

“DO I THUS START MY PEREGRINATION”

Who is this Mendes Pinto Anyway?

"When I recall the travails and misfortunes I endured, beginning in my childhood and all through the best days of my life, I'm lead to think that in good reason I may complain about fortune, a fortune that seems to have taken into itself to persecute me and to broken me, as if that could bring her the highest renown and the highest glory. Because it is plain that fortune - not happy enough with putting me in my home country in my days of youth in such a state that I only endured miseris, poverty, and mischievous accidents that even endangered my life - decided to take me to India where, instead of finding the remedy that I was searching for, I only found more and more travails and dangers.

But, on the other hand, when I notice that in all those dangers and travails God always found a way to place me in safety, I'm lead to conclude that there is less reason to complain about the past wrongs, than there is reason to thank the Lord for His gift of allowing me to live long enough to lay down these plain and crude writings that I leave in inheritance to my children. For them only am I writing it so that they may know about the travails and dangerous moments that spent twenty-one years of my life, in which I was held captive for 13th times, and for 17 sold as a slave, in India, Etiopia, Arabia Felix, China, Tartaria, Macassar, Samatra, and countless other parts of that eastern archipelago in the outskirts of Asia that is known in the geographies of the Chinese, Siamese, Gueus, or Lequios as the Eyelash of the World."

Peregrinação, chapter 1

It was the year of the Grace of 1498. Two *nau* and a *caravela* reached the shores of Calecute the most important centre of the Malabar coast of India, manned by 160 soldiers and sailors under the captainship of one Vasco da Gama, until then the obscure offshoot of a minor noble family from Portugal. For him and his men was reserved the glory of bridging Europe and Asia by sea after millennia of European expansion and three generations of Portuguese discoveries.

Soon Portuguese ships trailed in the steps of Vasco da Gama grafting for their king a presence in Asia. They ventured in all directions, from the southern shores of the Middle East to the coasts of the Gulf of Bengal, from the islands of South East Asia to distant China and behind. Envoys were sent to Monomotapa and the fabled Prestes João of Abissinia in Africa; to the king of Persia and the kinglets of Arabia; to the Maharaja of Bisnaga and the Grão Mogor of Northern India; to the eights of Nepal and the steppes of Mongolia; to the kings of Pegu, Siam, Arracão and the Emperor of China. Lands until then wrapped in myth, suddenly became no less real and attainable than any well-trodden destiny of Europe.

It was not a peaceful journey. The newly arrived Portuguese disrupted ancient routes that connected all parts of Asia and linked Asia to Europe. Old and well-established interests could not leave the challenge unanswered. From Cairo to Calecute, from Sofala to Malaca, From Venice to Samatra, a whole network of traders – mostly

** Both the nau and the caravela are ocean-going sailing ships used by the Portuguese in their voyages of exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries.*

Muslims – saw their business endangered. They reacted accordingly. Vasco da Gama was the first to taste that opposition, be it open or concealed, soft spoken or heavy handed, purely commercial or at the tip of the sword. None of those that followed in his steps would be spared from it.

The Portuguese reaction was up to measure: one after the other they tried to seize the key ports and the trade routes in the spice trade, either with a carrot of gold, or with a stick of steel. That was to be the work of D. Francisco de Almeida, first Vice-Roy and victor of the Mamelucos fleet off the coast of Diu in 1508, and Albuquerque, the conqueror of Ormuz (1509), Goa (1510) and Malaca (1511).

NAMES OF PERSONALITIES, PLACES AND THINGS

As it fits the setting, you will find many names of people and places in European (mostly Portuguese) and Asian languages other than English. We decided to follow the next rules when handling those names:

- European names of people are given in their Portuguese expression, even if there is an English equivalent, since at the time there was the practice to use the name as employed in the Portuguese language or to alliterate it into it. So, we use “João” instead of “John” or “Jean”, “Estevão” instead of “Stephen” or “Esteban”. We do this even if the person in case is a British national.
- For Asian names of people and places we employ the Portuguese word that was in current use at the time. For instance, we use “Bisnaga” instead of “Vijayanagar” and “Maluco” instead of “Molucas” (modern Portuguese) or “Malucco” (English).
- For the names of common things we use English. If the English word is not commonly used today, we use Portuguese. So, we use “caravela” instead of “caravel”.

