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Duarte Barbosa

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Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar

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In the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century

DUARTE BARBOSA



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A DESCRIPTION
OF THE COASTS OF
EAST AFRICA AND MALABAR

IN THE BEGINNING OF
THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY,

BY

DUARTE BARBOSA,

A PORTUGUESE.

TRANSLATED FROM

AN EARLY SPANISH MANUSCRIPT IN THE BARCELONA LIBRARY

WITH NOTES AND A PREFACE,

BY

THE HON. HENRY E. J. STANLEY.

LONDON :

PRINTED FOR THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY.

M.DCCC.LXXVI.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE Spanish manuscript from which this volume has been translated is in the handwriting of the beginning of 1500, full of abbreviations, and without punctuation or capital letters at the beginnings of sentences or for the proper names, which adds much to the difficulty of reading it. It contains eighty-seven leaves. The handwriting more resembles an example of the year 1510 than those dated 1529 and 1531, given at p. 319 of the "Escuela de Leer Letras Cursivas Antiguas y Modernas desde la entrada de los Godos en España, por el P. Andres Merino de Jesu Christo, Madrid, 1780." This work was translated into Spanish from the original Portuguese in 1524, at Vittoria, by Martin Centurion, ambassador of the community of Genoa, with the assistance of Diego Ribero, a Portuguese, cosmographer and hydrographer to his Majesty Charles V. There are reasons (as will be shewn in the notes) for supposing that the Spanish translation, probably this copy and not the Portuguese original, assisted the compilers of the early atlases, especially that of Abraham Ortelius, of Antwerp, 1570, other editions of which were published in succeeding years.¹ The

¹ I have been informed by Mr. Winter Jones that Diego Ribero drew up a map of the world in 1529, of which Sprengel

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similarity of the orthography of this manuscript and of that of the names in maps as late as that of Homann, Nuremberg, 1753, shews how much geography up to a recent period was indebted to the Portuguese and Spaniards. It may also be observed that from their familiarity at that time with the sounds of Arabic, the proper names are in general more correctly rendered in European letters, than used to be the case in later times.

This MS. is in the Barcelona Library and is there catalogued "Viage por Malabar y costas de Africa, 1512 : letra del siglo xvi." It was supposed to be an original Spanish work, for the statement of its having been translated is in the body of the MS., no part of which can be read without more or less difficulty. This work is not a book of travels as the title given in the catalogue, though not on the MS., indicates ; it is rather an itinerary, or description of countries. It gives ample details of the trade, supplies, and water of the various sea-ports mentioned in it. It contains many interesting historical details, some of which, such as the account of Diu, the taking of Ormuz, the founding of the Portuguese fort in Calicut, their interruption of the Indian trade to Suez by capturing the Indian ships, the rise of Shah Ismail, etc., fix pretty nearly the exact date at which this narrative was composed as the year 1514.

wrote an account in 1795, called, *Über J. Ribero's älteste Weltcharte*. He gives the western hemisphere only, the eastern hemisphere has been published by the *Vte. Santarem*. This might be the means by which the orthography and errors of this work passed into the maps of *Ortelius*.

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Two other MS. copies of this work are preserved in the Royal Library at Munich: the first of these, No. 570 of the catalogue of that library, is in a handwriting very similar to that of the Barcelona MS., and apparently of the same period. It consists of one hundred and three leaves, and is stated to have proceeded from the episcopal library of Passau. This MS. does not contain the appendix respecting the prices of the precious stones. The other MS. No. 571, is of fifty-three leaves, and is written in two handwritings, both of which are much rounder and dearer than that of No. 570; the catalogue states that this MS. came from the library of the Jesuits of Augsburg. There are several verbal differences between the two MSS., and perhaps No. 571 agrees more exactly with the Barcelona MS. The two Munich MSS. frequently write words such as *rey* with a double r, as *rrey*, which does not occur in the Barcelona MS., where, however, words begin with a large r, which is also used for a double r in the middle of a word.

