

The
History And
Description Of Africa
V1



Leo Africanus
John Pory

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THE HISTORY
" ^L
AND
DESCRIPTION OF AFRICA

AND

OF THE NOTABLE THINGS THEREIN CONTAINED,

WRITTEN BY

AL-HASSAN IBN-MOHAMMED AL-WEZAZ AL-FASI,

A MOOR, BAPTISED AS GIOVANNI LEONE, BUT BETTER KNOWN AS

LEO AFRICANUS.

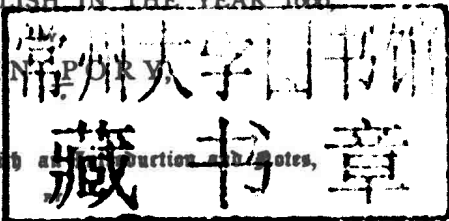
Giovanni Leone, Africanus

DONE INTO ENGLISH IN THE YEAR 1600

JOHN PORY

And now Edited, with an Introduction and Notes,

DR. ROBERT BROWN.



IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

25

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PREFATORY NOTE.

AS the members of the Hakluyt Society are already aware, the much-deplored death of the editor, at a period when barely a third of the text was in print, has deprived the present work of the advantage of his final revision, and also of the notes which it had been his intention to affix to the concluding chapters. As, however, the portion thus left unannotated was comparatively small, and seemed to contain few points not already touched upon in the notes to the earlier chapters, it has been deemed advisable not to introduce any additional matter, and the work, therefore, is issued in the state in which the manuscript was left at Dr. Brown's decease, with the exception of a few necessary alterations and excisions.

The task of seeing through the press the remainder of the text, together with Dr. Brown's Introduction, has been performed in a most able manner by Dr. E. Denison Ross, whose linguistic attainments, and particularly his intimate acquaintance with Arabic, have been of especial benefit to the book. Dr. Ross has also prepared the general index to the volumes.

Acknowledgments are also due to Mr. E. G. Ravenstein for the set of illustrative Maps which, together with an explanatory memorandum, he has prepared and presented to the Society for reproduction in these volumes. Founded as they are on an independent study of Leo's writings, these maps form in themselves an important contribution

to African geography, and greatly enhance the value of the book.

In addition, Mr. Ravenstein has kindly contributed the index of place-names, which not only includes all references in the text, but also indicates the position of each place upon the appropriate map.

The great bulk of the work has necessitated its issue in three volumes. Ordinarily, these would have been allotted, two to one year, and the third to the next. After careful consideration, however, it has been judged best to issue all three for 1895, thus presenting the subscribers for that year with an extra volume.

WILLIAM FOSTER,
Hon. Secretary.

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Roman Illiberes. However, from the fact of Leo being an African, or from his writing on Africa, he is now invariably called Leo Africanus.

His Arab name was Al-Hassan Ibn Mohammed Al-Wezâz, Al-Fâsi,¹ that is, the man of Fez (a surname he obtained in his later years). He is also known as "El-Gharnâthi", the Granadian,² a designation which, apart from other facts, renders it extremely probable that he was born, not in Morocco, as "Al-Fâsi" might seem to indicate, but in Granada. On this point, indeed, there can be little doubt: for not only does he state the circumstance more than once in the body of the volume,³ but Ramusio, who obtained his information from one of Leo's friends, reiterates the statement. Again, Leo tells us (p. 299) how he met at "Elmadin" "one of Granada my countreyman, who was exceeding rich, having serued as an archer in the region for fifteen years"; so that there is no reason for the hesitation expressed by Pory in his preface (notwithstanding the explicitness of the title-page of his translation), as to whether Leo "were borne in Granada, in Spaine (as it was likely), or in some part of Africa".

¹ Hartmann, *Edrisii Africa*, p. xix.

² Thus (in 1889) M. Delphin calls him "El Hassan ben Mohammed El Ouezaz El R'ernathe plus connu sous le nom de Léon l'Africain". - *Fas, son université*, etc., pp. 6-7.

³ The book ends after the Arab fashion, "finisce il Libro di Giovan Leone nato in Granata e allevato in Barberia" (10th March, 1526).

The passage which seems to have raised doubt in his mind and in the minds of other commentators, *e.g.*, Braus,¹ is the Latin of Florianus: "Cui" (Africa) "et vitæ initium et educationis meæ bonam partem debeo",² which Pory translates, correctly enough: "Africa unto which countrie I stand indebted both for my birth and also for the best part of my education" (p. 187). But the Italian original bears no such interpretation. "Essendo l'Affrica mia nudrice, & nella quale io cresciuto, & dove ho speso la più bella parte & la maggiore degli anni miei." This simply means that Africa was his "nurse", and that he there passed the early part of his life.

