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Duarte Barbosa

Excerpt

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DESCRIPTION OF THE EAST INDIES AND
COUNTRIES ON THE SEABORD OF THE
INDIAN OCEAN IN 1514.

¹ THE CAPE OF ST. SEBASTIAN AFTER PASSING THE
CAPE OF GOOD HOPE.

HAVING passed the Cape of Good Hope in a north-easterly direction, at Cape San Sebastian, there are very fair mountain lands, and fields, and valleys, in which there are many cows and sheep, and other wild animals; it is a country inhabited by people who are black and naked. They only wear skins with the fur of deer, or other wild animals, like some cloaks in the French fashion, of which people the Portuguese, up to the present time, have not been able to obtain information, nor to become acquainted with what there is in the interior of the country. They have no navigation, neither do they make use of the sea, neither have the Moors of Arabia and Persia, or the Indies, ever navigated as far as this, nor discovered them, on account of the strong currents of the sea, which is very stormy.

ISLANDS OF THE GREAT UCIQUES.²

Having passed Cape San Sebastian towards the north-east for India, there are some islands close to the mainland to the east, which are called the Great Uciques; in which,

¹ Here the Barcelona manuscript begins.

² *Insula Bocicas*, 23 deg. S. lat., just N. of C. S. Sebastian, Homann's Atlas, Nuremberg, 1753:

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on the side towards the mainland there are a few small towns of Moors, who deal with the people of the continent, and they provision themselves from them. In these Vciques much amber is found of good quality, which the Moors collect and sell in other places, and likewise many pearls and small seed pearls are found in the sea in beds (crusts), which they cannot gather or fish up, and whenever they do get them out they boil them, and extract the said pearls and seed pearls dingly and burnt, and there is no doubt that there are many and good ones, if they knew how to extract them, as is done in Sael, Cochoromandel, and in Barahe,¹ which will be mentioned hereafter.

THE LITTLE VCIQUES ISLANDS IN RIVERS.

Having passed the Vciques grandes towards Sofala, a fortress which the King of Portugal made there, and where there is much gold, at xvii or xviii leagues from it there are some rivers, which make between their branches, islands, called the Little Vciques, in which there are some villages of the Moors, who also deal with the Gentiles of the mainland in their provisions, which are rice, millet, and meat, and which they bring in small barks to Sufala.²

SOFALA.

Having passed the Little Vciques, for the Indies, at xviii leagues from them there is a river which is not very large, whereon is a town of the Moors called Sofala,³ close to which town the King of Portugal has a fort. These Moors established themselves there a long time ago on account of the great trade in gold which they carry on with the Gentiles of the mainland: these speak somewhat of bad Arabic (garabia), and have got a king over them,

¹ Probably Bahrein.

² Cujus rex Quitove, Atlas, 1753. Reg. Munica cujus rex Chicanga.

³ Cefala, Ortelius.

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who is at present subject to the King of Portugal.¹ And the mode of their trade is that they come by sea in small barks which they call zanbucs (sambuk), from the kingdoms of Quiloa, and Mombaza, and Melindi; and they bring much cotton cloth of many colours, and white and blue, and some of silk; and grey, and red, and yellow beads, which come to the said kingdoms in other larger ships from the great kingdom of Cambay, which merchandise these Moors buy and collect from other Moors who bring them there, and they pay for them in gold by weight, and for a price which satisfies them; and the said Moors keep them and sell these cloths to the Gentiles of the kingdom of Benamatapa who come there laden with gold, which gold they give in exchange for the before mentioned cloths without weighing, and so much in quantity that these Moors usually gain one hundred for one. They also collect a large quantity of ivory, which is found all round Sofala, which they likewise sell in the great kingdom of Cambay at five or six ducats the hundred weight, and so also some amber, which these Moors of Sofala bring them from the Vciques. They are black men, and men of colour—some speak Arabic, and the rest make use of the language of the Gentiles of the country. They wrap themselves from the waist downwards with cloths of cotton and silk, and they wear other silk cloths above named, such as cloaks and wraps for the head, and some of them wear hoods of scarlet, and of other coloured woollen stuffs and camelets, and of other silks. And their

¹ *Lusiadas*, Canto v, stanza 76.

