

IRANIAN HERITAGE FROM PORTUGUESE ORIGIN - MEANING AND PRACTICE OF SAFEGUARDING

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1. Presentation

A vast component of the heritage constructed by the Portuguese exists outside Portugal. Considering the historical circumstance of an almost planetary dispersion, the discovery of significant cultural testimony in the most recondite whereabouts has become recurrent.

The large number of cases is associated, chronically, with a generalized ignorance – of the common citizen as well of the specialists.

The examples vary substantially in their framing, from the situations of great reference in the national mythology to the productions confined to minority communities. Sometimes these achieve a notable physical expression, still actuating, and sometimes (although being primacy documents) those are nothing but feeble marks, to which not even the academic community gives the convenient characterization.

Common to the great majority of the examples of this universe is abandonment and degradation.

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, a private institution in Lisbon, has been operating an international cooperation politic that, being pioneer and relevant in the interventions it has been doing, constitutes a renewal focus in the search of the cultural dimension and of the identity reinforcement that involves each community to whom the patrimony belongs and, simultaneously, Portugal.

Illustrating this wide theme I present the study case in progress in Iran, focusing the strategic apparatus of the entrance of the Persian Gulf, with the enormous Fortress of Hormuz and the Forts of Keshm and Larak, prolonged by the archaeological remains of the Bandar-e-Cong Factory and by the subsistence of monuments in Mascate, Oman and Bahrain, among others.

2. Situation and historical dimension

When we talk about Heritage of Portuguese origin, some simple questions rest unmade. To ask simply about the number of cases, geographically referred, of examples of the built Patrimony by Portuguese outside Portugal, generally integrating new urban organisms – this is a question with a yet undefined answer.

However, after the perception of the greatness of the number, the knowledge of the extraordinary movement in which Portugal was the protagonist, will permit developments of a wide reach, if we can deepen diverse methodological

approaches: which were the nuclei of colonizing and their chronologic and geographic alignment; which were the correlations with the historical situation and the politic and economic movements of the different Civilizations; which were the morphologic and social characteristics of the cities under Portuguese management; what was the regional part of a presence that interacted in determined geo-political contexts; what was the lasting civilizational significance of the ultramarine enterprise of Portugal.

The greater astonishment is to say that the Portuguese, at the time for sure much less than a million and a half, in its great majority farmers from the interior, would be able to produce, from the middle of the 15th century, an intense activity of domain of the maritime trade, sustained by a rosary of African cities and the Islands of the South Atlantic, continuing after trough the Indic to the Far East.

In a period, after the conquest of Ceuta in 1415, that goes between the construction of the second city abroad (Alcácer-Ceguer, 1458) and the creation of Dili, in East Timor, in 1769 – only two and a half centuries – I have distinguished an ultramarine urban production of about 300 cities.

The experience of the creation of Madeira and Azores, since soon carrying a vanguard cultural wideness, as well of the conception of a Maritime Empire in the East, done by the visionary Afonso de Albuquerque, or even, in the American subcontinent, the geographic domain of the Amazonas and the conception of Brazil – these and much others are examples that integrate constructed patrimonial facts with an outstanding range. These are the ones that shape the expression of a new phenomenon, which gathered the perception of the true scale of Humanity and the estimate of the acting capacities, in a globalizing perspective of a national essence, that is still playing its role on the identification of Portuguese people.

It is a fact that in some, and not few, latitudes, reality and subsequent domination generated processes of extraordinary antagonism, and even of annihilation, approving historical processes related with the economic designs of the different cycles, from gold and spices through sugar cane, and including diamonds and tobacco. We should, however, for the sake of truth, recognise that Portugal was the first country in the world that promulgated simultaneously the official abolishment of the death row and of the trade of slaves.

The historical cities, and sometimes what is left of them in

monumental terms, are the most legitimate expression of Civilization. It is in it that the synthesis of the cultural vectors that justified it as an affirmation act is made, supporting the evolution of Mankind.

The projection of acting collective memories, that only the built heritage permits, is one of the essential fundamentals of the balance and progress of the cultural values of a given community.

3. Hormuz and the Persian Gulf

One year ago, the Gulbenkian Foundation was asked by the Iranian Authorities to study the possibilities of an intervention in Hormuz's monument, extending to other preoccupations, the Forts of Keshm and Larak. These three pieces of military architecture constitute the wise strategic apparatus to control the entrance of the Persian Gulf.

