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THE PORTUGUESE ON QESHM

Daniel T. POTTS

Although much less well-known than the nearby island of Hormuz, Jazireh-ye Qeshm or Jazira-al-Tawila, as it is known in Arabic, is in fact the largest island in the Persian Gulf (fig. 4.1). With a length of about 122 kms, an average width of 18 kms, and a total area of 1445 sq. kms., Qeshm is located about 22 kms. south of Bandar ‘Abbas and is separated from the mainland by the straits of Kuran, commonly known in English sources as Clarence Strait in honour of King William IV when he was the Duke of Clarence1. But if Qeshm is not as well-known as Hormuz, it is nevertheless true that its history, from the early fourteenth to the early eighteenth century, was intimately bound up with that of Hormuz, Safavid Iran, the VOC, the EIC and Portugal.

Qeshm first appears in the historical record in the accounts of the return of Alexander’s admiral Nearchus from the mouth of the Indus River to Susa, as transmitted by Strabo, Pliny, and Arrian, all of whom say that Nearchus visited an island called Oaracta2 at the bottom of the Persian Gulf. An identification with Qeshm was first made in 1764 by the French geographer Jean-Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville, who pointed to the similarity between ‘Oaracta’ and ‘Broct’3, a name noted

2 Strabo, Geography 16.3.7, of which manuscript variants also preserve Doracta. Cf. Oaracta, Arrian, Indica 27; Oracta / Doracta, Pliny, Natural History 6.98.
by Pedro Teixeira (1586-1605) who referred to ‘The Isle of Queixome or Broct’\(^4\). In fact, Teixeira was merely repeating what was by then common usage. The dual name ‘Qeshm and Brokht’ is found in the works


of ‘Abd al-Karim b. Muhammad Nimdihi, Samarqandi, Ja’fari and Ibn Majid. Aubin recognised that Brokht can be linked with the village of Kusheh in the centre of Qeshm, where a shrine to one Shaykh al-Barkah or Barkh was attested in the early twentieth century. According to Nimdihi (b. 1439 or 1440), Brokht had a royal palace. Earlier Islamic geographical sources, like Baladuri; the anonymous Akhbar al-Sin wa’l Hind, from 851; Tabari; Istakhri; Yaqut; and Ibn Khordadhbeh, referred to Qeshm as Jazirat Abarkawan or Bani Kawan and sometimes Laft or Lafet, a name still preserved by the second largest town on Qeshm. Ibn Khordadhbeh described Bani Kawan as a station between Kish and Hormuz on the sea-route to India and China.

Qeshm was of importance principally because of its relationship to Hormuz. This is likely to have been of considerable antiquity, although we have no sources describing it before 1301 when, in response to a Tartar attack, Baha’-al-Din Ayaz, the Hormuzi ruler, moved a large portion of his people, as well as his court, to Qeshm. Close ties between Qeshm and Hormuz are also illustrated by the fact that in 1417, after Qotb-al-Din Tahamtan III Firuz Shah, king of Hormuz, was forced to abdicate in favour of his eldest son Seyf al-Din, the ex-king retired to Qeshm.

The real significance of Qeshm was revealed for the first time in a Western source in a letter sent by Afonso de Albuquerque to Dom Francisco de Almeida, Viceroy of India, probably in November 1507, where he noted that Hormuz obtained its drinking water ‘from an island two leagues from Ormuz called Kishm. On this island cattle are bred, and wheat, barley and millet are sown. It is larger than the island of Ormuz and the king has some houses there, where he stays when he goes hunting.”

7 Aubin, ‘Le royaume d’Ormuz’, p. 102, n. 151.
Although Qeshm is not a place which today impresses the visitor with its fertility, the quality of its soils or its agricultural potential, the water resources alluded to by Albuquerque made it an extremely adjunct of Hormuz. Qeshm’s role as the major source of water for Hormuz is repeated over and over again in the literature, and in some cases is even noted on maps. Signs of water management are visible all over the island. Covered and open cisterns, along with dams and wells, are a common phenomenon. Rainfall, however, can be highly variable. Between 1960 and 1989, for example, rainfall averaged only 155 mm per annum, but for the past five years the average has been only 50 mm. In 2002-2003 Qeshm received only 36 mm, and in 2003-2004 only 10 mm.

