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The Discovery of Australia

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spring, in about $123\frac{1}{2}$ E. lat., a distance of 325 miles, which it took sixteen days to traverse, not a drop of water was found.

Having safely reached Perth, after one of the most brilliant desert-journeys on record, Giles set about preparing for the return march, on which he hoped to connect the known portions of West Australia with the terminus of his unfortunate expedition of 1873-74. Messrs. Tietkens and Young both elected to return home by sea. Proceeding to Champion bay, the expedition struck north-east for the head-waters of the Ashburton, discovering *en route* some good pastoral country. The eastern limits of the basin of this river were for the first time determined, and beyond this the party again plunged into the open rolling desert of sandhills and spinifex, which proved hardly less inhospitable than that previously traversed to the southward. At one part a space of ten days elapsed without a drop of water being seen. The Alfred and Marie range, sighted in 1874, was crossed, and the route continued by the Rawlinson and Petermann ranges, south of the Amadeus swamp, to the telegraph-line in the neighbourhood of the Alberga.

A minor expedition in 1882, in the region west of the Peake telegraph station, completed Giles' work as an Australian explorer—work which gained him the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society in 1880, and a decoration and diploma of knighthood from the King of Italy. For the extent of unknown country traversed, his explorations can hardly be matched by those of any other Australian pioneer, and though, unfortunately, they did not open up any large tracts of country of value to the settler, the inhospitable nature of the scene of his labours in itself brings into clear relief the qualities of endurance and daring which enabled him to disclose its secrets. In addition to various official reports, a connected account of his travels, written in a bright and interesting style, was published in 1889. Giles was a life member of the Society, which he joined in 1877.

CORRESPONDENCE.

The Discovery of Australia.

IN Major's introduction to the Hakluyt Society's volume 'Early Voyages to Australia,' on p. 64, he sums up the results he has arrived at by saying, "Our surmises, therefore, lead us to regard it as highly probable that Australia was discovered by the Portuguese between the years 1511 and 1529, and almost to a demonstrable certainty that it was discovered before 1542." The reasons for this are briefly—there exist French maps, and only French maps as early as 1542, which give the outline of a country that is certainly Australia; on this outline map are certain Portuguese names (p. 59), which show that the discoverers were Portuguese.

I venture to think that the Portuguese did not discover Australia; their official histories, which are very full on all new voyages, never mention such a fact, and there was no reason for special silence in regard to it. The passage quoted later from Couto, who wrote about 1596, shows that at that late date their information regarding Australia was of the vaguest and most fragmentary character.

The problem therefore is, how did the French obtain the information that enabled them, and them alone, to map the Australian coast? and if they did not obtain it from Portuguese sources, how are the Portuguese names on the map to be explained? With diffidence, I would suggest that the explanation should be sought in the French expedition with Portuguese captains and pilots that visited the East about 1527. The dates agree, and the presence of the Portuguese officers would account for the names.

It will be better to bring together what is known of this French expedition from Portuguese sources. Gaspar Correa has the most detailed account, and I will abridge what he says. I will then give corroborative notices. Correa went to the East in 1513, and lived there continually till after 1566; the date of his death is uncertain. He was at Diu in the commencement of 1531. His history was, however, not printed until 1858, and has not been borrowed from by either earlier or later historians.

Correa, vol. iii. p. 238, referring to the year 1528:

"In the year 1527 there left France three vessels armed as corsairs, and they journeyed towards India. At sea one of them—of which Stephen Dias Brigas, a pilot and Portuguese, was the captain—separated from the others and reached Diu with forty-eight men; the ship had much artillery, and 60 of the crew had died. When he got there the captain Brigas went on shore, and feigned that he was but a messenger sent by another who remained on board, and told those in the boat that if they were questioned they should say the captain was on the ship, and that he was his servant. He went to the captain of Diu, who was then called Camalmaluqo (Kamalu-l-mulk?), and told him the captain of the vessel wanted his safe conduct to sell the merchandise he had on board and buy that of the town, and that he was ready to pay customs as a strange merchant; that he had never visited these parts before, and that he was the vassal of a great king with whom he should make friendship. The captain of Diu asked him whether he was an ally of the Portuguese, and he replied that he knew them, but had not yet met them. The Moor told him he was pleased to see him, and that he could trade in the city with full security, and as a safe conduct gave him an arrow from his quiver, which is the customary form of royal security. On this Brigas returned to his ship, and told the crew they might buy and sell. With the Moor captain were some renegade Portuguese, who were asked of what nationality were those of the ship, and they said French, who came from a country called France, without any licence, to rob whoever they found on the sea; that they were thieves, and that if the Portuguese caught them they would kill them as if they were Turks. The Moor held his tongue, and, seeing the French were ragged and dirty vagabonds—who ranged the streets and frequented taverns to drink country liquor, who had no merchandise, and only sold hatchets and knives and swords and matchlocks, all articles of iron, but no merchantable goods, and bought stamped cloths to clothe themselves, and their only trade eating and drinking—he wrote all to his lord, the King of Cambay* (Guzerat). When the king heard this, he sent foists to the ship and brought away Brigas and all the crew, leaving the vessel empty, and put them in a house well guarded. He took out of the ship all that was in it, chiefly artillery, large and small and white arms, and lay it aground in the channel; it was about 250 tons, and very rotten. When this ship was crossing the Gulf (Arabian sea) to Diu, one of our ships coming from Malindi met it and tried to get near it, but it sailed away, as it was a good sailer, and the French did not speak with us. Perhaps Brigas had no quarrel with us, and preferred robbing the Moors. The king sent for Brigas and the French, and told them to turn Moor and serve him, and that he would pay and patronize them, and that he had no work for them in his country if they were not Moors, and those who would not turn he would order to be killed. To this the captain Brigas answered, 'Lord, we are in your hands and under your feet, but you cannot act thus with justice, for we have your royal security. On me you can work your will, for I will not turn Moor. These others can do as they please.' When the others heard the king's words they

