CHAPTER II

READING OR EXPERIENCE?

FORMATION OF *OS LUSÍADAS*

This chapter concerns itself with the question of the ‘sources’ of Camões’s epic, *Os Lusiadas*. When the work is read from a historical perspective, it is natural for an inquisitive mind to ask the question: how much of *his* experience would have gone into the making of *Os Lusiadas*? Equally important is the question, what would be the measure of imagination that could have enriched his experience while writing the epic? By way of answering these compelling questions, even the least modest researcher would admit that while his biographies offer more brackets and parentheses, readers of the poet’s work tend to derive from his lyrical and epic verses much more ‘facts’ than those otherwise ‘scientifically’ proved from evidences, if any. It can be assumed that there must be factors that have gone into the creation of the epic, coming from his interaction with scholars and books. This implies that there is a constant shifting of centres – experience and reading – in the consideration of the source and background of his epic.

For a creative writing to be possible, the two most important ingredients are considered to be reading and experience. While speaking about the historical / fictional work of the sixteenth century Portuguese writer, Mendes Pinto, entitled *Peregrinação* (1614), João Camilo dos Santos makes the following observation:
It is nothing new that the triumph of experience over knowledge transmitted through books is a characteristic of the Renaissance. The shipwreck narratives and *Peregrinação*, given the importance that they are endowed with the direct accounts of the original experiences, on one hand illustrate the new mental models, and on the other hand contribute, themselves, to the implantation of another vision of the world and life. (135. emphasis added)

The difference between Pinto’s work and Camões’s epic, as Santos adds to say, consists in that while Pinto ‘pretends’ that his novel is not fiction but history, Camões ‘pretends’ that his work is both (134-135).

It is assumed in this study that *Os Lusiadas* can be read as a source of history not only for Portugal and India, but for many other lands and peoples. However, it shall also be remarked that *Os Lusiadas* is a special kind of source of history, for unlike a traditional source which is used for a single linear way of interpretation, Camões’s epic by its special makeup, allows multiple readings (with an experience of time-fluctuations) even at a particular time of reading. One reason for this is that the unique nature of *Os Lusiadas* is constituted of at least two lines of background namely, Camões’s ‘reading’ and his individual experience. He mixes one with the other in his profound imaginative and lyrical mind. The result is that the reader is granted freedom to move constantly to and fro history and literature. In this context, it shall also be remarked that though Camões is regarded one of the greatest epic writers, his reading included not only literature / mythology by Virgil.
Ovid and others, but also history by such great ones as João de Barros, Diogo de Couto (with the latter Camões is said to have sailed with the manuscript of the epic, from Mozambique to Lisbon) and others. Compared to the other legendary epic poets, Camões is believed to be the first great European artist to have crossed the Equator and visited the tropics and the Orient (Bacon, xviii, xxviii). This means that though other ancient epic writers like Homer and Ovid have mentioned India in their works, it is Camões for the first time who gives description of the Orient from a personal experience. Thus, literature, history (which together constitute his ‘reading’), and personal experience (Vasco da Gama’s first voyage and Camões’s own voyage to the Portuguese Orient, are distanced only by about 55 years) has rendered Os Lusiadas a very special sort of source of history.

His biographies, full of parenthetical clauses (loaded with uncertainties) say that Camões was born in 1524 or 1525. But it could not be established for certain whether he was born in Lisbon or elsewhere. He belonged to a noble Galician family which came to Portugal as early as 1369. Many of his biographers have gathered the names of his parents – Simon Vaz de Camões and Anna de Sa de Macedo – though “there is not one direct allusion to either of his parents in any of Camoes’s works” (Bacon, xii). Leonard Bacon who studied the works of Juromenha, Professor Prestage, Professor Aubrey Bell, Senhora de Vasconcelos and others on the poet’s life, remarks that the family suffered from a lack of sufficient fortunes quite in early stage and his father is said to be “a poor gentleman…of whom nothing
of importance is known except that he resided at Coimbra for some time and later at Lisbon” (xii). This means that poverty and deprivation for which there is ample reference in *Os Lusiadas*, were realities in the poet’s life. In the words of Paul Mazery,

Little is known about the life of Luis de Camões. He was probably born in Lisbon in 1524 or 1525. His father, Simão Vaz de Camões, came from an aristocratic family that had come from Galicia to Portugal in 1370. The poet studied at Coimbra, his tutor being his uncle who was chancellor of the university there. (13)

Thinking about the authors and works that might have influenced Camões, it is natural to be curious to know where he had had his formal education. It has been observed from very scanty sources that an uncle of his – Dom Bento de Camões – was a figure (whether he was a professor or a student is not certain) at the university of Coimbra. This information has not helped his biographers to discover if the poet himself had been at the university. It is true that many names not recorded in history – which, therefore, does not mean that these names are not historical – but found in *Os Lusiadas* are to be his friends from Coimbra, as his biographers speculate. Some of them are, according to Landeg White. “Fernão Veloso (Canto V: 31. VI: 41 – 69 and IX: 69), Lionardo Ribeiro (VI: 40 and IX: 75-82). Álvaro Vaz de Almada (IV: 25 and VI: 69) and Alvaro de Braga, the clerk. and Diogo Dias, the overseer (VIII: 94)” (242). Leonard Bacon adds among the names of his friends, “the brothers Gonçalo and Alvaro de Silveira, and with
less probability, Jorge de Montemayor, the author of the celebrated ‘Diana’” (xii). Bacon goes to add that “The Martyrdom of Gonçalo de Silveira in East Africa is mentioned explicitly in the Lusiads…” (ibid). In addition to the historical figures, Cameôos adds, in the words of Landeg White, “Fernão Veloso (cantos 5.31, 6. 41 – 69, and 9.69). Lionardo Ribeiro (cantos 6.40 and 9.75 – 82). Álvaro Vaz de Almada (cantos 4.25 and 6.69) and Álvaro de Braga, the clerk, and Diogo Dias, the overseer (Canto 8.94)” (242).

Were these names found in the epic purely his inventions? Or were they really his friends and acquaintances – or even illustrious names he collected from his reading – no biographer could establish for certain. If Os Lusiadas had meant merely an invention of names, places and events, it would have been easy for the epic to be assigned a great place in imaginative literature and not in history. But the case is different. Most of the names the epic refers to are historical, as historians have no doubt about the matter. Apart from Vasco da Gama, the fleet had his brother Paulo da Gama who commanded the warship São Rafael. Nicolau Coelho who was in charge of the Caravel Bérrio and Gonçalo Nunes who commanded a supply ship, which are some of the historical names that render the epic more often than not a historical reading. In addition to them, the most recent English translator of the epic, Landeg White mentions the following:

On board were Pero de Alenquer, who had been Bartolomeu Dias’s pilot in 1487-8; Fernão Martins, who spoke Arabic, and Martim Afonso who had lived in Congo; a certain Álvaro Velho, who kept a
diary of the whole voyage as far as Guinea on the return journey:
together with four masters, three ships’ clerks and an unknown number
of priests, mariners, caulkers, soldiers and condemned prisoners (see
canto 2.7), in total somewhere between 150 and 200 men. (242)

Coimbra supplied not only the names of these ‘friends’ but memories
of historical incidents associated with the land. In the epic work, the poet
becomes most excited when he refers to the meadows of Mondego and the
legendary tragedy of Inês de Castro. But whether he actually studied at
Coimbra is a matter of suspect, especially when one considers the fact that he
knew very little of Latin and, still meagre of Greek, at a time when it was a
discredit even for an undergraduate not to converse in these languages.

Coimbra must also have fed the future poet by accounts from many of
the historians and chroniclers whose presence in the epic is too self-evident.
Fernando Castelo-Branco in his “A Visão Camoniana da História” speaks of
the sources Camões might have used in Cantos III and VIII: “...a narração
dessa história fundamenta-se principalmente nas crónicas de Duarte Galvão,
Rui de Pina e Fernão Lopes” (115-116). According to Castelo-Branco, when
Camões sings “... o que a tudo enfim me obriga. / É não poder mentir no que
disser” (III. 5), the poet is not attempting merely a rhetorical statement but a
serious one. The poet’s intention is to re-present history as truth – that is, a
history endowed with value judgments. Consequently, Camões takes two
positions in his historiography: the first one is to make appropriate selections
from the chronicles, and the second one is to invest that history with moral
lessons (which the reader encounters at the close of every Canto). Consequently, Os Lusiadas turned out to be a unique literary history as the poet is believed to have made tremendous research and reading in matters of history. In the words of Castelo-Branco, "Para atingir este objectivo, o poeta terá feito um considerável esforço de pesquisa e de leitura..." ("A Visão", 116).

