INTRODUCTION

Apologia

The account of Sierra Leone and the Northern rivers and coasts by Father Manuel Álvares is the last of the Portuguese texts on Guinea which in 1969 I was invited by the late Avelino Teixeira da Mota to have translated into English.<1> Like the text by Donelha which was published in 1977, the first publication in a projected series, the text by Álvares had remained in manuscript since the seventeenth century and had never been consulted by scholars.<2> The case for publishing it early in the series was therefore strong, but the text is very long - the longest of all the texts in the project - and my English translation was only completed shortly before Teixeira da Mota's death in 1982. In the intervening years I have issued the translations of the other Guinea texts - Faro (1982), Almada (1984), Coelho (1985) and Jesuit documents (1989) - some with scholarly apparatus, some without. Now it is the turn of Álvares.

But this translation is issued in a very crude, and inadequate, and inelegant, and therefore tentative form. There are occasional gaps and queries in the translation, and apart from this introduction there is almost no scholarly apparatus. Other commitments, measured against increasing years, have prevented me from tidying up the translation, which no doubt also contains errors. Typed over a long period by various typists the typed form is not always consistent, and each chapter is separately paginated. Faults in the the photocopying and make-up of volumes are mea culpa, since, with the exception of welcome wifely help in collating around the dining-room table and other furniture, I did it myself.

Some years ago I promised never to publish translations of previously unpublished material without supplying a copy of the original document, if necessary in microfiche.<3> I have not done this here, for a reason. Although I think it unwise to leave material that might be useful to others too long in a single copy in my desk drawer, I feel less guilty in allowing a few scholarly colleagues to see this work in such a raw form, because it now seems possible that the Portuguese text, together with English and French translations, and scholarly apparatus, will be published, in due course. This possibility now arises as a result of a discussion in Lisbon to which I was kindly invited, in July 1990, by the present and past Directors of the Centro de Estudos de História e Cartografia Antiga, Dr Emília Madeira Santos and Professor Luís de Albuquerque. It would be very appropriate if the project which Teixeira da Mota began when Director of the Agrupamento de Estudos de Cartografia Antiga was now resumed and completed by its successor institute. But this is D.V. and finances permitting - the latter proviso one which presently limits scholarly activity as much in Britain as in Portugal.

Father Manuel Álvares

Not a lot is known about the author of this text, Father Manuel Álvares, S.J. (1573-?1617).<4> He joined the Jesuit mission 'of Cape Verde' in 1607; briefly visited Bissao and Santa Cruz (Guinala, in the Rio Balola); reached Sierra Leone, still in 1607, to join the veteran missionary, Father Baltasar Barreira; then apart from a brief visit by another Jesuit colleague in 1609 and a brief visit by either one or two rival Augustinian missionaries in 1613 and/or 1614, worked alone from 1608 up to his death in 1617 (or perhaps 1616).<5> The circumstances of his death appear not to be known, and his place of burial is uncertain.<6> What we do know about him comes from his writings. On his way to Sierra Leone he wrote a letter which has been published by Brásio, and a report which was included in the contemporary published edition of Jesuit reports by

Guerreiro (I have translated both).<7> From Sierra Leone he supplied information which appeared in Barreira's 1609 report and hence in Guerreiro; and also in Barreira's 1610 report (all translated).<8> His annual report for 1611-1612 was incorporated in a more general report by Barreira, but also appears within the present text (I have translated and edited it).<9> His next annual report, for 1613, was also incorporated within a more general report and also appears within the present text. None of these 1611-1613 reports were published contemporaneously, but a small section of Álvares' 1613 report, referring to the death of Barreira, was included in a 1647 history of the Portuguese Jesuits.<10> If Álvares made any later annual reports they do not appear to be extant, but we have a letter, or part of a letter, written in 1616 (not yet published in Portuguese but available in English).<11> Finally, we have the present text, which is described below.

A much younger man than Barreira, Álvares' reports from Sierra Leone were not given the publicity of Barreira's earlier reports, partly because the reported success of the early years of the mission was now patently wearing thin - or perhaps it is fairer to say that idealistic hype was giving way to a more realistic approach, since we need not hold that all of Álvares' efforts were in vain. But after Álvares' death the Jesuits abandoned Sierra Leone.

