

THE CAREER AND
LEGEND OF
VASCO DA GAMA

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CHAPTER ONE

OVERTURE: BONES OF CONTENTION

This Da Gama, whose fortune it was to initiate direct European contact with the East, was a man of iron physique and surly disposition. Unlettered, brutal, and violent, he was nevertheless loyal and fearless. For some assignments he would have been useless, but for this one he was made to order. The work lying ahead could not be accomplished by a gentle leader.

Charles E. Nowell, *The Great Discoveries* (1954)¹

VASCO AND ZULAIKHA

THERE ARE FEW MORE STRIKING WAYS OF TRANSFORMING history into legend than through the medium of opera. In this dramatico-musical genre, quintessentially a form of the nineteenth century (even if its origins lie earlier), characters and situations are automatically transfigured, and happily dissolve into the most melodramatic colours. The storm and thunder of emotions played out through virtuoso voices slotted into well-defined registers and categories, and nearly always working on a simple palette of theatrical possibilities, dominates over reason – even dramatic reason. This is clearly the genre of Heroes then, in consonance with the particular romantic imagination of the Great Age of Nationalism, and hence suited above all in its sensibility to the exigencies of a nationalistically tinted history. Thus, so much of what is essential to nineteenth-century German nationalism filters through the works of Richard Wagner, even as the Italian *Risorgimento* finds voice through the operas of Giuseppe Verdi.

We could do worse than to approach our subject thus, to listen to the tenor voice of Vasco da Gama (1469–1524) not as it appears

¹ Charles E. Nowell, *The Great Discoveries and the First Colonial Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1954), p. 36.

in his very few writings or those of his contemporaries, but through the lips of a nineteenth-century operatic *alter ego*. And what does he say to us in this form?

Ah! Have pity on my memory,
 O, you to whom I pray!
 Take no more than my days,
 and leave me with my glory!
 Ah! The torments that the furies bring together,
 are less cruel to me;
 For 'tis to die twice over,
 To lose at once both life and immortality!

So sings the explorer Vasco da Gama in the fourth act of the once-celebrated but now largely forgotten opera of Giacomo Meyerbeer and Eugène Scribe, *L'Africaine* (1865).² We may rapidly rehearse the twists and turns of the improbable plot of this work, in five acts and lasting four or more hours in performance, a work that is *not* – we should stress – the product of Portuguese authorship.³ The first Act opens in the Hall of the Admiralty Council in Lisbon, where Vasco da Gama is awaited after a long absence by his beloved Inès, the daughter of Don Diégo, the Admiral of Portugal. She sings, in soprano, to her companion Anna, of Vasco's last adieu to her before departing the banks of the Tagus ('Adieu, mon beau rivage'), and, in at least one version, adds:

It is for me that Vasco, seeking glory,
 shares the travails of Diaz, a sailor grand,
 Battling both the winds and the waves,
 he sails with him in search of new-found lands.
 My hand will be the prize of his victory,
 By love protected, Vasco triumphant shall stand.

But having accompanied his master Bernard Diaz – a composite figure, made up in equal parts of the navigator Bartolomeu Dias

² G. Meyerbeer–E. Scribe, *L'Africaine: Opéra en cinq actes* (Paris, 1865), Act V, Morceau 15, 'Grand Air de Vasco'. All translations cited here are mine, from the French libretto. For a good summary description of the opera, see Steven Huebner, 'Africaine, L' ("The African Maid")', in Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, Vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 31–3. For a detailed discussion, John Howell Roberts, 'The Genesis of Meyerbeer's "L'Africaine"', PhD dissertation, Department of Music (Berkeley, University of California, 1977).

³ My account is based on a video recording of the performance of the San Francisco Opera, conducted by Maurizio Arena, and directed by Lotfi Mansouri. Vasco da Gama was played by Plácido Domingo, Sélika by Shirley Verrett, Inès by Ruth Ann Swenson, and Nélusko by Justino Diaz. The recording was broadcast by KQED TV, San Francisco, and produced by RM Arts (1989).

