

**The first list of Malayalam words at the end of
15th century by a Portuguese seaman**
A primeira lista de palavras do malaiala escrito por um
marinheiro português no final do século XV

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Abstract: MS-804 from the Municipal Library of Porto, Portugal, is a unique copy of the journal of the first voyage to India under Vasco da Gama's (ca. 1460–1524) command. It describes the voyage subsequent to the departure from the Tagus River, Portugal, on 8 July 1497 until the return up the shallows of the Grande River de Buba, Guinea, on 25 April 1499. The author of the original of this account is probably Álvaro Velho (fl. 1497/1507), born in Barreiro, but the arguments are still weak, being only achieved by deduction. The copyist is also probably John Theotonius, CRSA. The great merit of this document is the fact that the author was a direct eyewitness of all events. In the last appendix, at folio 45, it has a list of 122 useful daily words and expressions in Portuguese and their translation into Malayalam, a provincial Dravidian language spoken in Kerala State, India. It is a relevant testimony of a variety of Malayalam at the end of the 15th century, despite certain transcription mistakes and the scribe's censorship of some vulgarisms. In this new semi-diplomatic edition, I applied rigorous transcription criteria and corrected earlier editions, adding English translations and Malayalam equivalences.

Keywords: Portuguese Discoveries. Vasco da Gama. India. Malayalam. Álvaro Velho. Semi-diplomatic edition.

Resumo: O manuscrito 804 da Biblioteca Pública Municipal do Porto, Portugal, é uma cópia única do relato da primeira viagem de Vasco da Gama (ca. 1460–1524) à Índia. Descreve a expedição desde a saída do rio Tejo, Portugal, em 8 de julho de 1497, até a chegada, no regresso, ao Rio Grande de Buba, na Guiné-Bissau, em 25 de abril de 1499. O autor do texto original terá sido provavelmente Álvaro Velho (fl. 1497/1507), natural do Barreiro, mas os argumentos não são ainda muito convincentes, tendo sido obtidos somente por dedução. O copista será, também provavelmente, o agostinho João Teotónio, C.R.S.A. O grande mérito deste documento é o fato de o autor ser uma testemunha ocular de todos os eventos. Por outro lado, no último apêndice, no fôlio 45, há uma lista com 122 palavras úteis e expressões de uso diário em português e respectiva tradução no malaiala ou malabar, uma língua dravídica falada no estado de Querala (ou Kerala), no extremo sudoeste da Índia. Trata-se de um testemunho relevante de uma variante do Malaiala, no final do século XV, apesar de alguns erros de transcrição e censura de alguns vulgarismos, possivelmente pelo copista. Nesta nova edição semidiplomática, aplicamos rigorosos critérios de transcrição e corrigimos as edições anteriores, bem como adicionamos as traduções em inglês e as respetivas equivalências em malaiala.

Palavras-chave: Descobrimientos portugueses. Vasco da Gama. Índia. Malaiala. Álvaro Velho. Edição semidiplomática.

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INTRODUCTION

MS-804 from the Municipal Library of Porto in Portugal is an anonymous copy of the journal (or diary) of the first voyage of Vasco da Gama (ca. 1460–1524) (and the consequent “discovery” of the maritime route) to India. It describes the voyage subsequent to the departure of the first armada on 8 July 1497 until the return up the “baixos do Rio Grande” [the shallows of the Grande River de Buba] of modern day Guinea-Bissau on the west coast of Africa on 25 April 1499, where, who is presumably the author, Álvaro Velho (fl. 1497/1507), might have remained. Diogo Köpke (1808–1844) and António da Costa Paiva (1806–1879), the first who published the text and studied it comprehensively, tell that:

O merito, porem, deste Roteiro consiste, não na linguagem nem no estilo, mas em ser escripto por uma testemunha ocular do portentoso feito do Descobrimento da India. [The merit, though, of this “Journal” consists neither in the language nor in the style but in its being written by an eyewitness of the portentous feat of the discovery of India.] (Köpke; Paiva, 1838, p. XXI, my translation).

In fact, in this first fleet, the four ships (three carracks or “naus” – the S. Gabriel [90 tons], S. Rafael [90 tons] and an unnamed supply ship [110 tons] – and the caravel *Bérrio* [50 tons]) and the 170 Portuguese seamen under the command of Vasco da Gama (ca. 1460–1524) departed from the Tagus River in Lisbon, Portugal on 8 July 1497, and they arrived at Calicut (or Kozhikode) on the Malabar Coast (currently the state of Kerala) in southern India almost a year later on 20 May 1498. They stayed at Calicut for approximately three months, and, during that period, they established political and commercial relationships. Inclusively, the Samorin², the ruler or “king” of Calicut, received a Portuguese committee represented by Vasco da Gama and twelve other Portuguese “seamen” on 28 May 1498 (Velho, 1st half of 16th century, ff. 9v.-23r.). Vasco da Gama left Calicut on 29 August 1498 and arrived at Lisbon approximately a year later at the end of August or the beginning of September 1499 with only two ships and nearly 50 sailors. The caravel *Bérrio*, also known as *São Miguel*, under Nicolau Coelho’s (ca. 1460–1504) command, arrived on 10 July (Couto, 1996).

CODEX MS-804

MS-804 is allegedly the most ancient and the unique copy of a lost text, catalogued by the Municipal Library of Porto as “Roteiro da primeira viagem de Vasco da Gama à Índia”, 1497–1499 [Journal of the first voyage of Vasco da Gama to India, 1497–1499]. It was listed by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the Memory of the World Register on 19 June 2013 (see UNESCO, 2013). It belonged to the Monastery of Santa Cruz de Coimbra (established ca. 1131) from the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine (*Canonici Regulares Sancti Augustini* – CRSA) until 1834 when the Portuguese Minister of Justice Joaquim António de Aguiar (1792–1884), nicknamed “The Friar-Killer”, suppressed the Portuguese religious orders by a decree published on 30 May 1834. The majority of the library of the Canons Regular of the Monastery of Santa Cruz de Coimbra was moved into the Municipal Library of Porto.

