

Santa Helena, A Forgotten Portuguese Discovery

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It is a pleasure to contribute to a volume in honour of Dr L A Oliveira Ramos at the crest of a long career of service to history and to the University of Oporto. Although in a short article I cannot do justice to the diversity of his accomplishments, I hope that in sending this article on a neglected aspect of the Discoveries I may both testify my esteem for him and repay him the debt I owe to Oporto historians of other generations, notably Duarte Leite and Damiao Peres.

1.

The island of St Helena in the South Atlantic, at 15 58" south, lies 1913 km west of Angola and 3284 km east of Brazil, a speck in the ocean not now often heard of, though its name is familiar everywhere as the place of exile of Napoleon Bonaparte from 1815 until his death in May 1821. It can hardly be called the seat of an emperor, though in the great days of steam navigation it was much visited, by more than a thousand ships in 1859. This number had dwindled to forty in 1937. Its capital Jamestown is hardly more than a large village. It was vacant in 1659, when it became England's second overseas island colony. But its discovery was certainly Portuguese and it had at least one Portuguese colonist in the 16th century, by name Fernao Lopes, who first appears in India in 1510 and is said by Gaspar Correa to have died in 1546. In April 1536 the Spaniard Andres Urdaneta was at St Helena and recorded 'a Portuguese hermit, but no other people whatever'.

My attention was drawn to St Helena by Mr B W Rowlands, author of a scientific and well-produced book on *The Birds of St Helena* (British Ornithologists' Union 1998). Mr Rowlands had added an appendix, No ix, headed 'Fernao Lopes, the First Settler on St Helena, and who probably introduced Pigs and Goats'. Mr Rowlands was fascinated by the extraordinary story of Fernao Lopes and has gone in search of further evidence about him, including a visit to the Vatican's secret archives, but the main source remains Gaspar Correa's chronicle or *Lendas da India*, which remained unpublished until 1838-1860. He was one of the secretaries of Afonso de Albuquerque and records in plain language what he saw and heard. He also wrote summaries of the reigns of Kings Manuel and John III, which remained unpublished until the edition of Dr Jose Pereira da Costa in 1992. The *Lendas* were at least revised after 1560 and the author probably died in 1565. The reference to Fernao Lopes' death in 1546 implies that this part was revised after that date, or long after the events described. No precise dates are given, and there is some garbling: at one point Fernao Lopes is alone like Robinson Crusoe, and at another he has a native servant or Man Friday. In brief, when Albuquerque left India to conquer Malacca, the fort of Benasterim which guarded access to the island of Goa was overrun and surrendered. When Albuquerque returned, he mustered his men and cannon and laid siege to Benasterim. It resisted for nearly a month, when Rassul Khan asked for terms, making the condition that the Portuguese who had surrendered to him should keep their lives. This Afonso de Albuquerque accepted, through his negotiator and interpreter Joao Machado. But Lopes and one Peroannes, regarded as traitors and renegades, were horribly mutilated, their noses and ears being cut off and their right hands amputated. They were then released. One of those who survived was Tedreannes

of the hands', who devoted himself to good works by helping the clergy to bury the dead and died in the time of Dom Nuno da Cunha (1529-38). Another was Fernao Lopes 'who did not want to come with Joao Machado' and boarded a ship for Portugal, having a wife and children in Lisbon: when the ship called at St Helena for water, he hid, and as he could not be found, the crew left a barrel of biscuit and meat and some clothes before sailing on.

So far, Gaspar Correa. Afonso de Albuquerque in a letter to King Manuel (Gavetas, V, 1965, No 3699), shows that King Manuel had ordered those who had joined the Moors' to be pardoned. Albuquerque explains that most had come back with Machado while he was at Malacca: 'se tornaram alguns e dous deles se tornaram arrependers outra vez'. He had given them arrears of pay and clothes, and informed those who were still away of the pardon. He points out that if they were not punished they would think they could go and come as they pleased. This is dated from the Santo Antonio on the way to Goa, October 26 1517, when Albuquerque had been dead for almost two years.

