Appendix C

Duarte Barbosa’s Letter to King Dom Manoel I, Written as Escrivao of Cananor on January 12th 1513.¹

Sire - in addition to the obligation under which I lie in virtue of the office of writer, which I hold by your Highness’s Grace, my inclination is to speak the truth in those matters chiefly which concern your service, and it appears to me that God would show me no mercy if I wrote not plainly to your Highness as to the affairs of Cananor, these being what I know clearly as well by the language as by knowledge acquired when I was here before; the acts, customs and trade agreed to by the Admiral,² and confirmed by the other Captains-in –Chief up till now, which we are bound to observe towards the king and people of this land; that is, in accordance with your rules and commands, to keep complete faith with them and to preserve with them true peace, which matters have been to a certain degree infringed, as your Highness will learn from the Ambassadors and letters of the king of Cananor.

I arrived here in the year 1511 with D. Ayres,³ while the Captain-in-chief was at Malacca, having left Diogo Correa as Captain in this fortress, who by his tyranny, jealousy and harsh disposition almost caused the people of the country to rise against him, despising them and threatening them with the Captain-in Chief, and desiring to take sides with one village against the other valaya,⁴ and also against the Governor. I remind Your Highness that the trade of Calecud was lost through Ayres Correa desiring to have the sifting done by Coja Beguy. It is well that those who serve your Highness should be favoured, and not that they should be made to do

¹ Duarte Barbosa, pp. xxxviii-xlil.
² Vasco da Gama.
³ He was the brother of Vasco da Gama and arrived at Cananor in August 1511 AD.
⁴ It denotes province or district.
what they ought not to do against the King of their land, for they are his vassals, as he is vassal of your Highness, and that is what troubles him most. I say nothing in detail as to many things concerning Diogo Correa, which are worthy of severe punishment, as he now lies where the lord have mercy on his soul.5

Gonzalo Mendez Feitor and Pedro Homen were here and as on account of certain auspicious utterance of your Highness, they desired to preserve and sustain the peace of this people, he forbade them to go to Cananor and to walk among the people, and embroiled them with the Captain-in-Chief, who always believed in his wickedness and held them to be virtues, following bad accounts he gave regarding them to the king of the land and the Governor and people thereof; as to which thing let your Highness ask Joao Serrao who knows something of this, for to relate them in detail would be business without end. And the king of the land was on the point of breaking away entirely from the Captain-in-Chief on account of the oppression of his Governor, and also regarding a number of horses which he took from him by force without paying for them, and compelled the Wazir (alguazil) to pay his masters for some of them, threatening to put him in irons if he did not do so. I know this well, for I was a whole day with the king, telling him from your Highness that if he was in any way aggrieved he should make it known to your Highness, whereupon everything would be made right with all peace and love towards him, on which he said that he would rather lose his land altogether, since they did him much violence as he could not endure; and he wanted nothing from us, neither ports nor sea trade, not giving nor taking with us, and that he wished to live away from the coasts and maintain himself on the fruits of land, since we robbed him of his land and used such constraint against him. I disputed with him with mild words until at last he told me that having taken much counsel he was willing to endure everything until your Highness knew of it, and to this intent, he sends thither these men with certain services of jewels, and with letters and messages by the hand of Joao Serrao.

This year we had at this factory for the cargoes of these ships four thousand quintals of ginger, almost on credit, which the King ordered to be given to us, and we

5 He was killed in a battle near Goa (1511 AD).
have gone on paying for it little by little. If we had had goods to give in exchange it seems to me we might have had six or seven thousand quintals, but, as we had no goods with which to pay, we reached the price of hundred fedas the bahar, and last year we had to take it at 120 fedas the bahar; and now they tell us that they will make us take up six thousand quintals, and pay in goods or some other things at once. If we have these I believe we can bring the price down to eighty fedas the bahar; for Jorge de Melle has now, with his pleasant words and disposition, made them well-disposed, and drawn them out of evil thoughts which possessed them, for since he has been here many Moors and Heathens of good estate come to this fortress; whereas two years past they neither came in nor dealt with us. This is the fruit of the tree planted by your Highness's hand.

Let your Highness give order to relieve this factory with goods in abundance, and in especial order them to discharge cargo here, for all ships pass on to Cochim and leave us nothing here, nor they are willing to stay here for three days, even though they come very early, they think of nothing but numbers of quintals, and this year they missed four or five Meca ships. Which had come to Calecud, because they were unwilling to wait here, and we gave them information of this, for we knew for certain that those ships had come. Last year twelve or thirteen ships laden with spices passed to Meca and Adem, and this year as many are getting ready. May God amend this, since your Highness is not willing to do so, for it would be better to stop the passing of these spices than to remain at Goa wasting whatever your factories possess on the armed bands of the country, with seven or eight hundred men and four or five ships, besides as many caravels and galleys; paying more on wedding of men to prevent their turning Moors than Goa has as yet brought in or ever will bring in.

There the Captain-in-chief keeps all his establishments, for getting your old established factories, where are to be found all cargoes needed for the ships, for the foundation of which your Highness ordered the discovery of India, and thus too, he spends in money and food for the Canaries of land as much as would suffice for the factories here, while the Portuguese here go about receiving payment of their
wages. Oft-times, too, Coja Beguy is here and devours daily the value of cruzado in food, from which there is no profit.\(^6\)

They have sent to your Highness an ambassador who says he is from the Preste Joam, and sent orders from Goa to these fortress to give him great presents and entertainments, (which were made for him), saying that he had brought the wood of the Holy and True Cross. With him he brought the woman of the land of Preste Joam, and a youth; asserting that woman was his wife and daughter of great lord, and youth a near relative of the king, and that he himself be the Chief Ambassador. Here the woman revealed that he was a moor and came from Cayro as a spy, that he had bought the youth, and that she had been stolen by him and not his wife; for the Abyssinians are black and are branded on forehead, while this man is white and did not know the language of Preste's country. She demanded of Captain Jorge de Mello before all officials of this fortress that he should turn the man out of it, and inasmuch as he was a Moor, and considering the falsehood with which he came, the Captain sends him as he arrived to your Highness, with a clear statement of what is known here, and Gasper Pereyra also writes it to your Highness.

I brought with me an appointment from your Highness to the first writer's desk which should fall vacant at Cananor. This was furnished by the death of Joam D'Avila, and Duarte Frez came this year with an appointment to Joam D'Avila's desk with the surety of the ships of the country, and Pedro Mem for feitor. According to your Highness's intentions I remained first writer as was Pedro Mem; as Duarte Frez brought nomination to the desk of J. D'Avila. The Captain-in-Chief understood it as he pleased and appointed Duarte Frez first writer with the securities that he holds, 70,000 reis and greater part of the duties on ginger and drugs, and as I work better than any official at the language. I remain now with 50,000 dry reis; whereas I shall kiss the hands of your Highness to order me to be tested with justice, and to enjoy

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\(^6\) Coja Beguy (Khwaja Beg) was a Muslim of Calicut, who was employed by Alboquerque.
the time I have to live and serve as first writer, since Duarte Frez has been appointed to the post of J. Davila; and this would be a great favour to me.

Done at Cananor, the XII of January, 1513.

DTE BARBOSA

(This letter highlights the importance of good relations with the sea traders. Duarte Barbosa clearly records the displeasure of the local ruler, who was annoyed owing to the bad treatment at the hands of the Portuguese. His displeasure and unwillingness to trade with the Portuguese would have resulted in considerable losses to the treasury. Thus, Barbosa convinced him to take his case to the rulers in Portugal. He was sure that the local ruler would receive justice towards the end).