

Vasco da Gama, Account of Travels around African to India, 1497–1498

*Vasco da Gama (c. 1460–1524) led several Portuguese expeditions into the Indian Ocean via the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa, establishing a sea route from Western Europe to India. This excerpt from *Lendas da India*, by the historian Gaspar Correa (c. 1496–1563), recounts da Gama's first voyage, which set sail on July 8, 1497, and returned to Portuguese shores on May 20, 1498. It chronicles the challenges of rounding the Cape and da Gama's experiences at his ultimate destination, the Indian port of Calicut.*

Source: Oliver J. Thatcher, ed., *The Library of Original Sources* (Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co., 1907), Vol. V: *9th to 16th Centuries*, pp. 26–40.

1497 The Bay of St. Helena [on the west coast of the present country of South Africa]. On Tuesday (November 7) we returned to the land, which we found to be low, with a broad bay opening into it. The captain-major [i.e., da Gama speaking in the third person] sent Pero d'Alenquer in a boat to take soundings and to search for good anchoring ground. The bay was found to be very clean, and to afford shelter against all winds except those from the N.W. It extended east and west, and we named it Santa Helena.

On Wednesday (November 8) we cast anchor in this bay, and we remained there eight days, cleaning the ships, mending the sails, and taking in wood. The river Samtiagua (S. Thiago) enters the bay four leagues to the S.E. of the anchorage. It comes from the interior (sertao), is about a stone's throw across at the mouth, and from two to three fathoms in depth at all states of the tide.

The inhabitants of this country are tawny-colored. Their food is confined to the flesh of seals, whales and gazelles, and the roots of herbs. They are dressed in skins, and wear sheaths over their virile members. They are armed with poles of olive wood to which a horn, browned in the fire, is attached. Their numerous dogs resemble those of Portugal, and bark like them. The birds of the country, likewise, are the same as in Portugal, and include cormorants, gulls, turtle doves, crested larks, and many others. The climate is healthy and temperate, and produces good herbage. On the day after we had cast anchor, that is to say on Thursday (November 9), we landed with the captain-major, and made captive one of the natives, who was small of stature like Sancho Mexia. This man had been gathering honey in the sandy waste, for in this country the bees deposit their honey at the foot of the mounds around the bushes. He was taken on board the captain-major's ship, and being placed at table he ate of all we ate. On the following day the captain-major had him well dressed and sent ashore.

On the following day (November 10) fourteen or fifteen natives came to where our ship lay. The captain-major landed and showed them a variety of merchandise, with the view of finding out whether such things were to be found in their country. This merchandise included cinnamon, cloves, seed-pearls, gold, and many other things, but it was evident that they had no knowledge whatever of such articles, and they were consequently given round bells and tin rings. This happened on Friday, and the like took place on Saturday.

On Sunday (November 12) about forty or fifty natives made their appearance, and having dined, we landed, and in exchange for the eitis with which we came provided, we obtained shells, which they wore as ornaments in their ears, and which looked as if they

had been plated, and foxtails attached to a handle, with which they fanned their faces. The captain-major also acquired for one eitil one of the sheaths which they wore over their members, and this seemed to show that they valued copper very highly; indeed, they wore small beads of that metal in their ears.

On that day Fernao Velloso, who was with the captain-major, expressed a great desire to be permitted to accompany the natives to their houses, so that he might find out how they lived and what they ate. The captain-major yielded to his importunities, and allowed him to accompany them, and when we returned to the captain-major's vessel to sup, he went away with the negroes. Soon after they had left us they caught a seal, and when they came to the foot of a hill in a barren place they roasted it, and gave some of it to Fernao Velloso, as also some of the roots which they eat. After this meal they expressed a desire that he should not accompany them any further, but return to the vessels. When Fernao Velloso came abreast of the vessels he began to shout, the negroes keeping in the bush.

We were still at supper; but when his shouts were heard the captain-major rose at once, and so did we others, and we entered a sailing boat. The negroes then began running along the beach, and they came as quickly up with Fernao Velloso as we did, and when we endeavored to get him into the boat they threw their assegais, and wounded the captain-major and three or four others. All this happened because we looked upon these people as men of little spirit, quite incapable of violence, and had therefore landed without first arming ourselves. We then returned to the ships.