* At this time Sultan Bahadar.

were afraid that he would kill them, and said to Brigas that they should obey the order, and God would find the remedy, who, since He had brought them here, would not cause their deaths. Then they all conformed to save their lives and turned Moor, and all died Moors. The king gave a robe to Brigas, and gave him pay, and always had him with him. The others, as they were low men, were debauched, and the king sent them to Champaner to work on the fortifications, since they were not men to let roam freely. Brigas was a good servant before the king, who was gracious to him, and afterwards ordered him to marry a Spanish woman called the *Marqueza*, who was captured in one of our galleys that was taken by a Mecca (Red sea) ship that was going to Diu in the time of the Governor Dom Duarte, as I have related before in its proper place, and they were long married, and Brigas died a good Christian, and the woman was afterwards freed from her captivity when Nuno da Cunha had a fortress in Diu, as I will tell when the time comes.

“Another of the ships separated near the Cape of Good Hope towards the south, going it knew not where, and touched land on the Sumatra coast, whence it went to the Island of Gold where all the sand of the shore, large and small, was of gold, and the land very fertile, and great woods and rivers of fresh water, and the people naked and bestial, with coverings made of leaves, who did not prevent anything being taken away. They loaded what gold they pleased, and started for they knew not where, and the winds carried them to the Sumatra coast, very broken, with the greater part of the crew sick or dead, and the ship leaking so that she was foundering, they ran her towards the shore to beach her, when she struck on a shoal and was wrecked. Those who could work got out the boat and reached the shore with a lot of gold they put in her; on the land they were killed by the fishermen, who took their gold. The merchants from Sumatra told this tale in Malacca, and the whole country-side spoke of this boat the fishermen found filled with gold, and with a crew that spoke like Bombardiers,* of whom they took one to the king of that country, who impaled him, as he said he could not find his way back to the Island of Gold. Thus was discovered that Island of Gold, and by this it was known † that this ship was of the fleet in which Brigas sailed.

“The third ship reached the island of St. Lawrence (Madagascar), and, struck by a storm, found shelter in a bay with kindly people on shore, who dealt well by them; they refitted their ship, and traded with hatchets and iron goods and cloths, and bought pepper—old and weak, which seemed to have been wild pepper, and smelling woods that are a bad imitation of sandal wood, and with cinnamon, all of little value, and they thought they had got to India. When they started they returned by the way they came, and watered at St. Helena, where they picked up three of our men who had deserted from cargo-ships in which they were prisoners banished to the Brazils, and, starting again, reached France at the port of Neypa,‡ whence they started. When it was found their goods were false and bad, they did not try again this labour, for they were corsairs who sought what they could rob. The Portuguese who came back with them were pardoned of the banishment to which Lopo Vaz had condemned them for going with mutineers in India, and they told the king all about this ship.”

There are, then, two points: first, the statement that there was a French expedition that left France in 1527, and that one of the ships composing it was lost on Sumatra after discovering the Island of Gold. Assuming this to be correct, the second point is, where is this Island of Gold, and what is its present name?

* That is, unlike Portuguese. Bombardiers were usually Flemings.

† Query by speech of crew?

‡ Dieppe.

