PORTUGUESE DOCUMENTS ON MALACCA
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DAMIAO DE GOES

This unequal figure of the Portuguese renaissance, as a historian and humanist, traveller, epistolist, diplomat and keeper of the Archives, Damiao de Goes made out of life, a perfect symbiosis of the ideals of his time.

Born at Alenquer, Portugal in 1502, Damiao de Goes was the son of Rui Dias de Goes and his fourth wife, Isabel Gomes de Lima. He lost his father at the age of eleven. He was chosen by the Royal Palace as the chambers groom, as his name appeared as one residing in the Royal Palace in 1518.

In about 1522, he left Portugal and began a series of expeditions as an official of the King. According to a note on his activities, he served in Germany, Brabant and Holland in a very important negotiation. In 1529, he travelled to Baltic as an official and visited Danzig where he established contacts with the local traders. He then proceeded to Lithuania, Poznan and also the Royal House of Cracow, Poland. It is a current tradition and it was Goes, who, for the first time, offered sugar to be tasted.

In 1531, he visited Denmark and on his way to Poland again, he visited Lubeck, Wittenberg, Luther and Melanchthon.

In the following year, he entered a new phase of life, as a scholar, giving up his post of treasurer of the "Casa da India". He also gave up his post in the factory of Flanders. The first half 1534 was spent in living in Basel together with Erasmus. From there, he left for Padua where he spent four years in the penumbra of the university. During holidays, he tried to contact the humanistic figures of his time in Rome, Venice, in the North and South of Italy, and Nuremberg where he became familiar with some of them, like, Reginald Pole and Bounamici and others.

After completing his studies in Padua, he proceeded to Louvain where he got married. The following three years, that is, from 1539–1542, he begins a period of humanistic Lusitanian creation. He published several opuscules as "Comentarii rerum gestarum in India" in 1539, and in the following year, still in Lovain, "Fides, religio moreque Aethioporum sub imperio Preciosi Joanni". At this time, war bursts out in Flanders and he has some disappointments which take him to Portugal in 1545, full of great prestige and possessor of excellent culture, and perhaps convinced that he could contribute to install the new humanistic currents in Portugal.

It is at this stage that he starts a new career as a chronicler, at the beginning, on a temporary appointment as Archivist of the Torre do Tombo (in 1548) and not yet a Royal Chronicler. Ten years later, at the request of Cardinal D. Henrique, he began to write the Chronicle of D. Manuel, a very difficult task for many reasons. However, Damiao de Goes, made use of new sources in the Archives of Torre do Tombo and succeeded in this difficult task. In 1566, he published the first and second parts of the Chronicle of the Most Blessed King D. Manuel.

In this chronicle, the author imposes on himself a criterion of truth, as he says it in the introduction. However, his work provoked certain ill-feelings on the part of some noble families who tried to oppose him by unjust critics. Damiao de Goes, however, succeeded in freeing himself from these accusations and his chronicle was printed.

1See Antonio Joaquim Anselmo, Bibliography of Works published in Portugal in the 16th century, Lisbon, 1926, pp.134–135

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Damiao de Goes also wrote – “Chronicle of the Prince D. Joao, the Second King with this name”, and it was finished in 1557, but published only ten years later in Lisbon.

This book proves well the gifts of the Chronicler, the text being well documented with his rigourous facts within his knowledge. This was emphasized in the chronicle of D. Manuel, for the objective he proposes and the dimensions he attains, the two chronicles can be considered works of great historiographic level.

The persons he described, move within the frame in which psychological analysis and material exactness are expounded. It can even be said that in the pages of Damiao de Goes, one can find strokes of a brush of social criticism almost unnoticed in the writers of that time, like Barros or Castanheda. In Goes, we found a narrative based on documents and written with honesty. One may add, that the keeper of the Archives reveals great courage in bringing out serious fault when he criticises the deviations committed under the royal sombre.

The praise or condemnation, approval or disapproval of the past events, is not necessarily a judgement of the value of merits or dismerits of the facts. In the historical field, everything should be narrated, with faithfulness to the events, as Damiao de Goes says:— "it is a serious obligation to give new information of the deeds and bravery of the kings and princes". That is, one should have great respect for the faithfulness of the facts narrated. In the historical field, Damiao de Goes does not intend to judge dead persons; for this reason, we cannot consider him a moral historian, but as someone searching for the truth.