Rounding the Cape. At daybreak of Thursday the 16th of November, having careened our ships and taken in woods we set sail. At that time we did not know how far

we might be abaft the Cape of Good Hope. Pero d'Alenquer thought the distance about thirty leagues, but he was not certain, for on his return voyage (when with B. Dias) he had left the Cape in the morning and had gone past this bay with the wind astern, whilst on the outward voyage he had kept at sea, and was therefore unable to identify the locality where we now were. We therefore stood out towards S.S.W., and late on Saturday (November 18) we beheld the Cape. On that same day we again stood out to sea, returning to the land in the course of the night. On Sunday morning, November 19, we once more made for the Cape, but were again unable to round it, for the wind blew from the S.S.W., whilst the Cape juts out towards S.W. We then again stood out to sea, returning to the land on Monday night. At last, on Wednesday (November 22), at noon, having the wind astern, we succeeded in doubling the Cape, and then ran along the coast. To the south of this Cape of Good Hope, and close to it, a vast bay, six leagues broad at its mouth, enters about six leagues into the land.

1498. Calicut. [Arrival.] That night (May 20) we anchored two leagues from the city of Calicut, and we did so because our pilot mistook Capna, a town at that place, for Calicut. Still further there is another town called Pandarani. We anchored about a league and a half from the shore. After we were at anchor, four boats (almadias) approached us from the land, who asked of what nation we were. We told them, and they then pointed out Calicut to us.

On the following day (May 22) these same boats came again alongside, when the captain-major sent one of the convicts to Calicut, and those with whom he went took him to two Moors from Tunis, who could speak Castilian and Genoese. The first greeting that he received was in these words: "May the Devil take thee! What brought you hither?"

They asked what he sought so far away from home, and he told them that we came in search of Christians and of spices. They said: “Why does not the King of Castile, the King of France, or the Signoria of Venice send thither?” He said that the King of Portugal would not consent to their doing so, and they said he did the right thing. After this conversation they took him to their lodgings and gave him wheaten bread and honey. When he had eaten he returned to the ships, accompanied by one of the Moors, who was no sooner on board, than he said these words: “A lucky venture, a lucky venture! Plenty of rubies, plenty of emeralds! You owe great thanks to God, for having brought you to a country holding such riches!” We were greatly astonished to hear his talk, for we never expected to hear our language spoken so far away from Portugal.

The city of Calicut is inhabited by Christians. [The first voyagers to India mistook the Hindus for Christians.] They are of tawny complexion. Some of them have big beards and long hair, whilst others clip their hair short or shave the head, merely allowing a tuft to remain on the crown as a sign that they are Christians. They also wear moustaches. They pierce the ears and wear much gold in them. They go naked down to the waist, covering their lower extremities with very fine cotton stuffs. But it is only the most respectable who do this, for the others manage as best they are able. The women of this country, as a rule, are ugly and of small stature. They wear many jewels of gold round the neck, numerous bracelets on their arms, and rings set with precious stones on their toes. All these people are well-disposed and apparently of mild temper. At first sight they seem covetous and ignorant.

When we arrived at Calicut the king was fifteen leagues away. The captain-major sent two men to him with a message, informing him that an ambassador had arrived from

the King of Portugal with letters, and that if he desired it he would take them to where the king then was. The king presented the bearers of this message with much fine cloth. He sent word to the captain-major bidding him welcome, saying that he was about to proceed to Calicut. As a matter of fact, he started at once with a large retinue. A pilot accompanied our two men, with orders to take us to a place called Pandarani, below the place (Capna) where we anchored at first. At this time we were actually in front of the city of Calicut. We were told that the anchorage at the place to which we were to go was good, whilst at the place we were then it was bad, with a stony bottom, which was quite true; and, moreover, that it was customary for the ships which came to this country to anchor there for the sake of safety. We ourselves did not feel comfortable, and the captain-major had no sooner received this royal message than he ordered the sails to be set, and we departed. We did not, however, anchor as near the shore as the king's pilot desired.

When we were at anchor, a message arrived informing the captain-major that the king was already in the city. At the same time the king sent a bale, with other men of distinction, to Pandarani, to conduct the captain-major to where the king awaited him. This bale is like an alcaide, and is always attended by two hundred men armed with swords and bucklers. As it was late when this message arrived, the captain-major deferred going.

