

s'emparant du Diyâr Bekir. reconstituant ainsi ce qui avait été jusqu'en 1514 le domaine de son arrière-grand-père Châh Ismail. Par la suite, les Ottomans assiégèrent vainement Bagdad en 1626, mais la ville finit par tomber en 1634 sous les coups de Murâd IV.

Lorsqu'on lit la relation de l'ambassade de Don Garcia de Silva Figueroa à la lumière de ces données et de certaines autres, on découvre ce qui se cache derrière la jovialité de Châh Abbâs. Celui-ci sait fort bien que ses intérêts et ceux du Portugal divergent en tous points, surtout lorsqu'il veut mettre la main sur Ormuz et sa mainmise sur les îles voisines desquelles l'emporium tirait son eau potable. En réalité, le processus était déjà en route alors qu'il cajolait l'ambassadeur, se moquant avec lui de l'envoyé ottoman avec qui il gaussait vraisemblablement de lui, tout cela par l'entremise d'un interprète géorgien dont aucun des deux diplomates ne comprenait la langue... Châh Abbâs, décrit comme un homme courtaud, rougeaud et d'une familiarité plutôt vulgaire, apparaît dans la *Relaçam* comme l'habile meneur d'un jeu complexe dans lequel des interlocuteurs point assez retors se laissent visiblement prendre comme des moucherons dans une toile d'araignée. La brièveté avec laquelle est narrée le départ de Don Garcia de la cour safavide nous semble donner la mesure de son dépit d'avoir effectué un si long voyage pour un résultat à ce point décevant.

New insights into the History of Oman in the Sixteenth Century: a Contribution to the Study of the Evolution of the Muscat Fortifications

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Of all the ports along the coast of Oman, described by Duarte Barbosa as the "Kingdom of Ormuz in Arabia" (*Reino de Ormuz na Arábia*),¹ Muscat, situated at 23° 40', was certainly in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries one of the most important. Although it was surrounded by desert territory and separated from it by sharp peaks descending almost to the harbour itself, the town was situated in a sheltered area, in a deep bay protected by a very narrow entrance. Not only was it exceptionally well protected from the winds, but the depth of the harbour allowed the anchoring of ships of large tonnage as well. On the other hand, the existence of an islet located at the entrance of the bay concealed it from ships sailing by along the coast; for this reason the Greek-Roman sources considered it a "hidden port".² Some centuries later

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¹ See Jean Aubin, "Le royaume d'Ormuz au XVI^e siècle", *Mare-Luso Indicum*, vol. 5 (1973), pp. 114-116, and Duarte Barbosa, *O livro de Duarte Barbosa (edição crítica e anotada)*, ed. Maria Augusta da Veiga e Sousa, 2 vols. (Lisbon, 2000), vol. 1, p. 127.

² Ibrahim Yahya Zahran Al-Busaidi, *Os Portugueses na Costa do Oman na Primeira Metade do Século XVII*, unpublished M.A. dissertation (Lisbon, 2000), p. 131. The horseshoe configuration, already described by Brás de Albuquerque (p.131), is patent in the Portuguese iconography of the 16th-17th centuries. Regarding the islet, it is visible as being separated from the cliffs that surrounded the harbor in the *Livro das Plantas de todas as Fortalezas Cidades, e Povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental* by António Bocarro, illustrated by Pedro Barreto de Resende (c. 1642) (Biblioteca Pública de Évora, CXV/2-1) (hereafter Resende / Bocarro), published as António Bocarro, *O Livro das Plantas de Todas as Fortalezas, Cidades e Povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental*, ed. Isabel Cid (3 vols., Lisbon, 1992). See also António de Mariz Carneiro, *Descrição da Fortaleza de Sofala e das mais da Índia*, ed. Pedro Dias (Lisbon, 1990), n. 5. The same islet is also depicted from another much more visible angle in the *Livro de Lisuarte de Abreu* (1558-1564, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Ms. 525); and as a matter of fact the image shows two islets at the entrance of the Bay, curiously topped by crosses. In fact they were connected by a small beach that would get submerged at high tide. This beach is more visible in an image part of the *Livro das Plantas das Cidades e Povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental* (...) (Biblioteca do Paço Ducal de Vila Viçosa, Cod. 1471), ed. Luís Silveira (Lisbon, 1991), p. 45 (n. 29). Both the book *Plantas de Praças das Conquistas de Portugal* of Manuel Godinho de Herédia (1610) (Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro, Ms. CAM 3.5.), as well as

the natural conditions continued to be praised in Portuguese narrative sources. If in the sixteenth century Duarte Barbosa is laconic about Muscat and Tomé Pires ignores it, later on in the seventeenth century, António Bocarro and Fr. António Gouveia provide us with accurate information about the natural conditions of the port. We learn, for example, that it could accommodate twelve galleons and twenty-three galleys. The entrance, located to the southeast, was so narrow that the distance from one side to another could be covered by a gunshot. The depth was between twenty-five fathoms the entrance, twelve to thirteen inside the port and six fathoms near the beach.³

Muscat in the early sixteenth century

These natural conditions explain the birth of an agglomeration and its continued growth, attested already in the fourteenth century, that is, during the period of the foundation of Hormuz (1300). With an estimated population of 7,000 souls⁴ housed in a confined space, compressed between the sea and the mountain, the city exhibited the typical urban fabric of Muslim coastal settlements in the Indian Ocean; the streets were so narrow that the soldiers of Afonso de Albuquerque had difficulty to wield their long spears in September 1507, when the Portuguese chased the population through the town.⁵ Muscat had beautiful homes of stone and lime with several floors and terraces,⁶ which allowed for a better use of the space available, and several mosques. One of these appears to have been particularly sumptuous. Partly built with woodwork and vaulted in stone, it was surmounted by a terrace, resting on pillars made of wood or stone, in the same style as the one erected in Hormuz at the

the *Livro de Plantaforma das Fortalezas da India* ou *Atlas-Miscelânea* (c.1612-1623?) now lost, or the *Lyvro de Plantaforma das Fortalezas da India* (c.1612?/c.1635?) (Forte de S. Julião da Barra, Oeiras, Ms.18 505) merely indicate the presence of two small shoals at the entrance of the harbor. The book of the *Plantas das Cidades, Portos e Fortalezas da Conquista da India Oriental* (c.1633?) (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich, Cod. Icon. 162), one of the four existing copies) follows the same model: see José Manuel García, *Cidades e Fortalezas do Estado da India, séculos XVI e XVII* (Lisbon, 2009), pp. 74-75.

³ See António Bocarro, *O Livro das Plantas*, vol. II, p. 44. The notation of these values in fathoms is visible in the image of the *Livro das Plantas das Cidades e Povoações do Estado da India Oriental* (...), in the manuscript of the Biblioteca do Paço Ducal de Vila Viçosa (Cod. 1471) edited by Luís Silveira. The Portuguese maritime fathom was eight feet, which corresponded to 1.76 m; the current one corresponds to two yards, that is, to 1.83m, see Humberto Leitão & J. Vicente Lopes, *Dicionário de Linguagem de Marinha Antiga e Actual* (Lisbon, 1990), p. 108.

⁴ This number is an estimate by Aubin, "Le royaume d'Ormuz", p.115, where the method of counting is explained (n. 232).

⁵ Aubin, "Le royaume d'Ormuz", p. 115, quoting Brás de Albuquerque.

⁶ Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, *História do Descobrimento e Conquista da India pelos Portugueses*, ed. M. Lopes de Almeida (2 vols., Porto, 1987), bk. II, chap. LV, vol. 1, p. 330.

beginning of the fourteenth century.⁷ This mosque, depicted with its roof terrace and its minaret, is placed to the east of the city in the illustration of the *Livro de Lisuarte de Abreu* (1558-1564) within walking distance of the beach. A white building that rises in the same location in the image of the *Livro das Plantas* may be the mosque, too, though drawn without its minaret. These iconographic versions of the mosque are interesting, because an older temple, built on stone pillars, was destroyed by Albuquerque during the 1507 attack.⁸

Apart from the urban centre, there were palm gardens fed by wells equipped with norias. Three of these *palmares*, enclosed by walls of stone and adobe (dried brick), with the typical oasis crop system of the Arabian Peninsula and South of Iraq (Basrah) are visible in the image already mentioned in the *Livro das Plantas*. One of these gardens, which corresponds to the place of al-Tawiyān, where three *wadis* are joined (*al-wadi* al-Kabir, *al-wadi* al-Wusta and *al-wadi* al-Saghir) was described as "Orta do Cabaço"; it corresponds in Resende / Bocarro's description to the garden in the figure that lies beyond the wall, along the path that meandered towards the mountains, at the foot of one of them. This mountain was crowned by a small round bulwark, one of the various watchtowers that were spread over the peaks.⁹ The water of this well, the "Orta do Cabaço" / al-Tawiyān which supplied the fortress and urban area in the seventeenth century, was certainly already being used in the previous period. It was one of these wells, probably the same one that exists today at Tawi al-Zubayr, al-Tawiyān al-'Alawiyat, and Tawi al-Za'franiyah, that, using a basic system of plumbing, was able to supply ships.¹⁰ Freshwater resources, as we shall see, were crucial to the importance of Muscat within the maritime economy of the northern quadrant of the Arabian Sea.¹¹

According to Fernão Lopes de Castanheda in his *História*, the access to the hinterland between the two inhospitable mountain ranges (*Serras*) was barred by a strong

⁷ Aubin, "Le royaume d'Ormuz", p. 115, n. 236 and p. 90, n. 57.

⁸ Castanheda, *História do Descobrimento*, bk. II, chap. LV, vol. 1, p. 334.

⁹ This watchtower / bulwark may correspond to the small fort of Qal'at al Rawiya. See *Muscat Gate Museum. Memoirs of History* (Muscat, 2001), p. 16.

¹⁰ *Muscat Gate*, p. 17. Consider the comment by A.H. Morton in Michel Membre, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539-1542)*, ed. A.H. Morton (London, 1993), p. 52, n. 3 regarding the testimony of Membre according to whom there was a small stream in Muscat. The cultivation of sugar cane is also mentioned. The small stream that appears in the *Livro das Plantas* was probably a small saltwater stream flowing into the beach and not a stream of freshwater.