who turned the Cape of Good Hope in 1487, and the warrior-chronicler Bernal Díaz del Castillo who was with Cortés in Mexico – we learn soon after that Vasco da Gama has suffered shipwreck on a distant desert island. Some in Lisbon are gleeful, thinking him dead, and Inès quite naturally is despondent. But three-fourths of the way to the end of the act, matters take a dramatic turn for the better, as Vasco da Gama returns, bringing with him the Indo-African Queen of the opera's title, Sélika, and her servant Nélusko in tow, having purchased them both at a slave mart, after they had been captured on the high seas. Vasco meets, however, with a disappointing reception, largely on account of the machinations of the villainous Don Pédro, who himself lusts after Inès, whose hand he has been promised by King Emmanuel. Instead of being given ships and men to lead another expedition, Vasco is judged wanting by the ferociously intolerant Grand Inquisitor as well as the Council of State, headed by none other than Don Pédro himself. The sternly ridiculous figure of the Grand Inquisitor with his choir of robed priests reproduces clichés about the priest-ridden character of Iberia, while at the same time confirming the mid-nineteenth-century prejudices of the French bourgeoisie in respect of the Catholic clergy.

In Act II, we hence see Vasco da Gama thrown into an Inquisition prison along with Sélika and Nélusko; and the Queen sings him an Indian lullaby ('Sur mes genoux, fils du soleil') to rest his downcast spirit. Sélika, it has emerged already from broad hints and *sotto voce* asides in the first Act, has fallen in love with Vasco, while her servant Nélusko hates him not only because of *his* own love for the Queen, but because, significantly, Vasco is Christian. Nélusko's restless pagan mind leads him to contemplate killing Vasco, but he eventually is persuaded to desist; while he frets and fumes, Don Pédro swaggers in with Inès, and announces his own appointment to lead an expedition to continue the work of Bernard Diaz, with the aid of the two native informants whom Vasco has brought back, namely Sélika and Nélusko. Worse still, he has persuaded Inès to marry him, in exchange for arranging the release of Vasco from prison.

By Act III, we see the voyage of exploration in full progress; Don Pédro is on board ship in mid-ocean, accompanied by Inès, and guided by an obsequious Nélusko, who however has his own nefarious designs. Indeed, he broadly hints that he intends to wreck the vessel, through his worship of the terrible Adamastor,



Plate 1 Drawing of a set for *L'Africaine* (Act IV) by Charles-Antoine Cambon and Joseph Thierry (1865), showing the great temple in the land discovered by Vasco da Gama.

God of the Tempests, to whom he dedicates the song: 'Adamastor, roi des vagues profondes'. Another nobleman, Don Alvar, who accompanies Don Pédro, has his eye though on Nélusko, and his worst suspicions are confirmed when two of the three vessels in the fleet are lost on account of Nélusko's ill advice. A storm gathers and, at this stage, another vessel (whose sail they have caught sight of from time to time, and which mysteriously and significantly *precedes* them) sends out a boat to Don Pédro's ship. On it arrives Vasco da Gama, who has somehow managed to obtain a ship to command. He informs Don Pédro that he has come to save him, in spite of their mutual hatred, because of his own love for the noble Inès. Don Pédro, ironically sneering, refuses his aid, and they prepare to fight a duel with swords when Adamastor intervenes. There is a terrible storm, and the ship is wrecked on a reef, where natives swarm on board to capture all survivors; in the ensuing confusion Nélusko stabs and kills Don Pédro. We thus find ourselves by Act IV in the exotic land of which Séliska is Queen.

This act, Act IV, then, is the real centrepiece of the opera,

where its exoticism reaches full bloom. The setting is a temple with Indian architecture: to the right there is a palace, and the background is of sumptuous monuments. Priestesses enter, followed by Brahmins, amazons, jugglers, warriors and finally the Queen, Sélïka. The Great Brahmin, High Priest of Brahma, sings to her:

We swear by Brama, by Wischnou, by Shiva,
The Gods whose power Indoustan reveres,
We swear obedience to the daughter of our Kings.

Sélïka is thus back among her own people in an African Hindustan (confusingly also called a great island, and at times identified through the stage directions in Act II with Madagascar), and the tables are definitely turned on the Portuguese. The malevolent Nélusko meanwhile plots to have the Brahmins make a human sacrifice of the Portuguese women survivors and of Vasco da Gama, who is the sole male Portuguese survivor of the storm. The latter, all unsuspecting, enters the scene in his role of Great Discoverer, singing his Grand Air ('O paradis sorti de l'onde') for which the opera is perhaps best known:

Marvellous land, fortunate garden!
Radiant temple, greetings!
O paradise emergent from the waves,
A sky so blue, a sky so pure,
that my eyes are ravished,
You belong to me!
O New World that I would gift to my country!
This vermilion countryside ours,
this rediscovered Eden ours!
O charming treasures, o marvels, greetings!
New World you belong to me
Be mine, mine, so be mine, o lovely land!
New World, you belong to me, so be mine, so
be mine, mine, mine, mine.

