V2 Chapter 4 Primary Sources

Tome Pires, *Summa Oriental*: Description of Calicut

[Introduction] Tomes Pires (d. 1540) was a Portuguese apothecary who was in the Indian Ocean world during the early years of the Portuguese activity there. His description of the region, called the *Summa Oriental*, was finished by 1515. **[End introduction]**

The ports of Chombakulu, Puthupattanam, Tricodi, Pantalayini, Kappatta, Calicut, Chaliyam and Parappanangadi belong to the kingdom of Calicut. They are small ports. All these have ships and merchants and good towns. The king of Calicut is called the Zamorin, that is Lord of all the people of Malabar. This kingdom is bounded on one side by Cannanore and on the other by Tanore, that is by these kingdoms. The port of Calicut is not good because the land slopes up from the sea. The town is large and has many inhabitants, and a great deal of trading is done there by many merchants, natives of Malabar as well as Klings, Chettis and foreigners from all parts, both Moors and heathens. It is a very famous port and is the best thing in all Malabar.

Many nations used to have great factories here; each country used to bring its merchandise here, and a great business of barter and exchange took place. It is a large place; it is renowned in all this part of Asia as an important place; this kingdom is smaller than Cannanore; it has better fighting forces; it is a well-shaded country. They make many kinds of silken cloths here, and preserves. Although this king has a great name, he is only obeyed inside his kingdom, and not always that; and because I am not writing history, I will not give the origin of this title; only the people of Malabar say that there used to be a king in this Malabar who reigned over the whole country of Malabar, and that, persuaded by the Moors, he became a Mohammedan and started along the road to Mecca, but died in the kingdom of Dhofar Tufary before he reached the mouth

of the strait. He was already out of his mind when he left Malabar, and had divided up the whole country, and after he had given it away, a relative of his arrived and asked for a portion. He gave him the land of the city of Calicut, which was a small thing, and the name has remained until today; but Calicut has grown in importance on account of the trade that is carried on there.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Pires says he is not writing a history. What is he writing? What does this tell you about Portuguese interests at the time the book was written?

2. From this description, what can you infer about the religious life of people in the port cities of the Indian Ocean?

Duarte Barbossa*, Book of Duarte Barbossa*: On the Island of Kilwa

[Introduction] Duarte Barbossa (1480–1521) was, like Tome Pires, a participant in the early Portuguese activity in the Indian Ocean world. He served as a scribe at the Portuguese factory in Cannanore. He later joined Magellan's effort to circumnavigate the globe and died in the Philippines in the same battle in which Magellan was killed. He is the author of the *Book of Duarte Barbossa*, a multivolume account of the lands of the Indian Ocean with special attention to those that had come under the control of the Portuguese. In this passage he describes the Swahili city of Kilwa.**[End Introduction]**

Source: https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015014990389&view=1up&seq=39

After passing this place and going towards India, there is another island close the mainland, called Quiloa [Kilwa], in which there is a town of the Moors, built of handsome houses of stone and lime, and very lofty, with their windows like those of the Christians; in the same way it has streets, and these house have got their terraces, and the wood worked in with the masonry, with plenty of gardens in which there are many fruit trees and much water. This island has got a king over it, and from hence these is trade with Sofala with ships, which carry much gold, which is dispersed thence through all of Arabia Felix, for henceforward all this country is thus names in account of the shore of sea being peopled with many towns and cities of the Moors; and when the King of Portugal discovered this land, the Moors of Sofala and . . . [here he lists several other coastal towns] were all under obedience to the king of Quiloa, who was a great king amongst them. And there was much gold in this town, because of all the ships which go to Sofala touch at this land, both ingoing and coming back. These people are Moors, of a dusky colour, and some of them are black and some white; they are very well dressed with rich cloths of gold, and silk, and cotton, the women also go very well dressed our with much gold and silver in chains and bracelets in their arms, and legs, and ears. The speech of these people is Arabic and they have the books of the Alcoran [the Qur'an], and honour greatly the their prophet Muhamad. This King, for his great pride, and for not being willing to obey the King of Portugal, had this town taken away from him by force, and in it they [the Portuguese] killed and captured many people, and the king fled from the island, in which the King of Portugal ordered a fortress to be built, and thus he holds under his command and government those who continue to dwell there.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is Barbossa's attitude toward the town and people of Kilwa?