¹¹ Aubin, "Le royaume d'Ormuz", p. 115. See also *Muscat Gate*, pp. 14-17. The irrigation system was also remarkably improved as evidenced by the system of *qanats* (*aflaj*) that exist traditionally in Oman: *Muscat Gate*, pp. 20-23, highlights the social environment associated with the maintenance of the wells and *aflaj*.

structure created with a wooden “junk” with two faces,¹² reinforced with rubble and equipped with several cannons, the technique used in other cities in Oman but also in Iranian cities continental or insular (like in Hormuz).¹³ The place of the defensive structure in question is easily discoverable, because new fortifications of the second half of the sixteenth and especially the seventeenth century as they appear in the beautiful illustration of Muscat in the *Livro das Plantas* must have been erected not far from the traces of an old *tranqueira*.¹⁴ The description of Castanheda, indicating that only two narrow passages gave access to the sea (and they were so narrow that they only could fit a man at a time), suggests that there may have existed by the beachfront some kind of defensive wall that espoused the curved shape of the bay, such as it can be seen later in a representation on the *Livro das Plantas* (even though a simple line of habitations facing the beach, could have constituted this defensive wall).¹⁵ The city existed therefore in a restricted space, between two sets of defensive walls. The passages were closed by doors, each one defended by a piece of artillery.¹⁶

This “very gracious place with very good homes” (*lugar muito gracioso de casas muito boas*) according to the testimony of Brás de Albuquerque, a “port of Oman that was unrivalled in the world” according to the pilot Ibn Majid, soon came to compete economically with the nearby town of Qalhat, the *Dar-al-fath*, which was considered as the second capital of the kingdom of Hormuz. Qalhat gradually lost its influence in favour of Muscat. The reasons for this decline had little to do, in the authoritative opinion of Jean Aubin, to the earthquake that struck Qalhat (and Hormuz) in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. They were most likely caused by the development of vessels with greater tonnage and the unfavourable conditions of the port of Qalhat (which could only receive small ships during the monsoon); these factors explain convincingly the gradual ascendancy of Muscat, whose harbour could shelter during the same monsoon periods vessels with much larger tonnage.¹⁷

¹² Castanheda, *História do Descobrimento*, bk. II, chap. LV, vol. 1, p. 330. The term makes no real sense here, unless referring to vessels littered ground or crushed, whose wood was used to make the mound, but it may be also a transcription error.

¹³ See Rudi Mathee, “Unwalled Cities and Restless Nomads: Firearms and Artillery in Safavid Iran”, *Safavid Persia. The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville (London, 1996), pp. 396-405.

¹⁴ Al-Busaïdi, *Os Portugueses*, p. 140, indicates that Albuquerque found there “a set of turrets and wood dust (clay?) that extended from one dune to another on the coast in front of the city”. Castanheda’s testimony is interesting.

¹⁵ In his letter to the authorities of Elvas (30.I.1509, *Arquivo da Câmara Municipal de Elvas, Livro 2 das Proprias*, fol.38-41) edited by Jean Aubin, “Cojeatar et Albuquerque”, *Mare Luso-Indicum*, vol. 2 (1971), p.146, king D. Manuel mentions the “strong walls” of Muscat, but as Jean Aubin indicates, the observation should have applied to the wall by the sea. There would also be some watchtowers, reported by Castanheda and Brás de Albuquerque (Aubin, “Le royaume d’Ormuz”, p. 121, n. 278).

¹⁶ Castanheda, *História do Descobrimento*, bk. II, chap. LV, vol. 1, p. 330.

¹⁷ Aubin, “Le royaume d’Ormuz”, p. 112.

Even though in 1515 the trade results from Qalhat to the king of Hormuz were over twice as much as the ones from Muscat,¹⁸ in the fifteenth century Muscat already had asserted itself as a key scale for Muslim merchant ships who were the link between the Red Sea and India and transported the pilgrims for the *Hajj*. It is there that ‘Abd-al Razzâq Samarqandî, ambassador of the Timuride Shâhrukh to the court of Calicut between 1442 and 1445, waited in the company of a group of merchants for a favourable monsoon in order to reach the Malabar Coast in May 1442. It is in Muscat that he stayed a month on the return trip in April-May 1444. It is also in this port-city that the Russian traveller Athanasius Nikitin made a stop on his journey to India.¹⁹

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Muscat was dominated by three major forces that fought for political power and religious influence: the powerful Bedouin lineage of Banû Jabr, that had been able to impose its domination over various regions of Oman (lineage headed by Sayf Bin Ajwad and, around 1470, by his brother Agwad Bin Zâmil),²⁰ the Nabhanites from the city of Bâhla (headed by Sulaymân Bin Sulaymân Al Nabahani) and the Ibadites (under the leadership of the ibadite *imam* ‘Umar-Bin al-Hattâb al-Harusi).

While Nabhanites and Ibadites fought each other in the late fifteenth century (a struggle that ended with the victory of Imam ‘Umar Bin-al-Hattâb al-Harusi and the intervention of Banu Jabr (1487),²¹ Hormuz kept there, since the fourteenth century, a system of protectorate. Muscat was directed, as in other cities of the coast of Oman (Qalhat and Quriyat), by a governor or vizier, usually chosen from the elite of the Persian kingdom, hailing from southern Iran. The governor coexisted with the reigning sheikh. In 1507, as reported by the Portuguese chronicler Fernão Lopes de Cas-

¹⁸ Aubin, “Le royaume d’Ormuz”, p. 113 and n. 215: Qalhat yielded 11,000 *asrafî* and Muscat 4,000, although the chronicler Gaspar Correia mentions 5,000 *asrafî* for Muscat. Also consider the *Revenus du Royaume d’Ormuz et dépenses du roi en 1515 [?]*, published by Jean Aubin, *Mare Luso-Indicum*, vol. 5/II (1973), p. 233, quoting João de Barros, *Ásia*, II/10-7 (annex 1 bis). Sohar would bring 1,500 *asrafî*, Khurfakkân the same amount, and Daba 500.

¹⁹ Aubin, “Le royaume d’Ormuz”, p. 112, n. 199.

²⁰ Aubin, “Le royaume d’Ormuz”, pp. 123-125. The Banu Jabr belong to the clan of Banu ‘Aqil, that descended from Amir bin Sassaa, one of the fractions of the tribes of Quraish: Al-Busaïdi, *Os Portugueses*, p. 20, n. 4.

²¹ See the main aspects in Al-Busaïdi, *Os Portugueses*, pp. 20-21. See also Aubin, “Le royaume d’Ormuz”, pp. 122-123; n. 284 points out that this part of the story is mostly known by a later work of chronicles influenced by the Ibadites, the *Kasf al-Gümma al-Jam’ li-’ahbâr al-Ummah*, translated by E.C. Ross, “Annals of Oman, from Early Times to the Year 1728 A.D.”, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. 43, 1 (1874), pp. 111-196 and commented by Ahmad ‘Ubaïdlî, *Kasf al-Gümma al-Jam’ li-’ahbâr al-Ummah* (Nicosia, 1985). See also Sarhan Bin Saïd Al-Izkawi, *Tarih ‘Uman Al-Muqtabas Min Kitab Kasf al-Gumma Al-Jami’ Li-Ahbar Al-Umma*, ed. Abdul-Majid Al-Qaisi (Muscat, 1980). The chronicle translated by G.P. Badger, *History of the Imâms and Sayyids of ‘Omân by Salîl-Ibn Razik from A.D. 661-1856* (London, 1871), written in the 19th century, is inspired by the *Kasf*.

tanheda, the governor was “a gelded man who had been a slave of the king of Hormuz”, a strong man who had been killed trying to escape the men of Afonso de Albuquerque.²²

Although it is not always clear how power was divided between the local sheikhs, viziers, warlords and eunuchs of royal Iranian origin that surrounded them, the staff of Hormuz had two essential functions: to strictly enforce the embargo of strategic materials related the marine construction (wooden paddles, *cairo*, iron, steel, sail cloth) thus preventing the construction of local fleets, which could pose a danger to the maritime power of the king of Hormuz;²³ and to govern the customs which collected in favour of Hormuz an important part of the rights of trade by which he was known in the Indian Ocean. These were applied to dates,²⁴ raisins of different castes, salt (a marsh where salt was extracted was compared by Brás de Albuquerque to Lisbon’s *Rossio*, i.e. its main square) and dried salted fish.²⁵

In 1535, Michele Membre indicates that animals (including horses) ate this dried salted fish, and walls and houses were built with this material.²⁶ Other authors, such as Ibn Majid, Gaspar Correia or Brás de Albuquerque enrich the list: they highlight the existence of cereals (*gallât*) like barley and wheat, fresh fruits, oil (*salit*), and the trade in slaves. To the agricultural productions we can add Indian sugar²⁷ and rice carefully stored in warehouses.²⁸ In the seventeenth century, Bocarro speaks of the production of some cotton, already mentioning products in the region that were not specifically from Muscat; he cites “*hua semente de que se usa ha pouco em co-*

²² Castanheda, *História do Descobrimento*, bk. II, chap. LV, vol. 1, p. 330. Regarding the plunder of Muscat, described by Portuguese sources, see also Al-Busaidi, *Os Portugueses*, pp. 30-32.

²³ The same rule was applied to Bahrain and the Portuguese were often used to monitor compliance with these measures. Regarding Bahrein, see Dejanirah Couto, “Contribution of Portuguese Narrative Sources to the History of Qal’at al-Bahrain (البحرين قلعة): some information on the expeditions of 1521 and 1529”, *20 Years of Bahrein Archaeology – 1986-2006*, ed. Pierre Lombard (Bahrein, in press); Patricia Risso, *Oman & Muscat: an Early Modern History* (New York, 1986), pp. 4-5.

²⁴ André Wink points out that Oman produced about forty types of dates among which the quality *ferd* that supported the long boat trips: André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World. Volume III – Indo-Islamic Society 14th-15th Centuries* (Leiden & Boston, 2004), p. 194.

²⁵ Barbosa, *O Livro*, p. 130: “E lugar de trato de mercadorias e de muito grande pescaria: aqui se pescam muito grandes pescados que salgam para se levar por mercadoria a outras partes”. That fish was, among others, the tuna fish fished near the Râ’s al Hadd, where in August of 1507 Afonso de Albuquerque ordered the burning of a fleet of about forty barges: Aubin, “Le royaume d’Ormuz”, p. 117.

²⁶ Membre, *Mission*, pp. 52-53.