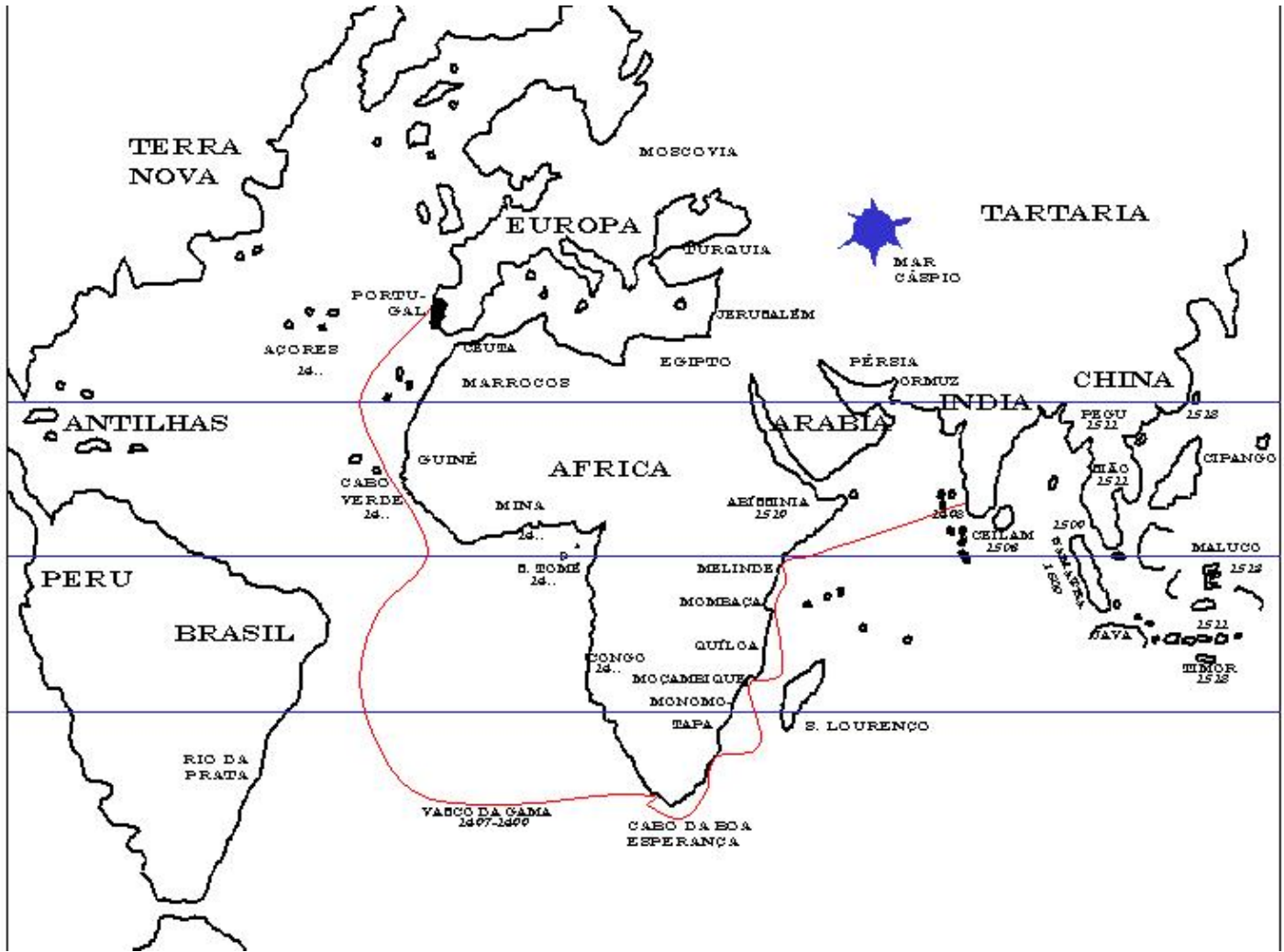
For D. Manuel, the king of Portugal, there were other reasons for concern: others might try to dispossess him of his prized trophy. They tried. First there were the Spanish, ironically under a Portuguese captain, Fernão de Magalhães. Sailing from east to west across a deceptively Pacific Ocean, they reached the Portuguese treasure trove of Asia with claims for a share. But the voyage was too long and uncertain and the New World presented better prospects. Eventually the Spanish would carve their minor presence in Asia, a presence that didn't dent on Portuguese interests.

Next came the French. Where the king of France deigned not put his will, the privateer saw his opportunity. A French expedition was sent in the 1520ths to Asia financed by merchants. Alas, Fortune did not have the *fleur-de-lis* close to its hearth. The expedition found its doom off the coasts of Samatra. No further attempts were made from France to get a slice of the spice trade.

The Venetians, enclosed in the Mediterranean and pressured by the Turks, had no option but to helplessly watch their interests soar as the Portuguese diverted the spices from the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. The English were too concerned with their own matters while the Low Countries, the Germans, and the Genovese all had their stake in the Portuguese venture.

For a whole century Portugal, the westernmost kingdom of Europe, was able to hold in his hands the key to Asia. No wonder that Lisbon looked like the portal to an Eldorado, not of gold, but of riches that not even gold could buy. From all over Europe men converged to the shores of the Tejo. Granted, most of them were Portuguese, but no few were Dutch, German, English, Scott, Italian, Spanish, French, Slavic, and whatever. No matter what the guise they chose to get access to the causeways to the *naus* – be it as soldiers, sailors, priests, literates –, all of them had their mind set in distant lands, peoples, and fortunes. Neither did status prove to be an obstacle: nobleman and villain, freeman and convicted, rich and poor, all looked for their opportunity to take their part

in the great enterprise. Year after year, thousands of men – and some tens of women – departed to India, and from India they spread in all directions, specially to the Far East where the rewards were bigger, and the king’s hand’s reach was shorter.



These were men like Fernão Mendes Pinto. As countless other anonymous soldiers and adventurers he attempted his fortune in Asia. Yet only Fernão Mendes decided to record his experiences in a book – *Peregrinação**. There he narrates his adventures, the fortunes and misfortunes incurred all through twenty years in Asia. In his many travels he was a soldier, diplomat, slave, merchant, missionary, beggar, pirate. It’s men like him that are to be played in *The Travels of Mendes Pinto* (TToMP from now on), a role-playing game set in 16th century Asia. Like Mendes Pinto, they set sail from Lisbon to Goa, India, as soldiers contracted to serve in the Portuguese factories, fortresses or towns spread in the seashores of the Indian Ocean and the China Sea. Like him they look for the fortunes and honours that are unreachable at home.

