

Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History

*Volume 6. Western Europe
(1500-1600)*

Edited by David Thomas and John Chesworth



With

John Azumah

Stanisław Grodź

Andrew Newman

Douglas Pratt

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Christian-Muslim Relations
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History of Christian-Muslim Relations

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Luís Vaz de Camões

Camões

DATE OF BIRTH	Approximately 1524
PLACE OF BIRTH	Probably Lisbon or Coimbra
DATE OF DEATH	10 June 1580
PLACE OF DEATH	Lisbon

BIOGRAPHY

Luís Vaz de Camões is considered the greatest poet of the Lusophone countries because of the influence he had on the Portuguese language. His biography is richer in anecdotes than facts, and even the details of his birth are uncertain.

It is assumed that Camões was born in Lisbon or Coimbra in around 1525. According to one tradition, he attended courses in the humanities at the University of Coimbra, although without being registered. This may, in fact, be accurate, as from 1542 his uncle, the Augustinian Bento Camões, was chancellor of the university. After his return to Lisbon, he frequented court circles and encountered the new culture in which the classical tradition came into interaction with Italian and Castilian.

In about 1547, Camões first experienced Christian-Muslim confrontation when, in the course of a battle against the Moors at Ceuta in Morocco, he was injured and lost the vision in his right eye. Back in Lisbon, he was imprisoned from 16 June 1552 to 13 March 1553 for brawling. In 1553, he sailed to Goa and remained in the East for more than 15 years, working as a public official as well as taking part as a soldier in at least two military missions. During this time, he was again sent to prison twice, first in Macao then in Mozambique.

It was during this time in the East that Camões worked on *Os Lusíadas*, which he published in 1572, two years after his return to Lisbon. He died in Lisbon in 1580, aged 56.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Secondary

J.H. Saraiva, *Vida ignorada de Camões*, Lisbon, 1978

J. Nabuco, *The Lusiads as the epic of love*, Ithaca NY, 1909

WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Os Lusíadas, 'The Lusiads'

DATE 1572

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Portuguese

DESCRIPTION

Os Lusíadas is an epic work, generally ranked among the masterpieces of world literature. Its title comes from *Lusíadas*, 'Portuguese', deriving from the Roman name for Portugal, Lusitania. It describes the explorations of the Portuguese and the voyage of Vasco da Gama on his discovery of the route to India, and it is also an account of the intense battle of Catholic Christendom against the advance of Islam, especially in its Sunnī form. Camões's verses reveal the hatred of the Christians for the Moors, whom they regard as heretics. He reiterates the typical classical Portuguese idea from the age of discoveries, that the ultimate goal of the activities in the Indies was the conquest of Egypt, the liberation of the Holy Land from Muslim rule, and the destruction of the holy sites in Mecca and Medina. In India, the Portuguese met a plethora of Islamic peoples, while at the same time they were confronting the Ottoman Empire and potentially seeking agreements with the Safavid rulers of Persia. During the 16th century, the earlier call for a *cruzada* ('crusade') became a rhetorical formula that was frequently employed but rarely led to large-scale military mobilisation against the Ottomans. Like many other early modern European men of letters, Camões demanded an all-out war against the 'Turk'.

The ideological axis of the poem focuses on the relationship of Portugal with the Islamic world, depicted as a just war waged against Islam. As Camões suggests, one cannot forget 'the great valour of that brave people the Portuguese', who 'have expelled the Muslim, for all his strength and numbers, from the entire region of the Tagus' (Canto I:42).

Os Lusíadas consists of ten cantos, which celebrate the defeat of Islam and the spread of Christianity through the southern hemisphere to South-East Asia. Each canto is composed in a variable number of *stanzas* (1,102 in total), which are based upon the decasyllabic *ottava rima* (rhyme scheme: ABABABCC). The narration, written in Homeric fashion, begins with the voyage of Vasco da Gama and ends with his return from India. Inserted into this narrative, it tells the history of Portugal (Canto III).

In the introduction, Camões, showing his classical background, pays homage to Virgil and Homer, and describes the ancient Greek gods.

Throughout, he creates a fusion of pagan, Christian and Islamic symbolism. Thus, in Canto II Vasco da Gama, who is in Mombasa, sends two convicts to assess the situation around the Portuguese group. An ambush has been set by the local Muslim king, but the goddess Venus and the Nereids intervene to help the Portuguese overcome the Moorish trick. Venus symbolises the higher purpose of the epic adventure, and also the redeeming essence of Christianity. In opposition to this, starting in Canto I, Bacchus represents the obstacle standing in the way of Christianity. He is the Lord of India, who fears having his power usurped by the Christian Portuguese, and also of the infidels, who must be redeemed.

Camões dedicated the poem to the young King Sebastian of Portugal, who was aged 24 at the time. A few days after the famous battle of Lepanto on 7 October 1571, in which European naval forces defeated the powerful Ottoman fleet, Camões invited King Sebastian to attack Morocco, using the mythological language of his own *Ecloga*, titled *Que grande variedade vão fazendo*. According to Vitor Aguiar e Silva, it is possible that King Sebastian was influenced in his crusade by these great poetic words. King Sebastian was killed on 4 August 1578 at al-Qaṣr al-Kabīr, in Morocco.

Camões's poem could be said to have contributed to the creation of 'Sebastianism', a popular national belief that the monarch was not really dead but had only disappeared, to one day return, reclaim the throne and fill the world with justice, a legend that shares commonalities with the Islamic belief in the Mahdī, who would appear to restore justice and righteous rule.

SIGNIFICANCE

Os Lusíadas shaped the Portuguese attitude towards Muslims. It portrays Islam, particularly as represented by the Turks, not only as heretical but also as the belief of the enemies of Catholic Portugal. Thus, Muslims must be defeated for Christianity finally to triumph in East and West.