As to the first point, Correa's narrative is very detailed, and, with the exception of a minor matter to be noticed later, bears on the face of it an appearance of truth. In the case of the first ship, we know that Correa was at Diu within two and a half years of its reaching there. We also know that many of the crew were living from whom he could have learned the facts. He tells us, in a later part of his history, that the surviving members of the crew were with Sultan Bahadar's (king of Guzerat) army at Mandishwar, when in 1534 he was defeated by the Emperor Humayun of Dehli. Now Castanheda, who came out to India in 1528, though he does not give a detailed account of this Diu ship, corroborates Correa in a curious way. In Book viii. chap. 94, p. 226, speaking of the camp at Mandishwar, he says that in Sultan Bahadar's army were "30 Frenchmen who came to Diu in Brigas' ships." Now, the forty-eight Frenchmen of Correa in 1528 would certainly have dwindled to at most thirty in 1534. Barros mentions this Diu ship, Decade IV. Book iii. chap. 2, when he says that Brigas' ship reached Diu in 1527;* and also in Decade IV. Book iii. chap. 4, he mentions that Bartholomew Freire had met a French ship with a Portuguese master Brigas. Now, Freire's ship had reached the African coast in November, 1528, and this date confirms the account of Correa. As to the third ship, the one that touched at Madagascar, I have only found a mention in Correa, vol. iii. p. 385, where it is said that in 1530 a Frenchman who had been left in Madagascar by a French ship was found and taken off; and a note to Barros, Decade IV. Book v. chap. 6, confirms this, and says that the Frenchman was rescued by Diogo da Fonseca (see, however, Barros, Decade IV. Book iii. chap. 2, where it is said that the Frenchman had only been left on Madagascar in 1529). As to the third ship (which is the second of Correa's narrative), the note to Barros above quoted, after mentioning the Diu and Madagascar ships, goes on, "Of the third the captain and pilot was a Portuguese, of Villa de Conde, who called himself the Rosado, which ship was lost in a bay on the west side of the island of Sumatra, near Panaajú, a city of the king of the Batos, who got from it some artillery, which he used against the king of Achin in the year 1539."

This French expedition is also mentioned in another work, which is certainly not sober history, but which, published in 1614, and referring to 1539, brings together in a romance many traditions of that time—I refer to the 'Peregrinações' of Fernão Mendez Pinto. The author of this work, in chapter 15, says that he saw among the artillery of the king of the Batos,† in Sumatra, two camels and one half *espera* in bronze, with the arms of France on them, which in the year 1526, when Lopo Vaz de Sampayo was governing India, were obtained from a French ship, whose captain and pilot was a Portuguese of Villa de Conde, who was called The Rosado. Again, in chapter 20 the same author says, speaking of the geographical inquiries he had made in Sumatra, "And also I discovered the bay in which was lost the Rosado, captain of a French ship, and companion of Brigas, captain of another ship, which put in to Diu in 1529, while Sultan Bahadar, king of Cambay, was living. All the French in that one became Moors, who were 82 in number, whom the king took in 1533 as gunners in the war he had with the king of the Mogols, where all died and none remained alive."

The dates 1526 and 1529 are traditional and incorrect. Considering all these accounts, we may take it that Correa was right when he says that a French expedition of some kind, consisting of three ships, did go to the East in 1527, and that of the three ships one was lost on the coast of Sumatra. Correa having been shown to be correct thus far, we may go a step further, and say that probably he

* This is incorrect, as the next quotation from Barros shows

† For the people called Battas, see Yule's 'Glossary S.V.'