On the following morning, which was Monday, May 28th, the captain-major set out to speak to the king, and took with him thirteen men. On landing, the captain-major was received by the alcaide, with whom were many men, armed and unarmed. The reception was friendly, as if the people were pleased to see us, though at first appearances

looked threatening, for they carried naked swords in their hands. A palanquin was provided for the captain-major, such as is used by men of distinction in that country, as also by some of the merchants, who pay something to the king for this privilege. The captain-major entered the palanquin, which was carried by six men by turns. Attended by all these people we took the road of Calicut, and came first to another town, called Capna. The captain-major was there deposited at the house of a man of rank, whilst we others were provided with food, consisting of rice, with much butter, and excellent boiled fish. The captain-major did not wish to eat, and as we had done so, we embarked on a river close by, which flows between the sea and the mainland, close to the coast. The two boats in which we embarked were lashed together, so that we were not separated. There were numerous other boats, all crowded with people. As to those who were on the banks I say nothing; their number was infinite, and they had all come to see us. We went up that river for about a league, and saw many large ships drawn up high and dry on its banks, for there is no port here.

When we disembarked, the captain-major once more entered his palanquin. The road was crowded with a countless multitude anxious to see us. Even the women came out of their houses with children in their arms and followed us. When we arrived (at Calicut) they took us to a large church, and this is what we saw: The body of the church is as large as a monastery, all built of hewn stone and covered with tiles. At the main entrance rises a pillar of bronze as high as a mast, on the top of which was perched a bird, apparently a cock. In addition to this, there was another pillar as high as a man, and very stout. In the center of the body of the church rose a chapel, all built of hewn stone, with a bronze door sufficiently wide for a man to pass, and stone steps leading up to it. Within

this sanctuary stood a small image which they said represented Our Lady. Along the walls, by the main entrance, hung seven small bells. In this church the captain-major said his prayers, and we with him.

We did not go within the chapel, for it is the custom that only certain servants of the church, called quafees, should enter. These quafees wore some threads passing over the left shoulder and under the right arm, in the same manner as our deacons wear the stole. They threw holy water over us, and gave us some white earth, which the Christians of this country are in the habit of putting on their foreheads, breasts, around the neck, and on the forearms. They threw holy water upon the captain-major and gave him some of the earth, which he gave in charge of someone, giving them to understand that he would put it on later. Many other saints were painted on the walls of the church, wearing crowns. They were painted variously, with teeth protruding an inch from the mouth, and four or five arms. Below this church there was a large masonry tank, similar to many others which we had seen along the road.

After we had left that place, and had arrived at the entrance to the city (of Calicut) we were shown another church, where we saw things like those described above. Here the crowd grew so dense that progress along the street became next to impossible, and for this reason they put the captain-major into a house, and us with him. The king sent a brother of the bale, who was a lord of this country, to accompany the captain-major, and he was attended by men beating drums, blowing arafils and bagpipes, and firing off matchlocks. In conducting the captain-major they showed us much respect, more than is shown in Spain to a king. The number of people was countless, for in addition to those

who surrounded us, and among whom there were two thousand armed men, they crowded the roofs and houses.

The further we advanced in the direction of the king's palace, the more did they increase in number. And when we arrived there, men of much distinction and great lords came out to meet the captain-major, and joined those who were already in attendance upon him. It was then an hour before sunset. When we reached the palace we passed through a gate into a courtyard of great size, and before we arrived at where the king was, we passed four doors, through which we had to force our way, giving many blows to the people. When, at last, we reached the door where the king was, there came forth from it a little old man, who holds a position resembling that of a bishop, and whose advice the king acts upon in all affairs of the church. This man embraced the captain-major when he entered the door. Several men were wounded at this door, and we only got in by the use of much force.

May 28. The king was in a small court, reclining upon a couch covered with a cloth of green velvet, above which was a good mattress, and upon this again a sheet of cotton stuff, very white and fine, more so than any linen. The cushions were after the same fashion. In his left hand the king held a very large golden cup (spittoon), having a capacity of half an almude (8 pints). At its mouth this cup was two palmas (16 inches) wide, and apparently it was massive. Into this cup the king threw the husks of a certain herb which is chewed by the people of this country because of its soothing effects, and which they call atambor. On the right side of the king stood a basin of gold, so large that a man might just encircle it with his arms: this contained the herbs. There were likewise many silver jugs. The canopy above the couch was all gilt.

The captain-major, on entering, saluted in the manner of the country: by putting the hands together, then raising them towards Heaven, as is done by Christians when addressing God, and immediately afterwards opening them and shutting fists quickly. The king beckoned to the captain-major with his right hand to come nearer, but the captain-major did not approach him, for it is the custom of the country for no man to approach the king except only the servant who hands him the herbs, and when anyone addresses the king he holds his hand before the mouth, and remains at a distance. When the king beckoned to the captain-major he looked at the others [i.e., da Gama's men], and ordered them to be seated on a stone bench near him, where he could see them. He ordered that water for their hands should be given them, as also some fruit, one kind of which resembled a melon, except that its outside was rough and the inside sweet, whilst another kind of fruit resembled a fig, and tasted very nice. There were men who prepared these fruits for them; and the king looked at them eating, and smiled; and talked to the servant who stood near him supplying him with the herbs referred to.

