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Edited by E. G. Ravenstein

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*1497-1499*

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OF

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“ Por vias nunca usadas, não temendo  
De Africa, e Noto a força, . . . . .  
. . . . .  
A ver os berços, onde nasce a dia.”

CAMOENS, Canto I, stanza 27.

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely reading 'Vasco da Gama'.

*(From a Photograph by Sr. Camancho.)*

This Portrait, now in the Hall of Honours of the Lisbon Geographical Society, was presented by the Conde de Vidigueira to King D. Carlos.

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A JOURNAL  
OF  
THE FIRST VOYAGE  
OF  
VASCO DA GAMA,  
1497-1499.

*Translated and Edited, with Notes, an Introduction and Appendices.*

BY

E. G. RAVENSTEIN, F.R.G.S.,

CORRESPONDING MEMBER OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY OF LISBON.

LONDON:  
PRINTED FOR THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY.

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## ERRATA.

P. 3, note 3. The wrong date is not August 18, but August 22, which ought to be October 22. See also p. 190, note 1.

P. 3, line 17. *Instead of* "lower mainsail", *read* "mainsail".

P. 4, note 2, to be read thus: "That is, towards Tristão da Cunha, Gama being at that time 400 miles to the N.N.W. of these islands".

P. 9, note 3. *Instead of* "Ant<sup>o</sup>", *read* "dent<sup>o</sup>" (dentro).

P. 15, note 1. *Instead of* "Rio do Infante", *read* "Rio de Infante".

P. 16, line 10. *Read* "when setting a bonnet we discovered the mast was sprung . . . and . . . secured it with lashings".

P. 22, line 8. *Instead of* "when putting the ship about", etc., *read* "in tacking towards the other ships, which were astern, Coelho", etc.

P. 23, note 4. *Add* "Aljofar, in Portuguese, means seed-pearls".

P. 73, line 17. *Instead of* "August 23", *read* "August 24".

P. 79, line 14. *Instead of* "Biaquotte", *read* "Biaquolle".

P. 80, note 1. For the identification of the Ilhas de S. Maria, see p. 200.

P. 92, line 13. *Add* "and left at once".

P. 148, line 20, and P. 175, line 60. The pilot was Pero Escolar, not Escovar. A Pero Escovar is mentioned by Barros (t. I, part I, p. 143) jointly with João de Santarem, as having made discoveries on the Gold Coast in 1471. He was a "cavalier" of the King's household. Another Pero Escovar went as pilot to the Congo in 1490. This latter may possibly have been our man.

P. 161, line 24. *Instead of* "D'Alberti", *read* "D'Albertis".

P. 167, line 17. *Instead of* "Rodriguez", *read* "Rodrigo".

P. 167, line 29. *Instead of* "Diogo de Vilhegas", *read* "Diogo Ortiz de Vilhegas".

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*CORRIGENDA.*

MAP VII.—Add H to the east of G, above the word “paigucim”; the reference letters, H, I, K and L, are to be changed to I, K, L and M respectively.

Page 39, line 11 from bottom.—Instead of *maize*, read *millet*.

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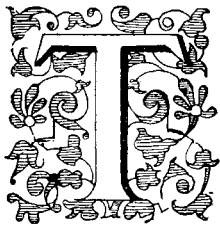
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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE discovery of an ocean route to India, in 1497-98, marks an epoch in the history of geographical exploration no less than in that of commerce. It confirmed the hypothesis of a circumambient ocean, first put forward by Hecataeus, but rejected by Ptolemy and his numerous followers; and, at the same time diverted into a new channel the profitable spice trade with the East which for ages had passed through Syria and Alexandria. In consequence of this diversion Venice lost her monopoly, and Lisbon became for a time the great spice-market of Europe.

But Portugal was a small country whose resources were hardly even equal to the task of waging the continuous wars with the Moors in which she had so unwisely been engaged for generations past. And when, in addition to her African forces, she was called upon to maintain great fleets in the



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distant East, in order to enforce her monopoly of the spice trade, at first in the face only of the Moors, and afterwards in that of powerful European rivals, her resources speedily came to an end, and she found herself exhausted and helpless. It may well be asked whether Portugal would not be happier now, and richer, too, had she never had the opportunity of dwelling upon these ancient



VASCO DA GAMA.

*(From a Contemporary Medallion in the Cloister of Belem.)*

glories; had the wealth of the Indies never been poured into her lap, only to breed corruption; and had her strength not been wasted in a struggle to which she was materially unequal, and which ended in exhaustion and ruin.