Nevertheless, describing conditions in the early sixteenth century, Gaspar Correia wrote that 1,000 pipas were transported to Hormuz by terradas each day from Qeshm. Today, the capacity to deliver 1,000 pipas or 385,000 litres per day seems extraordinary. If true, then it is hard to avoid the conclusion that precipitation levels must have been much greater in the late medieval and early modern era than they have been in recent decades. In 1604 Pedro Teixeira noted that the eastern end of Qeshm, if that is what he meant by ‘the point of Queixome on the outside’, ‘has plenty of palm orchards, gardens, and wells of good water’, and further, ‘This isle is very fertile, and bore all suitable produce of good quality and in plenty’, adding, ‘when it was better peopled’, such as ‘wheat, barley, fruit and vegetables’. By the early nineteenth century, however, conditions appear to have worsened. We have the testimony of East India Company and Bombay Marine officers, like Col. Kempthorne...

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13 E.g. on Jacques Nicholas Bellin’s ‘Ile d’Ormus ou de Jeru’ from c. 1750.
17 Teixeira, The Travels, p. 19.
who, in 1835, noted, ‘Boats from all parts of the gulf come to Kishm for wood, and the island once contained upwards of two hundred villages and towns; but now it cannot boast of one-half of that number…. The natives live by fishing and agriculture, and the island produces dates, wheat, and vegetables, sufficient for their subsistence, with a few grapes, mangoes, and water-melons. They have few cattle and sheep, but goats are bred in considerable numbers, and thrive well’18. The apparent abandonment of villages noted by Kempthorne coincides with the observations made by Lt. Whitelock who wrote, ‘Basidoh is scantily supplied with water. The wells dry up in April or May; and the few tanks, which are similar in construction to those of Hormuz, and have, it is supposed, the same origin… do not afford more than is sufficient for the station, and the ships fill up either on the opposite coast, or further up the channel’19.

One detail from Albuquerque’s Hormuz campaign is particularly intriguing. Desirous of destroying or seizing control of the Hormuzi king’s other possessions before approaching Hormuz itself20, Albuquerque’s forces attacked Sayyed Zeyn al-Mellat’s forces on Qeshm21. As a result, his men came away with an unusual trophy. In Kerr’s *General History and Collection of Voyages and Travels*, we read; ‘He then fell upon Keyshom or Queixome, which was defended by five hundred archers sent to Ormuz by the king of Lar or Laristan in Persia under the command of two of his nephews, both of whom were slain with most of their men…The town of Keyshom was plundered and burnt. Among the plunder was taken a large Persian carpet, which the soldiers were going to cut in pieces to divide among them, and for the greater convenience of removal, which Albuquerque purchased from them, and sent afterwards to the shrine of St. Jago in Gallicia’22. This of course is the famous cathedral of Santiago de Compostela which had served as a rallying point during the campaigns to expel the Moors from Spain.

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21 Zeyn al-Mellat’s command is confirmed in a letter of 1508 from the king of Hormuz. See A. M. Joannon, ‘Sur une lettre du roi d’Ormuz (1508)’, *Mare Luso-Indicum* III (1976), pp. 175-179.
In 1552, after Ottoman forces under the command of Piri Reis had spent sixteen days at Hormuz, they went to Qeshm because, as Nur al-Din, the vizier (Port. guazil) of Bahrain for the ruler of Hormuz, explained in a letter of 30 October sent from Hormuz to the Governor of India in Goa, ‘At Qeshm (Queyxome) were the principal people and merchants from this town [of Hormuz] with a great quantity of goods, of gold and silver, and of cash. The Turks took all these things, nothing escaped them, and Your Lordship can be assured that this was the richest prize that could be found in all the world’. A separate letter written by Álvaro de Noronha, the Portuguese governor of Hormuz, provides additional detail, noting that there were about thirty merchants on Qeshm, with average capital of 20,000 cruzados, in addition to one Spanish Jew who had at least 80,000 cruzados in gold. Although Diogo do Couto later said that 20,000 people were captured by the Turkish forces, this seems an impossibly high figure.

In the spring of 1580 the Venetian jeweller Gasparo Balbi sailed from Basra to Hormuz, a journey described in his Viaggio dell’Indie Orientali. Just a few days before arriving at Hormuz Balbi reached the ‘isola di Basidon’ on 5 May 1580. Nineteenth-century writers, including the East India Company employees Horsburgh, Kempthorne and Whitelock, refer to the ruins of a Portuguese fort and town at ‘Bassadore or Basidu Point’ and such reports probably led Wilhelm Tomaschek to state that Basidu was the site of a Portuguese fortaleza. To my knowledge this has not been confirmed.  