MS-804 is a codex in paper with 45 folios measuring 287 mm by 205 mm. The foliation is in Arabic numbers on the top right corner of the recto folio. However, pagination between folio 2 verso (page 4) and folio 43 verso (page 86) was added in a different and later handwriting. The codex is collated in three booklets with six (12 folios),

¹ All translations into English are my own.

² “The term Samorin or Zamorin used by the Portuguese for the ‘king’ of Calicut was a corruption of Samudrī Raja or Samudrāthiri (Samoothiri) Raja, Malayalam from Sanskrit for ‘one who has the sea for his borders’ or ‘lord of the sea’. [...] By the time of Vasco da Gama’s arrival, the Zamorin’s power extended over coastal Kerala north from Cochin (Kochi) to Pantalayini-Kollam.” (Ames, 2009, p. 74, note 19).

six (12 folios) and nine (18 folios) bifolia respectively and has three extra pages, which contain the list of the “language of Calicut” words. The binding is parchment from a liturgical book with musical notations.

I consulted six semi-diplomatic editions³ and two English translations of this copy, published between 1838 and 2009, and they use different titles. For four of them, the editors preferred the term “Roteiro” [Route / Itinerary] (Velho 1838, 1861, 1969, 1999); Baião and Basto (1945) chose “Diário” [Diary / Account]; Albuquerque (1989) chose “Relação” [Relation / Report] and Ravenstein (1898) and Ames (2009), in the English translations, adopted the term “Journal”. However, all of them can be considered correct.

The problem is that the copy of the manuscript is untitled. In effect, it has two posterior (kinds of) titles. On the one hand, on the original flyleaf, there is “Relação do descobrimento da Índia por Vasco da Gama”⁴ [Relation of the discovery of India by Vasco da Gama], possibly written by the “owner” (and also probably its scribe), the friar John Theotonius, CRSA. There is also, though erased, an inscription telling that this codex was for the use of the friar John Theotonius: “Pertinet ad usum fratris Theotonii de Sancto G... Canonici Regularis in cenobio Sancte Crucis” [Pertains to the use of the friar Theotonius of Saint G... Canon Regular in the monastery of the Holy Cross] (Köpke; Paiva, 1838, p. VIII). On the other hand, on the first page top right corner of the manuscript, “Descobrimento da Índia por Vasco da Gama” [Discovery of India by Vasco da Gama] was added, in a letter probably from the end of the 18th century (or the first half of the 19th century).

Thus, the authors have adopted the title according to different arguments each and, fundamentally, the sense on how they understood the Portuguese words “Relação”, “Roteiro”, “Relato” and “Diário”, and the kind of the text genre they believed it was. Albuquerque (1989, p. 6), for example, preferred the designation “Relato”, because this document was not a really “roteiro” but a description [“relato”] of certain chronological events. However, I agree with Marques (1999), who chose “Roteiro”, because of “a necessidade de não nos desviarmos da conhecida frequência da utilização do termo” [the necessity of not turning away from the known frequency of the use of the term] (Marques, 1999, p. 13-14, my translation). He inclusively enlightened that

[...] poderíamos, é certo, socorrer-nos de outros termos, como Diário, que, à semelhança dos anteriores, não seria totalmente adequado para traduzir com rigor específico a diversificada riqueza do conteúdo latente neste importante documento [...] we could, of course, use other terms, such as Diary/Journal, which, like the previous ones, would not be entirely suitable to translate, with unambiguous objectivity, the diverse richness of the potential content in this important document] (Marques, 1999, p. 14, my translation).

³ I have adopted the following criteria for the selection of the semi-diplomatic editions:

- both editions from the 19th century by Köpke and Paiva (1838); Alexandre Herculano and the Baron of Castelo de Paiva (António da Costa Paiva, 1861).
- the first two 20th-century editions by Costa (1969) and Baião and Basto (1945).
- two of the newest editions, which means the last two of the 20th century by Albuquerque (1989); and Marques (1999).

⁴ In order for a better clarity and readability of the texts, I have adopted the following transcription criteria, based mainly on Pinho (1987, p. 255-262) and Costa (1993, p. 46-59):

- I have expanded all abbreviations and brevigraphs, except the Portuguese indefinite articles/pronouns <hũa(s)>, <algũa(s)> and <nenhũa(s)>, inclusively when they are written with two vowels <uu>, in order to preserve a Portuguese phonetic specificity, which still remains in some northern Portuguese villages;
- I have changed into uppercase the first graphemes in the beginning of the sentences and in the proper nouns, anthroponyms and toponyms;
- I have normalized the use of the Ramist letters <v> and <j> (as consonants) and <u> and <i> (as vowels), and I have changed the long (medial or descending) <f> for the short (terminal or round) <s>;
- I have separated the words that were improperly joined and have combined those that were separated;
- I have kept the original punctuation (and the double slash) in order to not change the thought or expression of the authors;
- I have corrected the very clear errors in the original text.

So, the translation into English by Ravenstein (1898) (1834-1913) and Ames (2009) and the rendering in the application to UNESCO as the “Journal of the first voyage of Vasco da Gama” (UNESCO, 2013) are good choices.

MANUSCRIPT AUTHORSHIP

The text is anonymous, but, after the analysis of Köpke and Paiva (1838), the first Baron of Castelo de Paiva, it is consensual amongst almost all researchers that the author of the original text might have been Álvaro Velho. He was born in Barreiro, near Lisbon, and lived in Africa from 1499 to, at least, 1507 and was one of the informers of the German-Portuguese printer Valentin Ferdinand of Moravia (fl. 1450–1519)⁵ for the writing of Codex Hispanus 27 from the Bavarian State Library in Munich (Fernandes, 1507).

