

**The Columbus Letter of February 15, 1493,  
and the Pero Vaz de Caminha Letter  
of May 1, 1500: A Comparison**

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the letter ascribed to Christopher Columbus and addressed to Luis de Sant' Angel, *escribano de ración* of the Catholic Kings,<sup>1</sup> and compare it to the letter that Pero Vaz de Caminha wrote to King Manuel I,<sup>2</sup> to determine the influence the former may have had on the latter. Interest in this study derives from the fact that the Columbus letter, published early in April, 1493, barely a month after Ferdinand and Isabella received Columbus in Barcelona, constitutes the first published news of the discovery of the New World, gained wide distribution, and continued to be the only published account available at the time of the discovery of Brazil by Pedro Alvares Cabral in 1500.<sup>3</sup> Demitrio Ramos has recently argued that the Columbus letter to Sant' Angel was not written by Columbus, but rather was concocted by Fernando of Aragón and Sant' Angel for political purposes in order to strengthen the Catholic Kings' rights of possession to the West in the Ocean Sea against the claims of the Portuguese.<sup>4</sup> For my part, I shall address Columbus as the author, for I would argue that its authorship by Columbus would conform very well to the latter's long history of self-aggrandizing public relations efforts. For the purposes of this paper, however, the fact that the letter was published, revealing "las Yndias" to the western world, is enough.

My procedure will be to analyze the Columbus letter from the point of view of 1) the expedition and its objectives, 2) the land and its people, 3) and compare this data to the information contained in Caminha's letter, since both letters deal with the first European contact with the flora, fauna, minerals and inhabitants of the New World. Finally, I shall seek to determine whether the Caminha carta reveals any foreknowledge of the Columbus letter.

Analysis of the Columbus letter reveals that the purpose of the expedition was to find riches, saleable commodities, and, above all, gold, a precious metal much in demand in Europe at that time. The destination purportedly sought, but not specifically mentioned, was India. What Columbus found was a number of islands that he supposed signaled the periphery of that great amorphous place the travellers, writers and map makers of those days called "las Yndias", some of whose off shore islands appeared on the maps of the time more or less where they were supposed to be, according to Columbus' view, that is to say, to the west of Europe in the Ocean Sea. He expected that Catayo (Japan) would be found to the west, adjacent to and east of the land of the Great Khan (China), where to its south India would be found. In other words, Columbus believed that the distribution and orientation of the world indicated on the maps he knew were relatively correct. He thus thought that he was on the threshold of reaching his objective, and more especially because the island he named Juana (present-day-Cuba) was so large that he first thought it was Catayo, and the one he named Española was so very rich: "Española es maravilla. Española ...es para desear, e vista es para nunca dexar."

Those islands, according to the Columbus letter, constituted a wonderful, Edenic world abounding in all good things whose simple

people were completely untouched by civilization. Some of the islands were larger than England and Scotland combined, he claimed. All were blessed by a pleasant climate, and numerous ports, some of which were large enough to hold all the ships of the known world. There were high mountains and great plains rich in flora, fauna, minerals, and abundant fresh water, ideal for both grazing and farming, and great forests with all manner of trees. All in all, everything was excellent, readily available for the taking, and capable, so Columbus stressed, of providing Spain with everything she might need. And that was not all, it could also do so as well for all Christendom. Columbus specifically mentions mines of gold and other metals, spices, cotton mastic and lignaloe in unlimited quantities. He also believed that there was rhubarb and cinnamon there, as well as "a thousand significant things I shall find, that the people that I leave there will have found." Among those abundant income-producing items Columbus included all the slaves the Catholic Kings might wish to take from among natives who are idolatrous ("y quantos mandaren cargar, e serán de los ydolatras").<sup>5</sup>

Columbus attributed the success of the enterprise, what he called his "great victory," cited in the first line of the text, to the intervention of Providence: "la grand vitoria que Nuestro Señor me ha dado en mi viaje".

The "Carta" by Pero Vaz de Caminha was written on board Pedro Cabral's flagship between April 23 and May 1, 1500.<sup>6</sup> In that letter the king's notary wrote down all that he saw and heard on the armadas' westward sweep from the time seaweed was sighted, suggesting that land was near, until the evening before the fleet departed on the long voyage to round the Cape of Good Hope, continuing on its way to India.<sup>7</sup>

The goal was India. King Manuel the Fortunate was sending Pedro Álvares Cabral to Calicut, a great commercial center in India whose location and richness were already well known through Pedro de Covilhã's reports to King João II in 1491, and very particularly as the result of the historic and spectacular voyage Vasco da Gama had just completed to India in 1498. Therefore, the Portuguese crown, as far as Cabral's armada was concerned, had no interest in China, Japan or, for that matter, the "Indies" of the Ocean Sea.