The wide geographic context that had other fulcrum supports at Goa and Malacca, Hormuz was one of the keys of the Portuguese Maritime Empire of the East, conceived by Afonso de Albuquerque. Soon on the trip to India, he occupied himself in the construction of a fort in Socotorá (in the entrance of the Red Sea), failed the conquest of Adem but submitted Curiate, Mascate, Soar e Orçafão, in the maritime front of Oman. Consummating the submission of Hormuz, he began the construction of a great fortress in October 1507. The works were interrupted in January of the following year, and is merely in 1515, after the saga of Goa and Malacca, that Albuquerque returns to finish the work, in which he spent the rest of his days until his death, in December that year.

The state of ruin of the Fortress of Hormuz does not retreat the overall importance of an exceptional repository of the Portuguese military architecture of the 16th century, on the epoch of transition.

To give an idea of the importance of this case, it is enough to say that the Forts of Keshm and Larak occupy an area of construction that goes from 1500 to 2000 m², when the Hormuz Fortress presents an implantation area that is about 20 000 m². Its major diagonal extends for 265 meters. The drawn restitution of the surveying works done six months ago is being made. In the study that we have been doing, besides the treatment of the zones that deserve to be pointed out, we are essaying the lecture of the completion of the albuquerquean work. This approximation to the hypothetic lining of the initial construction, is substantially different from the first known hypothesis given by a German studios, Wolfram Kleiss, in 1976. The main components of the original fortified apparatus are: the entrance system, with two hexagonal turrets, the sea bulwark that was annex to it, the land wall with a semicircular turret in the middle, and the hypothesis of a polygonal bulwark of great proportions, articulated with the tower of the Governor of the city .

The importance of holding this strategical point and the greatness of the city is summarized in the metaphor of João de Barros's book: "the world is a ring and Hormuz is a precious gem mounted on it". It is not surprising, thus, that half a century after the first phase of fortification, an extraordinary reform and amplification was made by the Architect Inofre de Carvalho.

It is from this reformulation of the half of the 16th century that stand out, even today, the most important examples of the Portuguese military architecture of transition, where we can see the grade of conceptual and technical domain that was achieved. This verification is underlined not only on the subsistent bulwarks, but also on the realization of the enormous cistern (that exists even today practically intact) and on the whole of the ensemble of the great rehabilitation project that the reform of Albuquerque's fortress was subjected.

Owing to abandonment and natural degradation, nowadays we observe an enormous ensemble ruined, in which composition we can distinguish various additions posterior to the time of Portuguese occupation (1622) and, above all, the observation of a highly important component of the original construction – which has been protected due to the "encapsulation" of the new stonework adjoined by the great reform of 1558/1560.

Thus, it happens that, besides the late epoch (that would include also adaptations provided by the project of Architect of India João Baptista Cairato, possibly from 1613), this monument gives us the observation of an earlier epoch, in many points appearing in better condition than the posterior phases.

The most relevant areas on the patrimonial point of view are illustrated by the two bulwarks with higher integrity levels (and that make the articulation with the Fortress entrances, on the tops of the long wall turned West), the great cistern and the church (subsisting even now, related to this piece, doubts about the interpretation of its function and about the drawing).

Jointly with the Hormuz's case, I also present some images related to the mentioned cases of Keshm, Larak and Bandar-e-Cong. The ensemble observed as a whole achieves a notable projection, and overall, it appeals to an actuation of safeguard with great historical and civilizational importance.

This is a relevant example of a cultural practice that could promote an intervention based on cooperation and affirmation of the peace values.

4. For the safeguard of Iranian Patrimony of Portuguese origin

The urban ultramarine experience of Portugal, embracing a scale and a multifunctional articulation without precedents – and never more equaled - happens from the singular .

availability of the scientific and technological knowledge and from the religious motivation, that made possible the maritime epos of Portugal on the basis of new attitudes towards the Discoveries and knowledge of the World

In such geographical amplitude, Portuguese adapted the ways to propitiate the domain of such extensive and complex relations, abandoning the ancient Christian civilization's sedimentary posture, which antagonised the Mediterranean against the Islamic universe.

To the discovery and finding of more than two thirds of the world ignored until the end of the Middle Age, it was achieved an extraordinary combination of efforts, knowledge, financial resources, sacrifices and power.

In the state of things of the actual so-called globalization era, it would be interesting to reflect on how to deny the inevitability of a false "equalization" that is on the base of the lost of autonomy and cultural affirmation. The cultural heritage is the identity of our future, on the multifaceted expression of the people that inhabit and love those places where built patrimony lies.