Ethiopes são todos, mas parece,
 Que com gente melhor comunicavam:
 Palavra alguma Arabia se conhece
 Entre a linguagem sua, que fallavam:
 E com panno delgado, que se tece
 De algodão, as cabeças apertavam,
 Com outro, que de tint azul se tinge,
 Cada hum as vergonhosas partes cinge.

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victuals are millet, and rice, and meat, and fish. In this river near to the sea there are many sea horses, which go in the sea, and come out on land at times to feed. These have teeth like small elephants, and it is better ivory than that of the elephant, and whiter and harder, and of greater durability of colour. In the country all round Sofala there are many elephants, which are very large and wild, and the people of the country do not know how to tame them: there are also many lions, ounces, mountain panthers, wild asses, and many other animals. It is a country of plains and mountains, and well watered. The Moors have now recently begun to produce much fine cotton in this country, and they weave it into white stuff because they do not know how to dye it, or because they have not got any colours; and they take the blue or coloured stuffs of Cambay and unravel them, and again weave the threads with their white thread, and in this manner they make coloured stuffs, by means of which they get much gold.

KINGDOM OF BENAMATAPA.

On entering within this country of Sofala, there is the kingdom of Benamatapa, which is very large and peopled by Gentiles, whom the Moors call Cafers. These are brown men, who go bare, but covered from the waist downwards with coloured stuffs, or skins of wild animals; and the persons most in honour among them wear some of the tails of the skin behind them, which go trailing on the ground for state and show, and they make bounds and movements of their bodies, by which they make these tails wag on either side of them. They carry swords in scabbards of wood bound with gold or other metals, and they wear them on the left hand side as we do, in sashes of coloured stuffs, which they make for this purpose with four or five knots, and their tassels hanging down, like gentlemen; and in their hands azagayes, and others carry bows and arrows: it must be

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mentioned that the bows are of middle size, and the iron points of the arrows are very large and well wrought. They are men of war, and some of them are merchants: their women go naked as long as they are girls, only covering their middles with cotton cloths, and when they are married and have children, they wear other cloths over their breasts.

ZINBAOCH.¹

Leaving Sofala for the interior of the country, at xv days journey from it, there is a large town of Gentiles, which is called Zinbaoch; and it has houses of wood and straw, in which town the King of Benamatapa frequently dwells, and from there to the city of Benamatapa there are six days journey, and the road goes from Sofala, inland, towards the Cape of Good Hope. And in the said Benamatapa, which is a very large town, the king is used to make his longest residence; and it is thence that the merchants bring to Sofala the gold which they sell to the Moors without weighing it, for coloured stuffs and beads of Cambay, which are much used and valued amongst them; and the people of this city of Benamatapa say that this gold comes from still further off towards the Cape of Good Hope, from another kingdom subject to this king of Benamatapa, who is a great lord, and holds many other kings as his subjects, and many other lands, which extend far inland, both towards the Cape of Good Hope and towards Mozambich. And in this town he is each day served with large presents, which the kings and lords, his subjects, send to him; and when they bring them, they carry them bareheaded through all the city, until they arrive at the palace, from whence the king sees them come from a window, and he orders them to be taken up from there, and the bearers do not see him, but only hear his words; and afterwards, he bids them call the persons who

¹ Zimbros, Ortelius, Zimbaon, Atlas, 1753. *Sedes Regia*.

