sea was not necessarily something that was to be guaranteed to those setting
out on a sea voyage. Although this burial on land could have been due to an inability to access
one of the ships due to their maintenance, it is also possible that the men preferred to have graves
on shore. As David J. Stewart and Marcus Rediker mention, the fact that there was occasionally
unpleasantness if the burial process at sea did not go as planned, such as with sharks eating the
man once he was dropped overboard or simply seeing the body floating and not safely in its
grave, could have made the prospect of having a burial on land much more enticing, especially if
the company was already there doing work.43 Depending upon the circumstances, burial on land,
although more difficult than services aboard ships, was not something only reserved for those of

42 Woodes Rogers, 291.

43 David J. Stewart; Marcus Rediker.
the elite who died, and as such the burial of the men at Horn Island shows another aspect of burials that occurred on Rogers’ voyage.

In looking at the deaths Rogers recorded in *A Cruising Voyage Round the World*, the level of details given about the men themselves and their burials varied wildly in ways that were not always connected with rank or style, as is evident in looking at his recording of the last four deaths which occurred aboard the vessels. These events were mentioned after the entry of April 6, 1710. Rogers writes: “We buried ashore here, [at Penguin Island] George Russel, a Foremast-man, Dec. 30. 1710. John Glasson, dº 5 Jan. Mr. Carleton Vanbrugh, Owners Agent, 3 Feb. Mr. Lancelot Appleby, 2d Mate, 21 dº. and four deserted.”44 These deaths recorded show a deviation away from Rogers’ tendency to not always list the names of those he is writing about. Rogers does this by not recording the names of the men who deserted, although he did list both George Russel’s and John Glasson’s names, even though neither of them had ever been mentioned directly in the rest of the account. Mr. Appleby’s status as being a second mate meant that his rank could have been what merited a mention of his name if for no other reason than that Rogers would have undoubtedly been at least moderately familiar with the man. It would be expected, as well, that Mr. Vanbrugh would be mentioned given Rogers’ familiarity with him. What is interesting with Mr. Vanbrugh’s name being mentioned, however, is the fact that such was all that Rogers chose to write about for his death.

Throughout *A Cruising Voyage Round the World*, it is evident that Rogers and Mr. Vanbrugh, initially the Duke’s agent, did not get along quite as well as might have been desired. Part of this could have come from the fact that rather early on in the voyage, Mr. Vanbrugh requested to go ashore and assist with the ransoming of a ship they had captured, but was instead

44 Woodes Rogers, 305.
held captive himself. Within the letters exchanged between Rogers and the Vice-Consul from Port Oratava, Rogers stated that he would not give up the captured bark and its cargo in exchange for Mr. Vanbrugh because the ship agent had wished to go ashore against Rogers’ initial inclination. By the end of the diplomatic exchange, where Rogers returned the prisoners from the bark, Mr. Vanbrugh was returned. A council was held which determined that Rogers’ actions were appropriate for the situation; however, Mr. Vanbrugh was still upset by the callousness portrayed by Rogers’ regarding leaving him behind. In April of 1709, further tensions arose as Mr. Vanbrugh was removed from the Committee of officers and was replaced by Samuel Hopkins after threatening to shoot a man “only for refusing to carry some Carrion-Crows that he shot, and having lately abus’d Capt. Dover.” These actions, as well as others throughout the voyage, undoubtedly made Mr. Vanbrugh not terribly popular among Rogers and the other officers. Despite these circumstances, Rogers’ accounting of Mr. Vanbrugh with only his name and no condescending comments as were listed with Deptford’s death, shows a professionalism on Rogers’ part that seems to fit his style of recording other deaths within his account.

By studying a few of the mentions of death that were presented within Woodes Rogers’ A Cruising Voyage Round the World within the context of ocean burials and Rogers’ own life, it seems fair to state that the inconsistency shown with the logging of death within the account was influenced by the factors set out in the beginning of this paper. The circumstances surrounding these events clearly played a role, as can be seen with the variation in accounts. Rogers’ own background and writing style affected the account in how the deaths of different members of the

46 Ibid., 112.
crew were treated differently. Finally, Rogers’ familiarity with the recently departed members was clearly shown throughout the account as being important as only few members of the crew received much written on their deaths unless Rogers was familiar enough with them to know what to write down. By looking at all of these factors together and how they shaped A Cruising Voyage Round the World, a better insight into the treatment of death at sea by Woodes Rogers upon this voyage can be reached. Although this study does show Rogers’ method and style of discussing deaths aboard his voyage, as it is only one account there are certainly limitations in how widely applicable this method of accounting and grieving at sea is. By studying how this one captain viewed and recorded the deaths, however, a groundwork is set upon which to build upon further interpretations of other captains in order to find the similarities and differences, and begin to see how death was commonly recorded by captains. It is by gaining that understanding, that a view of death at sea as a widely-experienced part of maritime life can be better understood, and it is in looking at death and how it was conveyed that one can build an understanding of how it was perceived by Rogers as he wrote about it and what he perceived to be the proper way of conveying it within his account of his privateering voyage around the world.
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