The arguments are still weak, and there is not yet a clear proof of its authorship, being only achieved by deduction. In summary, the main arguments for considering Álvaro Velho to be the author of the original text of codex MS-804 have been:

- He was an ordinary soldier or sailor (maybe deported) of the first fleet to India with some seamanship knowledge;
- He was one of the twelve emissaries of the Portuguese committee accompanying Vasco da Gama to the Samorin, the ruler or the “king” of Calicut:

E ao outro dia pella manham que foy hũa segunda feira vinte oito dias do mes de Mayo foy o capitam a falar a el rey e levou comsygo dos seus treze homens dos quaes eu fuy huum delles. [And the other day, by the morning, which was a Monday, May 28, the Captain went to speak to the king and took with him of thirteen men of whom I was one.] (Velho, 1st half of 16th century, ff. 19v.–20r, my translation).

- According to Castanheda (1551) (1500–1559), Vasco da Gama took with him twelve emissaries to the Samorin, referring explicitly to beyond an anonymous “veador” (comptroller), Diogo Dias (scribe of Vasco da Gama), Fernão Martins (Arabic interpreter), João de Sá (scribe of Paulo da Gama, ca. 1465–1499), Gonçalo Pires (sailor), Álvaro Velho (soldier or sailor) and Álvaro de Braga (scribe of Nicolau Coelho)⁶:

[...] e ali se assentou que fossen co ele doze pessoas, scilicet, Diogo diaz seu escrivão & Fernão Martinz, ho lingoa, & ho seu veador, & João de Saa que despois foy tesoureyro da casa da Índia, & hũ marinheyro chamado Gonçalo Pirez que fora de sua criação, & hũ Alvaro Velho, & Alvaro de Braga que despois foy escrivão dalfandega do Porto, & assi outros a que não soube os nomes que co ele erão treze. [...] and there it was decided that twelve persons should go with him, i.e., Diogo Dias, his scribe; Fernão Martins, the translator and his comptroller; João de Sá, who was further a treasurer of the House of India; a sailor named Gonçalo Pires, who was created with him; one Álvaro Velho; Álvaro Braga, who later was officer of the customhouse of Porto, and likewise others of whom I didn't know their names. Altogether, with him, were thirteen.] (Castanheda, 1551, p. 50, my translation).

- He knew Alcochete⁷, nearby ca. 15 km from Barreiro, and that allowed him to compare it with the African town Malindi or Melinde (in modern day Kenya):

⁵ Valentim Fernandes, as he is known in Portugal, or Valentin von Olmütz (currently is Olomouc, in Czech Republic) or Valentinus Moravus, as he was called by Falkenstein (1840, p. 295), was one of the most important early printers in Portugal and lived there for 23 years, most probably between 1494 and 1519.

⁶ I did not find out the life-dates of Diogo Dias, Fernão Martins, Gonçalo Pires and Álvaro de Braga.

⁷ The similarity between Malindi and Alcochete is a very weak argument. The Portuguese King D. Manuel I (1469–1521, kingdom 1495–1521) was born in Alcochete. With this reference, the author may have wanted to entertain the king, or he may have had the intention to present the manuscript directly to the king, and it would be more understandable for him.

[...] esta villa de Milyndes esta em hũa angra e esta asemtada ao lomguo de hũa praya a qual villa se quer parecer com Alconchete. [...] this village of Malindi is in a cove, and it is placed on a beach and seems to look like the village of Alcochete.] (Velho, 1st half of 16th century, fol. 18r, my translation).

- The description ends suddenly with the arrival at the Grande River in Guinea on 25 April 1499:

[...] e hũa quinta feira vinte e cinco dias do mes d'Abril achamos fundo de trinta e cinco braças e todo o dia fomos per este caminho e o menos fundo foram vinte braças e nom podemos aver vista de terra e os pilotos diziam que eramos nos baixos do Rio Grande. [...] and, on Thursday 25 April, we found the floor at thirty-five “braças” (similar to fathoms, but each “braça” measured 10 “palmos”, about 2.20 meters), and the whole day, we went down this way, and the least deep was twenty “braças”, and we could not see the land, and the pilots said that we were in the shallows of the Grande River.] (Velho, 1st half of 16th century, fol. 40r, my translation).

- And, according to Fernandes (1507), in 1507 Álvaro Velho had been in West Africa since precisely 1599, i.e., for eight years: “Alvaro Velho do Barreyro que esteve algũuns oyto annos nesta terra”⁸ [...] [Álvaro Velho from Barreiro who was some eight years in this land [...]] (Fernandes, 1997, p. 115, my translation).

Nevertheless, Ames (2009) considers different hypotheses. For him, it is unlikely that a humble (possibly deported) sailor (or a simple soldier) could have a humanistic education as is reflected in the document:

While the style, syntax and vocabulary are far from the level of the leading humanist chroniclers of the period, the document certainly reflects a fluency in language and grammar in Portuguese with periodic Latin abbreviations, which belie the educational background of many common sailors or soldiers of that period. (Ames, 2009, p. 21).

For Ames (2009), there are solid arguments to consider João de Sá (fl. 1497–1514), the scrivener for the carrack São Rafael under Paulo da Gama's command and also one of the emissaries to the Samorin (Pereira; Rodrigues, 1912, p. 427), the author of the “Roteiro”. Nevertheless, “both Álvaro Velho and João de Sá have factors in their favor and which weigh against them in the longstanding authorship debate” (Ames, 2009, p. 25). On the other hand, he believes also that

[...] there is the very real possibility that neither of these men was indeed the author of this *Journal*. After all, the names of only 39 of the ca. 170 men of the fleet have ever been established. Moreover, we know the names of only 8 of the 13 men who accompanied Vasco da Gama on his initial visit to the Samorin of Calicut in late May 1498. One of these unknown companions of the Captain Major may have also been the author. (Ames, 2009, p. 25).

In addition, Correia (1858) (16th century), who went to India when very young, probably in 1514, arriving in India fifteen years before Fernão Lopes de Castanheda and dying in Goa before 1583 (Stanley, 1869, p. I–II), wrote a history of the first 53 years of Portuguese exploits in India. His manuscripts were only published in 19th century, between 1858 and 1866. In the first tome, he says that he had used a copy of a diary written by the priest João Figueira, who had participated in the first voyage of Vasco da Gama to India:

⁸ It is not clear that Valentim Fernandes was referring to Guinea because he was speaking of the villages of Sierra Leone, but, earlier, he said, “[...] em esta terra e em toda a guynee [...]” [...] in this land and in whole of Guinea [...] (Fernandes, 1997, p. 113).