By this time it was obviously well known that water and shelter were to be found at St Helena for ships coming back from Goa and Sofala. Correa says that Lopes' crew-mates left him a letter that when the next ship came he should emerge to get what he needed. This is told under the year 1515 (vol 2, p 316, ch xxxix, of M Lopes de Almeida's edition, Oporto 1975). When then was St Helena discovered and found to be of value?

There is no contemporary record of the discovery of the island, though it is said that it was discovered by Joao da Nova, who sailed from Lisbon in 1501 and returned in 1502. There is no record of the discovery before (and including) the voyage of Bartolomeu Dias who first rounded the Cape at the end of 1487 and early 1488. The Cape Verde Islands were well known, and Sao Tome and Principe, only 120 miles offshore, were settled. Dias had no reason to look for islands in the midst of the South Atlantic, but set out to do what he did. Vasco de Gama's fleet of four ships (or three and a supply ship) resembled that of Dias. It was perhaps not expected that East Africa would be covered in one bound when West Africa had needed several, but Gama was fortunate enough to find a pilot and reached India. The great news was brought to Lisbon by Nicolau Coelho on July 10 1499: Gama himself lingered at the Azores where his brother died, and arrived only in September. He had lost perhaps half of his company. The *Diario* of Alvaro Velho records no land between the Cape Verdes, on August 1, and November 4 when a fine bay was found 'a qual puseram nome Santa Helena'. It had nothing to do with the island. Usually new lands were named after the saint on whose feast they were discovered or from some natural feature. There are three feasts of St Helena: St Helen virgin on April 15; St Helena queen and mother of the Emperor Constantine on May 22; and St Helena empress on August 18. There is no feast of St Helena anywhere near November, though the *Diark* gives correctly All Saints, St Simon and Jude, St Catherine and on the return the Conception and St Lucy. Sixty leagues beyond the fine bay was the Angra de Sao Bras, which Alvaro Velho does not claim because Dias had found it on St Blaise's day or February 3. Ships carried calendars, now probably usually printed, though perhaps not all identical, and it is not at once obvious why St Helena's bay, where Gama was from November 4 to 16 got its name. Eric Axelson says that Dias had not seen the bay because he had passed that section of the coast out at sea (*South-East Africa, 1488-1530*, 36).

Gama had found the way to India, but had also found Muslims. A trading-castle like the Mina in West Africa would have to be defended. The second fleet to India consisted of thirteen ships and was entrusted to Pedro Alvares Cabral, the son of the governor of Guarda on the central frontier, of a military family that prided itself on its loyalty. He was probably given a thousand men, many of them soldiers. He lost one of the ships with all hands off the Cape Verdes, and sailing well to the west discovered central Brazil at Easter, April 22 1500. If he had spent another day searching for the lost ship Brazil might have been named after St George, the patron saint of Lisbon. They coasted a little and took a good look at the inhabitants. On May 1 Pero Vaz de Caminha wrote his famous letter sent from the isle of the Holy Cross', the name being associated with the discovery of the True Cross by St Helen, the mother of Constantine, an event commemorated on May 3. Cabral's instructions were to get to India, not to explore, and following Gama's advice, he struck across the Atlantic from central Brazil to the Cape of Good Hope. It was a vast journey, out of sight of land, so far as we know. If his ships sighted either Ascension or St Helena, they did not report it. But four

more ships were lost off the stormy Cape, so that [^]ve ships were lost and one sent back before Cabral reached India. If Cabral began as a military commander, he was forced to adopt diplomacy as his weapon. They had achieved more than was required of them by discovering Brazil, and if they had discovered an uninhabited island they would probably not have stopped.