Portugal, however, notwithstanding the sad ending of her vast Eastern enterprises, is still justly proud of the achievements of her "great" Vasco da Gama, and boldly places him by the side of Magelhães

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and Christopher Columbus, as one of a noble triad which occupies the foremost rank among the great navigators of an Age of Great Discoveries.

Vasco da Gama was born, about 1460,<sup>1</sup> at Sines, of which coast-town his father, Estevão, was alcaide-mór. He was the youngest of three brothers. Genealogists trace back his pedigree to a valiant soldier, Alvaro Annes da Gama, who resided at Olivença in 1280, and greatly distinguished himself in the wars with the Moors. The Gamas could thus boast of gentle blood, though they neither belonged to the aristocracy of Portugal, nor were they possessed of much worldly wealth.

We know next to nothing of Vasco da Gama's youth. When King João, after the return of Bartholomeu Dias, decided to fit out an armada to complete the discovery of an ocean highway to India, he selected Vasco da Gama as its captain-major, and this choice of the King was confirmed by his successor, D. Manuel.<sup>2</sup> Such an appointment would not have been made had not Vasco da Gama already been known as a man of energy.

---

<sup>1</sup> He was thus eighteen years of age when Queen Isabella, in 1478, granted a safe-conduct to him and Fernão de Lemos, enabling them to pass through Castile on their way to Tangier (Navarrete, iii, p. 477). According to P. Antonio Carvalho da Costa's unsupported statement, Vasco da Gama was born in 1469.

<sup>2</sup> According to Castanheda, the appointment was at first offered to Paulo da Gama, Vasco's elder brother. He declined on account of ill-health, but offered to accompany his brother as captain of one of the vessels.

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capacity and competent knowledge. We ought therefore not be surprised if Garcia de Resende, in his *Chronicle of D. João II* (c. 146), tells us that he was a man whom the King trusted, as he had already served in his fleets and in maritime affairs, and whom he had consequently charged, in 1492, with the task of seizing the French vessels lying in the ports of Algarve, in reprisal for the capture by a French pirate of a Portuguese caravel returning from S. Jorge da Mina with gold.

Castanheda (I, c. 2) speaks of Vasco as having done good service in the time of King João II, and as being experienced in the affairs of the sea. Mariz (*Dial.*, iv, c. 14; v, c. 1) calls him a young man (*mancebo*), high-spirited and indefatigable, who had such a thorough knowledge of navigation (*arte marítima*) that he would have been able to hold his own with the most experienced pilots of Europe. We know, moreover, from Barros and Goes that

---

<sup>3</sup> Vasco da Gama, after his return from India, married Catarina de Ataíde. He proceeded a second time to India in 1502. When returning from Cananor he shaped a direct course across the Indian Ocean to Mozambique. After a long period of rest, King João III again sent him to India in 1524, but he died at Cochin on December 25th of the same year, at the age of sixty-five. His remains were taken to Portugal in 1538, and deposited at Vidigueira. Since 1880 they are supposed to have found their last resting-place in the church of Belem.

For an interesting estimate of the character of the great navigator, see Lord Stanley of Alderley's *The Three Voyages of Vasco da Gama* (Hakluyt Society), 1869. See also the Appendices of this volume for further information on the first voyage.

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he landed at S. Helena Bay with his pilots in order to determine the latitude. These extracts show, at all events, that Vasco da Gama was not a mere landsman ; nor is it likely that the command of an expedition, the one object of which was discovery, and not trade or war, would have been entrusted to such an one.

He was, moreover, well qualified for his post in other respects. His indomitable firmness made him shrink from no obstacle which opposed itself to the success of his expedition ; and notwithstanding the unheard-of length of the voyage and the hardships endured, he retained the confidence of his men to the very last.

The question whether Da Gama can fairly be ranked with Columbus and Magelhães, has frequently been discussed.

The first place among these three undoubtedly belongs to Magelhães, the renegade Portuguese, who first guided a ship across the wide expanse of the Pacific. The second place is almost universally accorded to Columbus, whose unconscious discovery of a new world, fit to become the second home of the European races, was immensely more far-reaching in its consequences than the discovery of an ocean highway to India, now largely discarded in favour of the shorter route across the isthmus of Suez.

It is maintained, in support of the claims of Columbus, that he was the originator of the scheme the success of which covered him with everlasting

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glory, whilst Vasco da Gama simply obeyed the behests of his King, when he took the lead of an expedition which was to crown the efforts made by little Portugal for generations past.