Biographers think that Camões left the University and went of Lisbon in 1543, at a time Portugal's excellence in imperial expansion and advancement in letters had their immediate impact felt in Lisbon. However, it was also a time when there was a strong sentiment of antipathy rising against the protagonists of Reformation—Calvin, Luther, Henry VIII, and others—which forms a convincing background and even areas of direct references in Os Lusiadas (VII: 5-7). But then, the poet's Lisbon life is of exciting interest to the biographers and historians mainly because of the passions Camões is said to have developed for many a woman, by names as various as Caterina de Ataide (interestingly, also the name of Vasco da Gama's wife), Infanta Maria and Beatrice. Biographers maintain interest in such matters because the poet's blooming creativity which expressed itself during these years, finds an easy explanation. For, between his last years in Coimbra and 1550, he is understood to have written three plays: El-Rei Seleuco (King Seleucus), Os Amfitrões (The Amphitryons), and Filodemo. However, his passion for love also seems to have cost him his place in the Court of John III. He is reported to have boasted too publicly of his amorous success with a princess of the
royal family, which should have hurt the King's feelings or at least violated a
taboo in matters of gossip. Consequently, he was banished from the Court,
though the free time he enjoyed at the banks of the Tagus river is supposed to
have inspired him to think of writing an epic that would further the glory of
Portugal.

Whether just as a part of the continuation of the punishment or not,
sometime around 1547, Camões went to Ceuta in Morocco, which was a
Portuguese colony from the time of John I. and where skirmishes with the
Moors still continued. Biographers assume that the departure was a
compulsory exile, since it was a time when the well-off Portuguese men were
happy to pay a tax to be exempted from being commissioned to Morocco. The
hard life in Ceuta, however, happened to enrich the epic with convincing and
realistic descriptions of the hard life at a fortress and wild animals like lioness
and its whelps. Camões is said to have lost one eye (if right or left, traditions
differ) in Morocco in some fight. Referring to the biographical account of
Professor Prestage, Leonard Bacon says that Camões's life of exile or term of
service came to an end in 1549, which gave him a chance of sailing in the
company of Afonso da Noronha who had just been appointed Viceroy of
India. One knows not whether Camões just got a chance to ruminate an
adventure to the Orient. It is said that Camões enlisted for service in India in
1550, though it was not yet occasion for him to set sail for India.

During the carnival of the Corpus Christi Day, 1552, he went to defend
his friends against a court official named Gonçalo Borges whom he stabbed.
The punishment was a term of eight months in prison. Later, Camões would suffer imprisonment in Goa for some misconduct of his in Macão, and still another captivity in Mozambique connected with debt. No wonder that Camões assigns a prominent role to prisoners in his epic, though it was a historical reality by then that for the strenuous voyage to India and the service in the difficult Orient, prisoners formed one of the favourite choices of the officers. From *Os Lusiadas*, for instance, we understand that prisoners constituted an important portion of the passengers in the first voyage from Lisbon to Calicut. This became a regular practice in all subsequent voyages. The 'advantage' was that their lives could be risked as they could be deputed for tasks such as inspecting an unknown land. Canto II speaks of such a situation, where the prisoners were ventured: the occasion is the fleet's arrival at the shores of Mombasa:

E de alguns que trazia condenados

Por culpas e por feitos vergonhosos.

Por que pudessem ser aventurados

Em casos desta sorte duvidosos.

Manda dous mais sagazes, ensaiados.

Por que notem dos Mouros enganosos

A cidade e poder, e por que vejam

Os Cristãos, que só tanto ver desejam.(II: 7)

Further, the verses II: 13 speaks of their risk: "Aqui foram de noite agasalhados. / Com todo o bom e honesto tratamento. / Os dous Cristãos, não
vendo que enganados / Os tinha o falso e santo fingimento". Again, when they make the landfall at Malindi, it is one of the captured Moors who is sent as an envoy to the king yet unknown to them; for such and similar risky jobs, the prisoners were the easy target: "Mandam fora um dos Mouros que tomaram. / Por quem sua vinda ao Rei manifestaram” (II: 74).

Indeed it was not the captives or prisoners alone who suffered. As the voyage itself was deploringly uncertain of realizing the destination, it was almost a kind of hopeless sojourn in the seas fighting with acute hopelessness. hunger, desperation and even rage that verged on mutiny. Camões puts these words into the mouth of da Gama as he addresses the King of Malindi (V: 70, 71, 72):

‘Crês tu que já não foram levantados
Contra seu Capitão, se os resistira,
Fazendo-se piratas, obrigados
De desesperação, de fome, de ira?
Grandemente, por certo, estão provados.
Pois que nenhum trabalho grande os tira
Daquela Portuguesa alta excelência
De lealdade firme, e obediência’. (V: 72)

In fact, Norwood H. Andrews, Jr. overlooks the reference to mutiny made by Camões in the epic, while da Gama himself is said to have faced such a threat historically. In Andrews, Jr.’s words, "It has been pointed out that he[Camões] makes no mention of the mutiny which forced da Gama to throw
overboard the navigational instruments and which well might have thwarted
the purpose of the expedition had it not been throttled immediately and with a
heavy hand” (92, emphasis added).

A very important factor among the navigators, at least with regard to
such maiden voyages, was the presence of pilots. In fact, all along the
voyage, da Gama yearns to collect information about India as well as to
procure a pilot to guide them as directly as possible to the Malabar coast.
This was occasion, sometimes, for the captain to be tricked by deceptive
pilots who could mislead the fleet. The Sheikh of the Isle of Mozambique
supplies the captain with such a pilot: (I: 83, 94, 95, 97, 101, 105). One of
the promises was that he would take them to the lost Christian kingdom of the
‘mythical’ Prester John. The sailors were saved from such traps only by
sheer luck though the poet attributes the escape to Providence. For, because
of adverse winds and waves while they could not cross the dangerous bar in
Mombasa, the unfavourable natives of Mombasa take to heels as they mistake
the pandemonium of the Portuguese mariners for war cry and the pilot they
procured from Mozambique himself jumps into waters (II: 28). Such
incidents need not necessarily invite the attention of a historian, since the
pattern of friendliness / unfriendliness of this kind appears to be conforming
to the epic pattern of “the guest-friendship ritual” found in Homer and Virgil
(Andrews, Jr. 87-88). However, a pilot whose guidance, without
exaggeration, was the most crucial, is supplied by the King of Malindi. How
his presence eased the troubled and fatigued minds, is clear from these lines:
“No piloto que leva não havia / Falsidade, mas antes vai mostrando / A navegação certa, e assim caminha / Já mais seguro do que dantes vinha.” (VI: 5). That, it is this Malindian pilot who identifies the Malabar coast and cries out the sighting of the land (VI: 92), shows the importance of the pilot the voyage made use of. Landeg White speaks of the historicity of da Gama’s pilot: “Da Gama’s pilot was long reputed to have been Ahmed Ibn Majid, the greatest Arab navigator of his day and author of numerous treatises on the Indian Ocean. He is now thought to have retired in 1465” (245). It turns out to be that the presence of the pilot in the epic is a mixture of history and Camões’s own reading on the matter. As Norwood H. Andrews, Jr. remarks. When the Portuguese left Melinde, the xeque [sheikh] sent a pilot with them, thus assuring them of passage to India. At this juncture the Odyssey again comes to mind. King Alcinous also assured his visitor of the passage he sought. He did so in a different way, to be sure, but only with regard to incidentals. Odysseus needed a ship and da Gama did not. Odysseus was homeward bound, da Gama outward. Neither could have finished his journey without the help he received, however, and both owe their successful arrival to their hosts. The general pattern is consequently the same in both cases. (86-87) The mention of the pilots – both favourable and unfavourable – became necessary at this juncture in order to further emphasize the pattern of friendliness/unfriendliness adopted by Camões not only because of experience
and history, but also because of the generic conventions he had seen in writers like Homer and Virgil.