Brazil, the "Ilha de Vera Cruz", the land Pero Vaz de Caminha described in his "Carta" to Manuel I, was also depicted in Edenic terms. Although the Portuguese were disappointed that it apparently had no gold or minerals of any kind, it did possess mountains and broad plains covered by forests of huge trees, many rivers, good air, an abundant supply of fresh water, and large safe harbors. Since the eyes of the Portuguese were on the spice trade centered in Calicut and on the propagation of the faith in the Orient, the only interest Caminha saw in Brazil's material riches was that it could serve as a useful *pouso* or stopover place for future Portuguese India fleets to take on wood and water before the long journey across the immense South Atlantic to the Cape of Good Hope.

Pero Vaz de Caminha's observations were very objective and he made no reference to anything outside his immediate experience in Brazil as a Portuguese, except to compare the climate of Vera Cruz to that of northern Portugal ("Pero a terra em si é de muito bons ares, frios e temperados como os de Entre-Douro e Minho, porque neste tempo de agora assim os achámos como os de lá") and to liken an old native covered with feathers to Saint Sebastian ("andava por loucancia cheio de penas pegadas pelo corpo, que parecia aseteado como São Sebastião.")

Columbus used vaguer terms when comparing the climate of Española to that of Spain in May, and he made comparisons to other places, including Crete, Chios, and Guinea.

The Columbus expedition found two separate groups of inhabitants: The first lived on the second island at the entrance to the Indies. They had long hair and were said to be ferocious and to eat raw, human flesh, and in their many canoes, rob and pillage the inhabitants of the other islands. They were the ones who had contact with the women "without marriage", who had no feminine activities, used bows and arrows, covered themselves with sheaths of copper, and who inhabited the first island toward Spain, where there were no men.

The vast majority of the natives Columbus found, however, were very different. They were very numerous and are described in the letter as living in a state of Edenic innocence in an idyllic land of plenty, where they went naked ("andán todos desnudos, honbres y mugeres, asy como sus madres les paren"), although some women covered their sex with a leaf-like affair of cotton made for the purpose. So well disposed and pliant were the natives, the letter avers, that they could easily be converted to the Catholic faith and thus gain for the Catholic Kings Heaven's rewards. It also seems implicit, given that so much attention is paid in the letter to the search for riches, that such a people could play a useful role in Spain's economic development. They are depicted as having no sense of personal property and as being perfectly gullible in barter, trading gold and spun cotton for broken and worthless things. The implication is that the Spanish monarchs could ask for nothing more:

Verdad es que después que se aseguran y pierden este miedo,

ellos son tanto sin engaño y tan liberales de lo que tienen que no lo creerían syno el que lo viese. Ellos de cosa que tengan, pidiéndogela, jamás dicen de no, antes conbidan a la persona con ello y muestran tanto amor que darían los coraçones, y quier sea cosa de valor, quier sea de poco preçio, luego por qualquiera cosa de qualquier manera que sea que se le dé, por ello sean contentos.

So much was this true that Columbus felt it necessary to order his men not to take advantage of the natives : "Fasta los pedaços de los arcos rrotos de las pipas tomavan, y davan lo que tenían como bestias; asy que me paresçió mal, yo lo defendí."<sup>5</sup> Caminha used a similar word, calling the natives of Brazil "gente bestial." He did so, not because of their desire to trade their bows and arrows "por qualquier cosa," which they also did, but rather because with that expression he referred to their rudeness or lack of good manners. The latter was demonstrated by the two young Indians who had received gifts from Cabral, and never returned: "Os outros dois que o Capitão teve nas naus, que deu o que ja dito hei, nunca mais aqui apareceram, de que tiro ser gente bestial e de pouco saber, e por isso são assim esquivos." It is interesting to note that, although both letters refer to the lack of bartering savvy of the natives, it was Caminha, the royal notary accustomed to the etiquette of the court, who called attention to their lack of "good manners". This was the only occurrence in which Caminha made a less than complimentary remark about any of the natives. On the contrary, he lauded them over and over again. Although Columbus called them cowards because they did not use their bows and arrows (as we shall see later), he generally made an effort to gain their good will: "A todo cabo aonde

yo aya estado e podido aver fabla, les he dado de todo lo que tenía, así paño como otras coisas muchas, syn rresçibir por ello cosa alguna.”