Of course, Damiao de Goes puts them up in his mental frame when he describes the Portuguese of his time and this proves that Damiao de Goes was a humanist with a European outlook. The great deeds of Portugal were not judged isolated, but as part of the European panorama of the time. Thus, the cultural dimension of Damiao de Goes places itself in a world of achievements of the Portuguese nation, which is understood to be part of the achievements of the whole Christian world.

Damiao de Goes's patriotism is not expressed in a national form but in the whole European context, while it could be valued and announced as the great deeds of the Lusitanian empire.

This means that the admiration for the national glories in Damiao de Goes should not be confused with a common sentiment of patriotism.
With Diogo do Couto, we are in the presence of the successor of Joao de Barros, in his making, the *Decadas da Asia*, a project in which he delineated the history of the Portuguese empire in the East, from 1526 to 1600. Referring to his biographic outline, there is quite secured knowledge about the main landmarks in his life, but the same cannot be said about all his works, since there is a mystery hovering over some of the books of the *decadas* regarding the dates of the editions and the whereabouts of its manuscripts.

Diogo do Couto was born in Lisbon in 1542. He came from a noble family. His parents were Gaspar do Couto and Isabel Serrao de Calvos. In 1559, Diogo do Couto set sail to the East. He spent about ten years in these regions. He journeyed back to Portugal in April, 1570, in the fleet of D. Antao de Noronha, with Luiz de Camoes, a friend and travelling companion, in the galleon Santa Clara. He remained in Portugal for only a year. On the 17th March, 1571, he sailed back to India, together with the new Viceroy, D. Antonio de Noronha and never returned to Portugal. He died in Goa on the 10th December, 1616. Which are the books of the *decadas* Diogo do Couto has written?

During his life, the following *decadas* were published – IV, V, VI & VII. They were published in Lisbon, in 1602, 1612, 1614, and 1616, covering the events from 1526 to 1564. He also left the manuscripts of four other *decadas* which suffered a sad end; the 8th and 9th, had to be revised by the author and the 10th had a copy maintained until the publication of the edition of "Regia Oficina" in 1717. The 11th *decada* was lost with only a synopsis of it known, published on the same date. The 12th *decada* was not completed.

It can be said that Diogo do Couto wanted to be like Barros and have his name joined to his, by writing the monumental Portuguese history in South–East Asia and Asia, thus, the *decadas* would be accepted as a glorious work of two authors, with a little difference. If the work of Joao de Barros breathes the euphony of greatness, the writing of Couto is a testimony of the decline of the Portuguese empire in India perceived by the Portuguese at the beginning of the 17th century. What led to the collapse of the empire? It may be due to Dutch threats or the errors and the weakness of the administration.

Several letters of Diogo do Couto written between 1605 to 1608, are a testimony of the spirit of the present situation, written in a very sad stroke of the brush and how it came to this situation in the transition of the 16th century to the 17th century. The greatest enemy of the Portuguese empire was Holland, who had liberated herself from the yoke of the Austrian power and who tried to build up an overseas Holland by taking the Portuguese possessions.

The setting up of the East India Company, in 1602 marked the moment of the policy of expansion by sending well equipped large fleets, through the Cape of Good Hope, with the purpose of attacking the neuralgic and strategic Portuguese trading sites. First, the Dutch took Moluccas, securing the monopoly of spices, and then, they expanded the Dutch domination. The conquest of Java and several fortresses on the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel served as places of support in the capture of Malacca in 1641 as the true key of navigation to the Far East.

As a tentative of penetration in the years between 1595 and 1598 had been very successful with the arrival of the fleet in Holland loaded with spices, thus, Holland received the first fortune of the Dutch traders. Couto refers to a coeval witness: - "The Dutch welcomed well the trade and commerce of the South seas of Oriental Indies that they decided to continue to conquer it." 1

1 Roteiro da viagem que fez a nao Nosa S.a de Betancor ... vindo de Goa para Portugal, feito pelo Ld. Ant. de Misquita que vinha nella". National Library of Lisbon, Fundo Geral, codex 341, fol. 1
The historian assists with sadness at the fall of the empire by the years 1608 and 1612 and his letters during this period are a testimony of criticism which he directs against the weakness of the Portuguese authorities in India. Out of 14 ships which King Philips III sent to defend that state in 1607, only the galleon Oliveira entered the harbour of Goa. The Dutch fleet "Peter Gimaltes" – "was here in the sea-roads of Goa humiliating us".  

