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FROM BRAZIL TO MACAO: TRAVEL WRITING AND DIASPORIC SPACES

A Tragic Story of the Sea



University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies
Centro de Estudos Anglisticos da Universidade de Lisboa

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Textos



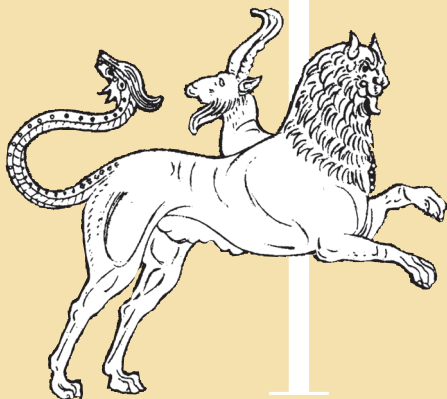
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Introduction

João Almeida Flor

Translation

John Elliott



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DIRECÇÃO

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A TRAGIC STORY OF THE SEA

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RELAÇÃO

DA MUY NOTAVEL PERDA
DO
GALEÃO GRANDE S. JOÃO

*Em que se contaõ os grandes trabalhos , e
lastimosas cousas que acontecèraõ*

AO CAPITAÕ
MANOEL DE SOUSA
SEPULVEDA,



E OLAMENTAVEL FIM, QUE ELLE,
e sua mulher, e filhos, e toda a mais gente
houveraõ na Terra do Natal, onde se perdè-
raõ a 24. de Junho de 1552.

Introduction:
Voyage, Shipwreck, Exile and End

João Almeida Flor

In association with the organisation by the University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies of the International Conference *From Brazil to Macao: Travel Writing and Diasporic Spaces*, this volume presents a bilingual edition of the famous story of the wreck of a sixteenth-century Portuguese ship. This is the account of the Great Galleon *São João*, which, on its return voyage from India to Lisbon, was wrecked just off the east coast of Africa, resulting in the grievous misfortunes of the survivors, led by their captain Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda.

The ship had set sail from the port of Cochin, in India, on 3rd February 1552, following the routes across the Indian Ocean, but violent storms were to prevent it from rounding the Cape of Good Hope and caused the destruction and subsequent abandonment of the vessel. Accompanied by his wife, Dona Leonor de Sá, their young children, and some crewmembers and passengers, Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda decided to march along the shoreline, heading north in search of salvation. Despite their valiant efforts, however, it was their inability to cope with the difficulties of the situation, together with their vulnerabilities of all kinds, the hostility of the Kaffirs and their extremely low spirits, that would determine their tragic outcome. In fact, gradually falling prey to the spectres of humiliation, disgrace, madness and death, almost all of the survivors of the shipwreck finally met their end on the coast of Natal, although a certain Álvaro Fernandes was to survive and bring the world news of that fateful episode.

Because of its high drama, this narrative belongs to a group of texts that present the other side of the Portuguese overseas expansion, amounting to a series of counter-epics and testifying to the many adversities that could not always be overcome in the course of the great overseas adventure, a collective exploit imbued with the elegiac awareness of suffering and perdition.

It is difficult to enumerate the possible motives of interest that the tragedy of the Great Galleon *São João* might have for a modern-day audience, since the intersubjective relationship established both in and by its reading leads to the recognition of almost as many motives as there are readers. In fact, readers project onto the text their own cultural background and knowledge, the sedimentation of their previous literary experiences, the horizon of their personal expectations and the latitude of their interests and preferences. Thus a whole series of antecedents, presuppositions and conditioning factors are brought to bear on their reading, establishing the limits of taste that are supposedly representative of a certain community of readers situated in their own space and time.

Yet, with no other purpose than to provide a few examples, perhaps some of the most pertinent and meaningful aspects of Sepúlveda's episode as the narrative of a shipwreck may be organised around three fundamental areas – historical, literary and didactic.

It is difficult to overemphasise the historical interest of the sixteenth-century accounts of shipwrecks, for they painted a picture of exoticism that greatly appealed to the European curiosity during this period of scientific, political, cultural and economic openness to new continents. These narratives bring together valuable information about the life, customs and habitat (fauna, flora, topography, hydrography, climatology) of the native inhabitants of south-east Africa, well before the first contacts were made with the Portuguese navigators, who brought with them a different material civilisation and symbolic capital. In this way, the disembarkation of the survivors of the shipwreck offers the reader the great pageant of otherness, gradually revealed through two main channels. On the one hand, it allows for the presentation of experiential knowledge and promotes both observation and dialogue with unknown realities; on the other hand, it allows for a confrontation with native cultures and peoples, even when relationships of conflict and hostility are established with these, as was the case with the victims of the shipwreck of the *São João*.

Besides this, because of their predominantly informative function, the accounts of shipwrecks were based on statements taken from eye witnesses, who not only furnished details of the courses followed by the ships and their respective ports of call, but also spoke of the vicissitudes of the weather, the classes of the vessels and the much broader context of everyday life, as

expressed in the various tasks undertaken by seafarers on board Portuguese ships and galleons. In this regard, the case of Sepúlveda and his fellow mariners helps us to complete the full set of information, generally to be found scattered throughout other sources of nautical historiography, such as the shipping regulations, sailing directions, reports, ships' logbooks or the works written by the chroniclers of the Portuguese overseas expansion.

In turn, when seen in a fuller context, the loss of the Galleon *São João* exemplifies and reveals the serious difficulties faced by the armadas that guaranteed the trading links with the Far East from the 16th to the 19th century, operating along the so-called India Run.

This was a vast enterprise, developed through the initiative and investment of the Crown and managed either under direct administration or on a concessionary basis, with the support of private capital and loans taken out both in Portugal and abroad. In fact, in taking advantage of the route between the two oceans afforded by the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope, the India Run made it possible to supply the European market with spices, by using a new maritime itinerary for trading with the Orient rather than following the traditional trade route through the Levant and over the Red Sea.

In view of the great dimension of the adventure and the difference in navigational conditions between the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, it is not surprising that the respective sailing directions and calendar were established and standardised, taking into account the need to overcome the foreseeable difficulties posed by the monsoon seasons, adverse winds and currents, and even by the great severity of some storms.

Thus, it was in the transitional period between winter and spring that the armadas would set sail from Lisbon, heading first for Cape Verde and then sailing south-west in a wide arc towards Brazil, before finally veering south-east in order to round the southern coast of Africa and the Cape of Good Hope in the summer, heading for the Indian Ocean. Thereafter, they could choose between travelling on the inward side of the Island of São Lourenço (Madagascar), through the Mozambique Channel or, alternatively, taking the outside route across the open sea and then finally heading north-eastwards, so that, by the end of September, they would arrive at the coast of India, where the ships would then remain in port for roughly three months.

Conversely, on their return voyage to Lisbon, vessels would set sail from Goa or Cochin, sometime around December or January of the following year, taking the Indian Ocean routes south-west and then, after rounding the Cape, they would stop off for water supplies at the island of St. Helena and then head for the Azores. Finally, they would draw closer to the Portuguese coast, where they would expect to arrive in midsummer.

As can be imagined, such a programme was not always adhered to rigorously, either because of delays in the stowage of the vessels, consequently leading to their late departure, or because of errors in navigation, or even because of attacks by pirates who coveted the riches that the ships were carrying. Not to mention other unforeseeable circumstances or events that could be imputed to human responsibility, such as breakdowns, abandonments, vessels running aground, unscheduled stops in ports or fires on board. Whatever the reasons, it is worth noting that the losses of ships were not distributed evenly in geographical terms along the whole of the route. Instead, such losses were concentrated, above all, in three critical areas – in the transition from the Indian to the Atlantic Ocean (as happened to Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda), in the Mozambique Channel, and finally in the region of the Azores when drawing closer to the Portuguese coast.

Modern-day historiography has sought to ascertain and systematise the causes of shipwrecks and other misfortunes occurring on the India Run, particularly on the return voyage, which led to the loss of vessels, human lives and valuable merchandise, with a high average rate of overall failure.

Although the statistics show variations in the number of accidents recorded over several decades, it may be said that many of these were related with shipbuilding problems, further aggravated by deficient maintenance, the overly large size of the vessels and the tendency to increase their respective tonnage, all of which contravened the royal stipulations on such matters. However, the enormous profits that could be made with the trading of merchandise, by private shipowners, agents and even by the crew itself, seemed to justify the excessive increase in the onboard transport and storage capacity. Consequently, and frequently in detriment to the safety of both people and goods, all the available space was overladen with silks, cotton, exotic woods, porcelain, pepper, cinnamon and other spices.

Further complications were the limited weaponry of many ships, leaving them at the mercy of enemy attacks, and a series of human errors, caused

by ineptitude or negligence. Such an anomaly was related with the real difficulties found in recruiting experienced crewmembers with sufficient skills to perform the arduous work required by the India Run. In fact, taking into account the high number of passengers and seafarers, together with the soldiers that were needed to defend the actual vessel or to man the overseas fortresses, it would have been necessary to rigorously determine the real skills of those applying to join the merchant navy, something that was incompatible with the relatively scarce labour supply. The deficient training and discipline of crewmembers reached all the way up the hierarchy, even as far as the position of commander, a figure who was frequently a member of the high nobility but ill-accustomed to life at sea. The exception to such an acquiescent attitude was to be found in the rigorous selection of the pilots, who were sometimes of foreign origin and, in the final analysis, responsible for ensuring the success of the voyage. Even so, despite the professional competence of many pilots, the difficulties of manoeuvring the ship and the various tasks involved in navigation were exacerbated by various technical limitations, such as inadequately produced charts and maps, some deficiencies in the nautical instruments and the mariners' purely empirical knowledge of winds, currents and tides.

Over time, the conjugation of all these factors substantially affected the flows of vessels along the India Run, which saw periods of peak activity alternating with downturns, until numbers started to progressively dwindle from the end of the 16th century onwards. It might be plausible to relate such a decline with the seriousness of the political situation in Portugal, in the course of the dynastic crisis unleashed after the Battle of Alcácer-Quibir and the changes occurring during the reign of the three Philips. It would, however, be more appropriate to go beyond the Iberian borders and remember also the geostrategic alterations that had taken place in the meantime, as well as the international economic and financial situation at that time. This was reflected by the aggressive competition of the Dutch and the English in the exploitation of the Cape Route, which had sustained the Portuguese monopoly over the long-distance trade with the Orient.

In short, Sepúlveda's shipwreck must be seen as rooted in the broader context of the historical circumstances that involved the India Run, whose vicissitudes, resulting from complex and multifarious causes, were reflected in the gradual disintegration of the Empire.

As far as the literary reception afforded to the subject is concerned, we know that, at first, the news of the loss of the Galleon *São João* (1552) was transmitted through the oral tradition.

It is not surprising that such a circumstance favoured the formal stylisation of the account, rendering it devoid of rhetorical flourishes, introducing alterations into the chronological sequence of events and redistributing the different emphases of the narrative. At the same time, perhaps due to the influences of contemporary preachers, such procedures were beginning to direct the substance of the matter towards underlining the episode's respective exemplarity and didactic function, with the aim of providing coming generations with the opportunity to use the mistakes of others to their own advantage and thus avoid the paths that led to perdition. In short, the historical contents related with the loss of the *São João* soon acquired moral overtones and were endowed with edifying intentions, shaping a hybrid discourse that was carried over into the chapbook literature of the late 16th century.

In fact, at a time when emulation and competition between printers sought to satisfy the curiosity of the general public, avid for information about the vicissitudes of overseas expansion and interested in the sensationalism of certain items of news, a pamphlet entitled *História da mui notável perda do galeão grande São João* was printed and put into circulation around 1555-56, without any indication of its author, or the date or place of its printing. Its success was reflected in the large numbers of copies printed in each successive edition and the fact that the text functioned as a kind of inaugural template for a sub-genre of travel literature in 16th-century Portugal, composed of narrative accounts of shipwrecks.

Initially published to meet the demands of a wider audience of literary consumers, the episode in which Sepúlveda played such a leading role was soon accepted into circles of more restricted symbolic production and, under the auspices of aristocratic or royal patronage, ended up gaining access to the world of legitimate literature and appearing in works that enjoyed an appreciable cultural projection.

As an illustrious example of this canonical dignity, we should perhaps remember stanzas 46-48 of Canto V of *The Lusíads* (1572), in which Camões told of the misfortune that befell Sepúlveda ("enamoured, liberal, cavalier") and the adversities faced by his family members, presaged by the voice of

Adamastor. Shortly afterwards, in classicising terms with mythological and allegorical overtones, the *Elegiada* (1588) of Luís Pereira Brandão returned to and developed the theme of the shipwreck. In the same year, the episode was transcribed in an abbreviated form by Giampietro Maffei in *Historiarum Indicarum libri XVI*, a circumstance that was to play an important role in its dissemination overseas. The *Naufração e lastimoso sucesso da perdição de Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda* (1594), a work by Jerónimo Corte Real, reached an even wider audience, enjoying remarkable success amongst both the critics and the (inter)national public alike. It even gave rise, for example, to a Spanish translation (1624) by Francisco de Contreras. At the same time, albeit at another level, the narrative material was adapted to the demands of the stage by 17th-century Spanish playwrights, including Lope de Vega with his *Comedia famosa de don Manuel de Sosa* (1635) and Tirso de Molina with his *Escarmientos para el cuerdo* (1636). In parallel to this, the moralising and edifying potentialities of the Sepúlveda episode help to explain why the theme was also made use of by the didactic neo-Latin Jesuit theatre in plays such as *Ambitio sive Sosa naufragus* (1643) and *Volubilis Fortunae cursus* (1728).

In other words, between the 16th and 18th centuries, the material referring to the Galleon *São João* branched off into many different directions. On the one hand, there was a contamination of the original account, rooted in the desire to produce a true and factual report of the news, by the didactic and apologetic aims that have since been attributed to it. On the other hand, it can be seen that the narrative material increased its geographical spread through its progressive internationalisation, brought about by its various translations into Latin and modern languages. Finally, one should also mention that there were alterations of a genre-based nature made to the original text, whenever the discursive models peculiar to oral accounts or narrative prose gave way to the characteristic conventions of dramatic language. In later phases, such a process of continuous metamorphosis would advance even further and, in the final analysis, give rise to a series of inter-semiotic crossovers between literature, music and the visual arts, exemplified both by the iconographical tradition that was inspired by the themes of certain passages in the narrative and by the present-day composition of symphonic and choral scores.

Returning to the chronological line of events, it is also important to point out that, during the 17th century, the subject of the 16th-century

shipwreck consolidated its central place in the literature of the expansion, as can be seen in the scattered echoes that it had in historiographical works, such as *Etiópia Oriental* (1609) by Frei João dos Santos, *Década VI* (1616) by Diogo do Couto and *Ásia Portuguesa* (1674) by Faria e Sousa.

In the following century, as part of the project for the reconstruction of the collective memory that had already presided over the foundation of the Royal Academy of Portuguese History, Bernardo Gomes de Brito published, in 1735 and 1736 respectively, the first and second volumes of his *História Trágico-Marítima*. What is considered to be the pseudo-third volume of the work is really a group of six reports of maritime losses, although there do exist certain well-grounded doubts about the involvement of Bernardo Gomes de Brito in its editing. Nonetheless, in the first two volumes, the organiser brings together, in a suggestive collection, a dozen reports and accounts of shipwrecks occurring in the second half of the 16th century (1552-1602), which have not ceased to attract the attention of successive generations, busily entertained in the critical reading, literary rewriting and creative reception of the whole work, but most particularly of the tragedy of Sepúlveda.

Taking into account the multiple authorship of such reports, some of which can be attributed to well-established writers, such as Manuel de Mesquita Perestrelo, Bento Teixeira Pinto, Diogo do Couto and João Baptista Lavanha, it might be thought that the specificity of each of the stories would prevail over the homogeneity of the whole. However, in practice, overall Bernardo Gomes de Brito's collection seems to obey the rhetorical structure of the narratives in which one recognises its formal arrangement in sequence, comprising the exordium, proposition, narration and conclusion. What is more, this formal organisation, which can also be observed in the story of Sepúlveda, involves the existence of unchanging situations, underlying the variety of the events that are related, in a schematic series that interconnects antecedents/departure/storm/shipwreck/disembarkation/pilgrimage/return. Such a structural reiteration accentuates the clear unity of the truly melancholic tone that is inherent in the aftermath of the disaster, which obliges the victims of the shipwreck to concentrate their attention and efforts at the primary level of the preservation of their own lives, situated as they are on the tenuous frontier between the possibility of salvation and the probability of annihilation.

In order to reconstruct, at least partly, what would have been the expectations of 18th-century readers and critics in relation to the *História Trágico-Marítima*, a moralistic argument that nonetheless was already almost two centuries removed from them, we may seize upon the opinions that preceded the work itself, in representation of the three censorial authorities that prevailed at that time: the *Santo Ofício* (the Inquisition), the *Ordinário* (the ecclesiastical judges) and the *Paço* (the royal censor).

Overall, these opinions draw attention to the general aspects of Bernardo Gomes de Brito's text, considered to be devoid of any material that might be considered an attack upon the faith and good customs, and therefore deserving of the required licences and authorisations. It should be mentioned that such an assessment also highlights the exemplary nature and didactic function of a work of history that, in providing an education about life, illustrated the tragic dimension of failure and might come to serve as a "school of cautions", enabling all those who rashly challenged the winds and waves to benefit from the solid experience of their predecessors. Furthermore, the opinions of the censors stressed how the text exhorted prayer and created a favourable climate whereby all its readers might act in accordance with their fear of death. This latter phenomenon was seen as the final act of an earthly journey fraught with dangers, adversities and disappointments, in which one was continuously made aware of the transitory nature of existence, the fleeting nature of time, the changeability of circumstances and, finally, the fragile and troubled human condition, subject to divine wrath and mercy.

It should also be noted that one of the censors drew a comparison between the narrated adventures and the famous ancient navigations of Ulysses, Aeneas or, in more modern times, Sebastián del Cano, Francis Drake, Thomas Cavendish and others. As might be expected, what can be concluded from such a comparison is that the Portuguese were supreme in an enterprise that so often began as glorious navigation and ended in tragic shipwreck, with an irreparable loss of lives and merchandise. In support of this opinion, some selected passages were invoked from Virgil, Ovid, Horace, Lucan and Juvenal, whose descriptions of Mediterranean storms were considered to have been supplanted by the fearful tempests that aroused the anger of the Portuguese Oceans.

It should be remembered that, after the inclusion of the shipwreck of

Sepúlveda in the *História Trágico-Marítima*, the exemplary nature of this deplorable case was highlighted and the conditions were implicitly created for the relational reading of the narrative, seeking to place it within the framework of the macrotext of which it forms an integral part. In this way, in the intertextual dialogue with other accounts collected by Bernardo Gomes de Brito, the loss of the Galleon *São João* contributed to the prevailing fashion and encouraged the spread across Europe of the narratives of shipwrecks, as is in fact widely documented in Dutch, French and English collections, which remained popular throughout the 17th to the 19th centuries.

Besides providing this bibliographical overview, which could in fact be continued into the present day, it is also possible to interpret the significance of the *História Trágico-Marítima* within the broader and more comprehensive context of Portuguese culture. In fact, just like the tragedy of the forbidden love of Inês de Castro, the destruction of the hopes of the realm on the battlefield of Alcácer-Quibir and the ruin of the Empire's capital in the mega-earthquake of 1755, Bernardo Gomes de Brito's work confirms the capacity of the Portuguese collective imagination for assimilating and sublimating the experience of tragedy, incorporating it into its discursive heritage. Furthermore, exploring the aesthetic productivity of death, whether real or imagined, also offers the possibility of intensifying both the horror and the compassion that are necessarily felt in such cases, with liberating or cathartic effects.

In any case, the literary value of the narratives that comprise the collection put together by Bernardo Gomes de Brito was not always fully recognised, for the work seemed too close to the stereotypes aimed at the relatively unselective consumption of a mass audience. Nowadays, however, a profound shift in the paradigms of literary criticism has obliged us to revise the canon, through the inclusion and rehabilitation of what had previously been considered marginal(ised) or merely peripheral, to the extent that some reports of shipwrecks in the *História Trágico-Marítima* may today be seen as major works in Portuguese culture.

The series of gestures involved in collecting these works from the oral transmission and bringing them together in book form did much more than simply follow the normal logic of anthological compilations. Instead, they amounted to a form of intervention on the very literariness of the text itself, resulting in a concentration of the emotionally richest episodes, the poetic

structuring of the narrative and the strategy of making recurrent use of image-bearing, metaphorical, symbolic and allegorical episodes. Furthermore, if we consider the common theme running through the various accounts to be that of survival in the face of adversity, then we may assess the degree of descriptive realism to be found not only in the painstakingly elaborate depiction of concrete objects, but also in the ever more profound analysis of the inner motivations of the characters when confronted with situations of extreme gravity.

As if this in itself were not enough to stir the reader's imagination, the story of Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda also contained a latent romantic quality that intermittently rises to the surface of the text or, in some cases, even occupies the foreground of the narrative, depending on the perspective of the author and the supposed expectation of the receiver of the message. In fact, there is said to have been another noble pretender and fiancé of the beautiful Leonor de Sá, a certain Luís Falcão, captain of Ormuz and Diu, who ended up being murdered under mysterious circumstances. Such an event, coupled with the fact that, shortly afterwards, Leonor de Sá married Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda, caused the latter to be suspected of moral or material involvement in a murder that was never solved.