²⁷ The statement from Bocarro about the existence of large amounts of very white sugar cane, partially in powder and in “*pedra de estremada bondade*” (i.e. exceedingly beautiful stone) seems to mean an autochthonous production, which coincides with the testimony (rejected by A.H. Morton) of Michele Membre, according to which there was production of sugar cane in Muscat (see *supra*); Bocarro, *O Livro das Plantas*, vol. II, p. 52.

²⁸ Different testimonies in Aubin, “Le royaume d’Ormuz”, pp. 114-115.

zimentos”, i.e. coffee (*caoa*), incense and *azebre*.²⁹ In contrast, the camels (and their wool cloths, called *cambolyns*) and horses of Muscat “very strong and very generous of mind”, were considered among the best that the Islamic world produced.³⁰

The camels were led to Hormuz, and integrated the caravans (*cafilas*) from Iran; the horses were sent to the great emporium of the Persian Gulf from where some were sold to India to serve, as we know, in the armies of the princes of the Deccan.³¹ Not being surrounded by cliffs, the ports of Muscat and Qalhat offered good conditions for carriage horses (unlike Quriyat where the sea clashed with the reefs, or Sohar, limited by coral reefs that forbade the approach of ships). These horses came from the oasis of the Batinah and the continental Arabia (mainly Qatîf and Hâsâ).³² However, and despite some contradiction in Portuguese texts, the great port of embarkation of horses seems to have been Khurfakkân, located further north. This dock was well protected, and there existed vast barns and stables to house the animals before the great crossing to India.³³

Muscat also produced the famous fibre extracted from coconut husk, called *cairo*, from which cables of ships were made.³⁴ In fact, the city was virtually an exclusive supplier – and carefully guarded by Hormuz – of the ships of passage. This trade, coupled with clean fresh water – sold in tubs or wooden barrels – for supplying ships, constituted, as has been pointed out, one of the greatest assets of Muscat.³⁵

²⁹ Bocarro, *O Livro das Plantas*, vol. II, p. 52.

³⁰ See the testimony of Bocarro, *O Livro das Plantas*, vol. II, pp. 51-52.

³¹ It is no coincidence that bales of a reed scent were sold in India, a substance known as the “herb of Muscat” or “Mecca straw” that served as bedding for horses transported in ships. On the issue of horse trading in different Portuguese sources see the recent article by Rui M. Loureiro, “Portuguese Involvement in Sixteenth Century Horse Trade through the Arabian Sea”, *Pferde in Asien: Geschichte, Handel und Kultur – Horses in Asia: History, Trade and Culture*, ed. Bert G. Fragner, Ralph Kauz, Roderich Ptak & Angela Schottenhammer (Vienna, 2009), pp. 137-146; Geneviève Bouchon, “Les musulmans du Kerala à l’époque de la découverte portugaise”, *Mare Luso-Indicum*, vol. 5/II (1973), p. 43; Aubin “Le royaume d’Ormuz”, pp. 117-118; the *Memoria sobre a Governança da Índia e Rendas de Ormuz* (before 11 June 1527), *Arquivos Nacionais da Torre do Tombo*, Lisbon (hereafter AN/TT), CC II, 141, 103, edited by António Dias Farinha, “Os Portugueses no Golfo Pérsico (1507-1538)”, *Mare Liberum*, vol. 3 (1991), pp. 93-96, indicates a yield from trade of horses in Ormuz of 80,000 “pardaus de ouro” (p. 95).

³² Dejanirah Couto [Potache], “The Commercial Relations between Basrah and Goa in the Sixteenth Century”, *Studia*, vol. 48 (1990), p. 148, n. 13.

³³ Aubin, “Le royaume d’Ormuz”, p. 118.

³⁴ Leitão & Lopes, *Dicionário de Linguagem*, p. 124. The cables made of *cairo*, although less resistant than linen, had longer duration and were lighter. The ports of Malabar and Gujarat obtained their supplies of *cairo* in the Maldives archipelago: Bouchon, “Les musulmans du Kerala”, p. 45.

³⁵ This is what can be determined from the testimony of Brás de Albuquerque: see Aubin, “Le royaume d’Ormuz”, p. 115, n. 231.

Muscat's role in the regional economy was also highly significant, given that the town combined maritime trade with fishing, irrigated crops and pastoral nomadism.³⁶ Cattle came from the interior, goats and sheep being moved to the coast by the Bedouins.³⁷ Another point to note is Muscat's role in the redistribution of products imported from India, such as the aforementioned rice and spices, moved to interior cities located between the Jebel Akhdar and Wadi Samâ'il, such as Manah, Nizwa, Bâhla and Izki. Various testimonies describe this redistribution.³⁸

The situation of economic control by Hormuz meant that there was also a rivalry between Muscat and Hormuz, which became visible often in situations of denial of payment of fees and taxes by the sheikhs from Oman. Actually Muscat disliked the draining of a portion of their income to Hormuz. And this draining was obviously considerable, due to the fact that traditional taxes in Muscat were generally lower than those of Hormuz: Muscat goods paid generally between 3.5% and 7.5% whilst the taxes in Hormuz were between 11% and 15% and sometimes more.³⁹

Traditional trade relations of Muscat with the city of Basrah, Iraq's southern capital, were carefully maintained, since they allowed an alternative to the economic pressures from Hormuz. In the seventeenth century the links continued to develop at a steady pace; António Bocarro indicates that from Muscat ships departed for the Persian Gulf and in particular for the factory at Kong, with Sind tissues brought from Dabul and Cambay, drugs, hides, indigo, sugar of Sind and Bengal, and coffee.⁴⁰ A portion of this was then sent to Basrah, especially "the finest and richest clothes because they are all very costly". The main port of the Shatt-el-Arab, which received the *câfilas* from Aleppo, supplied many dates, *aljofre*, *ruiva* and tissues from Persia, probably silks and brocades.⁴¹ Information about this whole complex traditional network of commerce, as well as stories about the rivalries between Mus-

³⁶ Wink, *Al-Hind*, p. 194; Aubin, "Le royaume d'Ormuz", p. 117.

³⁷ Aubin, "Le royaume d'Ormuz", p. 119.

³⁸ Trade attached to the Indian rice was already noted at the end of the thirteenth century by Marco Polo (Aubin, "Le royaume d'Ormuz", p. 119).

³⁹ Dejanirah Couto, "Hormuz Under the Portuguese Protectorate: Some Notes on the Maritime Economic Nets to India (Early 16th Century)", in *Aspects of the Maritime Silk Road: from the Persian Gulf to the East China Sea*, ed. Ralph Kauz (Wiesbaden, 2010), pp. 46-47: the rights obviously varied with the type of goods and their origin. In Muscat the white tissues of Balagat, Kambay and Sind, the caps and belts described as "camarabandos" (*Kamarband*) paid 11%, as well as Cambay indigo, the spices (pepper and nutmeg), tin and Indian sugar. The other goods paid 7 ½%. However in Hormuz, the Malacca tissues paid 16 ½% and the Indian tissues 10% while the Persian silk paid 5%. Only Indian raw cotton, necessary to the activity of weaving ateliers of Hormuz paid 5%. See also Aubin, "Le royaume d'Ormuz", p. 172.

⁴⁰ In the seventeenth century, Bocarro, *O Livro das Plantas*, vol. II, p. 62, states that the *cafila* which ran from Basrah to Muscat took only one escort ship due to the fact that the "enemies of Europe" were not there.

⁴¹ Bocarro, *O Livro das Plantas*, vol. II, p. 62.

cat, Qalhat and Hormuz, circulated in the Indian Ocean. They explain to some extent the interest of Albuquerque in Muscat and his offensive against the city in 1507.⁴²

Without fortifications worthy of that name on the side of the bay, Muscat was a fairly easy prey. Indeed, until the early sixteenth century and the arrival of the Portuguese, few offensives had taken place coming from the sea. Only *Balouchi* pirates of the Nodhaki tribe from Malakân, appearing in Portuguese sources under the name *nautiques*, and *niquelus* (a tribe originally from Oman but installed in the region of Nakhilu in the Persian Gulf, perhaps in the mid-sixteenth century, by permission of the governor of Lâr)⁴³ posed, with their small ships some kind of threat in the region, and therefore the king of Ormuz only had in Muscat modest fleets for defence.⁴⁴

The Portuguese in Muscat

The looting of the city by Albuquerque in 1507 and the peace that was established afterwards with the sheikh Râshid Bin Ahmad Masqatî led to the establishment of a small nucleus of Portuguese and of a *feitor*. During the uprising of the cities of Oman in November 1521 against the payment of taxes owed to the *malek* of Hormuz (an event closely linked to the uprising against the Portuguese in Hormuz a few days before),⁴⁵ Râshid, was ordered to kill all Portuguese who resided in the *feitoria*, but refused to do so. The episode, thanks to which the Sheikh went on to win the status of the Portuguese ally in the region, and to be gratified by them,⁴⁶ however, led to

⁴² Aubin, "Cojeatar", pp. 112-113, following the testimonies of Brás de Albuquerque and Gaspar Correia. See also the testimony of Martín Fernández de Figueroa, *Conquista de las Indias de Persia e Arabia que hizo la Armada del Rey don Manuel de Portugal e de las muchas Tierras, diversas Gentes, Extrañas Riquezas y Grandes Batallas que hallá hubo. En Sumario del Bachiller Juan Agüero de Trasmiera*, ed. Luis Gil Fernández (Valladolid, 1999), p. 84 and ns. 139 and 140.

⁴³ Concerning the *Balouchi* pirates and the *Nikhelus*, see Willem Floor, "Who were the Nikhelus?", in *Revisiting Hormuz: Portuguese Interactions in the Persian Gulf Region in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Dejanirah Couto & Rui Loureiro (Wiesbaden, 2008), p. 91, n. 5 (*nautiques*) and pp. 89-105 (*Nikhelus*). About the *nautiques*, see also the "Carta do Irmão Aleixo Madeira ao padre Luís Gonçalves" (Hormuz, 24.IX.1553), edited in *Documentação para a História das Missões do Padroado Português do Oriente - Índia (1551-1554)*, ed. António da Silva Rego (12 vols., Lisboa, 1993), vol. 5, p. 323 (n. 63); description of an attack of these pirates, in "Carta Geral do Colégio de Goa aos Padres e Irmãos de Portugal" (Goa, 1.XII.1552), *Documentação*, vol. 5, pp. 237-238 (n. 49).

⁴⁴ As it was already mentioned, the reason was the goal of Hormuz to prevent the emergence of any other regional maritime power: Aubin, "Le royaume d'Ormuz", p. 143.