After serving the eight months in prison for stabbing the courtier, Camões's apology was accepted and King's pardon followed on March 7, 1553. However, Camões set sail for India – whether exiled or went on his own - on March 23, 1553, on the flagship of Fernão Alvares Cabral. It is assumed that he was six months on voyage in São Bento from Lisbon to Goa. Now, one can see that the winds and waves described in Os Lusiadas as always threatening the lives of the people aboard the ship are not totally the invention of mere imagination, though in order to convey the ferocity of the sea, the poet has used mythical gods and goddesses, as one reads in Canto VI: 35-37. Later, during the voyage between Malindi and Indian Coast, the fleet of Vasco da Gama were threatened by one of the most disturbing times with storm, waves and lightning (VI: 70-79, 84), for the poet exclaim: “Quantos montes, então, que derribaram / As ondas que batiam denodadas! / Quantas árvores velhas arrancaram / Do vento bravo as furias indinadas!” (VI: 79), which naturally make the Captain pray for their lives and grace of endurance (VI: 80-83) in such words as, “Por que somos de ti desamparados. / Se este nosso trabalho não te ofende. / Mas antes teu serviço só pretende?” (VI: 82). Perhaps the embodiment of the difficulties in crossing the Cape of Storms (renamed after the Portuguese taming of the seas, as Cape of Good Hope) is personified most aesthetically in Adamastor – a mythical name adopted by Camões to describe the historical reality of the Cape (the subject
for a detailed analysis later in the present work). As Dino F. Preti observes, Camões’s voyage in *S.Bento*, which necessitated passing through the Cape of Good Hope with its “terrível tempestade” inspired him later to create the entity of Adamastor in his epic (193). Suffice it to mention here that, the life at sea described in the epic has its major source in the experience of the poet himself. Hence, some of the salient features of the life aboard a sixteenth century Portuguese ship that was forced test the patience of a violent sea for more than six months before reaching the Indian coast, are worth mentioning here.

To withstand the profound uncertainties in the vicissitudes of the voyage, the mariners often sought pleasure in *story telling* as we read in *Os Lusiadas*. The practice was carried out especially during the night, a time when fatigue and sleep were expected to overpower them. William Mickle, the eighteenth-century translator of *Os Lusiadas* comments on this historic practice:

‘All but the second watch are asleep in their warm pavilions; the second watch sit by the mast sheltered from the chilly gale by a broad sail cloth; sleep begins to overpower them, and they tell stories to entertain one another. For beautiful, picturesque simplicity there is no sea-scene equal to this in the Odyssey or Aeneid’ (qtd. in White 1997: 246).
The reference is made to the stanza where the poet speaks of the change of the night watch at midnight (VI: 38). The recourse was story telling, as Camões himself should have experienced the situation in person:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Vencidos vêm do sono, e mal despertos;} \\
\text{Bocejando a miúdo se encostavam} \\
\text{Pelas antenas, todos mal cobertos} \\
\text{Contra os agudos ares, que assopravam;} \\
\text{Os olhos contra seu querer abertos,} \\
\text{Alas estregando, os membros estiravam;} \\
\text{Remédios contra o sono buscar querem.} \\
\text{Histórias contam, casos mil referem. (VI: 39)}
\end{align*}\]

Stories of love and romance were not found befitting for a life of continuous hardships at sea but only those of “guerra fervida e robusta / A nossa história seja, pois dureza / Nossa vida há de ser, segundo entendo, / Que o trabalho por vir me está dizendo” (VI: 41). In the epic, Farnão Veloso proceeds then to tell his companions the story of the Twelve [Portuguese] of England (VI: 42-69).

Perhaps the deepest deprivation they suffered, especially to view it from Camões’s own perspective, must be the deprivation of love which would even lead to perversion and lasciviousness. The wise Man of Belém, in the epic, has already sounded this as one among his many warnings: - "‘Dura inquietação d’alma e da vida, / Fonte de desamparos e adultérios’” (IV: 96). No surprise then that the sailors are also eager to tell stories of love. Lionardo
Ribeiro who seems to reflect Camões's sentiment is one among such men who are famished by love: “Responde Leonardo, que trazia / Pensamentos de firme namorado: / Que contos poderemos ter melhores, / Para passar o tempo, que de amores?” (VI: 40). Later the reader would encounter that this frustration (“Ser com amores mal afortunado”, IX: 75) of his is too expressive in his prolonged chasing of the nymph in the Isle of Love (IX: 75–82). In fact, the Isle of Love itself seems to have been conceived by the poet as the most befitting reward to these sailors who were isolated from their beloved ones for almost two years to sojourn in the most unimaginably testing situations. The frustration and anticipation, coming from the experience of the poet himself, are expressive in the lines: “Ó que famintos beijos na floresta, / E que mimoso choro que soava! /.... / Melhor é experimentá-lo que julgá-lo. / Mas julgue-o quem não pode experimentá-lo” (IX: 83).

Even though, historical records lack references to most of the details of the events in Camões’s life, almost all of his biographers have identified the reason of his ‘banishment’ from the royal court, in his love for a lady in the palace. The love unreciprocated or unconsummated, as many Camonians believe, is supposed to have inspired much of his lyric poetry. George Monteiro speaks of Lord Viscount Strangford who published Poems. from the Portuguese of Luis de Camoens (1803). “drawing largely upon a strictly autobiographical interpretation of Camoens’ sonnets and songs” and how he has made a fanciful and romantic story befitting the theme of love itself.
In the Church of ‘Christ’s Wounds’, at Lisbon, on the 11th of April, 1542, he first beheld Dona Catherine de Ataide, the object of his purest and earliest attachment. The churches of Spain and Portugal…are the very cradles of intrigue, and it was not long before Camoens enjoyed an opportunity of declaring his affection, with all the romantic ardour of eighteen, and of a poet. ….

The peculiar situation of Dona Catarina (that of one of the queen’s ladies) imposed an uniform restraint on her lover, which soon became intolerable. Like another Ovid, he violated the sanctity of the royal precincts, and was in consequence banished from the court’ (qtd. Monteiro, 90-91)

After the expedition in Africa, when the poet returned, his love’s soul had already departed from this world – in the words of Strangford. ‘she was torn from the world at the age of twenty’ (qtd. ibid. 91)

It can also be noted that the Portuguese movements were quite strategic, systematic and planned. As we have noted, only one or two – chiefly prisoners or captives – would be sent to inspect the land and communicate with the ruler. The same takes place at the shores of Calicut too: “Chegada a frota ao rico senhorio, / Um Português mandado logo parte / A fazer sabedor o Rei gentio / Da vinda sua a tão remota parte” (VII: 23). Once it is found that a favourable welcome would be accorded, the captain himself disembarks to meet the ruler: “Mas ele, que do Rei já tem licença / Para desembarcar, acompanhado / Dos nobres Portugueses, sem detença /
Parte, de ricos panos adornado” (VII: 43). He would be accompanied by a handful of the Portuguese men (VII: 59). But as the captain is escorted to meet the royal personalities, some of his men would be waiting at the beach, watchful and cautious till the captain returned safe. When Vasco da Gama realized that Catual with a sly purpose denied him boat to return to the ship, the captain remembers that Nicolau Coelho (captain of the caravel Bérrio) who was waiting for him at the beach, and da Gama, immediately, gives him orders to return to the fleet (VIII: 88). Such a voyage that lasted for many months together made it necessary for the ship to be tendered and cleaned. Os Lusíadas has such a scene when the fleet arrives at the mouth of river Kwakwa (V: 79).

What they most suffered was from diseases caused by hunger, poverty and stale or undernourished food. Os Lusíadas describes such a disease with some of its bizarre symptoms. Through da Gama's words addressed to the King of Malindi, the poet describes the disease with the awesome note that they did not have any doctor or surgeon to treat the malady:

‘E foi que de doença crua e feia,
A mais que eu nunca vi, desampararam
Muitos a vida...

........