* *Peregrinação* has been translated into English either as “*Peregrination*” or “*The Travels of Mendes Pinto*”. Check with your bookshop or library for a copy.

So, come and take your place in the *nau*, let’s sail to India. It’s your turn to craft a new fortune, get new honours, start a new destiny.

Game conventions and setup

As in any other role-playing game* there will be a group of players impersonating different characters (Player Characters or PCs) and a Game Master playing the *deus ex machina* of Asia, the setting where the PCs evolve. It's up to the Game Master to define the nature of events, and to monitor the behaviour of creatures and persons with which the PCs interact (Non-Player Characters or NPCs).

In order to play all is needed is writing material to take notes and a lot of imagination plus several ten sided dice (d10)– we recommend at least four. Miniatures and other similar «tabletop stage properties» are optional but may come handy if it suits the gaming style of the group of players.

Game situations and their resolution. Game situations correspond to any natural event or interaction between NPC and NPC, PC and NPC or PC and PC. In the course of the game each player defines how his PC reacts in the game situations he faces while the GM determines the flow of natural events and the actions of the NPCs. In any case, the unfolding of events and character behaviour within the game situation can be established in one of three ways:

- *Automatic method.* What the players say that happens, happens.
- *Deliberate method.* Players state the intentions and behaviour of the characters and arbitrate how these translate into an outcome based on the likelihood of the possible results.
- *Random method.* Players state the intention and behaviour of their characters and arbitrate the corresponding results based on a random factor generated with dice.

The deliberate and random method work on the assumption that the outcome of the game situation cannot be predicted or foreseen with certainty by the characters since it is subject to the intervention of conflicting forces – of which the behaviour of the characters is only one. In any case, it is likely that each character foresees a desired outcome – the one he may want to achieve with his action.

Both the deliberate and the random methods to handle situations require the players to take into account the different factors that influence the unfolding of the events. Some of those factors may contribute to the realization of the desired outcome, so we call them **bonus**. Conversely, we call **penalties** factors that may jeopardise the fruition of that outcome.

In any game situation the players should list both bonus and penalties and do their balance by subtracting the later from the former. The end result is the situational balance expressed as a bonus or a penalty number.

When applying the deliberate method for situation resolution all one has to do is to interpret the balance between bonus and penalties in order to define the course of events.

When recurring to the random method, the balance is converted into a dice-pool. The result generated through the corresponding dice roll provides the clue that allows the players to decide on the course of events in the game situation.

The dice-pool. In order to handle game situations through the random method TToMP uses 10-sided dice (d10). In each situation the players have to define the set of dice to use. This is called the dice-pool. It is used according to the next conventions:

* *A role-playing game is a game of character development, simulating the process of personal development commonly called "life"*
RuneQuest, 1978

- The player must roll at least one die – called the Basic Die (BD) – plus the balance of bonus and penalty factors that apply to the situation.
- If the balance is a bonus, the player rolls the BD plus an amount of extra dice equal to the bonus and retains the highest value rolled. This is notated as $BD+nb$ where n is the value of the bonus.
- If the balance corresponds to a penalty, the player rolls the BD plus an amount of extra dice equal to the penalty and retains the lowest value rolled. This is notated as $BD+np$ where n is the value of the penalty.

Even if it may sound obvious, it's important to emphasize that in any situation the player only retains the value of a die and that the highest that value, the better since it corresponds to the closeness between the desired outcome and the realized outcome.

Marcia makes a roll in a situation where her PC gets 3b and 1p for a balance of 2b. So she rolls $BD2b = 3d10$ and gets 2, 4 and 8. She picks the 8 – the highest value rolled – and discards the other two dice.

John is to make a roll in a situation where his PC is an under-performer (his balance is 1p). He rolls $BD1p = 2d10$ and gets a 3 and a 6. He discards the 6 and retains the 3.

The Asia of Mendes Pinto

The Asia of Mendes Pinto extends from the eastern coast of Africa to the China Sea. Most of the years he lived there were spent in South East Asia and the Far East. This long stretch of seas and lands was almost outside of the control of the *Estado da India**. For adventurers like Mendes Pinto, always looking for an expedite way to harvest riches and honours, prospects increased while outside the reach of the king's administration. There the adventurer was free to care only for his fortune, be it as a mercenary or a merchant, by becoming a privateer or an outright pirate, by settling as a *casado* or wandering as an *embarcadiço* (sailor).