There is much truth in this contention. The scheme of reaching the East by a westward course across the Atlantic had no doubt been entertained in Portugal in the reign of Affonso the African [1438-81]. Fernão Martinz, the Royal Chaplain, had discussed its prospects with Paolo Toscanelli, when in Italy, and had been instructed to apply for further particulars to the Florentine physician, in response to which he had received the famous letter of June 25th, 1474, and the chart which accompanied it. But practically nothing was done, except that an adventurer or two<sup>1</sup> were authorised to seek for the islands supposed to lie to the west of the Azores. Prince Henry the Navigator would perhaps have acted upon such a suggestion, had he been still alive, but the King's resources were devoted to Africa, or wasted in two disastrous wars with Spain.

Columbus, on the other hand, made the discarded scheme his own; he, too, applied to Toscanelli for counsel,<sup>2</sup> and found confirmation of that physician's

---

<sup>1</sup> Ruy Gonçalves da Camara in 1473, Fernão Telles in 1474.

<sup>2</sup> Toscanelli's letter to Columbus was written long after that addressed to Fernão Martinz, for the expression *ha dias* (perhaps a rendering of *pridem* or *haud diu*) does not mean "a few days ago", but "long ago." Columbus himself uses it in that sense when he writes from Jamaica that the "Emperor of Catayo asked

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erroneous hypothesis as to the small breadth of the Atlantic by studying the *Imago Mundi* of Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly, and other writings. Nor did he rest until he found in Queen Isabella the Catholic a patron who enabled him to put his theories to the test of practical experience. It was his good fortune that Providence had placed the new world as a barrier between him and Marco Polo's Cipangu (Japan), which was his goal, or he might never have returned to claim the reward of his success.

On the accession of D. João II, in 1481, the discovery of Africa was resumed with renewed vigour, and the councillors of that King acted wisely when they advised him to decline the offers of Columbus,<sup>1</sup> for the resources of Portugal were quite unequal to pursuing at one and the same time a search for a western route and continuing the efforts for opening a practical route around the southern extremity of Africa. And thus it happened that Columbus "discovered a new world for Castile and Leon", and not for Portugal.

When, however, we come to consider the physical difficulties which had to be overcome by these great navigators in the accomplishment of their purpose, the greater credit must undoubtedly be awarded to Vasco da Gama. Columbus, trusting as implicitly to the chart and sailing directions

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long ago (*ha dias*) for men of learning to instruct him in the faith of Christ." The request for missionaries had been made to the Pope in 1339 (Navarrete, *Collecion*, 2nd ed., 1, p. 457).

<sup>1</sup> Barros, *Dec. I*, l. 3, c. ii.

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of Toscanelli as did Vasco da Gama to those of Dias, and, perhaps, of Pero de Covilhão, shaped a course westward of Gomera; and, having sailed in that direction for thirty-six days, and for a distance of 2,600 miles, made his first landfall at Guanahani, being favoured all the while by the prevailing easterly winds. The task which Vasco da Gama undertook was far more difficult of accomplishment. Instead of creeping along the coast, as had been done by his predecessors, he conceived the bold idea of shaping a course which would take him direct through the mid-Atlantic from the Cape Verde Islands to the Cape of Good Hope. The direct distance to be covered was 3,770 miles, but the physical obstacles presented by winds and currents could only be overcome by taking a circuitous course, and thus it happened that he spent ninety-three days at sea before he made his first landfall to the north of the bay of St. Helena. This first passage across the southern Atlantic is one of the great achievements recorded in the annals of maritime exploration.

Once beyond the Cape, Vasco had to struggle against the Agulhas current, which had baffled Bartholomeu Dias, and against the current of Mozambique; and it was only after he had secured a trustworthy pilot at Melinde that the difficulties of the outward voyage can be said to have been overcome.

In one other respect Vasco da Gama, or, perhaps, we ought to say his pilots, proved themselves the

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superiors of Columbus, namely, in the accuracy of the charts of their discoveries which they brought home to Portugal. Accepting the Cantino Chart<sup>1</sup> as a fair embodiment of the work done by this expedition, we find that the greatest error in latitude amounts to  $1^{\circ} 40'$ . The errors of Columbus were far more considerable. In three places of his Journal the latitude of the north coast of Cuba is stated to be  $42^{\circ}$  by actual observation; and that this is no clerical error, thrice repeated in three different places, seems to be proved by the evidence of the charts. On that of Juan de la Cosa, for instance, Cuba is made to extend to lat.  $35^{\circ}$  N. (instead of  $23^{\circ} 10'$ ), and even on the rough sketch drawn by Bartolomeo Columbus after the return from the Fourth Voyage, Jamaica and Puerto Rico (Spagnola) are placed  $6^{\circ}$  too far to the north.<sup>2</sup>

Verily, the Portuguese of those days were superior as navigators to their Spanish rivals and the Italians.