As gengivas na boca, que crescia
carne, e juntamente apodrecia.
- Apodrecia com um fétido e bruto

69
Cheiro, que o ar vizinho inficionava;

Não tínhamos ali médico astuto,

Cirurgião subtil menos se achava.' (V: 81, 82)

In the following stanza the captain wails for the lives of many of his comrades which the disease robbed off. Camões calls it Ramnúsia, that is, Nemesis, out of the mythical Furies. Almost all the English translators (including Atkinson, Bacon and White) identify the disease as scurvy. In the words of Leonard Bacon,

The pest was scurvy. It may be added that, however repulsive, this passage supplies so accurate a clinical account as to interest several leading physicians whom I have consulted in the connection. It must be one of the earliest accounts of a disease, which was something of a novelty. Lord Stanley in The Three Voyages of Vasco da Gama (page 70) notes that Gaspar Correias' account of scurvy, which could have been on Camões' desk, is perhaps the first mention of the disease at sea. Scurvy was a penalty of long voyages. And the Portuguese invented that form of activity. (208)

It is believed that Camões arrived in Goa in September, 1553. Os Lusiadas abounds in references to various Portuguese outposts India. The experience of various wars with which Camões invests his epic do not come entirely from imaginative inventions. For, as he had experience of military service in Morocco, he went on a military expedition in India also, on Portuguese cause. As Bacon reports.

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Camões, a few weeks after arriving in the huge, beautiful, and outrageous city [Goa], which he called ‘the mother of knaves and stepmother of honest men,’ went on an expedition against the King of Pimenta far south on the Malabar Coast. The force recaptured an island in favor of the King of Cochim, a steady ally of Portugal, and returned victorious, with some loss of life...(xviii-xix)

He, then, went to Ormuz in 1554 / 1555. The critics infer from the minute details of description of this Coast of the Persian Gulf and references to the house of Meneses family made in Os Lusiadas that he did go on an expedition to Ormuz with a member of this renowned family. They also think that, for some of the details regarding Ormuz, the poets owes to Barros. But Camões is believed to have returned to Goa in 1555 itself, for he is said to have written two satiric plays, Satyra do Torneio (Satire on the Tourney) and Disparates na India (The Follies of India) which were staged along with his earlier Filodemo during the festivities in connection with the inauguration of Francisco Barreto as Governor in Goa. Critics are of opinion that though they are not great artistic achievements, the plays nevertheless have recorded some aspects of the seamy side of Goan life in the sixteenth century. Legend has it that he went to Macão in 1556. But none of his works, nor any of the available documents prove the veracity of such a voyage, though the ‘Grotto of Camões’ where he is assumed to have written Os Lusiadas is a tourist attraction even today. Similarly, the reference to ‘birds who walk on their wings’ in the Island of Ternate as referred to in his epic, indicate that he
would not have visited the island personally, though there is a tradition attesting the visit in the positive. But whether from Macão or from Ternate, he is forced to return to Goa (perhaps obeying an order for misconduct). Almost all the Camonians believe that his ship was wrecked in 1559, near the mouth of Mekong river of Combodia. Camões refers to the incident unforgettable for him especially because he swam ashore clutching ‘these Cantos soaked but snatched from shipwreck’:

"Vês, passa por Camboja Mecom rio,
Que capitão das águas se interpreta;

"Este receberá, plácido e brando,
No seu regaço os Cantos que molhados
Vém do naufrágio triste e miserando.
Dos procelosos baxos escapados.
Das fomes. dos perigos grandes, quando
Será o injusto mando executado
Naquele cuja Lira sonorosa
Será mais afamada que ditosa. (X: 127,128, emphasis added)

The shipwreck, poverty, dangers, ‘unjust’ order, etc. which the poet says that he had to suffer and are referred to in these lines are the subject of the self-conscious lines of VII: 80; but the poet still had to continue suffering in the form of imprisonment in Goa. In the words of Paul Mazery,
Duty took Camões to many places, and he began *The Lusiads* at Macau (1556-60) where he was an administrator of estates. He visited the Moluccas and Canton. Then, accused of embezzling assets in the estates under his care, he was punished and sent back to Goa to be imprisoned. He was shipwrecked off the Cambodian coast and swam ashore with the manuscript of *The Lusiads*. The shipwreck did not save him from imprisonment. (15)

It was perhaps the communication from Macão that induced the authorities in Goa to imprison him. There is also a story about him that he was imprisoned in Goa on account of his inability to pay debts, from which some of his friends and admirers tried to save him. About this time, he wrote an ode addressing the Viceroy, which was written as an introduction to an old gentleman’s work on Oriental drugs and medicinal plants in Goa, published in 1563. The ode is said to be Camões’s first printed work.

Though it was often neglect Camões encountered (X: 145), he is ready to offer his services to the nation, as he declares in the final stanzas of Canto X (Stanzas,145-156). He is proud not of his poetic skill alone, but of experience he has acquired from his sojourn. He assesses his worth in such terms as “Nem me falta na vida honesto estudo, / Com longa experiência misturado, / Nem engenho, que aqui vereis presente, / Cousas que juntas se acham raramente” (X: 154, emphasis added). Thus, as Camões regards himself, *estudo* and *experiência* form the primary sources of his creativity which yielded his masterpiece in the form of *Os Lusiadas*. He even goes on to
advise the young King Sebastião to take advice only from those seasoned with reading and experience (X: 152).

Camões inherited this ideal (of reading conjoined with experience) from the ideology of the times, namely Renaissance. There is an impressive reflection of the Renaissance ideal of man in his advice imparted to his King. Accordingly the poet claims himself to have been trained not only as an artist but even as a warrior; for, he comes to serve the nation with, pen in one hand, a sword in the other: “Numa mão sempre a espada, e noutra a pena” (VII: 79). Same assurance is repeated in the lines in X: 155, though it is painful to hear him singing of due approval he was always denied of: “Só me falece ser a vós aceito” (X: 155).

In VII: 78 – 87, the poet refers to the poems he wrote before the present work, how he suffered an aimless sojourn in the seas, torments of war, banishment, poverty, and shipwreck. In VIII: 39-42, through the words of Paulo da Gama, Camões refers to the loss of artistic taste in the contemporary times. Arts are nourished, however, by honours and rewards, though some men achieve rank and possessions because of certain kings who were ruled by favouritism and flattery. The result was that some gallant ancestors (history) were not made the subject of poetry, as poetry (power of versification) itself was dead in those ‘poets’ who were falsely encouraged by kings. Camões had profound conviction that poetry would be nourished only by rewards. Isle of Love represents this Camonian insistence: “... as deleitosas / Honras que a vida fazem sublimada” (IX: 89). Perhaps an unjust
history too justifies Camões's anxiety for rewards and fame (IX: 89 – 95) which the poet was unfortunate enough to be deprived off amply: through the words of the nymph the poet wails of a king “de quem ficou tão mal pagado / Um tal vassalo, ó Rei” (X: 25).

Camões's sojourn in the Orient lasted for about 17 years and for all these years there was hardly a time when he did not suffer acute poverty. All these years, he long wanted to return to his motherland. But, as Paul Mazery states. “Although he wanted to return to Portugal, debts prolonged his imprisonment [for embezzling assets in the estates under his care, while he was in Macão]” (15). At last he decides to return to Portugal and in 1567 he accepts the offer of certain Pedro de Barreto, Captain of Mozambique, to take him up to the African country. But Camões was penniless in Mozambique for two years. Finally, the passengers in the ship, Santa Clara, that included the historian Diogo de Couto come ready to pay his debts and take him to Lisbon. Camões reached Lisbon on April 7, 1570.

The epic was published in Lisbon in 1572 and the King allowed him a pension. However, as all biographers attest, even the publication of his masterpiece did not improve his lot. As Paul Mazery continues to report.

In 1564, under a new governor, the fortunes of Camões improved, and in the next three years he wrote much lyrical work, most of it belonging to The Lusiads. .....

Camões reached Portugal on 7 April 1570, his financial position no better than in Africa and Asia, and he needed a patron for the
publication of The Lusiads. His patron is thought to have been either Gonçalo Coutinho or a member of the family of Antão de Noronha.

On 23 September 1571 King Sebastião I (1554-1578) authorized Antonio Gonçalves, printer, of Lisbon, to publish 'a work in ottava rima entitled Os Lusiadas, consisting of ten complete cantos, and in which are narrated in poetic form the principal exploits of the Portuguese in India.'

The book appeared in March 1572 and earned Camões a royal pension of 15 000 réis for three years. One of the reasons for granting the pension was the excellent portrayal of 'things in India'. The annuity was twice increased, in 1575 and in 1580, the second increase eight days before the death of Camões on 10 June. (16)

As Landeg White comments, as notes to Canto X.25, "the theme of the badly rewarded soldier and of royal ingratitude bears directly on Camões's own situation"(254). History also speaks of how in the last days, the poet was completely neglected by everyone except by his faithful servant who had to go through the streets of Lisbon begging alms just to sustain the life of his noble master. Benigno Joaquim Martinez speaks of Camões's servant who "...corria as ruas de Lisboa, pedindo esmola para sustentar o seu nobre e honrado senhor" (3).