** Estado da India refers to the Asian territories under the rule of the Portuguese king.*

PORTUGUESE SPELLING

All through this book you will find names of places and people that are Portuguese in origin or were adapted to the Portuguese language. Most of the time you should not worry about the exact pronunciation of Portuguese words and may pronounce it the way that seems best to you. After all, this is a game and not a learning book (you may always consult specialized books or internet sites to get the full picture on this issue). Yet, you may find useful to have some guidelines on some particular sounds:

- a : always sounds like either one of the “a” in *MArgAreth*.
- e : is mute like the “e” in *namE* or sounds like either “e” in *bEst* or like “e” in *End*.
- ã and õ : they sound like “an” and “on” respectively.
- ãe : a sound that is hard to pronounce by English speakers. Read it as “ay” in *lAYman*, or as “i” in *Llence*.
- ão : another sound that is hard to pronounce. Read it as “ou” in *thOUsand* or as “on”.
- õe : still another unpronounceable sound. Read it as “oy” in *cOYote*.
- ç : always used before “a”, “o” or “u”, it sounds like the “ss” in *aSSaSSin*.
- nh : the equivalent of the French and Italian “gn” or the Spanish “ñ”. Most English speakers read it as “ny”. For instance, “Mascarenhas” is pronounced as “MascareNYas”.
- lh : another difficult sound. Read it as “li”. For instance, read “carvalho” as *carvaLlIo*.
- ch : it always sounds like the “sh” in *aSHes*.

Abissinia. Also called Etiopia, it's the fabled land of the Prestes João (Prester John), a mythical emperor. Abissinia is a Christian kingdom surrounded by Muslim states to the

North and East, and animist tribes to the West. It is governed by the Negus (that the Portuguese keep calling Prestes João) but has been almost completely conquered by the King of Afar, a Muslim leader from the port of Afar in the coast. The Prestes João has been calling for the Portuguese help to free his country, so far unsuccessfully since there are no major strategic or economic interests in this distant land.

Achem. A Muslim kingdom situated in the north of Samatra. Its economic and political position is derived from trade with links to India, the Ottomans and all around South East Asia. It's one of the biggest opponents of the Portuguese in the region.

Arabia. Mostly desert, Arabia hosts countless fiercely independent tribes and kinglets. Yet the Ottoman conquest put all of them under the more or less effective rule of the Sublime Porte of Istanbul. For the coastal cities and villages, piracy, privateering and mercenary activities are as important as trade and fishing. The Portuguese were never able to secure a port at the mouth of the Red Sea that could allow them to put a stop to the Red Sea trade between Asia and Europe.

Bengala. *“It has a Moorish king, the inhabitants are white men, very apessoados. There are also many foreigners from many places as Arabians, Persians, Abissinians, and Indians. And that since the land is very rich, and wealthy and mild”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

Many Portuguese adventurers and traders settled in the coasts of Bengala, a Muslim kingdom of North Eastern India famed for its riches and civilized manners.

Bisnaga. The capital of Narsinga, it's a wondrous city of majestic buildings.

Borneu. An island inhabited by small animist tribes. There are some small states along the coast that usually pay tribute to more important powers like Achem and Pão.

Calecute. *“Lays the city of Calecute where the trade was and is more in the hands of foreigners than the sons of the soil, and where our lord the king – according to the will of the king of the city – has a very strong fortress”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

The most important state of Malabar, opposed the Portuguese presence due to the influence of Muslim traders that feared to lose their position in the spice trade if it was diverted from the Red Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. It has been at intermittent war with the Portuguese and their allies of Cochin ever since 1500.

Cambaia. *“Has very good houses, very high with windows and covered with tiles according to our usages, in finely traced streets with beautiful squares and big buildings, all made of stone and lime”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

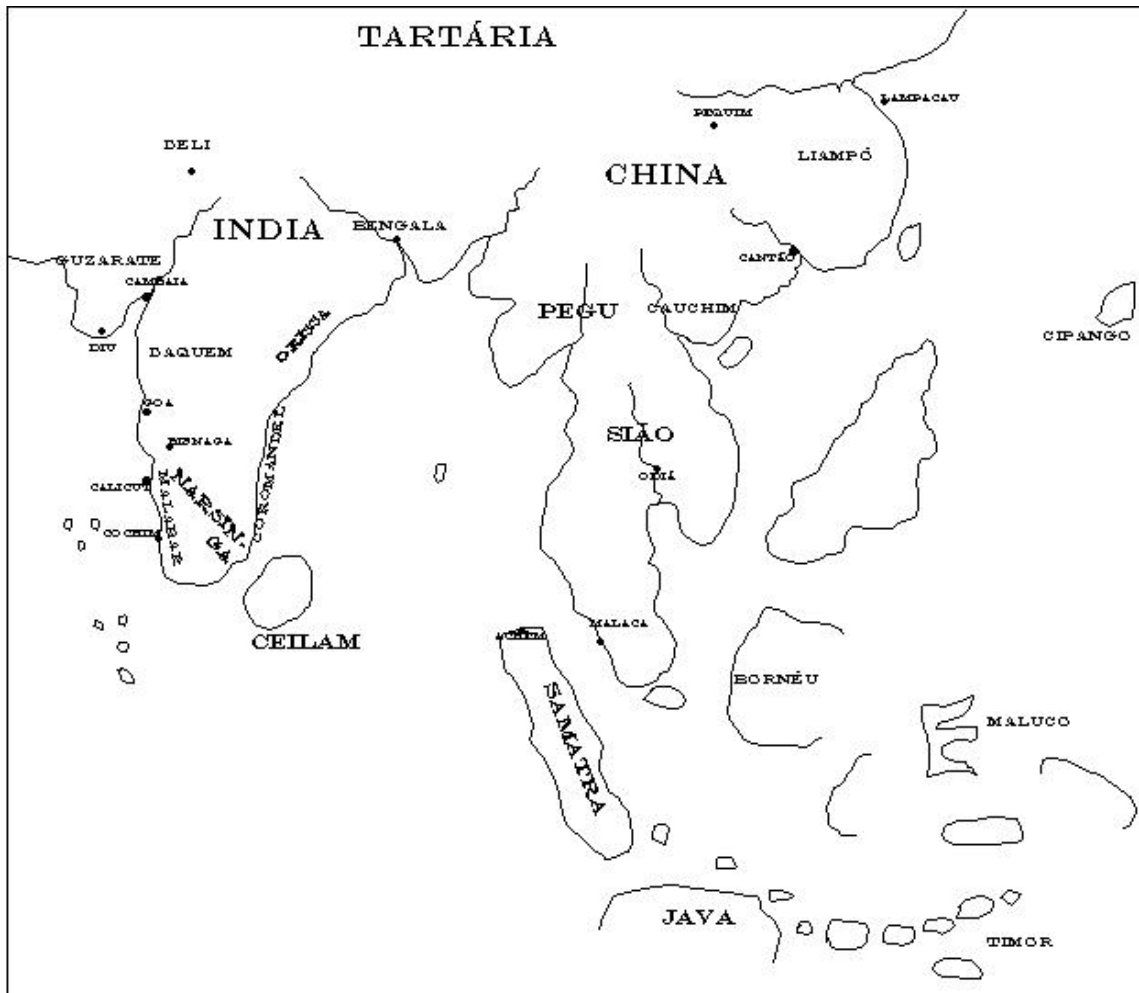
The capital of the kingdom of Guzarate.