Only two of Cabral's losses were known in Lisbon, but preparations were made for a third expedition, of four ships under the command of Joao da Nova, a Galician who had been deputy governor of Lisbon. He sailed in mid-March 1501. No diary such as Alvaro Velho's exists. A tradition expressed by Joao de Barros and so repeated by Damiao de Gois credits Joao de Nova with the discovery of Ascension and St Helena. Duarte Leite pointed out that Barros named Ascension as Conception. But the feast of the Conception is on December 8, and Joao da Nova was not then in the Atlantic. It is supposed that Barros wrote Conception for Ascension and that Gois followed him. Joao da Nova returned to Lisbon in September 1502, and the 'Cantino map' was executed between his return and November 4, when the Italian Alberto Cantino informed Duke Hercules of Ferrara from Rome that he had paid twenty gold ducats for it. It was discovered at Modena, where it now is, and is one of the great achievements of Portuguese cartography. It shows Ascension, correctly named, in its correct place, but does not show or name St Helena. The Cantino map is contemporary, and Barros, writing half a century later, is mistaken. The Ascension is not a saint's day, but a moveable feast falling thirty-nine days after Easter, in 1501 on May 20 and in 1502 on May 13. Duarte Leite, with his knowledge of winds and sailing-speeds, thought a departure from Lisbon in mid-March with a touch at northern Brazil must be incompatible with a sighting of both islands in the month of May, (*Descobrimentos, Colectanea*, J 63, II, 1962-3). He was sure that Ascension was sighted either on May 13 1501 or on the return on May 5 1502, as recorded on Cantino's map. But Ascension is 1296 km from St Helena, a distance which could not be covered in a few days. It seemed therefore that Ascension was sighted on the outward journey and St Helena on the return. Damiao Peres (*Historia dos descobrimentos*, Oporto, 1943, 448) pointed out a rectification by Fontoura da Costa which placed Ascension on May 20 1501, but considered the absence of St Helena from the Cantino map as proof that it was not discovered by Joao da Nova, Duarte Leite had supposed that the expedition had touched northern Brazil, of which there was no proof: if not, he would have had more sailing-time at his disposal. But the Ramusio compilation contains a report by Tome Lopes, who sailed as scribe with Estevao da Gama on the return from India on April 11 1503: he states that on July 30 1503 they sighted an unknown island described in terms that leave no doubt that it was St Helena. It was 200 leagues from Ascension, 600 from the Cape, 380 from Sao Tome and 680 from Maio', etc. Tome Lopes would not have heard of the discovery of Ascension in the previous year until he reached Lisbon where he wrote this account. Thus St Helena was sighted, but not named, on July 30 1503.

2.

For the earliest sketch of St Helena - it can hardly be called a map - we must look to the *Livro de Valentim Fernandes*, the German printer who arrived in Lisbon from Seville in 1495 and died there in 1519. He brought fine type and was a man of some letters who served as adviser to members of the German community in Lisbon. He sent information about the Discoveries to the geographer Conrad Peutinger of Munich, where his manuscript still is. It was edited by A Baiao in 1940 and in a much better transcription by Dr Jose Pereira da Costa published by the Portuguese Academy of History in 1997. The book is a miscellany, bound up in Germany. It is undated, but opens with an account of Ceuta and the West African coast bearing the date 1507, with internal references to a revolt at Safi in 1506 and an appointment in 1507. There follows a section on the 'ylhas do Mar Oceano' beginning with lists of the Azores, Madeira, Canaries, Cape Verdes and Sao Tome, Principe and Anno Bom. The descriptions begin with the Canaries, and Sao Tome is headed by a declaration that Valentim Fernandes wrote it in December 1505 from Goncalo Piriz, seaman, who had often visited it and other islands. The only reference in the text to St Helena is at the end in a list of the Cape Verdes, Sao Tome, Principe, Fernao do Poo, Anno Bom, Ascencam and Sancta Elena. The verso is blank, followed by the sketch-maps. The next section starts with a note on an expedition to

Arzila begun at 6pm on November 2 1508. There follow extracts from 62 chapters of Azurara's Guinea, 20 pages in Latin on the finding of Guinea, Madeira and the Azores, and a rutter for mariners from the Berlengas to the Scillies. Lastly is an account of the voyage of Dom Francisco de Almeida, the first Viceroy of India, which left Lisbon on March 25 1505 and carried one Hans Mayr as scrivener of the factory. It crossed the Line, sailed out towards Brazil and rounded the Cape on July 2, with no mention of islands beyond Cape Verde.