This implies that what goes into the making of history is not the ideals of truth and objectivity alone, but feelings, sentiments and attitudes emanating from profound experiences such as poverty and acute personal deprivations of
the historian / poet. Leonard Bacon speaks of the importance of experience in the formation of Camões's epic:

...Camões, as has been often said before, was the first highly imaginative European to visit the Tropics and the Orient. ... Hence veracity reigns in every syllable, even if he did believe one or two travelers' tales. And even that dependence on the ancient Classics, which was one of the thought-forms of the Renaissance, cannot and does not overcome the factual and the actual. (xxviii, emphasis added)

In addition to the extent of the density of such an experience that has gone into the making of the epic, an important amount of sources that were available to Camões belongs to the historical as well as the literary spheres, which are already hinted at, but require an elaboration at some length, before the discussion of the poet's sources should conclude. Among the literary influences on Os Lusiadas, as all Camonians agree, the most pervasive one is Virgil's Aeneid. As, William J. Entwistle observes:

In its plot the Lusiads is essentially an Aeneid with the masses transposed. The initial epic impulse and the technique of the verse are due to Ariosto, whose influence is seen in Camoens (sic), as in Milton, still more in a negative sense, in the revulsion from mere fabling which has become their characteristic mark. Camoens' contact with Homer is uncertain, and Scripture and prophecy (wherein he differs so markedly from Milton and Dante) leave but the faintest traces. But the great lines of Vergil (sic) rolled on his ear with a purity of intonation and a
conservatism of sense, which are the special privilege of speakers of the neo-Latin tongues. (76-77)

It is well known that Camões modeled this epic after the classical epic of Virgil. Camões’s apparent ‘imitation’ is visible even with the opening lines of Os Lusíadas. However, an important difference is that Camões’s subject is not a single man as that of Aeneid but the achievements of ‘the Portuguese’ as he sings in I: 3. It is interesting to note that Camões is also equally anxious to assert that his is not mere poetry born of fantasy but one that is used to write history: “As verdadeiras vossas são tamanhas, / Que excedem as sonhadas, fabulosas” (I: 11). If this is true, then Virgil and others have merely helped the Portuguese poet to ornament the work into the semblance of a traditional epic. In the musings of Bacchus, as the fleet reaches the Mozambique Island. (I: 74-76) is resembled Juno’s speech in Aeneid (1:37-49). Again the lines in I: 77 reflect those in Aeneid, i. 50-2.

The scene in which Venus makes an imploration to her father Jove, for requesting favours for the Portuguese sailors (II: 35 – 38) closely resembles Venus making a similar appeal to Jupiter in Aeneid (i. 223-304). In Jove’s answer to her daughter’s appeal in Os Lusíadas (II: 45), Aeneas himself is referred to. The long speech da Gama makes to the king of Malindi (II: 104-V: 89) imitates Aeneas’s address to Dido in Aeneid, i. 597 – 610. Calliope in Camões’s epic, III: 1 and X: 8, is also the epic muse invoked in Aeneid, ix. 525. In a vision to the King Manuel, the famous Ganges presents itself exhorting him to persevere in order to be victorious over the Indian peninsula.
In *Aeneid* we read the river Tiber giving a similar advice to Aeneas (viii. 36). Camões is indebted to Virgil’s shepherd Titoiro [for more sources, one can consult the texts edited by Ramos and Bacon] as he describes the people at saint Helena Bay (V: 63).

After the fleet left the Malindian coast, they had to face a very disturbed sea. The lightning is compared to Aeneas’ shining armour which was forged by Vulcan to please his wife (VI: 78). In Canto VIII, Paulo da Gama uses the paintings on the banners in the ship in order to tell the history of Portugal. Like many of the references given above, this incident too does not require a necessary historical source. For, as Landeg White remarks, “the shields of Achilles (*Iliad* xviii) and of Aeneas (*Aeneid*, viii) provide precedents for the use of a series of pictures to illuminate history” (White, 249).

The epic simile in VIII: 87 that describes the state of da Gama’s mind in its wandering mood, when he was detained on land by Catual, is an adaptation of a simile in *Aeneid* viii. 17 – 25. Again the comparison of Venus to Dido who loved Aeneas is made at the occasion of Venus’ preparation of the Isle of Love where each nymph endeavours to please each mariner (IX: 22, 23). For the preparation of the Isle of Love, Venus seeks the help of her son Cupid and her speech (IX: 37-42) echoes *Aeneid*, i.663-6 as much as *Metamorphoses*, v. 365 ff. Similarly, the mythical fame referred to in IX: 44, 45, is the same as the giantess portrayed in *Aeneid*, iv. 178 – 88 and *Metamorphoses*, xii: 39 – 63. Iopas to whom the nymph is presented superior
in singing history (X: 8) is the bard who sings before Dido and Aeneas, in
_Aeneid_, i. 740 ff. According to Norwood H. Andrews, Jr., in order to conceive
his epic as “nationalistic”, Camões found “two of his models” in Virgil and
Homer as congenial to the purpose; from the _Iliad_, he learned that it was “war
that has united the Greeks” while _Aeneid_ taught him that the “vision of the
commonwealth” contributed to the sense of “Eternal Rome” (62). It is
primarily the nationalism in _Aeneid_ that has become the archetype of the
national consciousness in Camões’s work.

Camões is self-conscious, as evident from the poem, that he is
following the model set by Virgil, Homer and others. Therefore, he is equally
anxious to remind the reader that his subject is not fantasy but history,
because his work is born more from action (experience) than from poetry
(reading / imagination). The words presented as a speech of da Gama at the
conclusion of his long narration of Portugal’s history to the king of Malindi
place action and experience above reading and poetry. Thus da Gama prides
himself in the fact that even Aeneas and Ulysses (heroes of Virgil and Homer,
respectively) have not ventured as much as himself (V: 86 and V: 89).

Reviewing J. Broges de Macedo’s _Os Lusiadas e a História_, Teresa
Bernardino speaks of Macedo’s observation that a poem on the necessity of
action was itself the need of the times, for it was a time when national
independence was in jeopardy. Macedo notes that Camões seeks to emphasize
two factors urgently necessitated by that juncture of history when Camões
was writing the poem. One is the solidarity between the government and the
governed, or the rulers and the ruled. The other is a fear he projects throughout the poem, regarding the danger of the agents of power who are dominated by particular, personal and selfish interests. Thus history and vision are combined in Camões's epic. As history and poetry are in constant dialogue in the epic, the progression in the poem turns out to be essentially one of self-criticism or dialectics. One can see the discourse in the poem emerging as a result of the juxtaposition of various kinds of 'contradictions', like the dogmatic (mainstream) and anti-dogmatic (criticism of the mainstream), of which 'o Velho do Restelo' is a clear representative. In other words, Os Lusiadas is a poetry of history, an interpretação de Portugal whose nationhood is being built through an interaction of the powers of the State, the Church and the nobility in the epic (Bernardino, 53-54).

Camões's epic is superior to Homer and Virgil, in aspects other than the question of action or history. Even at the level of story telling, critics like William Mickle find Camões's epic superior to those of Homer and Virgil. Commenting on the story Veloso says in Os Lusiadas (VI: 42 – 69), Mickle observes that "For beautiful, picturesque simplicity there is no sea-scene equal to this in the Odyssey or Aeneid" (qtd. in White, 246). It should also be remarked here that all along the observations on the influence of Aeneid on Os Lusiadas, the extent of the originality of Camões's work itself should be made clear. Speaking on the point, William J. Entwistle remarks:

The comparison with the Aeneid illustrates the profound originality of Camoens' design, not the spurious originality of words and plots which
our modern writers show, but that true originality with (sic) reaches through the assimilated experience of the past to new thoughts of truth or beauty. *Camoens aimed at an exact historicity...its symbolic truth, and so to convert annals into history.* (78, emphasis added)

Next to *Aeneid*, the book that appears to have influenced Camões's work the most, is the *Bible*. (The chapter on Camões's conception of history deals with his Faith which, therefore, presupposes the influence of the Bible on him). Verses 106 of the first Canto, according to Professor Otoniel Mota, are inspired by two Old Testament references: Job 25:6 and Psalms 21:7 (qtd. Lima, 311-312). The decoration on the altar in a shrine (in fact, a deception created by the natives motivated by Bacchus) in Mombasa depicting the scene of the Pentecost (II: 11), alludes to Acts 2. 1 – 4. According to Sebastião da Rocha Lima, among the Old Testament references in *Os Lusiadas*, the most frequented is the one made to the Exodus of the Israelites through the Red Sea: II:99, IV:63, VI:81, IX:2 and X:98 (Lima, 310). In the description of the Battle of the River Salado in the epic (III: 111), the giant army of the Moors and the comparatively tiny army of the Christians are compared to the monstrous Goliath and the humble shepherd David – a story that is told in Samuel 17.20 – 54. A cluster of biblical characters from the Old Testament appears in III: 140.