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26 Özbaran, ‘The Ottoman Turks’, p. 62, n. 61, citing Couto.
30 According to d’Anville, ‘Recherches géographiques sur le golfe Persique’, p. 152, Duarte Barbosa named Baçido as one of the towns controlled by the king of Hormuz. I cannot find any reference in Dames’ edition of The Book of Duarte Barbosa. However, as there are still over a dozen unpublished manuscripts of Barbosa’s work extant, it is entirely possible that d’Anville had access to one in which Baçido was mentioned (my thanks to Jorge Flores for bringing this important point to my attention). The Carta Universal en que se contiene todo lo que del mundo se ha descubierto of 1529 by Diogo Ribeiro does, however, show bacido. See Dejanirah Couto, J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont and
Although the Portuguese were well-established on Hormuz by the time of Balbi’s visit, we have no written sources attesting to their activities on Qeshm, and Piri Reis’s testimony relates only to Hormuzi merchants. Several years ago, however, an unexpected discovery was made during dredging to enlarge the port of Qeshm. An entire Portuguese cemetery, close to the present shoreline, was uncovered by a back-hoe. The exact number of graves destroyed is unknown and only one gravestone was salvaged. During a visit to Qeshm in December 2004, I was able to see the stone itself, which, for lack of a museum, is kept in the largest hotel on the island. With the assistance of Mr. Bijan Darehshori, head of the Environment Dept. of the Qeshm Free Zone Authority, I photographed

Fig. 4.2. Portuguese gravestone found on Qeshm sometime before 2004 (photo D.T. Potts).

the gravestone (fig. 4.2) and obtained a copy of a transcription of the text. It is engraved with a skull-and-crossbones and the following text:

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SEPV[LTVRA] DE
AMTON[IO] C[O
REA E DE SEVS
ERDEIROS FALE
SEO AOS 17 DE
IANEIRO DE 1591
ANNOS
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Thus, the text reads, ‘grave of Antonio Correa and his descendants, died on 17 January of the year 1591’.

The identity of this António Correa is a mystery. An António Correia de Souza is known to have been Captain of Ribeira Grande in the Cape Verde Islands for an uncertain number of years from 1544 onwards. Another António Correia, son of Aires Correia, factor of Calicut and nephew of Diogo Lopes de Sequeira (appointed governor of India in 1518), led the invasion of Bahrain in 1521, while a third António Correa was Captain of Cochin and active in Martaban and Malacca in 1519. None of these three seems a likely candidate for our António Correa, for each would have had to have survived about 50-70 years beyond the time when they are attested. The presence of a Portuguese cemetery on Qeshm is intriguing, for one would have thought that the Portuguese serving on Hormuz, when they died, would have been buried there, not on Qeshm, and until now no written evidence has emerged suggesting a permanent Portuguese presence on Qeshm during António Correa’s lifetime. If there was, then it seems to be overlooked by contemporary and later sources.

31 According to Mr. Darehshori, the copy of the inscription was made by a Portuguese visitor who was one of the architects who inspected the fort when the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation were first considering the possibility of restoring the Portuguese fort on Qeshm.


34 Özbaran, ‘The Ottoman Turks’, p. 47.


36 Rui Manuel Loureiro kindly informed me that the Portuguese architects who recently inspected the Portuguese fort on Qeshm suspected there might have been an earlier phase pre-dating Rui Freire’s construction (discussed below). If true, the apparently early date
The fact that there was no Hormuзи resistance to Piri Reis’s advance on Qeshm in 1552 certainly suggests that no Portuguese forces were stationed there in the mid-sixteenth century. Fifty years later the situation had probably not changed either. This can be inferred from Pedro Teixeira’s description of 1604, cited earlier, which deplores ‘the raids of the Nihhelús Arabs, that lay it waste, through the negligence of the Captains of Harmuz, only three leagues’ sail distant, who could easily and cheaply amend the same’37. A decade later, in 1614, following their seizure of Bahrain and Gombroon, Persian forces occupied Qeshm and again, there is no mention of encountering Portuguese forces or a Portuguese fort. That a fort was soon constructed, however, is in no doubt. Following the Persian occupation of Qeshm and after an intense round of diplomatic missions and deliberations, it was decided in 1618 that Rui Freire d’Andrade would be sent from Lisbon to Hormuz with orders to ‘trace and destroy any foreign European ships that tried to establish trade connections with Persia…patrol the Hormuz Straits and the mouth of the Red Sea…in order to seize ships sailing with forbidden goods or ships not in possession of Portuguese cartaze [sic]’ and, as an afterthought dated 15 January 1619, ‘establish a fortress on Qishm, which the Persians had held since 1614’38.

Fifteenth months later, on 20 June 1620, Rui Freire’s flotilla arrived at Hormuz39. After attending to matters on Hormuz, Rui Freire turned his attention to the English at Jask, but it was not until Christmas of that year that a costly naval battle was fought in which the Portuguese lost 160 men to eight Englishmen40. Thereafter, Rui Freire initiated negotiations with the local king of Hormuz over the planned construction of a fort on Qeshm. The Portuguese captain of Hormuz fort, Dom Francisco de Sousa, argued against the project, even while he recognised the advantages of Qeshm over Hormuz–principally water and agricultural

of the gravestone would be explicable. On the other hand, it is highly likely that the fort was rebuilt by the Safavids and later rulers of Qeshm. Thus, disentangling the building phases of the fort from an external inspection alone, without new excavations, is hazardous at best. Note my remarks below on Teixeira’s testimony of 1604, which strongly suggests there was no Portuguese military presence, let alone a fort, on Qeshm at that time.