Later he says:

Y dava yo graçiosas mill cosas buenas que yo llevaba porque tomen amor; y allende desto se farán xptianos, que se ynclinan al amor y serviçio de sus altesas y de toda la naçion castellana; e procuran de ayuntar e nos dar de las cosas que tienen en abundançia que nos son neçessarias.

The Portuguese found the natives of the Ilha de Vera Cruz equally skittish and also sought their good will:

Abasta que ate aqui como quer que se eles em alguma parte amansassem, logo de uma mao para a outra se esquivam como pardais de cevadoiro e homem nao lhes ousa de falar rijo, por se mais nao esquivarem e tudo se passa como eles querem, pelos bem amansar.

Unlike the Spaniards, the Portuguese took no prisoners. Cabral convened the council of captains (Pero Vaz de Caminha also attended), and it was agreed that no natives were to be taken prisoner, inasmuch as it would be more efficient to leave two Portuguese exiles there to learn the native tongue:

(...) porque geral costume era dos que assim levavam por força para alguma parte dizerem há ali tudo o que lhe perguntam; e que melhor e muito melhor informação da terra dariam dois

homens destes degredados que deixasse, do que eles dariam se os levassem, por ser gente que ninguém entende.

It was further decided that nothing should be done to upset the natives so that they would remain completely tame and peaceful: "(...) e que portanto, não curassem aqui por força tomar ninguém nem fazer escândalo, para os de todo mais amansar e pacificar." All in all, the reasoning seems very logical, very modern, that is to say, Renaissance in character, and in conformity with Caminha's own respect for the natives and open-minded attitude concerning the novelty of the New World he was witnessing.

Columbus gave the natives high praise for their intelligence and skill as sailors and as builders of canoes, noting that they knew the islands well, ranged in trade over all of them, and had canoes that could hold up to eighty rowers, which they could propel at incredible speeds ("...que no es de creer"), even faster than a *fusta*, he claims. This is the first published reference to the New World word, *canoe*, and, although eight years had passed since the word *canoa* had been put into circulation, Caminha continued to use the Portuguese word of Arabic origin, *almadia*, to describe the dugout canoe he saw in Brazil. On the other hand, Caminha was the first to record the description of a *jangada*, the characteristic native craft of the Brazilian Northeast still in use today.

Aside from the cannibals mentioned above, Columbus described the natives as "gente bien dispuesta y de hermosa estatura," declaring that

"no he hallado mostrudos como muchos pensavan; mas antes es toda gente de muy lindo acatamento; ni son negros como en

Guinea, salvo con sus cabellos correndios, y no se crian adonde ay ímpeto demasiado de los rrayos solares."

I deduce that the men wear their hair short, inasmuch as the latter distinguishes those who are cannibals, who wear it long like women, as I mentioned earlier.

Columbus calls these natives peaceful, their only arms being bows and arrows, which they do not dare to use: "No tienen otras armas, salvo las armas de las cañas quando están con la simiente," and, since they have no iron or steel, "a la qual ponen al cabo un palillo agudo," but they are cowardly and "no osan usar de aquellas." Caminha does not see the natives in the same way. He notes that their "arcos são pretos e compridos e as setas compridas e os ferros deles são canas aparadas," made no mention of cowardice on the part of the natives who were encountered in groups of two or three up to three or four hundred, and were almost always armed with bows and arrows. The fact that he mentioned bows and arrows twenty-five times in the eight folios of his letter seems to suggest, if not patently demonstrate, that the Portuguese were more than a little worried about the potential danger to them by such a concentration of fire power, a fear demonstrated also by the fact that the Portuguese were always at pains to ask them to lay down the bows and arrows. Caminha pointed out, however, that the natives never used them.

When Columbus described the Navidad fort he caused to be built on Española from his flagship, the "Santa María," that had gone aground, he vowed that, should the natives turn against the small compliment of well armed and well provisioned men he had left there, the latter would be "capable of destroying the whole land."<sup>8</sup> This

statement again repeats a disdainful attitude toward the arms and virility of the Indians. Initially, he found them so fearful and skittish ("con la gente [de Juana] no podia aver fablas, porque luego fuian todos"; "son temerosos a maravilla"; "como ya he dicho son los mas temerosos que ay en el mundo"; "fuyan a no aguardar padre a hijo") that it was almost impossible to communicate with them. Columbus found little diversity among the inhabitants of the islands he visited with respect to their build, their language or their customs, but, strangely, he registered amazement that they all understood each other. For these reasons, and because he thought the natives well disposed to accept Catholicism, he hoped that the Catholic Kings would see to their conversion: "para lo que espero que determinarán sus altezas para la conversación dellos de nuestra santa fe, a la qual son muy dispuestos."