There are several consequences arising from such a situation. Firstly, it is still unclear to what extent the shipwreck and the subsequent misfortunes experienced by Sepúlveda may be considered expiatory situations resulting from the punitive logic that led him and his family to suffer retribution for the evil that had been committed against another. Secondly, given such ingredients, it is not surprising that the sensitivity of some Portuguese fiction writers should have explored the tragic, passional and romantic components of the Sepúlveda episode, reflected in its distressing coupling of the themes of love and death. Finally, attributing the ultimate responsibility for the disaster to Sepúlveda's alleged transgression means highlighting the casuistry of the situation and the ethical and moral behaviour of the individual, while simultaneously concealing the structural dysfunctions of the system that objectively helped to increase the list of failures on the India Run.

Anyway, placed at the very beginning of the collection, the case of Sepúlveda represented a kind of prototype and inaugural model of the symbolic maritime narratives about the sudden change of fortune to which even the great people of this world are subject.

A representative of the upper echelons of the social hierarchy, endowed with military glory and material prosperity and, furthermore, enjoying a love that was requited in an auspicious marriage, Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda seemed to be equipped with all the requirements needed for his own full personal realisation and lasting happiness. Nonetheless, the ill-starred return voyage from India resulted in a radical reversal of his status, after he had been defeated by the violence of the inclement weather and the barbarity of the natives, finding himself completely stripped of the privileges of his rank, his riches and indeed the bare necessities for his honourable survival. Deeply wounded in his most intimate affections and showing signs of serious mental derangement, Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda seems to have sought a form of metaphorical death as he wandered off into the loneliness of the bush.

A symbolic reading of the loss of the *São João* might suggest that the maritime disaster introduces a momentary interruption into the Christian theme of life as a journey, for, in the crisis-limit of the shipwreck, the fundamental loneliness and vulnerability of the human species are brought into even sharper focus.

Furthermore, with the failure of the guiding instruments – charts, compass, astrolabe – capable of organising the data of the experience and rendering them legible, the notion of directionality is lost and the concepts of course, route and orientation begin to fade. To cap it all, the course that the survivors are following in a certain direction frequently ends up bringing them back in a circle to the point of departure, in a painful image of unforeseeable disillusion and frustration, corresponding, in the human microcosm, to that great disorder of the world that, if the truth be told, makes the voyage impossible. In turn, by severing the bonds and destroying the relations that structured sixteenth-century society, the shipwreck leads individuals to regress to the anomie and anarchy of the *status naturalis*, where what prevails is the simple principle of the survival of the fittest. In this way, the codes of shame and honour, the hierarchies and the protocols of social contact, peculiar to European societies, are rendered devoid of meaning, and the castaways are reduced to the condition of the universal equality of birth, symbolised in the naked body of Dona Leonor de Sá, forced to cover herself with her hair and bury herself in the sand in order to safeguard her modesty.

In order to take this reading of the loss of the Great Galleon *São João* a step further, it is convenient to remember how storms and the threat of

shipwreck became literary and religious topics in the European tradition, commented on both by the epic poems of classical antiquity and by the biblical and patristic discourse that, after all, forms an integral part of the cultural references invoked in the *História Trágico-Marítima*.

Let us therefore evoke the *Odyssey*, in which marine divinities unleash storms in order to attack Ulysses, as well as the *Aeneid*, where the water and the inclement behaviour of the elements are factors that lead to the dispersal and destruction of the Trojan ships. In this way, Homer and Virgil established models that were greatly reworked by Ovid, Seneca, Lucan or Lucretius and, in their wake, by a whole host of epigones and disciples. Such writers were frequently trained in the techniques of rhetorical description, depicting the sublime violence of the unbridled elements. The howling of the wind, the darkness of the clouds, the flashes of lightning and the roars of thunder, the vortex of fearful waves between heaven and the abyss – this whole repertoire of visual and auditory details created the pathetic atmosphere in which the ship would be torn apart, sinking within sight of the shore and leading to the despair of the survivors in their search for salvation.

As far as biblical texts are concerned, it is enough to remember how destruction by water motivated Noah's voyage in the ark, to invoke the tempest that endangered the life of Jonas, or remember the storm described in Psalm 107, or even to refer to the action of Jesus in taming the Sea of Galilee and, finally, the shipwreck that befell St. Paul and was described in the Acts of the Apostles. As a complement to this, in the patristic literature, the aim of comparing aspects of the classical heritage with the Christian cultural paradigm establishes prefigurations and correspondences between the famous heroes of antiquity and the figure of Christ himself. He is the divine pilot of the ship of the Church, who, after a series of detours and deviations, carrying the cross as a mast, guarantees the believer's arrival at the port of eternal shelter.

This rich source of cultural references provides us with the possibility of approaching the text as a series of stratified meanings. On the surface, we recognise the literal and truthful meaning of the factual matter relating to the shipwreck of the *São João*. At the intermediate level, we find the aesthetic aspects and strategies that determine the fictional representation of actual events. At a deeper level can be found the symbolic and allegorical meanings

that provide a mythical interpretation of the story and inscribe it in the cultural and religious paradigm prevailing after the Council of Trent.

Furthermore, this common classical, biblical and patristic core lies at the origin of countless symbolic meanings that, both in literature and the visual arts, are to be found running through the poetics and the iconography of storms and shipwrecks.

As a symbol, the sea appears as an untamed force, an image of tensions, disputes and quarrels that lie far beyond the capacity of human understanding, expressing the threat of a return to *primaeval* chaos. As an allegorical representation of the inconstancy of life itself, whether individual or collective, sometimes in distended harmony, sometimes beset by turbulence, the waves equally suggest changeability and the physical or psychic unruliness to which the fragile human condition is accustomed. By extension, maritime metaphors also invade the field of social and political organisation, in which appeasement alternates with the stormy agitation that disunites the established hierarchy and severs the relations of cooperation between the members of the community, who, as a rule, are subordinated to whoever governs the ship of State.

After these reflections on the historical, literary and symbolic relevance of the *História Trágico-Marítima*, we shall conclude this prologue to the loss of the Great Galleon *São João* with reference to two emblematic passages of its spiritual dimension.

Firstly, when Bernardo Gomes de Brito's collection narrates how some castaways were prevented, through physical violence, from embarking on the lifeboats, in order not to damage the others' chances of survival, such a scene may be read, in reverse, as an implicit appeal to the Christian values of fraternal solidarity and charity.

Secondly, Bernardo Gomes de Brito recounts how, finding themselves faced with imminent danger and in order to lighten the load, the mariners threw overboard goods that were considered to be precious, but which suddenly showed themselves to be superfluous and worthless in comparison with the value of life itself.

Because it returns to a frequently commented Christian theme, this voluntary jettisoning of the cargo may indicate that the profoundest didactic meaning to be drawn from the episode of Sepúlveda is the condemnation of human covetousness and the exhortation to renounce material goods

(*contemptus mundi*) in order to preserve the authentic values that guarantee salvation. Seen from this perspective, the *História Trágico-Marítima* fulfils the role of appealing to the reader, presenting him with an *exemplum* capable of providing him with comfort at a time of innermost trials and tribulations, and alerting him to the imperious need to free himself of anxieties, through the unconditional exercise of the virtue that transfigures pain itself and affords it a transcendental meaning.

One final observation will serve to suggest how, as a catastrophe, the shipwrecks of the *História Trágico-Marítima* and its sequels seem to question the significance and the teleological meaning of existence. In fact, we are placed before the central problem of theodicy, which is that of knowing how to reconcile the absolute Good that God represents with the intervention of Evil (that is to say, the absence of Good) in the world, under its various forms – ignorance, suffering, destruction, death, individual and collective calamity. Seen from a pessimistic viewpoint, it might be said that, for an extremely long moment, something happened, and it was as if God had absented Himself from history and gone silent, leaving the men abandoned to the vagaries of Fate or subjected to that blind destiny that governed the category of tragedy amongst the playwrights of classical antiquity.

Nonetheless, this view would perhaps be too simplistic and would diverge from the Jewish-Christian cultural paradigm which, by claiming free will as the driving force behind both the individual and collective life, makes the individual responsible for his actions, the eventual iniquity of which it may fall upon him to answer for. However, such radical retributive justice – a legacy from the Old Testament – has shown itself to be supplanted by the evangelical message of infinite mercy, which, in the consummation of time, will welcome those sinners who repent. In this way, the Christian framework of the *História Trágico-Marítima* makes it possible to reincorporate the misfortunes of the shipwreck into the scheme of divine providence and to preserve a finalistic interpretation of the story.

In short, just like all the suffering to which the human condition is prone, the ordeals that victimised Sepúlveda may (and perhaps can) be stoically interpreted as instances of temporary mortification, to be converted in the long term into an effective instrument of eternal and universal salvation.

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**THE MIDDLE GROUND:
A TRANSLATOR'S NOTE**

John Elliott

The proposal made to me by my colleague, Professor João Flor, when he invited me to take part in what he described as our “project” was to translate the Portuguese text of the *História Trágico-Marítima* into “21st-century English”. In both cases, the inverted commas are used here with great deliberateness as they mark out some of the boundaries that were to determine my approach to the task in hand. Notwithstanding Professor Flor’s perfectly valid use of the word *project*, I must confess that such an expression reflects precisely one of those modern-day usages of a word that, albeit largely for reasons of personal taste, I would probably be incapable of ever making myself. And full marks to Professor Flor for keeping abreast of the times and talking like a 21st-century man. I wish I could do so myself sometimes, but then again I’m rather glad that I don’t. It is the eternal dilemma faced by the (how can I put this without sounding too facetious or immodest?) “educated” man: how to adapt his speech to the changing times without reneging on all that he holds dear, giving words meanings that they never had before and consequently do not immediately have for him now, but yet at the same time accepting the diachrony of language and the need to ultimately “go with the flow”. I am reminded here of an episode of the eponymous BBC television programme *Grumpy Old Men*, in which media celebrities (middle-aged men) are invited to air their views on the changing nature of the modern world and ultimately to lament the way that things are going. In the episode in question, the actor and comedian John Sessions was to be seen and heard deploring the way in which the English language was changing and, at one point, he most movingly (for me at least) banged his head furiously with his fist and bemoaned the fact that the human race has spent thousands of years perfecting language so that we can use it to

“express what is in here and get it out there” in the most articulate and convincing fashion, only now to see the labours of all these many centuries nullified by what he plainly regarded as a modern-day plot to trivialise what is, after all, a thing of beauty, and indeed a joy for ever.

By the same token, I cannot for the life of me claim to speak *21st-century English*, which is something that my students have been only too keen to point out to me in recent years. What I would probably claim to speak is a brand of “educated” (whatever that really means) late 20th-century English, probably with hankering after a number of semi-archaisms from a more glorious past prior to the onset of technology and its pervasive encroachment upon our everyday life, and particularly upon our use of language.

Nonetheless, I perfectly understood the plea that was made to me at the beginning of this “project” of ours, for earlier translations of this same text (*The Tragic History of the Sea* by Charles David Ley, and again with the same title by C.R. Boxer and Josiah Blackmore) have undeniably given the impression that they are locked in a past time and, although not unreadable, are difficult for a modern reader to relate to as anything other than a historical document. My response to the injunction that I mentioned at the beginning was therefore to produce a text that would be accessible to the *21st-century reader*, rather than to write a 21st-century text *per se*, for at the same time it could not be forgotten that my participation in the project amounted to translating an unashamedly 16th-century text, and no potential reader would expect, or indeed want, an ancient text to evoke memories of the modern world. It would, I feel, detract from both the theme and the actual content of the tale that is being told. I sought, therefore, to produce what may best be described as a kind of hybrid text, one that was “readable” in the present while simultaneously remaining “evocative” of the past. A text that established a middle ground, rather in the manner of a performance of one of Shakespeare’s plays in modern dress, except that, in this case, the “dress” was the language and what remained from the past was not a text written in 16th-century language, but a text written in modern-day language with a 16th-century “feel”. In a similar fashion, I was also reminded of the tremendous efforts that were made in translating *The New English Bible*, although this was, of course, ultimately the work of a committee. The translators of *The New English Bible* followed the principle of dynamic

equivalence, best summed up in the words of C.H. Dodd, the Vice-Chairman and Director of the Joint Committee, when he said in his Introduction to the New Testament that “We have conceived our task to be that of understanding the original as precisely as we could (using all available aids), then saying again and again in our own native idiom what we believed the author to be saying in his”¹.

As Dodd further goes on to explain:

It should be said that our intention has been to offer a translation in the strict sense, and not a paraphrase [...] But if paraphrase means taking the liberty of introducing into a passage something which is not there, to elucidate the meaning which is there, it can be said that we have taken this liberty only with extreme caution, and in a very few passages, where without it we could see no way to attain our aim of making the meaning as clear as it could be made. Taken as a whole, our version claims to be a translation, free, it may be, rather than literal, but a faithful translation nevertheless, so far as we could compass it.²

In many ways, it was precisely this same spirit that I sought to follow, although I must confess to feeling somewhat defrauded on the few occasions that I have read (or, probably more accurately, flicked through) *The New English Bible*, in that, having been raised from a very early age upon the King James’ Authorized Version, I consider the latter to be the real work and all others to be mere derivatives or pale imitations of the definitive version of this magnum opus. I *expect* my Bible to sound like the Bible, for otherwise it is a different book and not the translation that I recognise as the Bible. Not that most of the readers of my translation of the *Naufração do Galeão Grande São João* will necessarily have been previously exposed to earlier translations and thus are unlikely to have pre-conceived ideas about the text itself. Nonetheless, they will have *expectations* about the sort of text that they are about to read, and such expectations will, I maintain, be centred around

¹ C. H. Dodd, ed., *The New English Bible with the Apocrypha*. Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, 1970. (p. vii)

² *Ibid.* (p. vii)

the period that they are conscious of reading about, while simultaneously knowing that, in the 16th century, people did not speak or write as they do today. I have simultaneously sought both to meet those expectations and not to defraud my readers by offering them a truly modern text.

In concrete terms, the successful production of such a hybrid text (part modern, part ancient) relates to the translator's belief in the reader's ability and willingness to accept the rules of the game. Words are chosen and sentence structures used that are still acceptable today, even if they are rarely heard. In other words, there is nothing that would not be possible within the framework of this ill-defined concept of 21st-century English, although many expressions that are used might be considered slightly unusual in the mouths and pens of modern writers. I have noted countless instances of the use of this technique, but a few examples should suffice to illustrate this idea.

The mood is set as early as the title page, with words that, according to the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, derive etymologically from Old Saxon and Old High German (*ordeal* and *befell*). Not words that are difficult to “compass” nowadays (to use C.H. Dodd's rather quaint terminology) and call for no great mental efforts on the part of the reader, but words that, by being evocative of times past, serve to orient him towards a different period from the present day, in that few people would be likely to use these words in normal everyday parlance and would more likely feel that they are words to be read in a literary context of at least some hundred years or more ago. The account of the shipwreck would itself have been published in pamphlet form shortly after the event, written either by the survivors themselves or by individuals with a certain level of culture who had been told of the details by one or more of the survivors. In such a case, it is fair to say that these are precisely the sort of words that would have been used at that time in an English version of texts of this nature, were such a thing to have in fact existed.

Of course, *Rogers's Thesaurus* played an invaluable role in offering me “older” synonyms of modern-day words, but this sort of choice became instinctive after a while as I entered into the spirit of the past and delved into the recesses of my own mind for words that I myself would have liked to

hear used in this text, so that, in the end, this imaginary hybrid time that is a mixture of past and present and yet never truly exists or existed is entirely of my own creation. I prefer words like *perished* to *died* or *presaged* to *indicated*, for example, not because these words are necessarily more meaningful, but they are certainly more evocative.

Yet, of course, this is always the dilemma that faces the translator in trying to remain faithful to the original text while simultaneously being fully aware of the fact that he is far removed from actually doing so. Perhaps Dodd's words, as quoted earlier, might be emended to some extent: "*saying again and again in our own native idiom what we believed the author to be saying in his*" was undoubtedly the imperative that remained uppermost in my mind as I set about my task, but I should perhaps add a few more words as a rider, "*were he alive now and recounting events in the manner of that time to readers of the present day and age*". Indeed, as I was attempting to translate the text in the vein that I have sought to outline above, I could not help wondering how much of this text of mine will already sound old-fashioned twenty or even thirty years from now. In many ways, I considered myself to be operating at the very limits of possibility, frequently choosing to employ words that are undoubtedly still in use, but which may well be heading for obsolescence in a not too distant future.

At the same time, the desire to remain faithful to the spirit of the text required the use of sentence structures and syntax that might best be described as somewhat antiquated, the secret being, as I have said, to achieve a balance of the expectable with the possible, since it is this unusual tension between ancient and modern that guarantees the authenticity of the text. Take, for example, the sentence *To which they both replied that the best thing would be to head for the shore*. Still perfectly acceptable nowadays, but probably of a formality that would make it now sound somewhat unusual, and certainly harking back to the days when Churchillian English was revered for its purity, rather than paid minimal lip service by modern-day technocracy. Certainly it was a joy for me to be freed from the shackles of what must be the nightmare of the purist translator: the generalised blandness of modern-day media speak. Another example of this attempt to create a 21st-century rendering of 16th-century language is to be found in this sentence: *And so he embarked, making the master do so too, for the latter*

was an old man and was lacking in spirit. Such a sentence sounds almost biblical to me, certainly feasible in the modern day, but definitely with evocations of earlier days, or at least days when people would write like this as a matter of course.

I deliberately used other constructions in an attempt to create a sense of erudition and evoke memories of a time when people cared almost passionately about the language: *but they didn't want to cut it loose lest the undertow of the breaking waves should drag them back into the sea again.* The effect of the word *lest* is precisely to produce that sense of the “modern archaism” that reminds the reader that this is an old-fashioned text. Similarly, although the difference may seem minimal, I maintain that saying that *The Christians signalled to this group that they should come down...* instead of *The Christians signalled to this group to come down* has the same effect. The secret was, I feel, to mix erudition with everyday language, rather in the manner of the original text itself, but I nonetheless maintain that it is essentially this very erudition that gives the text its distance from the present. Take for example the sentence: *because God had willed that what little water there was would serve as their means of sustenance.* Uncontroversial perhaps, but most certainly unusual, although not impossible. Such unusualness serves constantly to remind the reader of the fact that this is not entirely a 21st-century text. Instead, in keeping with the spirit of the remit that I was given, it is a 16th-century text written in 21st-century English, something that I have tried to point out is not exactly the same thing.

Nonetheless, I will admit that the need to make this a text accessible to a 21st-century reader led me to generally reduce the length of the sentences in the original Portuguese and to produce shorter, meatier and less intricate sentences, with a reduced use of subordinate clauses, which I believe is a feature of our modern times. Indeed, I long ago turned off the grammar and style checker on my computer, as it was always asking me if I was sure that I really wanted to write such long sentences.

At the same time, the Portuguese text has a tendency to begin many sentences and clauses with the word “e” (and), something that I considered to be a feature specific to that time and which constituted an anachronism for the modern reader. I retained some of these “ands” in order to maintain

the flavour of the original, but decided that to insert them all would make the text awkward to read. Once again, I think it is fair to say that the whole spirit of the project on which Professor Flor encouraged me to embark derived precisely from his desire to avoid much of the awkwardness that is to be found in earlier translations.

One of the areas that caused me most difficulty, and indeed most distress, in my efforts to satisfy the 21st-century reader was how best to render the extensive nautical terminology used in the account of the shipwreck proper. I myself will vouchsafe the accuracy of the translation of words such as *pintles*, *shrouds*, *hawesers*, *backstays*, *studdingsail*, *yardarm* and *gudgeons*, but I could not guarantee that these are words that are still used by seafarers nowadays. I feel, however, that the reader will easily accept this situation, being (as I myself was) entirely unfamiliar with the meaning and function of such items, and, indeed, if he is by chance an ancient mariner, he would expect nothing less. I therefore considered it pointless to “modernise” nautical vocabulary, as this was so clearly something that was time-specific and essential in maintaining the authenticity of the text. Similarly weights and measures could not be updated and I preferred to use footnotes and explanations, rather than to adulterate the past by using measures that would have been meaningless then. Everybody understands that leagues would have been the measure of nautical distance at that time, even if they are not sure exactly how long a league is, whilst the use of footnotes to explain the words *cruzados* and *quintais* already had something of a Shakespearean feel about it.

On re-reading my translation with the benefit of hindsight, I am sometimes slightly dismayed by some of the choices that I made. Why, for example, did I write this sentence: *The captain was unwilling to take the cow from them, despite having great need of it for his wife and children?* And not a simpler version, such as *The captain didn't want to take the cow from them, although he badly needed it for his wife and children?* I wonder what agonies I may have gone through at the time, and I end up concluding that it must have been an almost instinctive process, the culmination of all the considerations that I have been trying to make about the need to produce a hybrid text, or at least a text that operates at two levels simultaneously, a text that builds a bridge between past and present. I can only say that this

translation was more a personal question of feeling and sensitivity, a question of loving both the languages on which I was working, than one of scientific rigour. And, furthermore, I now discover that, despite my general disinterest in such matters, I am almost capable of praying instinctively in English: *May it please Him, given that He has seen fit to save us from the sea, to lead us safely to Christian territory, and to ensure that any amongst us who might meet their death in this quest should regard this as the saving of their souls.* How else does one pray in English except in a rather antiquated style? And so, I beg of you, dear readers, may you take pleasure in this humble offering, the fruit of my and Professor Flor's joint efforts, the outcome of our little "project". Or, to put it, quite simply, in the modern vernacular: *Enjoy.*

**AN ACCOUNT OF THE MOST REMARKABLE
LOSS OF THE GREAT GALLEON *SÃO JOÃO***

RELAÇÃO

DA MUY NOTAVEL PERDA
DO
GALEÃO GRANDE S. JOÃO

*Em que se conta os grandes trabalhos, e
lastimosas cousas que acontecerão*

AO CAPITAÕ
MANOEL DE SOUSA
SEPULVEDA,



DOlamentavel fim, que elle,
e sua mulher, e filhos, e toda a mais gente
houverão na Terra do Natal, onde se perdi-
rão a 24. de Junho de 1553.