37 Teixeira, The Travels, p. 20. On the Hula or Huwala Arabs of Nakhilu, see Floor, The Persian Gulf, p. 45.


40 Steensgaard, The Asian Trade Revolution, p. 338.
production—for he felt it would bring an end to peaceful relations with Persia. The shah of Hormuz, on the other hand, pointed out that the Portuguese had already ‘purchased’ Qeshm for a considerable amount of money from the King of Portugal, and he could therefore see no reason why they should not build a fort there if they chose to do so; in fact, he offered men and finances to aid Rui Freire. Although the plan was allegedly aimed at securing control of the wells on Qeshm as compensation for the loss of the wells at Gombroon to the Persians in 1614, Boxer noted that this decision ‘was not only ill-timed, but unnecessary: for as long as the Portuguese maintained their command of the sea in the Persian Gulf, they could land on Kishm and draw water from its wells at any time they liked; whilst conversely, if the mastery was allowed to pass to the English, then they would not have access to the wells at Kishm or anywhere else’.

Rui Freire, however, would not heed Dom Francisco’s advice and on 7 May 1621, about 1000 Portuguese arquebusiers, 500 Portuguese musketeers, and 1,000 ‘Moors of the King of Hormuz’ sailed from Hormuz to Qeshm in a fleet of thirty-three vessels. The next day a force of 1,000 Persian cavalrymen on the beach was quickly driven back by bombardment from the Portuguese armada, falling back to a series of trenches from which they were soon dislodged by continued bombardment. Rui Freire was thus able to commence construction at once on his fortress (figs. 4.3-4.4). According to the Commentaries of Rui Freire, the Portuguese began by erecting a rampart out of hogsheads, after which ‘the

41 And indeed Shah ‘Abbas later let it be known that he regarded the construction of a Portuguese fort on Qeshm as a hostile act, Steensgaard, The Asian Trade Revolution, p. 340.
42 The king of Hormuz is said to have told Rui Freire, ‘all the coasts that the Persian possesses are mine by right, and moreover the island of Queixome is equally mine—albeit the King of Persia sold it to the King of Portugal—so that the Fort can be erected in it without causing discord, for the island being really mine he sold it at no little profit to himself; and if tyranny should so far eclipse justice that the Persian opposes this work, I have men and money wherewith to defend it for the King of Portugal, in company with his valiant vassals, against the power of the whole world’. See C. R. Boxer, Commentaries of Rui Freire de Andrad, in which are Related his Exploits from the Year 1619, in which he left this Kingdom of Portugal as General of the Sea of Ormuz, and Coast of Persia, and Arabia, until his Death (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1930), p. 34.
45 Boxer, Commentaries of Rui Freire, p. 35. The ‘Moors’ were Arab auxiliaries according to Boxer, ‘Anglo-Portuguese Rivalry’, p. 72.
Fig. 4.3. Exterior of the Portuguese fort on Qeshm, seen from the side facing the sea (photo C.A. Petrie).

Fig. 4.4. Detail of the exterior of the Portuguese fort on Qeshm (photo C.A. Petrie).
Captain-Major sent to the Armada for great masts and planks of timber, with which four very strong bulwarks were made, being nailed up and filled in with earth to a height of 24 feet, and having walls of 8 span’s breadth made of stone and a fine blue clay that binds like lime, and faced with stone and lime; three pieces of artillery of 24 lbs: calibre were mounted in each bulwark. The construction of the walls was begun forthwith, they being made of the same stone and clay, 5 spans thick, with a facing of stone and lime, and provided with balkries and loopholes; likewise a moat was dug, measuring 24 feet in depth to the striking of water, and 20 paces broad.46

The individual bulwarks were named ‘Madre de Deos’, ‘Spirito Sancto’, ‘Santiago’ and ‘Sancto Antonio’. Rui Freire’s description also refers to a parade ground and powder magazine. In 1622 the English surgeon Thomas Wilson described the fort, suggesting that Rui Freire ‘brought the frame thereof ready made in his ships’.47 This is not what Rui Freire himself says, and suggests that Wilson may have been told a slightly confused account of the fort’s construction by a local informant who misunderstood the nature and purpose of the timber used to construct the bulwarks. Wilson added the interesting information that ‘for the building of this Castle they pulled down a fine Towne with Churches [presumably mosques] and Tombes, onely for the stones, some of which he burned and made Lime, and with the other he made the Castle wall of a great height and thicknesse, with half-moons and flankers very artificially, which in five moneths and a halfe hee had finished; a thing wonderfull in so short a time to be effected and with a great deepe drie Moat round about’.48 Presumably the buildings demolished by Rui Freire may have included the houses of the Hormuzi king and merchants attested in the days of Albuquerque and Piri Reis noted earlier.