⁴⁵ Concerning the details of the revolt and its implications in Oman, see Dejanirah Couto, "Réactions anti-portugaises dans le golfe Persique, 1521-1529", in *D'un Orient l'autre*, ed. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, Angel Pino & Samaha Khoury (Paris & Leuven, 2005), pp. 123-160.

⁴⁶ Regarding the context of the relationships and the detailed documentation that certifies them, Couto, "Réactions", p. 145 and ns. 103 and 104. The *Livro das Presas da Armada de D. Luís*

the death of Ra'is Daylamî Shâh, nephew of the powerful vizier of Hormuz, Ra'is Sharafuddîn.⁴⁷

At that time, there was a Portuguese group in Muscat: the captain (*capitão do mar*) Manuel de Sousa Tavares, Fernão Alvares Cernache,⁴⁸ Tristão Vaz da Veiga (*feitor* in Qalhat since 1520, who took refuge in Muscat when the Portuguese who resided in Qalhat were killed in 1521),⁴⁹ and João de Meira, who had travelled to Basrah in the Persian Gulf in 1517.⁵⁰ In April of 1522,⁵¹ D. Luís de Meneses, brother of Governor of *Estado da Índia* D. Duarte de Meneses (1522-1524), arrived in Muscat – an allied territory at that time. A number of invoices describe the content of the presents sent to sheikh Râshid Bin Ahmad Masqatî.⁵² This alliance was asymmetric, since it did not prevent D. Luís, after offering the Sheikh a few slaves in remembrance of his faithfulness, from putting in irons some subjects of Râshid.⁵³

de Meneses, in Farinha, "Os Portugueses no Golfo Pérsico", pp. 60-61, also indicated that local ships (*tarârid*) were also given to Râshid. As it has been said, he didn't participate in the rebellion in Hormuz, and gave back to the Portuguese what was left of the cargo of the *S. Jorge*, that had been shipwrecked off Muscat in August of 1522, while returning from India.

⁴⁷ Couto, "Réactions", p. 146 and n. 108. Ra'is Daylamî Shâh, who had marched on Muscat, was killed in the skirmish that opposed the sheikh of Muscat near Tiwî (Teive), three leagues north of Qalhat (where there was a fortress) or at Wadi Samâ'il. The Portuguese who were on board of a *nau* from Basrah (two servants from Tristão Vaz da Veiga) provided help to Râshid.

⁴⁸ Concerning this episode, see also Al-Busaidi, *Os Portugueses*, pp. 37-38.

⁴⁹ Couto, "Réactions anti-portugaises", p. 145.

⁵⁰ João de Meira was one of the first sent to Basrah in 1517 and in 1521. Regarding these trips, look up Ronald Bishop Smith, *João de Meira being Portuguese texts found in the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo relative to João de Meira's little known Voyages to Basrah in 1517 and 1521, and also the unknown voyage of Antonio de Saldanha to Basrah in 1519, with indications before they arrived at Basrah they were preceded by Gregorio da Quadra proceeding to Ormuz from his Captivity in the Yemen* (Lisbon, 1971); regarding the second trip of Meira, see AN/TT, CC I, 27,97, (25.I.1522), document published by Smith, *João de Meira*, p. 26-27.

⁵¹ February, in Al-Busaidi, *Os Portugueses*, p.37. See Couto, "Réactions anti-portugaises", p. 139 and n. 72. D. Luís came in sight of the island of Masira at the end of March, and arrived in Muscat in late April. Sohar was looted in early May or June. The arrival of the armed forces of Hormuz took place about 16 or 17 June (Fernão Lopes de Castanheda gives the date of beginning of May: Castanheda, *História do Descobrimento*, bk. VI, chap. IIII, vol. 2, p. 158).

⁵² Couto, "Réactions anti-portugaises", p. 146 and n. 111: the various orders, dating back to July 1522, which are part of presents to the sheikh of Muscat, refer caps, *beatilhas* and even a spear.

⁵³ Couto, "Réactions anti-portugaises", p. 146 and n. 110. See also the *Relação dos Escravos tomados em Muscate por Roque de Sousa, Capitão da Fusta Conceição e entregues a Bras Barroso, Meirinho da Nau S. Jorge*, AN/TT, CC II, 101, 144, (17.VI.1522), published by Farinha, "Os Portugueses no Golfo Pérsico", p. 66. However, in April of the same year, D. Luís had ordered that seven slaves that had been taken by Manuel de Sousa near the Râ's al-Hadd Cape (*Roçalgate*), would be given to the of Muscat. Muscat was "lugar de vosos amyguos e havedo respeyto aos muitos servyços que no alevantamento de Horomuz fyzeram a El-Rey noso senhor"; see also the *Ordem de D. Luis de Meneses a Jorge Pereira, Feitor da Armada, para serem entregues ao Xequ de Muscat 7 escravos qui tinham sido tomados por Manuel de Sousa*

However, the alliance offered some advantages to the Sheikh. Indeed, if the support of the Portuguese isolated him from other coastal cities of Oman, hostile to the Portuguese, on the other hand, the Portuguese support allowed him a certain freedom from the demands of Hormuz; above all it helped him to sustain the assaults of the Banû Jabr and of its rival, the *Wakil* of Qalhat. Portuguese support was substantially materialized during the stay of the brother of the governor in 1521: D. Luís left in Muscat about forty Portuguese who helped Râshid on an incursion against Quriyat, and remained in Muscat from May to August 1521.⁵⁴ Later, in 1527, the Portuguese *feitor* with authority over the customs of Muscat, Qalhat and Quriyat, was placed under the protection of Râshid as it is recorded in the *Memoria da Governança da Índia e Rendas de Ormuz*.⁵⁵

Sheikh Râshid (and later on members of his family) obtained the monopoly of *cairo* trade supplying all the naval vessels. He also received the monopoly of controlling customs, the *kapan* (weight) and the office of judge of customs until 1590. In the meantime, signs of nervousness among Portuguese and Hormuzis were detectable again in 1526, due to the exactions of the captain of Hormuz, Diogo de Melo, who eventually put into irons the vizier of Hormuz, Sharafuddîn.⁵⁶ The intervention of the new governor of the *Estado da Índia*, Lopo Vaz de Sampaio, calmed down the situation.⁵⁷ These incidents, part of the complex relations of the Portuguese with the authorities of Hormuz during this period, would not seriously affect, however, the Luso-Mascati alliance that the Portuguese needed to check and stabilize Qalhat, the old rival of Muscat.

Indeed, Re'is Shebabdîn, governor of Qalhat, lost no opportunity to rise against Hormuz and against the Portuguese. In 1519, he was in open conflict with the king of Hormuz, Tûrân Shâh IV, who, failing to attract him to Hormuz, urged Duarte Mendes de Vasconcelos to imprison the Re'is in his own home. The attempt failed, and Duarte Mendes de Vasconcelos was forced to withdraw without being able to

junto ao Cabo Roçalgate, AN/TT, CC II, 100, 138 (22.V.1522), in Farinha, "Os Portugueses no Golfo Pérsico", p. 66.

⁵⁴ See o *Livro das presas da Armada de D. Luis de Meneses*, edited by Farinha, "Os Portugueses no Golfo Pérsico", p. 61: "(...) seys pardaos que gastou em mamtimento de trimta e nove homens portugueses que foram com o xequ de Mazquate pera darem em um lugar que se chama Curyate que estava de guerra que faz em reaes mill e oitocentos (...)".

⁵⁵ *Memoria da Governança da Índia e Rendas de Ormuz*, already mentioned, published by Farinha, "Os Portugueses no Golfo Pérsico", pp. 93-94.

⁵⁶ Couto, "Réactions anti-portugaises", p. 150 and n. 129. These signs of nervousness were linked to the arrest of the *wakil* of Hormuz, Re'is Sharafuddîn, by the captain of Hormuz. The captain had extorted 2,750 *pardaus* to Sharafuddîn. The climate of rebellion is also stressed by Al-Busaidi, *Os Portugueses*, p. 39, ns. 1 and 2. According to the Portuguese chroniclers, Qalhat seems to have been the first focus of uprising, followed by Muscat.

⁵⁷ Al-Busaidi, *Os Portugueses*, p. 39.

capture Shebabdîn.⁵⁸ In 1521, however, during the anti-Portuguese uprising of Hormuz, Shebabdîn did manage to assassinate the group that he met in Qalhat, except the *feitor* Tristão Vaz da Veiga, who, as we have seen, found refuge in Muscat.⁵⁹

The years of 1521-1527 were important as they announced the economic and strategic role that Muscat would play in the following decades. Thus, between 1529 and 1535, when the Gujarat began to play a role with greater political relevance in the eyes of the Portuguese,⁶⁰ and they became increasingly interested in the port of Diu, Muscat strengthened its role as a key port for the commercial fleets that linked the Red Sea and the northern coast of India. About twenty years later, in 1553, the Jesuit priest Aleixo Madeira, in transit from Goa to Hormuz indicates that in the port of Muscat there were "thirty or forty sails of merchants (*chatins*) of India",⁶¹ which gives an idea of the intensity of the port's traffic in the middle of the sixteenth century.

On the other hand, the Mamluk threat between 1507 and 1517⁶² gave new importance to strategic ports in Oman as evidenced by the expedition of Huseyn al-Kûrdi (Huseyn Al-Tûrki) against Diu in 1509. After 1517, with the conquest of Egypt, the Turks themselves would replace the Mamluks. The establishment of the *eyalet* of Yemen in the decade of 1520⁶³ led to the increase of rumours about the possible

⁵⁸ Al-Busaidi, *Os Portugueses*, pp. 35-36. Description of the episode in Castanheda, *História do Descobrimentos*, bk. V, chap. XXXI, vol. 2, pp. 56-57.

⁵⁹ Al-Busaidi, *Os Portugueses*, p. 37. Castanheda, *História do Descobrimento*, bk. V, chap. LXXXIII, vol. 2, p. 141.