RELAÇÃO SUMMARIA

Da viagem que fez

FERNAO D'ALVARES
CABRAL,

*Dezde que partiu deste Reyno por Capitão mór da
Armada que foy no anno de 1553. de partes da
India até que se perdeu no Cabo de Boa Espe-
rança no anno de 1554.*



ESCRITA POR
MANOEL DE MESQUITA PERESTRELLO
Que se achou no dito Naufragio.

RELAÇÃO

DA
VIAGEM, E SUCCESSO
QUE TIVERÃO AS NAOS
AGUIA, E GARÇA

*Vinda da India para este Reyno no Anno
de 1559.*



COM HUMA DISCRIÇÃO
da Cidade de Colombo,
PELO PADRE MANOEL BARRADAS
da Companhia de JESUS,

*Enviada a este Padre da mesma Companhia
morador em Lisboa.*
E.cj)

RELAÇÃO

DO
NAUFRAGIO
DA
NAO S. THOMÈ

Na Terra dos Fumos, no anno de 1589.

E dos grandes trabalhos que passou
D. PAULO DE LIMA
Nas terras da Caserta até sua morte.



ESCRITA POR DIOGO DO COUTO
Guarda mór da Torre do Tombo.

*A raga da Senhora D. Anna de Lima enviada de
dito D. Paulo de Lima no Anno de 1611.*
Tom. II. V

AN ACCOUNT

OF THE MOST REMARKABLE LOSS

OF THE

GREAT GALLEON *SÃO JOÃO*

*relating the great ordeals and
the tragic events that happened*

TO THE CAPTAIN

MANOEL DE SOUSA

SEPULVEDA,

AND THE SAD END THAT BEFELL HIM,

his wife and children, and all of his people
in the Land of Natal, where they were wrecked

on 24th June 1552.

The account of this shipwreck has been written so that men might fear the punishment of the Lord and learn to become good Christians. It will bring the very fear of God before their eyes and hopefully encourage them not to break his Commandments. Because Manuel de Sousa was a noble and worthy gentleman, who in his time in India spent more than fifty thousand cruzados¹ in feeding many people, and in the charitable services that he rendered to many others. And yet, after all this, together with his wife and children, he was to end his life amongst the Kaffirs in terrible misery and poverty, being left with nothing to eat or drink and no clothes to wear. So many hardships did he endure before his death that this all may seem quite incredible to anyone who did not experience them with him. Amongst his companions was a certain Alvaro Fernandes, the keeper of the galleon, whom I happened to meet here in Mozambique in the year 1554 and who told me the whole story in great detail.

And, as it seemed to me that this story should serve as a warning and example to us all, I have written about the ordeals and death of this nobleman and the whole of his company, so that seafarers might learn to commend themselves continuously to God and the Virgin Mary, who prays for us all, Amen.

¹ An old Portuguese gold coin introduced in 1457 and worth 400 réis. It was 23¾ carats fine and weighed 72½ grains. In 1643, it was struck in silver.

Manuel de Sousa (may God rest his soul) set sail in this galleon from Cochin on 3rd February, 1552, to begin his ill-fated voyage. He had been late in departing as he had had to pick up some cargo in Quilon, where there had been only a little pepper to take on board. Here he had loaded about four thousand five hundred *quintais*² and then come to Cochin to increase the weight to seven thousand five hundred *quintais*, a most arduous task because of the war being waged at that time in Malabar. And it was with this cargo that he set sail for Portugal, although he could have taken as much as twelve thousand *quintais* with him. Despite the fact that the ship was carrying little pepper, it nonetheless set sail weighed down with other goods, something that he would have to be particularly careful about because of the great risks faced by heavily laden vessels.

On 13th April, Manuel de Sousa sighted the coast of the Cape at thirty-two degrees. He brought the ship in very close to the shore, as it was many days since he and his men had left India, having spent a long time reaching the Cape because of the threadbare sails they were using, which was one of the reasons, if not the main cause, for their misfortune. The pilot André Vaz had been heading for land at Cape Agulhas when the captain Manuel de Sousa had asked him to go in closer towards the shore and, obediently, the pilot had done so. This was why they had headed for the land of Natal, and, once they were in sight of it, the wind began to blow favourably and carried them along the coast. Constantly using the plumb line and taking soundings, they were soon able to see Cape Agulhas. The wind, however, became changeable, blowing one day from the east and the next day from the west. It was now 11th March and they were sailing in a northeast-southwest direction, with the Cape of Good Hope twenty-five leagues away, when suddenly the wind turned, coming from the west and the west-northwest, accompanied by great flashes of lightning. As night was drawing in, the captain sent for the master and the pilot and asked them what they should do in such weather, because it was coming at them towards the prow. To which they both replied that the best thing would be to head for the shore.

² A unit of weight formerly used in Portugal and equal to four *arrobas*. It was originally equivalent to one hundred pounds.

The reasons that they gave for heading for land were that the ship was very large and long and was heavily laden with boxes and other goods. They also had no sails other than the ones tied to the yards, for the other set had been destroyed in a storm that they had passed through on the Equator. These sails were already torn and could not be trusted; moreover, if they stayed where they were and the storm grew worse and it then became necessary to head for land, the wind could well carry off the only sails that they had, endangering both their voyage and their own safety. There were therefore no other sails on the boat, and the ones they had were in such a state that they spent just as long repairing them as they did sailing with them. And one of the reasons why they hadn't yet rounded the Cape was the time that they had spent lowering the sails in order to sew them back together again. So, it was sound advice to head for the shore with both of the large foremast sails half-furled, since, if they used only the old foresail, it was almost certain that the wind would tear it off the yard because of the vessel's great weight. In this way, the two sails would be able to work in tandem. And so they were making their way towards the land, some one hundred and thirty leagues from the Cape, when the wind veered so furiously to the northeast and then to the east-northeast that they were turned to the south again, and then to the southwest. As the sea was bearing down on them from the west and simultaneously being whipped up from the east, there was so much water being taken on board that each time that the galleon swayed to one side it seemed as though it would surely sink to the bottom. Three days passed in this fashion, but finally the wind calmed down a little. The sea, however, remained full and the ship was forced to labour so hard that it lost three pintles from the top of the rudder, on which the whole destruction or salvation of a ship depends. And yet no one knew of this, except the carpenter, who went to inspect the rudder and noticed the absence of these pins and so came to speak to the master, Cristóvão Fernandes da Cunha, or "Shorty" as he was popularly known, confiding in him in secret. Like the good officer and good man that he was, the latter replied that such a matter must not be related to the captain, nor to any other person, so as not to arouse any alarm or fear in the crew. And this was what he did.

Already faced with this hardship, they found themselves once again without any wind from the east-southeast, and then suddenly the storm

broke. It seemed as if God were determined to put an end to them now instead of later. And once again heading for shore, with the same sail, the ship wouldn't respond to the rudder and turned into the strong wind, which tore off the mainsail. Finding themselves without a sail, and knowing that they had no other, they ran to take in the sail from the prow, preferring to run the risk of being buffeted crosswise by the sea than to be without any sail at all. The foresail had not yet been taken in completely when the ship turned side on into the wind and was hit by waves so high that it rolled violently and the rigging and mast beams on the port side smashed into pieces, with nothing remaining but the three front ones.

With the rigging now destroyed and no shrouds on the mast at that side, they grabbed some hawsers to make some backstays. Yet, with the sea becoming so rough, it seemed to them that their efforts would be in vain and that they would be better off cutting down the mast and easing the strain on the ship. Both the wind and the sea were so strong that that they couldn't realistically perform any task at all and no man was able to remain standing.

With axes in their hands, they began hacking at the main mast, which suddenly split above the pulleys, as if it had been felled with just one blow, and the wind brought the crow's nest and shrouds crashing down over the starboard side and into the sea, as if they weighed nothing at all. They therefore cut the rigging and the shrouds on the other side, and everything fell into the sea. Finding themselves without a mast or yard, they made a small mast out of the stump that remained from the main one, nailing a piece of spar to it and tying it with cables as best they could. They then attached a yard to this to hold the studdingsail, and from another spar they made a yard for the main sail, while with some pieces of old sails, they rigged this large yardarm, doing the same thing for the foremast. But this was such a fragile and makeshift job that almost any wind would be enough to carry it off again.

As they now had everything patched up, they set sail with the wind from the south-southwest. But, since the rudder was missing three pintles, which were the main ones, they could only steer the boat with a great effort, using the sheets as a helm. They carried on like this with the wind growing stronger, but then the vessel turned into the wind and they lost all control of the rudder and the sheets. The wind now carried off what had become

their mainsail, so that they were reduced once again to the foresail as the ship began to heave, suffering from the damage caused by the storm. The rudder was so rotten that a great wave snapped it in two and immediately carried away half of it, leaving all the pintles in the gudgeons. Which is why one should take great care with the rudders and sails of ships, especially in view of the great difficulties that have to be faced on this particular route.

Those who understand the sea, and all those who pay heed to such matters, will realise exactly how Manuel de Sousa, his wife and the people that were with them must have felt when they found themselves in a rudderless ship off the Cape of Good Hope, without either mast or sails, or anything that they could even use to make new ones. The ship was now struggling badly and taking on so much water that, in order to avoid hitting the bottom, they considered the best remedy would be to cut down the foremast, for this was causing the ship to split open. But as they were preparing to cut it down, a great wave hit the ship and broke it off at the base, hurling it into the sea. All that remained for them to do now was to cut the shrouds. As it fell, the mast crashed so hard against the bowsprit that it was knocked off its step and almost completely into the ship. Even so, they were still left with part of a mast, although what this really presaged was even greater hardship. Despite their painstaking efforts, there was nothing they could do to repay their sins. They still had not sighted land since leaving the Cape, which was now some fifteen to twenty leagues away.

Since it was now without masts, rudder or sails, the ship was being pushed towards the shore by the storm. Manuel de Sousa and his officers could do nothing to remedy the situation and decided that the best they could do was to make a makeshift rudder and use some of the cloth that they were carrying as merchandise to make some sails, and then perhaps they could make it to Mozambique. So they set to work, dividing the men into groups, some working on fixing the rudder, some attempting to erect some form of mast, and yet others making sails in one way or another. Ten days it took them. And then, when the rudder was ready and they were preparing to install it, it proved to be too short and narrow and was of no use at all. But, nonetheless, they hoisted the sails that they had made to see if some salvation were possible. When they tried to work with the rudder, the ship did not respond in any way, because this new rudder didn't have the same measurements as the one that the sea had carried away. And that was

when they suddenly caught sight of land, on 8th June. Seeing the coast so close and sensing that the sea and the wind were pushing them shorewards, they had no other option than to let themselves be swept along. So as not to sink, they entrusted themselves to God, for the ship was already rent asunder and they needed a miracle to keep it afloat.

Manuel de Sousa now found himself so close to the shore and in such a plight that he consulted his officers, who all told him that, if they were to save themselves from drowning at sea, the best course of action would be to continue as they were until they sounded a depth of ten fathoms, whereupon they should drop anchor and launch the longboat. They immediately launched a rowing boat with some men in it to survey the beach and find the best place to land. The idea was that, after the crew had disembarked from either the small boat or the longboat, such provisions and weapons as could be taken ashore would be fetched from the galleon. However, the more cargo they saved, the worse it would be for them, because the Kaffirs would steal it from them. And acting upon this advice, they made their way to the shore pushed by the wind and sea, letting out the sail on one side and pulling it in on the other. The rudder was useless, with more than fifteen spans of water already below deck. They were now close to land and so they took a sounding, finding themselves to be still at some depth and so continuing to drift landwards. Some time later, the rowing boat returned and reported that there was a beach nearby where they could land safely, if they could make it, for the rest of the coast was very rocky with sheer cliffs and no salvation would be possible.

Men should think carefully about this situation, for it is a frightening prospect! And so they came ashore in the galleon to the land of the Kaffirs, considering this to be the safest thing to do, despite the danger that it represented. And now you will see what difficulties lay in store for Manuel de Sousa, his wife and children. With the message that had been delivered by the men in the rowing boat, they endeavoured to reach that place on the beach where it was safest to land. As the depth was now only seven fathoms, they dropped anchor and then very carefully prepared to launch the longboat.

The first thing they did once they had the longboat out was to drop another anchor, since the wind was calmer and the ship was but a stone's throw from land. As Manuel de Sousa could see that the ship was

irremediably sinking, he called for the master and the pilot and told them that the first thing they should do was to get him into land with his wife and children, together with twenty men to guard them. After this, they were to take the weapons and the ship's provisions, some gunpowder and some cambric cloth which they could use to bargain for further supplies. The idea was to erect a fort in that place, with fences made from the staves of barrels, so that they could then build a small caravel from the wood of the ship, which they could use to send a message to Sofala. But as it was written in the stars that the captain would meet his end there, together with his wife and children and all of his company, there was nothing that could be done to counter their destiny. In fact, no sooner had they had this idea of building a fort than the wind blew again with such force and the sea rose up so suddenly that it hurled the galleon towards the shore, making it impossible for them to do any of the things that they had planned. At this point, Manuel de Sousa, his wife and children, and roughly thirty men were now safely ashore and everyone else was still on the ship. To say that the captain, his wife and these thirty men had faced danger in disembarking would be pointless, but, in order to tell the painful truth, I shall simply say that the third time that the small rowing boat came ashore it sank. Some men perished there and then, amongst them the son of Bento Rodrigues. Up to that point the longboat had not yet come to land: they were too afraid to send it there because the sea was so rough, and, as the smaller boat was lighter, it had escaped on those first two occasions.

Together with the other people that were still on the ship, the master and the pilot could see that the galleon was being held by the land anchor, realising that the sea-anchor had been cut because the bottom of the sea was dirty and they had been anchored for two days. It was when dawn broke on the third day that they saw that the galleon was held only by the land anchor. The wind began to blow and the ship was now touching the bottom, so the pilot told the others: "Brothers, before the ship splits open and sinks, I suggest that whoever wants to embark in that longboat and go ashore with me should do so now." And so he embarked, making the master do so too, for the latter was an old man and was lacking in spirit. The wind remained strong and it was with great effort that around forty men embarked in that longboat. Meanwhile, the sea had swelled and was crashing against the shore, so that when the boat reached land it broke into pieces on the beach.

But God was merciful and no one died in this boatload, which was surely a miracle because the sea had turned it over before it reached land.

The captain, who had disembarked the day before, walked along the beach lifting the men's spirits and giving his hand to whoever he could in order to lead them to the fire that he had lit, because it was so cold. The best part of five hundred people were still left on the ship: two hundred of them were Portuguese, including Duarte Fernandes, the bosun and the quartermaster, while all the rest were slaves. And, with the ship in such a condition and now being heavily buffeted, it seemed sensible to them to let out the anchor further by hand, so that the ship would come in closer to the shore, but they didn't want to cut it loose lest the undertow of the breaking waves should drag them back into the sea again. When the ship ran aground, it split into two almost immediately, one half breaking from the mast forward and the other half breaking away from the mast to the stern, and then in another hour those two pieces had split into four. The cracks opened wider and the merchandise and crates floated to the surface, the people that remained on board throwing themselves onto the crates and the broken pieces of wood and attempting to make it ashore that way. More than forty Portuguese and seventy slaves died as they jumped, most people being brought to shore on the surface of the sea and some underneath it as well, as was God's will. Many of them were wounded by the nails and the sharp edges of the wood. Within four hours, the ship was torn to shreds, not a single piece longer than two feet being visible, and the wreckage was all brought to shore in the great storm.

The merchandise that was being transported on the ship, belonging both to the king and private individuals, was said to be worth a thousand pieces of gold. Indeed, since India had been discovered, no ship had left there with such a valuable cargo. And, since the ship had been broken into so many small pieces, the captain Manuel de Sousa was unable to disembark the merchandise as he had planned, for the longboat was now gone, leaving him with nothing from which he might build the crude caravel that he had intended. It became necessary to form some other plan.

When the captain and his companions saw that there was no way of arranging another boat, he sought the advice of his officers and the noblemen that were travelling with him (namely Pantaleão de Sá, Tristão de Sousa, Amador de Sousa and Diego Mendes Dourado, from Setúbal). They all

agreed that they should stay for a few days on that beach where they had disembarked from the galleon, and where they had access to water, while the sick and injured were attended to. So they built their fences from the wood of some chests and barrels, and remained there for twelve days, and in all that time not one black person from the region came to talk to them. Only in the first three days did nine Kaffirs appear on top of a hill, where they remained for two hours without engaging in any conversation with the company, merely looking surprised and making off again. Two days later, it seemed like a good idea to send a man and a Kaffir from the galleon to see if they could find any black people to bargain with for some supplies. And these men walked for two days without finding any living soul, nothing except for a few uninhabited straw huts. They concluded that the black people had fled in fear and so they returned to the camp. They did, however, find some arrows sticking out of some of the huts, which are said to be the Kaffirs' sign of war.

Three days later, they were still at the same spot where they had escaped from the galleon. And it was then that seven or eight Kaffirs again appeared on a hilltop, this time accompanied by a cow on a leash. The Christians signalled to this group that they should come down and the captain set off with four other men to talk to them. After the captain and his men had them safely cornered, the blacks explained to them in gestures that they wanted iron. So, the captain ordered half a dozen nails to be laid out and showed them to the Kaffirs, much to the delight of the natives, who then drew nearer to our men and began to negotiate the price of the cow. After an agreement had been reached, five Kaffirs then appeared on another hill, shouting in their language that they should not exchange the cow for the nails. And so these Kaffirs went away, taking the cow with them and not uttering another word. The captain was unwilling to take the cow from them, despite having great need of it for his wife and children.

He remained very careful and vigilant, getting up three or four times each night to do a round of the watches, which was very tiring for him. They continued like this for twelve days until the sick had recovered. At the end of this period, when everybody was fit enough to walk, he called them together and sought their advice about what to do. Before they could express their opinion, he addressed them as follows:

“Friends and gentlemen, you can see the state that we have arrived at for our sins, and I truly believe that just mine alone would have been sufficient for us to have been placed in this difficult plight that we find ourselves in. But our Lord is so merciful that He did not allow us to sink in that ship, which had already taken on so much water below deck. May it please Him, given that He has seen fit to save us from the sea, to lead us safely to Christian territory, and to ensure that any amongst us who might meet their death in this quest should regard this as the saving of their souls. As you can see, gentlemen, these days that we have spent here were necessary to allow the sick people amongst us to recover. Now, praise the Lord, they are fit enough to walk. And so I have gathered you together so that we might agree on the route that we should follow in order to best guarantee our salvation. As you have seen, our original plan to build a boat has been thwarted, for we could not save anything from the ship that might allow us to do so. And so, brothers and gentlemen, that is the way it is, for me just as much as it is for you, and I maintain that nothing should be done nor any decision taken without the consent of all concerned. One favour I do, however, request from you – namely that, should I be unable to walk as quickly as the rest of you because of my wife and children, you will neither withdraw your support nor abandon me. And I hope that, by our acting together in this way, our Lord will, in His merciful bounty, see fit to help us.”

After this speech, and after everyone had expressed their opinion as to the route they should follow, seeing that there was no other course of action available to them, they agreed that they should make their way along the shore in the most orderly fashion possible to search for the river that Lourenço Marques had discovered. They promised the captain that they would never abandon him and set out immediately. The river was a hundred and eighty leagues away along the coastline, but they were forced to walk more than three hundred because of the many detours that they had to make in order to cross over the rivers and swamps that they found along their way. After this, they returned to the sea, but they took five and a half months to complete their journey.

They set off from this beach where they had been wrecked at 31 degrees on 7th July 1552, marching in the following order: firstly Manuel de Sousa with his wife and children, together with eighty Portuguese and one hundred slaves. André Vaz, the pilot was also in his company, carrying a flag

with a crucifix on it and walking in the vanguard, while the captain's wife, Dona Leonor, was carried in a litter by some slaves. Immediately afterwards came the master of the galleon with the seafarers and the slave women. At the back walked Pantaleão de Sá with the rest of the Portuguese and the slaves, who must have numbered up to two hundred. All together, there were some five hundred people, of whom one hundred and eighty were Portuguese. And so, in this way, they walked for a month with great hardship, assailed by hunger and thirst, because in all this time they had had nothing to eat other than the rice that had survived the wreck and some fruit from the bush, for they could find no other provisions on the land, nor even anyone who might sell them anything. Wherever they passed, the land was so indescribably barren.

Throughout that month, they must have walked a hundred leagues and yet, because of all the detours that they had had to make around the rivers, they couldn't have advanced more than thirty leagues along the coast. By this time, they had lost ten to twelve people: one of them was the illegitimate son of Manuel de Sousa, aged ten or eleven, who, already very weak from hunger, fell behind the rest, together with the slave who was carrying him on his back. When Manuel de Sousa asked after him, they told him that he had fallen about half a league behind, and that he was losing his mind. And it was in this way that he lost his son, thinking that he was bringing up the rear with his uncle Pantaleão de Sá, as sometimes happened. He immediately promised five hundred *cruzados* to any two men who would set off in search of him, but nobody was willing to do so as night was already drawing in and they were afraid of the lions and tigers that would eat anyone who got left behind. He was therefore forced to keep to the path that he was following and to abandon his son, leaving him in the place that his eyes could still see as he kept looking back. One can easily understand the many troubles that this nobleman had to endure before his death. Also lost was António de Sampaio, the nephew of Lopo Vaz de Sampaio, who had once been the governor of India, as well as five or six Portuguese men and some slaves, who perished as a result of sheer starvation and the hardships that they encountered along the way.