By late June Shah ‘Abbas had heard about the construction of the Portuguese fort and his secretary is said to have told the interpreter of Edward Monox, the EIC agent at Isfahan, ‘that the Shah was pleased to obtain a casus belli in this way; he now intended to drive the Portuguese out of Hormuz, and when it was done he would give the English Gom- broon’.49 Nevertheless, Shah ‘Abbas tried one last time to avoid war by sending an Augustinian emissary to Hormuz to ask ‘whether the leaders there wanted peace or war. The Augustinians willingly fulfilled his wish

46 Boxer, Commentaries of Rui Freire, p. 37.
and dispatched a man, but he was secretly instructed to advise the leaders in Hormuz to choose war. Still, the Portuguese captain of Hormuz fort, Dom Francisco de Sousa, is said to have told the Augustinian emissary that they did not want war, and were only trying to safeguard the water supply of Hormuz, which depended on Qeshm. Losing patience, however, and perhaps because he was himself headed to Kandahar on campaign, he sent a force of 10,000 men under the command of ‘Abdullah Khan, nephew of Imam Qoli Khan, governor (beglarbegi) of Fars, even before his Augustinian envoy had returned to Isfahan. Faced with a Portuguese garrison inside a well-built fortress, ‘Abdullah Khan erected a fortified camp near the Qeshm fort, where he and his forces waited. According to a Persian spy captured by the Portuguese, a further 25,000 men under the command of Imam Qoli Khan were expected from Lar.

Boxer, Steensgaard and Slot all painted a fairly negative image of Rui Freire, citing inter alia Fernão de Albuquerque’s letter of 21 October 1621 in which the Governor of India criticised the young commander, saying, ‘it had been just and right if you had considered my previous warnings, and not been so confident of yourself, before putting hand to that work; for you with your thirty years had not been dreamt of in this world, when I was already old in years of experience and his Majesty’s service in these parts.’ Yet it is important to remember that Rui Freire was following his King’s orders and, although the construction of the fort on Qeshm has been much criticised by later commentators, and his performance at Jask the previous year was far from successful, Rui Freire took several initiatives while on Qeshm that deserve mention.

To begin with, while the construction of the fort was in progress, Rui Freire sent part of his naval force to block the arrival of additional Persian troops from the mainland, and dispatched others to Bandar-e Kong, reinforced by Hormuzian Arabs under the command of ‘Ali Kamal. A native of Nakhilu on the coast between Bandar-e Lengeh and Siraf, Kamal was a tribal leader who harboured a vendetta against the Persian court as a result of a conflict in which several family members had died. Decamping to the coast of what is today the UAE, between Ra’s al-Khaymah and Sharjah, he became an ally of Hormuz and an enemy of the shah’s.

50 Ibid., p. 340.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
54 Boxer, ‘Anglo-Portuguese Rivalry’, p. 73, n. 1.
At Kong Kamal overran a large Persian garrison and returned with considerable booty. 56. Rui Freire also sent two *trankeys* to Khasab, in Ra’s Mosandam, where they captured two Arab *shaykhs* of Rams whom they ransomed for 120,000 *patacas* each. This was followed by an expedition in 1621 against Jolfar, near modern Ra’s al-Khaymah, under the command of Jerónimo Tavares and Kamal. After reducing the fortress of Jolfar, its captured governor Cogenedim (Kh‘ajeh Mo‘in al-Din Fali?), a relation of the shah of Hormuz, was brought to Qeshm where he and his men were given an amnesty. The result was an addition of some 600 Persian fighting men to Rui Freire’s cause. 57. Moreover, even after ‘Abdullah Khan began his siege of the fort on Qeshm, Rui Freire was able to send ships out to plunder Kuhestak, on the mainland south of Minab, and to attack the Persian forces occupying Saramiao, near modern Basidu at the western end of Qeshm, or Sermion as Pedro Teixeira called it. While most of this activity was more destructive than constructive, it does suggest that Rui Freire was far from incompetent.