They also forced the Portuguese to set fire to a galleon, loaded with supplies, in order not to be captured by the enemy.

The chronicler blames the Portuguese leaders for this sad situation.

It was 1612, the chronicler felt that his life was coming to one end. He always desired the great honour of being awarded with the habit of the Order of Christ which he got later.

At this stage, it is time to analyse the concept of history of Diogo do Couto; to do this, let us examine the epistola which opens the fourth decade, directed to Philip II, on the 28th November, 1597. Diogo do Couto, after exalting the duties of a chronicler, whose obligation is to record the events of the past, spoke at length, about the greatness of Portugal, joining in the same eulogy – "this our country" and the monarch who jointly incarnated the "deeds of Ceasar, the prudence of Fabius, the efforts of Cipiao and the mercifulness of Philippo". (sic!) This transpires from the epistola, opening the fourth decade when he says:

"Among other deeds ... these weapons, since they were won so gloriously, were left as a heritage to the kings of Portugal, as now, Your Majesty holds them. This glory ... the Portuguese nation missed it as she would not appear to deserve it and we are to be blamed, by accepting that only the illustrious and notable deeds would be enough; we fail to see that the individual glory fades away, but the glory of our country as a whole continues eternally ... the deeds materialised in the East, in any other nation, would be written in a thousand volumes for admiration of all the world ... Your Majesty remedied this, by instructing me to continue writing the History of India, beginning where Joao de Barros ended, to come to light the deeds which these Portuguese vassals did in this region."  

But some epistolas, certainly can help the readers to understand the concept of history of Diogo do Couto:- in the decade VIII, written to Philip III of Spain, the epistola dedicating the five books of decade XII, he shows a personal acrimonious tone for the lack of interest he felt around himself about the vast work of this writing.

Indeed, Diogo do Couto is the first of all Chroniclers to write on South East Asia and Asia to whom the uncommon boldness in judging certain administrative persons and their deeds. He did not fear to condemn the evils the Portuguese Indians were doing, even the Viceroy "who did not want to be in the Chronicles about whom they did not mind to write anything good or bad, and this, the noblemen were to be blamed who did not want to emulate the glory of their ancestors, but only cared to build opulent homes and have artistic galleries in them."  

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1 'Carta do mesmo ao mesmo. Goa, derradeira oitava do Natal de 1608'; idem, box 206, n. 289, fol. 1  
2 Taken from "Asia" by Diogo do Couto, Decadas IV, part II, Lisbon, 1778, pp. XXVII – XXXIII.  
3 Published by Coimbra Martins, "Sobre as Decadas que Diogo do Couto deixou ineditas, estudo citado," p. 305.  
5 Idem, ibidem, p. 352

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The characteristic note, on the *decadas* of Diogo do Couto, is his historical frame of mind, in the evils of Portuguese India to identify them, with his personal anguish. He felt himself hurt, for the lack of interest they had for his work and his personal experience; he did not conceal this, not only in his letters, but, also, in his personal daily life. For, did he not criticise the Viceroy of India, in the events that took place, when the Dutch made an attack against Malacca in 1605 and when he asked for the views of Goan counsellors about the advantages of going to the aid of Malacca?

For he wrote:—

“It seems that he did not remember that I was living in this place, that he had much more obligation to ask many others but felt no need to know from me, my opinion. But, this is my fault, because I never tried to interfere with the viceroys and their official matters, because I rather prefer to show myself timid than to displease anybody; however, because of my duties, I feel bound to the service of His Majesty. I sent my views by writing and a copy to Frei Adeodato to show to your Excellency... I am not the sort of person who goes about offering my services or imposing myself on Your Excellency as Your Excellency can well testify because I have never offered myself neither have I asked for anything during your reign ...”

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1Letter to a D. Francisco da Gama; Goa, 23rd December 1605, National Library of Lisbon, box 206, n. 294, fol. 6.
FERNAO LOPES DE CASTANHEDA

Fernão Lopes de Castanheda was born in Santarem, around 1500. His father, Lopo Fernandes de Castanheda, was a legally trained district magistrate. He studied in the Convent of St. Dominic where he received an average education. In 1528, he left for India together with his father, now, a judge of the Municipality of Goa. Though he lived for fifteen years in South-East Asia and Asia, we do not know of his occupation during that time. He collected a lot of information for the History of the discoveries & conquests in India by the Portuguese, which he ended after his return to Portugal. From 1547, his name is inscribed in the registers of the University, as beadle and keeper of the library. He died in Coimbra on the 23rd March, 1559 and was buried in the Church of S. Pedro.