João of Avis in IV: 12 is compared to biblical Samson. In the next stanza the poet says that many Portuguese men did desert João of Avis in times of need exactly as Peter denied Christ himself (IV: 13). The poet says
that João II’s envoys crossed many seas with the quest of expedition; some went as far as the Persian Gulf where the Tower of Babel of Genesis Chapter II. is remembered, for the Tower was supposedly built beside the River Euphrates. It is in the Persian Gulf itself the two rivers, Tigris and Euphrates which are said to be flowing from the Garden of Eden (Genesis I) were seen mingling the waters (IV: 64). According to the Wise Man of Belém (IV: 98), the ambition and pride of the mariners excelling the love of their beloved ones come from sin which originated with Adam (Gen. 3: 22 - 24). For, according to the Wise Man, man is called not to death but to life (IV: 99); for, even Christ was wary of death (Mathew 26. 38 – 42). At the River Kawaka (which the mariners re-name as Bons Sinais) they erect a column which they name it as St Raphael (V: 78), the Guide of Tobias in the apocryphal Book of Tobit (5: 5 – 21). After they left Malindi they encountered ferocious waters (VI: 74) which leaped like the Tower of Babel. The Tower of Babel is again referred to in VII: 45. On this occasion, the sailors reflect on the fears caused by the biblical flood (VI: 78). And da Gama prays for the safety of his men whom he compares to ‘the children of Israel’ (VI: 81) which is an obvious reference “to Moses and the Red Sea crossing (Exodus 14. 19–31); to St. Paul’s voyage past the sandbanks of North Africa known as Syrtes (Acts 27. 14 – 44); and to Noah and his ark (Genesis 6 – 9)” (White, 247). Noah is again referred to (for his vineyard in Genesis 9: 20 – 21) when the poet speaks of the wine (“O licor que Noé mostrara à gentle”) which Paulo da Gama
serves the Catual (VII: 75). The dramatic conflict between the Samaritans and the Jews is alluded to in Canto VII: 39.

The poet refers to a shipwreck he suffered (VII: 80) and he considers the survival as a miracle: “Agora às costas escapando a vida, / Que dum fio pendia tão delgado / Que não menos milagre foi salvar-se / Que para o Rei Judaico acrescentar-se” (VII: 80); and, in Isaiah 38: 5 we read Isaiah telling Hezekiah that God was adding fifteen years to his life. Against the Isle of Love, the poet reflects on the models of perverted love (IX: 34) and one of them deals with Amnon of Judea, who is King David’s son who raped his sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13: 1 – 36). In the vision Tethys presents to da Gama in X: 95, she shows him Meroé, the biblical city which the goddess locates in Nubia on the Upper Nile. She shows him Mount Sinai (X: 99) and tells him that the epithet ‘Golden’ added to the Chersonese region in the isle of Sumatra perhaps came from the biblical Ophir (X: 124).

It was natural for Camões to be influenced by the Bible since he had at least one strong occasion to be immersed in the reading of the scriptures, as he was frequenting the University of the Convent of Saint Rosa where his uncle Bento de Camões, a monk, was the librarian. In the words of Sebastião da Rocha Lima, “Frequentado a Universidade do Convento de Santa Rosa, onde seu tio, Frei Bento de Camões era bibliotecário, naturalmente ali, no convívio do livros, a sua inteligência se aprofundou em todos os conhecimentos humanos” (310). However, his attitude to the Bible is different from his attitude to other texts or stories. While, for him, Bible is true, the
stories and gods coming from other sources are inventions of imagination. Tethy’s confession makes the point too clear:

‘Aqui, só verdadeiros, gloriosos
Divos estão, porque eu, Saturno e Jano,
Júpiter, Juno, fomos fabulosos.
Fingidos de mortal e cego engano.
Só pera fazer versos deleitosos
Servimos; e, se mais o trato humano
Nos pode dar, é só que o nome nosso
Nestas estrelas pós o engenho vosso.’ (X: 82, emphasis added)

The superiority of the Bible is acknowledged by the pagan goddess in X: 84. Above all else, Camões’s use of the Bible in the interpretation of history reveals (subject of discussion in one of the ensuing Chapters here), according to Sebastião da Rocha Lima, that his was a Christian conception of history which attempted, at the same time, a synthesis of faith and his love for the country (313).

There are allusions in Os Lusiadas to various other texts among which the most important ones are Odyssey and Ovid’s Metamorphoses. Being a literary form, Os Lusiadas recasts history using mythology not only as a source but also as an organizing principle of his work. Hernâni Cidade writing about the influence of Gil Vicente’s tragic-comedy, D. Duardos in Comões’s drama, Auto de Filodemo, hints at three major influences on Camões, among whom he imitates the last two while he reveals his indebtedness by writing
one of his *Letters* to the first one: "O Poeta soube muito bem constituir a trindade da sua devoção: Bernardim, Gil Vicente e João de Barros. Ao primeiro, cita-o numa das suas *Cartas*; aos dois outros, imita-os" ("Homenagem", 48)

Combined to the literary sources are the historical ones like João de Barros, Damião de Góis and others. Regarding the part played by historical ‘reading’ in the formation of *Os Lusiadas* Landeg White’s observation is worth-quoting:

‘… Camões’s most present English editor [Frank Pierce (ed.), *Luis de Camões, Os Lusiadas* (Oxford, 1973), P.x] can suggest in all seriousness that he need never have left Portugal to find the materials for his epic… Yet the constant weaving of his historical sources with the demands of the epic form and with personal thought and fresh observation are the very substance of *The Lusiads*.’ (xii, emphasis added).

Landeg’s words stress the importance of ‘reading’ that contributed to the making of the poem. Paul Mazery speaks of the historical materials Camões might have used: “For the journey of Vasco da Gama with the *São Gabriel*, the *São Rafael*, the *Berrio*, and a fourth vessel captained by Gonçalo Nunes, Camões had much material at his disposal, principally the diary of Álvaro Velho, the chronicles of Castanheda and João de Barros, and other first-hand accounts” (13). Mazery finds the diary as an important source for Camões:
Among the sources used by Camões, Vasco da Gama’s diary of the voyage is very important. It refers to Calicut’s wealth and adds that it is from there that the ‘spices come that are eaten in West and East and in Portugal, as well as in all the provinces of the world. Likewise, from this city called Calicut, go many precious stones of all sorts; and it should also be known that the said city has its own supply of the following spices – much ginger and pepper and cinnamon, although they are not as fine as those from an island called Ceylon, the latter being a journey of eight days from Calicut.’ (16)

H. V. Livermore presents in his “Epic and History in the Lusiads” a list of all the well-known and even the not-so-well-known historical sources:

For his main theme, he had the printed Décadas of João de Barros and História do descobrimento e conquista of Lopes de Castanheda. The Commentaries of Afonso de Albuquerque had appeared. He certainly knew Diogo do Couto who was to undertake the completion of the Décadas, and may be presumed to have met Gaspar Corrêa whose Lendas da Índia remained unpublished until the nineteenth century. With the addition of Galvão’s Tratado and other partial works he had no lack of sources for his main theme. His resources for the medieval history of Portugal were less plentiful. The chronicle of Dom Afonso Henriques was available in the version of Duarte Galvão, the friend of Afonso de Albuquerque. The chronicles of Rui de Pina covered the rulers of the fifteenth century. But there was no account of the reign of
King Manuel until Damião de Góis, who had been appointed keeper of the archives in 1548, finally published his four tomes in 1566-67. There was still no published account of the reign of John III, though this fell outside the scope of the *Lusiads*. (13)

Dino F. Preti in his "Camões e a Realidade Histórica", mentions the four most popular of Camões’s historical sources:

Três obras hitoriográficas fazem parte deste confronto com o poema camoniano: *Décadas* de João de Barros, *História do Descobrimento e Conquista da Índia pelos Portugueses* de Fernão Lopes de Castanheda e *Roteiro da Primeira Viagem de Vasco da Gama* de Álvaro Velho. Além dessas obras, mencionaremos, de passagem, apenas como referência para documentação dos fatos históricos citados (pelo menos, alguns deles), a *Crónica d’el Rei D. Manuel* de Damião de Goes embora tenha sido publicada posteriormente à data em que Camões deve ter composto o Canto II do poema. (153)

What augmented and inspired his imagination is not merely reading/imagination and experience but an interest in other peoples and cultures. In the words of Landeg White, "*The Lusiads* is packed with such moments when personal experience and alert enquiry combine with *an imaginative reinterpretation of his sources* to cast a patina of freshness over the text" (xiii, emphasis added).

