THE RETURN VOYAGE

[Calicut to Angediva]

On Wednesday, which was the 29th of August, seeing that we had already found and discovered what we had come in search of, both in terms of spices and precious stones, and as it seemed unlikely that we could establish peace and cordial relations with the people here, the Captain major and the other captains agreed, that we should depart. [They decided] to take with us the men that we held, as they, upon returning to Calicut, might help us establish friendly relations.

We therefore set sail and departed for Portugal, greatly rejoicing at our good fortune in discovering the great things that we had found!

On Thursday [30 August] at noon while becalmed about a league below [north] of Calicut, about seventy boats approached us,1 crowded with men; wearing cuirasses of red folded cloth, much like a strong leather breastplate. Their weapons for the body, arms, and head were these…(the author has omitted to tell us how these weapons were made).2

As soon as they came within range of our ship’s bombards, the Captain major ordered his ship and the others to fire upon them. But they followed us for about an hour and a half. As they were doing this, a thunderstorm broke which carried us out to sea; and when they saw that they could no longer do us harm, they returned to shore, while we continued with our route.

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1 Castanheda LI C. XXV (62) used the term *tones* when describing these boats, implying that they were rowed and made of planks sewn together with coir rope. Cf. Ravenstein, *Journal*, p. 77 n. 1.

2 This interpolation by the copyist confirms that the manuscript is not the original.
From this land of Calicut, which is also called Upper India, comes the spices that are consumed in the east and west, in Portugal, and in all the countries of the world. Precious stones of every type also come from this city called Calicut. That is: in this city there are, of local production, the following spices: much ginger; pepper, cinnamon, even though this is not as fine as that coming from an island, called Çilam [Ceylon], which is eight days journey from Calicut. All this cinnamon passed through the city of Calicut. There is an island, called Melaca [Melaka], which sends cloves to this city. The ships from Meca [Mecca] load spices here and carry them to a city in Mecca, called Judea [Jidda]. And from this island [Melaka] to there [Jidda] takes fifty days of sailing before the wind, since the ships of this country cannot tack; and there they unload their cargoes, and they pay the Grand Sultan his customs duties. And from there the merchandise is transshipped in smaller vessels, which carry it up the Red Sea to a place close to Santa Catarina of Mount Sinai, called Tuur, and here again customs duties are paid. From that place the merchants load the spices on camels, hired for four cruzados each, and they carry it to Quayro [Cairo] in ten days’ time, and here they pay more customs duties. On this road to Cairo, many times they are robbed by thieves who live in that country, like the Bedouins and others.

Here [Cairo] the spices are loaded on ships plying a river, called the Nile, which rises from the land of Prester John, in Lower India; and descending this river for two days they reach a place called Roxete [Rosetta], where they pay more duties. There the spices are loaded on camels, and brought in a day to a city called Alexandria, which is a seaport. The galleys of Venice and Genoa come to this city of Alexandria in search of these spices, which yield the Grand Sultan a revenue

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3 As Ravenstein Journal, p. 78 n. 1, noted, this should be “Arabia.”
4 This was Az-Zahir Qanshaw (1498–1500) of the Circassian Burji Mamluk dynasty which ruled Egypt from 1250 to 1517.
5 In the first edition of the Roteiro, Kopke had identified this place with Suez. Ravenstein citing M.F. Denis argued for Tor (El Tor or Tur Sinai). Given the fact that the port of El Tor then dominated the shipping of the Gulf of Suez and given its proximity to the Monastery of St. Catherine, this seems like a logical revision.