The work of Castanheda is the most efficient and complete source pertaining to the first fifty years of Portuguese dominance in South-East Asia and Asia. He is, undoubtedly, one of the greatest chroniclers of the 16th century. How he acquired such vast erudition and a good concept of history which he displays is not known. Probably, it was due to the great experience in his daily life and the social living with his family in Goa. We may add, that later, in Coimbra, the Portuguese alma mater might have been in contact with the professors of the Colleges of Arts and University which enabled him to acquire such vast knowledge: "having found no other alternative as I have said, I agreed to offer my services to the university of Coimbra and when I was not occupied in their service I managed to complete this history with much effort of body and spirit...."

His complete work - the Historia should have comprised ten books, out of which only eight were published. The first book came out of the press 'João Berreira', in Coimbra, in 1551 and books II & III came out in the following year. This means that Castanheda was the first historian to see "His Deeds" on the Portuguese in the East come to light and be well-known before Barros, whose first década was printed in 1552 and to prevent anyone else getting the laurels, Castanheda makes it known in the introduction of his book III. The following years, until 1561, books IV to VIII came out, while, the last, was left to be completed by his children. It is almost certain that Castanheda did not want to revise books IX and X as he was bound to do for book 1 in 1554. In Castanheda's mind, to touch the manuscript would amount to infringing on the historical truth and this would not fit his way of thinking. Hence, such a difference existing between the last two books and the rest.

To make an analysis of the concept of history by Castanheda, it is important to read the introductions of book I, II & III, as they are valuable by their biographical information and ideas. Castanheda shows great courage, when he states that if the vassals owed great respect for their kings, the kings do not owe less respect to the historians. The past deeds are a reflection of the virtues of those who ruled, who were learned and were men of experience.

Like the other chroniclers of the Portuguese golden century, Castanheda also feels the flame of heroism of any Portuguese who lived in South-East Asia and Asia. He also witnessed the greatness of the Portuguese epic.

In the introduction of book II, he reveals his concept about history where he focusses on three points, namely:-

1) The heroic standing of the Portuguese deeds; 2) History is found in his own investigation and 3) He chooses his models, in this matter – Sa de Miranda and Zurara.

He praises Sa de Miranda for his work in favour of the Portuguese language and the chronicler. He praises Zurara for withstanding the problems he encountered while going through the land of Morocco while documenting himself to write the Chronicle of D. Duarte de Meneses in which, he showed himself a very ‘experienced’ historian. To evaluate the merit of Castanheda’s work, from the publication of the first book in 1553, the first translation in French appeared in the press of Michel Vascosin in Paris. In the following year, thanks to the humanist, Nicolas de Grouchy, a master of the College of Arts and a friend of Castanheda, a new translation appeared, which, earned Castanheda a great name: “L’Histoire des Indes de Portugal, contenant comment l’Inde a este decouverte ... fait par Fernand Lopes de Castanheda et traduict de portugues en francois par Nicolas de Grouchy”.

The style of Castanheda, of course, did not attain the style of Joao de Barros. The latter possessed a classical formation while the education of Castanheda was normal.

When one reads the História of Castanheda, immediately one will notice a fluid style, many a times unpretentious, but always clear; it pleases when one reads his descriptions, very natural and never affecting the historical contents.

On the other hand, one can collect from the História a deep interest in the study of the Portuguese presence in India; the inventory of hundreds and hundreds of names, many of them obscure persons whom he mentions along his extensive work, names of captains, factors, pilots, traders, sailors, soldiers and all these, helps the reader to write the history of the Portuguese empire in South East Asia and the East. In contrast to the décadas of Joao de Barros, although he names humble persons, however, the governors and captains form the gallery of Portuguese history while the História of Castanheda, goes down to greater details, thus, permitting to come to the surface the khakhi of the soldiers, sailors and adventurers, who from 1497 - 1550 make the weaving of Portuguese epopee in South East Asia and Asia.

*Extract taken from the National Library of Paris, cita: 8ª Oy. 68.