Then, throwing his eyes on the captain-major, who sat facing him, he invited him to address himself to the courtiers present, saying they were men of much distinction, that he could tell them whatever he desired to say, and they would repeat it to him (the king). The captain-major replied that he was the ambassador of the King of Portugal, and the bearer of a message which he could only deliver to him personally. The king said this was good, and immediately asked him to be conducted to a chamber. When the captain-major had entered, the king, too, rose and joined him, whilst the rest remained where they were. All this happened about sunset. An old man who was in the court took away the couch as soon as the king rose, but allowed the plate to remain. The king, when he joined

the captain-major, threw himself upon another couch, covered with various stuffs embroidered in gold, and asked the captain-major what he wanted.

And the captain-major told him he was the ambassador of a King of Portugal, who was Lord of many countries and the possessor of great wealth of every description, exceeding that of any king of these parts; that for a period of sixty years his ancestors had annually sent out vessels to make discoveries in the direction of India, as they knew that there were Christian kings there like themselves. This, he said, was the reason which induced them to order this country to be discovered, not because they sought for gold or silver, for of this they had such abundance that they needed not what was to be found in this country. He further stated that the captains sent out traveled for a year or two, until their provisions were exhausted, and then returned to Portugal, without having succeeded in making the desired discovery. There reigned a king now whose name was Dom Manuel, who had ordered him to build three vessels, of which he had been appointed captain-major, and who had ordered him not to return to Portugal until he should have discovered this King of the Christians, on pain of having his head cut off. That two letters had been intrusted to him to be presented in case he succeeded in discovering him, and that he would do so on the ensuing day; and, finally, he had been instructed to say by word of mouth that he [the King of Portugal] desired to be his friend and brother.

In reply to this the king said that he was welcome; that, on his part, he held him as a friend and brother, and would send ambassadors with him to Portugal. This latter had been asked as a favor, the captain-major pretending that he would not dare to present himself before his king and master unless he was able to present, at the same time, some men of this country. These and many other things passed between the two in this

chamber, and as it was already late in the night, the king asked the captain-major with whom he desired to lodge, with Christians or with Moors? And the captain-major replied, neither with Christians nor with Moors, and begged as a favor that he be given a lodging by himself. The king said he would order it thus, upon which the captain-major took leave of the king and came to where the men were, that is, to a veranda lit up by a huge candlestick. By that time four hours of the night had already gone.

The captain-major went on the back of six men [in a palanquin], and the time occupied in passing through the city was so long that the captain-major at last grew tired, and complained to the king's factor, a Moor of distinction, who attended him to the lodgings. The Moor then took him to his own house, and we were admitted to a court within it, where there was a veranda roofed in with tiles. Many carpets had been spread, and there were two large candlesticks like those at the Royal palace. At the top of each of these were great iron lamps, fed with oil or butter, and each lamp had four wicks, which gave much light. These lamps they use instead of torches.

This same Moor then had a horse brought for the captain-major to take him to his lodgings, but it was without a saddle, and the captain-major refused to mount it. We then started for our lodgings, and when we arrived we found there some of our men [who had come from the ships] with the captain-major's bed, and with numerous other things which the captain-major had brought as presents for the king.

On Tuesday, May 29, the captain-major got ready the following things to be sent to the king, viz., twelve pieces of lambel, four scarlet hoods, six hats, four strings of coral, a case containing six wash-hand basins, a case of sugar, two casks of oil, and two of honey. And as it is the custom not to send anything to the king without the knowledge

of the Moor, his factor, and of the bale, the captain-major informed them of his intention. They came, and when they saw the present they laughed at it, saying that it was not a thing to offer to a king, that the poorest merchant from Mecca, or any other part of India, gave more, and that if he wanted to make a present it should be in gold, as the king would not accept such things. When the captain-major heard this he grew sad, and said that he had brought no gold, that, moreover, he was no merchant, but an ambassador; that he gave of that which he had, which was his own private gift and not the king's; that if the King of Portugal ordered him to return he would intrust him with far richer presents; and that if King Camolim would not accept these things he would send them back to the ships. Upon this they declared that they would not forward his presents, nor consent to his forwarding them himself. When they had gone there came certain Moorish merchants, and they all depreciated the present which the captain-major desired to be sent to the king.