Some of Valentim Fernandes' sketch-maps give only outlines of the lesser islands, with the appropriate name. But Sao Tome has several toponyms including the povoacao with 200 vizinhos: the text lists more natural features. Ascension and St Helena are on a separate sheet with only the name. Ascension is shown as a triangle with blobs for outliers, but the representation of St Helena is purely schematic, a square placed level on an axis with equal semicircular bites on each side representing bays or inlets. In fact, St Helena is a hunchbacked globule without reference to the cardinal points. For Valentim St Helena was a name: it had been sighted but that was all. If Goncalo Piriz was the informant in December 1506, he knew that St Helena had been named, but little more. As to the sketch-maps, Alberto Cantino may have obtained his map clandestinely, but in November 1504 King Manuel ordered that maps that might show the route to India be submitted for inspection. The precise words are: 'we command that there be no navigation on the sea-charts for Guinea but as far as the isles of Principe and Sao Tome and no cartographer shall make maps beyond these isles and those already made showing beyond be taken to Jorge de Vasconcelos to be removed'. The text is in A Cortesao, *Cartografia e cartografos Portugueses*, 1935, and J Ferreira do Amaral, *Pedro Reinel me fez*, 1995, 180, who points out that earlier maps were signed by the cartographer, but subsequent Portuguese maps often left unsigned. This order cannot explain the absence of St Helena from the Cantino map, which was then far away in Italy. If we accept that Joao da Nova found Ascension on the feast of the Ascension, May 20 1501, he could not have sighted St Helena, more than a hundred leagues away, on St Helena's day, May 22, but he could have discovered it on his return in September 1502. Estevao Gomes sailed with Tome Lopes on April 11 1502, reached India and on the return on July 30 1503 described the unknown and unnamed island we now call St Helena. Tome Lopes in his report names Ascension as 200 leagues to the north. But Ascension had not been reported in September 1502 when Estevao da Gama was two months at sea. Duarte Leite explained this by supposing that Lopes wrote after his return to Lisbon. But if Joao da Nova had discovered St Helena in May 1502, this would also have been known on Tome Lopes⁵ return. The discrepancy could be explained if Tome Lopes learned while still in India of the discovery of Ascension on Joao da Nova's outward journey. But even this does not account for the absence of St Helena in Cantino's map. Every rule has its exceptions: that of naming places on the feast-day of the appropriate saint does not apply in the case of the Vera Cruz or Brazil, or of St Helen's bay named by Vasco da Gama. In concrete terms, the island of St Helena is first described, rather accurately, by Tome Lopes on July 30 1503.

3.

The island was soon recognised as a place where water and shelter might be found by those in trouble on the long haul from Mozambique to the Cape Verdes. Correa (vol 2, ch xxxix, 1975) says that Fernao Lopes was alone for many years. He found food and fire, made himself a cave and cooked herbs. Next year a ship came and he hid, but the sailors left biscuits and cheese and a letter urging him not to hide. As they left, a cock fell overboard and he made it his pet. Other passing ships enabled him to grow pumpkins and pomegranates, and rear ducks, chickens, pigs and goats. The King was told of his astonishing life, and ordered him to come freely to Portugal. He disembarked secretly, was lodged in the captain's house and was taken secretly to see the King and Queen, who enabled him to go to Rome. The Pope rejoiced to see him and heard his confession, and gave him letters for the King to send him back to the island. He spent ten years on the island with a boy who had fled there. The boy, a negro, was frightened into disclosing him to the captain of a ship, Pero Gomes Teixeira, *ouvidor-mor* for India, who talked to him assuring him that he would not be removed against his will. Pero Gomes took the boy, but left Lopes, with a letter in the name of the king that he

would not be removed against his will. Thereafter Lopes was assured that nobody would remove him and talked to all visitors and gave them produce: after a long time he died in 1546. This is not history as Fernao Lopes' famous namesake wrote it, or as Dr Oliveira Ramos and I endeavour to teach it. If this Fernao Lopes was pardoned by the Pope and the King, why should he have been so scared at being sent to Lisbon? Where did the black Man Friday spring from?