The tenor's crescendo ends what is not the most inspired verse, perhaps, but assertive enough in its own unsubtle way of the spirit of the explorer and conquistador that Eugène Scribe wished to depict. Still, Vasco is soon disabused of his happy illusions, and assaulted by murderous Brahmin priests clamouring for his blood ('Du sang! du sang!'); and it is now that he launches his plea to save his claim to immortality, which is, naturally enough, more precious to him than life itself. But Sélïka intervenes to save him,

by falsely claiming to the assembly they are already betrothed; and their marriage is celebrated in style by the Great Brahmin of the temple of Brahma. Indeed, Vasco even discovers, aided by a magical potion that he is given by the Great Brahmin, that he is just a little bit in love with Sélika after all, and refuses her offer to escape. Indians dance, the festivities are on, and it seems that a happy ending of sorts has been achieved.

This is of course illusory, and it remains to play out the tragic finale. East is East, and West after all is West. In Act V, Vasco discovers that Inès has survived the massacre of the Portuguese women, and meets her secretly in the palace garden. Sélika discovers them in conversation, and is initially furious and vengeful. But realising that she cannot intervene in the inevitable course of their romance, she eventually lets them go to their ships, accompanied on the way by a happily relieved Nélusko. She herself now mounts a promontory, with a view over the sea, in the second part of Act V. Breathing the fumes of a poisonous manchineel tree conveniently perched atop the hill, she swoons, singing a farewell to Vasco. At this juncture, Nélusko returns, to find her half-dead, and offers to die with her too. He sings:

O heavens, her hand is cold and icy,
It is death, it is death, it is death!

She replies:

No, it is happiness!
Here is the rest of eternal love!
Here is the rest of a pure love!

Vasco da Gama has meanwhile sailed away to Portugal, where glory and immortality no doubt await him. Don Pédro has died in the shipwreck, and Vasco's romance with the widowed Inès can be brought to its happy conclusion. Tragic though the end is for the African Queen (*L'Africaine*) Sélika, the optimistic celebration of Europeans' exploration of a world that had been to them, hitherto, unknown, remains essentially intact. Hardly in the same literary league as *The Tempest*, the logic of *L'Africaine* entirely lies in its use of stock operatic characters and exoticist tropes, with the Inquisition-ridden Portuguese as much as the Indo-Africans being used to provide theatrical colour. Above all, it is laden with the suggestion that despite all romantic yearnings to the contrary, East and West are destined never to make a happy marriage; Vasco must find his true love with Inès.

The Vasco da Gama of Scribe-Meyerbeer may appear at first sight to have little to do with the Vasco da Gama whose career we shall explore in the remainder of this work. The spectator of the opera sees him as a patriot, an intrepid explorer, a romantic and chivalrous hero, whom women the world over pine for. Contrasted to this dashing (and rather egotistical) masculine spirit is Sélíka (a distortion of Zulaikha, from the classical Persian romance-tradition), who in a somewhat curiously tragic mode represents the lands that Vasco is destined to discover. Now, significantly, Scribe's remaining cast of characters draws in good measure on a particular source: the sixteenth-century work of the Portuguese national poet, Luís Vaz de Camões (1524–80), titled *Os Lusíadas*.⁴ This makes perfect sense, for Scribe had earlier written the libretto for Gaetano Donizetti's *Dom Sébastien, roi de Portugal* (1843), where one of the major characters besides the ill-fated Portuguese monarch was Camões himself. For *L'Africaine*, Scribe used his source loosely, with a certain abandon even. Thus, the villainous Don Pédro's name is almost certainly derived from that of the Portuguese king Dom Pedro (1357–67), celebrated for his affair with Inês de Castro (herself surely the source for the name of Vasco's beloved), a romance that is set out in detail by Camões; and above all the figure of Adamastor is clearly and very directly borrowed from Camões, who invented this pagan god to be the great opponent of Vasco da Gama in his epic text. The opera thus built not on conventional historical writings, but on a classicised mythification of the Portuguese discoveries that had already been inherited from the late sixteenth century, in which Vasco da Gama appeared as a figure that was at once larger than life and somewhat two-dimensional.