Caminha gave considerable emphasis to religious matters, while Columbus did not. We should note that, whereas Columbus had no priest aboard his boats, Cabral had a number of religious personnel with him, for, in addition to establishing trade and coincidentally punishing the Muslims for their violent attack on Vasco da Gama's ships in the harbor at Calecut, one of the principal purposes of his expedition was to proselytize. During the weeks' stay, two masses were said: the first on Easter Sunday and the second on Friday, May first, the armada's last day in Brazil. On this latter occasion, following the sermon, Father Henrique sat at the foot of the cross and distributed some forty of the tin crucifixes "que trazia Nicolau Coelho...que lhe ficaram da outra vinda".<sup>9</sup> Caminha also suggested to King Manuel I that the best thing that could be done with the Ilha de Vera Cruz, apart from its being an excellent layover place for future armadas, as we noted earlier, would be to convert the natives: "Pero o melhor fruto que

nela se pode fazer me parece que será salvar esta gente. E esta deve ser a principal semente que Vossa Alteza en ela deve lançar."

Columbus took some Indians by force on the first island that he encountered, "para que deprendiesen y me diesen notiçia de lo que avia en aquellas partes", and thus it was that "luego entendieron y nos a ellos, quando por lengua o señas." In that way he learned that the natives had "ninguna secta ni ydolatría salvo que todos creen que las fuerças y el bien es en el çielo." Columbus asserts that those natives believed that he and his armada came from Heaven: "creyan muy firme que yo con estos navynos e gente venía del çielo" and, finding that credulity very useful, he always took them with him when entering villages, where they would cry, "'Venit a ver la gente del çielo.'" According to Columbus, once the natives' fear of the foreigners had dissipated, they would all come out of their houses and villages to offer gifts of food and drink, "que davan con un amor maravylloso".

Columbus referred to the natives of the Indies as "men," "women," "persons," or "people," indicating that he was free from any theological problem in their regard, but in the letter he also called them "Indians" (*indios*) on four occasions, the first direct use of the term with reference to the natives of the New World. Caminha's remarks are much the same, calling them "men," "women," and "people," but there is no thought at all in Caminha's mind of relating the natives of the Ilha de Vera Cruz to "las Yndias," that figured on contemporary maps, or to India itself, which the Portuguese knew perfectly well they were not near and knew, moreover, how to reach. Columbus stressed that he neither found nor heard of monsters on the voyage, alluding, presumably, to the statements in Marco Polo, Mandeville and other medieval accounts, but he nevertheless contradicted himself when he wrote that

he had heard tell of an island inhabited by cannibals, of an island of women only, of one with "persons" without hair, and of another with "people" with a tail.

The Indians had no socio-political-religious structures, as far as Columbus could determine, therefore he thought they could readily be converted to Christianity, as we mentioned before. Columbus may have been thinking of the difficulties that the Muslims and the Jews had been recently posing for the Catholic Kings, inasmuch as both groups, unlike the New World natives, had well established doctrines, venerable holy books, and a functional hierarchy to stiffen their resistance to conversion. Caminha made a similar observation about the natives' lack of social organization and religion, noting that "*esta gente é boa e de boa simplicidade e imprimir-se-a ligeiramente qualquer cunho que lhes quiserem dar,*" demonstrations of which he was often able to observe, such as during the two religious services, when many natives imitated the actions of those attending mass.

While Columbus does not specify the color of the race of men he encountered in the Indies, simply noting they were not as dark as the men of Guinea (suggesting a belief in geographical determinism, for he refers to the Indies' higher latitude as the reason), Caminha called them "*pardos, maneira de avermelhados,*" without making any comparison to peoples of other regions or climates. Columbus was not able to determine whether they hold all property in common, but he observed that it seemed so, especially in the case of food ("*...me parecia ver que aquello que uno tenia todos hazian parte, en espeçial de las cosas comederas*"). Although Caminha did not mention the concept, he did allude, albeit indirectly, to community property in his description of the natives' huge, one-room, thatched houses in which some thirty or forty

people were communally housed.