The formation of the epic, as almost all the Camonians agree, took place during his long *sojourn in the orient*, in particular in Goa, Malabar.
Macau and Mozambique. Perhaps, the most important influence played on the imagination of Camões for the writing of the epic, was his direct and personal exposure to the East. Thus, to quote Paul Mazery, “He, too, saw the southernmost tip of Africa, became familiar with the island of Mozambique and Cape Guardafui, Goa, Malacca, and Macau. ... Fighting in Morocco he lost an eye, alluded to in strophe 83 of the sixth canto of The Lusiads’s ten cantos” (13). Critics find many of the verses reflecting Camões’s own experiences mixed with his reading. Paul Mazery, for instance, thinks that Canto V: 3 which is presented as words spoken by Vasco da Gama of his grief in having to leave Lisbon, come directly from the poet’s own similar experience. In these words, Mazery states, “The reader is given a clear picture of the poet’s thoughts as he leaves Lisbon” (14). According to Mazery, Canto I: 50 reveals Camões’s own curiosity about strange lands and foreign tongues, itself a feature of the literature of discoveries belonging to the Renaissance times. As Landeg White remarks, “… it was in India that he became a great poet, the first European artist to cross the equator and experience Africa and India at first hand. The result is The Lusiads, an epic of European thought and action in the sixteenth century” (ix, emphasis added).

Norwood H. Andrews, Jr. says that the immediate necessity that contributed to the writing of the epic was the historical inevitability Camões encountered in the decline of the Portuguese overseas empire at that time. In his words, “…Camões, writing at a time when Portuguese ascendancy had already waned severely, was attempting to recreate the spirit which had
engendered that ascendancy" (63). Some of the Camonians think that it is his life of suffering that contributed to the note of elegy, pain and, consequently, a lyric quality to the epic. Quoting Aubrey F.G. Bell (1881-1950) - the English critic of Os Lusiadas and biographer of Camões - A. Álvaro Dória states: “A dura experiência da vida, em Lisboa, em Ceuta e no Oriente, contribuiu, e muito, para lhe afinar a líra; foi essa experiência e o sofrimento inerente que lhe encherem as ‘líricas com a música nascida da dor’” (42). However, considering the fact that biographical details about Camões are deploringly limited, the case turns out to be that, in the words of Landeg White, “Our only source is his poetry, and any conclusions will follow from how that poetry, including his many lyrical poems, is interpreted” (xx).

We have been discussing the major sources that contributed to the making of Os Lusiadas. Though the sources were attempted a classification under such broad headings as reading and experience, the main thrust or spirit or (if one is allowed to use an equally problematic term) ideology that Camões has inherited is, indeed, that of the Renaissance. This, to be more precise, seems to have revealed itself in the form of certain inquisitiveness with regard to the category of ‘the unknown’. The spirit of enquiry and exploration has had the unknown as its cherished target. To unravel the mysteries, including the unknown lands was the chief agenda of the scientific mind inspired by the spirit of the Renaissance. As Camões was insistently a self-proclaimed ‘historian’ in his epic, it was his aim, along with Vasco Da Gama and his companions to tame the unknown solidified into India which
metaphorically stood for the unexplored awaiting the discovery by a Renaissance mind. As a historian, Camões is found to be restless until the sole objective of the mariners is fulfilled. At the same time, as a poet, he maintains a profound respect for the unknown in Os Lusiadas. In other words, there is a curious mixture of the historian and the poet in him and his poem represents an equally interesting balance between the known and the unknown.

However, the profession of a historian requires that he resists the unknown; his essential project is to resolve the unknown and unravel the mysteries. Camões's mariners (like his historical mind), therefore, "By oceans where none had ventured / voyaged to Taprobana [the eastern limit of the known world, identified as Ceylon in X: 51] and beyond" (I: 1). Therefore, the sailors exclaim that they saw new heavens (V: 14). As a result "os rudos marinheiros, / Que têm por mestra a longa experiência" (V: 17) were able to discover many more things than men with mere learning could not. Learning from books or philosophizing, reclining within the confines of the four walls of a library, would only enhance the mysterious. If, on the other hand, the philosophers had ventured out into the world for experience, they would encounter "puras verdades" (V: 23)(such as "the first realistic account of the water spout" in V: 18 – 22; Bacon, 203). In fact, the unknown is the enemy of cultural encounters; many a time, if not all, skirmishes between nations are caused by lack of communication as that happened between the black naked people of saint Helena Bay and the Portuguese (V:
Similarly, the Tower of Babel contributed much to the first uneasy encounter between the Portuguese and the natives of Malabar: “O povo que concorre vai confuso / De ver a gente estranha, e bem quiser / Perguntar: mas no tempo já passado / Na torre de Babel lhe foi vedado” (VII: 45). What Camões understood from his ‘reading’ of history is that João II and Manuel I were interested not so much in wealth and in occupying other countries as unraveling “os segredos escondidos / Da natureza e do húmido elemento” (V: 42).

The Adamastor is angry with the seafarers because he is a symbolic representation of the obstacles in the way of the explorer; he, in other words, represents the unknown (V: 50). There are Camonians who think that Adamastor is not altogether an imaginative invention. Norwood H. Andrews, Jr. quotes Hernâni Cidade who suggests its origin in “‘do gigante Polifemo, do gigante Atlas, metamorfoseado em monte, ambos da Odisseia’”, and Andrews, Jr. goes on to observe that “It would seem worthwhile to add, however, that Adamastor’s participation in the war with Olympus (V,51), and his love for Thetis (V,53) [are] so highly reminiscent of Ovid’s tale of Ployphemus and Galatea in both of its narrative composition and its eroticism…”(69). Paul Mazery identifies the source of Adamastor in Camões’s own life, that is, in his journey to the East. He comments: “When Camões sighted the Cape of Good Hope (called Cabo Tormentório in the poem) he was in the São Bento. Three years later[1556], when he left for Macau, he commenced The Lusiads, and the cape forms part of the fifth
Canto. Camões embodies the Cape in the figure of Adamastor, a monster in the mythological tradition" (15).

When Samorin, though incited by informers, raises the issue of not bringing "precious gifts" (VIII: 62) and expresses his doubt of the Portuguese being exiles or pirates (VIII: 63), da Gama defends his genuine motive as, not wealth but exploring the unknown and the remote:

'Porque, se eu de rapinas só vivesse,

Undívago, ou da pátria desterrado,

Como crês que tão longe me viesse

Buscar assento incógnito e apartado?

.........

Eu não vim mais que a achar o estranho clima

Onde a natura pôs teu Reino antigo.' (VIII: 67, 68)

If it were mere trade and commercial relationship that was the yardstick of the success of the epic sojourn of the Portuguese, then their mission could be said to have ended in failure (It could also have been said that Camões has written an epic of failure). However, Vasco da Gama takes stock of the success of the voyage, in the manner of a Renaissance figure:

Parte-se costa abaixo, porque entende

Que em vão com o Rei gentio trabalhava

Em querer dele paz, a qual pretende

Por firmar o comércio que tratava.