⁶⁰ The establishment of the factory by Afonso de Albuquerque in Diu in 1513, was followed by intentions to build a fortress in 1519, and successive expeditions took place (Diogo Lopes de Sequeira, Heitor da Silveira, Lopo Vaz de Sampaio and to finalize Nuno da Cunha in 1531). The treaty of December 23, 1534 that led to the granting of Bassein (Vasai) by Gujaratis provided a framework to Portuguese aspirations: see Dejanirah Couto, "Em Torno da Concessão e da Fortaleza de Baçaim (1529-1546)", *Mare Liberum*, vol. 9 (1995), pp. 119-122. See also the recent unpublished doctoral thesis by André Pinto de Sousa Dias Teixeira, *Baçaim e o seu território (1534-1738): administração, economia e sociedade* (Lisbon, 2010). Regarding the traditional importance of the economic links between Muscat and Gujarat consider the excerpt from the letter from the Sheikh of Muscat, Râshid Bin Ahmad Masqatî, in Aubin, "Le royaume d'Ormuz", p. 171 (quoting AN/TT, *Cartas Orientais*, n. 82).

⁶¹ Letter of Brother Aleixo Madeira to Father Luís Gonçalves (Ormuz, 24.IX.1553), *Documentação*, vol. 5, p. 324.

⁶² Although the expedition of al-Huseyn Kurdî has not yet been studied in sufficient detail, one can see Jean Aubin "Albuquerque et le Cambaye", *Mare Luso-Indicum*, 2 (1971) pp. 12-19; Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery*, (New York, 1994), pp. 108-117; Dejanirah Couto, "Les Ottomans et l'Inde Portugaise", *Vasco da Gama e a Índia / Vasco da Gama et l'Inde / Vasco da Gama and India*, ed. João Pedro Garcia (3 vols., Lisbonne-Paris, 1999), vol. I, pp. 183-184.

⁶³ Dejanirah Couto, "Portuguese-Ottoman Rivalry in the Persian Gulf in the Mid-Sixteenth Century: the Siege of Ormuz, 1552", in *Portugal, the Persian Gulf and Safavid Persia*, ed. Rudi

entry of a Turkish fleet into the Indian Ocean, coming from the Red Sea; and the alerts became more insistent and regular. For the Portuguese, who kept their information networks active in the Arabian Sea,⁶⁴ the cities of Oman constituted true "listening posts" and supported surveillance efforts to follow the Ottoman manoeuvres in the region.⁶⁵ So much so that even the Jesuits were involved in the web of the Portuguese informants: in October 1554, Father António Mendes suggested that a Father of the Society of Jesus could occupy the convent abandoned by the Franciscans in Beirut in order to get fresh secret information about the Ottomans. He also suggested that the Fathers of the Society who were in Venice would befriend Venetian consuls in order to obtain informations and use them as postmen between Europe and India.⁶⁶

Indeed, the great expedition of Hadım Süleyman Pasha to the Red Sea, and subsequently to Diu, in 1538, came to justify such a role for the Omanite cities.⁶⁷ But it was certainly the fact that the Ottomans had implemented their power more firmly in Aden, the *sancağ eyalet* of Yemen in 946/1539, that this role became even more relevant. On the other hand, although this establishment had been problematic for many decades (see the unstable period in 1547 during which Farhad Pasha was named *beylerbeyi* of Yemen, succeeding Uways Pasha),⁶⁸ it had as its logical corollary the intensification of the activities of Ottoman corsairs in the coastal waters of Oman, contributing to extend the area of informal Ottoman influence into the region.⁶⁹ In 1546, the year of the conquest of Basrah in the Persian Gulf,⁷⁰ they at-

Mathee & Jorge Flores (Leuven, 2011), p. 145 ff.; see also Salih Özbaran, *Ottoman Expansion towards the Indian Ocean in the 16th Century* (Istanbul, 2009), p. 215-251.

⁶⁴ See Dejanirah Couto, "Arméniens et Portugais dans les réseaux d'information de l'océan Indien au XVI^e siècle", in *Les Arméniens dans le commerce asiatique au début de l'ère moderne*, ed. Sushil Chaudhury & Kéram Kévonian (Paris, 2006), pp. 171-196.

⁶⁵ About the Ottoman power in Yemen, see among several other authors Michel Lesure, "Un document ottoman de 1525 sur l'Inde portugaise et les pays de la mer Rouge", *Mare Luso-Indicum*, vol. III (1976), pp. 137-160. Couto, "Les Ottomans", pp. 182-183.

⁶⁶ "Carta do Irmão António Mendes a S. Inácio" (Ormuz, 20.IX.1554), in *Documentação*, vol. 5, p. 343: "(...) mui amigos do cônsul dos venezianos, que esta em Alepo, e do que esta no Grão-Cairo, porque tendo com elles comunicação e amizade, por elles se poderia escrever a esta Índia".

⁶⁷ Couto, "Les Ottomans", pp. 187-188; Dejanirah Couto, "No Rasto de Hâdim Suleimão Pacha: alguns Aspectos do Comércio do Mar Vermelho nos Anos de 1538-1540", in *A Carreira da Índia e as Rotas dos Estreitos*, ed. Artur Teodoro de Matos & Luís Filipe F. Reis Thomaz (Angra do Heroísmo, 1998), pp. 496-499; R. J. Blackburn, "Turkish-Yemenite Political Relations, 1538-1568", unpublished doctoral dissertation (Toronto, 1971); see also R.J. Blackburn, "Two Documents on the Division of Ottoman Yemen into two *Beglerbegiliks* (973/1565)", *Turcica*, vol. 27 (1995), p. 224.

⁶⁸ See Frédérique Soudan, *L'Yémen ottoman d'après la chronique d'Al-Mawza'i Al-Ihsân fî duhûl mamlakat al Yaman taht Zill 'adâlat Âl 'Utmân* (Le Caire, 1999), p. 252; Couto, "Portuguese-Ottoman Rivalry", pp. 147-148.

⁶⁹ For a synthesis of Ottoman maritime activities during this period, see Giancarlo Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 90-95.

tacked Qalhat and proceeded to Muscat, where the forces of the local emir, Sheikh Rabi'eh (son of Râshid Ahmad Bin Masqatî), with the support of the *feitor* Fernão Dias Caesar and the tax collector (*recebedor de finanças*) Diogo Luís,⁷¹ managed to repel them without too much difficulty. However, two ships, one from Basrah and the other from Chaul (loaded with bales of silk) were captured, but the owners rescued them almost immediately.⁷²

The Ottoman attacks

It is in this double perspective, both economic and strategic, that we can understand the interest of the Portuguese for Muscat. In the 1540s, the collection of information and "observation" of Ottoman movements in the western Indian Ocean became progressively more important; the need to defend Hormuz and the *Estado da Índia* eventually led the Portuguese to set up an agreement with the Sheikh (after consulting the vizier and the *Malek* of Ormuz) in order to support the decision of erecting a fortress. Interestingly, the impact of the Ottoman attack of 1546 had been stopped by just twenty-six Portuguese whose only defensive structure was an outer wall along the shore ("*tranqueira forte ao longo da água*") made from wood or from rows of stones laid in a herring-bone pattern.⁷³

The construction of the first Portuguese fortification was therefore initiated by order of Captain João Lisboa in 1551. The order was given by the Viceroy Afonso de Noronha,⁷⁴ as he explained himself in a letter of January 22, 1552 to king D. João III.⁷⁵ The cost of the construction of the stronghold was to be supported by the rents

⁷⁰ Concerning the conquest of Basrah see Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, Viviane Rahmé & Salam Hamza, "Textes ottomans et safavides sur l'annexion de Bassora en 1546", *Eurasian Studies*, vol. III/1 (2004), pp. 1-33; Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, Viviane Rahmé & Salam Hamza, "Notes et documents sur le ralliement de la principauté de Basrah à l'empire ottoman (1534-1538)", *Anatolia Moderna / Yeni Anadolu*, vol. VI (1996), pp. 85-95.

⁷¹ *Obras completas de D. João de Castro*, ed. Armando Cortesão & Luís de Albuquerque (4 vols., Coimbra, 1968-1981), vol. III, "Carta de Luís Falcão a D. João de Castro" (4.XI.1546), p. 257.

⁷² *Obras completas*, vol. III, "Carta de Sebastião Lopes Lobato a D. João de Castro" (30.X.1546), pp. 253-254.

⁷³ *Obras completas*, vol. III, p. 252.

⁷⁴ See the recent biography of the Viceroy by Nuno Vila-Santa, *D. Afonso de Noronha, Vice-rei da Índia. Perspectivas Políticas do Reino e do Império em Meados de Quinhentos* (Lisboa, 2011). About the policy against the Ottomans, *Obras completas*, vol. III, pp. 85-92.

⁷⁵ AN/TT, CC I, 87,71, edited by Dejanirah Couto, "Un coup d'épée dans l'eau: la *Memoria da tomada de fortaleza de Catifa* et l'expédition à Bassorah", in *Revisiting Ormuz*, pp. 78-85, specially p. 81 (fol. 2v° and fol. 3): "os navios que vão a Ormuz e vem dele pera Índia vão forçadamente fazer sua agoada e se acolhem e muitas vezes imverna aly armada (...). E porque seria cousa tam prejudicial a Ormuz entrarem aly os Turcos e por a tera ser de calidade e a baya de maneira que se podiam fazer fortes (...) todos asentaram que deuia logo prover niso e

from Qalhat and Muscat, and this suggests that Muscat was far from being able to finance the project by itself.⁷⁶ Indeed, if in 1515 Qalhat yielded 11,000 *ashrafi* while Muscat only yielded 4,000 ou 5,000, as we mentioned before,⁷⁷ from 1541-1543 Qalhat was still yielding thirty *leques* but, surprisingly, Muscat does not appear mentioned in the records of the incomes of the royal house of Hormuz during these years.⁷⁸

The date of the order given by the Viceroy D. Afonso de Noronha deserves a comment as it is related to a military episode that occurred in the Persian Gulf in 1551. This event, to which Portuguese sources paid almost no attention with the exception of Diogo do Couto, had a considerable impact on the geopolitics of the region.⁷⁹ We refer to the incursion of D. Antão de Noronha, the nephew of the Viceroy D. Afonso de Noronha, against the oasis of Qâtîf on the shore of the Arabian Gulf, the entry of his fleet into the Shatt-el-Arab, and his attempt to attack Basrah, already dominated by the Ottomans.