The piracies of the Portuguese are told without any reticence, apparently without consciousness of their criminality, for no attempt is made to justify them, and the pretext that such and such an independent state or city did not choose to submit itself on being summoned to do so by the Portuguese, seems to have been thought all sufficient for laying waste and destroying it. This narrative shows that most of the towns on the coasts of Africa, Arabia, and Persia were in a much more flourishing condition at that time than they have been since the Portuguese ravaged some of

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them, and interfered with the trade of all. The description of the early introduction of the cultivation and weaving of cotton into South Africa by the Arab traders will be read with interest ; and the progress then beginning in those regions three hundred and fifty years ago, and the subsequent stand still to which it has been brought by the Portuguese and by the slave-trade to America, may be taken as supporting the views lately put forward by Captain R. Burton and others at the Anthropological Society.

The greater part of this volume was printed in Italian by Ramusio in 1554 in his collection of travels (*Venetia, nella Stamperia de' Giunti*), as the narration of Duarte Barbosa, and a large part of this work must have been written by Barbosa ; and a Portuguese manuscript of his was printed at Lisbon in 1812 in the "*Collecção de noticias para a historia e geografia das nações ultramarinas.*" This manuscript of Barbosa's, however, is much less full than this Spanish MS. of Barcelona, or than the Italian version of Ramusio, and the Lisbon editors have added from Ramusio translations of the passages which were wanting in their MS. These publications do not contain the number of leagues between one place and another which are given in the Spanish translation.

That the Portuguese manuscript printed at Lisbon in 1812 belongs to Barbosa, stands only on the authority of Ramusio, who gives an introduction by Odoardo Barbosa of the city of Lisbon, which is not to be found either in the Barcelona MS. or in the Portuguese MS., and which has been translated from the

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Italian of Ramusio and published in the Lisbon edition. The introduction to the Lisbon edition states that the Portuguese MS. is not an autograph MS., and that the account of Barbosa is bound up along with other papers. This introduction refers to the passages in the Portuguese MS. which are not to be found in Ramusio, and says it may be doubted whether these were additions posterior to the work of Duarte Barbosa.

It had occurred to me that this work might be attributed to the famous navigator Magellan, and that it must have been through him that it found its way to Charles the Fifth's court : there are several reasons for this supposition, and some difficulties in the way of it ; I will, however, follow Sr. Larrañaga's advice, and state both sides of the question.

Duarte Barbosa, cousin of Magellan, Alvaro de Mezquita, Estevan Gomez, Juan Rodrigues de Carvalho were Portuguese employed by Spain along with Magellan¹ in the fleet which sailed on the 21st September 1519, from San Lucar de Barrameda to Brazil and the straits which bear the name of that Admiral.

Now the *Panorama* or Spanish version of the *Univers Pittoresque* states (page 140) : "It was at that time, although it has not been possible to ascertain exactly the year, when the illustrious Viceroy of the Indies sent Francisco Serrano to the Moluccas, a

¹ The Portuguese are scarcely justified in their censure of Magellan for serving Spain, after the neglect he had met with at the hands of the King of Portugal, since disnaturalisation was a custom of the country frequently practised at that period : and it is the necessary complement of naturalisation.

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friend, and also, as it is believed, a relation of Magellan, the same person who by reason of the exact and precise data which he furnished to the celebrated navigator deserved later to see his name inscribed amongst those of other notable persons, whose fame will last as long as history endures."

* * * * *

"At the beginning of the same century Duarte Barbosa also proceeded to the Moluccas, and cruised among those countries for the space of sixteen years, collecting interesting notes, which although they were not published till three centuries after the event, are not on that account the less admirable and precious; these reports were published in Lisbon in a work which bears the following title: *Collecção de Noticias para a historia e Geografia das nações ultramarinas*; those reports which relate to Barbosa are contained in the second volume."

Now this Barcelona MS. contains in an appendix the voyage of three Portuguese, a Spaniard, and five Malays, whose captain was Francisco Serrano, to the Moluccas in the year 1512: this supplies the date of his voyage which the above quoted paragraph says could not be ascertained, and this account is not in Ramusio's collection, and there is every reason to suppose that it was as yet unpublished.

In addition to what has been said by the writers of the *Panorama* and *Univers Pittoresque*, in which statement they follow the 3rd Decade of the "Asia" of Barros, lib. v. cap. 8:—

"We wrote before how Francisco Serrão wrote some

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letters from the Maluco Islands where he was, to Fernão de Magalhaães, on account of being his friend from the time when both were in India, principally at the taking of Malaca :” it was to be expected that Barbosa and Serrano would furnish their information to Magellan, whether as the head of their family, or as the Portuguese who had been longest at the Spanish Court, and through whom they might hope for advancement and further employment, such as Duarte Barbosa obtained with the fleet which discovered the Straits of Magellan.