'Etiópia Menor e descripção geográfica da Província da Serra Leoa'

This text of about 90,000 words was given to me in a transcript with the following notes on the title page. First, this in Portuguese - 'Composed by Padre Manuel Álvares of the Society of Jesus, when he was resident in this Province of Serra Leoa, but never completed or put in a clean copy on account of his death in 1616. Copied from his own original preserved in the Royal Convent of S. Francisco in Lisbon'. The reference being to a manuscript of 143 ff. in the Biblioteca da Sociedade de Géografia in Lisbon <12>, I take it that this note appears on the manuscript and is of earlier date. The transcript then has the following note, in pencil in Teixeira da Mota's hand and in English, added for my benefit - 'Original reading by Dr Luís de Matos. Most of the corrections by T.M. Most of the punctuation has been introduced. Many passages still to find the meaning of or to render clear (revising punctuation or after discovering the probable errors of the copyist).' The transcript is in partly modernized spelling (e.g. Álvares for Alvarez). I take it that the title given on the transcript is the actual title of the manuscript and of Álvares' original.

The text deals with the coast of western Guinea, from the Senegal River southeastwards to Sierra Leone, in that geographical order, but in two Parts. The first Part covers the Northern rivers and coasts, the second Sierra Leone, where Álvares was living as he wrote the account.

I must emphasise that I have not had the opportunity to see the manuscript. Had Teixeira da Mota lived, when I completed the translation from his transcript I would have signalled difficult passages to him and he would undoubtedly have checked both my translation and the transcript against the manuscript. Therefore what you have here is a not-finally-revised translation of a not-finally-revised transcript of a not-finally-revised text. I draw attention especially to the lack of punctuation in the original, which helps to excuse some of my difficulties with certain passages.

As with all the earlier translations, a draft translation was prepared for me by my faithful assistant, Mrs Pamela Horner. This I revised considerably, in particular in the light of my knowledge of the historical and African background, but also with the guidance of a French translation of Part II by

Professor Léon Bourdon. I am therefore solely responsible for faults in the translation.

Dating the text

We have no exact information either as to when Álvares wrote his account - the Dedication and Prologue are undated and the account contains few dates - or as to when it reached completion in the form in which we now have it. Although Part I of the account is shorter and much less well informed than Part II, giving rise to the suspicion that Álvares began by writing an account of Sierra Leone to which he later added an account of the Northern rivers and coasts, the final draft must have been written in the order we have it since he refers several times in Part II to what he has already written in Part I (2/2/9,2/8/4).<13> It is likely that he began the account when lonely after the departure of Father Barreira in 1608, and the few post-1608 events he bothers to date are in years between 1609 and 1612 (1609 - 1/3/1,1/4/4,2/2/2,2/10/6; 1610 - 1/9/1,2/2/8,2/25/1,2/25/6; 1612 - 1/3/12,2/2/8,2/2/11,2/15/7), with the exception that in Chapter 15 of Part II he refers to 'the present year 1613' (2/15/6). A reference in Chapter 10 of Part II to a present sent to a local king by 'Brother Franciso Pereira' almost certainly cannot have been written earlier than 1613.<14> All this suggests that the account was written in 1612 and 1613.

The final chapter of the account begins with a statement to the effect that Álvares did not intend, when he began writing, to discuss the history of the mission, but having been solicited by his 'dearest friends' to include information about it (in fact he had mentioned it frequently), he now adds a copy of his 'Annual Letter for 1611 and 1612'. This report - in this version - has a footnote referring to events dated to June 1613.<15> This footnote is additional to another version of the report, perhaps the original version, which Álvares sent to the Cape Verde Islands in April 1613. The account formally ends with Chapter 26, but the manuscript continues with material that appears to derive from Álvares and may well represent additions he drafted with the intention of working them into a revision and enlargement of the account. It does however seen that at one stage he thought the account was complete, since he prepared a Dedication and a Prologue. The Dedication is to Father Claudio Aquaviva, the Jesuit general who died on 31 January 1615. But since Álvares may not have heard of the death for many months, he may have prepared the dedication as late as 1615, although 1613 or 1614 is perhaps more likely. However, a reference in the Dedication to the affairs of Sierra Leone having become 'a battleground for various opinions' probably refers to the Augustinian belittling of the Jesuit mission, and if so is most likely to have been written after 1613.