Columbus referred to women several times but he did not single them out for description. We infer, as we noted earlier, that they wear their hair long. He thought monogamy to be the rule among the Indians (except for the chief, whom they give up to twenty women), and it seemed to him the women worked more than the men. Caminha, unlike Columbus, described the natives in considerable detail, both men and women: how they painted themselves, how they wore their hair, the shape of their noses, and their fine features, including their total nudity and lack of body hair; he described how the men wore short hair and had lip plugs. He also referred specifically to the genitalia of both sexes and to the fact that the men, like the Portuguese, were not circumcised.<sup>10</sup>

E uma daquelas moças era toda tinta, de fundo acima daquela tintura, a qual certo era tão bem feita e tão redonda a sua vergonha — que ela no tinha — tão graciosa, que a muitas mulheres de nossa terra, vendo-lhe tais feições, fizera vergonha, por não terem a sua como ela. Nenhum deles não era fanado mas todos assim como nos.

In spite of what Caminha considered the natives' deficient, non-European diet, he nevertheless was so struck by their admirable physical fitness in comparison to the Portuguese, that he wrote:

Eles não lavram nem criam, nem há aqui boi, nem vaca, nem cabra, nem ovelha, nem galinha, nem outra nenhuma alimaria que acostuada seja ao viver dos homens. Nem comem senão

desse inhame, que aqui há muito, e dessa semente e frutas que a terra e as árvores de si lançam. E com isto andam tais e tão rijos e tão nédios que o não somos nós tanto, com quanto trigo e legumes comemos.

Columbus' letter makes clear that he intended to go straight to China/India, with no original intention of making any discoveries. To support that thesis, note that he took no criminals to be left in new lands, as had long been the custom of the Portuguese in their explorations, to learn the native languages, and he carried with him no stone markers to visibly establish his sovereigns' rights to his possible discoveries. He took possession of the islands he encountered with pomp, "*con pregón y vanderá real estendida*," but internal evidence suggests that he did so almost on the run, such was his haste to reach the rich lands of his objective. This thesis is further supported by the fact, as mentioned earlier, that there was no mention on Columbus' expedition of priests or members of religious orders on board, as Cabral had, to minister to the spiritual needs of his men or to engage in proselytization once they had reached their destination. On this occasion, the Portuguese expedition didn't carry stone markers either, but it did carry exiles to be conveniently left along the way to learn native languages. Caminha described the construction of the wooden cross that was set up, how it was carried in procession accompanied by the singing priests and other religious personnel, how it was planted with pomp, "*com as armas e a divisa de Vossa Alteza, que lhe primeiro pregaram*", as well as how the altar was prepared at its foot. We also know that the mass was said by Padre Frei Henrique on that solemn occasion.

In conclusion, while Columbus and Caminha agree that the peoples

they found were well disposed to be converted to Christianity, Caminha had no thought of enslaving them, as is suggested in Columbus' letter. He saw them simply as willing hands in replenishing the supplies of future India-bound fleets. Both letters convey the idea that their respective monarchs would gain the rewards of Heaven by converting the natives to Christianity. Columbus lays great stress on the debt owed to Providence for his discoveries. Caminha also credits Providence, but without emphasis.

Some of the differences between the two letters can clearly be attributed to the difference in 1) the length of stay in the new lands: Cabral's was limited to about a week, whereas Columbus ranged through the Caribbean islands for about three months; 2) the perspective: Caminha was a passenger, and according to my reading, with no official responsibilities concerning the voyage, while Columbus was the commander of an expedition and responsible for complying with the objectives of his voyage to his sovereigns; and 3) those objectives: The Columbus letter announces a great discovery (however wrong he was about what it was he had discovered) to establish Spain's rights of legal possession. Caminha's letter, on the other hand, was a quasi social letter of information to his king to which, moreover, he appended a personal petition regarding his banished son-in-law. These differences are reflected in the content of the letters.

To make up for the failure of his quest to reach Catayo, Columbus seemed to assume a formal yet impassioned egocentric tone and dashed about taking possession of new lands while looking for gold and other profitable products to validate his voyage. Secondly, his hyperbolic, covetous description of the Indies, especially of the Island of Española, and of the exotic nature, innocence, and pliability of the

inhabitants he encountered, is tinged with commercialism and a lack of humanity. The Portuguese, too, were on the lookout for gold, silver and other precious metals, but Caminha noted that the Ilha de Vera Cruz offered them none. Caminha's account of the flora, fauna and material resources is straightforward and realistic, his tone is informal, even humorous at times, and his anthropologically detailed descriptions of the natives are those of a curious, tolerant, objective eye-witness, whose admiration and acceptance of the inhabitants of the Ilha de Vera Cruz is virtually boundless.