Mas como aquela terra, que se estende
Pela Aurora, sabida já deixava,
Com estas novas torna à pátria cara,
Certos sinais levando do que achara. (IX: 13)

Thus, *Os Lusiadas* is an epic of exploration, a work born of the true spirit of the Renaissance. However, Camões being a poet (as much as he was a historian with regard to the selection of the subject matter), could very well tolerate the unknown. While his (Portuguese) history sought conquering the unknown (cultures, religions and mysteries in the nature), Camões’s poetry tolerates, and even celebrates the unknown, the mysterious and the miraculous. Such elements and factors in the poem enhance the poetic dimension of the epic.

One important textual or reading pleasure of the epic consists in marvelling at the unknown in a mood of sublimity. Though to a sailor, Cape of Storms offered an inexplicable anxiety and fear, the mind of a poet transforms that fear into a beautiful image of sublimity. On seeing the Adamastor, Vasco da Gama exclaims in aesthetical terms (V: 38). The epic, in fact, is replete with a record of many such wonders, mysteries and miracles like the apparition of Jesus Christ at Ourique, natural wonders like the water spouts (V: 18 – 22), the miracle of the German Crusader, Heinrich Bonn (VIII: 18), and the miracles wrought by St. Thomas’ (X: 108 – 119). Moreover, Camões views the entire Portuguese achievements as miracle, especially because the Portuguese encounters with the alien peoples were encounters of the handful with the countless; hence, it was always, “Feita Le
Deus, que não de humano braço!” (VIII: 24). It is also the habit of Camões’s Vasco da Gama to entrust everything to God, whenever difficulties arose, in the attitude of “teu serviço” (VI: 82). As soon as Calicut is spotted, da Gama is overwhelmed by a reflection of the unknown rather than by a self-justification and pride in a scientific and planned voyage (VI: 94). Contrary to the practice and expectation of a historian, a poet can admit wonderment and helplessness of which their Captain is often seen a prime model. “Arrepiam-se as carnes e o cabelo / A mi e a todos, só de ouvi-lo e vê-lo (V: 40) is unlikely to happen to the mind of a historian.

In the light of the idea of poetic celebration of the unknown, the Isle of Love which is a pure poetic creation and the subject of the two final Cantos of the epic, appears to us not merely a world created to appeal to the sensuous but something intended to transform all that remains to be conquered and explored into a pleasurable or even a desirable aesthetic object. It is significant that Camões takes care to interpret the meaning of the Isle of Love in terms of sublimity / “sublimada” (IX: 89). Nothing is yet accomplished; the job undone still call the Lusitanians for further adventures in the name of fame (IX: 90–95). Being consistent to the overall deployment of the combined categories of the known and the unknown, the Isle of Love also presents the blending / admixture of two visions. While at Tethys’ banquet, the nymph offers the Portuguese a vision of history of achievements that are already realized and fulfilled (X: 6–74), what occupies the vision Tethys herself offers (X: 75 – 142) is the universe itself, representing a world that is
yet unknown and unexplored, in terms of the Orient, especially. Therefore, Tethys entices the Portuguese with repeated incantation of “Olha”. And, the target of the invitation of the goddess is “Para lhe descobrir da unida esfera / Da terra imensa, e mar não navegado, / Os segredos, por alta profecia, / O que esta sua nação só merecia” (IX: 86). Norwood H. Andrews, Jr. who thinks that Adamastor attests to sources in mythology(though its description and association with the Cape of Storms are original), observes that Ilha dos Amores (the Isle of Love) is not without any classical references, though the conception as a whole is Camões’s own contribution. In his words,

…it emanates from the poet’s imagination for a definite artistic purpose, once again in the manner of Vergil’s (sic) nymphs. Its roots are planted firmly in a mythos which comprehends the love goddess’ birth from the waves, her predilection for islands in general, and, perhaps, such specifically vague islands as the floating one of Aeolus. Like Adamastor, it has enough antecedents to make it, except for the date of its emergence, and integral part of the classical whole; but, again like the giant of the Cape, it owes its existence to a Portuguese poet of the Renaissance. (69-70)

António José Saraiva, who identifies the strongest source of Camões’s knowledge of mythology with Leão Hebreu’s Diálogos do Amor, states:

Leão Hebreu (autor que Camões assimilou profundamente, segundo creio e espero demonstrar um dia) expõe nos Diálogos do Amor a doutrina de que a mitologia encerra ensinamentos profundos sobre a vida
e a natureza, que é preciso desentranhar em vários planos, o literal, o moral e o alegórico. Com efeito, a mitologia camoniana requer uma interpretação múltipla. (53)

Norwood H. Andrews, Jr. points out how the pagan mythology came to be used by the Christian writers:

One key to the pantheistic structure within a Christian poem such as Os Lusiadas lies, as Hernâni Cidade points out (Luis de Camões, p.39), in Camões’ continuation of the medieval tradition, systematized in the Iberian Peninsula by St. Isidore of Seville, whereby the works of pagan authors could be interpreted to express allegorically the will of God. (71)

For a Christian conception of history formulated through an application of mythology, Camões is said to have influenced by Plato’s idea of Forms. Roger M. Walker who thinks that the knowledge of the Providence, which can be described as Grace and is represented by Venus in the Ilha dos Amores, is the climax of the poem, offers many a parallel between Plato’s Republic and Os Lusiadas in his “An Interpretation of the Role of the Supernatural in ‘Os Lusiadas’”. One of his observation in this respect is that “It is interesting to note that Plato uses the simile of a good captain and an unruly crew to illustrate the stupidity of democracy, which prevents the philosopher from directing ‘the ship state’ according to his superior lights, in order to give political freedom to those who misuse it” (f. n. no.14.90-91). He, however, acknowledges the limitation of his view regarding the possible ways in which Plato could come to influence the epic poet:
So far as I am aware, it has not been definitely established that Camões knew Plato’s works at first hand; but I think we can safely assume that he was familiar with his ideas, which were so widely popular during the Renaissance. My thanks are due to Mr. R. C. Willis of Manchester University for first pointing out to me the probable influence of Plato on other aspects of Os Lusiadas. (f.n.no.6, pp.86-87)

The mixing of time - the past and the future - in these two visions signifies that, in Camões’s conception of history (to be dealt in more detail in another chapter), the present knowledge of the past is fruitless and futile if that knowledge (the known) is not complemented by a vision for the future (the unknown). Portuguese “história” is not a thing of the past but one that is weaved by heroes yet to be born (“Altos varões que estão por vir ao mundo”, X: 7). It is, therefore, quite understandable that Camões’s epic ends in a stance of ‘prophecy’ as in X: 156. And what should spur them forward is not the desire for wealth but faith in Christ: “Se cobiça de grandes senhorios / Vos faz ir conquistar terras alheias. /.../ Mova-vos já sequer riqueza tanta. / Pois mover-vos não pode a Casa Santa” (VII: 11).

Combined with faith, of course, was Camões’s profound love of the nation. His last days were saddened not only by extreme poverty but more so by the Portuguese defeat at the battle of Alcacer-quivir (1578) which provoked him to write his final words about his nation, proclaiming that he was content to die not only in it but with it. Benigno Joaquim Martinez quotes those poignant words of Camões thus:
Emfim, acabará a vida, e verão todos que fui tão affeiçoado á minha patria, que não sómente me contentei de morrer n'ella, mas de morrer com ella’ ”(3).

Fernando Castelo-Branco, in his “A Visão Camoniana da História”, proposes the idea that Camões was perhaps a convert, “cristão-novo”, probably from Judaism. According to Castelo-Branco, a Jewish version of the epic also existed even in 1572 in which the divinity of Christ was not acknowledged. But, as Camões was frequenting the monastery, his future censor at the Inquisition, the Dominican priest, Bartolomeu Ferreira might have pointed out the objectionable issues so that the necessary amendments could already be done before it came out as a work acceptable to the Christians. One can see, at close examination, that traces of both the traditions, of the Jewish and the Christian, characterize the poem. In other words, as Castelo-Branco argues, the decision to include the miracles could be more religious, than political or historical (“Visão”, 123).

To conclude the present discussion, one may add that since sources for a complete biography of Camões have never been available, the critics tend to suggest that the poet’s works could be read to understand the nuances of his life and development of his creative process. As William J. Entwistle remarks, in Os Lusiadas “...it is the portrait of one of the purest of heroes. - the poet Camoens himself.... In the epic he enshrined for ever his essential virtues and his highest resolves, shining in the clear light of his much-buffeted patriotism” (86).