During this time, they had already entered into several skirmishes, but the Kaffirs had always come off worse. However, in one of the struggles, Diogo Mendes Dourado, who until then had fought most valiantly,

was killed. There was so much hardship, caused by the need for vigilance, the fight against hunger and the relentless marching, that people were growing weaker every day. It was inevitable that one or two people would be left behind on the beaches and in the jungle as they were unable to walk any further. Eventually they would be eaten by tigers and snakes, of which there were many in the region. There is no doubt that watching these men being left alive in these deserted areas day after day was a painful and distressing business for all concerned. Those who were left behind insisted with the other members of their group who continued walking, possibly either their parents or brothers or friends, that they were to carry on and that they should commend their souls to God. It was undoubtedly heart-rending to see one's relatives and friends being left behind without being able to do anything to help them, knowing that shortly afterwards they would be eaten by savage beasts. If this caused great pain to those who heard about it, then just imagine how even more distressing it must have been for those who saw it and lived through it.

Despite this great misfortune, they carried on walking, sometimes making occasional forays into the bush in search of food or to ford rivers, and then returning once again to the shoreline, other times scaling high hills and then clambering down them at great personal risk. And, as if all these ordeals weren't enough, they were frequently presented with even more problems by the Kaffirs. They walked on and on like this for about two and a half months, their hunger and thirst becoming more and more intense. Almost every day, quite remarkable things happened to them, of which I shall now recount the most extraordinary.

It frequently happened amongst these people that they would sell a jug containing a pint of water for ten *cruzados* or a cauldron holding two gallons for one hundred *cruzados*. Because this sometimes led to disorder, the captain would send for a cauldron of water (there being no larger container in the company) and give a hundred *cruzados* to whoever fetched it. Then he would divide the water up, the part that he reserved for his wife and children being worth eight to ten *cruzados* per pint, while the rest was also divided up and sold in the same way, so that he could keep control of things. Due to the money that was to be made in one day from selling water in this way, the next day someone else would be just as willing to go and fetch it and expose himself to this same risk. And, all the while, people were so

hungry that they would pay a fortune for any fish that was caught on the beach or for any animal that was hunted in the hills.

They continued on their way day after day, negotiating the terrain as they found it and beset by the same hardships as I have already described. By now they must have been some three months into their journey, still determined to find the river discovered by Lourenço Marques, which flows into Boa Paz, one of the watering places for those sailing the India route. For many days now they had been living only off the occasional piece of fruit that they found, or off the bones that they toasted, and frequently a snake's skin would be sold at the camp for fifteen *cruzados*. If it was dry, they would soak it in water and eat it like that.

When they were walking along the beach, they would feed on the fish or shellfish that the sea provided them with. And, at the end of this time, they came across a Kaffir, an old man who was the chief of two villages and who looked to be a friendly person. He gave them a warm welcome and told them not to go any further, but to remain in his company and he would look after them as best he could. In fact, the land there was short of food, but not because it wasn't arable. It was simply that the Kaffirs were people who sowed little and only ate the wild animals that they hunted.

The Kaffir chief insisted with Manuel de Sousa and his people that they should stay with him, telling them that he was at war with another king in the next region that they would have to pass through. He asked them for their help, telling them that if they pressed ahead that they would certainly be robbed by this king, who was more powerful than him. Consequently, because of the useful advantage that he expected from this group of men, and because of the good experiences that he had had of the Portuguese with Lourenço Marques and António Caldeira, who had both been to that region, he did his best to keep them there with him. Those two Portuguese visitors had christened him with the name of Garcia de Sá, because he was old and looked a lot like this man, as well as being a good man, of which there was no doubt. In all countries of the world, there are, of course, good and bad people, but his goodness was such that he gave the Portuguese a warm welcome and paid them due honour, doing his best to prevent them from moving on, telling them that they would be robbed by that king with whom he was at war. And they stayed there six days trying to decide what to do. But it seems that it was written in the stars that Manuel de Sousa and



most of his company were destined to meet their end on this journey, and so they did not want to follow the advice of this king, who tried hard to make them change their minds.

When the king saw that the captain was nonetheless determined to leave, he asked him, along with some members of his company, to help him before they left in fighting against another Kaffir king that they had already left behind. It seemed to Manuel de Sousa and the Portuguese that they could not refuse to do what he asked, as much for the kindness and shelter that he had offered them as for the fact that they did not wish to offend him as they were in his power and that of his people. And so he asked Pantaleão de Sá, his brother-in-law, to take twenty men and help their friend the king. Pantaleão de Sá set off with these twenty men and five hundred Kaffirs and their captains, going back six leagues to where they had come from to fight with a Kaffir who was in revolt. They took all his cattle, which were their spoils, bringing them to the camp where Manuel de Sousa was with the king and spending five or six days about this business.

After Pantaleão de Sá had returned from that war in which he had been helping the king, together with the people who went with him, and after they had all rested from the work that they had had, the captain again sought the advice of his group about their determination to leave. Their enthusiasm to stay was so muted that they agreed that they should continue on their way in search of that river of Lourenço Marques, not knowing that they were in fact already upon that river, for this was the water that flowed in three branches to the sea at Boa Paz, and they were camped upon the first of these branches. And despite the fact that the company found a red cap (which was a clear sign that Portuguese people had been there previously), their fate blinded them and their luck would have it that they were determined to continue on their way. They had to cross the river, which, because of its size, could only be done in canoes. To do this, the captain wanted to take seven or eight canoes that were chained up, but the king did not want to lend them to him. The king was looking for any way that he could to keep the captain and his men there. And so the captain sent some men to see if they could take the canoes themselves: two of them came back and said that this would be a difficult task. Those men, however, that had maliciously remained with the boats took one of the canoes and embarked on it, heading down the river and leaving their captain behind. On seeing

that his company had no way of crossing the river other than with the blessing of the king, the captain asked him if he would take the Portuguese across in his canoes, saying that they would pay the people who took them handsomely. In order to appease the king, Manuel de Sousa gave him some of their weapons so that he might then release them and let them cross.

So, the king came to the river with them in person, with the Portuguese fearing that they might be tricked as they crossed the river. The captain therefore asked the king to return to the village with his people. In this way, Manuel de Sousa would be able to cross the river as he pleased with his own men, and his only request was that the king should leave behind enough blacks as were needed to man the canoes. Since there was no malice in the black king, and given that he preferred to help them as much as he could, it was easy to convince him to return to the village. And the king immediately left and allowed them to cross as they wished. So, Manuel de Sousa ordered thirty men across to the other bank in the canoes, armed with three muskets. Once the thirty men were established on the other side, the captain, his wife and children crossed over too, and after them came all the rest. Nobody was robbed and they immediately lined up to begin their march again.

It took them five days to reach the second river, a distance of twenty leagues. There they found some black people who directed them to the sea. It was now sunset and, on the banks of the river, they saw two large canoes. They set up camp for the night on the beach. The water in the river was salty and there was no fresh water anywhere around, only behind them where they had already been. During the night, their thirst was so great on the beach that they almost died, and Manuel de Sousa decided to send someone to fetch some water. But no one was prepared to go for less than one hundred *cruzados* a cauldron. Nonetheless, he sent people for water at that price, each of them making two hundred a day, but if he had not done so there would have been no other way.

As I said earlier, there was very little to eat and their thirst was becoming unbearable, because God had willed that what little water there was would serve as their means of sustenance. The next day at nightfall, they saw three canoes arrive at the beach full of black men: these told a black woman in the camp who was beginning to understand something of their language that a ship had arrived full of men like the Portuguese, but that it had now gone. Manuel de Sousa then asked the black men if they would take him and his

party to the other side and they replied that it was already night (because Kaffirs never do anything at night), but that they would take them across the next day, if they paid them. When dawn broke, the blacks came with four canoes and, for the price of a few nails, they began to take people across. The captain sent some men across first to guard the crossing. Next, he embarked in a canoe with his wife and children to wait on the other side for the rest of his company. Another three canoes laden with people went across with him.

It is said that by that time the captain was no longer in his right mind, already wearied by too many watches and far too much hard work, a burden that he bore more than the others. And because he was eager to avoid any trickery on the part of the black men, he laid his hand on his sword and tearing it from its scabbard, he pointed it at the men who were paddling him across, shouting: "Where are you taking me, you dogs?"

When the blacks saw the naked steel of the sword, they leapt into the sea and were in danger of drowning. His wife and some of the people who were with him told him not to harm the blacks, for they might all drown. But, if the truth be told, anyone who knew Manuel de Sousa and had previously witnessed his discretion and gentleness, and had then seen him doing this, might well have said that he was no longer in his right mind, for he was a kind and considerate man. Thereafter, he was never again able to control his people as well as he had done before. When they arrived at the other side, he complained of a headache and so they draped towels around his head.

Now they were all gathered together on the other side and ready to start walking again when they saw a group of Kaffirs and immediately adopted fighting positions, lest these men should have come to rob them. As the Kaffirs drew nearer to our people, they began to talk to one another, and then they asked the captain and his team where they were from and what they were looking for. The Portuguese said that they were Christians whose ship had been wrecked, asking the Kaffirs if they could guide them to the great river that lay further ahead. They also had one other request, asking the Kaffirs to bring forth such supplies as they had available, which the Portuguese would gladly pay for. Through one of the Kaffir women, who was from Sofala, the blacks told them that if they wanted supplies they should go with them to the village where their king lived, and he would welcome them and give them shelter. At this time, they still numbered

roughly one hundred and twenty people, with Dona Leonor now being one of those walking. Being a noblewoman, she was also youthful and delicate, but she had made her way over that arduous terrain just as well as any robust man of the country. She frequently consoled the other women in the company and helped them to carry her children. This process had begun when there were no longer enough slaves left to carry the litter in which she had been travelling. It seems clear that the grace of Our Lord had come to her aid, because without it such a weak woman unused to such hardship would have been unable to walk over such a long distance and along such difficult paths, afflicted by so much hunger and thirst. For they had already walked more than three hundred leagues because of the long detours they had been forced to make.

But let us return to our story. After the captain and his company had understood that the king was close by, they accepted the Kaffirs as their guides and, now so weakened by their hunger and thirst as only God can know, very cautiously accompanied these men to the place that they indicated. The village where the king was to be found was a league away, and when they arrived there the Kaffirs told them not to enter because it was a place that they liked to keep secret. Instead, the Portuguese were asked to wait by some trees that were pointed out to them, while the Kaffirs said that they would bring the food out to them. Manuel de Sousa did as he was bidden, being a man that was in a foreign land and not knowing so much about the Kaffirs as we do now, given our experience of this wreck and that of the ship *São Bento*. A hundred men armed with muskets could cross the whole of Kaffraria, because the Kaffirs were more afraid of these weapons than they were of the devil himself.

After they had been sheltering awhile in the shade of the trees, there began to arrive some food in return for their payment of nails. And they remained there for five days, thinking that some ship might come from India, for this was what the natives had told them. So, Manuel de Sousa asked the king for a house in which to shelter with his wife and children. The Kaffir king replied that they would give him one, but that the captain's people couldn't all stay there together, as there wasn't enough food being produced by the land. He could stay with his wife and children and with a few people of his own choice, but the rest of the people would have to be divided up and sent to different villages. Nonetheless, they would give them

all food and houses until some ship arrived. This was apparently a clever stratagem on the part of the king, in preparation for what he would do later. Clearly what has been said was true, namely that the Kaffirs were afraid of muskets: the Portuguese had no more than five muskets with them and up to a hundred and twenty men, but the Kaffirs did not dare to fight them. In order to rob the captain and his group, the Kaffirs separated them from one another, knowing that the Portuguese were greatly weakened by hunger and therefore sending them to different places. And, unaware of how much better off they would have been by sticking together, the captain's men delivered themselves up to fate and did as the king wished, sealing their own perdition. They had completely ignored the advice of the king they had met earlier, who had told them the truth and done the best he could for them. And, in this way, it can be seen that men should never say or do anything when they alone are the ones responsible for their own actions, but that they should always put everything in the hands of Our Lord.

After the Kaffir king had agreed with Manuel de Sousa that the Portuguese should be divided up amongst the different villages in order to be better supplied, he also told him that he had his own captains in these places, who would take the company there and give them something to eat. And this could only be done if Manuel de Sousa told the Portuguese to leave their weapons behind, because the very sight of them made the Kaffirs afraid. The king would have them stored in a hut and would give the arms back to the Portuguese when the ship came.

As Manuel de Sousa was already ill and in danger of losing his mind, he did not reply as he would have done if he had had his wits about him. Instead, he said that he would talk to his men. But their time had come and they would certainly be robbed, and so he spoke with his men and told them that he would not leave that place. One way or another, they would find help in the form of a ship, or something else that God might send them. The river they were on was in fact the one discovered by Lourenço Marques, as the pilot André Vaz had told him. Anyone who wished to could leave that place, if that was what they thought best, but he couldn't, for the sake of his wife and children. She was already greatly weakened by the ardours of the journey, couldn't walk and didn't even have any slaves to help her. And so he was determined that he would end his life there with his family whenever God decided that his time had come. He requested of those who went away



from there that if they encountered a Portuguese ship they should send him news of this fact, while those who wished to stay there with him could do so. Wherever he went, they would go too.

And yet, so that the blacks would trust them and not suspect that they were thieves, he told his men that they must hand over their weapons in order to relieve themselves from the great hunger that they had suffered for so long. This was the opinion of Manuel de Sousa, but it must be said that those who agreed with him were also not in their right minds, because, if they had looked closely, they would have seen that whenever they had their guns with them the blacks never came anywhere near them. The captain ordered them to lay down their weapons, wherein lay their salvation after God. And so, against the better judgement of some and even more against the will of Dona Leonor, they surrendered their arms. But there was nobody to contradict him apart from her, even though this had no effect. So, she then said: "If you give up your arms, I shall be lost together with all these people." The blacks took the weapons and delivered them to the king's house.

As soon as the Kaffirs saw the Portuguese without weapons, which meant that their act of betrayal had been successful, they immediately began to separate them from one another and rob them. Each group was taken off into the bush and left to its own fate. On reaching their respective places, the Portuguese were stripped naked, beaten and thrown out of the villages. These different groups did not include Manuel de Sousa, who, with his wife and children and the pilot André Vaz and roughly twenty other people, had stayed with the king, because they were carrying a lot of jewels, precious stones and money, which were said to be worth more than one thousand *cruzados*. As soon as Manuel de Sousa, his wife and those twenty people had been separated from the rest, they were immediately robbed of everything that they had. They weren't stripped of their clothes, however, and the king told them to go off and find the rest of their company, because he didn't want to harm the captain any more, nor even touch him or his wife. When Manuel de Sousa saw this, he realised what an enormous mistake he had made in giving up the guns, and he was forced to do as bidden, because the matter was no longer in his hands.

The other members of the company, including Pantaleão de Sá and another three noblemen, numbered ninety in total and had been separated

from one another and divided into small groups. However, after they had been robbed and stripped of their clothes by the Kaffirs to whom they had been entrusted by the king, they gradually regrouped, because they were situated close to one another. Feeling miserable after their mistreatment, they were now bereft of their captain, without their guns, clothes or any money with which to bargain for food. Even so, they began their march again.

And looking dreadful, with nobody in control of them, they made their way in a disordered fashion, following different trails: some walked off through the bush, others over mountains, and they ended up spreading out, each of them being concerned above all with doing what they could to save their own lives, whether they were amongst Kaffirs or Moors. They had no one to give them any advice, nor anyone to bring them together again and guide them. As these men were now wandering around completely lost, I shall stop talking about them and turn my attentions once more to Manuel de Sousa and his ill-fated wife and children.

Manuel de Sousa now found himself robbed of everything he had and was sent away by the king to go in search of his company. He had no money, no weapons, and nobody who could even use them. Even though he had been sick in the mind for several days, he nonetheless felt this insult very deeply. Imagine then how his wife must have felt, for she was in a very frail state, beset by so much hardship and in great need of attention and, to make matters worse, had just witnessed her husband being so badly mistreated in front of her own eyes. He couldn't even govern himself or look after his children. But, as she was a woman of good judgement and had the backing of these men that she still had with her, they decided to start walking through the bush. They had no other remedy and no one in whom to place their trust, other than in God. Still in her company at this time were André Vaz, the pilot, and the bosun, who had never left her, as well as one or two Portuguese women and some female slaves. And so they set off, considering it best to follow in the path of the ninety robbed men, who were somewhere ahead of them, having started out two days earlier. Dona Leonor was now so weak, so sad and inconsolable at seeing the state her husband was in. She found herself separated from the others and knew that it was impossible to join up with them again. Just to think of this is enough to break anyone's heart! They walked on, nonetheless, only to come across some more Kaffirs,

who attacked the captain and his wife and the few men that were still in his company, stripping them once more of their clothes, leaving them with nothing at all. Finding themselves in such a terrible plight and with two very young children in tow, they both prayed to God.

They say that Dona Leonor would not allow herself to be stripped of her clothes and that she defended herself by punching and slapping her attackers. She would have preferred the Kaffirs to kill her than to find herself naked before everybody, and there is no doubt that her life would have ended there and then were it not for Manuel de Sousa, who begged her to allow them to take off her clothes, reminding her that they were all born naked and that it was God's will that she should be so too. One of the hardest things for them was to see their two small children standing in front of them crying, begging for something to eat, without their being able to do anything about it. Finding herself naked, Dona Leonor threw herself on the ground and covered herself with her hair, which was very long, digging a hollow for herself in the sand and covering herself up to her waist, refusing to move from there. Manuel de Sousa walked up to an old woman, who was one of her nurses and had been left with a torn shawl, and asked her if he could use it to cover his wife. The nurse gave it to him, but his wife still refused to move from that hole that she had thrown herself into when she found herself naked.

The truth is that I don't know how anyone could hear of such a thing without feeling great pity and sadness. Just to see such a noble woman, the daughter and wife of two such honourable gentlemen, treated so badly and with such a lack of respect! When the men who were still in his company saw Manuel de Sousa and his wife naked, they moved away from them because of the embarrassment and unease that they felt on seeing their captain and Dona Leonor in such a state. This was when she said to André Vaz, the pilot: "You can see the state we have reached and realise that we cannot move from here. You know that, for our sins, we must end our lives here. Go as far away from here as you can, do what you must do to save yourselves, and commend us to God. If you should eventually make it to India or Portugal, tell them how you left Manuel de Sousa and me with our children." And, seeing that they could do nothing either to remedy the great fatigue of their captain or to overcome the misery and poverty of his wife and children, they set off into the bush in an attempt to save their own lives.

When André Vaz parted from Manuel de Sousa and his wife, the galleon's bosun, Duarte Fernandes, went with him, together with some female slaves, three of whom survived and later came to Goa to tell how they had seen Dona Leonor die. And even though his mind was not working properly, Manuel de Sousa did not forget the needs of his wife and children and the hunger they must be feeling. Much the worse for wear and limping from the wounds that the Kaffirs had inflicted on one of his legs, he hobbled off into the bush to find some fruit for them to eat. On his return, he found Dona Leonor very frail, both from hunger and from crying so much after the Kaffirs had stripped her naked. She never again moved from that spot, nor did she stop crying. Finding one of his children dead, he buried him in the sand with his own hands. The next day, Manuel de Sousa went off into the bush again to find some fruit, and when he came back he found Dona Leonor and their other son dead, with five slave women wailing over their bodies.

It is said that when he found her dead, he did nothing more than pull the slave women away and then sat down next to her, his face pressed against one of his hands, for half an hour, without crying and without uttering a word, simply with his eyes fixed on her and paying little heed to his son. After this time had elapsed, he stood up and began to dig a grave in the sand with the help of the slave women. All the while, he continued not to say anything. He buried her and their son and, having finished, he returned along the path that he had followed when searching for fruit, again without uttering a word to the slave women, setting off into the bush never to be seen again. It seems certain that, once he had wandered off into the bush, he would have been eaten by lions and tigers. And this was how they ended their lives, husband and wife, after having marched for six months with so many hardships through the land of the Kaffirs.

The men from this company who escaped (from amongst both those who had stayed with Manuel de Sousa when he was robbed and the ninety men who had set off before him) amounted to eight Portuguese, fourteen male slaves and three of the female slaves who were with Dona Leonor when she died. Amongst the survivors were Pantaleão de Sá, Tristão de Sousa, the pilot André Vaz, Baltasar de Sequeira, Manuel de Castro and Álvaro Fernandes. They had been walking overland without any hope of ever reaching the land of the Christians when a ship had come to that river. On board was a

relative of Diogo de Mesquita, who was trading in ivory. On hearing the news that there were Portuguese seafarers wandering lost on the land, he sent out a search party to find them and negotiate their safe return in exchange for beads, each person costing a few coins' worth of beads, for this was a commodity that was highly valued amongst the blacks. If Manuel de Sousa had still been alive at this time, he too would have been rescued. But it seems that in this way it was better for his soul, for Our Lord's will had thus been done. The survivors reached Mozambique on 25th May, 1553.