O que tambem fez hum Clerigo da nao chamado João Figueira, que tomou de sua vontade escrever tudo o que nesta viagem se passou; que chegou a Melinde e esteve com a candea na mão pera morrer. Então cuidando que havia de morrer deo ao Capitão hum quaderno em que tudo tinha escrito, com que muyto folgou, e partindo de Melinde lhe encomendou que assi escrevesse até acabar a viagem, o que assi fez. Do que este Clerigo escreveo depois se fizerão muitos treslados, de que eu vi os pedaços d'hum delles em poder d'Afonso d'Albuquerque, antre huns papeis velhos [...], polo que vendo tão gostosas cousas pera folgar de ouvir e saber, recolhi este quaderno já feito em pedaços. [It was also done by a cleric of the carrack named João Figueira, who, of his own will, wrote everything that happened on this voyage, including that he arrived in Melinde and was with a candle in the hand in order to die. Then, thinking that he was going to die, he gave to the captain a booklet in which he had written everything, which much pleased the captain, and, leaving from Malindi, he ordered that he write in the same manner until ending the voyage, which he did. Of what this cleric wrote were made afterwards many copies, of which I saw some fragments of one of them in the ownership of Afonso de Albuquerque, amongst some of his old papers [...], whereby, seeing things so pleasing to hear and to know, I gathered this booklet, which was already torn in pieces.] (Correia, 1858, p. 134, my translation).

Unfortunately, there is no other information about this priest João Figueira, and I did not find any similarity between both accounts. Moreover, there is another interesting reference in the prologue to the third volume, in which Correia (1862) says that he had also used a manuscript booklet written by a deported man who travelled in the first Vasco da Gama fleet:

E por algum pouço que meu rudo entendimento pôde alcançar, com vontade nacida em mim satisfazendo meu desejo, crecido de hum caderno que me veo ter ás mãos, que fez hum degredado que veo com dom Vasco da Gama no descobrimento, perguntando per os portugueses mais antigos na India e a muytos gentios em Cananor e em Cochym, fiz este breve sumario de lendas, em que entitoley o primeyro livro do começo do descobrimento da India feito per dom Vasco da Gama [...]. [And, for any little that my rude knowledge can reach, with will the born in myself satisfying my desire, grown by a booklet which came to my hands, which a deported man wrote, who came with Sir Vasco da Gama in the discovery, and asking for the oldest Portuguese in India and many gentiles in Cannanore and Cochin, I did this short summary of legends, in which I titled "The first book of the beginning of the discovery of India, made by sir Vasco da Gama" [...]] (Correia, 1862, p. 8, my translation).

Obviously, without any other information, it is impossible to say if Correia (1862) was talking about Álvaro Velho or another journal written by "another" deported man. On the other hand, Marques, who is absent in Ames' references, adds another interesting argument in favor of Álvaro Velho as the author of the original manuscript. There is no reference to any reward given by the Portuguese king D. Manuel I (1469–1521) to the author, as would be expected. This could be explained by the absence of Álvaro Velho from Portugal (Marques, 1999, p. 19).

In summary, all arguments are still weak and fallible. However, I will continue considering Álvaro Velho the author of the Roteiro until the discovery of a stronger hypothesis.

Furthermore, we do not have any concrete data about the author of this unique copy, but it is possible that the friar John Theotoni, CRSA, from the Canons Regular of the Holy Cross of Coimbra could have written it. This would explain, for example, the quality of a certain language fluency and the use of some "periodic Latin abbreviations", as referred to by Ames (2009, p. 21), and the "censorship" of certain vulgarisms in Portuguese as we will show. Codex MS-804 is, undoubtedly, a copy with the many typical errors of a copyist, like the repetition of words and some wrong transcriptions, particularly in the examples of the "language of Calicut", as Johannes Franz Heinrich Hümmerich (1868–1930) proved (Hümmerich, 1927, 1945).

THE DATING OF THE MANUSCRIPT

Concerning the dating of the manuscript, if we accept that the author is, in fact, Álvaro Velho, the original might have been written during the voyage, which means that it was probably written between 8 July 1497 (the departure from



Lisbon) and 25 April 1499 (the disembarkation in the shallows of the Grande River de Buba in Guinea). Nevertheless, this copy is undated, but a palaeographic and codicologic analysis by Marques (1999, p. 19-21) and Albuquerque (1989, p. 5) shows that it was written most probably in the first half of the 16th century.

THE “LINGUAJEM DE CALECUTE”

After the end of the codex, i.e., after folio 41 (page 81), there are some appendices with descriptions of the kingdoms to the south of Calicut (fol. 41r., p. 81–fol. 43r., p. 85), elephants (fol. 43r., p. 85–fol. 43v., p. 86), the price for which spices were sold in Alexandria (fol. 43v., p. 86–fol. 44r.) and the language of Calicut and a short list of “their names” (fol. 45r.–fol. 45v.), items not transcribed by some of the historians who published semi-diplomatic editions (Albuquerque, 1989).

The unique explicit study about the language of Calicut I know was done by Hümmerich firstly in German (Hümmerich, 1927, p. 56-85), and, (only) fifteen years after his death, was translated into Portuguese (Hümmerich, 1945, p. 181-230). This list occupies only one folio (two pages) and contains 122 useful daily expressions, organized in two columns, and sixteen proper nouns. It is interesting that the list is interrupted to insert the nouns (without any explanation), finishing with more six words. The proper nouns are: “Tenae // Pumi // Paramganda // Usapee // Quilaba // Gouaa // Ajapaa // Arreco // Axirania // Cuerapa // Cutitepa // Anapa // Canapa // Gande // Remaa // Mamgala.” (Velho, 1st half of 16th century, fol. 45v.).

The entries are not listed by alphabetical order, but they are ordered *mutatis mutandis* by semantic domains. Each entry starts with the Portuguese preposition “por” [for], followed by the Portuguese word(s), a double slash and the translation into the “language of Calicut”.