Returning to the situation on Qeshm, when the Portuguese Viceroy and Council in Goa learned, on 20 October, of ‘Abdullah Khan’s advance on Qeshm and Hormuz, they dispatched a small armada of ten vessels under the command of Simão de Melo 58 for they were aware that men and arms were in short supply at Hormuz, and that an English fleet was due to land at Jask in the winter in order to pick up the annual shipment of silk coming overland from Isfahan. As Steensgaard notes, it is not entirely clear when the Anglo-Persian *entente* was realised. Carmelite sources characterise the English as Persian allies as early as September, while Pietro della Valle’s statement of 3 December is generally regarded as the first concrete testimony of Iranian-English negotiations on military collaboration. 59. Quite possibly, perceptions on this point differed considerably. Monox was being pressured to commit the English to a military alliance against the Portuguese on pain of ‘Abbas’s refusal to let the silk caravan travel to the coast, yet Monox knew he was not empowered to accept such an arrangement without consulting the ships’ council.

A letter sent to Surat by Monox and several colleagues (dated 7 February 1622) describes subsequent events. Shortly after the English fleet arrived at Jask by Monox on 14 December 1621 they received a message from

Monox urging them to set off immediately up the coast to Kuhestak [Costake] where they arrived on 23 December. Shortly thereafter, a representative of Imam Qoli Khan’s, identified as Samander Sultan, arrived ‘chiefly to intreat the aide of our shipps against their and our enemies the Portugalls’60. After consulting their commissions, the captains council agreed and proposed a series of articles which, after translation into Persian, were taken by Monox and his successor-to-be, William Bell, to Imam Qoli Khan who was then at Minab. Meanwhile, Rui Freire seems to have attempted to open negotiations with Imam Qoli Khan, suggesting that old friends should not go to war over a little water, and offering to pay all of the Persian force’s expenses if they lifted the siege of Qeshm fort61, but the Anglo-Persian accord seems to have already been concluded on 5 January 162262.

Obviously, Hormuz was the object of the proposed action and on 22 January the English fleet anchored less than 2 leagues or 6 nautical miles off of Hormuz where they hoped to engage their ‘daringe yet dasterdly enymie…with his five galllyones and two smale shipps, besydes frigetts and boats a suffetient nomber to encounter with us’63. Once the English commanders were apprised that Rui Freire was on Qeshm, ‘in his new erected castle’, they set sail and brought their ships as close as possible to invite our enymies to a banquit of fyer flyinge bullitts the ensuinge morninge’. At the sight of a ‘napkin or white cloth’, Monox went on shore and had an audience with Rui Freire. After much negotiation they failed to come to an arrangement and the English bombarded the fort. Dissatisfied, however, with the result, in which they nevertheless breached the fort’s walls and killed an estimated thirty men, the English landed five cannon ‘to batter him nearer at hand’64. It was at this point that William Baffin, serving with Captain Blithe on board the London, went ashore. As described in Samuel Purchas’ Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas his Pilgrimes, published in 1625, ‘Master Baffin went on shoare with his Geometricall Instruments, for the taking the height and distance of the Castle wall, for the better leauelling of his Peece to make his shot; but as he was about the same, he receiued a small shot from the Castle

63 The English Factories in India, 1622-1623, p. 32.
64 Ibid., p. 34.
into his belly, wherewith he gave three leaps, by report, and died immediately.\textsuperscript{65} It seems that Baffin’s grave was known and tended after his death. An anonymous note in the \textit{Journal of the Central Asian Society} from 1927 reads as follows: ‘It may interest you to know that I have found what I feel certain is the grave of William Baffin, the explorer who gave his name to Baffin Bay. This grave is on Kishm Island, near the town. It has been kept in good repair by former Sheikhs of the island, and the last repairs were done about fifty years ago. It is known as the grave of ‘Al Ferangi’ or of ‘Al Anglazi’. I found the sea was making encroachments on one side of this grave, and out of a feeling of pity for this lone Englishman I left sufficient money to have it built up from the sea…. As far as tradition goes amongst the older inhabitants of Kishm, this was the grave of an officer (the word used was \textit{Hakim}) who had been killed fighting.\textsuperscript{66} Whether or not Baffin was buried in amongst the Portuguese whose graves were disturbed by the dredging discussed earlier, we do not know. Certainly the description given by the anonymous visitor to it in the 1920s makes it sound as if it had been an isolated monument.