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Posterity is fortunate in possessing a very full abstract of the Journal which Columbus kept during

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<sup>1</sup> It is quite possible that the draughtsman of the Cantino Chart placed St. Helena Bay incorrectly, and not as determined by Vasco da Gama. Canerio places this bay in lat.  $32^{\circ} 30' S.$ , which is only  $10'$  out of its true position.

<sup>2</sup> See Wieser, *Die Karte des Bartolomeo Colombo*, Innsbruck, 1893. Cuba is not shown on this chart, possibly because Bartolomeo would not do violence to his conscience by representing it as a part of Asia (as his brother believed it to be to the day of his death) after its insularity had been recognised.



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his first voyage to the West Indies.<sup>1</sup> No such trustworthy record is available in the case of Vasco da Gama, whose original reports have disappeared. They were consulted, no doubt, by João de Barros and Damião de Goes; but these writers, much to our loss, dealt very briefly with all that refers to navigation. The only available account written by a member of the expedition is the *Roteiro* or Journal, a translation of which fills the bulk of this volume, and of which, later on, we shall speak at greater length. The only other contemporary accounts, which we also reproduce, are at second-hand, and are contained in the letters written by King Manuel and Girolamo Sernigi immediately after the return of Vasco da Gama's vessels from India.

Apart from these, our chief authorities regarding this voyage are still the *Decades* of João de Barros and the *Chronicle* of King Manuel, by Damião de Goes. Both these authors held official positions which gave them access to the records preserved in the India House. Castanheda relied almost wholly upon the *Roteiro*, but a few additional statements of interest may be found in his pages.

As to the *Lendas* of Gaspar Correa, we are unable to look upon his account of Vasco da Gama's first voyage as anything but a jumble of truth and

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<sup>1</sup> *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*, by C. R. Markham (Hakluyt Society), 1893.

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fiction,<sup>1</sup> notwithstanding that he claims to have made use of the diary of a priest, Figueiro, who is stated to have sailed in Vasco's fleet. Correa's long residence in India—from 1514 to the time of his death—must have proved an advantage when relating events which came under his personal observation, but it also precluded him from consulting the documents placed on record in the Archives of Lisbon. This much is certain: that whoever accepts Correa as his guide must reject the almost unanimous evidence of other writers of authority who have dealt with this important voyage.<sup>2</sup>

A few additional facts may be gleaned from Faria y Sousa's *Asia Portuguesa*, from Duarte Pacheco Pereira and Antonio Galvão; but in the main we are dependent upon the *Roteiro*, for recent searches<sup>3</sup> in the *Torre do Tombo* have yielded absolutely nothing, so far as we are aware, which throws additional light upon Da Gama's First Voyage, with which alone we are concerned.

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<sup>1</sup> Thus Correa states correctly that the Cape was rounded in November, that is, in the height of summer, but introduces accessory details—perhaps taken from an account of some other voyage (Cabral's, for instance)—which could only have happened in mid-winter. (See p. 193).

<sup>2</sup> An excellent translation of Correa's account of *The Three Voyages of Vasco da Gama*, by Lord Stanley of Alderley, was published by the Hakluyt Society in 1869. It is accompanied by foot-notes, directing attention to those numerous instances in which Correa differs from other writers.

<sup>3</sup> Most of the documents discovered on these occasions were made known by Texeira de Aragão and Luciano Cordeiro, to whose published works frequent reference will be made.

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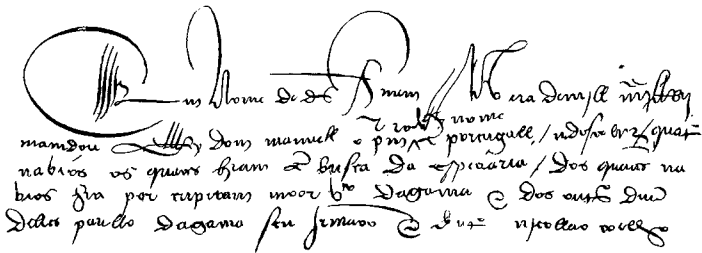
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And now we shall proceed to give an account of the *Roteiro*.