At first glance, what stand out are five erased or scratched out Portuguese words, with the same ink of the other handwriting, which means that they might have been erased by the scribe. All of them are words from the sexual semantic domain, such as “caralho” (“canay”) [dick], “colhons” (“feirim”) [balls], “quuo” (“cudo”) [ass], “peydo” (“baly”) [fart] and “foder” (“panany”) [to fuck]. This could signify that the author considered them as usual or daily words but the scribe (possibly the friar John Theotonius, CRSA) considered them offensive, rude or impolite words, i.e., vulgarisms. However, it is interesting that the word “cono” (“cula”) [pussy] was not similarly erased, without any explanation. Curiously, the German missionary in India, Hermann Gundert (1814–1893), reported a similar situation when he was writing his Malayalam-English dictionary. First of all, he tells that his main sources for the idiomatic significations to southern Kerala or Travancore had:

[...] been carefully collected both from the productions of the Cottayam Press, and from the very valuable Dictionaries compiled by the Portuguese and Italian Missionaries of Verapoli; works which, although completed in 1746, rest upon materials accumulated in the 17th, perhaps even 16th century, and rank as the oldest monument extant of the study of Indian languages by Europeans. (Gundert, 1872, p. IV).

Secondly, he adds that he did not reject the provincialisms and vulgarisms, but he preferred signing them with the abbreviation “obsc.” (obscene), as the Portuguese and Italian missionaries of Verapoli did:

[...] *provincialisms* and *vulgarisms* have not been rejected, though they are pointed out as such [...]. To discard coarse and even obscene modes of speech, has not been thought advisable, however much their existence and currency may be regretted. They are marked “obsc.”, as was done by the fathers of Verapoli in their day, that they may be avoided. (Gundert, 1872, p. V).



I suppose that these erased “vulgarisms” were common words in those days amongst certain sectors of Portuguese society. I found similar examples, for instance, in the manuscript “*Obra nova de lingua geral de mina*” (1741) written by António da Costa Peixoto (1703–1763) and some contemporaneous dictionaries register the majority of them (Fernandes, 2012, p. 37-42). The unique words I did not find in the first Portuguese dictionaries were “foder” [to fuck], “cono” [pussy] and “caralho” [dick], but there are synonyms for the last two, such as “membro de molher” (*cunnus, i*) [woman organ / pussy] (Barbosa, 1611, p. 722) and “pissa” (*mentula, ae*) [dick] (Cardoso, 1562, 86r.; Barbosa, 1611, p. 851). The others are registered in the same terms (sometimes with a different orthography), such as “colham” / “colhão” (*coelus, ei; testiculus, i*) [balls] (Cardoso, 1562, 32v.; Barbosa, 1611, p. 218); “cu” (*podex, cis; anus, i*) [ass] (Cardoso, 1562, 37r.); “peido” / “peydo” (*crepitus, us*) [fart] (Cardoso, 1562, 84v.; Barbosa, 1611, p. 826)⁹.

In sum, the list is composed by 75 nouns related to human beings and parts of the body, daily objects, fish and other animals, boats and navigation, parts of the day and cardinal points, 36 verbs in infinitive and imperative moods, five adjectives and, maybe, two adverbs (or adjectives too), one negative (“nam quero”: “totenda” [I do not wish]) and other interrogative sentences (“ouves”: “que que ne” [Do you hear?]).

MALAYALAM, THE “LANGUAGE OF CALICUT”

The “language of Calicut” corresponds to the Malayalam language, but it can be mixed with some words of a neighbor or related tongue, like Tamil or Canarese (or Kannada). Throughout the codex, there is no concrete expression about any Indian language. Álvaro Velho speaks once of “mourisco” [Moorish] (Velho, 1st half of 16th century, fol. 24v.) and “Arrabia” [Arabic] (Velho, 1st half of 16th century, fol. 17v.), explaining, for example, that, in Malindi (in the present-day Kenya), they found some Indian navigators who spoke a language different from Arabic:

[...] a sua linguagem he estremada da dos mouros e alguns delles sabem algũa pouca d'arravia polla continoa comunicação que tem com elles. [...] their language is distinguished from that of Moorish, and some of them know a few Arabic due to the continuous communication they have with them.] (Velho, 1st half of 16th century, fol. 17v, my translation).

Zwartjes (2011) explains, for example, that Portuguese missionaries used a confused language terminology, and they referred to both Tamil and Malayalam languages as Malabar, for example, because of the confusion between the language and the name of the region, i.e., the Malabar Coast, as the southwestern coast of India was called:

Their terminology for Indian languages is sometimes confusing: the *Bracmana* tongue did not necessarily mean Sanskrit; at Goa it meant rather Konkani or Marathi, while *Hindostani* applied even to Marathi [...]. Henriques, however, always refers to Tamil as “lengua Malabar”. (Zwartjes, 2011, p. 31).

I compared this list with the Malayalam-English dictionary of Gundert (1872), and I found some similar roots, for instance, “pagal” (for “pagalalu”) [day] and “meenuh” (for “miny”) [fish]. There are at least two main published sources that prove that this list of words is, indeed, the Malayalam language. On the one hand, the Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Central Travancore, John Martindale Speechly (1864–1904) believed that the “language of Calicut” corresponded effectively to a “bad” Malayalam, spoken in the coastal regions of southern India, mixed with some Tamil and Arabic words. He said, in a personal letter to Ravenstein (1898):

⁹ See also DIClweb.

[...] at the sea-port towns generally the worst Malayālam is spoken. Many Malayālam words are the same in Tamil, and in this list there are some which a Tamil scholar would be able to point out. Also, it is not unlikely that there are some Arabic words Malayālamised, in the list. The anonymous author's list is a very interesting one, and his journal, I have no doubt, will be so also. The "ne"¹⁰ which ends so many words may stand for "ni", "thou". Sometimes it is only an expressive ending. (Speechly, 1869 apud Ravenstein, 1898, p. 105).