In 1515 King Manuel named Duarte Galvao as his ambassador to Ethiopia, with Padre Francisco Alvares, author of the famous *Verdadeira Informagam das terras do Prestejodo* (1540), as priest and historian. But Duarte Galvao died near Massawa and the mission was suspended until Dom Rodrigo de Lima was appointed in 1520, again with Padre Alvares, whose book (I use the English translation of Beckingham and Huntingford, Hakluyt Society, 1956/1961, with copious notes) shows that when the mission reached Massawa on April 9 1520 the ouvidor Pedro Gomes Teixeira helped him to attend to the remains of Duarte Galvao, but was not one of the fourteen named members of the mission. A document shows that on June 24 1520 he was back in Goa, where he attested King Manuel's decree of November 1519 forbidding officials to take bribes of any kind (*Arquivo Portuguez Oriental*, fasc 5, No 24, with Francisco Lopes, the governor's apothecary). The mission to Ethiopia was away until 1526, and was brought back by Duarte Galvao's son Antonio, the author of the *Tratado dos descobrimentos*, published in 1550. His ship, the 'Espinheiro', listed and seemed unable to reach Lisbon without running out of water: Padre Alvares noted 'we made our course for the island of St Ylena to take on water'. On Easter day, April 21 1527, they ran past it at night, but were saved by a storm lasting three days which filled their barrels. Antonio Galvao does not mention St Helena in his treatise: he might have done so had the wind not blown so hard at Easter 1527.

As Padre Alvares and his companions headed for home, three French corsairs sailed from Dieppe for the Orient. It was not the first of their intrusions. On July 9 1518 a French ship was reported off Sofala (document of A da Silveira, E Axelson, *South East Africa, 1488-1530*, 1940, 165). At that time, Fernao Lopes was probably already on his island: Afonso de Albuquerque had reluctantly granted him a royal pardon before his death in December 1515, but Lopes was a renegade and there was the church to be reckoned with. Had he not told Joao Machado that he was a Muslim and could not live among Christians? (Correa, II, 213). Might he not betray Santa Helena to the French? They had cut dye-wood in Brazil at various times since 1504. The three ships from Dieppe in 1527 seemed to portend a serious attempt against Portuguese interests in the Orient.

One of the French ships of 1527, under a Portuguese named Estevao Dias Brigas, was the 'Grand Anglais' which reached Quiloa on November 12 and stayed until the following April. Though told that he could not go to any part of India under Portuguese control, he proceeded to Diu (not yet annexed). His doings there are described by Correa. He and his men were arrested and their petition for release is cited by Axelson (p 282, doc 132 from Sousa Viterbo, *Trabalhos nduticos*, 84. The date given in Axelson may be questioned). Another French interloper Jean Parmentier died at Sumatra.

The French threat is the context for an anonymous document urging King John III to have St Helena settled, both in order to forestall foreign intrusion and to provide for the needs of passing ships. It refers to Fernao Lopes by name and is printed in Padre Silva Rego's *Gavetas*, V, No 3616, 248-252. It is undated, unheaded and anonymous, but refers to the governor of India as 'now Nuno da Cunha' (1529-38) and is ascribed to 1530. The author is a returning official who reports to the King his observations and recommendations about various captaincies: he is probably identifiable. He advocates the abolition of three-year terms which stimulate cupidity, and the adoption of indefinite terms dependent on performance, with the company of wives and families. Diu should be annexed: (it was, by Dom Nuno da Cunha in 1535). Sumatra should be fortified since French ships went there direct. 'Also you should order the isle of St Helena to be settled, because once settled it will provide succour for ships coming from India and be secure from the coming of foreigners, as they do. They would find that it gives wheat of good quality and chickens, and there is salt like saltpetre, and gum like incense or mastic. Fernao Lopes the hermit asked me to remind your Highness to send him the Jao whom he left behind here' (*the cd ficara*). If the report was written after the writer's return, we have proof that Fernao Lopes did indeed go to Portugal to meet the king before 1530. His Man Friday was not a negro but a Javanese. Correa asserts that Lopes went to Rome and

was formally pardoned by the Pope. The question of the day was the treatment of conversos, to face which King John III applied to Rome for the introduction of the Spanish Inquisition in June 1531, thus anticipating the lapse of the periods of grace due in 1534: Clement VII responded by issuing a general pardon on April 7 1533 (Herculano, *Estabelecimento da Inquisigao*, II, III). Whether Fernao Lopes had received a previous pardon appears unknown.