The additional material begins with Álvares' annual report for 1613, which he probably wrote in April 1614. But it includes a footnote reference to 'the visit of the Portuguese in 1614', suggesting that the footnote was added not earlier than 1615. The other additional material consists of an account of Barreira's visit to Bena in 1607, which could have been written at any post-1608 date; and two chapters of considerable ethnographic interest. One deals with the Susu, and the other with secret societies among both the peoples of the rivers and coasts North of Sierra Leone (Bagas, Susu, etc) and the Sierra Leone peoples. It is possible, since Bena is in Susuland, that the three chapters were intended to go together, and just possible that Álvares was filling out a gap in his account, between Part I and Part II, where he leaps from the Biafada to Sierra Leone, ignoring the intermediate coast and the Susu interior. Be that as it may, none of these chapters includes a date.

The latest dates appear in footnotes. Not having seen the manuscript I do not

know whether these notes are actually footnotes or marginal notes; and in t transcript some appear to be introduced at the wrong point. Many appear to be mere reflective jottings - hence peculiarly difficult to translate since the meaning is often obscure - and these give the impression of having been add after the text was written. Moreover cross-references in a number of not refer to later chapters, so were added later, perhaps in an intended revisio But without closer study I cannot yet decide whether all the footnotes are late additions to the account.

Álvares died in late 1616 or 1617, but since he appears to have been ill in his later years he may not have worked on his account after 1615, just as he may not have forwarded an annual report after 1614. The failure to integrate the 1613 report into the account and the scrappy nature of many of the footnotes throughout the account suggest a work which was being revised and updated i minor respects up to 1615 and whose revision was never completed.<16> Thu confirming the later comment on the first page of the transcript. We do not know - that is, I do not presently know - how the original manuscript reached Portugal (or for that matter why the manuscript of the transcript was copied an how it found its way, separated from other Jesuit material, into a secula archive). But it seems likely that Álvares never despatched a copy of his account to Portugal, and that his manuscript remained with him until his death, when it was rescued by a member of the Portuguese trading community in Sierra Leone and sent to Lisbon.

The value of the text

Álvares' text is more original, as well as fuller, when dealing in Part II with Sierrra Leone (that is, an area bounded by the lower Scarcies River to th North, the lower Port Loko Creek to the East, and the riverside of the Sierr Leone estuary to the South and West). His material on the northern coasts an rivers in Part I is partly derivative, and for the Cacheu-Bissau-Guinala area, where he and fellow Jesuits had briefly worked, tends to be replete with missionary rhetoric and pious stories.<17> Not that rhetoric and piety ar lacking in the account of Sierra Leone, but Álvares had spent years in Sierra Leone compared with weeks further North, and his account therefore also contains a large amount of personal observation, mainly of an ethnographic nature. While too much in this direction should not be expected of a seventeenth-centur missionary - and Álvares is not outstandingly perceptive - nevertheless his account is markedly superior to the writings of Barreira in its reference t local detail. Of course this was partly due to the difference between writing edifying annual reports for home consumption and writing a 'geographical account' - although one wonders what Álvares thought were the possibilities of its publication.<18> But the difference was also partly due to th personalities of the two men. The elderly Barreira was an old hand in Blac Africa and hence distinctly blasé about the African background, whereas Álvares, with no previous experience of alien cultures before joining the mission, was still sufficiently suffering from culture shock to want to recor and report what he found exotic around him. Yet the whole account is imbue with a proper missionary spirit, necessarily in the style and understanding o the time, so that the modern reader may find many passages irrelevant to his/her interest, boring, even irritating - not least of course when they clash with, not only our better understanding of African societies, but also with ou liberal and relativist prejudices. The account contains a good deal o missionary rhetoric, some allusive and far-fetched; and chapters 18-24 discuss Christianity versus 'superstition' in such general and moralising terms that three chapters and most of a fourth, which include not a single specific reference to Africa, have been omitted from the translation. Further, th African scene is seen through very critical, not to say blindly biassed

contemporary-European eyes. But when allowance has been made for all this, Álvares is to be commended for telling us more in detail about certain aspects of the cultures of Sierra Leone peoples, especially the Temne, than any earlier writer.