Magellan returned to Europe in 1512. Duarte Barbosa probably did not return till 1517, since he is said to have remained sixteen years in the Indian Ocean, and in that case he could not have returned before 1515—however, it is said in the introduction to the Lisbon edition that he is the son of Diego Barbosa, named in the Decades as having sailed in 1501 with the first fleet with João de Nova : the same introduction also says that the time of his departure to and return to India are unknown.

Ramusio's edition of Barbosa's narrative says the writing of it was finished in 1516 ; it does not, however, mention any facts which occurred later than the year 1514. There is reason to suspect that Ramusio obtained his copy from the same source as the Barcelona manuscript, because the name of the precious stone zircon is spelled differently, giagonza, jagonza, and gegonza, and this difference of orthography coincides in the same places in the Spanish manuscript and in Ramusio. Ramusio gives an appendix containing

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the prices of precious stones and of spices, but has not got the voyage to the Moluccas of Francisco Serrano. The only reason I can conjecture for this not having reached Ramusio is, that it was a confidential paper, on account of the rivalry of Spain and Portugal with regard to those islands; and it is stated in history that Serrano increased the distances so as to enable Magellan to persuade the Spaniards that the Moluccas were more to the eastward, and that they fell within the demarcation of territories assigned by the Pope to Castille. This account of Francisco Serrano's voyage, and of his remaining behind married at Maluco, was either written by the Spaniard who accompanied him, or was translated by some other person than Diego Ribero and the Genoese ambassador Centurione, since all the points of the compass which in the body of the work are indicated by the names of winds, are here described by their names, as este, sud-oeste, etc. Tramontana, greco, maestro, siloque, are all Spanish terms, but are less literate than the names of the points of the compass, and seem to be owing to the Genoese translator, to whom they would be familiar. It must be observed that the handwriting and paper of the narrative and two appendices of the Barcelona MS. are identical, and the leaves are numbered consecutively, so that there is no reason for supposing that the whole papers were not originally, as they now are, placed together.

Ramusio in various parts of the narrative leaves a blank with the words, *Here several lines are wanting*; this may be owing to passages having been struck out

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for political reasons. The Portuguese edition has a short passage not in the Spanish MS., the only apparent motive for its omission being that it was to the glorification of the Portuguese.

Since so large a portion of the present volume is contained in the Portuguese manuscript of Barbosa printed at Lisbon, it would be natural to follow Ramusio in attributing the work to him : at the same time it is not easy to understand how Barbosa, who was in the Indian Ocean at the time, should have confounded the two naval actions at Diu in 1508, and 1509, which he relates as one only, although the Portuguese were beaten in the first and victorious in the second. It is also difficult to imagine that one person visited all the places described in this volume, even in the space of sixteen years, at a period when travelling was slower than at present : and the observations on the manners and customs show a more intimate knowledge than what could be acquired by touching at a port for a few days only.

This work is that of no ordinary capacity ; it shews great power of observation, and also the possession by the writer of great opportunities for inquiry into the manners and habits of the different countries described. It could hardly have been drawn up by an ecclesiastic, there is too great an absence of condemnation of idolatrous practices, and the deficiencies of St. Thomas's Christians are too lightly spoken of. An ecclesiastic would not have been so indifferent to their mode of communion and to the sale of the sacraments, which caused many to remain unbaptized. The scanty mention of

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Albuquerque and of Goa, and its being the sort of political memorandum which a person in Magellan's position, seeking service from Spain, and desirous of pushing the Spanish government to eastern as well as western enterprise, would be likely to write ; the commercial details, which are not those of a merchant, but rather of a soldier, for the prices given chiefly relate to provisions, horses and elephants, things useful in war, whilst the prices of jewels and spices, drawn up in a business-like manner, are in an appendix and not referred to in the narrative,—all these circumstances seem almost to justify the conclusion that this volume was drawn up by Magellan, or under Magellan's guidance, for the purpose of being laid before Charles V, at the time that Magellan was seeking the command which he received a short time later.

