

“*Argellion* (the Coco-nut). ”

“Another tree is that which bears the *Argell*,¹ i.e. the great Indian Nut. In nothing does it differ from the date-palm, excepting that it surpasses it in height and thickness, and in the size of its fronds. All the fruit it produces is from two or three stalks bearing three *Argells* each.² The taste is sweet and very pleasant, like that of fresh nuts. The *Argell* at first is full of a very sweet water, which the Indians drink from the nut, using it instead of wine. This drink is called *Rhoncosura*,³ and is exceedingly pleasant. But if the *Argell* be pluckt and kept, the water congeals gradually on the inside of the shell; a small quantity remaining in the middle, till in course of time that also gets quite dried up. If, however, it be kept too long the coagulated pulp goes bad and cannot be eaten.

“*Phoca, Dolphin, and Turtle.* ”

“The *Phoca*, *Dolphin*, and *Turtle* we eat at sea if we chance to catch them. To eat the *dolphin* or *turtle* we cut their throats; the *phoca*’s throat we don’t cut, but strike it over the head as is done with large fishes. The flesh of the *turtle* is like mutton, but blackish; that of the *dolphin* is like pork, but blackish and rank; that of the *phoca* is also like pork, but white and free from smell.

“*Concerning the Island of Taprobane.* ”

“This is the great island in the ocean, lying in the Indian Sea. By the Indians it is called *SIELEDIBA*,⁴ but by the Greeks *TAPROBANE*. In

pepper has over it a leaf that shelters it from the rain. When the rain ceases the leaf turns aside; if rain recommences the leaf again covers the fruit” (in *Journ. As.*, ser. vi, tom. v, p. 284).

¹ Pers. *Nárgél*.

² This is obscure in the original: οὐ βάλλει δὲ καρπὸν εἰ μὴ δύο ἢ τρία σπάθια ἀπὸ τριῶν ἀργελλίων. But his drawing explains, showing two stalks with three nuts to each. He must have seen but poor specimens.

³ Possibly Cosmas has confounded the cocoa-nut milk with the cocopalms toddy. For *Sura* is the name applied on the Malabar coast to the latter. *Roncho* may represent *Lanha*, the name applied there to the nut when ripe but still soft, in fact in the state in which it gives the milk (see *Garcias dall’ Orto*, Venice, 1589, p. 114; *Rheede*, vol. i).

⁴ This represents fairly the Pali name *SIHALADIPA*. *Sihala* or (Sansk.) *Sinhala*, the “Dwelling of the *Lions*,” or as otherwise explained, “The *Lion-Slayers*.” *Taprobane*, from (Pali) *TAMBAPANNI*, (Sansk.) *TAMPARNI*, the name of a city founded near Putlam by Wijaya (son of *Sihabahu*) the first human king and colonist. These names are explained in the *Mahawanso* thus:

“At the spot where the seven hundred men, with the king at their head, exhausted by (sea) sickness, and faint from weakness, had landed out of the vessel, supporting themselves on the palms of their hands pressed on the ground, they set themselves down. Hence to them the name of *Tambapanniyo* (“copper-palmed,” from the colour of the soil). From this circumstance that wilderness obtained the name of *TAMBAPANNI*. From the same cause also this renowned land became celebrated (under that name).

“By whatever means the monarch *Sihabahu* slew the *Siho* (*Lion*), from