In short, the Columbus letter is egocentric in tone and eminently political and economical in its import, whereas Caminha's letter is personal in tone and thoroughly objective and humanistic in its thrust. In spite of the antecedence and wide dissemination of the Columbus 1493 letter, the similarities between the two letters describing the discovery of new lands in the New World can be clearly attributed, not to any influence the Christopher Columbus letter might have had on Pero Vaz de Caminha, but rather only to the intrinsic similarities of the two parts of America they described—lush, semi-tropical lands inhabited by peaceful, primitive peoples. I conclude that there is no evidence that Caminha had any knowledge of the Columbus letter.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The letter known as the Letter to Luis de Sant' Angel was first published in Barcelona in Spanish in the Talleres of P. Posa in the early part of April, 1493, and subsequently received immediate wide distribution in Italian and Latin.

The only extant copy of the first edition is in the New York Public Library. Although it registers slight differences, I shall cite from the Simancas manuscript (Archivos Generales de Simancas (Sección de Estado, 1-2, fol. 164-165), presuming it to antedate the Barcelona publication. See Demitrio Ramos, *La "Carta de Colón" sobre el descubrimiento: La primera noticia de América*. Valladolid: Casa-Museu de Colón, Seminario Americanista de la Universidad de Valladolid, 1986; transcription, 119-138); fac-simile, 141-143. I shall base my study on Ramos' transcription.

<sup>2</sup> Caminha's letter was not published until some three centuries after the discovery of Brazil; see Aires de Casal, "Corografia Brasílica" in *Geografia do Reino do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Régia, 1817.

<sup>3</sup> The earliest subsequent publication pertaining to Columbus' first voyage was by Pedro Mártir de Angleria, who published volume one of his *Decades* in 1511.

<sup>4</sup> Demitrio Ramos, 5-117, especially, 114-117.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, at that moment none of them were Christians! It would therefore be legitimate to understand this to mean that the Catholic Kings might well order the entire native population into captivity, a far richer prize, of course, than the relatively few Guanches and Muslims they had enslaved in the Canary Islands, in Granada or in northwestern Africa, respectively.

<sup>6</sup> The dates assigned to events at that time conform to the Julian calendar then in force. The Gregorian calendar, which was adopted in Christian countries in 1582, now places the Julian dates 13 days earlier than our dates today. Caminha's letter was returned, along with others, from the Brazilian landfall on May 1, 1500, on the supply ship that on Cabral's orders carried the news of the discovery to Lisbon. Only extant are Caminha's, the one written at the same time and in the same place concerning navigational matters (including a depiction of the constellation of the Southern Cross) by Mestre João, who called himself "físico e cirurgião de Vossa Alteza," and the short "Relação do Piloto Anônimo", translated into the Venetian dialect and published in 1507, containing some astronomical observations.

<sup>7</sup> For a more complete analysis of the Caminha "Carta," see my "A 'Carta' de Pero Vaz de Caminha, Revista", forthcoming in the *Proceedings of the Colóquio sobre Literatura de Viagens e Descobrimientos Portugueses*, Lisboa, Universidade de Lisboa, November, 1988. In that study I have pointed out that Caminha saw the New World from four perspectives: 1) the search for riches, inasmuch as the immediate objective of Cabral's expedition was economic, to wrest the spice trade from the hands of the Muslims in India; 2) the dissemination of the faith, for Manuel I continued the ideals of the crusades so that maritime expansion went hand in hand with proselytism; 3) the fertility, beauty and the abundance

of the new land, comparing it to regions of Portugal; and, finally, 4) the natives of the newly discovered land, whom Caminha described in considerable physical and moral detail, emphasizing their fine appearance and excellent health, their Edenic innocence and skittishness, and their eager generosity and readiness to be of service.

<sup>8</sup> This disdain for the nonbellicose nature of the natives and their paltry ironless arms, and his optimism concerning the Spaniard's superiority in science and armament turned out to be unwarranted. As we know, on his return to Fort Navidad on his second voyage, Columbus found it destroyed and the well equipped garrison he had left there slaughtered.

<sup>9</sup> This matter-of-fact comment would presumably derive from a desire to differentiate male Christians of the time from Muslims and Jews in respect to that particular.

<sup>10</sup> Could the use of the noun, "vinda," suggest in this case that well-known and experienced pilot in African west coast exploration, Nicolau Coelho, had come to Brazilian shores on an earlier voyage? In the fleet of Gama's first voyage to India, Coelho had commanded a *caravela*.