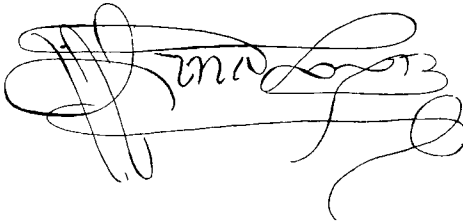
*The Manuscript of the "Roteiro".*

In giving an account of the manuscript of this Journal, we entrust ourselves to the guidance of Professors Kopke and Antonio da Costa Paiva, the two gentlemen who first published it.



Signature of Fernam Lopes  
de Castanheda

Water Mark




That is :—

“Em Nome de Ds Amem// Na era de mill iij LR vij  
mamdou Ellrey Dom manuell o primo desde nome em portugall/  
a descobrir/ quat  
navios/ os quaes hiam em busca da especiaria/ dos quaes na  
vios hia por capitam moor Vco da Gama e dos outros duũ  
dells Paulo da Gama seu jrmaoo e doutro njcollao Coelho”.

The manuscript originally belonged to the famous Convent of Santa Cruz at Coimbra, whence it was

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transferred, together with other precious MSS., to the public library of Oporto.

It is not an autograph, for on fol. 64 (p. 77 of this translation), where the author has left a blank, the copyist, to guard against his being supposed to have been careless in his task, has added these words: "The author has omitted to tell us how these weapons were made". This copy, however, was taken in the beginning of the sixteenth century, as may be seen from the style of the writing as exhibited in the facsimile of the first paragraph of the work, shown on preceding page.

The MS. is in folio, and is rudely bound up in a sheet of parchment, torn out of some book of ecclesiastical offices. The ink is a little faded, but the writing is still perfectly legible. The paper is of ordinary strength, and of rather a dark tint; the manufacturer's water mark is shown in the above facsimile. Blank leaves of more modern make, and having a different water-mark, have been inserted at the front and back, and the first of these leaves contains the following inscription in a modern hand, which is still legible, although pains have been taken to erase it:—

"Pertinet ad usum fratris Theotonii de Sancto  
G . . . . Canonici Regularis in Cenobio  
Scte Crucis".

Immediately below this we read:—

"Dô Theotonio",

and near the bottom of the page, in a modern hand,

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probably that of one of the librarians of the convent :—

“Descobrimento da Índia por D. Vasco  
da Gamma”.

Prof. Kopke suggests<sup>1</sup> that the copyist of this valuable MS. was the famous historian Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, who was Apparitor and Keeper of the Archives in the University of Coimbra, and was engaged there during twenty years, much to the injury of his health and private fortune, in collecting the materials for his *Historia do Descobrimento e Conquista da Índia*. In support of this assumption he publishes a signature (see the facsimile on page xxii) taken from a copy of the first book of Castanheda's history, published in 1551. But A. Herculano,<sup>2</sup> whilst admitting this signature to be genuine, points out that the cursive characters of the MS. are of a type exceedingly common during the first half of the sixteenth century, and that it would consequently not be safe to attribute it to any writer in particular. Until, therefore, further evidence is forthcoming, we cannot accept the Professor's theory that we are indebted for this copy to Castanheda; though, as we have already said, there can be no doubt that in writing his account of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama he depended almost exclusively for his facts upon the anonymous author of this *Roteiro*.

<sup>1</sup> *Roteiro*, prim. edição, p. xix.

<sup>2</sup> *Roteiro*, seg. edição, p. xii.

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It is quite possible, as suggested by Prof. Kopke, that the title by which the *Roteiro* was known at the convent of Santa Cruz misled certain bibliographers into a belief that Vasco da Gama himself had written this account of his voyage.

Thus Nicoláo Antonio, in his *Bibliotheca Hispana Veta* (1672), lib. 10, c. 15, § 543, says:—

“Vascus da Gama . . . . dedit reversus Emanueli suo Regi populari Portugalix idiomate navigationis suae ad Indiam anno MCD XCVII relationem, quae lucem vidit.”

The words “quae lucem vidit” need not, however, be understood as conveying the meaning that this narrative was actually printed and published, for the same author, in his *Bibliotheca Hispana Nova*, makes use of the same equivocal expression when describing another voyage to India, expressly stated by him to be still in MS.

Moreri, in his *Dictionnaire* (1732), quoting as his authority a *Bibliotheca Portuguesa* in MS., which he had from “a man of judgment and of vast erudition”, states that Vasco da Gama is said to have published an account of his first voyage to India, but that no copy of it had up till then been discovered.

Similarly, Barbosa Machado, the author of the standard *Bibliotheca Lusitana* (t. iii, p. 775), 1752, accepting Nicoláo Antonio as his authority, says