Indeed, retaliation came soon, and in 1551/1552, Admiral Pîrî Re'îs, the well-known Ottoman navigator and cosmographer arrived to blockade Hormuz.⁸⁰ Before reaching the island of Djarûn (Hormuz), Pîrî began by laying siege to Muscat⁸¹ where his son, Mahmoud Bey led the attack.⁸² For the Ottomans, Muscat represented a logistical base to attack Hormuz and consolidate their presence in the western Gulf; it was important for them to ensure the safety of the military outpost of Basrah. Two Ottoman documents, sent to Istanbul by Kubâd Pasha, the governor of Basrah, on 17 October 1552 (26 *shevval* 959) and November 5, 1552 (18 *zi'l-ka'de* 959) give us some information about the Ottoman conquest of Muscat. From these documents we

que deuia mamdar fazer hum baluarte sobre hua rocha que na emtrada da baya estaa (...) dei cuidado desta obra a João de Lixboa, por ser hum homem homrrado...".

⁷⁶ Couto, "Un coup d'épée Couto", p. 81: "(...) requere-se a el-Rey d'Ormuz que das remdas de Calayate e Mazqate dese ajuda pera se fazer. Pareceo-lhe tambem que deue as remdas do mesmo Mazqate pera se gastarem no mesmo baluarte atee se acabar".

⁷⁷ See note 18.

⁷⁸ See the *Titulo das Remdas que remde a Ylha d'Oromuz (vers 1541-1543)*, edited by Jean Aubin as an appendix of his article "Le royaume d'Ormuz", p. 219. Julfar appears in first position (probably because of its pearl fisheries); the income was 45 *lakh* (*leques*).

⁷⁹ Couto, "Un coup d'épée", pp. 57-88; Dejanirah Couto, "L'expédition portugaise à Bassora en 1551", *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-Lettres* (Paris, 2003), pp. 461-486.

⁸⁰ *Geschichte Sultan Süleyman Kanûnîs von 1520 bis 1557 oder Tabakât ül-Memâlik ve Derecât il-Mesâlik von Cêlalzâde Mustafâ genannt Koca Nisânci* ed. Petra Kappert (Wiesbaden, 1981), p. 98 (482^a53.71, 482^b53.72).

⁸¹ Cengiz Orhonlu, "Hint Kaptanlığı ve Piri Re'îs", *Belleten*, vol. XXIX/134 (1970), pp. 4-6.

⁸² Orhonlu, "Hint Kaptanlığı", p. 5, n. 27. D. Álvaro de Noronha (AN/TT, CCI, 89, 9), in a letter to D. João III (Hormuz, 31.X.1552), reports that Mahmoud Bey (*Mamede Beque*), son of Pîrî Re'îs, fired upon Muscat for six days with sixteenth galleys; his father came afterwards with thirteenth other ships.

also learn that Pîrî Re'is had encircled the island of Djarûn with 850 men, 24 *kadirga*, 3 or 4 *barça* and many weaponry.⁸³ These forces had already served him to overcome previously the fortress of Muscat. João Lisboa and the Portuguese garrison surrendered in ambiguous circumstances after a week of fighting; although the captain stated that he resisted for a month, a cross-checking with several other sources indicates that the resistance lasted effectively for a week only. In a sarcastic vein, the craftsmen (*mestres*) of Goa, in a letter to king D. João III, suggested that it was not surprising that the captain João Lisboa surrendered, because "he was a merchant-soldier (*chatym*) who bought the fortress with money".⁸⁴

The Ottomans captured 128 men of the garrison,⁸⁵ including the captain João de Lisboa. After having followed Pîrî Re'is to Hormuz, in circumstances that were not very clear – it is not known if as a hostage, or as a volunteer informant – João Lisboa was sent to Cairo, where he was officially kept for several years in captivity. During this period, and to dispel rumours of his conversion to Islam (and collusion with the Ottomans), he organized a spy network at the service of King D. João III,⁸⁶ who, in subsequent years, and in spite of the information that he had gotten on the questionable behaviour of the captain, still undertook initiatives to have the Portuguese prisoners of Muscat released.⁸⁷

⁸³ Regarding these ships see Idris Bostan, "Gemi Yapımcılığı ve Osmanlı Donanmasında Gemiler", *Türk Denizcilik Tarihi* – vol. I, ed. Idris Bostan & Salih Özbaran (Istanbul, 2009), pp. 325-339; Dejanirah Couto, "Le viaggio scritto per un comito veneziano et la Descriptio Peregrinationis Georgii Huszti: quelques témoignages sur les équipages de l'expédition de Hadım Süleyman Pasa dans l'océan Indien (1538)", *Eurasian Studies*, vol. VIII/1-2 (2010), pp. 84-87; Daniel Panzac, *La marine ottomane. De l'apogée à la chute de l'empire* (Paris, 2012), pp. 20-27; Gábor Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 48-54.

⁸⁴ Letter from Goa (25(?).XI.1552), AN/TT, CC I, 89, 21, edited in *Documentação*, vol. 5, pp. 218-219 (n. 46). See the *cartas* from *Patrão das Naus da Índia e Mar Oceano* (Master of the Indian fleet) e de *Piloto-Mor* (pilot) in King D. Manuel's chancery, Liv. 51, fol. 283 and Liv. 8, fol. 113 respectively, as well as pensions of 10,000 *Reis* and of 4,000 *Reis* Liv. 51, fol. 37 and Liv. 3, fol. 213, respectively.

⁸⁵ The garrison numbers vary: the craftsmen of Goa indicate 60 men, *Documentação*, vol. 5, p. 218.

⁸⁶ We have his extensive report to the Portuguese sovereign written in Cairo on August 30, 1555 (AN/TT, CC I, 86,120), transcribed and published in full by Couto, "Portuguese-Ottoman Rivalry", pp. 167-174.

⁸⁷ See Dejanirah Couto, "L'espionnage portugais dans l'Empire ottoman", *La Découverte, le Portugal et l'Europe*, ed. Jean Aubin (Paris, 1990), p. 262, n. 71. The favourable opinion of D. Álvaro de Noronha – shared by the viceroy D. Afonso – faded after the surrender of Muscat (AN/TT, CC I, 89, 9). D. João III had been warned of the dubious behaviour of the captain of Muscat since 1554. In a letter to Pedro de Alcaçova Carneiro (s/d, AN/TT, *Colecção S.Vicente*, vol. VI, fol. 266-266vº) he confirms the information: "em outra carta vosa me falays sobre o resgate daqueles portugueses que foram tomados em Muscat pelos Turcos E por que informam que tenho de quam mal se ouveram naquele negocio e (crossed of: "nem") cumprimento o que deviam nele a meu serviço e a suas honras". The negotiations for the liberation started in the summer of 1554 through the intervention of an overseer of Beatriz de Luna (Nasci), the

If the testimony of the same craftsmen of Goa is to be trusted, the responsibilities of the loss of Muscat could not be attributed solely to the captain of the fortress. In India, the Viceroy D. Afonso de Noronha had demobilized his forces until he got information of the arrival of the Ottoman fleet. Unwilling to fight the Turks, the Viceroy began preparations, and did it so slowly (*tam de vagar*) that, as the document indicates, the Ottomans had time to attack Muscat before the arrival of any Lusitanian assistance".⁸⁸

The Portuguese effort to fortify the port of Muscat in the second half of the sixteenth century is also explained by the fact that due to the quality of its moorings and the presence of a strategic product for war at sea (freshwater), it remained very attractive not only for the Ottoman fleets but also for the Ottoman corsairs. Thus they came to attack Muscat from 1555 onwards, following the great battle of August 1554 when Seydi Ali Re'is fought against the armada of D. Álvaro de Noronha along Cape Musandam, an event that was described in detail in several contemporary testimonies.⁸⁹ Thus the Turkish corsairs ravaged the waters of Muscat for several years and attacked the coasts of Hadramawt and Oman. In 1560-1561 (*Rajab* 968), the chronicler 'Abdullâh Bâ Makhramah tells us that three ottoman vessels left Aden, and that, passing through Shihr, Qishn and Julfâr, headed to Qalhat. They captured a Portuguese *galiota* that was coming from India and imprisoned the Portuguese captain.⁹⁰

In 1581, Mir Ali Beg, probably in connection with certain Ottoman *levend* groups operating in the Red Sea and Aden, followed in the footsteps of his predecessors, Pîrî Re'is and Sefer Re'is, and also came to attack Muscat. Analyzing somewhat freely the testimony of Diogo do Couto, the only Portuguese chronicler to underline

powerful Jewish lady known as *A Senhora* that emigrated to Istanbul around 1552. In 1560 two companions of João de Lisboa, António Pinto and Sebastião Criado, were in Messina in charge of negotiating the release of the prisoners (*Quadro Elementar das Relações Políticas e Diplomáticas de Portugal*, ed. Visconde de Lagoa & others (18 vols., Lisbon, 1842-1860), vol. XII, pp. 198-199.

⁸⁸ Carta de Goa, 25(?).XI.1552, AN/TT, CCI, 89, 21, edited in *Documentação*, vol. V, pp. 218-219. The inaction of the Viceroy is described with irony: "estas novas trouxeram as fustas que vyerom do Estreyto em Mayo, e o vyso-rey sempre dormyo".

⁸⁹ See a brief presentation of the accounts in Dejanirah Couto, "Naval Battles Between Turks and Portuguese in the Indian Ocean in 1554 according to New Portuguese and Spanish Sources", in *International Turkish Sea Power History Symposium: The Indian Ocean and the Presence of the Ottoman Navy in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Istanbul, 2009), pt. III, pp. 32-42. Transcription of the documents will be given in two forthcoming articles edited by the Türk Tarih Kurumu (2014).

⁹⁰ R.B. Serjeant, *The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast. Hadrami Chronicles. with Yemeni and European Accounts of Dutch Pirates off Mocha in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1963) p. 109. The same year a Portuguese squadron intercepted a ship of Atjeh transporting Ottoman traders. A naval battle took place and all the ships were set on fire. Only twenty Muslims survived and managed to reach Aden (p. 110).

the episode “Sefer Re’is” (although João de Lisboa, the captain of Muscat, refers to it in his long report to king D. João III),⁹¹ Giancarlo Casale suggests that this Ottoman corsair had larger ambitions concerning the Portuguese maritime traffic between Goa and Hormuz.⁹² But Couto’s testimony should be examined with caution: he wrote under a specific ideological context, and his main purpose was to stress the way the governor Afonso de Noronha ruled. It was necessary to highlight the strength of the policies of Noronha, and to exaggerate the Ottoman danger, awarding to Sefer the intentions that he may not have had, at a time when the rivalry between the Portuguese and Ottomans was intense. Partisans of a “hard line” for the Portuguese policy in the Indian Ocean (that since 1546/1547 were manifesting themselves in increasingly difficult dealings with Ottomans in Basrah), opposed partisans of a more conciliatory policy towards the Porte administration.⁹³

In any case, Mir Ali Beg attacked Muscat in 1581 with 150 to 200 men from his base in Aden.⁹⁴ According to the same chronicler ‘Abdullāh Bā Makhramah, many Portuguese were killed, the city was burned, and among the destroyed buildings, there was the main church (this building did not exist in 1553, as can be seen by the contemporary description of the Jesuit fr. Aleixo Madeira). The Turks seized a loaded ship, ready to go to Hormuz and a galleon. Loaded with booty, they returned to Shihr, and from there, to Aden.