On the other hand, Hümmerich (1945) presented it likewise as the Malayalam language, which belonged to the Dravidian languages:

O idioma com o qual o descobridores portugueses pela primeira vez vieram ao contacto na Índia, "a linguagem de Calecut" o malaialim, e, sobretudo, no Malabar, pertence à língua dravídica, falada por cêrca de 57 milhões de pessoas, segundo o censo de 1901. [The language which the Portuguese explorers first came into contact in India, "the language of Calicut", Malayalam, especially in Malabar, belongs to the Dravidian language spoken by approximately 57 million people, according to the census of 1901.] (Hümmerich, 1945, p. 192, my translation).

However, Fontoura da Costa (1869–1940) and José Marques translated Malayalam into Portuguese as the word "Malaio" [Malay] (Costa, 1969, p. 95-99; Marques, 1999, p. 25), an Austronesian language spoken, for example, in Malasia, Indonesia and also in Singapore (Lewis et al., 2016b). It is, obviously, a wrong translation, because, for example, Costa mentioned that "Ravenstein e Hümmerich provaram que o vocabulário é malaio, estando algumas palavras mais ou menos estropiadas" [Ravenstein and Hümmerich proved that the vocabulary is Malay (i.e., Malayalam) with some words more or less crippled] (Costa, 1969, p. 138, note 296, my translation). So, they might have wanted to say "Malaiala" [Malayalam] in Portuguese.

According to the Ethnologue, Malayalam is Dravidian, southern Tamil-Kannada, Tamil-Kodagu, Tamil-Malayalam and Malayalam, and it is a statutory provincial language in Kerala state spoken by 33 million people in India (India Census, 2001) and by 26,300 people in Singapore (Singapore Government, 2011) (Lewis et al., 2016a). Hümmerich (1945, p. 192) explained that Malayalam is closely related to Tamil and Canarese, and it was spoken in 1901 by 6 million people in a coastal region of ca. 45 kilometers in southern India. On the other hand, the German missionary Hermann Gundert had already said that it had:

[...] been found difficult to draw the line of demarcation between Malayālam and Tamil words. These two languages of old differed rather as dialects of the same member of the Dravidian family, than as separate languages; in consequence many Tamil words occur still in local usage [...] or in time-honored phrases and formulas [...], which have long ceased to be used in colloquial speech. (Gundert, 1872, p. III).

In addition, Caldwell (1875) (1814–1891) said that

[...] the difference between Malayalam and Tamil, though originally slight, has progressively increased, so that the claim of Malayalam, as it now stands, to be considered, not as a mere dialect of Tamil, but as a sister language, cannot be called in question. Originally, it is true, I consider it to have been not a sister of Tamil, but a daughter. It may best be described as a much-altered offshoot (Caldwell, 1875, p. 24).

¹⁰ Hümmerich (1945, p. 219) explains that the suffix "-ne" corresponds to the verbal morpheme "-(k)unnu" of the infinitive present, and the final sound is equivalent to the Portuguese allophone [ɐ]. However, Jiang (2010, p. 30) presents it as the morpheme of all persons of the present.

A NEW SEMI-DIPLOMATIC EDITION OF THE “LINGUAGEM DE CALECUT”

Concerning the differences between this new transcription and other semi-diplomatic editions, it should be highlighted that the edition of Hümmerich (1927, p. 56-60) is one of the best, and it was very useful in terms of the analysis of the “language of Calicut”. He was, for example, the first who attempted to transcribe the Portuguese verb “foder” [to fuck], and he presented the most complete list of current Malayalam equivalences. Nevertheless, the Portuguese translation (Hümmerich, 1945, p. 185-189), published posthumously fifteen years after his death, has unbelievable errors in terms of the transcription of some Portuguese words. The translator, Moura Brás (1881–1954), inconceivably exchanged, for example, all Portuguese vulgarisms into more “ethical” or “moral” polite words; instead of “cono” [pussy], he transcribed the word as “vagina” [vagina]; instead of “caralho” [dick], he wrote “pénis” [penis]; for “colhons” [balls], he transcribed the word as “testículos” [testicles]; and, for “foder” [fuck], he transcribed it as “cópula” [copulate].

Given this, I followed Marques’ edition (1999, p. 128-132) more closely because, not only it is the latest one, but it also – and essentially – uses very similar criteria. However, I do not agree with him in a few situations; for instance, he modernized the punctuation too much, transforming, for example, the double slash into a hyphen, and he transcribed the word “colhoes” (Marques, 1999, p. 130) without a nasal sign and with a final diphthong, but I interpret it with only the final vowel <o> and the consonant <n> as sign of nasality (“colhons”). Hümmerich (1927, p. 57) transcribed it with a tilde and a reduplicate vowel <e> (“colhõees”); Marques (1999, p. 129) interpreted the word “maoo” (“betall”) as an adjective [bad], but, for me, there is a tilde above the vowels, such as in the plural of the same Portuguese word for “lamguaim” (“mãoos”), which is obviously a mistake of the scribe; he did not appoint an hypothesis in Portuguese for the Malayalam word “panany”, as Hümmerich (1927, p. 59) did. Marques (1999, p. 129- 128) interpreted the imperative expressions “day lhe” [give him!] and “tira lhe” [take him away!] as “criane”, but the first word cannot be the consonant <c> and is rather the vowel <e> (“eriane”), as in other examples, and the Malayalam word is “eryyunnu”, as Hümmerich (1927, p. 57) referred.

Another problematic choice I had to make is related to the Portuguese verb “andar”, which is repeated in the manuscript. All paleographers transcribed the Malayalam words as “narecane” and “mareçane” respectively, which correspond to what is effectively written in the manuscript. However, the second (“mareçane”) is a mistake of the scribe. The correct form might be “narecane” for both because the Malayalam verb is, in fact, “nadakkunnu” (Hümmerich, 1945, p. 185). I had a similar problem with the transcription of the Malayalam word for the Portuguese verbs “beber” [to drink] and “morder” [to bite]. I read “carichany” (“canchany” for Marques, 1999, p. 130) for both because they have exactly the same handwriting. This could simply be a mistake of the author or also of the scribe as the “correct” Malayalam words are actually very similar: “kudikkunnu” [to drink] (Hümmerich, 1927, p. 57) and “kadikkunnu” [to bite] (Hümmerich, 1927, p. 58).