Yet, with all the suppleness of his race, he was wont in the course of his life to claim either Africa or Europe as his birth-place, according as it seemed best for his own interest. "For mine owne part", he tells us, "when I heare the Africans euill spoken of I will affirme my self to be one of Granada: and when I perceiue the nation of Granada to be discommended then will I professe my selfe to be an African" (p. 190).

Yet, in spite of these explicit statements, M. Canal, a resident in Algeria, in quoting our author's account of Oujda,³ calls him "Leon l'Africain, voyageur Toscan"; and Mr. Rae, a most intelligent traveller,

¹ *Allgemeine Geographische Ephemeriden*, Bd. vii (1801), p. 311.

² Antwerp edition (1556), p. 36.

³ *Bulletin de la Soc. de Géog. et d'Archéologie d'Oran*, 1886.

who cites Leo frequently in Pory's version, perpetrates the extraordinary blunder of saying that he was "born in Barbary and brought up as a Christian in Granada",¹ the exact contrary of what was the case. Even the accurate Prescott, in that he refers to him as "a learned Granadine who emigrated to Fez after the fall of the capital",² seems to have been under the impression that Leo's learning was obtained in Spain.³ Much of his learning was of Italian origin, though he was undoubtedly an erudite man after the Arab standard, before he came to Rome.⁴

HIS BIRTH AND PARENTAGE.

That he was born in 1491 is a statement which writers have hitherto copied from one another, without taking the trouble to ascertain upon what foundation the assertion rests. In reality, it is a

¹ *Country of the Moors*, p. 22.

² *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic* (Kirk's edition, 1890), p. 454.

³ Jerome Lalande (*Mémoire sur l'intérieur de l'Afrique*, Paris, "An troisième de la République," p. 4) actually states that Leo went to Africa in 1491, "à la suite du Roi d'Espagne."

⁴ Ramusio (1485-1557), though the contemporary of Leo and in Rome on business of the Venetian Republic many times during his residence there, does not seem to have been personally acquainted with him. In the dedication of the first volume of his *Navigazione* to Hieronimo Fracastoro, he merely tells his friend that the short account he gives of Leo was obtained from a gentleman of good credibility (*degno di fede*) who knew him at Rome and lived some time with him there.

mere inference, that as Granada was surrendered on the 2nd of January 1492, and Leo went to Africa as a child, he must have been born in the previous year. But this also assumes that Leo's father left Spain as soon as "from the Alhambra were all the crescents flung", though, as history has it, most of the Moors remained in the city; and even Boabdil himself did not emigrate until 1493.

But, as I will presently show, there is no foundation for assuming that Leo's family left in 1492, or indeed at any particular date, before he was old enough to make the Thagia pilgrimages. The mere fact of his having been acquainted with Spanish admits of no safe inference. For his family must have spoken it freely, especially if, as I hope to prove, he was born, not in 1491 but in 1494-95; in that case they were for at least three years subjects of Ferdinand and Isabella. Leo affords us some safe guidance in this difficulty; for he intimates that when Saffi fell into the hands of the Portuguese he was twelve years old. This event happened in 1507-8, which would put his birth in the year I have indicated. Again, he tells us that when he was fourteen he knew "Sidi Jeja", who was there as captain of the country about Saffi engaged in collecting the revenues of King Emanuel the Fortunate. Now this man is well known to history. He is the personage who is usually called Sidi Yahia ben Tafut. But he did not obtain his post—that of official chief of the Arabs—until about the year 1508-9, when,

according to the usual legend, Leo must have been seventeen or eighteen. This of course renders it impossible for us to accept 1491 as the year of his birth; and as Leo's personal acquaintance with "Sidi Jeja" did not begin till two years after the capitulation of Saffi, namely, in 1509, the difficulty of believing that he was born earlier than three or four years after the fall of the last Moorish kingdom in Spain becomes an impossibility.

Who his father was we are not told, except that he owned land, etc. But it is certain, from the distinguished position which his relatives occupied in Morocco, that he was a man of wealth and consequence, both in Fez, and previously in Granada. Leo's uncle seems also to have been a person of consequence; for he was sent as Ambassador from the King of Fez to the King of Timbuktu, and bore a wide reputation as "an excellent Oratour and a most wittie Poet". Leo seems also to have had another relative at Fez, who impoverished himself with the study of alchemy (p. 66); but beyond this we know nothing of his family, and nearly all that we know of his career is derived from the incidental remarks he chooses to vouchsafe in the course of his work.