Pantaleão de Sá had been wandering completely lost for a long time through the land of the Kaffirs and arrived at the palace almost dead from hunger, nakedness and the exhaustion of having walked for so long. On reaching the door of the palace, he asked the courtiers if they could arrange for some help for him from the king. They declined to ask for such a thing, making the excuse that the king had recently been suffering from a serious illness. When the Portuguese asked what the illness was, they told him that the king had such a constant and festering wound in his leg that they feared he might die at any moment. He listened to them attentively and asked them to tell the king of his arrival, stating that he was a doctor and that he might be able to restore him to good health. Delighted with what he said, they immediately reported the matter, whereupon the king instantly sent for him and, as soon as he saw the wound, Pantaleão de Sá said: "Please trust me, and you will soon be fully recovered." He then left the room and began to think about the difficult enterprise he had arranged for himself. He couldn't escape from this business alive, as he had no idea as to what he might do, for he was someone who had been trained to take lives rather than to cure ailments in order to preserve them. Thinking in this way, as if he were no longer concerned about his own fate, feeling that he would prefer to die just once than to do so repeatedly, he urinated on the ground and, having produced a little mud, he went inside and applied it to the almost incurable wound. That day passed, and the next one, and, when the illustrious Sá was expecting to hear a death sentence rather than anything that might save either his life or that of the king, the courtiers came out in great excitement, wanting to carry him on their shoulders. Naturally, he asked them why they were so happy and they told him that the ointment that he had applied had taken away all the rotting sores and that the flesh of the king's leg was now perfectly healthy again. The fake doctor went inside

and, confirming the truth of what they had said, told them to continue applying the ointment. In a few days, the king would be in perfect health, he said. When this happened, in addition to a whole series of other honours, they placed Pantaleão de Sá on an altar and worshipped him as if he were a god. The king asked him to stay at his palace and offered him half of his kingdom. He was prepared to do anything that he asked for, but Pantaleão declined the offer, saying that he needed to return to his own people. The king then sent for a large quantity of gold and precious stones, which he lavished upon Pantaleão, ordering his people to accompany him safely to Mozambique.

CONGRESSO INTERNACIONAL – LISBOA 2008

DO BRASIL A MACAU: NARRATIVAS DE VIAGENS E ESPAÇOS DE DIÁSPORA

O Naufrágio de Sepúlveda



University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies
Centro de Estudos Anglisticos da Universidade de Lisboa

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João Almeida Flor

RELAÇÃO

DA MUY NOTAVEL PERDA
DO
GALEÃO GRANDE S. JOÃO

*Em que se contaõ os grandes trabalhos, e
lastimosas cousas que acontecerãõ*

AO CAPITAÕ
MANOEL DE SOUSA
SEPULVEDA,



E OLAMENTAVEL FIM, QUE ELLE,
e sua mulher, e filhos, e toda a mais gente
houveraõ na Terra do Natal, onde se perdê-
raõ a 24. de Junho de 1552.

VIAGEM, NAUFRÁGIO, DESTERRO E FIM

João Almeida Flor

Em consonância com a organização, pelo Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa, do Congresso Internacional *Do Brasil a Macau: Narrativas de Viagem e Espaços de Diáspora*, este volume apresenta, em edição bilingue, a história célebre do desastre de um navio português quinhentista. Trata-se da narrativa sobre o Galeão Grande *S. João* que, na viagem de regresso da Índia até Lisboa, naufragou na costa oriental da África, causando a pungente desventura dos sobreviventes, capitaneados por Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda.

A embarcação largara do porto de Cochim, na Índia, a 3 de Fevereiro de 1552, seguindo as rotas do Índico mas as violentas intempéries haviam impedido a passagem do Cabo da Boa Esperança e destruído o navio que foi abandonado. Retrocedendo, acompanhado de sua mulher, D. Leonor de Sá, dos filhos de tenra idade bem como de alguns tripulantes e passageiros, Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda decidiu continuar a marcha pelo litoral, em direcção ao norte e em busca de salvamento. Não obstante, a despeito de denodados esforços, alguma inabilidade para enfrentar a situação, as vulnerabilidades de toda a sorte, a hostilidade dos Cafres e o profundo desalento conjugaram-se para desencadear o trágico desfecho. Com efeito, gradualmente vitimados pelos espectros da humilhação, do despudor, da loucura e da morte, quase todos os náufragos sucumbiram na costa do Natal, salvando-se um certo Álvaro Fernandes a quem caberia trazer a notícia daquele episódio funesto.

Pelo profundo dramatismo, esta narrativa pertence a um conjunto de textos que apresentam o reverso da expansão portuguesa e se constituem

como contra-epopeias, testemunhando as muitas adversidades que nem sempre foi possível vencer na aventura de além-mar, gesta colectiva atravessada pela consciência elegíaca do sofrimento e da perdição

Difícil se torna enumerar os motivos de interesse da tragédia do Galeão *S. João* para o público dos nossos dias, até porque a relação intersubjectiva estabelecida na (e pela) leitura leva ao reconhecimento de quase tantos quantos os leitores destinatários. Com efeito, cada um deles projecta no texto o apetrechamento cultural disponível, a sedimentação das experiências literárias anteriores, o horizonte da sua expectativa pessoal e a latitude dos seus interesses e preferências. Assim, comparece na leitura todo o conjunto de antecedentes, pressupostos e condicionantes que definem a margem do gosto individual, supostamente representativo de uma certa comunidade de leitores, situada em espaço e tempo próprios.

Todavia, sem outro intuito que não seja de carácter exemplificativo, talvez se possam organizar alguns dos aspectos essenciais da pertinência e do significado do episódio de Sepúlveda, enquanto narrativa de naufrágio, em torno de três campos fundamentais – histórico, literário e didascálico – que passamos a desenvolver.

Será difícil exagerar o interesse histórico dos relatos de naufrágios quinhentistas que traçavam o quadro do exotismo, tal como este se apresentava à curiosidade europeia durante a abertura científica, política, cultural e económica a novos continentes. Neles se recolhem preciosas informações sobre a vida, os costumes e o habitat (fauna, flora, topografia, hidrografia, climatologia) das populações indígenas do sudeste africano, antes de terem estabelecido contacto com os navegantes portugueses, portadores de diferente civilização material e capital simbólico. Assim, o desembarque após o naufrágio oferece o espectáculo da alteridade, gradualmente revelada por duas vias principais. Por um lado, viabiliza o conhecimento experiencial e promove a observação e o diálogo com realidades ignotas; por outro lado, propicia o confronto com culturas e povos nativos, mesmo quando com estes se estabelecem relações de conflitualidade e hostilização, como aconteceu no caso das vítimas do *S. João*.

Além disso, pela sua função predominantemente noticiosa os relatos de naufrágios assentam em depoimentos de testemunhas presenciais e pormenorizam não só trajectos e escalas mas também as vicissitudes meteorológicas, a

tipologia das embarcações e todo o quadro da vida quotidiana nas tarefas de marear, a bordo das naus e dos galeões portugueses. Nesse aspecto, o caso de Sepúlveda e seus congéneres contribui para completar o conjunto de informações, dispersas por outras fontes da historiografia náutica como sejam os regimentos, os roteiros, as relações, os diários de bordo ou as obras dos cronistas da expansão.

Por seu turno, tomada globalmente, a perda do Galeão *S. João* exemplifica e denuncia as graves dificuldades com que se debatiam as armadas que, entre os séculos XVI e XIX, asseguravam anualmente a ligação comercial com o Oriente, através da chamada Carreira da Índia.

Tratava-se de uma vasta empresa, desenvolvida por iniciativa e investimento da Coroa, sob administração directa ou concessionada, com o apoio de capitais particulares e empréstimos contraídos em Portugal e no estrangeiro. Com efeito, aproveitando a rota interoceânica do Cabo, a Carreira da Índia permitia o abastecimento do mercado europeu de especiarias, através de um novo itinerário marítimo para as trocas comerciais com o Oriente, em alternativa ao circuito tradicional pelo Mediterrâneo levantino e Mar Vermelho.

Dada a amplitude da aventura e as diferentes condições de navegação entre o Atlântico e o Índico, não admira que o roteiro e o calendário respectivos se encontrassem estabelecidos e padronizados, tendo em conta a necessidade de resolver dificuldades previsíveis, causadas pelo regime das monções, por ventos adversos, por correntes contrárias e até pelo rigor das intempéries.

Assim, na transição do inverno para a primavera, as armadas largavam de Lisboa, rumavam a Cabo Verde, descreviam depois um largo arco para sudoeste, em direcção ao Brasil, e viravam finalmente para sudeste, de modo a contornar a África e, no verão, dobrar o Cabo da Boa Esperança, em trânsito para o Índico. A partir daí, podiam optar pela viagem por dentro da Ilha de S. Lourenço, através do canal de Moçambique ou, em alternativa, seguir o trajecto por fora, ao largo do oceano, tomando finalmente a direcção nordeste o que, em finais de Setembro, permitia aportar na costa da Índia onde as naus se demoravam cerca de três meses.

Inversamente, no percurso de regresso a Lisboa, também conhecido por torna-viagem, as embarcações partiam de Goa ou Cochim, por alturas de Dezembro-Janeiro do ano seguinte, seguiam as rotas do Índico para sudoeste

e, ultrapassado o Cabo, faziam escala para aguada na Ilha de S.Helena, rumavam aos Açores e, por fim, aproximavam-se do litoral português, com chegada previsível em pleno verão.

Como se imagina, nem sempre tal programa se cumpria com rigor, quer por atrasos na estiva e consequentes partidas tardias, quer por erros de navegação, quer ainda por ataques de corsários cobiçosos das riquezas em trânsito, para não mencionar outras circunstâncias fortuitas ou imputáveis à responsabilidade humana, como sejam avarias, abandonos, encalhes, arribadas ou incêndios a bordo. Quaisquer que sejam os motivos, valerá a pena notar que a distribuição geográfica das perdas de navios não se reparte equitativamente por todas as fases do percurso, mas se concentra, sobretudo em três zonas críticas – na transição do Índico para o Atlântico (como aconteceu a Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda), no Canal de Moçambique e, finalmente, na região dos Açores, quando da aproximação à costa portuguesa.

A historiografia do nosso tempo tem procurado averiguar e sistematizar as causas determinantes dos naufrágios e de outros fracassos, ocorridos na Carreira da Índia, em especial na torna-viagem, que levaram à perda de embarcações, vidas humanas e preciosas mercadorias, com elevada taxa média de insucesso global.

Embora as estatísticas mostrem flutuações no número de acidentes registados ao longo de várias décadas, poderá afirmar-se que muitos deles se relacionam com problemas de construção naval, agravados por deficiente manutenção, pelo sobredimensionamento das embarcações e pelo aumento tendencial da tonelagem respectiva, de resto em desrespeito pelo que fora estipulado por determinação régia. Todavia, os avultados lucros auferidos com a transacção das mercadorias, por parte dos armadores privados, dos intermediários e da própria tripulação, pareciam justificar que se aumentasse desmesuradamente a capacidade de transporte e armazenagem, a bordo. Por conseguinte, com frequência e em detrimento da segurança de pessoas e bens, todo o espaço disponível se encontrava atravancado pela sobrecarga de sedas, algodão, madeiras exóticas, porcelana, pimenta, canela e outras especiarias.

A tudo isto se juntavam a escassez de armamento de muitas naus, à mercê de ataques inimigos, e uma série de erros humanos, provocados por inépcia ou negligência. Tal anomalia estava relacionada com as reais dificuldades encontradas no recrutamento de tripulantes experimentados e possuidores

de qualificações para o desempenho das árduas funções exigidas pela Carreira da Índia. Na verdade, tendo em conta o número elevado de passageiros e de gente do mar, a que se juntavam os soldados, necessários à defesa do próprio navio ou à guarnição das praças ultramarinas, teria sido necessário apurar, com rigor, as reais aptidões dos candidatos à marinharia o que se revelava incompatível com a relativa escassez da oferta de mão-de-obra. As deficiências de formação e disciplina dos tripulantes atingiam os vários níveis da hierarquia e até mesmo o posto de capitão-mor, muitas vezes fidalgo de alta estirpe mas pouco afeito às coisas do mar. A tal atitude condescendente, exceptuava-se a exigente selecção dos pilotos, por vezes de proveniência estrangeira, sobre os quais recaía, em última análise, a responsabilidade de assegurar o sucesso da viagem. Ainda assim, a despeito da competência profissional do piloto, o rigor da manobra e das tarefas de navegação ressentia-se de várias limitações técnicas, tais como certa insuficiência na representação cartográfica, algumas deficiências nos instrumentos náuticos e o conhecimento empírico de ventos, correntes e marés.

Com o decorrer dos tempos, a conjugação de todos estes factores afectou substancialmente os fluxos de embarcações na Carreira da Índia que conheceu períodos de ascensão, alternando com fases descendentes, até à sua progressiva decadência, a partir dos finais do século XVI. Seria talvez plausível relacionar tal declínio com a gravidade da situação política em Portugal, no decurso da crise dinástica após Alcácer-Quibir e as vicissitudes ocorridas durante a monarquia filipina. Todavia, convirá cruzar as fronteiras ibéricas e ter presentes também as alterações geoestratégicas entretanto registadas, e a conjuntura económico-financeira internacional, com a concorrência agressiva de holandeses e ingleses, na exploração da rota do Cabo que havia sustentado o monopólio português do comércio de longo curso com o oriente.

Em suma, o naufrágio de Sepúlveda situa-se e enraíza-se no amplo quadro das circunstâncias históricas que envolveram a Carreira da Índia cujas vicissitudes, resultantes de causas complexas e multifactoriais, se reflectiram no processo de desintegração do império.

Do ponto de vista da recepção literária dispensada à matéria, sabemos que, nos primeiros tempos, a notícia da perda do Galeão *S. João* (1552) foi transmitida através da tradição oral.

Não admira que tal circunstância fosse propícia à estilização formal do relato, ao despojamento de ornatos retóricos, à introdução de alterações na

sequência cronológica dos eventos e à redistribuição das ênfases narrativas. Simultaneamente, porventura devido a influências da parenética coetânea, tais procedimentos foram encaminhando a substância da matéria, no sentido de sublinhar a respectiva exemplaridade e função didascálica, com o objectivo de proporcionar aos vindouros a oportunidade de usar os erros alheios em proveito próprio e assim evitarem os caminhos da perdição. Em suma, o conteúdo histórico relacionado com a perda do *S. João* cedo terá adquirido ressonâncias moralizadoras e absorvido intenções edificantes, configurando um discurso híbrido que transitou para a literatura de cordel tardo-quincentista.

Com efeito, numa fase em que a emulação e concorrência entre os impressores pretendiam satisfazer a curiosidade do público, ávido de informações sobre as vicissitudes da expansão e interessado no sensacionalismo de algumas notícias, foi dado à estampa, por 1555-56, sem indicação de autoria, data ou local de impressão, um folheto volante intitulado *História da mui notável perda do galeão grande S. João*. O seu êxito reflectiu-se em elevadas tiragens, em sucessivas edições e no facto de o texto haver funcionado como uma espécie de matriz e modelo inaugural de um subgénero da literatura de viagens no Portugal quincentista, constituído pelas narrativas de naufrágio.

De início dado à estampa, para corresponder à procura de um circuito alargado de consumo literário, o episódio protagonizado pelo Sepúlveda em breve foi acolhido no círculo de produção simbólica mais restrita e, sob a égide do mecenato aristocrático ou régio, acabou por aceder ao âmbito da literatura legitimada e comparecer em obras de expressiva projecção cultural.

Como exemplo ilustre desta dignidade canónica, lembremos as estâncias 46-48 do Canto V de *Os Lusíadas* (1572) onde Camões celebra a desdita do Sepúlveda (“liberal, cavaleiro, enamorado”) e os infortúnios de seus familiares, pressagiados pela voz do Adamastor; pouco depois, em termos classicizantes de timbre mitológico e alegórico, a *Elegiada* (1588) de Luís Pereira Brandão retoma e desenvolve a temática do naufrágio; no mesmo ano, o episódio é transcrito abreviadamente por Giampietro Maffei em *Historiarum Indicarum libri XVI*, circunstância que desempenha papel de relevo no processo da difusão além-fronteiras. Ainda maior alcance atingiu o *Naufrágio e lastimoso sucesso da perdição de Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda* (1594), obra de Jerónimo Corte Real cuja inspiração conheceria

assinalável êxito junto da crítica e do público (inter)nacional, originando, por exemplo, uma tradução castelhana (1624) de Francisco de Contreras. Ao mesmo tempo, embora noutra plano, regista-se a adaptação da matéria narrativa às exigências do palco, por parte de dramaturgos espanhóis seiscentistas, entre os quais se contam Lope de Vega com *Comedia famosa de don Manuel de Sosa* (1635) e Tirso de Molina com *Escarmientos para el cuerdo* (1636). Em paralelo, as virtualidades moralizadoras e edificantes do episódio do Sepúlveda explicam o aproveitamento do tema também por parte do teatro jesuítico novilatino, de cunho didáctico, em peças como *Ambitio sive Sosa naufragus* (1643) e *Volubilis Fortunae cursus* (1728).

Por outras palavras, entre os séculos XVI e XVIII, a matéria referente ao Galeão *S. João* descreve um trajecto multidireccional. De um lado, assiste-se à contaminação do relato original, de raiz noticiosa, factual e verídica, pelos propósitos didácticos e apologéticos que lhe são atribuídos. Do outro lado, verifica-se que a matéria narrativa amplia a sua irradiação geográfica, através de progressiva internacionalização, veiculada por traduções em latim e em idiomas modernos. Por último, acresce o facto de se haverem registado transposições de ordem genológica no texto original, sempre que os modelos discursivos próprios do relato oral ou da prosa narrativa cedem o lugar às convenções características da linguagem dramática. Em fases posteriores, mais avançará tal processo de contínua metamorfose que, em última análise, dará origem a uma série de cruzamentos intersemióticos entre a literatura, a música e as artes plásticas, exemplificados tanto pela tradição iconográfica que tematiza certos passos da narrativa como pela composição de partituras sinfónicas e corais, já em nossos dias.

Retomando a linha cronológica, importa ainda assinalar que, durante o século XVII, a matéria do naufrágio quinhentista consolida e centraliza o seu lugar na literatura da expansão, como transparece nos ecos dispersos em obras historiográficas, tais como *Etiópia Oriental* (1609) de Frei João dos Santos, *Década VI* (1616) de Diogo do Couto e *Ásia Portuguesa* (1674) de Faria e Sousa.

No século seguinte, como reflexo do projecto de reconstituição da memória colectiva que presidira já à fundação da Real Academia da História Portuguesa, Bernardo Gomes de Brito publicou, respectivamente em 1735 e 1736, o primeiro e o segundo volumes da sua *História Trágico-Marítima*. Aquilo que se considera ser o pseudo-terceiro volume da obra é realmente

um conjunto de seis relatos de perdas marítimas, embora subsistam fundadas dúvidas quanto à intervenção de Bernardo Gomes de Brito nas tarefas editoriais. Não obstante, nos dois primeiros, o organizador reúne, em sugestiva colecção, uma dúzia de notícias e relatos de naufrágios ocorridos na segunda metade do século XVI (1552-1602) que não têm cessado de atrair a atenção de sucessivas gerações, ocupadas na leitura crítica, na reescrita literária e na recepção criativa da obra, muito em especial da tragédia de Sepúlveda.

Tendo em conta a múltipla autoria de tais relatos, alguns deles atribuíveis a escritores de renome, como Manuel de Mesquita Perestrelo, Bento Teixeira Pinto, Diogo do Couto e João Baptista Lavanha, poderia pensar-se que a especificidade de cada uma das histórias sobrelevaria à homogeneidade do conjunto. No entanto e na prática, a colectânea de Bernardo Gomes de Brito obedece globalmente à estrutura retórica das narrativas onde se reconhece a disposição formal em sequência, composta por exórdio, proposição, narração e conclusão. Para mais, esta organização formal, também observável na história de Sepúlveda, comporta a existência de situações invariantes, subjacentes à variedade dos acontecimentos relatados, numa série esquemática que interliga antecedentes/partida/tempestade/naufrágio/desembarque/peregrinação/ regresso. Tal reiteração estrutural vem acentuar a notória unidade de tom, deveras melancólico, inerente às sequelas do desastre que obrigam os náufragos a concentrar atenções e energias no nível primário da preservação da vida, situada na ténue fronteira entre a possibilidade de salvação e a probabilidade do aniquilamento.

Para reconstituir, ao menos parcialmente, quais teriam sido as expectativas do público e da crítica setecentistas face à *História Trágico-Marítima*, argumento moralista mas que deles distava já quase dois séculos, poderemos lançar mão dos pareceres antepostos à obra, em representação das três instâncias censórias então vigentes: o Santo Ofício, o Ordinário e o Paço.

No seu conjunto, os pareceres acentuam aspectos genéricos do texto de Bernardo Gomes de Brito, considerado isento de matéria atentatória da fé e dos bons costumes, logo merecedor das licenças e autorizações requeridas. Importa referir que tal avaliação também realça a exemplaridade e a função didáctica de uma obra de história que, como mestra da vida, ilustrava a dimensão trágica do insucesso e poderia servir de “escola de cautelas”, permitindo que quantos desafiassem temerariamente as ondas e os ventos

pudessem aproveitar com a experiência sedimentada dos seus antecessores. Além disso, os pareceres censórios frisavam como o texto exortava à oração e criava um clima favorável a que todos os leitores agissem em função do temor da morte. Esta afigurava-se o acto final de um percurso terreno cheio de perigos, adversidades e desenganos onde continuamente transparecia a transitoriedade da existência, a fugacidade do tempo, a mutabilidade das circunstâncias e, enfim, a frágil e atribulada condição humana, à mercê da ira e da misericórdia divinas.

Deve ainda notar-se que um dos censores estabelece a comparação entre as aventuras narradas e as famosas navegações antigas de Ulisses, de Eneias ou, modernamente, de Sebastião del Cano, Francis Drake, Thomas Cavendish e outros. Como se poderia esperar, desse cotejo se conclui a primazia do esforço português, numa empresa que tantas vezes se iniciou por navegação gloriosa e acabou em funesto naufrágio, com irremediável perda de vidas e mercadorias. Em apoio desta opinião, são também invocados alguns passos selectos de Virgílio, Ovídio, Horácio, Lucano e Juvenal cujas descrições das tempestades mediterrânicas se consideram suplantadas pelas medonhas tormentas que embraveciam a vastidão imensa do Mar Oceano português.