Cauchim. The transition region between South East Asia and China. It's under the suzerainty of the Chinese king.

Ceilam. *“lays the great island that the moors, arabians and persians and sorianos call Ceilam, and the Indians Tenarisim that means «the land of delights», where our lord the king has a fortress for trade ... This island is inhabited by gentiles while in the sea ports live many moors in big towns under the rule of the king of the land”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

Also known to the Europeans as Taprobana, it's the island located to the south of India. Ceylon is a centre of the production of spices, cinnamon in particular, and a point of passage for ships navigating between the Arabian Sea and the Sea of Bengal. Ceilam is torn by conflicts among its kings. Some of these have been requesting Portuguese assistance in their wars.

China. The greatest and more advanced state of Asia directly controls continental East Asia and keeps the neighbouring states as tributaries.



Cipango. A fabled archipelago off the coast of China. So far no European was able to get there but a merchant called Marco Polo mentioned it in the 14th century.

Cochim. “Further away along the coast rests the kingdom of Cochim where there is much pepper ... This kingdom has a big and good river that accommodates many and big Moorish and Christian naus for trade ... At the mouth of the river has our lord the king a beautiful fortress surrounded by a big village of Portuguese and Christians of the soil converted after the construction of this fortress” **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

A small state in Malabar. When the relationships between the Portuguese and the Samorim of Calecute turned sour, the king of Cochin advanced and provided a friendly port to the newcomers. Since then Cochin has been the Indian centre for the Portuguese

trade between Asia and Europe, even despite the fact that Goa became the capital of the Estado da India.

Coromandel. *“It has seventy or eighty leagues along the coast where there are many cities towns and villages, populated by many gentiles. This land of the king of Narsinga has many rices and meats and wheats and all other vegetables that grow in it. It’s a land of fields. Here come each year many naus from Malabar for the rice”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

The south east coast of India is a free heaven for Portuguese traders and adventurers that prefer to operate outside of the reach of the Estado da India. The coast is under the suzerainty of Bisnaga but the traditional Hindu lack of interest towards the seas means that local rulers have a lot of *de facto* independence.

Daquem. *“After this kingdom of Guzarate on the way to India, along the coast rests the kingdom of Daquem ... Its king is a moor but most of the inhabitants are gentiles ... it has many sea ports where there is big trade of many merchandizes that are sent to the back-country”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

Deli. *“Going further into the back-country there is great kingdom they call Deli, with many lands and very big and rich cities where live wealthy merchants”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

Diu. *“It’s placed in a small island close to the mainland and has a very good port that allows for many naus”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

A strategic fortress located in an island in the south of Cambaia conquered by the Portuguese in 1536. The conquest ensured the naval control of the gulf of Cambaia and, coupled with the control of Ormuz, provided a major platform for naval operations in the north Arabian Sea.

Egipto. Egipto was the major Muslim power in the Middle East under the rule of the Mamluk Turks until it was conquered by the Ottomans in 1517. It is a rich region and a major point of passage between Europe and Asia. In Alexandria meet the eastern traders of Gujarat, Achem, Malabar, and other ports in Asia with the Venetians from Europe. For centuries the spices reached Europe through this network that operated despite of the religious conflicts between Christians and Muslims. The alternate route opened by Vasco da Gama challenged that monopoly of intercontinental trade.

Goa. *“There is a beautiful river that sends two arms to the sea thus making an island in-between where stands the city of Goa. It belonged to Daquem and was a lordship unto itself ... [Afonso de Albuquerque] entered the river and - fighting the said city - conquered it by the force of his weapons ... Immediately he put the city under the rule our lord the king, as it is today, fortifying it with many and good fortresses, and it is populated with many Portuguese and mours and gentiles”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**
Conquered by Afonso de Albuquerque in 1510, Goa is located in a complex of islands at the juncture of two rivers that flow from the Western Gates. It is strategically located between the kingdoms of Narsinga and Bisnaga. The Portuguese turned it into the capital of the Estado da India.