Nowadays, 200 million people use the Portuguese language as their own, and hundreds of cultural marks of Portuguese origin integrate the life basis of thousands of communities, a little all over the world.

The safeguard and rehabilitation of the Iranian patrimonial

ensemble of the entrance of the Persian Gulf, to which is adjoined other historical pieces in the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran and in other neighbour States, presents itself with high interest, aiming the valorisation of thematic nuclei of great cultural and historical importance.

Such a patrimonial value poses today as a determinant vector to the strategies of a sustained development – because it is in it that radicates, with the greatest genuineness and significance, the capacity of statement of values. These, identified as unique, promote the exercise of citizenship by communities that differentiate from each other, with the conscience of the singular part they are playing in the concert of Human Civilization.

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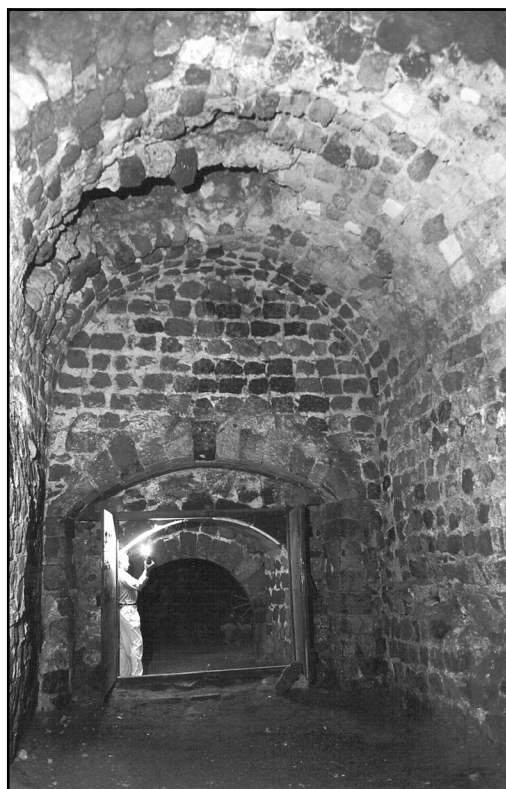
Fig. 1: Approach of Ormuz with the Fortress' present condition



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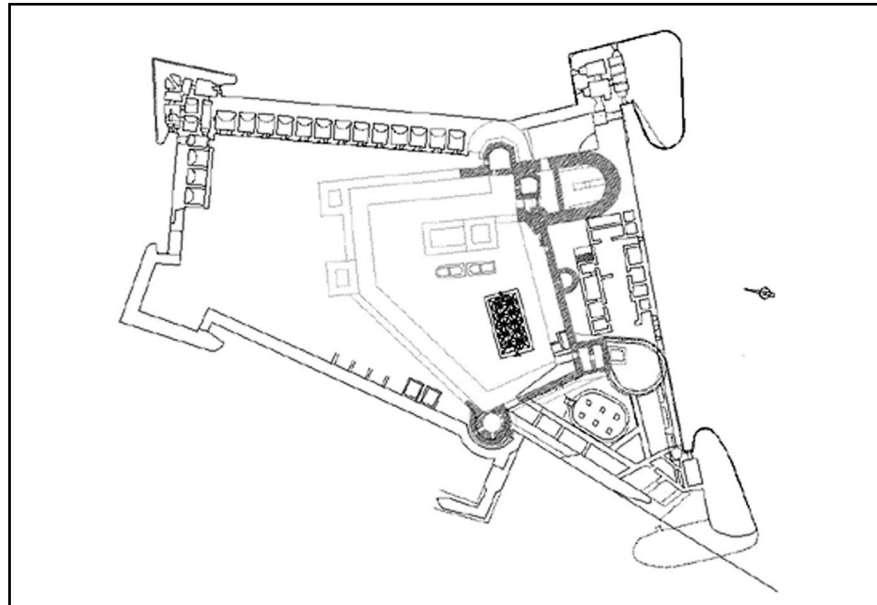


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Figs. 2,3: Partial view of the interior of the Fortress and North entrance, next to the better preserved bulwark

Fig. 4: Plan with the present restitution of the architectural survey with the existing components of the first fortress (1507/1515).



Figs. 5, 6: Plan and sections and inside view of the ancient manuline church (interior 19,20 x 60 m).