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have brought these presents, and he dismisses them. This king constantly takes with him into the field a captain, whom they call Sono, with a great quantity of men-at-arms, and amongst them they bring six thousand women, who also bear arms and fight. With these forces he goes about subduing and pacifying whatever kings rise up or desire to revolt. The said king of Benamatapa sends, each year, many honourable persons throughout his kingdoms to all the towns and lordships, to give them new regulations, so that all may do them obeisance, which is in this manner: each one of the envoys comes to a town, and bids the people extinguish all the fires that there are in it; and after they have been put out, all the inhabitants go to this man who has been sent as commissary, to get fresh fire from him in sign of subjection and obedience; and, whoever should not do this is held as a rebel, and the king immediately sends the number of people that are necessary to destroy him, and these pass through all the towns at their expense: their rations are meat, rice, and oil of sesame.¹

RIVER ZUAMA.

Leaving Sofala for Mozambich, at forty leagues from it, there is a very large river, which is called the Zuama;² and it is said that it goes towards Benamatapa,³ and it extends more than 160 leagues. In the mouth of this river there is a town of the Moors, which has a king, and it is called

¹ Ajonjo (Agiongoli) plant with a viscous substance. Ajonjoli Sesame plant. Ajonjera, *carlina aqualis* bruised in water makes birdlime.

² Zuama, Ortelius.

³ Vê do Benomotapa o grande imperio,
De selvatica gente, negra e nua,
Onde Gonçalo morte e vituperio
Padecerá pela Fé sancta sua:
Nasce por este incognito hemispherio
O metal, porque mais a gente sua
Vê que do lago, donde se derrama
O Nilo, tambem vindo está Cuama,
Camoens, Canto x, stanza 93.

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Mongalo.¹ Much gold comes from Benamatapa to this town of the Moors, by this river, which makes another branch which falls at Angos, where the Moors make use of boats (almadias), which are boats hollowed out from a single trunk, to bring the cloths and other merchandise from Angos, and to transport much gold and ivory.

ANGOY.

After passing this river of Zuama, at xl leagues from it, there is a town of the Moors on the sea coast, which is called Angoy,² and has a king, and the Moors who live there are all merchants, and deal in gold, ivory, silk, and cotton stuffs, and beads of Cambay, the same as do those of Sofala. And the Moors bring these goods from Quiloa, and Monbaza, and Melynde, in small vessels hidden from the Portuguese ships; and they carry from there a great quantity of ivory, and much gold. And in this town of Angos there are plenty of provisions of millet, rice, and some kinds of meat. These men are very brown and copper coloured; they go naked from the waist upwards, and from thence downwards, they wrap themselves with cloths of cotton and silk, and wear other cloths folded after the fashion of cloaks, and some wear caps and others hoods, worked with stuffs and silks; and they speak the language belonging to the country, which is that of the Pagans, and some of them speak Arabic. These people are sometimes in obedience to the king of Portugal, and at times they throw it off, for they are a long way off from the Portuguese forts.

MOZAMBIQUE ISLAND.

Having passed this town of Anguox, on the way to India, there are very near to the land three islands, one of which

¹ The old maps have a kingdom of Mongale stretching N. from the R. Zuama.

² Angoches, 16 deg. S. lat., Homaun.

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is inhabited by Moors, and is called Mozambique.¹ It has a very good port, and all the Moors touch there who are sailing to Sofala, Zuama, or Anguox. Amongst these Moors there is a sheriff, who governs them, and does justice. These are of the language and customs of the Moors of Anguox, in which island the King of Portugal now holds a fort, and keeps the said Moors under his orders and government. At this island the Portuguese ships provide themselves with water and wood, fish and other kinds of provisions; and at this place they refit those ships which stand in need of repair. And from this island likewise the Portuguese fort in Sofala draws its supplies, both of Portuguese goods and of the produce of India, on account of the road being longer by the mainland.

Opposite this island there are many very large elephants and wild animals. The country is inhabited by Gentiles, brutish people who go naked and smeared all over with coloured clay, and their natural parts wrapped in a strip of blue cotton stuff, without any other covering; and they have their lips pierced with three holes in each lip, and in these holes they wear bones stuck in, and claws, and small stones, and other little things dangling from them.