A distorted image of the fortifications

Although in the long letter and report addressed to the Portuguese king (sent from Cairo in 1555), João de Lisboa says nothing about the construction of his fortress in this first phase, he must have built or strengthened various structures that surrounded the city towards the East and the West with extensions to the South. Resende / Bocarro described in the seventeenth century the fortifications that they probably saw, but that had already been modified by the addition of two buildings of the late sixteenth century: the fort of *Al-Jalâli*, whose construction must have started during the mandate of Viceroy of *Estado da Índia* D. Duarte Meneses (1584-1588) and was continued by his successor (probably around 1587 or 1588), and the fort of *Al-Mirâni*, dated from 1588, if one is to believe the inscription visible in two faceted stones arranged inside its vaulted door. The inscription specifies that the works were executed in 1588 by Belchior Calaça (Alvares?) under order of Governor of *Estado*

⁹¹ Couto, “Portuguese-Ottoman Rivalry”, pp. 168-169 (document 2, fol. 1v°); Casale, *The Ottoman Age*, p. 106, quotes the document.

⁹² Casale, *The Ottoman Age*, pp. 93-95.

⁹³ On his career, Casale, *The Ottoman Age*, pp. 93-112. On the anti-ottoman context in the Portuguese India and the ideological position of the chronicler Diogo do Couto, see Couto, “The Commercial Relations”, pp. 154-155; Couto, “Un coup d’épée dans l’eau”, pp. 57 ff.

⁹⁴ Al-Busaidi, *Os Portugueses*, p. 140; Serjeant, *The Portuguese*, p. 111.

da Índia Manuel de Sousa Coutinho (who took office on May 4, 1588). As is well known, *Al-Mirâni* was built according to the plans of the Italian military engineer Giovanni Battista Cairati in charge since 1584, to consolidate the fortifications in Hormuz, Bahrain, Muscat and Malacca. The small bastion on the fortress is probably his work (1589?). The chapel based on a circular geometry was also built during this reconstruction. Endowed with a tiled dome, it highlights a beautiful Manueline Portal of limestone that most likely came from Portugal.

Compared with *Al-Mirâni*, the stronghold of *Al-Jalâli* built on the opposite side of the bay, appears to be a building of lesser sophistication. From *Al-Jalâli* one could see at the entrance of the bay, the bulwark of Santo António, which António Bocarro describes as being no more than a thin wall, two fathoms long, set between two rocks, filled with rubble on the inside with its platform. *Al-Jalâli* was composed by a circular wall, had a (domed?) reservoir for rainwater, so large that it could contain over a thousand barrels of water, warehouse supplies, and an armoury with ammunition and weapons. This structure was partly dug into the rock. *Al-Jalâli* was also defended by a bastion equipped with artillery pieces. Access was through a steep staircase carved in the rock, which ended on the walls. In the early seventeenth century, D. García de Silva y Figueroa, the Spanish ambassador to the Safavid court of Shâh ‘Abbâs refers to it briefly, stating that facing *Al-Mirâni*, one would see the old fortress (*a velha fortaleza*) that was located four hundred steps away.⁹⁵

As the steep mountain imposed the use of various terrain features, the construction of *Al-Mirâni* required an enormous effort. A keen observer, Figueroa noted that the fortress had been erected on the gaps between the sharp ridges of the mountain range surrounding the valley. He described in the following terms:

“And what makes this a more impregnable fortress, is that, as the wall that surrounds it, according to his disposition and the place in which it is located, is very steep and irregular, the path does not run right, and presents many recesses, protrusions and angles, both exterior and interior, serving as obstacles (*traveses*) allowing several possible defensive positions”.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Don García de Silva y Figueroa, *Comentarios de la Embaxada al Rey Xa Abbas de Persia (1614-1624)*, ed. Rui Manuel Loureiro, Ana Cristina Costa Gomes & Vasco Resende (2 vols., Lisbon, 2011), vol. 1, p. 173. Annotated edition, text established according to the original manuscript of the Nacional Library of Spain, ms. 18217.

⁹⁶ Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 1, p. 172: “(...) Y lo que mas inexpugnable haze esta fuerça, es, que como la muralla que la rrodea, sign la dispusiçion y sitio suyo, siendo en parte tan aspera, y desigual, no corra derecha, forçosamente haze muchos senos, y angulos, ansi exteriores como interiores, siruiendo de traueses y defensas los unos a los otros (...)”.

In fact, the well-known illustration of the Muscat fortifications from the *Livro das Plantas* by Resende / Bocarro, which we already referred to, complicates the analysis of the primitive fortress. The picture not only is from a late period (early seventeenth century) but we suspect that it may be distorted, obeying to a stereotype used by the author. Resende / Bocarro, in the representation of Muscat, tried to give an idea of its complexity, but he resorted to outlining the entire plan, marking only the most visible details (stairs, doors, walkways, bell towers, canons). Some of these representations assume a symbolic character. Another problem arises however: Resende / Bocarro did not use the graphical representation in geometric perspective (limiting himself to draw what M. A. Oliveira Costa Lemos described as a “naive picture”).⁹⁷ He “used geometric planes with views of the grounds, which then he transformed in a view with vanishing point”.⁹⁸ For this reason, the layering of the fortifications is not visible in the famous drawing, giving rise to the superimposition of various planes, which generated several inconsistencies on the structure of the image.

A better description: D. García de Silva y Figueroa

We believe that the best description of the fortresses *Al-Mirâni/Al-Jalâli* is not the illustration from Barreto de Resende / Bocarro, due to its imprecisions that we listed regarding the graphical structure of the drawing, but certainly the one from D. García de Silva y Figueroa, who travelled through Muscat in 1617. Figueroa, a true maniac for details, incessantly recording events in his journal of the trip to Persia, goes as far as even counting the number of flights of stairs that separated the platforms armed with cannons (*rebelim*, plu. *rebelins* in current Portuguese).

It therefore has the advantage of giving us a description of the different levels of the fortress of *Al-Mirâni*, which are not depicted on the picture of Resende / Bocarro. For example, he emphasizes that the cliff over which the fortification towered, was less than “fifty paces” from the convent of St. Augustine. He also describes a small guard post, facing south-east and the wharves, covered with palm leaves, where one could see a few soldiers and native Christians; a stairway began there, rising for twenty or thirty steps to the first *rebelim* with cannons, at a height of “two spears” above the ground. Here began a thick continuous wall, interrupted only by a solid door. Passing through this door, one would arrive to the next platform, through a stone staircase of more than sixty or seventy steps. There was located the second

⁹⁷ See Maria de Assunção Oliveira Costa Lemos, *As Ilustrações ingênuas do Manuscrito «Fortalezas do Oriente»*, unpublished M.A. dissertation (Lisbon, 1987).

⁹⁸ Rui Manuel Loureiro, “Para os Olhos do Rei: Iconografia de Fortalezas Portuguesas na Região do Golfo Pérsico por volta de 1600 / For the Eyes of the King: Iconography of Portuguese Fortresses in the Persian Gulf Area around 1600”, *Oriente*, vol. 18 (2007), p. 76.

rebelim also equipped with guns of various types, and from where one could see the sharp mountain ridges, and also “both ports”. In this place began a second wall, with another door. And from there, one would continue to climb, through a steeper stairway with yet more and more steep steps until reaching the internal courtyard inside the fort itself. The house of the captain (*casa do capitão*) was a narrow building with two or three vaulted storage areas for ammunition. Interestingly, although Figueroa mentions the circular vaulted chapel with tiles (*azulejos*) that actually was part of a set of three churches, two of which would have disappeared,⁹⁹ he doesn’t give any details about it, except for a reference to its belfry and to a large window.

This group of structures was defended by a strong tower guarding not only the Augustinian convent, but the whole valley and the pier, a set up that is very characteristic of Portuguese military architecture from the Manueline period.¹⁰⁰ Figueroa expresses some criticism about the layout of the artillery, but adds that the excellent location of the fort compensated for any shortcomings in its design. From this central yard two lines of ramparts grew, with a width of approximately thirty steps, going through the ridges that ended in another bastion / turret. In fact, the most privileged position to oversee the hinterland and the port was where this bastion was located, situated in a plane slightly higher than the rest of the fortress. Actually, access to this bastion, the key element of the fortress, was so heavily defended that it was virtually impossible to reach it.¹⁰¹ We believe that it is perhaps for this reason that the image of Resende / Bocarro shows a gateway with a stairway to the sea, which may have been created after the visit of Figueroa to Muscat.

Possible localisation of João de Lisboa’s ancient fort

Due to the basic topographic constraints mentioned above, the initial Portuguese fortress built by João Lisboa must have stood roughly on the same location of this bastion / turret and there is even the possibility that it was extended to the perimeter of the house of the captain. If we compare the image of Resende / Bocarro with the image, already mentioned, of the depiction of the naval battle between D. Fernando de Noronha and Seydi Ali Re’is in 1554 in the *Livro de Lisuarte de Abreu*, the

⁹⁹ The existence of the three churches is mentioned by Eduardo Kol de Carvalho, *Trilhos do Património Português* (Lisbon, 2006), p. 158. See also Al-Busaidi, *Os Portugueses*, pp. 137-138 about the Latin inscription “Ave Maria Gratia Sancta Plena Dominus Tecum” (AVE MARIA SA PLA DO. S.TECV.). Original reading by Serjeant, *The Portuguese*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁰ On this type of fortification, known as *castelo roqueiro*, see Rafael Moreira, *História das Fortificações Portuguesas no Mundo* (Lisboa, 1989), pp. 91-96.