2. In light of your answer to the first question, does his cavalier description of the Portuguese conquest of Kilwa seem at all odd? How do you account for this?

John Huyghen van Linschoten, *Itinerario*: Of Cloves

[Introduction] Linschoten (1563–1611) was a Dutch merchant who worked for the Portuguese in India. Among other things, he served as the viceroy's secretary. Upon his return to the Netherlands he published a book, the *Itinerario*, that was full of commercial and nautical intelligence he had picked up in Asia. His work helped Dutch and English merchants break into the trade of the Indian Ocean at the expense of the Portuguese. In the excerpt below, he describes cloves and how they grow. Cloves were sufficiently valuable that the Dutch later seized all of the five islands Linschoten describes**.[End intro]**

Of Cloves

Cloves are by the Turkes Persians, Arabians, and most part of the Indians called Calafur, and in the Islands of Maluco, where they are only found and do grow Chamke. These Islands are five, lying under the Equinoctial line as in the description thereof is declared. They have nothing else there but Cloves, which are carried from thence, throughout the world, the trees whereon they grow are like Bay trees, the blossoms at first white, then green, and at the last red and hard which are the Cloves, and when the blossoms are green they have the pleasantest smell in all the world.

. . . The Indian women use much the to chawe [*sic*] Cloves, thereby to have sweet breath, which habit the Portingals wives that dwell there, doe now begin to use. . . .

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why would this type of information be useful to merchants who might hope to break into the Indian Ocean trade?

2. What does it tell you that Portuguese women are adopting the some of the habits of their "Indian" counterparts?

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Concerning the Belief of the Idolaters with Respect to the Deity

[Introduction] French merchant and traveler Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605–1689) made six voyages to Persia and India. His account of those voyages includes much of the sort of commercial intelligence that is found in Linschoten's work, but also lots of anthropological information about the beliefs and culture of the people of Asia. **[End introduction]**

The idolaters of India yield to creatures as the cow, the ape, and different monsters, the honours which are due only to the true Deity, although it is certain that they acknowledge one infinite God, all-powerful and all-wise, Creator of the heavans [*sic*] and the earth, who is omnipresent. They call him in some places Permesser, in other Peremael [Brahma], as for example, towards Malabar; and Vistnou [Vishnu] in the language of the Brahmins who inhabit the coast of Coromandel. As the idolaters have perhaps heard that the circle is the most perfect of figures,

they have thought to improve upon it by saying God is of an oval figure, and it is for this reason that they generally keep in their pagodas an oval pebble, which they obtain from the Ganges [river] and adore as a god. They are so strongly fixed to this foolish idea that the wisest among the Brahmins will not listen to any argument against it, and thus it is not to be wondered at if a people who have such evil guides fall into this gross and monstrous idolatry. There is a caste so superstitious about this, that those who belong to it keep this oval stones suspended from their necks, and press them against their bodies while they pray.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Does Tavernier have different interests and concerns than Duarte Barbossa and Tomes Pires have?

2. Is his attitude toward the people of India different from Barbossa's attitude toward the people of Kilwa?

An Indian Wall Hanging

[Introduction]This work by an unknown Indian artist dates from the late sixteenth century. In it we see four Europeans: two men, probably merchants, and two women who are probably their wives. There is a dog in the lower left corner. **[End introduction]**

Find the graphic here:

https://www.meisterdrucke.uk/fine-art-prints/Unbekannt-Unbekannt/66747/Wall-hanging-showing-early-traders-to-India,-Indian,-late-16th-century.html

Questions for Discussion:

1. How can we tell that these are Europeans?

2. What about his subjects appears to have stood out to the artist?

3. Are these caricatures of Europeans? Or is this a neutral treatment?