After a few days of steady bombardment, the Portuguese surrendered on 1 February. Seventeen guns were captured at Qeshm fort and Rui Freire was sent to Surat as a prisoner, after which Hormuz fell to an Iranian force of about 3000, aided by the English. The Portuguese surrendered on 23 February and the last surviving members of the Hormuz garrison were allowed to sail to Goa four days later, but English ships remained until September before turning the ruined town and fortress of Hormuz over to the Persians and returning to Surat.\textsuperscript{67} In addition to accounts in both English and Portuguese sources, the fall of Qeshm and Hormuz were commemorated by the Iranian poet Qadri of Shiraz in two compositions, the \textit{Jangnameh-ye Qeshm}, and the \textit{Jarunnameh}.\textsuperscript{68} Despite the pounding that Rui Freire’s fort on Qeshm received, it is still relatively well-preserved. Archaeological excavations were undertaken by the Iranian Cultural Heritage & Tourism Organization several years ago, and limited restoration seems to have already occurred on some of the walls.\textsuperscript{69}

\textsuperscript{65} Quoted in Wilson, \textit{The Persian Gulf}, p. 146, n. 1.
\textsuperscript{67} Markham, \textit{The voyages of William Baffin}, pp. xlv-xlvi, n. 2.
\textsuperscript{69} According to reports in the Iranian press dated 4 December 2006, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Iranian government have agreed to restore the fort.
One possible Portuguese phantom on the island deserves mention as well. This is Souza, or Bandar-e Suzeh, on the south coast of Qeshm, where a graveyard and settlement with many ruined walls and structures is spread over a hilly area of c. 50 × 150 m. Middle and late Islamic ceramics (celadon and Jolfar ware) were found on the site. At the base of the hill are the badly preserved remains of a small cemetery where local tradition says ‘St Francis of Souza’, a famous Portuguese mathematician (?), lies buried. Local tradition also considers the placename ‘Suza’ to be a relic of Portuguese settlement on Qeshm. Souza is, of course, a common Portuguese surname and it is intriguing to note that in 1621 the Captain of Hormuz was one Dom Francesco de Souza, who died shortly before the English assault on Qeshm. Is it possible that Francesco de Souza is the ‘St Francis of Souza’ of local legend and that he was regarded on Qeshm as a ‘mathematician’ because of his navigational skills or ability to use surveying instruments like William Baffin? Probably not. Without providing a reference, Tomaschek recorded the name Suza or Juze in Portuguese sources and, assuming this is correct, it suggests the toponym Suza pre-dates Portuguese contact with Qeshm.

Just as the fall of Hormuz did not signal the end of Portuguese involvement in Persian Gulf affairs, so too did Qeshm continue to be a factor even after its conquest. During the siege of Hormuz, the Safavid forces offered to sell Qeshm to the Portuguese for 500,000 patacas, an offer that was however refused. Following his escape from his English captors in 1623, Rui Freire was named General of the Red Sea and the Straits of Hormuz by the newly appointed viceroy of India, D. Francisco da Gama. After asserting their control at Muscat and many of the smaller coastal ports in Oman, the Portuguese attacked and plundered Qeshm during the winter of 1629-1630 and an agreement between Imam Qoli Khan and Rui Freire, a Dutch translation of which survives, shows that the tables had, to some extent, been turned and the Iranians, faced with a re-invigorated Portuguese presence in the Persian Gulf, would pay the Portuguese tribute for Qeshm. But after Shah Safi, ‘Abbas’s successor, had Imam Qoli Khan put to death, these payments were stopped, greatly angering the Portuguese. Notwithstanding the well-documented Dutch

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70 Thanks again are due to Mr. Bijan Darehshori who accompanied Dr. C. A. Petrie and me on our visit to Qeshm and showed us this site.
73 Ibid., p. 133.
74 Ibid., p. 134.
attack on Qeshm of 1645, the Portuguese were still negotiating about the
tribute they were owed from Qeshm in 1673. A decade later, however, the Dutch, under Casembroot, again attacked
the Persians on Qeshm, and the ensuing years saw Qeshm change hands
between Persian, English and Omani forces on more than one occasion.
As Bandar-e Kong declined during the final years of Safavid rule, a
local Arab sheikh based at Basidu, named Shaykh Rashid, transformed
this western Qeshmi town into an active port of trade. During the next
few years, when a fairly chaotic situation reigned at Bandar ‘Abbas with
Safavid supporters, Afghan forces, Arabs, Omanis, English and Dutch
all jockeying for power and forging and breaking alliances, Qeshm
became the object of a final Portuguese assault. In 1729, according to
the journal of the expedition a Portuguese force of 500 Europeans with
additional Sindi soldiers under a Colonel Cienfuegos, seized the customs
house at Basidu and ransacked Shaykh Rashid’s house there, hoping
to chase the English from the area and re-occupy Qeshm, Larak and
Hormuz.