Nor is the name of any other Portuguese settler preserved. The Spaniard Urdaneta visited St Helena in April 1536 and noted the presence of only 'a Portuguese hermit'. Correa says that Fernao Lopes died in 1546. Dom Joao Bermudes, patriarch in Ethiopia from 1535 to 1555, says in his *Relagam* (Lisbon 1565) that he returned from Cochin with Dom Joao de Meneses to St Helena, where he remained against the captain's better judgement: he stayed a year, suffering hunger and privation 'because that Island is so distant from human communication that there cometh no people but some fugitive slaves which had run away from some ships that came thither, and it was said that they had killed another chaplain, with the which mine began to be corrupt and would not serve me. Wherefore, destitute of all human help in my old age and sickness, I came the next year to Portugal in the ship called Sao Paulo, wherein Rui de Melo came as captain'. Bermudes was a resident, not a mere passer, and his brief account shows that there were inhabitants, even if they were not free Portuguese citizens.

4.

The island of St Helena now passes from the domain of Portuguese history into that of fantasy. Of the great Portuguese 16th-century historians, neither Barros, nor Damiao de Gois nor Bishop Jeronimo Osorio visited the east: only Lopes de Castanheda saw India, though Barros was a high official in the overseas service, whose *Decades* were used by Camoes and Osorio's father had been a judge in India. The poet arrived in India just before Dom Joao Bermudes set out on his unprojected stay on St Helena. It was formerly believed that the Isle of Loves' in *Cantos IX-X* was suggested by St Helena, though this view is now discarded: isles of seduction are known in the classics. On his return to Portugal in 1567 he may well have heard that St Helena was a haven for mariners in distress: the *Lusiads* were printed in 1572. Urdaneta had noted the presence of calabashes, oranges, pomegranates, pigs and goats, though not of nymphs. Jeronimo Osorio published his Latin history of King Manuel in 1571: it was given a Portuguese translation in 1804-06, reprinted at Oporto in 1946. In Book II he tells how Joao da Nova had discovered St Helena on the return voyage, giving the date of his arrival in Lisbon correctly as September 11 1502. It was not a large island but seemed placed there by divine determination to refresh weary voyagers from India, having permanent streams of fresh water, dense groves and forests and healthy air. A man to be mentioned later cultivated it and droves of sheep and pigs thrived. It abounded in fruit and vegetables. It gave mariners water and wood, and they delighted in its fishery, hunting and bird-wealth (*passerinagem*). Perhaps he was a little carried away by the majesty of the Latin language. Later, in his Book VIII he tells of the betrayal of Goa where 70 souls had risked sempiternal perdition, including Fernao Lopes. Afonso de Albuquerque had spared the lives of the Portuguese Muslims but by cutting off noses, ears, right hands and left thumbs caused as much terror as the death penalty. On returning, Lopes' ship had left him on St Helena, where with admirable sagacity and industry he planted vegetables and nurseries with which passing ships were marvellously sustained. Osorio's Latin was translated into French in 1581, and therefore more widely read than other Portuguese historians.

After 1580, Portugal acquired the enemies of Spain and the Dutch began to take over the Oriental trade. Portugal devoted its attention to Brazil, and West Africa grew in importance as India declined. Sao Paulo de Luanda was founded in 1572. In April 1576 one Duarte Lopes of Belmonte embarked at Lisbon on what was to be a ten years stay. His *Relagam* is lost but the Italian version by Filippo Pigafetta was printed at Rome in 1591: it is reprinted and translated as *Relagdo do reino do Congo* by Rosa Capeans, Lisbon 1951. On his way out, Duarte Lopes was driven to St Helena, only nine miles round but as singular as it was small, being visible thirty miles away in the immensity of the ocean, a marvel of nature. It was so called from its discovery on May 3 (the feast of the Invention of the Cross). Its chief place was the Ermida, with vessels and vestments for the use of passing priests. It has also a small house with space for two or three stranded mariners, perhaps even only