¹⁰¹ Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 1, p. 172 (fól. 173): “Toda la cumbre desta sierra, es tan difiçil de andar por ella signun desde lexos parece, que con peligro se puede llegar un hombre tra otro al pie deste sigundo torreón : y esto no es posible si non fuese de dia, porque de noche, aunque fuesen muy praticos los que tal intentasen, seria muy çierto el despenarse”.

squared shape of the fortress on this picture coincides with the bastion / turret of the drawing made by Resende / Bocarro, with only a difference of perspective. As a matter of fact, in the *Livro de Lisuarte de Abreu*, the square fortification appears at the center of the bay, which would be natural in a schematic drawing of this kind. However, if we look at the today's Muttrah fort, in the Muscat province of Oman (which was probably build up on ancient foundations), it is also situated at the center of the bay. Therefore it is not clear if the illustration of the *Livro de Lisuarte de Abreu* represents *Al-Mirâni* in Muscat or Muttrah fort. Unfortunately, only an archaeological survey could fully confirm whether this claim is correct.

It is in the description of the main body of the fort, around the house of the captain, that the image distortions of Resende / Bocarro are more clearly apparent. If one does not follow the step by step description of Figueroa, it will be impossible to understand the organization of the different platforms of *Al-Mirâni*. In fact, from the captain's house, one would climb up another ten or twelve steps up to an even higher level where there was one little square of thirteen or fourteen steps in diameter, underneath which was a cistern with a capacity to provide water to three hundred men for two years.¹⁰² From here there were three or four more steps, until one would reach the already mentioned chapel with its bell and a large window provided with arms rests. From this vantage point, it was possible to observe very well, not only the port but also the old fortress (*fortaleza velha*). The yard of the chapel was surrounded by another turret; although it looked large in the version of Resende / Bocarro, this turret was much smaller than the other two, at the time of Figueroa's description. If one would descend down to the little square over the cistern, and walked for twelve or fourteen steps in the opposite direction to the stairs that had taken to get to the house of the captain, one would arrive at the north wall overlooking the harbor and the main cove.

Figueroa also describes in detail this side of the fortress. On the way down from the wall that led directly to the port, there was a passage giving access to another platform, where stood soldiers and two vaulted storage areas for firewood and ammunition. This platform was also armed with artillery pieces. From here there was also a good view of the surrounding sea. A particularly steep stairway, meandering through the rocks with more than sixty steps, led to another *rebelim* garnished with artillery pieces. Further down, though through a less steep and broader staircase, one could reach the last platform, equipped with artillery capable of firing at water level. As the Castilian ambassador stresses, entry into the harbor was impossible by any small craft if it was "not friendly". Unfriendly ships could easily be hit at the vulnerable level, just above of the water line.¹⁰³ A more detailed study of the fortifications that we are undertaking (including the watchtowers mentioned in the existing documen-

¹⁰² Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 1, p. 173 (fol. 173).

¹⁰³ Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 1, p. 173 (fol. 173v°).

tation as well as elements regarding complementary walls that surrounded the valley or defended the gullies known as *boqueirões*) would go beyond the scope of this article.

Local manpower and construction of the fortifications

Rather than going into further details, it seems useful to recall some other aspects including the issue of manpower and labour required for the construction of these two fortresses and other fortifications in Oman. This problem needs to be studied taking into account the intervention of Omani military tradition in the field of construction of fortified strongholds (*Sur* and watchtowers) and its influence on the design of European strongholds during the early Portuguese period.

Another element deserves to be emphasized here, too. Since 1521, the presence of a nucleus of Portuguese merchants and adventurers in Muscat became gradually more important and active, based on a nucleus of people close to the *feitor* (who accumulated his functions in Muscat and Qalhat at least until 1588) from the initial group left by D. Luís de Meneses. The descendents of this small group probably engaged in the construction of the fortifications. According to the already mentioned Fr. Aleixo Madeira (in his letter from Hormuz dated September 24, 1553), there was a large Portuguese community in Muscat, which included a Portuguese woman living as a concubine with a Portuguese for fifteen years, and was under Jesuit protection. Willem Floor believes that the size of the community declined after 1552, but in any case, in the 1550s, about sixty married Portuguese lived in Muscat, and in 1547, according to D. Manuel Lima, there were forty or fifty.¹⁰⁴ As was the case in Islamic Hormuz and elsewhere in the Indian Ocean, they usually lived with concubines or in bigamy (see the testimony, in 1551, of Fr. Gaspar Barzeu). In 1617, Figueroa tells us that there were three or four houses with Portuguese residents (*casados*) and just a few soldiers.¹⁰⁵

It is in this urban core group that we can later place the monastery of the Augustinians, where D. Garcia stayed overnight in 1617 and regarding which he has left us a detailed description. This convent, despite appearing with great prominence in the *Livro das Plantas*, was in reality a small building housing only five to six religious men, although it could accommodate up to ten.¹⁰⁶ It was built certainly between 1611 and 1617, since in 1611 Fr. António de Gouveia tells us that the Augustinians

¹⁰⁴ Letter of D. Manuel de Lima to Governor D. João de Castro, *Obras completas*, vol. III, p. 417 (Hormuz, 23-VI-1547).

¹⁰⁵ Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 1, p. 171.

¹⁰⁶ Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 1, p. 171.

lived in poverty, in a few small houses, as they did not yet have a monastery.¹⁰⁷ The city layout map from Resende / Bocarro shows us another building marked as a church (the *Matriz?*), in front of which a cross is marked, and several other buildings.

These interesting testimonies corroborate another, later one, from the Italian travelogue of Pietro Della Valle: this author also tells us that there was a spontaneous or informal community in Muscat, a *Republica* living outside the Portuguese crown's sphere of authority. They settled along the bay in the same way as the native Christians, the *Baneanes*, the Hindus and the Jews (15-20 very poor houses according to Figueroa). These Portuguese devoted themselves to smuggling and trading with Hormuz and the Sind. Their marginalization was undoubtedly encouraged by the way the agents of the Portuguese Crown worked in Muscat: a letter from 1546 tells us that before Belchior de Sousa it was habitual to have a *catur* in Muscat "who collected the taxes from the ships entering the strait and compelled them to go to that city (Hormuz)". This custom was lost and then a servant of the captain of Muscat charged one *pardau* for each ship that came in, self-proclaiming himself *feitor*, employing a scribe without obtaining authorization from the king of Portugal or the governor of *Estado da India*.¹⁰⁸

Conversely, Portuguese soldiers stationed in Hormuz deserted and took refuge in Muscat, where they also engaged in smuggling various products.¹⁰⁹ In the seventeenth century, and according to António Bocarro, the Portuguese administration was composed of eighteen employees and the roles and salaries are listed; the military contingent was about four hundred men, but only eighty were permanently stationed in Muscat, which corroborates the testimony from Figueroa. These thin forces relied on the auxiliary support of three hundred Arabs dispersed throughout the different Portuguese forts in the region, and were moved around assisting each other depending on the occurrence of specific conflicts.

In 1611, Fr. António de Gouveia saw Muscat as a "small and poor" city whose residents (including the Portuguese) "are the poorest I've seen in any place that I have

¹⁰⁷ Frei Antonio de Gouveia, *Relaçam em qve se tratam as Gverras e Grandes Victorias qve alcançou o Grãde Rey da Persia Xá Abbas do Grão Turco Mahometto, & seu Filho Amethe* (...) (Lisboa, 1611), chapt. III, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ Letter of Rafael Lobo to Governador D. João de Castro, *Obras completas*, vol. III, p. 122 (Ormuz, 2.II.1546).

¹⁰⁹ D. Manuel de Lima to Governor D. João de Castro, *Obras completas*, vol. III, p. 456 (Ormuz, 27.IX.1547), and Rui Gonçalves de Caminha to the same governor (Goa, 17.II.1548), *Obras completas*, vol. III, p. 523: "Em Batecala achey seis ou sete naos carreguadas de drogas e ferro, e o démo sabe se levao pimenta, todos para jrem a Mequa e a Masquate com cartazes do noso capitao dom Dioguo". On smuggling in the western Indian Ocean see Anthony Disney, "Smuggling and Smugglers in the Western Half of the Estado da India in the Late Sixteenth Century and Early Seventeenth Century", *Indica*, vol. 26 (1989), pp. 57-75.

been to, because most do not have more than a small hut made of mats, without anything more than a *cambulim* or sleeping mat, and in such miserable quarters, they are exposed to the elements, even suffering excessive cold (...) their usual sustenance consists of dates, without anything else, and when they manage to eat rice, it is an occasion for festivities".¹¹⁰ Figueroa says exactly the same thing,¹¹¹ and indicates that there were three hundred homes, as small and "bad" as the ones of poor peasants in Spain; the poorest lived in houses of reeds covered with palm leaves. Only in the small neighborhood around the church did the Portuguese live in stone and lime houses with terraces that looked better to the town's visitors.¹¹²

Conclusion

In 1611, Fr. António de Gouveia wholeheartedly believed in the superiority of the fortress of Muscat, one of the jewels of military architecture in the Indian Ocean. According to him, the fortifications were impregnable, in relation to the Ottomans who had suffered a major defeat in 1554 in the battle of Cape Musandam (although he does not mention their raid against Muscat in 1581).¹¹³

In spite of the presence of these impressive fortresses, the Portuguese presence in Muscat had since – at least in the early seventeenth century – lost much of its luster. Little remained from the rivalry with Hormuz. A wordy and scrupulous observer, D. Garcia de Silva y Figueroa accurately described the Muscat fortifications and witnessed the agony of the Portuguese presence on the coast of Oman, where nonetheless several fortresses still remain, evidence of the dream of maintaining a Portuguese presence in an Islamic area at a time when maritime powers such as the Dutch, the English – and later the Omanis – asserted their supremacy in different parts of the Indian Ocean.

¹¹⁰ Gouveia, *Relaçam*, chapt. IV, p.14: "(...) são os mais pobres que vi por todas as partes por onde andei, porque os mais delles não possuem mais que hua pequena choupana, feita de esteiras, sem terem dentro mais alfaia que um cambulim, ou esteira em que dormem, e em tam miseráveis aposentos passam calmas, e frios excessivos (...). Seu ordinário mantimento he tâmara sem outra cousa algua, & o dia que chegam a comer arroz, he de festa pera elles (...)".

¹¹¹ Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 1, p. 174 (fol. 172v°): "(...) El resto de la gente de la tierra es pobríssima, no comiendo sino tamaras y leche, y algun poco de arroz por fiesta".

¹¹² Figueroa, *Comentarios*, vol. 1, p.171 (fol. 171v°).

¹¹³ Gouveia, *Relaçam*, chapt. IIII, p.12.