Importa reter que, a partir da inserção do naufrágio do Sepúlveda na *História Trágico-Marítima*, se acentua a exemplaridade desse caso deplorável e implicitamente se criam as condições para a leitura relacional da narrativa, visando inscrevê-la e enquadrá-la no macrotexto de que é parte integrante. Desta forma, no diálogo intertextual com outros relatos coligidos por Bernardo Gomes de Brito, a perda do Galeão *S. João* contribui para a voga e irradiação europeia das narrativas de naufrágios, de resto amplamente documentadas em colectâneas holandesas, francesas, e inglesas cuja popularidade se prolonga pelos séculos XVII a XIX.

Para além deste panorama bibliográfico que, de resto, se poderia prolongar até aos nossos dias, seria possível ler a *História Trágico-Marítima* no contexto significativo mais amplo e abrangente da cultura portuguesa. De facto, tal como a tragédia do amor interdito de Inês de Castro, tal como a derrota da esperança do reino nos campos de Alcácer-Quibir e tal como a ruína da capital do império no megassismo de 1755, a obra de Bernardo Gomes de Brito comprova capacidade de o imaginário português assimilar e sublimar a vivência trágica, incorporando-a no seu património discursivo.

Para mais, nestes casos, explorar a potencialidade estética do sofrimento e da morte, real ou figurada, também significa a possibilidade de exacerbar o horror e a compaixão, com objectivos libertadores ou catárticos.

Em qualquer caso, o valor literário das narrativas que compõem a colecção de Bernardo Gomes de Brito nem sempre terá sido plenamente reconhecido, pois a obra parecia demasiado próxima dos estereótipos destinados ao consumo pouco selectivo por parte de um público massificado. Em nosso tempo, porém, uma profunda alteração nos paradigmas da crítica literária obrigou a reconsiderar o cânone, por inclusão e reabilitação do que até aí fora marginal(izado) ou apenas periférico, de tal modo que algumas relações de naufrágios da *História Trágico-Marítima* podem ser hoje consideradas obras maiores da cultura portuguesa.

A série de gestos que as recolhe da transmissão oral para as reunir em livro não se limita a obedecer à lógica das compilações antológicas. Em vez disso, constitui uma forma de intervenção na própria literariedade do texto, pela concentração nos episódios emocionalmente mais ricos, pela estruturação poética da narrativa e pela estratégia de recorrência de elementos imagéticos, metafóricos, simbólicos e alegóricos. Além disso, se considerarmos ser a sobrevivência na adversidade o tema comum que percorre e impregna os diversos relatos, poderemos avaliar o grau de realismo descritivo com que se traça tanto o retrato minucioso e elaborado de objectos concretos, como a análise aprofundada do interior das personagens, colocadas perante situações de gravidade extrema.

Como se tanto não bastasse para despertar a imaginação do leitor, a história de Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda comportava ainda uma dimensão romanesca latente que, com intermitências, aflora à superfície do texto ou, nalguns casos, ocupa mesmo o primeiro plano da narrativa, consoante a perspectiva do sujeito enunciador e a suposta expectativa do destinatário. Na verdade, dizia-se ter havido um outro fidalgo pretendente e noivo da formosa Leonor de Sá, um certo Luís Falcão, capitão de Ormuz e Diu, que acabou por ser assassinado em circunstâncias misteriosas. Tal acontecimento, conjugado com o facto de, pouco depois, se haver realizado o matrimónio de Leonor de Sá com Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda fez recair sobre este a suspeita de implicação moral ou material num homicídio nunca desvendado.

Daqui derivam várias consequências. Em primeiro lugar, fica por esclarecer até que ponto o naufrágio e subsequentes infortúnios do Sepúlveda

poderão ser considerados como situações expiatórias, resultantes da lógica punitiva que faz recair, sobre ele e os seus, o mal cometido a outrem. Em segundo lugar, na presença de tais ingredientes, não pode surpreender que a sensibilidade de alguns ficcionistas portugueses houvesse explorado a componente trágico-passional e romântica do episódio do Sepúlveda, reflectida no díptico funesto do amor e da morte. Finalmente, atribuir a responsabilidade última do desastre à alegada transgressão do Sepúlveda significa pôr em evidência a casuística da conjuntura e do comportamento ético-moral do indivíduo, enquanto ficam obscurecidas as disfunções estruturais do sistema que objectivamente contribuíram para aumentar a lista de insucessos na Carreira da Índia.

De qualquer modo, colocado na abertura da colectânea, o caso do Sepúlveda, constituía uma espécie de protótipo e modelo inaugural das narrativas simbólico-marítimas acerca da súbita mutação da fortuna a que estão sujeitos os grandes deste mundo.

Representante do topo da hierarquia social, da glória militar e da prosperidade material e, para mais, desfrutando um amor correspondido em auspicioso matrimónio, Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda parecia reunir todos os requisitos para a realização pessoal plena e a felicidade duradoura. Não obstante, o desditoso regresso da Índia determinou a radical inversão do seu estatuto, depois que se viu derrotado pela violência das intempéries e pela barbárie dos nativos e por completo destituído de honrarias, de riquezas ou mesmo do indispensável à digna sobrevivência. Atingido nos mais íntimos afectos e revelando sinais de grave desvario mental, Manuel de Sousa Sepúlveda parece buscar, na errância pela solidão do mato, uma forma de morte metafórica.

No quadro de uma leitura simbólica da perda do *S. João*, o desastre marítimo introduz momentânea ruptura e descontinuidade na tónica cristã da vida como viagem, pois, na crise-limite do naufrágio, a radical solidão e vulnerabilidade da espécie humana se revelam ainda mais nítidas.

Além disso, com a falência dos instrumentos de orientação – carta, bússola, astrolábio – capazes de organizar e tornar legíveis os dados da experiência, perde-se a noção de direcionalidade e diluem-se os próprios conceitos de rumo, rota e orientação. Para cúmulo, o trajecto em determinado sentido acaba, amiúde, por reconduzir circularmente ao ponto de partida, numa imagem dolorosa de imprevisível desengano e frustração, correspondentes,

no microcosmo humano, a esse grande desconcerto do mundo que, em rigor, torna a viagem impossível. Por seu turno, ao destruir os nexos e desmembrar as relações que estruturavam a sociedade quinhentista, o naufrágio leva os indivíduos a regredir à anomia e anarquia do *status naturalis* onde prevalece o princípio da sobrevivência do mais forte. Deste modo, os códigos de honra e vergonha, as hierarquias e os protocolos de convívio, próprios das sociedades europeias, tornam-se vazios de significado e os naufragos vêem-se reduzidos à condição da igualdade universal do nascimento, simbolizada no corpo desnudo de D. Leonor de Sá, coagida a cobrir-se com seus cabelos e enterrar-se nas areias para resguardar o pudor.

Para aprofundar esta leitura da perda do Galeão Grande *S. João*, será conveniente recordar como a tempestade e a ameaça de naufrágio são tópicos literários e religiosos da tradição europeia, glosados tanto pelas epopeias da antiguidade clássica como pelo discurso bíblico e patrístico que constituem, afinal, parte integrante das referências culturais invocadas na *História Trágico-Marítima*.

Evoquemos, então, a *Odisseia* onde as divindades marinhas desencadeiam tempestades para atingir Ulisses, bem como a *Eneida*, onde as águas e a inclemência dos elementos são factores de dispersão e destruição das naves troianas. Deste modo, Homero e Vergílio estabelecem modelos largamente reelaborados por Ovídio, Séneca, Lucano ou Lucrécio e, na sua esteira, por múltiplos epígonos e discípulos. Não raros, estes adestravam-se nas técnicas da descrição retórica, retratando a sublime violência dos elementos infrenes. Silvos do vendaval, negrume das nuvens, fulgor de relâmpagos, ribombos do trovão, vórtice de vagas temerosas entre céus e abismos – todo este repertório de apontamentos visuais e auditivos criava o ambiente patético em que se iria desenrolar o desmantelamento da nave, o afundamento à vista da costa e o desespero dos sobreviventes em busca de salvação.

Quanto aos textos bíblicos, bastará ter presente como a destruição pelas águas motiva a viagem de Noé, ou invocar a procela que faz perigar a vida de Jonas, ou recordar a tempestade descrita no Salmo 106 ou ainda referir a intervenção de Jesus para amainar o mar da Galileia e, finalmente, o naufrágio protagonizado por S. Paulo e descrito nos Actos dos Apóstolos. Em complemento, na literatura patrística, o propósito de confrontar aspectos da herança clássica com o paradigma cultural cristão estabelece prefigurações e homologias entre os celebrados heróis da antiguidade e a figura do próprio

Cristo, divino piloto da nau da Igreja que, após desvios e deambulações, levando a cruz por mastro, assegura a chegada ao porto de eterno abrigo.

Deste manancial de referências culturais resulta a possibilidade de abordar o texto como um conjunto estratificados de sentidos. À superfície, reconhecemos o plano literal e verídico da matéria factual relativa ao naufrágio do *S. João*. No plano intermédio, situam-se as valências e estratégias estéticas condicionantes da representação ficcional dos eventos. Em profundidade, detectam-se os sentidos simbólicos e alegóricos que mitificam a história e a inscrevem no paradigma cultural e religioso posterior ao Concílio de Trento.

De resto, este fundo comum clássico-bíblico-patristico está na origem de inúmeras significações simbólicas que, na literatura como nas artes plásticas, percorrem a poética e a iconografia da tempestade e do naufrágio.

Enquanto símbolo, o mar transparece como força indómita, imagem de tensões, litígios e desordens que se situam para além da capacidade de entendimento humano e traduzem uma ameaça de regresso ao caos primordial. Representação alegórica da inconstância da própria vida, individual e colectiva, ora em harmonia distensa, ora assolada por turbulências, as ondas sugerem igualmente a mutabilidade e o desregramento físico ou psíquico, a que é atreita a frágil condição humana. Por extensão, as metáforas marítimas invadem também o campo da organização social e política onde o apaziguamento alterna com a agitação tempestuosa que desarticula a hierarquia estabelecida e as relações de cooperação entre os membros da comunidade, em regra subordinados a quem governa a nau do Estado.

Na sequência desta reflexão sobre a relevância histórica, literária e simbólica da *História Trágico-Marítima*, concluiremos este prólogo à perda do Galeão Grande *S. João*, notando dois passos emblemáticos da sua dimensão religiosa.

Em primeiro lugar, quando a colectânea narra como, por meio de violência física, alguns naufragos foram impedidos de embarcar nos salva-vidas, para não prejudicarem as possibilidades dos restantes sobreviventes, tal cena poderá ser lida, por inversão, como um apelo implícito aos valores cristãos da entreatajuda e da caridade fraternas.

Em segundo lugar, conta Bernardo Gomes de Brito como, em caso de perigo iminente, e para alijar carga, os marinheiros lançavam borda fora as mercadorias julgadas preciosas mas se lhes revelam subitamente supérfluas e desprezíveis, em comparação com o valor da própria vida.

Porque retoma um tópicio cristão constantemente glosado, esse gesto de despojamento voluntário pode indiciar que o sentido didascálico mais profundo do caso do Sepúlveda residirá na condenação da cupidez humana e na exortação à renúncia dos bens materiais (*contemptus mundi*), em proveito dos valores autênticos que asseguram a salvação. Nesta perspectiva, a *História Trágico-Marítima* cumpre a função de interpelar o leitor, apresentando-lhe um *exemplum* capaz de lhe proporcionar conforto na íntima tribulação, e despertando-o para a imperiosa necessidade de se libertar de inquietações, pelo exercício incondicional da virtude que transfigura a própria dor e lhe confere sentido transcendente.

Uma última observação servirá para sugerir como, enquanto catástrofe, os naufrágios da *História Trágico-Marítima* e suas sequelas parecem questionar o significado e o sentido teleológico da existência. Com efeito, somos colocados perante um problema central da Teodiceia, qual seja o de saber como compatibilizar o Bem absoluto que Deus representa com a intervenção do Mal (isto é, da privação do Bem) no mundo, sob variadas formas – ignorância, sofrimento, destruição, morte, calamidade individual e colectiva. Em óptica pessimista, dir-se-ia que, por um longuíssimo instante, algo se passa como se Deus se houvesse ausentado da história e remetido ao silêncio, deixando os homens cativos das vicissitudes da Fortuna ou submetidos àquele destino cego que governava a categoria trágica nos dramaturgos da Antiguidade clássica.

Não obstante, esta visão seria demasiado redutora e divergente em relação ao paradigma cultural judaico-cristão que, ao afirmar o livre-arbítrio como motor decisivo da vida individual e colectiva, responsabiliza o indivíduo pelos actos cometidos cuja eventual iniquidade poderá recair sobre a sua cabeça. Todavia, esta radical justiça retributiva, herança veterotestamentária, revela-se suplantada pela mensagem evangélica de infinita misericórdia que, na consumação dos tempos, acolherá os pecadores contritos. Desta forma, o enquadramento cristão da *História Trágico-Marítima* torna possível reincorporar as desventuras do naufrágio no esquema da providência divina e preservar uma interpretação finalista da história.

Em síntese, tal como todo o sofrimento a que é atreita a condição humana, as provações que vitimizam Sepúlveda devem (e talvez possam) ser estoicamente interpretadas como passos de mortificação temporária, a ser convertida, a longo prazo, em instrumento eficaz de salvação eterna e universal.

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**Relação da mui notável Perda
do Galeão Grande *S. João***

RELAÇÃO

DA MUY NOTAVEL PERDA
DO
GALEÃO GRANDE S. JOÃO

*Em que se conta os grandes trabalhos, e
lastimosas cousas que acontecerão*

AO CAPITÃO
MANOEL DE SOUSA
SEPULVEDA,



E OLAMENTAVEL FIM, QUE ELLE,
e sua mulher, e filhos, e toda a mais gente
houverão na Terra do Natal, onde se perdi-
rão a 24. de Junho de 1553.

RELAÇÃO SUMMÁRIA

Da viagem que fez

FERNAO D'ALVARES
CABRAL,

*Desde que partiu deste Reyno por Capitão mór da
Armada que foy no anno de 1551. ás partes da
India até que se perdeu no Cabo de Boa Esper-
rança no anno de 1554.*



ESCRITA POR
MANOEL DE MESQUITA PERESTRELLO
Que se achou no dito Naufragio.

RELAÇÃO

DA 5
VIAGEM, E SUCCESSO
QUE TIVERÃO AS NAOS
AGUIA, E GARÇA

*Vinda da India para este Reyno no Anno
de 1559.*



COM HUMA DISCRIÇÃO
da Cidade de Columbo,
PELO PADRE MANOEL BARRADAS
da Companhia de JESUS,

*Enviada a outro Padre da mesma Companhia
morador em Lisboa.*
E c'j

RELAÇÃO

DO 5
NAUFRAGIO
DA
NAO S. THOMÈ

Na Terra dos Fumos, no anno de 1589.

E dos grandes trabalhos que passou
D. PAULO DE LIMA

Nas terras da Cascaes até sua morte.



ESCRITA POR DIOGO DO COUTO
Guarda mór da Torre do Tombo.

*A requ da Senhora D. Anna de Lima irmã de
dito D. Paulo de Lima no Anno de 1611.*
Tom. II. V

Coisa é esta que se conta neste naufrágio para os homens muito temerem os castigos do Senhor e serem bons cristãos, trazendo o temor de Deus diante dos olhos, para não quebrar seus Mandamentos. Porque Manuel de Sousa era um fidalgo mui nobre e bom cavaleiro, e na Índia gastou em seu tempo mais de cinquenta mil cruzados em dar de comer a muita gente, em boas obras que fez a muitos homens; por derradeiro foi acabar sua vida e de sua mulher e filhos em tanta lástima e necessidade entre os cafres, faltando-lhe o comer e beber e vestir. E passou tantos trabalhos antes de sua morte que não podem ser cridos senão de quem lhos ajudou a passar, que entre os mais foi um Álvaro Fernandes, guardião do galeão, que me contou isto muito particularmente, que por acerto achei aqui em Moçambique o ano de mil quinhentos e cinquenta e quatro.

E por me parecer história que daria aviso, e bom exemplo a todos, escrevi os trabalhos e morte deste fidalgo e de toda a sua companhia, para que os homens que andam pelo mar, se encomendem continuamente a Deus e a Nossa Senhora, que rogue por todos. Amen.

Partiu neste galeão Manuel de Sousa, que Deus perdoe, para fazer esta desaventurada viagem de Cochim, a três de Fevereiro do ano de cinquenta e dois. E partiu tão tarde por ir carregar a Coulaão, e lá haver pouca pimenta, onde carregou obra de quatro mil e quinhentas, e veio a Cochim acabar de carregar a cópia de sete mil e quinhentas por toda com muito trabalho por causa da guerra que havia no Malavar. E com esta carga se partiu para o Reino podendo levar doze mil; e ainda que a nau levava pouca pimenta, nem por isso deixou de ir muito carregada de outras mercadorias, no que se havia de ter muito cuidado pelo grande risco que correm as naus muito carregadas.

A treze de Abril veio Manuel de Sousa haver vista da costa do Cabo em trinta e dois graus, e vieram ter tanto dentro, porque havia muitos dias que eram partidos da Índia, e tardaram muito em ver o Cabo por causa das ruins velas que traziam, que foi uma das causas e a principal de seu perdimento, porque o piloto André Vaz fazia seu caminho para ir à terra do cabo das Agulhas, e o capitão Manuel de Sousa lhe rogou que quisesse ir ver a terra mais perto; e o piloto, por lhe fazer a vontade, o fez; pela qual razão foram ver a Terra do Natal, e estando à vista dela, se lhe fez o vento bonança, e foi correndo a costa até ver o cabo das Agulhas, com prumo na mão, e sondando; e eram os ventos tais, que se um dia ventava levante, outro se levantava poente. E sendo já em onze de Março, eram nordeste sudoeste, com o cabo de Boa Esperança vinte e cinco léguas ao mar, ali lhe deu o vento oeste e o és-noroeste com muitos fuzis. E sendo perto da noite, o capitão chamou o mestre e o piloto, e lhes perguntou que deviam fazer com aquele tempo, pois lhe era pela proa, e todos responderam que era bom conselho arribar.

As razões que davam para arribar foram que a nau era muito grande, e muito comprida, e ia muito carregada de caixaria e de outras fazendas, e não traziam já outras velas, senão as que traziam nas vergas, que a outra esquipação levou um temporal que lhe deu na Linha, e estas eram rotas, que se não fiavam nelas; e que se parassem, e o tempo crescesse, e lhe fosse necessário arribar, lhe poderia o vento levar as outras velas que tinham, que era prejuízo para sua viagem e salvação, que não havia na nau outras; e tais eram aquelas que traziam, que tanto tempo punham em as remendar como em navegar. E uma das coisas por que não tinham dobrado o Cabo a este tempo, foi pelo tempo que gastavam em as amainar para coserem; e portanto o bom conselho era arribar com os papafigos grandes ambos baixos, porque dando-lhe somente a vela de proa, era tão velha, que estava mui certo levar-lha o vento

da verga pelo grande peso da nau, e ambos juntos, um ajudaria ao outro. E vindo assim arribando, que seriam cento e trinta léguas do Cabo, lhe virou o vento ao nordeste e ao lés-nordeste tão furioso, que os fez outra vez correr ao sul, e ao sudoeste; e com o mar que vinha feito de poente e o que o levante fez, meteu tanto mar, que cada balanço que o galeão tomava, parecia que o metia no fundo. E assim correram três dias, e ao cabo deles lhes tornou o vento a acalmar, e ficou o mar tão grande, e trabalhou tanto a nau, que perdeu três machos do leme do polegar em que está toda a perdição ou salvação de uma nau. E isto se não sabia de ninguém, somente o carpinteiro da nau que foi a ver o leme, e achou falta dos ferros e então se veio ao mestre, e lho disse em segredo, que era um Cristóvão Fernandes da Cunha, o Curto. E ele respondeu como bom oficial, e bom homem, que tal coisa não dissesse ao capitão, nem a outra nenhuma pessoa por não causar terror e medo na gente, e assim o fez.

Andando assim neste trabalho, tornou-lhe outra vez a faltar o vento a lés-sudoeste, e temporal desfeito, e já então parecia que Deus era servido do fim que ao depois tiveram. E indo com a mesma vela arribando outra vez, lançando-lhe o leme a banda, não quis a nau dar por ele, e toda se pôs de ló; o vento que era bravo lhe levou o papafigo da verga grande. Quando se viram sem vela, e que não havia outra, acudiram com diligência a tomar a vela de proa, e se quiseram antes aventurar a ficar de mar em través que ficarem sem nenhuma vela. O traquete de proa não era ainda acabado de tomar quando se a nau atravessou, e em se atravessando lhe deram três mares tão grandes que dos balanços que a nau deu lhe arrebentaram os aparelhos e costeiras da banda de bombordo, que não lhe ficaram mais que as três dianteiras.

E vendo-se com os aparelhos quebrados e sem nenhuma enxárcia no mastro daquela banda, lançaram a mão a uns viradores para fazerem uns brandais. E estando com esta obra na mão, andava o mar muito grosso, e lhe pareceu que por então era obra escusada, e que era melhor conselho cortar o mastro pelo muito que a nau trabalhava; o vento e o mar era tamanho que lhes não consentia fazer obra nenhuma, nem havia homem que se pudesse ter em pé.

Estando com os machados nas mãos começando já a cortar, vêem subitamente arrebentar o mastro grande por cima das polés das coroas, como se o cortaram de um golpe, e pela banda do estibordo o lançou o vento ao mar com a gávea e enxárcia, como que fora uma coisa muito leve; e então lhe

cortaram os aparelhos e enxárcia da outra banda, e todo junto se foi ao mar. E vendo-se sem mastro nem verga, fizeram no pé do mastro grande que lhe ficou um mastaréu de um pedaço de antena, bem pregada, e com as melhores arreataduras que puderam, e nele guarneceram uma verga para a vela da guia, e da outra antena fizeram uma verga para papafigo, e com alguns pedaços de velas velhas tornaram a guarnecer esta verga grande, e outro tanto fizeram para o mastro de proa. E ficou isto tão remendado e fraco que bastava qualquer vento para lhos tornar a levar.