RETURN OF THE MOORS TO AFRICA.

In 1492, however—from three to four years, according to our calculation, before Leo was born—the last stronghold of the Moslems in Spain

surrendered to the army of Ferdinand and Isabella ; and the Moorish king, after bewailing the fate which Allah had decreed, as he stood upon that rocky eminence still known to the Andalusians as “ El ultimo Sospiro del Moro ”—“ The Last Sigh of the Moor ”—retreated to the mountain territory in the Alpujarras that had been allotted to him by the clemency of his conqueror. It may, however, be remembered that the Moors were not expelled. That step, so fatal to the prosperity of Spain, was not taken until a later period. They were permitted to either remain as subjects of His Catholic Majesty, or return to Africa, as suited them best. Even after the rebellion of the Alpujarras mountaineers in 1500-1502, those concerned in the revolt were granted a general amnesty on condition of either being baptised or leaving the country. But though all who wished to seek a home in Barbary were transported thither in public galleys at a charge of ten golden doblas a head, very few could afford to avail themselves of that privilege. This is Bledas'¹ version of the first banishment of the race, and is no doubt correct, albeit that chronicler is by no means charitable to the infidels. But Padre Bernaldez, the Curate of Los Palacios, disposes of them in a manner less creditable, though possibly his statement is an accurate account of what happened in some cases. “ For”, remarks this historian,² “ the Christians shipped the

¹ *Cronica de los Moros de España* (1618), pp. 634-641.

² *Reyes Catolicos*, cap. 165 ; cf. Prescott, *History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella* (Kirk's edition, 1890), p. 467.

men, gave them a free passage, and sent them to the devil."

Religion, nevertheless, sate easy on the Spanish Moors. Thousands had been more or less voluntarily converted by the liberal-minded Talavera and the more bigoted Ximenes, and outwardly at least performed the duties of their new faith. It was not until 1610 that Philip the Third, at the instigation of the fanatical Archbishop of Valencia, deported the remnants of the race which still conformed to the creed of their fathers, retaining as slaves a certain number to expiate their offences against his sovereignty by toiling in the galleys, or dying by inches in the mines of Peru.

In the execution of this "grande resolucion", as the King termed it, about a million of the most industrious of the "Morisco" inhabitants of Spain were hunted like wild beasts, and banished to Africa, with every concomitant of barbarity. Many, indeed, were slain before they could reach the coast. The crews in many cases rose upon them, butchered the men, violated the women, and threw the children into the sea. Others, driven by the winds on the sandy shores of Barbary, were attacked by the marauding Arabs and slaughtered, despite their creed or their nationality; for a people who killed or enslaved every shipwrecked seaman, and every tribe of which was at war with the other, were not likely to bestow much esteem on castaways in Spanish garb, speaking Arabic with a Castilian accent, and whose previous history did not

altogether clear them of the taint of renegadism. Few escaped maltreatment and robbery ; and those who managed to reach the shores of Morocco, Algiers, or Tunis arrived penniless, and only to find that there was no place for them among their less effeminate kindred. Many, disheartened with the coldness of their co-religionists in the cities, wandered into the desert, and perished from privations and hardships which their life in Andalus had little fitted them to endure. It is therefore by no means incredible that, in one expedition in which 140,000 "Moriscos" were carried to Africa, upwards of 100,000 suffered death within a few months of their leaving Spain.¹

But at the period when the father of little Hassan, son of Mohammed, crossed the Straits of Gibraltar, there had been little cruelty of this kind practised. The Moors had fought, won, fought again and lost ; and latterly, though they remembered the evil fate which had lost them a country that only the industry of their fathers and the enlightenment of their sovereigns had made fairer and more fertile than that to which they were driven, they cherished no particular hatred towards the Christians for recovering what seven centuries before had been wrenched from their grasp. It was, as La Valette remarked to Dragut, the corsair chief, as he saw him labouring at the galley oar in a Maltese harbour, "Usanza di guerra"—the way of war.

¹ Davida, *Vida de Felipe III*, p. 146.