Álvares is fond of quoting from the Fathers of the Church and from contemporary authorities on morals and doctrine (more so than Barreira), as well as from the Scriptures - the hangover, no doubt, of his years as a lecturer. I have not yet done my homework on these references, to identify and check them, hence some of the gaps in the translation. Did he take his academic books with him to Africa or had he a good memory ? He certainly had some books at Sierra Leone, indeed he received some, for in his 1613 report he directs the reader to the printed edition of Jesuit letters by Guerreiro which included accounts of the Cape Verde mission up to 1610: this indicates a work of which the final volume appeared in 1611 and which he therefore probably received in 1612. Álvares had therefore available a printed account of the mission, with material on both Sierra Leone and the northern coasts, including Barreira´s visit to Bena which Álvares summarises in one of the additional chapters, and Barreira´s brief visit to the ´Little Coast´ of Senegal in 1608. But Guerreiro also includes a summary of the account of western Guinea by André Álvares de Almada, written in the early 1590s - still in manuscript, Almada´s account was probably copied by Barreira when in the Cape Verde Islands and summarised either by him, or else by Guerreiro if Barreira sent the whole account home. At a glance, Part I of Álvares´ account draws on this summary of Almada in Guerreiro: closer research may not only confirm this impression but show that some of Almada seeps into Part II. It is doubtful, however, whether Álvares used any printed material on Guinea other than that in Guerreiro, and indeed there was very little in print, at least in Portuguese, and especially on Sierra Leone, that he could have used.

What then were Álvares´ other sources ? Apart from his own brief personal observations at Bissau and Guinala, and his extended observations in Sierra Leone, he no doubt obtained oral information from Barreira during the months they spent together. He similarly obtained oral information from members of the Portuguese trading community in Sierra Leone, and from their mixed-raced descendants or any other local Africans with whom he could communicate, in Portuguese or the vernacular (the latter, one suspects, via an interpreter). Since the African included a small number of ´evolué(e)s´, at least one of whom had received intensive education and acculturation in the Cape Verde Islands <19>, his reliance on African oral information was probably considerable.

This is not the place to attempt to assess Álvares´ attitudes to Africans, to Moslems, and to women - or for that matter, to the heretical English, whom he encountered in his latter days when they visited the estuary. Or to investigate his extreme interest in the Devil and all his works. Perhaps the account is most valuable when it deals with the ´Mane invasions´. It supplies a mass of detail on the Manes. Unfortunately the detail is often unconnected and therefore puzzling, and perhaps sometimes garbled. It must be said that Álvares is not the clearest of writers, and his constant moralising at times erodes the logical sequence of descriptive passages. Worst of all are the footnotes. As already stated, these are often scrappy and very difficult to follow. All in all, the account calls out for extensive annotation - I may yet be able to tackle this. Perhaps the greatest weakness of Africanist annotation is that it often displays a regrettable ignorance of the European background. Álvares was a Portuguese Jesuit, and his thinking must have been permeated with the thought-patterns of Portuguese Jesuitry. Or, at the simplest level, with knowledge of the Scriptures. For instance, the horror-stories Álvares relates about the Mane invasions may echo some of Isaiah´s fulminations against Babylon - ´They come from a far country ... to destroy the whole land. Every

one that is found shall be thrust through ... Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, their wives ravished´ etc, etc (Isaiah 13: 5,15-16).

And finally

The translation is fairly literal, but words and phrases in brackets have been added to fill out the meaning. Doubts about the translation - or the accuracy of the transcript - are signalled by (?).

The translation is available in a very limited number of copies to specified scholars, in the expectation that a fuller edition, together with the original text, will within a reasonable time be published in Lisbon - thanks to the continuing efforts of those of his friends and admirers who respect the memory of Teixeira da Mota.

P.E.H.H.
1.10.1990

NOTES

<1> For a lengthier account of the Teixeira da Mota project, my involvement, and the future prospects, see my note in History in Africa, 10, 1983, pp.387-394.

