

Important Portuguese of the Past

Vasco da Gama

Vasco da Gama, 1st Count of Vidigueira (Sines or Vidigueira, Alentejo, Portugal, around 1460 or 1469 – 24 December 1524 in Kochi, India) was a Portuguese explorer, one of the most successful in the European Age of Discovery and the commander of the first ships to sail directly from Europe to India. For a short time in 1524 he was Governor of Portuguese India under the title of Viceroy.

Vasco da Gama's father was Estêvão da Gama. In the 1460s he was a knight in the household of the Duke of Viseu, Dom Fernando.[3] Dom Fernando appointed him Alcaide-Mór or Civil Governor of Sines and enabled him to receive a small revenue from taxes on soap making in Estremoz.

Estêvão da Gama was married to Dona Isabel Sodré, who was the daughter of João Sodré (also known as João de Resende). Sodré, who was of English descent, had links to the household of Prince Diogo, Duke of Viseu, son of king Edward I of Portugal and governor of the military Order of Christ.[4]

Little is known of Vasco da Gama's early life. It has been suggested by the Portuguese historian Teixeira de Aragão that he studied at the inland town of Évora, which is where he may have learned mathematics and navigation. It is evident that Gama knew astronomy well, and it is possible that he may have studied under the astronomer Abraham Zacuto.[5]

In 1492 King John II of Portugal sent Gama to the port of Setúbal, south of Lisbon and to the Algarve to seize French ships in retaliation for peacetime depredations against Portuguese shipping - a task that Vasco rapidly and effectively performed.

On 2 March 1498, the fleet landed in Mozambique, after having suffered dreadful time and have Vasco da Gama smothered with an iron hand an uprising of sailors.

The pilot that the Sultan of Mozambique gave the lead to India was secretly charged with delivering our vessels to the Moors in Mombasa.

On 17 April 1498, Calicut could be seen. He had discovered the sea route to India.

D. Manuel rewarded this glorious done, naming Admiral Vasco da Gama Chief of India and making him a donation of three hundred thousand “reis” income.

He returned twice to India, where he was the Governor and second Vice-king.



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