In retrospect, the success of *L'Africaine* (called *Vasco de Gama, ou le Cap de tempêtes*, in its first performances) may seem a little astonishing. The composer, Giacomo Meyerbeer (born Jakob Liebmann Beer in Berlin in 1791), had died in Paris in 1864 before it could ever be staged; the librettist Scribe had already preceded him from this world in February 1861. The performed version was eventually based on a substantial reworking of Meyerbeer's manuscripts by the celebrated Belgian musicologist François-

⁴ Luís de Camões, *Os Lusíadas*, introduction and notes by Maria Leticia Dionísio (Lisbon, 1985). For useful interpretative works, see António Cirurgião, 'A divinização do Gama de *Os Lusíadas*', *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Português* 26 (1989), 513–38; also Sílvia Maria Azevedo, 'O Gama da História e o Gama d'*Os Lusíadas*', *Revista Camoniana* (N.S.) 1 (1978), 105–44.

Joseph Fétis, who was appointed to the task by Meyerbeer's widow. It was Fétis, incidentally, who changed the opera's name back from *Vasco de Gama* to *L'Africaine*, insisting that the former was too obscure for the French public of the day! Now, Meyerbeer had signed a contract with the Opéra de Paris as early as May 1837 for *L'Africaine*, and a first version of the libretto had been written in the same year by Scribe, who was himself something of a favourite amongst the mid-nineteenth-century French bourgeoisie. This version contains the kernel of the later plot structure, but in fact has no mention of Vasco da Gama. Instead, the setting is Seville in the epoch of Philip III, the hero is Fernand, a young naval officer, and the main love triangle involves him, Inès – daughter of the viceroy of Seville – and Sélika (or Sélica), queen of a kingdom in darkest Africa, near the source of the river Niger. This setting survives in the second, shorter, version, which dates to 1843, and which Meyerbeer actually set to music. By 1849, the composer and the librettist had begun to veer towards India as a possible setting and, in 1850, Meyerbeer finally urged Scribe to take on Vasco da Gama as the central character. In a somewhat revealing letter of 27 October 1851, he wrote to Scribe:

I do not know if I am mistaken, but it seems to me that it would be a good and clear exposition, and at the same time a magnificent musical introduction, to have a solemn meeting of the Portuguese Admiralty, before which Vasco appears to present his plans for the discovery of India, and to ask for vessels and troops. This Council would be presided over by the rival of Vasco (later the husband of Inès). As in all meetings, there would be a division of opinion among the members, each one defends his opinion, but in the end the cabal which is against Vasco triumphs, his projects are declared impracticable, chimerical, the Grand Inquisitor who supervises all the Councils of State, declares that Vasco's opinions on the position of the earth are heretical. Vasco assaults and threatens him, but he is stripped of his posts, and banished; he leaves feeling furious, and declares that he will devote his small private fortune to equip a vessel, and to prove that he is not mistaken.⁵

This is to say that Meyerbeer wished to transform Vasco da Gama into a Columbus-like figure, driven by personal convictions which he presented before an uncomprehending State, hoping for

⁵ Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Département des manuscrits, n.a.fr. 22840, fl. 328r, cited in Roberts, 'Genesis of Meyerbeer's "*L'Africaine*"', pp. 103–4. It is not clear whether Meyerbeer had read some version of João de Barros's *Da Ásia*, as one of his letters to Scribe suggests. Barros could be the source for the composer's notion of a factional struggle in the Portuguese Admiralty on the issue of explorations in Asia.

its support. This is a theme that is somewhat subdued in the final version (in which Columbus does find explicit mention, though) but of a curious and ironic significance, as we shall see at length below.

After its long gestation period of over a quarter-century, in which it was the object of numerous rumours, scandals, and even witticisms in Paris, *L'Africaine* was eventually brought to the stage, and performed in the Opéra de Paris on 28 April 1865.⁶ Its commercial success in the short term was astounding: it was performed 100 times in a year, and had seen 485 performances (an average of nearly seventeen a year) by 1893. Its first American performance at the New York Academy of Music, led by Max Maretzek, was a resounding success. Only in Lisbon was it met with a mixed reaction. The Marquês de Niza, descendant of Vasco da Gama, objected to the frivolous portrayal of his ancestor, and at his insistence the version that played in Lisbon somewhat mysteriously substituted the name of Vasco da Gama with that of Guido d'Arezzo (ca. 990–1050), a Benedictine monk and medieval musicologist of renown.⁷ Since some of the rhymes in the text depend on the word 'Gama', we can only speculate how these might have been resolved.