Furthermore, in this new edition of the appendix, the “Language of Calicut”, I tried to add the maximum degree of information. On the one hand, I transcribed the manuscript with rigorous criteria, trying to correct earlier editions. On the other hand, I introduced the English translations of Ravenstein (1898, p. 105-108) within braces or curly brackets ({ }) and those of Ames (2009, p. 121-124) within (square) brackets ([]) when different from Ravenstein’s. I have also added my own English translation when I suppose there is a different interpretation — within chevrons or angle brackets (< >). I have also introduced Ravenstein’s Malayalam equivalences within the same braces or curly brackets ({ }), which had been furnished by Bishop John Martindale Speechly. Finally, I have also presented Hümmerich’s Malayalam (1945, p. 185-189) equivalences within double angle brackets (« »).

FOLIO 45R

LEFT COLUMN

por olha {see, look!} // no cane {nōkka} «nōkkunnu»
 por ouves {hearest thou?} [Do you hear?] // que que ne {kēlka} «kēkkunnu»
 por tira lhe {take him away} // eriane «eriyunnu»
 por tirar {to draw} // balichene {walikkān} «valikkunnu»
 por corda {rope} // coraoo {kayara} «kayaru»
 por alarga {largely} <enlarge> // lacany «idakkunnu or ilakunnu»
 por da me {give me} // comda {kutippān} «kondā»
 por beber {to drink} // carichany «kudikkunnu»
 por come {eat} // tinane {tinmān} «tinnunnu»
 por toma {take} // y na «innā»
 por nam quero {I don't wish} // totenda «todēndā»
 por andar {to go} [to go away] // narecane «nadakkunnu»
 por vai te {go away!} // poo {pō} «pō»
 por vem qua {come here!} // baa {bā or wā} «vā»
 por cal[a] te {be silent!} [be quiet!] // pote «pōdu»
 por levanta te {rise!} [get up!] // legany «ilakunnu»
 por lançar {to throw} // carecane {karikkān} «kalekkunnu»
 por falar {to speak} // parane {parane, speak thou} «parayunnu»
 por doudo {mad, silly} [mad, crazy] // moto «mūdhan?»
 por sesudo {serious} <unsmiling> // monday dicany «moyai midukkanu»
 por manco {lame} [crippled] // muracall {murakāl} «muda kāl»
 por cair {to fall} // biamce «vīlunnu?»
 por muito {many, much} // balidu {walare} «valitu»
 por mão {bad}¹¹ [hand] // betall {chītta} «viral»
 por vento {wind} // clacle {kātta} «kārru»
 por pouco {little} // chiredu {chiratu?} «chirutu»
 por day lhe {give him!} // eriane «eriyunnu»
 por paoo {timber, wood} [wood] // mara {maram} «maram»
 por pedra {stone} // calou {kallu} «kallu»
 por dentes {teeth} // faley «pallu»
 por beiços {lips} // çire {chīra?} «chiri»

¹¹ Bad interpretation by Ravenstein (1898, p. 105), because the Portuguese word has a tilde, which means that it is the noun "mão" [hand] and not the adjective "maoo" [bad].

RIGHT COLUMN

por nariz {nose} // muco {mūkka} «mūkku»
 por olhos {eyes} // cana {kanna} «kanna»
 por testa {forehead} // necheim {nīcha?} «nerri»
 por cabelos {hair} // talanay {talla} «talanār»
 por cabeça {head} // tala «tala»
 por orelhas {ears} // cadee {chewi} «kātu»
 por lingoa {tongue} // naoo {nākka} «nāvu»
 por pescoço {neck} // caestez «kaluttu»
 por mamas {breast} <boobs> // mulay {mula} «mulay»
 por peitos {breasts} // nane «neññu»
 por braços {arms} // carit «kai or kayyi»
 por estomago {stomach} // barri {wayara} «vayaru»
 por pernas {legs} // cali {kāla} «kālu»
 por caralho <striketthrough> [penis] <dick> // canay «kanay?»
 por colhons <striketthrough> [testicles] <balls> // feyrin¹²
 por quoo <striketthrough> [ass] // cudo «kūti»
 por mãos {hands} // lamguaim {kai} «idangai»
 por dedos {fingers} // beda «viral»
 por cono [vagina] <cunt, pussy> // cula «kula?»
 por pescado {fish} // miny {mīna} «mīnu»
 por masto {mast} // mana «maram»
 por lume {light, fire} [light] // tiir {tī} «tī»
 por dormir {to sleep} // teraquy «urakku»
 por homem {man} // amoo {āna} «ānnu»
 por molher {women}¹³ [woman] // pena {penna} «pennu»
 por barba {chin, beard} [beard] // tari «tādi»
 por lagosta {lobster} // xame «chemmīn»
 por papagayo {parrot} // tata {tatta} «tatta»
 por ponbas {doves} // cayninaa «mainainā»
 por peydo <striketthrough> [fart] // baly «vali»
 por beijar {to kiss} // mucam «muttunnu or mukarunnu»
 por morder {to bite} // carichany {katikkān} «kadikkunnu»

¹² Hümmerich (1927, p. 57) transcribed "seyrim", but the first consonant cannot be the long (medial or descending) <f>, but it is the consonant <f>.

¹³ The Portuguese word is singular. It has not the suffix <s>, morpheme of the plural.