When the captain-major saw that they were determined not to forward his present, he said that as they would not allow him to send his present to the palace he would go to speak to the king, and would then return to the ships. They approved of this, and told him that if he would wait a short time they would return and accompany him to the palace. And the captain-major waited all day, but they never came back. The captain-major was very wroth at being among so phlegmatic and unreliable a people, and intended, at first, to go to the palace without them. On further consideration, however, he thought it best to wait until the following day. The men diverted themselves, singing and dancing to the sound of trumpets, and enjoyed themselves much.

May 30. On Wednesday morning the Moors returned, and took the captain-major to the palace. The palace was crowded with armed men. Our captain-major was kept waiting with his conductors for fully four long hours, outside a door, which was only opened when the king sent word to admit him, attended by two men only, whom he might select. The captain-major said that he desired to have Fernao Martins with him, who could interpret, and his secretary. It seemed to him that this separation portended no good. When he had entered, the king said that he had expected him on Tuesday. The captain-major said that the long road had tired him, and that for this reason he had not come to see him. The king then said that he had told him that he came from a very rich kingdom, and yet had brought him nothing; that he had also told him that he was the bearer of a letter, which had not yet been delivered. To this the captain-major rejoined that he had brought nothing, because the object of his voyage was merely to make discoveries, but that when other ships came he would then see what they brought him; as to the letter, it was true that he had brought one, and would deliver it immediately.

The king then asked what it was he had come to discover: stones or men? If he came to discover men, as he said, why had he brought nothing? Moreover, he had been told that he carried with him the golden image of a Santa Maria. The captain-major said that the Santa Maria was not of gold, and that even if she were he would not part with her, as she had guided him across the ocean, and would guide him back to his own country. The king then asked for the letter. The captain-major said that he begged as a favor, that as the Moors wished him ill and might misinterpret him, a Christian able to speak Arabic should be sent for. The king said this was well, and at once sent for a young man, of small stature, whose name was Quaram. The captain-major then said that he had

two letters, one written in his own language and the other in that of the Moors; that he was able to read the former, and knew that it contained nothing but what would prove acceptable; but that as to the other he was unable to read it, and it might be good, or contain something that was erroneous. As the Christian was unable to read Moorish, four Moors took the letter and read it between them, after which they translated it to the king, who was well satisfied with its contents.

The king then asked what kind of merchandise was to be found in his country. The captain-major said there was much corn, cloth, iron, bronze, and many other things. The king asked whether he had any merchandise with him. The captain-major replied that he had a little of each sort, as samples, and that if permitted to return to the ships he would order it to be landed, and that meantime four or five men would remain at the lodgings assigned them. The king said no! He might take all his people with him, securely moor his ships, land his merchandise, and sell it to the best advantage. Having taken leave of the king the captain-major returned to his lodgings, and we with him. As it was already late no attempt was made to depart that night.

May 31. On Thursday morning a horse without a saddle was brought to the captain-major, who declined to mount it, asking that a horse of the country, that is a palanquin, might be provided, as he could not ride a horse without a saddle. He was then taken to the house of a wealthy merchant of the name of Guzerate, who ordered a palanquin to be got ready. On its arrival the captain-major started at once for Pandarani, where our ships were, many people following him. The others, not being able to keep up with him, were left behind. Trudging thus along they were overtaken by the bale, who passed on to join the captain-major. When they reached Pandarani they found the captain-

major inside a resthouse, of which there were many along the road, so that travelers and wayfarers might find protection against the rain.

May 31 to June 2. The bale and many others were with the captain-major. On our arrival the captain-major asked the bale for an almadia, so that we might go to our ships; but the bale and the others said that it was already late—in fact, the sun had set—and that he should go next day. The captain-major said that unless he provided an almadia he would return to the king, who had given orders to take him back to the ships, whilst they tried to detain him—a very bad thing, as he was a Christian like themselves. When they saw the dark looks of the captain-major they said he was at liberty to depart at once, and that they would give him thirty almadias if he needed them. They then took us along the beach, and as it seemed to the captain-major that they harbored some evil design, he sent three men in advance, with orders that in case they found the ship's boats and his brother, to tell him to conceal himself. They went, and finding nothing, turned back; but as we had been taken in another direction we did not meet.