Guzarate. *“This kingdom of Guzarate is very big. It has many cities and villages, both in the back-country and in the seashore. It has many ports populated by Moorish and*

governed this kingdom but the moors took it by war. Now its king is a moor” **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

A Muslim state that dominates North West India, centred in Gujarat, has Cambaia as its capital. Its traders have networks that cover all of the Indian Ocean, from Africa to South East Asia. Their relationship with the Portuguese is complex, alternating times of cooperation with times of conflict. Likewise, their king alternates conflict with cooperation as his military and strategic interests require.

Cambaia is under the thread of the Grão Mogor. Currently is in conflict with the Portuguese due to the loss of Diu.

India. Delimited to the north-east by the Himalayas, to the north-west by Persia and to the south by the sea, India is one of the major regions of the world. It is divided among many states most of which are under the rule of invading Muslim tribes from central Asia that subdued the local Hindu population. The exceptions are located in the south where the kingdom of Bisnaga constitutes the major of the remaining Hindu states. Most of India is comprised of more or less dry planes cut by rivers and deserts. The north is mountainous while the south is composed of a platform that is cut from the sea by two mountainous ranges that run parallel to the coast: the western and eastern Gates.

SOURCES

TToMP is based on several books written in the 16th century. The most important are:

- Peregrinação
- O Livro de Duarte Barbosa

In the present game-book we refer to those books by their title and the section from where we selected the quotations.

Java. One of the major islands of South East Asia. Inhabited by independent tribes and clans organized into small kingdoms, its population follow animist and Hindu religious practices but Muslims are converting successfully their coastal populations.

The Jaos (inhabitants of Java) can be found all around South East Asia as mercenaries or sailors.

Lampacau. A permanent Portuguese settlement off the coast of China.

Liampó. A coastal province of China. Liampó is the origin of most Chinese traders and junks.

Malabar. *“there starts the land of Malabar ... that has one hundred and thirty leagues, more or less, along the coast ... The kings are all of the same law and usages, more or less, but on what concerns the common people it is very different. You should know that in all Malabar there are eighteen laws of indigenous gentiles, each one separated from the others to the point that they don’t touch each other ... All the Malabar is covered in the seashore with palm trees that are as high as the highest cypress tree”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

A strip of coast located between the Arabian Sea and the Western Gates in south India. It’s a major source of pepper and the first place where the Portuguese arrived in the end of the 15th century.

The major local ruler, the Samorim of Calecute, always kept conflicting relationships with the Portuguese since he was bound to the Muslim traders that organized the traffic of spices from his port to Egypt.

In order to break the monopoly of Calecute and its Muslim traders with Europe through Egipto the Portuguese concentrated their activities in Cochim, a smaller state of Malabar.

The coast of Malabar is cut by rivers and water lines that make it a maze of ...

Malaca. By the end of the 15th century Malaca, located in west Malaysia, had turned into the major port in the trade between the Indian Ocean, the seas of South East Asia and the China Sea. Afonso de Albuquerque, recognizing its strategic interest, conquered it in 1511. Since then it became the most important Portuguese settlement in the region, ensuring the control of the Strait of Malaca and the safety of the Portuguese traders that head east.

Maluco. A couple of small islands located in the extreme of the South East Asian archipelago, Maluco (also called Molucas) is coveted for their treasure: cloves. This spice is only produced in Maluco. The Portuguese are settled in the region since around 1512-3 and have a fort at Ternate.

Melinde, Mombaça, Quiloa. Coastal Muslim city-states of Africa, now under the control (voluntary or imposed) of the Portuguese crown.

Moçambique. *“In the way to India there are three islands close to the mainland. Among these islands there is a settlement of moors called Moçambique with a really good port ... Here holds our lord the king a fortress to keep under his power the said gold [of Monomotapa]. To this port come our naus to get water and firewood and provisions from the land, and for repairs if needed”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

Monomotapa. In East Africa *“there is a very great kingdom of gentiles that the moors call cafres. These are black men, walk around nude, just covering their shameful parts with painted cotton cloths ... some are men of war, other are great merchants”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

Narsinga. The last independent hindu kingdom in India, keeps fighting the Muslim powers from the North, specially the Daquem and the Orissa. It comprises all the South of India except for Malabar.

Ormuz. *“This city of Ormuz, even if it is very rich and supplied with all type of provisions his very expensive since everything comes from the outside”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

The conquest of Ormuz by Afonso de Albuquerque in 1509 allowed the Portuguese to hold a strategic port in the trade between Central Asia and India. Furthermore, it allowed them the military control of the Persian Sea, an alternate route of the trade between Europe and Asia. Finally, Ormuz constitutes the most advanced position in the defensive system against possible Ottoman naval incursions in the Arabic Sea and for the military control of the coasts of Arabia.

Orissa. *“Further into the back-country there is another kingdom that borders with Narsinga, and on another side with Bengala, and on another side with the kingdom of*

many footmen, as I said before. He is often at war with the king of Narsinga, each conquering as many land as possible from the other, and they are seldom in peace” **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

Pegu. One of the major kingdoms of continental South East Asia. Many Portuguese are settled in Pegu either as merchants or as mercenaries.

Pequim. The capital of China, it's fabled for its riches, size and organization.