<2> Teixeira da Mota arranged for the Álvares MS to be consulted by the late Walter Rodney, who then quoted or cited significant passages in his History of the Upper Guinea Coast (London, 1970). These references in an important if somewhat prejudiced book led other scholars to approach the Lisbon library, Teixeira da Mota and later myself, for copies of the material. When it was assumed that the whole project would be quickly completed, restrictions on access to material in Portuguese archives and libraries appear to have operated; and certainly I was expressly forbidden to make transcripts and translations available, so that only after Teixeira da Mota´s death and a subsequent lapse of years without publication proceeding have I felt justified in showing my translations of unpublished material to other scholars. Teixeira da Mota himself of course frequently cited Álvares in his publications and he presented a section of the text in his Cristianização dos reis de Bissau (Lisbon, 1974), pp.59-63.

<3> Paideuma, 33, 1987, pp.42,45.

<4> Born in 1573 at Alter de Chão in the diocese of Elvas, he entered the noviciate in 1590 and eventually taught philosophy and theology for nine years, according to C. Sommervogel, Bibliothèque de la Compagnie de Jésus, Brussels/Paris, 1890-1932, t.1, 1890, column 219; t.8., Supplément, 1898, column 1615. However, this authoritative source (hence copied by Streit-Dindinger) errs in stating that Álvares died at Lisbon in 1619.

<5> For a chronology of the overall mission and of Álvares´ movements, see my Jesuit documents on the Guinea of Cape Verde and the Cape Verde Islands, issued from the Department of History, University of Liverpool, 1989.

<6> Senna Barcellos gave the burial-place as Caracore [i.e. Pepel] Island, which is plausible, but he gave no reference.

<7> Jesuit documents, items 23,28 (= António Brásio, Monumenta missionaria africana: África ocidental, second series, vol. 4, Lisbon, 1968, items 64,66-68; Fernão Guerreiro, Relaçam anual das cousas que fizeram os padres da Companhia de Jesus nas partes da India Oriental en emalgũas outras ... Tirado tudo das Cartas dos mesmos Padres ..., pt.4, Evora/Lisbon, 1609, liv.4, ff.193-196).

<8> ibid., items 31,41 (= Guerreiro, pt.5, 1611, liv.4, parts of caps. 5-8; Brásio, item 111).

<9> 'Álvares at Mitombo', Africana Research Bulletin, 11/1-2, 1981, pp.92-140. In this paper is some discussion of Álvares' activities in Sierra Leone.

<10> B.Telles, Chronica da Companhia de Jesu da Provincia de Portugal, part 2, Lisbon, 1647, pp.644-5.

<11> Jesuit documents, item 46.

<12> As noted in A.F.C. Ryder, Materials for West African History in Portuguese archives, London, 1965, p.80. The manuscript is given no call-number. I regret that I did not ask Teixeira da Mota about the source and history of this manuscript, including its alleged original. Rodney calls it an eighteenth-century copy.

<13> 2/2/9 signifies Part II, chapter 2, page 9 in the present translation.

<14> See my 'The abortive Portuguese settlement of Sierra Leone 1570-1625', in Vice-Almirante A. Teixeira da Mota in memoriam, Lisbon, 1987, pp.198-9.

<15> For a comparison of this version of the report with that in Brásio, see my 'Álvares at Mitombo'.

<16> I am assuming that the original manuscript had the footnotes as well as the text in Álvares' hand. I have considered the possibility that at least some of the notes were added by another person, perhaps after Álvares' death. But since certain notes refer to an 'I' who is undoubtedly Álvares, and many contain references or allusions that only he can have supplied, it is more likely that all the notes are his.

<17> In Part II he includes a chapter (2/16) on events in East Africa, but this is clearly summarised from a standard source.

<18> And I cannot be sure yet that 'geographical account' was the author's own description of his account. However the Jesuit bibliography calls it 'Descripção geografica da quella parte da Africa, chamada Guiné.

<19> See my 'Hamlet in an Afro-Portuguese setting: new perspectives on Sierra Leone in 1607', History in Africa, 5, 1978, pp.21-42.