This volume derives additional value from the numerous passages in which it runs parallel to the *Lusiad*, so that the two confirm one another, and this prose description serves as a commentary to Camoens. Several passages descriptive of the customs of the nairs of Malabar in this work present very forcibly the connection between Plato and the Hindus.

The travels of Varthema, a former publication of the Hakluyt Society, gave evidence of the good administration of India especially in regard to justice in olden times ; similar testimony will be found in this volume. The expedient of the King of Narsinga for correcting his high officials, without either removing them or lowering them in the eyes of those they had to rule, has not, I believe, been before narrated. Though Suttee

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has been so often described, the account of it in these pages possesses much interest and novelty, probably from having been written by an eye-witness, before that institution was disturbed by European influence. An allusion to the English longbow as to a weapon in actual use, gives an appearance of antiquity to this narrative even greater than that which belongs to its date. The orthography of the manuscript is not always uniform, therefore where a name is spelt in two different ways, I have left them as they are given. I have altered the original spelling of the names of only a few familiar places, and have retained the Portuguese expressions of Moor and Gentile, which mean Mussulman and heathen, one of which has survived up to the present time in Southern India as Moorman.

Any further observations I may have to make on this manuscript will be found in the notes.

I wish to express my thanks to Sr. D. Gregorio Romero Larrañaga, the head of the Barcelona Library; and to the other gentlemen of his department, for the cordial manner in which they have supplied me with the contents of their Library, and for their assistance in discussing doubtful points.

London, October 21, 1865.

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Dize que el 30^o de mayo quando buyo de ma
 para con tres puertos que se llaman de xp̄o y de memoriales
 de villa de india y de la que buyo de mala rona
 la qual metio por tres marineros malayos natu
 rales de malabar y tres de los d̄nos de nro s̄n̄o r̄n̄o
 xp̄o de mill y quymientos y doze d̄nos.

En el nonbre de d̄no salimos de la villa de malabar en una
 rora de la con nro marineros y piloto de malayos el r̄p̄t̄n̄o era
 fran se fano con los tres xp̄ianos que por todos se r̄annue
 ve los marineros natu rales de malabar los xp̄ianos tres por
 tres que se en r̄fellano se nel d̄no de mill y quyo y doze
 de la d̄n̄a de nro s̄n̄o r̄n̄o de la villa de mala rona y de la
 villa de india firme y no muy lejos de la mala rona
 leste de este r̄n̄o de la r̄n̄a de mala rona y de la r̄n̄a
 de malabar y de la villa de india.

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f. 111
 De rabe se trasladar a febrro. De f. 109
 en lno ua porto que a traduzida en len guaras
 telland en vitoria. Estando en de el en perador y de y
 des para primero dia de marzo año de mill e quinientos
 e ote fe de ynte e quatro años por mra pntazion qnba
 eador dela comynidad de gentes con ynterpetra non
 de dugo affero por tupees como grafo de suma. e
 y nro de ruitas de naipagar.

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P R E F A C E .

(TRANSLATED FROM THE PORTUGUESE EDITION, LISBON, 1812.)

I, Duarte Barbosa, a native of the very noble city of Lisbon, having navigated for a great part of my youth in the Indies discovered in the name of the king our lord, and having travelled through many and various countries neighbouring to the coast, and having seen and heard various things, which I judged to be marvellous and stupendous, and which had never been seen nor heard of by our ancestors, resolved to write them for the benefit of all, as I saw and heard of them from day to day, striving to declare in this my book the towns and limits of all those kingdoms to which I went in person, or of which I had trustworthy information; and also which were kingdoms and countries of the Moors and which of the Gentiles, and their customs. Neither have I left in silence their traffic, the merchandise which is met with in them, the places where they are produced, nor whither they are transported. And besides what I saw personally, I always delighted in inquiring of the Moors, Christians, and Gentiles, as to the usages and customs which they practised, and the points of information thus gained I endeavoured to combine together so as to have a more exact knowledge of them, this being always my special object, as it should be of all those who write on such matters; and I am convinced that it will be recognized that I have not spared any diligence in order to obtain this object, as far as the feeble extent of the power of my understanding allows of. It was in the present year of 1516 that I finished writing this my book.