Persia. One of the oldest states in the world, Persia is torn between internal rivalries and the menace of the Ottomans to the west. It has strong links with the Portuguese, despite the conquest of Ormuz (a tributary state) by Afonso de Albuquerque in 1509. Those links are based on trade since Persia is the major source of the horses that are exported to India and most of this trade is done through Ormuz and Goa.

São Lourenço. “*There is one very big island called São Lourenço, the back-country populated by gentiles and the sea-ports by moors”* **The Book of Duarte Barbosa**

Samatra. One of the major islands of the South East Asian archipelago, through its waters circulates most of the naval traffic between the Indian Ocean and the east. The original population is organized into tribes that share animist and Hindu practices. For the last decades several small Muslim trading states started to dot the coast of Samatra. The major of these states is Achem that controls the north of the island. To its west coast lies the famous Island of Gold that so far as proved elusive to locate.

Siam. One of the major states of continental South East Asia. It's very rich and powerful, but it's torn by internal rivalries. It's in constant conflict with Pegu and other neighbouring states. There is a sizable colony of Portuguese merchants and mercenaries at its capital of Odiá.

Tartaria. The land of the dreaded nomadic barbarians of the steppes. Known for its incursions into Chinese lands.

Timor. The island of Timor is the biggest in the small complex of islands that constitute the extreme of the South East Asian. It is also the most important because it produces coveted sandalwood that is mainly traded to China. Portuguese have been there since 1515.

Portuguese presence in Asia

As has been mentioned above, the Portuguese entered Asia in 1498. The next two decades signalled a frantic exploration of the coasts of Asia in all directions. By 1515 almost all of the most important destinies had been reached.

At the same time, there was an intensive diplomatic, military and commercial activity to carve a placement in Asia. This led to the creation of the Estado da India, the Portuguese political and administrative infrastructure. It was based on three pillars:

Geography. The cornerstone of the Portuguese presence was the holding of a network of strategic strong points. These included Goa, Ormuz, Malaca, Cochim, Maluco and Diu. These strong points allowed for the control of trade throughout Asia. The Portuguese were never able to get hold of a strongpoint in the straight of Adem, though, so the Muslim traffic through the Red Sea never really ended.

The key geographical feature of the empire was the fact that it was not land-based. The Portuguese king never attempted extensive land conquests. Instead, it was a naval empire. The objective was to control the seas. The land bases served the purpose of sustaining the naval *imperium*.

Further to those strategic points, the Portuguese created many complementary settlements, both by official initiative under the control of the king or by private enterprise.

The Estado da Índia. The Portuguese presence required an institutional framework. The basis were forts and factories, the first fulfilling mainly a military role, the latter meant for trade. Forts were managed by their *capitães* (captains) while factories were under the authority of a *feitor* (factor). Capitães e feitores responded directly to the *Vice-Rei* (Vice-Roy) or *Governador* (Governor) of the Estado da Índia. They were assisted by clerks, scribes, soldiers and other men. It was for the capitão or feitor to choose and contract the men under his service.

The Vice-Rei or Governador (the function was the same; the difference in title had to do with the position of the person in the Portuguese nobility at home) was usually nominated for three years terms. He was the military, administrative, judicial and diplomatic leader of the Estado da Índia with wide powers that reproduced those of the king. The Governador had under his command many officials and servants that fulfilled the administrative functions required by the Estado da Índia: scribes, notaries, judges, *línguas* (translators, often natives), factors, etc.

There were several naval fleets for coast guard and convoying the Portuguese and allied merchant ships. One of their major roles was to control Muslim boats to check if they were involved with trafficking into the Red Sea. This was done through a system of *cartazes* (charts) where the merchants were awarded a chart to allow them safe passage through waters under Portuguese control. The fleets were commanded by a *capitão-mor* (captain major) that could rip huge benefits from the capture of boats without cartaz if not from outright privateering and piracy.

Where there were important communities of settled Portuguese (the *casados*, see below) developed urban institutions modelled in those in existence in the major Portuguese cities. The key local body was the *Câmara* (the Municipal Council). Another important institution was the *Misericórdia* (...).

The church operated under the king's patronage but was independent from the Estado da Índia. It was divided into secular and missionary institutions.

Men. Most of the men sent to India were soldiers or contracted for military purposes. These were men with varied backgrounds that knew at least the basics of warring. When sending them, the State only ensured the costs of travel and food from Lisbon to India. Afterwards they would be on their own since the State did not pay directly the soldiers.

It was up to the captains nominated to the different fortresses and boats to gather and keep the men under their command. If a man was unable to be given *mesa* (to be accepted at the table) by a captain – in other words, to get work – he was on his own and had to survive on his resources. Either he had his own fortune to live on, he was able to sell his services as a mercenary to an Asia power, he was able to be hired by a *casado* (see below) or he himself was able to settle as a *casado*, or, if nothing else worked, he was condemned to begging for a living. The soldiers form the largest contingent of Europeans present in Asia.

There is no major specialization in the military. All men are supposed to be ready to use handguns, enter a melee or even fight from horseback. This last requirement is of secondary importance since cavalry is almost absent from conflicts involving the Portuguese.

The only specialized function in the military relates to the *bombardeiros* (artillerymen). Most soldiers are able to use low calibre guns, but managing the bigger ones is reserved to specialized staff. The Portuguese practice is to hire these in Germany and the Low Countries, so most of the

The Estado da India required a large number of officials to serve in the forts, factories, fleets, boats, diplomatic missions, etc. The basic requirement to be an official was to be literate. Each fort or factory required one or more *escrivães* (scribes), just as there's a *escrivão* in each boat. The judiciary calls for judges, notaries, ...