ON THE BANKS OF THE TAGUS

The operatic text eventually had other resonances in these years. In the troubled political climate of the year 1880, fifteen years after the first production of *L'Africaine*, five years after the foundation of the Portuguese Sociedade de Geografia, and four years after the creation of the Portuguese Republican Party, a great national celebration was held in Lisbon, as also in the other large towns of Portugal. Its ostensible purpose was to commemorate the third centenary of the death of none other than Camões, whose death had coincided with the takeover of Portugal by the Spanish Habsburgs in 1580. Legend had it that the poet, who in fact was a victim of the plague, had bid farewell to the world because he could not bear the thought of his *Pátria* under foreign rule. The challenges of the 1880s gave redoubled weight to this

⁶ A first approach to the opera's evolution may be found in Georges Servières, 'Les transformations et tribulations de *L'Africaine*', *Rivista Musicale Italiana* 34 (1927), 80–99; this has been incorporated though in Roberts, 'Genesis of Meyerbeer's "*L'Africaine*"'.

⁷ D. Maria Telles da Gama, *Le Comte-Amiral D. Vasco da Gama* (Paris: A. Roger and F. Chernoviz, 1902), p. 54.

legend: for even if Portugal was not directly under external threat in these years, her African empire certainly was. Indeed, the Sociedade de Geografia was formed in 1875 – among other reasons – to justify Portugal's historic rights to Angola and Mozambique, and even to the intervening territories in South-Central Africa that separated the two, in the face of challenges from the British, Germans, Belgians and other European powers.⁸

The great ideologue of the celebration of 1880 was the prolific academician, intellectual and journalist Joaquim Teófilo Fernandes Braga (1843–1924), later to serve two brief terms as President of the Portuguese Republic in 1910 and 1915.⁹ Fiercely anti-clerical and also vaguely socialist in his leanings, Teófilo Braga was above all a convinced Portuguese nationalist, who believed that the need of the hour was a regeneration of the Portuguese spirit, to which end the national celebrations could contribute in a significant way. Opposed to him were other republicans of a rather more internationalist colouring, such as Antero de Quental and J.P. Oliveira Martins (the latter himself romantic enough in his own view of history), who saw in the projected celebration 'patriotism reduced to a theatrical sentiment and national life to an opera' (perhaps *L'Africaine?*).¹⁰ Teófilo Braga nevertheless had his way. The central design of the national spectacle that he planned was to move an urn with some of the remains of Camões to the famous Jeronimite monastery on the banks of the Tagus in Lisbon (founded by the king Dom Manuel, in the early sixteenth century), to become an object of national veneration. This would be followed by a public procession on 10 June (the actual anniversary of the death of Camões) in which the earlier glory of Portugal would be contrasted to its present decadence. This would presumably shame the Portuguese nation into action, to defend itself and above all its colonial possessions.

The transformation of Camões into a key symbol for progressive republicans of the late nineteenth century may be curious,

⁸ Cf. António Ferrão, *A Sociedade de Geografia: As suas origens e a sua obra de 50 anos (1875–1925)* (Lisbon: n.d.), a work that I consulted as unbound proofs in the library of the late Alexandre Lobato in Lisbon. I am grateful to Manuel Lobato for permitting access to this work.

⁹ Cf. Teófilo Braga, 'O Centenário de Camões em 1880', *Revista de Filosofia e Positivismo* 2 (1880), 1–9, and for a larger ideological justification, Braga, *Os Centenários como Síntese Afectiva nas Sociedades Modernas* (Oporto: A.T. da Silva Teixeira, 1884). For a useful discussion of the political context of the 1880s celebrations, see Maria Isabel João, 'A festa cívica: O tricentenário de Camões nos Açores (10 de junho de 1880)', *Revista de História Económica e Social* 20 (1987), 87–111.