And so, with the happy fatalism of their race they kept the keys of their Granada houses, and cherished—as some of their descendants are still said to do¹—the title-deeds of their ancient property, praying every Friday to Allah to restore them finally to their ancient homes. If there was any special venom, any dislike more pronounced than that which the vanquished must ever feel towards the victor, it was directed less against the Christians than against their own Sultan, who, to use the words of his mother Ayesha, wept like a woman for the loss of what he could not defend like a man. His nomad subjects despised him: his life was even in danger from them. It is therefore not unlikely that this circumstance, quite as much as weariness of governing, led to his resolution to sell for a sum of money the Alpine kingdom which he held as a vassal of Ferdinand and Isabella, and next year follow into Africa his kindred, who had already proceeded thither. Al-Makkari is perhaps not unjust to the “Infidel King” when he affirms that the latter did his best to expedite his old rival’s departure. The after-career of Boabdil is very obscure, and the statements regarding it extremely contradictory. Almeria was the port from which he set sail, and Melilla the one at which he landed in Morocco. It had been his original intention to fix his residence at Marakesh (the City of Morocco);

¹ I have heard this picturesque tale in Tetuan, Tunis, and other towns of Barbary. But I have never managed to see either the keys or the parchments.

but hearing on his arrival in Africa that the provinces of that part were sadly afflicted by famine, pestilence, and other calamities, he is affirmed in one version to have taken up his residence at Fez, where he settled with his family and adherents, and built some palaces in imitation of those of Granada. Al-Makkari adds that this hapless Sultan died in Fez in the year 940 (A.D. 1538), and was buried in front of the mosque which stands outside the Bâb ush-Shar'at (the Gate of the Law).

But more recent researches tend to show that Boabdil¹ in reality sought and received an asylum from Abu 'Abd Allah Mohammed eth-Thâbiti, Sultan of Tlemsen, and there remained until his death in A.H. 899 (A.D. 1494), according to an inscription on a tombstone, now in the museum of the famous city, where the fallen King of Granada survived, for so short a period, his unmerited misfortunes.

The conditions of the capitulation of Granada were liberal beyond anything which could have been expected of Spain or of the age. There was actually nothing to prevent any Moslem from living in the full enjoyment of civil and religious liberty under Ferdinand and Isabella, for every right of property and conscience was by the treaty to be rigorously respected. No doubt, at a later period, many of its conditions were shamefully ignored. But at the date when the family of our author

¹ A corruption of Abu 'Abd Allah (Mohammed), his full name.

passed the Straits of Gibraltar, this persecution had not begun—a fact which it is necessary to remember in connection with the entire lack of bitterness displayed by him towards the Christians, for in spite of diplomatic reserve this would have appeared in his writings; as well as the readiness he displayed at a later date to adopt their creed to advance his own interests—a practice which had never been uncommon in Granada.

The self-expatriated Moors of the better class were, however, readily received in the different Barbary Courts. In Morocco especially—then beginning to be racked by the civil war between the Beni-Marini and the Shereefs—owing to their skill in military operations, and in various crafts little practised at the time in Maghreb al-Aksa, they were welcomed much more warmly than were their brethren a century later. Fez was their favourite place of residence, and, as Leo tells us, they built and re-peopled several towns in the vicinity. To this day the descendants of these immigrants, many of them bearing markedly Spanish features, and like Sid Hajj Mohammed Torres (the present Commissioner of Foreign Affairs at Tangier), having Spanish names, are still pointed out as “El-Andeless”. Soforo, between Fez and Mekines, is said to have been built by them. Curiously enough, Leo never mentions Boabdil, although his father was this king's immediate adherent, and despite the probability that Leo was in Fez at the time of the ex-monarch's residence in that town. This reticence is much to

be regretted ; for we possess but scanty information regarding the latter days of these Andalusian Moors in Morocco.

The Sultan left two sons, whose descendants less than a century later were little better than beggars at the mosque doors ; and to this day humble folks are pointed out in Morocco who claim to be “ Beni-s-Sultáni-l-Andalus ”—sons of the Sultan of Spain—though many of these are not actually the descendants of Boabdil, but of his uncle and rival, Sultan Az-zâghel, who also settled at Tlemsen.¹

CONDITION OF MOROCCO IN LEO'S DAY.

At the period when Leo was brought to Africa, the empire of Morocco was in a condition of political disintegration and moral decay. The Kingdom of Fez was held by Mulaï Said. But in the South the Shereefs, who afterwards obtained entire possession of the country, were beginning that movement which resulted in Morocco, Sus, and Tafilet becoming independent sovereignties, only to be united, nearly two centuries later, by the ruthless genius of Mulaï Ismaïl, who made a desert, and called it peace.

But in 1500 the Portuguese had possession of all

¹ M. Brosselard, formerly Prefect of Oran, seems to entertain a contrary opinion.—*Mémoire épigraphique et historique sur les tombeaux des émirs Beni Zeïyan et de Boabdil, dernier roi de Grenade, découverts à Tlemcen* (1878), pp. 159 et seq.