FOLIO 45V

LEFT COLUMN

por olhar {to see, look} // noquany {nokkuwān} «nōkkunnu»
por ouvir {to hear} // cegade {kēlkawān} «chekidu»
por bater {to beat} // catane «kottunnu»
por ferida {wound} // morubo «moruvu»
por espada {sword} // batany «vettunnu?»
por adarga {shield} // cutany «kuttunnu?»
por arco {bow} // cayny «kavinu»
por frecha {arrow} // ambum {anpa} «ambu»
por lança {spear} // com cudoo «kundam»
por tirar com arco {to shoot with a bow} // heany «eyyunnu»
por soll {sun} // nerara «ñāyaru»
por lua {moon} // neelan «nilā»
por ceo {heaven} [sky, heaven] // mana «mānam»
por terra {the earth} // caraa «kara»
por mar {the sea} // caralu «kadalū»
por nao {ship} <carrack> // capell {kappal} «kappal»
por barcos {boat} // canbuço «chambokku»
por noute {night} // erabut «iravu»
por dia {day} // pagalalu «pakalu»
por comer {eat} [to eat] // tinane {tinmān} «tinnunnu»
por mijar [to urinate] // matara «mūtaram»
por asentar {to mount} <to sit down> // arricany «irikkunnu»
por estar em pee {to be on foot} <to stand> // anicany «nikkunnu»
por andar {to go, travel}[to walk, go] // narecane¹⁴ «nadakunnu»
por abraçar {to embrace} // tarigany «talukunnu»
por pancadas {blows} // talaney «tallunnu»
por chorar {to mourn, wail} [to cry] // quene «kēlunnu»
por alevantar {to raise} [to lift] // alagany «ilakunnu»
por baylhar {to dance} // canechane «kunikkunnu»
por tirar com pedras ou paoo {to throw with stones or wood} [to throw a stone or wood] // ouryany «eriyyunnu»
por cantar {to sing} // fareny «pādunnu»
por chuva {rain} // majaa {mara} «mala or maya»

¹⁴ In the manuscript is written undoubtedly "mareçane", but it is a mistake by the copyist.

RIGHT COLUMN

por agoa {water} // tany {tanni} «tannīr or tanni»
por cego {blind} // curuge {kurutan, *blind man*} «kurudi or kuruttu»
por decepado de mãoo {maimed of a hand} // muraquay {murukai} «mudakai»
por foder <*striketthrough*> [to copulate] <to fuck> // panany «panunnu»
por toma {take!} // ennay «innā»
por vamo nos {let us go!} // pomga {pomka} «pōkām»
por leste {east} // careçache {kirakka} «kilakkārru»
por loeste {west} // meçache {patinyyara} «mēkkārru»
por norte {north} // barcangache {watakka} «vadakkangārru»
por sull {south} // tycamgarche {tekka} «tekkangārru»
por cam {dog} // naa {nāya} «nā»
por cadella {bitch} // pena {pennāya} «pen nā»
por moço {young man} // humnee «yuvanu»
por minino {girl}¹⁵ <little boy> // copoo «kochchu»
por cassa {house} // pura {pura} «pura»
por agulha [needle] // cudoo «kūdu?»
por verga {rod} // parima «parimaram»
por remo {oar} // tandii {tandu} «tandu»
por bombardas {a great gun} [great gun, cannon] // vedii «vedi»
por gavea {top-sail} // talii «talī»
por driça {halyard} // angua «āwang?»
por // ___: ___: ___: ___

Estes sam os seus nomes: {The following are some of the names [of persons]}[These are their names]

Tenae // Pumi // Paramganda //
Ujapee // Quilaba // Gouaa // Ajapaa //
Arreco // Axirama // Cuerapa // Cutitepa //
Anapa // Canapa // Gande // Remaa //
Mangala // ___: ___: ___: ___: ___

por ancora {anchor} // napara «mangūram»
por bandeiras e estandarte {flag} [flag, standard] // çoti {koti} «kodi»
por governalho {rudder, helm} // xoca «chukkān»

¹⁵ Wrong interpretation by Ravenstein (1898, p. 107) and Ames (2009, p. 122): the last vowel is, undoubtedly, an <o>, morpheme of the masculine, and not the <a>, morpheme of the feminine gender.

por pelote {pilot}¹⁶ <pelote> // cupajao «kuppāyam»
por calça {shoe} <trousers, pants> // cacu paja «kalkuppāyam»
por barrete {cap} // tupy {topi} «toppi»: ____: ____: ____

CONCLUSIONS

Codex MS-804 from the Municipal Library of Porto, in Portugal, is a copy from the beginning of the 16th century of a lost journal written by a simple soldier or sailor (maybe deported) of the first fleet to India. The author was most probably Álvaro Velho (fl. 1497/1507), born in Barreiro, under the command of Captain Vasco da Gama (ca.1460–1524). This codex describes the voyage from the departure from Lisbon, Portugal on 8 July 1497 to the arrival in the shallows of the Grande River de Buba in present day Guinea-Bissau on 25 April 1499. The great merit of this document is the fact that the author was as a direct eyewitness of all events he describes.

Particularly relevant for this study is the vocabulary in one final appendix at folio 45 (recto and verso). It has 122 useful daily words / expressions organized in two columns in Portuguese, their translation into the language spoken in Calicut (the current city of Kozhikode) in the southern Indian state of Kerala and sixteen proper nouns. It has mainly nouns (75) related to human beings and parts of the body, daily objects, fish and other animals, boats and navigation, parts of the day and cardinal points, verbs in infinitive (24) and imperative (12) moods, one negative and several other interrogative sentences, some adjectives (5) and, maybe, two adverbs (or adjectives too).

Despite some transcription mistakes and the censorship of some “obscene” words or vulgarisms by the scribe, maybe the friar John Theotoni, CRSA, from the Canons Regular of the Holy Cross of Coimbra, it is a relevant testimony of a variety of Malayalam, a statutory provincial Dravidian language in Kerala State, at the end of the 15th century, though mixed with some neighbor tongues, such as its “mother”, i.e., the Tamil language.

This list deserved a new semi-diplomatic edition in order to correct earlier editions, following rigorous transcription criteria and adding other relevant pieces of information, such as English translations and Malayalam equivalences.

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¹⁶ Wrong interpretation by Ravenstein (1898, p. 108) and Ames (2009, p. 124): the word “pelote” still exists in Portuguese and means a (medieval) large coat usually with large flaps and without sleeves (Casteleiro, 2001, v. II, p. 2805) e (Houaiss; Villar 2009, p. 1463).

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