This epic poem has exerted great influence in shaping Portuguese language and literature, with the consequence that the sentiments expressed in it towards Muslims and Islam have continued to influence the attitudes of Lusophones to the present day.

MANUSCRIPTS

The assessment of the manuscript tradition is still a matter of dispute among scholars.

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS

Os Lusíadas has appeared in many editions and translations. Below is a selected list reflecting its influence.

- Z. Trzeszczkowska (trans.), *Luzjady. (Os Lusíadas). epos w dziesięciu pieśniach*, Sandomierz, Poland, 2013 (Polish trans.)
- Os Lusíadas*, ed. R. Arnold, trans. H.-J. Schaeffer, Darmstadt, 2010 (German trans.)
- L.V. de Camões, *Obra completa*, ed. A. Salgado Jr, Rio de Janeiro, 2003
- H. Barrilaro Ruas (ed.), *Os Lusíadas*, Lisbon, 2002
- O. Gomes (trans.), *Lujhitāyana*, Goa, 2003 (Konkani trans.)
- R. Averini (trans.), *I Lusiadi*, Milan, 2001 (Italian trans. with parallel Portuguese text)
- S. González (trans.), *Os Lusíadas*, Madrid, 1990 (Asturian trans.)
- O. Ovcharenko (trans.), *Luziady; Sonety*, Moscow, 1988 (Russian trans. of *Os Lusíadas* and the Sonnets)
- Os Lusíadas*, Sao Paulo, 1982
- Đ. Šaula (trans.), *Luzijadi*, Belgrade, 1981 (Serbian trans.)
- Hideo Kobayashi (trans.), *Uzu rujiadasu: rushitania no hitobito*, Tokyo, 1978 (Japanese trans.)
- A. Capuder (trans.), *Luzijada. Izbor*, Ljubljana, 1976 (selected excerpts in Slovenian)
- F. Pierce (trans.), *Os Lusíadas*, Oxford, 1973 (English annotated trans.)
- A. Covaci (trans.), *Lusiada*, Bucharest, 1965 (Romanian trans.)
- G. Colom and M. Dolç (trans.), *Els lusíades*, Barcelona, 1964 (Catalan trans.)
- K. Bednár (trans.), *Lusovci*, Prague, 1958 (Czech trans.)
- R. Bismut (trans.), *Les luciades de Luis de Camões*, Lisbon, 1954 (French trans.)
- W.C. Atkinson (trans.), *The Lusiads*, London, 1952 (English trans.)
- Os Lusíadas*, 3rd edition, Porto, 1933
- J. Vrchlický (trans.), *Lusovci (Os Lusíadas). báseň o desíti zpěvech*, Prague, 1902 (abridged Czech trans.)
- F. de Santo Agostinho Macedo (trans.), *A lusiada de Luiz de Camões. Traduzida en versos latinos*, Paris, 1890 (Latin trans.)
- The Lusiad of Luis de Camoens*, London, 1853 (English trans.)
- J.J.C. Donner (trans.), *Die Lusiaden*, Stuttgart, 1833 (German trans.)
- L. Stoppendaal (trans.), *De Lusiade. heldendicht in X zangen*, Antwerp, 1777 (Dutch trans.)
- W.J. Mickle (trans.), *The Lusiad, or, The discovery of India. An epic poem*, Oxford, 1776 (English trans.)

- N.N. Piemontese (trans.), *La Lusiadi. o sia la scoperta delle Indie Orientali*, Turin, 1772 (Italian trans.)
- M. Duperron de Castera (trans.), *La lusiade de Camoens. Poeme heroique, sur la decouverte des Indes Orientales*, Amsterdam, 1735 (French trans.)
- M. de Faria i Sousa (trans.), *Os Lusíadas*, Madrid, 1639 (Spanish trans.)
- Os Lusíadas*, Lisbon: Casa de Antonio Go[n]çalvez impressor, 1572

STUDIES

- There are numerous scholarly works on the *Lusíadas*. Those that deal with Islam include:
- V. Aguiar e Silva (ed.), *O Dicionário de Luís de Camões*, Alfragide, Portugal, 2011
- C. Willis, *Camões, prince of poets*, Bristol, 2010
- M.L. de Castro Soares, 'A aventura do amor e do espírito. A lírica e a epopéia de Camões', in M.L. de Castro Soares (ed.), *Tendências da literatura. Do Classicismo ao Maneirismo e ao Barroco e sua projecção na actualidade*, Vila Real, Portugal, 2009, 88-97
- M.L. de Castro Soares, *Profetismo e espiritualidade de Camões a Pascoaes*, Coimbra, 2007, pp. 74-84
- N. Bisaha, *Creating East and West. Renaissance humanists and the Ottoman Turks*, Philadelphia PA, 2004
- F.F. Moreira, *Visão do amor e do homem. Uma análise lingüístico-estilística de oitavas rimas do Camões e de um soneto de Cruz e Souza*, Maceió, Brazil, 2005
- M. Cavalcante, *Por mares muito antes navegados. A tradição de Camões na poesia colonial brasileira*, Bairro, Brazil, 2001, p. 73
- M. de Lourdes Abreu de Oliveira, *Eros e tanatos no universo textual de Camões, Antero e Redol*, Pinheiros, Sao Paulo, 2000, pp. 20-31
- R. Finlay, 'Portuguese and Chinese maritime imperialism. Camões's *Lusiads* and Loo Maodeng's *Voyage of the San Bao eunuch*', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34 (1992) 225-41
- H.H. Hart, *Luis de Camoëns and the epic of the Lusiads*, Norman OK, 1962