Intriguingly, the great French geographer Jean Baptiste Bourguignon
d’Anville actually met Cienfuegos in 1729 and learned first hand of con-
ditions on Qeshm. Buried in d’Anville’s long article on the historical
geography of the Persian Gulf from 1764 is an account of his meeting
with a ‘Spanish gentleman in the service of Portugal, D. Alvaro de Navia
y Cienfuegos’ who had returned from Mombasa and who knew the
Persian Gulf from having sailed there. D’Anville wrote:

J’ai appris en 1729, d’un gentilhomme Espagnol au service du Portugal,
D. Alvaro de Navia y Cienfuegos, qui revenoit alors de Mombaça sur la
côte d’Afrique, & qui connoissoit le golfe Persique pour y avoir navigué,
que vers la pointe de Kesem ou Kismis, & un peu en dedans du canal qui
se termine à Ser-Mion, il s’étoit formé à l’occasion de la révolution arrivée
en Perse, une nouvelle ville, peuplée de fugitifs Persans & Arméniens,
mêlés avec les Arabes: qu’un seigneur Arabe, appelé Sheik-el-Rasset,
s’étoit formé dans ce canton une principauté indépendante, mettant à con-
tribution tous les bords du golfe. Teixeira étant à Basra en 1604, parle d’un
seigneur ou Shek du même nom de Ben-Rasset, établi aux environs de
 cette ville; & Pietro-della-Valle, qui étoit en Perse peu d’années après, il
est mention d’un Arab des environs de Mascate, également distingué par le

75 Slot, The Arabs of the Gulf, p. 204.
76 Ibid., p. 252.
nom de Rasset. La ville dont je viens de parler le nomme Bacido; & ce n’est pas une peuplade qui soit toute nouvelle; car j’ai remarqué que Duarte-Barbosa, Portugais, en fait mention dans le dénombrement des lieux possédés par les rois d’Ormus sur la côte de Perse, comme on peut voir dans la collection de Ramusio79.

In fact, this is the Don Alvaro, so-called ‘Marquis of Cienfuegos’, who drew a plan of Fort Jesus in Mombasa on the coast of Kenya80 after its re-conquest by the Portuguese in 172881. James Kirkman, the excavator of Fort Jesus, referred to him as ‘the dubious “Marquis” of Cienfuegos’, suggesting that he dedicated the plan to Cardinal João da Mota e Silva (1685-1747), cardinal-archbishop of Braga and prime minister of Portugal, hoping for preferment from his ‘prospective patron’82. Boxer and Azevedo noted: ‘Don Alvaro de Cienfuegos claimed to be a colonel in the Austrian and Spanish military service and a nephew of the cardinal of that name. But Diogo de Mendonça Corte-Real [1658-1736], Secretary of State in Portugal, said that he was really a Portuguese of humble origin (‘…filho de hum Portugues criado da Duqueza de Aveiro…’) and a renegade Carmelite friar’83.

Cienfuegos informed d’Anville that near the western end of Qeshm and just inside the channel that terminates at Ser-Mion—i.e. the Clarence or Kuran strait—a ‘new town, peopled with Persian and Armenian fugitives, mixed with Arabs’ formed as a result of the turmoil in Iran, and that an Arab shaykh named Shaykh al-Rashid [Rasset] had set himself up in an ‘independent principality’ there. As d’Anville noted, this was not a ‘new town’, but the town of Basido, mentioned over 200 years earlier by Duarte Barbosa. Cienfuegos’ intelligence, transmitted by d’Anville, was surely the source of Berghaus’ comment in 1832 that Basidu was the site of a flourishing Persian-Armenian colony84. Notwithstanding Cienfuegos’ efforts in the Persian Gulf, the Portuguese, who lost Mombasa in the same year, were unable to hold Qeshm, and this is where the

80 In the former Junta das Missões Geográficas e de Investigações do Ultramar in Lisbon, now Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical (http://www.iict.pt).
84 H. Berghaus, Geo-hydrographisches Memoir zur Erklärung und Erläuterung der reduzier ten Karte vom Persischen Golf (Gotha: Justus Perthes, 1832), p. 46.
island’s history of over 200 years of relations with the Portuguese empire draws to a close.

Qeshm’s importance was clearly as an adjunct to Hormuz, for which it served as that island’s chief source of sweet water. Indeed one might go so far as to suggest that without Qeshm the rulers of Hormuz and later occupying powers, like the Portuguese, would have been hard pressed to survive there. Strategically, however, the Portuguese gave Qeshm added importance by fortifying it, exactly as Dom Francisco de Sousa predicted, and provoking Shah ‘Abbas to attack it and thereby change the status quo in the Persian Gulf at that time. The English contribution to that effort, particularly the artillery bombardment, was critical, for without it Qeshm’s Portuguese garrison may have been able to withstand the Persian siege indefinitely but the prize was always Hormuz. Qeshm was, in one sense, only a distraction, albeit an important one for the Hormuzis, Safavids, Portuguese, Arabs, Dutch, and English of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, each of whom spilled blood in an attempt to gain control of the island.