E como tiveram tudo guarnecido deram às velas com o vento su-sueste. E como o leme vinha já com três ferros menos, que eram os principais, não lhe quis a nau governar, senão com muito trabalho, e já então as escotas lhe serviam de leme. E indo assim, foi o vento crescendo, e a nau aguçou de ló e pôs-se toda à corda, sem querer dar pelo leme, nem escotas. E desta vez lhe tornou a levar o vento a vela grande e a que lhes servia de guia; e vendo-se outra vez desaparelhados de velas, acudiram à vela da proa, e então se atravessou a nau e começou de trabalhar; e por o leme ser podre, um mar que lhe então deu lho quebrou pelo meio e levou-lhe logo metade, e todos os machos ficaram metidos nas fêmeas. Por onde se deve ter grande recato nos lemes e velas das naus, por causa de tantos trabalhos, quantos são os que nesta carreira se passam.

Quem entender bem o mar, ou todos os que nisto bem cuidarem, poderão ver qual ficaria Manuel de Sousa com sua mulher, e aquela gente, quando se visse em uma nau em cabo de Boa Esperança, sem leme, sem mastro e sem velas, nem de que as poder fazer. E já neste tempo trabalhava a nau tanto e fazia tanta água, que houveram por melhor remédio, para se não irem ao fundo a pique, cortarem o mastro da proa que lhe fazia abrir a nau; e estando para o cortar lhe deu um mar tão grande que lho quebrou pelos tamboretas e lho lançou ao mar, sem eles porem mais trabalho que o que tiveram em lhe cortar a enxárcia; e ao cair do mastro deu um golpe muito grande no gurupés, que lho lançou fora da carlinga e lho meteu por dentro da nau quase todo; e ainda foi algum remédio para lhe ficar alguma árvore; mas como tudo eram prognósticos de maiores trabalhos, nenhuma diligência por seus pecados lhe aproveitava. Ainda a este tempo não tinham vista da terra, depois que arribaram do Cabo, mas seriam dela quinze até vinte léguas.

Desde que se viram sem mastro, sem leme e sem velas, ficou-lhe a nau lançada no bordo da terra; e vendo-se Manuel de Sousa e oficiais sem

nenhum remédio, determinaram o melhor que puderam de fazer um leme, e de alguma roupa que traziam de mercadorias, fazerem algum remédio de velas, com que pudessem vir a Moçambique. E logo com muita diligência repartiram a gente, parte na obra do leme e parte em guarnecer alguma árvore, e a outra em fazer alguma maneira de velas, e nisto gastariam dez dias. E tendo o leme feito, quando o quiseram meter, lhe ficou estreito e curto, e não lhe serviu; e todavia deram às velas que tinham, para ver se haveria algum remédio de salvação, e foram para lançar o leme e a nau lhe não quis governar de nenhum modo, porque não tinham a bitola do outro que o mar lhe levara, e já então tinham vista da terra. E isto era aos oito de Junho; e vendo-se tão perto da costa, e que o mar e o vento os ia levando para a terra, e que não tinham outro remédio senão ir varar, por se não irem ao fundo, se encomendaram a Deus, e já então ia a nau aberta, que por milagre de Deus se sustentava sobre o mar.

Vendo-se Manuel de Sousa tão perto da terra e sem nenhum remédio, tomou o parecer de seus oficiais, e todos disseram que, para remédio de salvarem suas vidas do mar, era bom conselho deixarem-se ir assim até serem em dez braças, e como achassem o dito fundo surgissem para lançarem o batel fora para sua desembarcação; e lançaram logo uma manchua com alguns homens que fossem vigiar a praia onde dava melhor jazigo para poderem desembarcar, com acordo que, tanto que surgissem no batel e na manchua, depois de a gente ser desembarcada, tirem o mantimento e armas que pudessem, que a mais fazenda que do galeão se podia salvar, era para mais perdição sua, por causa dos cafres que os haviam de roubar. E sendo assim com este conselho, foram arribando ao som do mar e vento, alargando de uma banda e caçando da outra; já o leme não governava com mais de quinze palmos de água debaixo da coberta. E indo já a nau perto de terra, lançaram o prumo e acharam ainda muito fundo, e deixaram-se ir; e dali a um grande espaço, tomou a manchua a nau e disse que perto dali havia uma praia onde poderiam desembarcar, se a pudessem tomar; e que todo o mais era rocha talhada e grande penedia, onde não havia maneira de salvação.

Verdadeiramente que cuidarem os homens bem nisto, faz grande espanto! Vêm com este galeão varar em terra de cafres, havendo-o por melhor remédio para suas vidas, sendo este tão perigoso; e por aqui verão para quantos trabalhos estavam guardados Manuel de Sousa, sua mulher e filhos. Tendo já recado da manchua, trabalharam por ir contra aquela parte onde lhe demo-

rava a praia, até chegarem ao lugar, que a manchua lhe tinha dito, e já então eram sete braças, onde largaram uma âncora, e após isso, com muita diligência guarneceram aparelhos, com que lançaram fora o batel.

A primeira coisa que fizeram, como tiveram batel fora, foi portar outra âncora à terra, e já o vento era mais bonança e o galeão estava da terra dois tiros de besta. E vendo Manuel de Sousa como o galeão se lhe ia ao fundo sem nenhum remédio, chamou ao mestre e piloto, e disse-lhes que a primeira coisa que fizessem fosse pô-lo em terra com sua mulher e filhos, com vinte homens, que estivessem em sua guarda, e após isso tirasse as armas e mantimentos e pólvora e alguma roupa de Cambraia, para ver se havia na terra alguma maneira de resgate de mantimentos. E isto com fundamento de fazer forte naquele lugar, com tranqueiras de pipas, e fazerem ali algum caravelão da madeira da nau, em que pudessem mandar recado a Sofala. Mas como já estava de cima, que acabasse este capitão com sua mulher e filhos e toda sua companhia, nenhum remédio se podia cuidar, a que a fortuna não fosse contrária; que, tendo este pensamento de ali se fazer forte, lhe tomou o vento a ventar com tanto ímpeto e o mar cresceu tanto, que deu com o galeão à costa, por onde não puderam fazer nada do que cuidaram. A este tempo Manuel de Sousa, sua mulher e filhos, e obra de trinta pessoas estavam em terra, e toda a mais gente estava no galeão. Dizer o perigo que tiveram na desembarcação o capitão e sua mulher com estas trinta pessoas, fora escusado; mas por contar história verdadeira e lastimosa, direi que, de três vezes que a manchua foi a terra, se perdeu, donde morreram alguns homens, dos quais um era o filho de Bento Rodrigues; e até então o batel não tinha ido a terra, que não ousavam de o mandar, porque o mar andava mui bravo, e por a manchua ser mais leve, escapou aquelas duas vezes primeiras.

Vendo o mestre e piloto, com a mais gente que ainda estava na nau, que o galeão ia sobre a amarra da terra, entenderem que a amarra de mar se lhe cortara, porque o fundo era sujo, e havia dois dias que estavam surtos, e em amanhecendo ao terceiro dia, que viram que o galeão ficava só sobre a amarra da terra e o vento começava a ventar, disse o piloto a outra gente, a tempo que já a nau tocava: «Irmãos, antes que a nau abra e se nos vá ao fundo, quem se quiser embarcar comigo naquele batel o poderá fazer», e se foi embarcar, e fez embarcar o mestre, que era homem velho e a quem falecia já o espírito por sua idade; e com grande trabalho, por ser o vento forte, se

embarcaram no dito batel obra de quarenta pessoas; e o mar andava tão grosso em terra, que deitou o batel em terra feito em pedaços na praia. E quis Nosso Senhor, que desta batelada não morreu ninguém, que foi milagre, porque antes de vir a terra o soçobrou o mar.

O capitão, que o dia dantes se desembarcara, andava na praia esforçando os homens, e dando a mão aos que podia, os levava ao fogo que tinha feito, porque o frio era grande. Na nau ficaram ainda o melhor de quinhentas pessoas, a saber: duzentos portugueses e os mais escravos; em que entrava Duarte Fernandes, contramestre do galeão, e o guardião; e estando ainda assim a nau, que já dava muitas pancadas, lhes pareceu bom conselho alargarem a amarra por mão, por que fosse a nau bem a terra, e não a quiseram cortar para que a ressaca os não tomasse para o pego; e como a nau se assentou, em pouco espaço se partiu pelo meio, a saber, do mastro avante um pedaço, e outro do mastro à ré; e daí a obra de uma hora aqueles dois pedaços se fizeram em quatro, e como as aberturas foram arrombadas, as fazendas e caixas vieram acima, e a gente que estava na nau, se lançou sobre a caixaria e madeira a terra. Morreram em se lançando, mais de quarenta portugueses e setenta escravos; a mais gente veio a terra por cima do mar, e alguma por baixo, como o Nosso Senhor aprouve, e muita dela ferida dos pregos e madeira. Dali a quatro horas era o galeão desfeito, sem dele aparecer pedaço tamanho como uma braça, e tudo o mar deitou em terra, com grande tempestade.

E a fazenda que no galeão ia, assim de el-rei como de partes, dizem que valia um conto de ouros, porque, desde que a Índia é descoberta, até então não partiu nau de lá tão rica. E por se desfazer a nau em tantas migalhas, não pôde o capitão Manuel de Sousa fazer a embarcação que tinha determinado, que não ficou batel, nem coisa sobre que pudesse armar o caravelão, nem de que o fazer, por onde lhe foi necessário tomar outro conselho.

Vendo o capitão e sua companhia que não tinham remédio de embarcação, com conselho dos seus oficiais e dos homens fidalgos que em sua companhia levava (que era Pantaleão de Sá, Tristão de Sousa, Amador de Sousa, e Diogo Mendes Dourado, de Setúbal), assentaram que deviam de estar naquela praia onde saíram do galeão, alguns dias, pois ali tinham água, até lhe convalescerem os doentes. Então fizeram suas tranqueiras de algumas arcas e pipas, e estiveram ali doze dias, e em todos eles lhe não veio falar nenhum negro da terra; somente aos três primeiros apareceram nove cafres

em um outeiro, e ali estariam duas horas, sem terem nenhuma fala connosco; e como espantados se tornaram a ir. E dali a dois dias lhe pareceu bem mandarem um homem e um cafre do mesmo galeão, para ver se achavam alguns negros, que com eles quisessem falar para resgatarem algum mantimento. E estes andaram lá dois dias sem acharem pessoa viva, senão algumas casas de palha despovoadas, por onde entenderam que os negros fugiram com medo, e então se tomaram ao arraial, e em algumas das casas acharam frechas metidas, que dizem que é o seu sinal de guerra.

Dali a três dias, estando naquele lugar, onde escaparam do galeão, lhe apareceram em um outeiro sete, ou oito cafres com uma vaca presa, e por acenos os fizeram os cristãos descer abaixo. E o capitão com quatro homens foi falar com eles, e depois de os ter seguros, lhe disseram os negros, por acenos, que queriam ferro. Então o capitão mandou pôr meia dúzia de pregos e lhos amostrou, e eles folgaram de os ver, e se chegaram então mais para os nossos, e começaram a tratar o preço da vaca. E estando já consertados, apareceram cinco cafres em outro outeiro, e começaram a bradar por sua língua que não dessem a vaca a troco de pregos. Então se foram estes cafres, levando consigo a vaca, sem falar palavra. E o capitão lhes não quis tomar a vaca, tendo dela mui grande necessidade para sua mulher e filhos.

Assim estive sempre com muito cuidado e vigia, levantando-se cada noite três e quatro vezes a rondar os quartos, o que era grande trabalho para ele; e assim estiveram doze dias até que a gente lhe convalesceu; no cabo dos quais, vendo que já estavam todos para caminhar, os chamou a conselho sobre o que deviam fazer, e antes de praticarem o caso, lhes fez uma fala desta maneira:

«Amigos e senhores, bem vedes o estado a que por nossos pecados somos chegados, e eu creio verdadeiramente que os meus só bastavam para por eles sermos postos em tamanhas necessidades, como vedes que temos; mas é Nosso Senhor tão piedoso, que ainda nos faz tamanha mercê, que nós não fôssemos ao fundo naquela nau, trazendo tanta quantidade de água debaixo das cobertas; prazerá a Ele que, pois foi servido de nos levar a terra de cristãos, e os que nesta demanda acabaram com tantos trabalhos, haverá por bem que sejam para salvação de suas almas. Estes dias que aqui estivemos bem vedes, senhores, que foram necessários para nos convalescerem os doentes que trazíamos; já agora, Nosso Senhor seja louvado, estão para caminhar; e portanto vos ajuntei aqui para assentarmos que caminho havemos de

tomar para remédio de nossa salvação, que a determinação que trazíamos de fazer alguma embarcação, se nos atalhou, como vistes, por não podermos salvar da nau coisa nenhuma para a podermos fazer. E pois, senhores e irmãos, vos vai a vida, como a mim, não será razão fazer, nem determinar coisa sem conselho de todos. Uma mercê vos quero pedir, a qual é que me não desampareis nem deixeis, dado caso que eu não possa andar tanto como os que mais andarem, por causa de minha mulher e filhos. E assim todos juntos quererá Nosso Senhor, pela sua misericórdia, ajudar-nos».

Depois de feita esta fala, e praticarem todos no caminho que haviam de fazer, visto não haver outro remédio, assentaram que deviam de caminhar com a melhor ordem que pudessem ao longo dessas praias caminho do rio que descobriu Lourenço Marques, e lhe prometeram de nunca o desamparar, e logo o puseram por obra; ao qual rio haveria cento e oitenta léguas por costa, mas eles andaram mais de trezentas pelos muitos rodeios, que fizeram em quererem passar os rios e brejos, que achavam no caminho, e depois tornavam ao mar, no que gastaram cinco meses e meio.

Desta praia, onde se perderam em trinta e um graus aos sete de Julho de cinquenta e dois, começaram a caminhar com esta ordem, que se segue, a saber: Manuel de Sousa com sua mulher e filhos, com oitenta portugueses e cem escravos, e André Vaz, o piloto, na sua companhia, com uma bandeira com um crucifixo erguido, caminhava na vanguarda e D. Leonor, sua mulher, levavam-na escravos em um andor. Logo atrás vinha o mestre do galeão com a gente do mar e com as escravas. Na retaguarda caminhava Pantaleão de Sá com o resto dos portugueses e escravos, que seriam até duzentas pessoas, e todas juntas seriam quinhentas; das quais eram cento e oitenta portugueses. Desta maneira caminharam um mês com muitos trabalhos, fomes e sedes, porque em todo este tempo não comiam senão o arroz que escapara do galeão e algumas frutas do mato, que outros mantimentos da terra não achavam, nem quem os vendesse; por onde passaram tão grande esterilidade, qual se não pode crer nem escrever.

Em todo este mês poderiam ter caminhado cem léguas; e pelos grandes rodeios, que faziam no passar dos rios, não teriam andado trinta léguas por costa; e já então tinham perdidas dez ou doze pessoas; só um filho bastardo de Manuel de Sousa, de dez ou onze anos, que, vindo já muito fraco da fome, ele e um escravo, que o trazia às costas, se deixaram ficar atrás. Quando Manuel de Sousa perguntou por ele, que lhe disseram que ficava atrás obra

de meia légua, esteve para perder o siso; e por lhe parecer que vinha na traseira com seu tio Pantaleão de Sá, como algumas vezes acontecia, o perdeu assim; e logo prometeu quinhentos cruzados a dois homens que tornassem em busca dele, mas não houve quem os quisesse aceitar, por ser já perto da noite e por causa dos tigres e leões; porque, como ficava homem atrás, o comiam; por onde lhe foi forçado não deixar o caminho que levava, e deixar assim o filho, onde lhe ficaram os olhos. E aqui se poderá ver quantos trabalhos foram os deste fidalgo antes de sua morte. Era também perdido António de Sampaio, sobrinho de Lopo Vaz de Sampaio, governador que foi da Índia, e cinco ou seis homens portugueses e alguns escravos, de pura fome e trabalho do caminho.

Neste tempo tinham já pelejado algumas vezes, mas sempre os cafres levavam a pior, e em uma briga lhe mataram Diogo Mendes Dourado, que até sua morte tinha pelejado mui bem como valente cavaleiro. Era tanto o trabalho, assim da vigia, como da fome e caminho, que cada dia desfalecia mais a gente, e não havia dia que não ficasse uma ou duas pessoas por essas praias e pelos matos, por não poderem caminhar; e logo eram comidos dos tigres e serpentes, por haver na terra grande quantidade. E certo que ver ficar estes homens, que cada dia lhe ficavam vivos por esses desertos, era coisa de grande dor e sentimento para uns e para outros; porque o que ficava, dizia aos outros que caminhavam de sua companhia, porventura a pais e a irmãos e amigos, que se fossem muito embora, que os encomendassem ao Senhor Deus. Fazia isto tamanha mágoa ver ficar o parente e o amigo sem lhe poder valer, sabendo que dali a pouco espaço havia de ser comido de feras alimárias que, pois, faz tanta mágoa a quem o ouve, quanta mais fará a quem o viu e passou.

Com grandíssima desventura indo assim prosseguindo, ora se metiam no sertão a buscar de comer e a passar rios e se tornavam ao longo do mar subindo serras mui altas, ora descendo outras de grandíssimo perigo; e não bastavam ainda estes trabalhos, senão outros muitos, que os cafres lhe davam. E assim caminharam obra de dois meses e meio, e tanta era a fome e a sede que tinham, que os mais dos dias aconteciam coisas de grande admiração, das quais contarei algumas mais notáveis.

Aconteceu muitas vezes entre esta gente vender-se um púcaro de água de um quartilho por dez cruzados, e em um caldeirão que levava quatro canadas se fazia cem cruzados; e porque nisto às vezes havia desordem, o capitão

mandava buscar um caldeirão dela, por não haver outra vasilha maior na companhia, e dava por isso a quem a ia buscar cem cruzados; e ele por sua mão a repartia, e a que tomava para sua mulher e filhos, era a oito e dez cruzados o quartilho; e pela mesma maneira repartia a outra, de modo que sempre pudesse remediar, que com o dinheiro que em um dia se fazia naquela água, ao outro houvesse quem a fosse buscar e se pusesse a esse risco pelo interesse. E além disto passavam grandes fomes e davam muito dinheiro por qualquer peixe que se achava na praia ou por qualquer animal do monte.

Vindo caminhando por suas jornadas, segundo era a terra que achavam, e sempre com os trabalhos que tenho dito, seriam já passados três meses que caminhavam com determinação de buscar aquele rio de Lourenço Marques, que é a aguada de Boa Paz. Havia já muitos dias que se não mantinham senão de frutas, que acaso se achavam, e de ossos torrados; e aconteceu muitas vezes vender-se no arraial uma pele de uma cobra por quinze cruzados; e ainda que fosse seca a lançavam na água, e assim a comiam.

Quando caminhavam pelas praias, mantinham-se com marisco ou peixe, que o mar lançava fora. E no cabo deste tempo vieram ter com um cafre, senhor de duas aldeias, homem velho, e que lhes pareceu de boa condição, e assim o era pelo agasalho, que nele acharam, e lhes disse que não passassem dali, que estivessem em sua companhia, e que ele os manteria o melhor que pudesse, porque na verdade aquela terra era falta de mantimentos, não por ela os deixar de dar, senão porque os cafres são homens que não semeiam senão muito pouco, nem comem senão do gado bravo que matam.

Assim que este rei cafre apertou muito com Manuel de Sousa e sua gente que estivera com ele, dizendo-lhe que tinha guerra com outro rei, por onde eles haviam de passar, e queria sua ajuda, e que se passassem avante, que soubessem certo que haviam de ser roubados deste rei, que era mais poderoso que ele; de maneira que, pelo proveito e ajuda que esperava desta companhia, e também pela notícia que já tinha de portugueses por Lourenço Marques e António Caldeira, que ali estiveram, trabalhava quanto podia por que dali não passassem; e estes dois homens lhe puseram nome Garcia de Sá, por ser velho e ter muito o parecer com ele, e ser bom homem, que não há dúvida, senão que em todas as nações há maus e bons; e por ser tal fazia agasalhos, e honrava aos portugueses, e trabalhou quanto pôde que não passassem avante, dizendo-lhe que haviam de ser roubados daquele rei com que ele tinha guerra. E em se determinar se detiveram ali seis dias. Mas como



parece que estava determinado acabar Manuel de Sousa nesta jomada com a maior parte de sua companhia, não quiseram seguir o conselho deste reizinho, que os desenganava.

Vendo o rei que todavia o capitão determinava de se partir dali, lhe pediu que antes que se partisse o quisesse ajudar com alguns homens de sua companhia contra um rei, que atrás lhe ficava; e parecendo-lhe a Manuel de Sousa e aos portugueses, que se não podiam escusar de fazer o que lhe pedia, assim pelas boas obras e agasalho que dele receberam, como por razão de o não escandalizar, que estava em seu poder e de sua gente, pediu a Pantaleão de Sá, seu cunhado, que quisesse ir com vinte homens portugueses ajudar ao rei seu amigo. Foi Pantaleão de Sá com os vinte homens e quinhentos cafres e seus capitães, e tornaram atrás por onde eles já tinham passado seis léguas, e pelejaram com um cafre que andava levantado, e tomaram-lhe todo o gado, que são os seus despojos, e trouxeram-no ao arraial adonde estava Manuel de Sousa com el-rei; e nisto gastaram cinco ou seis dias.