They then took us to the house of a Moor—for it was already far in the night—and when we got there they told us they would go in search of the three men who had not yet returned. When they were gone, the captain-major ordered fowls and rice to be purchased, and we ate, notwithstanding our fatigue, having been all day on our legs. Those who had gone in search of the three men only returned in the morning, and the captain-major said that after all they seemed well disposed towards us, and had acted with the best intentions when they objected to our departure the day before. On the other hand we suspected them on account of what had happened at Calicut, and looked upon them as ill-disposed.

When they returned [June 1] the captain-major again asked for boats to take him to his ships. They then began to whisper among themselves, and said that we should have them if we would order our vessels to come nearer the shore. The captain-major said that if he ordered his vessels to approach his brother would think that he was being held a prisoner, and would hoist the sails and return to Portugal. They said that if we refused to order the ships to come nearer we should not be permitted to embark. The captain-major that said King Camolin had sent him back to his ships, and that as they would not let him go, as ordered by the king, he should return to the king, who was a Christian like himself. If the king would not let him go, and wanted him to remain in his country, he would do so with much pleasure. They agreed that he should be permitted to go, but afforded him no opportunity for doing so, for they immediately closed all the doors, and many armed men entered to guard us, none of us being allowed to go outside without being accompanied by several of these guards. They then asked us to give up our sails and rudders. The captain declared that he would give up none of these things: King Camolin having unconditionally ordered him to return to his ships, they might do with him whatever they liked, but he would give up nothing.

The captain-major and we others felt very down-hearted, though outwardly we pretended not to notice what they did. The captain-major said that as they refused him permission to go back, they would at least allow his men to do so, as at the place they were in they would die of hunger. But they said that we must remain where we were, and that if we died of hunger we must bear it, as they cared nothing for that. Whilst thus detained, one of the men whom we had missed the night before turned up. He told the captain-major that Nicolau Coelho had been awaiting him with the boats since last night.

When the captain-major heard this he sent a man away secretly to Nicolau Coelho, because of the guards by whom we were surrounded, with orders to go back to the ships and place them in a secure place. Nicolau Coelho, on receipt of this message, departed forthwith. But our guards having information of what was going on, at once launched a large number of almadias and pursued him for a short distance. When they found that they could not overtake him they returned to the captain-major, whom they asked to write a letter to his brother, requesting him to bring the ships nearer to the land and further within the port. The captain-major said he was quite willing, but that his brother would not do this; and that even if he consented those who were with him, not being willing to die, would not do so. But they asked how this could be, as they knew well that any order he gave would be obeyed. The captain-major did not wish the ships to come within the port, for it seemed to him—as it did to us—that once inside they could easily be captured, after which they would first kill him, and us others, as we were already in their power.

We passed all that day most anxiously. At night more people surrounded us than ever before, and we were no longer allowed to walk in the compound, within which we were, but confined within a small tiled court, with a multitude of people around us. We quite expected that on the following day we should be separated, or that some harm would befall us, for we noticed that our jailers were much annoyed with us. This, however, did not prevent our making a good supper off the things found in the village. Throughout that night we were guarded by over a hundred men, all armed with swords, two-edged battle-axes, shields, and bows and arrows. Whilst some of these slept, others kept guard, each taking his turn of duty throughout the night.

On the following day, Saturday, June 2, in the morning, these gentlemen [i.e., the bale and others] came back, and this time they wore better faces. They told the captain-major that as he had informed the king that he intended to land his merchandise, he should now give orders to have this done, as it was the custom of the country that every ship on its arrival should at once land the merchandise it brought, as also the crews, and that the vendors should not return on board until the whole of it had been sold. The captain-major consented, and said he would write to his brother to see to its being done. They said this was well, and that immediately after the arrival of the merchandise he would be permitted to return to his ship. The captain-major at once wrote to his brother to send him certain things, and he did so at once. On their receipt the captain was allowed to go on board, two men remaining behind with the things that had been landed. At this there was great rejoicing, thanks being rendered to God for having extricated us from the hands of people who had no more sense than beasts, for we knew well that once the captain-major was on board those who had been landed would have nothing to fear. When the captain-major reached his ship he ordered that no more merchandise should be sent.

QUESTIONS

- 1. How does da Gama underestimate the “natives” he sees in what is modern-day South Africa? What signs of a complex society can be found there?**
- 2. How are the two “native” peoples da Gama encounters at the Bay of St. Helena in southern Africa and at Calicut in present India similar and different, according to his account? In what ways does he value one over the other?**

3. In what ways was da Gama respectful of Calicut's traditions?