The many boats that cross the seas of Asia either under the king's banner or privately owned require their crews. Sailing ships are manned by *marinheiros* (sailors) and *grumetes* (). Rowing boats require dozens of *remeiros* (rowers). Each boat requires a pilot, with or without his assistants, one *mestre* (master) that commands the crew and a ... Usually the captain is not a sailor but a soldier or the owner of the boat – a merchant, maybe.

Men in command are supposed to hire their own retinue. Their ability to attract the best men available is connected to how liberal they are, specially with their wealth. They have to entertain a variable group of dependents by providing them *mesa* (receiving them at their table): this relates first to feeding their dependents – hence the name *mesa* – but may extend to the provision of accommodation, dress, weapons, etc. When the noble receives a posting, he will turn his dependents into his soldiers or officers. From that moment on these will start to be paid by their captain out of the money the captain receives from the king (or diverts from the king's revenue).

By papal order the missionary effort in Asia was to be carried forward by the Portuguese king, and under his command. This was called the *Padroado da India* (the priesthood of India).

Like everything else, the Portuguese king controlled the access of foreigners to Asia. These were either agents of the king (like mercenary gunmen), merchants that traded under the king's control or missionaries under the *padroado*.

In Portuguese-controlled coastal towns developed Portuguese quarters inhabited by settled Portuguese, the *casados* (married men). These had exchanged the military and bureaucratic posts in the Estado da India for the life of a civilian either as merchant or

crafters. There were also important quarters of *casados* in most towns and cities outside of the local potentates that kept good relationships with the Estado da India.

A SHORT TIMELINE FOR THE ASIA OF MENDES PINTO

- 1487 Bartolomeu Dias sailed from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean, demonstrating that it was feasible to reach Asia by sea
- 1492 *Cristovão Colombo reaches the Caribbean islands*
The Spanish kings conquer Granada
- 1495 *Death of D. João II. D. Manuel crowned king of Portugal*
- 1497-09 Vasco da Gama sailed to India, reached Calecute and came back to Portugal
- 1500-01 Pedro Alvares Cabral established factories in Cochim and Cananore, Malabar
On his way to India Pedro Alvares Cabral discovers Brasil
- 1502 Portuguese fortress in Sofala and factory in Moçambique
- 1503-04 The Samorim of Calecute fails in its attempt to conquer Cochim and expel the Portuguese
- 1505-09 Mandate of D. Francisco de Almeida, first Vice-Roy of India. He created the basis of the Estado da India
- 1506 The Portuguese reach Ceilam
- 1509 The Portuguese reach Malaca and Samatra
- 1509 Off the coast of Diu the Portuguese defeat a Mamluk fleet sent from Egipto, securing the Portuguese presence against external interventions in the Arabic Sea
- 1505-15 Government of Afonso de Albuquerque that conquers Ormuz (1509), Goa (1510) and Malaca (1511), thus establishing the main Portuguese settlements in Asia
- 1511 The Portuguese reach Pegu, Solor and Ternate (two islands close to Timor). Afonso de Albuquerque sends embassies to Sião, Campar and Java
- 1511-21 **Infancy of Mendes Pinto in Montemor-o-Velho with his parents**
- 1512 The Portuguese reach Maluco
- 1513 The Portuguese reach China. Embassy to the king of Persia
- 1514 The Portuguese receive embassies from Sião, Pegu and Abissinia and send an embassy to Cambaia
- 1515 First Portuguese attempt of an embassy to the king of China fails before reaching Pequim
- 1517 Ottoman Turks conquer Mameluk Egipto
- 1519-21 First Portuguese embassy to the Prestes João of Abissinia
- 1521-23 **Mendes Pinto is sent to Lisbon by an uncle to enter the service of a noble lady**
- 1521 *Death of the King D. Manuel and accession to the throne by D. João III*
- 1522 Regular annual fleets start to operate between Cochim and China
- 1523 **Mendes Pinto flees his master's house in a mysterious dangerous affair. He embarks in a caravel that is later taken by French pirates. Eventually he is left by the pirates with other Portuguese in the coast of Portugal south of Lisbon**
- 1523-25 **Mendes Pinto serves a nobleman of the Order of Santiago**
- 1525-29 **Mendes Pinto serves the Master of the Order of Santiago**
- 1534 (?) The Ottomans extend their control to the whole of Arabia
- 1535 Diu is handed to the Portuguese by the king of Cambaia
- 1535-36 The Ottomans conquer Iraque and Bagdade from the king of Persia
- 1537 The Captain of Diu kills the king of Cambaia
- 1537-38 **Mendes Pinto sails to India. He is 26 years old**
- 1538 The new king of Cambaia fails in his attempt to recover Diu through siege
- 1538-39 **Mendes Pinto works as a soldier in Ormuz and in a fleet off the Coast of Arabia and Abissinia. He is captured by Arabs and sold as a slave. Eventually he returns to Ormuz**
- 1539 **Mendes Pinto sails from India to Malaca with Pêro de Faria, the new captain of this city**

* Events in bold refer to the life of Mendes Pinto; events in italicised smaller type occur outside of Asia.