Depois que Pantaleão de Sá veio daquela guerra em que foi ajudar ao reizinho e a gente que com ele foi, e descansou do trabalho que lá tiveram, tornou o capitão a fazer conselho sobre a determinação de sua partida, e foi tão fraco que assentaram que deviam de caminhar e buscar aquele rio de Lourenço Marques, e não sabiam que estavam nele, porque este rio é o da água de Boa Paz com três braços, que todos vem entrar ao mar em uma foz, e eles estavam no primeiro. E sem embargo de verem ali uma gorra vermelha, que era sinal de virem já ali portugueses, os cegou a sua fortuna, que não quiseram senão caminhar avante. E porque haviam de passar o rio, e não podia ser senão em almadias, por ser grande, quis o capitão ver se podia tomar sete ou oito almadias, que estavam fechadas com cadeias, para passar nelas o rio, que el-rei não lhas queria dar, porque toda a maneira buscava para não passarem, pelos desejos que tinha de os ter consigo. E para isso mandou certos homens a ver se podiam tomar as almadias, dois dos quais vieram e disseram que lhe era coisa dificultosa para se poder fazer. E os que se deixaram ficar já com malícia, houveram uma das almadias à mão, e embarcaram-se nela, e foram-se pelo rio abaixo, e deixaram a seu capitão. E vendo ele que nenhuma maneira havia de passar o rio senão por vontade do rei, lhe pediu o quisesse mandar passar da outra banda nas suas almadias, e que ele pagaria bem à gente que os levasse; e pelo contentar lhe deu algumas das suas armas, por que o largasse e o mandasse passar.

Então o rei foi em pessoa com ele, e estando os portugueses receosos de alguma traição ao passar do rio, lhe rogou o capitão Manuel de Sousa que se tornasse ao lugar com sua gente e que o deixasse passar à sua vontade com a sua, e lhe ficassem somente os negros das almadias. E como no reizinho negro não havia malícia, mas antes os ajudava no que podia, foi coisa leve de acabar com ele que se tornasse para o lugar, e logo se foi e deixou passar à sua vontade. Então mandou Manuel de Sousa passar trinta homens da outra banda nas almadias, com três espingardas; e como os trinta homens foram da outra banda, o capitão, sua mulher e filhos passaram além, e após eles toda a mais gente, e até então nunca foram roubados, e logo se puseram em ordem de caminhar.

Haveria cinco dias que caminhavam para o segundo rio, e teriam andado vinte léguas quando chegaram ao rio do meio, e ali acharam negros, que os encaminharam para o mar, e isto era já ao sol-posto, e estando à borda do rio, viram duas almadias grandes, e ali assentaram o arraial em uma areia onde dormiram aquela noite, e este rio era salgado, e não havia nenhuma água doce ao redor, senão uma que lhe ficava atrás. E de noite foi a sede tamanha no arraial que se houveram de perder; quis Manuel de Sousa mandar buscar alguma água, e não houve quem quisesse ir menos de cem cruzados cada caldeirão, e os mandou buscar, e em cada um dia fazia duzentos; e se o não fizera assim, não se pudera valer.

E sendo o comer tão pouco, como atrás digo, a sede era desta maneira, porque queria Nosso Senhor que a água lhes servisse de mantimentos. Estando naquele arraial ao outro dia perto da noite, viram chegar as três almadias de negros, que lhe disseram por uma negra do arraial, que começava já entender alguma coisa, que ali viera um navio de homens como eles, e que já era ido. Então lhe mandou dizer Manuel de Sousa se os queriam passar da outra banda, e os negros responderam que era já noite (porque cafres nenhuma coisa fazem de noite), que ao outro dia os passariam se lhes pagassem. Como amanheceu, vieram os negros com quatro almadias, e sobre preço de uns poucos de pregos, começaram a passar a gente, passando primeiro o capitão alguma gente para guarda do passo, e embarcando-se em uma almadia com sua mulher e filhos, para da outra banda esperar o resto da sua companhia; e com ele iam as outras três almadias carregadas de gente.

Também se diz que o capitão vinha já naquele tempo maltratado do miolo, da muita vigia, e muito trabalho, que carregou sempre nele mais que

em todos os outros. E por vir já desta maneira e cuidar que lhe queriam os negros fazer alguma traição, lançou mão à espada, e arrancou dela para os negros, que iam remando dizendo: «Perros, aonde me levais?».

Vendo os negros a espada nua, saltaram ao mar, e ali esteve em risco de se perder. Então lhe disse sua mulher, e alguns que com eles iam, que não fizesse mal aos negros, que se perderiam. Em verdade, quem conhecera a Manuel de Sousa e soubera sua discrição e brandura, e lhe vira fazer isto, bem poderia dizer que já não ia em seu perfeito juízo, porque era discreto e bem atentado; e dali por diante ficou de maneira que nunca mais governou a sua gente, como até ali o tinha feito. E chegando da outra banda, se queixou muito da cabeça, e nela lhe ataram toalhas, e ali se tornaram a ajuntar todos.

Estando já da outra banda para começar a caminhar, viram um golpe de cafres, e vendo-os se puseram em som de pelejar, cuidando que vinham para os roubar, e chegando perto da nossa gente, começaram a ter fala uns com os outros, perguntando os cafres aos nossos, que gente era, ou que buscava. Responderam-lhe que eram cristãos que se perderam em uma nau, e que lhe rogavam os guiassem para um rio grande que estava mais avante, e que se tinham mantimentos, que lhos trouxessem e lhos comprariam. E por uma cafra, que era de Sofala, lhe disseram os negros, que se queriam mantimentos, que fossem com eles a um lugar onde estava o seu rei, que lhes faria muito agasalho. A este tempo seriam ainda cento e vinte pessoas; e já então D. Leonor era uma das que caminhavam a pé, e sendo uma mulher fidalga, delicada e moça, vinha por aqueles ásperos caminhos tão trabalhosos como qualquer robusto homem do campo, e muitas vezes consolava as da sua companhia e ajudava a trazer seus filhos. Isto foi depois que não houve escravos para o andar em que vinha. Parece verdadeiramente que a graça de Nosso Senhor supria aqui; porque sem ela não pudera uma mulher tão fraca e tão pouco costumada a trabalhos, andar tão compridos e ásperos caminhos, e sempre com tantas fomes, e sedes, que já então passavam de trezentas léguas as que tinham andado, por causa dos grandes rodeios.

Tornando à história. Depois que o capitão e sua companhia tiveram entendido que o rei estava perto dali, tomaram os cafres por sua guia, e com muito recato caminharam com eles para o lugar que lhe diziam com tanta fome e sede, quanto Deus sabe. Dali ao lugar onde estava o rei havia uma légua, e como chegaram, lhe mandou dizer o cafre, que não entrassem no lugar, porque é coisa que eles muito escondem, mas que se fossem pôr ao pé

de umas árvores que lhe mostraram, e que ali lhe mandaria dar de comer. Manuel de Sousa o fez assim, como homem que estava em terra alheia, e que não tinham sabido tanto dos cafres, como agora sabemos por esta perdição e pela da nau *S. Bento*, que cem homens de espingarda atravessariam toda a Cafraria, porque maior medo tem delas que do mesmo demónio.

Depois de assim estar agasalhado à sombra das árvores, lhes começou a vir algum mantimento por seu resgate de pregos. E ali estiveram cinco dias, parecendo-lhe que poderiam estar até vir navio da Índia, e assim lho diziam os negros. Então pediu Manuel de Sousa uma casa ao rei cafre para se agasalar com sua mulher e filhos. Respondeu-lhe o cafre que lha dariam; mas que a sua gente não podia estar ali junta, porque se não poderia manter por haver falta de mantimentos na terra, que ficasse ele com sua mulher e filhos, com algumas pessoas quais ele quisesse, e a outra gente se repartisse pelos lugares, e que ele lhes mandaria dar mantimentos e casas até vir algum navio. Isto era a ruindade do rei, segundo parece, pelo que ao depois lhe fez. Por onde está clara a razão que disse, que os cafres tem grande medo de espingardas, porque não tendo ali os portugueses mais que cinco espingardas e até cento e vinte homens, se não atreveu o cafre a pelejar com eles; e a fim de os roubar, os apartou uns dos outros para muitas partes, como homens que estavam tão chegados à morte de fome; e não sabendo quanto melhor fora não se apartarem, se entregaram à fortuna e fizeram a vontade àquele rei, que tratava sua perdição, e nunca quiseram tomar o conselho do reizinho, que lhes falava verdade e lhes fez o bem que pôde. E por aqui verão os homens como nunca hão-de dizer nem fazer coisa em que cuidem que eles são os que acertam ou podem, senão pôr tudo nas mãos de Deus Nosso Senhor.

Depois que o rei cafre teve assentado com Manuel de Sousa que os portugueses se dividissem por diversas aldeias e lugares para se poderem manter, lhe disse também que ele tinha ali capitães seus, que haviam de levar a sua gente, a saber, cada um os que lhe entregassem para lhe darem de comer; e isto não podia ser senão com ele mandar aos portugueses, que deixassem as armas, porque os cafres haviam medo deles enquanto as viam, e que ele as mandaria meter em uma casa, para lhas dar tanto que viesse o navio dos portugueses.

Como Manuel de Sousa já então andava muito doente e fora de seu perfeito juízo, não respondeu, como fizera estando em seu entendimento; respondeu que ele falaria com os seus. Mas como a hora fosse chegada, em

que havia de ser roubado, falou com eles, e lhes disse que nem havia de passar dali, de uma ou de outra maneira havia de buscar remédio de navio, ou outro qualquer que Nosso Senhor dele ordenasse; porque aquele rio em que estavam, era de Lourenço Marques, e o seu piloto André Vaz assim lho dizia, que quem quisesse passar dali, que o poderia fazer, se lhe bem parecesse, mas que ele não podia, por amor de sua mulher e filhos, que vinha já mui debilitada dos grandes trabalhos, que não podia já andar nem tinha escravos que o ajudassem. E portanto a sua determinação era acabar com sua família, quando Deus disso fosse servido; e que lhe pedia que os que dali passassem, e fossem ter com alguma embarcação de portugueses, que lhe trouxessem ou mandassem as novas, e os que ali quisessem ficar com ele, o poderiam fazer; e por onde ele passasse, passariam eles.

E, porém, que para os negros se fiarem deles e não cuidarem que eram ladrões que andavam a roubar, que era necessário entregarem as armas, para remediar tanta desventura como tinham de fome havia tanto tempo. E já então o parecer de Manuel de Sousa, e dos que com ele consentiram não eram de pessoas que estavam em si; porque, se bem olharam, enquanto tiveram suas armas consigo, nunca os negros chegaram a eles. Então mandou o capitão que pusessem as armas, em que depois de Deus estava sua salvação, e contra a vontade de alguns e muito mais contra a de D. Leonor, as entregaram; mas não houve quem o contradissem senão ela, ainda que lhe aproveitou pouco. Então disse: «Vós entregais as armas, agora me dou por perdida com toda esta gente». Os negros tomaram as armas e as levaram a casa do rei cafre.

Tanto que os cafres viram os portugueses sem armas, como já tinham concertado a traição, os começaram logo a apartar e roubar, e os levaram por esses matos, cada um como lhe caía a sorte. E acabados de chegarem aos lugares, os levaram já despídos, sem lhes deixar sobre si coisa alguma, e com muita pancada, os lançavam fora das aldeias. Nesta companhia não ia Manuel de Sousa, que, com sua mulher e filhos e com o piloto André Vaz e obra de vinte pessoas, ficavam com o rei, porque traziam muitas jóias, e rica pedraria e dinheiro; e afirmam que o que esta companhia trouxe até ali, valia mais de cem mil cruzados. Como Manuel de Sousa, com sua mulher e com aquelas vinte pessoas foi apartado da gente, foram logo roubados de tudo o que traziam, somente os não despiram; e o rei lhe disse que se fosse muito embora em busca de sua companhia, que lhe não queria fazer mais mal, nem tocar



em sua pessoa, nem de sua mulher. Quando Manuel de Sousa isto viu, bem se lembraria quão grande erro tinha feito em dar as armas, e foi força de fazer o que lhe mandavam, pois não era mais em sua mão.

Os outros companheiros, que eram noventa, em que entrava Pantaleão de Sá e outros três fidalgos, ainda que todos foram apartados uns dos outros, poucos e poucos, segundo se acertaram, depois que foram roubados e despedidos pelos cafres a quem foram entregues por o rei, se tomaram a ajuntar; porque era perto uns dos outros, e juntos bem maltratados e bem tristes, faltando-lhe as armas, vestidos e dinheiro para resgate de seu mantimento, e sem o seu capitão, começaram de caminhar.

E como já não levavam figura de homens, nem quem os governasse, iam sem ordem, por desvairados caminhos; uns por matos, e outros por serras, se acabaram de espalhar, e já então cada um não curava mais que fazer aquilo em que lhe parecia que podia salvar a vida, quer entre cafres, quer entre outros mouros; porque, já então não tinham conselho, nem quem os ajuntasse para isso. E como homens que andavam já de todo perdidos, deixarei agora de falar neles, e tornarei a Manuel de Sousa e a desditosa de sua mulher e filhos.

Vendo-se Manuel de Sousa roubado e despedido de el-rei que fosse buscar sua companhia, e que já então não tinha dinheiro, nem armas, nem gente para as tomar, e dado caso que já havia dias que vinha doente da cabeça, todavia sentiu muito esta afronta. Pois que se pode cuidar de uma mulher muito delicada, vendo-se em tantos trabalhos e com tantas necessidades e sobre todas ver seu marido diante de si tão maltratado, e que não podia já governar, nem olhar por seus filhos? Mas como mulher de bom juízo, com o parecer desses homens, que ainda tinha consigo, começaram a caminhar por esses matos, sem nenhum remédio, nem fundamento, somente o de Deus. A este tempo estava ainda André Vaz, o piloto, em sua companhia, e o contramestre, que nunca a deixou, e uma mulher ou duas portuguesas e algumas escravas. Indo assim caminhando, lhes pareceu bom conselho seguir os noventa homens que avante iam roubados, e havia dois dias que caminhavam, seguindo suas pisadas. E D. Leonor ia já tão fraca, tão triste e desconsolada, por ver seu marido da maneira que ia, e por se ver apartada da outra gente e ter por impossível poder-se ajuntar com eles, que cuidar bem nisto é coisa para quebrar os corações! Indo assim caminhando, tornaram outra vez os cafres a dar nele e em sua mulher e em esses poucos que iam em sua companhia, e ali os despiram, sem lhe deixarem sobre si

coisa alguma. Vendo-se ambos desta maneira com duas crianças muito tenras diante de si, deram graças a Nosso Senhor. Aqui dizem, que D. Leonor se não deixava despir, e que às punhadas e às bofetadas se defendia, porque era tal que queria antes que a matassem os cafres que ver-se nua diante da gente, não há dúvida que logo ali acabara sua vida se não fora Manuel de Sousa, que lhe rogou se deixasse despir, que lhe lembrava que nasceram nus, e pois Deus daquilo era servido, que o fosse ela. Um dos grandes trabalhos que sentiam, era verem dois meninos pequenos, seus filhos, diante de si chorando, pedindo de comer, sem lhe poderem valer. E vendo-se D. Leonor despida, lançou-se logo no chão, e cobriu-se toda com os seus cabelos, que eram muito compridos, fazendo uma cova na areia, onde se meteu até à cintura, sem mais se erguer dali. Manuel de Sousa foi então a uma velha sua aia, que lhe ficara ainda uma mantilha rota, e lha pediu para cobrir D. Leonor, e lha deu; mas contudo nunca mais se quis erguer daquele lugar, onde se deixou cair, quando se viu nua.

Em verdade que não sei quem por isto passe sem grande lástima e tristeza. Ver uma mulher tão nobre, filha e mulher de fidalgo tão honrados, tão maltratada e com tão pouca cortesia! Os homens que estavam ainda em sua companhia, quando viram a Manuel de Sousa e sua mulher despidos, afastaram-se deles um pedaço, pela vergonha, que houveram de ver assim seu capitão e D. Leonor. Então disse ela a André Vaz o piloto: «Bem vedes como estamos, e que já não podemos passar daqui, e que havemos de acabar por nossos pecados; ide-vos muito embora, fazei por vos salvar, e encomendai-nos a Deus; e se fordes à Índia, e a Portugal em algum tempo, dizei como nos deixastes a Manuel de Sousa, e a mim com meus filhos». E eles, vendo que por sua parte não podiam remediar a fadiga de seu capitão, nem a pobreza e miséria de sua mulher e filhos, se foram por esses matos, buscando remédio de vida.

Depois que André Vaz se apartou de Manuel de Sousa e sua mulher, ficou com ele Duarte Fernandes, contramestre do galeão, e algumas escravas, das quais se salvaram três, que vieram a Goa, que contaram como viram morrer D. Leonor. E Manuel de Sousa ainda que estava maltratado do miolo, não lhe esquecia a necessidade que sua mulher e filhos passavam de comer. E sendo ainda manco de uma ferida que os cafres lhe deram em uma perna, assim maltratado se foi ao mato buscar frutas para lhe dar de comer; quando tornou, achou D. Leonor muito fraca, assim de fome, como de

chorar, que depois que os cafres a despiram, nunca mais dali se ergueu, nem deixou de chorar; e achou um dos meninos mortos, e por sua mão o enterrou na areia. Ao outro dia tomou Manuel de Sousa ao mato a buscar alguma fruta, e quando tornou, achou D. Leonor falecida e o outro menino, e sobre ela estavam chorando cinco escravas com grandíssimos gritos.

Dizem que ele não fez mais, quando a viu falecida, que apartar as escravas dali e assentar-se perto dela, com o rosto posto sobre uma mão, por espaço de meia hora, sem chorar, nem dizer coisa alguma, estando assim com os olhos postos nela, e no menino fez pouca conta. E acabando este espaço se ergueu, e começou a fazer uma cova na areia com ajuda das escravas, e sempre sem se falar palavra, a enterrou e o filho com ela, e acabado isto, tornou a tomar o caminho que fazia quando ia a buscar as frutas, sem dizer nada às escravas, e se meteu pelo mato, e nunca mais o viram. Parece que andando por esses matos, não há dúvida senão que seria comido de tigres e leões. Assim acabaram sua vida, mulher e marido, havendo seis meses, que caminhavam por terras de cafres com tantos trabalhos.

Os homens que escaparam de toda esta companhia, assim dos que ficaram com Manuel de Sousa quando foi roubado, como dos noventa que iam diante dele caminhando, seriam até oito portugueses e catorze escravos e três escravas das que estavam com D. Leonor ao tempo que faleceu. Entre os quais foi Pantaleão de Sá e Tristão de Sousa e o piloto André Vaz e Baltasar de Sequeira e Manuel de Castro e este Álvaro Fernandes. E andando estes já na terra sem esperança de poderem vir a terra de cristãos, foi ter àquele rio um navio em que ia um parente de Diogo de Mesquita fazer marfim, onde, achando novas que havia portugueses perdidos pela terra, os mandou buscar e os resgatou a troco de contas, e cada pessoa custaria dois vinténs de contas, que entre os negros é coisa que eles mais estimam; e se neste tempo fora vivo Manuel de Sousa, também fora resgatado. Mas parece que foi assim melhor para sua alma, pois Nosso Senhor foi servido. E estes foram ter a Moçambique a vinte e cinco de Maio de mil e quinhentos e cinquenta e três anos.

Pantaleão de Sá, andando vagabundo muito tempo pelas terras dos cafres, chegou ao paço quase consumido com fome, nudez e trabalho de tão dilatado caminho, e chegando-se à porta do paço, pediu aos áulicos lhe alcançassem do rei algum subsídio. Recusaram eles pedir-lhe tal coisa, desculpando-se com uma grande enfermidade que o rei havia tempos

padecia; e perguntando-lhes o ilustre português que enfermidade era, lhe responderam que uma chaga em uma perna tão pertinaz e corrupta que todos os instantes lhe esperavam a morte. Ouviu ele com atenção, e pediu fizessem sabedor ao rei da sua vinda, afirmando que era médico e que poderia talvez restituir-lhe a saúde. Entram logo muito alegres, noticiam-lhe o caso, pede instantemente o rei, que lho levem dentro; e depois que Pantaleão de Sá viu a chaga lhe disse: «Tenha muita confiança, que facilmente receberá saúde», e saindo para fora, se pôs a considerar a empresa em que se tinha metido, donde não poderia escapar com vida, pois não sabia coisa alguma que pudesse aplicar-lhe, como quem tinha aprendido mais a tirar vidas, que a curar achaques para as conservar. Nesta consideração, como quem já não fazia caso da sua, e apeteendo ante morrer uma só vez do que tantas, urina na terra e, feito um pouco de lodo, entrou dentro a pôr-lho na quase incurável chaga. Passou pois aquele dia, e ao seguinte, quando o ilustre Sá esperava mais a sentença da sua morte do que remédio algum para a vida, tanto sua como do rei, saem fora os palacianos com notável alvoroço, e querendo-o levar em braços, lhes perguntou a causa de tão súbita alegria. Responderam que a chaga com o medicamento que se lhe aplicara, gastara todo o podre, e aparecia só a carne, que era sã e boa. Entrou dentro o fingido médico, e vendo que era como eles afirmavam, mandou continuar com o remédio; com o qual em poucos dias cobrou inteira saúde; o que visto, além de outras honras puseram a Pantaleão de Sá em um altar, e venerando-o como divindade, lhe pediu el-rei ficasse no seu paço, oferecendo-lhe metade do seu Reino; e senão que lhe faria tudo o que pedisse; recusou Pantaleão de Sá a oferta, afirmando lhe era preciso voltar para os seus. E mandando o rei trazer uma grande quantia de ouro e pedraria, o premiou grandemente, mandando juntamente aos seus o acompanhassem até Moçambique.

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