ISLAND OF QUILOA.

After passing this place and going towards India, there is another island close to the mainland, called Quiloa,² in which there is a town of the Moors, built of handsome houses of stone and lime, and very lofty, with their windows like those of the Christians; in the same way it has streets, and these houses have got their terraces, and the wood worked in with the masonry, with plenty of gardens, in which there are many fruit trees and much water. This island has got a king over it, and from hence there is trade with Sofala with ships, which carry much gold, which is dispersed thence

¹ Mozambique, Ortelius.² Quiloa, Ortelius.

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through all Arabia Felix, for henceforward all this country is thus named on account of the shore of the sea being peopled with many towns and cities of the Moors ; and when the King of Portugal discovered this land, the Moors of Sofala, and Zuama, and Anguox, and Mozambique, were all under obedience to the King of Quiloa, who was a great king amongst them. And there is much gold in this town, because all the ships which go to Sofala touch at this island, both in going and coming back. These people are Moors, of a dusky colour, and some of them are black and some white ; they are very well dressed with rich cloths of gold, and silk, and cotton, and the women also go very well dressed out with much gold and silver in chains and bracelets on their arms, and legs, and ears. The speech of these people is Arabic, and they have got books of the Alcoran, and honour greatly their prophet Muhamad. This King, for his great pride, and for not being willing to obey the King of Portugal, had this town taken from him by force, and in it they killed and captured many people, and the King fled from the island, in which the King of Portugal ordered a fortress to be built, and thus he holds under his command and government those who continued to dwell there.

ISLAND OF MOMBAZA.

Passing Quiloa, and going along the coast of the said Arabia Felix towards India, close to the mainland there is another island, in which there is a city of the Moors, called Bombaza,¹ very large and beautiful, and built of high and handsome houses of stone and whitewash, and with very good streets, in the manner of those of Quiloa. And it also had a king over it. The people are of dusky white, and brown complexions, and likewise the women, who are much adorned with silk and gold stuffs. It is a town of great trade in goods, and has a good port, where there are always

¹ Mombaza, Ortelius.

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many ships, both of those that sail for Sofala and those that come from Cambay and Melinde, and others which sail to the islands of Zanzibar, Manfia, and Penda, which will be spoken of further on. This Monbaza is a country well supplied with plenty of provisions, very fine sheep, which have round tails, and many cows, chickens, and very large goats, much rice and millet, and plenty of oranges, sweet and bitter, and lemons, cedrats, pomegranates, Indian figs, and all sorts of vegetables, and very good water. The inhabitants at times are at war with the people of the continent, and at other times at peace, and trade with them, and obtain much honey and wax, and ivory. This King, for his pride and unwillingness to obey the King of Portugal, lost his city, and the Portuguese took it from him by force, and the King fled, and they killed and made captives many of his people, and the country was ravaged,¹ and much plunder was carried off from it of gold and silver, copper, ivory, rich stuffs of gold and silk, and much other valuable merchandize.

MELINDE.

After passing the city of Mombaza, at no great distance further on along the coast, there is a very handsome town on the mainland on the beach, called Melinde,² and it is a town of the Moors, which has a king. And this town has fine houses of stone and whitewash, of several stories, with their windows and terraces, and good streets. The inhabitants are dusky and black, and go naked from the waist

¹ Camoens confirms the author's statement of the flourishing condition of Mombaza, and of its devastation by the Portuguese. Canto x, stanzas 26, 27—

Ambos darão com braço forte armado
A Quiloa fertil aspero castigo,
Fazendo nella Rei leal e humano,
Deitado forá o perfido Tyranno.
Tambem farão Mombaça, que se arrea
De casas sumptuosas e edificios,
Co'o ferro e fogo seu queimada e fea
Em pago dos passados maleficios.

² Melinde, Ortelius.