was correct when he says that this Sumatra ship had made some discoveries beyond the island of Sumatra itself. He calls the land discovered the Island of Gold. What light, then, do the Portuguese historians throw on this name *Island of Gold*? This brings us to the second point. In his description of this island Correa has departed from the appearance of truth which obtained in the rest of his story, and, in fact, merely describes a traditional El Dorado. The Island of Gold looms large in the story of Portuguese explorations in the farther East. Major, in his life of Prince Henry the Navigator, p. 445, identifies the Island of Gold as a Portuguese name for Australia. Without recapitulating his arguments, I will examine certain passages in the early Portuguese writers where this name occurs, and leave it to be judged how far he was correct. Speaking of 1518, Barros (Decade III. Book iii. chap. 3) says that the governor, Diogo Lopez, having heard much talk of the Island of Gold, sent Diogo Pacheco to explore Sumatra, as rumour in India said that the Island of Gold lay south of Sumatra, and the people there always maintained that the gold they sold was not the produce of Sumatra, but brought from the outside. Diogo Pacheco discovered two or three persons who said they had made the voyage to the Island of Gold; they said it lay south-east from Sumatra, over 100 leagues away; that the island lay in the centre of shoals and banks, and that they had to pass through narrow channels that shifted every year. Even when it was perfectly calm the sea broke on the edge of the channels violently. Because of these shoals and banks they could only go in small vessels, and the favourable winds only lasted for three months, and not a quarter of the ships that started ever returned, so that very few ever ventured on a second voyage, even though the trade was very profitable. The island in the centre of these shoals was described as having a fringe of palm trees, with many black people who would not allow traders to land, so that the Sumatrans knew nothing of the country. These black people traded their gold for cloths. Pacheco circumnavigated Sumatra for the first time on the occasion on which he made these inquiries, and was wrecked and killed in a second voyage in which he intended to try to make this Island of Gold. This description of the Island of Gold points in a curious way to Australia. Still the difficulties of accepting the identification are great. It must be remembered that the account is not of what Pacheco saw himself, but of what he heard from natives of Sumatra, with whose language he was imperfectly acquainted, who were themselves uneducated, and who may possibly not have been speaking from their own personal knowledge. The direction, south-east from the south of Sumatra, points unmistakably to Australia—there is no intervening land. The distance 100 leagues is out of the question; from Sumatra to Australia is nearer 1400 miles than 300. This distance points rather to the Cocos islands, but they lie south-west, and the informants would be more likely to err in the distance than in the direction; in fact, any measure of distance would be almost certainly unknown to them. The description of the land would apply to any coral island with a barrier reef. The description of the people certainly could not be applied to any Australian aborigines with which we have since become acquainted. Couto, who continued the history of Barros and wrote at the end of the sixteenth century, carried the matter a little further. In Decade IV. Book vii. chap. 8 of his history, when he is speaking of New Guinea he mentions the neighbouring islands, and says, "South of Amboina are the Banda islands, and to the east of them, nearly 300 leagues away, is, as some affirm, an island of much gold, whose inhabitants are only 4 palms high, and if this is correct, then they are the true pigmies." Omitting all consideration of the description of the people, the direction and distance point undoubtedly to Australia, the northern point of which lies some 900 miles from the Banda group—if not due east, very slightly the south of east. Due east lies New Guinea, to which Couto has

previously referred. That the Island of Gold is the old Portuguese name for Australia is a theory which has, as I have said, the great authority of Major to support it.

To resume, then, we find that a French expedition was in Eastern waters between 1527-1529, and that one of the ships was wrecked on the Sumatran coast after penetrating to a land still further east, which the Portuguese then knew as the Island of Gold; we find, further, that this term "Island of Gold" is used to denote a country of whose existence the Portuguese of the sixteenth century had no precise knowledge, but which they located in the seas where we now know Australia lies. This French expedition was commanded by Portuguese officers. We also know that the earliest maps which show the existence of the Australian continent, and show it with considerable accuracy, are French, that they are dated 1542, and that they have Portuguese names on them. We may also accept Major's surmise, from other facts than are here brought out, that the discoveries represented on the map were probably made before 1529. The two sets of facts seem almost certainly connected. There are two weak links, however, in the chain: (1) How, after the wreck of the *Rosado's* ship, did the papers reach Europe? (2) Why is nothing known of the expedition from French sources? for Parmentier's expedition is said not to have left Dieppe before 1529. As to the first point, the words of Correa are not explicit, but that they cannot mean that all the ship's crew were killed in the wreck and massacre is clear, as is shown by the survival of the man afterwards impaled for his obstinacy; some, therefore, must have escaped. My suggestion is that some did escape, and that the papers did, possibly after some years' wanderings, reach Europe, and that to them we owe the anomalous and puzzling maps that exist. As to the second point, the reply would lead us too far; it must be sought in those causes which have left in obscurity the history of all early French voyages. This semi-piratical cruise, commanded by foreign officers, would have less chance of being remembered even than the more truly national ones.

Since writing thus far, I have come across a passage that bears on the ignorance of the Portuguese of the sixteenth century as to Australia, a point touched on but not elaborated above. Gabriel Rebello, a man of exceptionally acute and inquiring mind, was in the Moluccas, the nearest Portuguese station to Australia, for thirteen years in the middle of the sixteenth century, and about 1560 or a little later he wrote a book called '*Informação das cousas de Maluco.*' For a eulogy of him, see Couto, Decade VIII. chap. xvi. In chapter xi. of part i., he describes, among other islands, the "*Arcepelago dos Papuas,*" and says that little is known of them, as the voyage is very dangerous by reason of the islands, banks, and shoals, but that it is said they are bounded on the south by land, which appears to run from east to west to the Straits of Magellan. This shows a very hazy acquaintance with the Australian continent twenty years after the far more accurate French maps had been published. As to this great southern continent, see also Couto, Decade IV. Book vii. chap. viii., for a somewhat similar statement made fifty years after the date of the maps.

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