one. It had thick stands of ebony, used by mariners who had carved many names on the trunks. The Portuguese had brought the vine, which grew on trellises round the Ermida and shelters. There were 'wild groves' of oranges, lemons and other fruits that ripened all the year round, large pomegranates and figs. There were goats and kids and wild pigs, partridges, wild chickens and pigeons, tame and fearless of man, but when caught salted with sea-salt. The earth was dusty like ashes and reddish, soft and not requiring to be ploughed. It produced cabbage, parsley, lettuce, pumpkin, chick-peas, beans, all self-reproducing. The sea was so full offish that it was only necessary to cast a hook. Asked why the king of Portugal had not fortified it, Frey Luis de Granada said that it was not necessary, as it was used only by Portuguese. He was reminded that in the year 1588 there were the English, Drake and Cavendish, and the pious Spaniard replied that it was too expensive to bring building-materials from Europe. In 1588 the Spanish king had other matters to attend to.

5.

The idea that Fernao Lopes served as a prototype for Robinson Crusoe was voiced long ago in an English magazine. More recently the theme has been taken up by Sra Fernanda Barroso Ferreira in *The Portuguese Inspiration for Robinson Crusoe*, which was picked up by R Gill and P Teale, *St Helena 500* (Cape Town 1999). I have not seen these works and cannot therefore comment on them. Daniel Foe was born in about 1663. He added De to his name and became a prolific journalist, publishing *The Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* in 1719. It was soon described as the best and most moral romance then extant. The hero is the son of a German from Bremen named Kreutzenaer who settled at York and married a Robinson: as the English could not pronounce Kreutzenaer, he was called Crusoe. He ran away from home, became a seaman, was captured by the Moors, escaped, and made a fortune as a sugar-planter in Brazil. On his return, his ship was blown to the Caribbean and wrecked on a desert-island on September 30 1659. All the rest were lost, but the ship was well-stocked and foundered conveniently near. Also the island was not unknown, having been stocked with goats, and was visited occasionally by Caribs, Spaniards and English pirates. Robinson remained alone for twenty-five years till in chapter XXII he found a stranded Indian who became his Man Friday. When Robinson returned to England on June 11 1687, he had been away for 28 years, 2 months and 19 days. Friday is sometimes depicted as a negro, but Defoe leaves no doubt that he was a Carib. Fortified by his religion, Crusoe taught Ms friend and servant not to be a cannibal but to behave as a respectable dissenter. Defoe esteems the Portuguese for their honesty: Robinson is befriended by a Portuguese of English descent named Wells. He admires the manliness of Spaniards, but is very critical of English hooligans. His theme calls for no subtle analysis of character, but is a welcome relief from the negative satire of his successor Henry Fielding, who died at Lisbon in 1754. Robinson takes some time to find Friday, but the tale of master and man is that of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza without the comedy. Defoe was once thought to have been 'inspired' by the story of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish seaman who was marooned on Juan Fernandez off the coast of Chile from September 1704 until February 1 1709. This was propagated by an article in an early *Encyclopedia Britannica*, but lacks substance. Selkirk was a castaway, deliberately marooned: he had no Man Friday and wrote nothing, his tale being known only from the account of his rescuer. A similar case from the Caribbean is told of Pedro Serrano, who maintained himself on his island by killing turtles. He grew so shaggy that when another appeared, both were about to run away in horror until one cried the name of Jesus and they saw they were both Christians. The Inca Garcilasso heard the story from his father's cousin in his boyhood in Peru and includes it in his *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* (I, ch VIII of my translation, 1968). Defoe might have seen Sir Paul Rycaut's version of 1688. But in Defoe turtles are conspicuous by their absence. He gives Robinson 'some Portuguese books' salvaged from the ship, but he himself was no great linguist. He could not have known Correa, who was still unpublished. He knew something about Portugal and Brazil, for the gold boom was at its height. The only island he names is Fernando de Noronha, and the only Portuguese Senhor Wells, though he sketches a kindly priest. Defoe's brainchild seems far removed from the tragic figure of Fernao Lopes, the pawn of human history, not of natural forces.