¹⁰ Oliveira Martins, cited in José-Augusto França, *Le Romantisme au Portugal: Etude de faits socio-culturels* (Paris: Editions Klincksieck, 1975), p. 744.

but it is not without precedent. From the seventeenth century, each generation of Portuguese writers had refashioned Camões in the light of their own needs, and the generation of 1870 to which Teófilo Braga belonged was no exception. To some other Portuguese intellectuals of the epoch, the celebrations represented a window of opportunity of another sort. These were men like Augusto Carlos Teixeira de Aragão (1823–1903), a medical doctor and numismatist, who saw the occasion as one where the importance not only of the poet Camões but of the hero of the *Lusíadas*, Vasco da Gama, could be reaffirmed. Teixeira de Aragão had already helped organise the Portuguese participation in the *Exposition Universelle* at Paris in 1867, and so was an experienced hand at the orchestration of public display and celebration; he had thereafter served in Portuguese India in 1871–2 in a variety of posts, including that of interim Secretary-General. This Goan sojourn gave him a taste for Indo-Portuguese numismatics, but also helped transform him into a convinced worshipper of the legend of Vasco da Gama.

Some necrology may be in order here. After his death at Cochin on 24 December 1524, Vasco da Gama had been buried with honours in that town in the chapel of the monastery of Santo António (later renamed the church of São Francisco). However, his remains were subsequently exhumed and taken back to his properties at Vidigueira in the Alentejo in 1538 by one of his sons, Dom Pedro da Silva Gama. There they remained, for two and a half centuries, in a resting place (the *Jazigo dos Gama*) constructed in the 1590s, with the epitaph (probably from the late seventeenth century): *Here lies the Great Argonaut Dom Vasco da Gama, First Count of Vidigueira, Admiral of the East Indies, and their Famous Discoverer*. But in 1840, the church where he lay buried was vandalised by unknown persons, in the course of the so-called Septemberist disturbances of the epoch. Large parts of its interior had to be reconstructed hastily in 1841, and a few years later a local cleric launched a plea to move the remains to a safer place, namely the Manueline monastery of the Jeronimites at Belém. The matter was not pursued though.

In the early 1870s, a more concerted campaign was launched to the same end, spearheaded by Teixeira de Aragão, by now far and away the leading Gamaphile in Portugal. The still-powerful Marquês de Sá da Bandeira was mobilised, and a committee was formed to look into the matter. The government of the Marquês d'Ávila e Bolama actually agreed to transfer the remains ceremo-

niously, and the Marquês de Niza (direct descendant of the Gamas) gave his assent too. But once more, a change of government frustrated Teixeira de Aragão's intentions. The 1880 Camões campaign thus appeared to him to be the ideal occasion finally to bring his plans to fruition. In April that year, the Academia Real das Ciências gave its support to the move, and later in the same month, royal permission was obtained. Besides Teixeira de Aragão, the ultra-romantic journalist and orator Manuel Pinheiro Chagas (1842–95) was closely associated with the management of the ceremonies.

On 5 June 1880, a committee left for the sleepy Alentejan town of Vidigueira, with the necessary paperwork apparently having been done. The tombstone was raised up and the work of transfer began the next day, but was interrupted by an urgent telegram from the Count of Vidigueira (another descendant of Gama), who demanded that the committee stop its work until he was present. On his arrival, the work was completed in some haste, and the ceremonial cortège, accompanied by cavalry and infantry, set out on the morning of 7 June from the town to Lisbon after the usual speeches and orations had been gone through. The railway station at Cuba was the first stop, and from there the party set out on the morning of 8 June by train, making stops at Alvito and Barreiro, for further speeches and ceremonies. In the latter place, the remains were transferred on board an official river armada, which made its way down the *Mar de Palha* (the Sea of Straw, as the backwaters of the Tagus upriver from Lisbon are called), to a spot where another committee awaited it with the bones of Camões. The two sets of remains were then carried down by river to Belém, where they were met in the late afternoon by a reception committee with various municipal and other dignitaries, members of the Academia Real das Ciências and the Sociedade de Geografia. Martial airs were played by massed military bands, and the cortège then proceeded by stages to the monastery and church of Santa Maria. Here, they were awaited by the King of Portugal, Dom Luís, the Queen and others, and solemn religious ceremonies were conducted. Two days later, the civic procession organised by Teófilo Braga and his associates crowned the affair.¹¹

However, matters soon took on a mildly farcical turn. Teixeira de Aragão, ever the keen researcher, had by 1884 discovered two

¹¹ For a contemporary account, see Manuel Pinheiro Chagas, 'A trasladação dos ossos de Vasco da Gama em 1880', *A Ilustração Portuguesa*, Vol. II, nos. 49–51 (1885–6) (in three parts).