



PORTUGAL I. RELATIONS WITH PERSIA IN THE EARLY MODERN AGE (1500-1750)

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Portuguese-Persian relations in the early Modern Age (1500-1750) surpassed Persia's geographical boundaries, as both countries interacted officially and informally in the Middle East, in the Persian Gulf, in the Indian Ocean, and in India. To Portugal, Persia mattered for the security of India—the core zone of her Asian empire—as a possible ally against any power that might use the Gulf as a base of attack against Portuguese interests in the Indian Ocean. Persia also mattered, because the Safavids kept a lasting interest in India, where they tried to obtain the adherence of the sultanates to Shi'ism, a policy viewed with apprehension by the “Estado da Índia,” whose authorities tried to fight back a possible Shi'ite coalition against Portuguese possessions. These are perhaps the most striking characteristics of the relations, together with the fact that both countries introduced changes in Asia: Persia with the political and religious revolution brought about by the Safavids, and Portugal through the establishment of a maritime empire that, in time, spanned from the southern extremity of Africa to Japan, heralding a new global era. It is also noteworthy that their relationship coincided with the rise and fall of the Safavids, and,



curiously, Persian cultural and linguistic influence into Portuguese language and culture came mainly through India.

The early stage (1489-1507). Prior to the first encounter with Safavid officials near the island of [Hormuz](#) in 1507, Portuguese knowledge and information on the Persian world was at best scarce and in most cases outdated. Until the late 15th century (1489), there is no evidence of direct contacts, as the Franciscan Fr. Lourenço of Portugal appointed papal legate to the Mongol armies in the Middle East in 1246, never reached his destination (Ramos, pp. 20-25; Jackson, p. 88). Descriptions of Il-khanid Iran, however, became known in Portugal thanks to Marco Polo. King Dom Duarte (r. 1433-38) had two copies of Marco Polo's work in the royal library, one of them in Portuguese, which made the book accessible to courtiers and officials (*Livro dos Conselhos*, p. 206; Carvalho, II/2, pp. 425-30). More information on Persia reached Portugal with the development of the latter's trade networks in the Mediterranean during the 15th century. That knowledge was partly empirical and partly mythical, and some pieces of it made their way into late medieval European cartography. One of its finest specimens came to Portugal in 1459, when king Dom Afonso V (r. 1438-81) commissioned the Italian cartographer Fra Mauro to make a world map including Persia with legends summing up all the information available in Italy at that time (*Atlas du Vicomte de Santarém*, pls. 45-50; Cortesão, II, pp. 94-183).

The first registered Portuguese contact in the outskirts of the Persian world occurred in 1489, when Pêro da Covilhã, an agent sent by king Dom João II (r. 1481-95) to collect information on the Asian trading world, visited the Persian Gulf twice in 1491-92. Other European merchants and diplomats had preceded him, particularly during the second half of the 15th century, which was the reflection of the growing exchanges between Europe and Asia (Barros, I/1, pp. 193-200; Ficalho, pp. 95-124).

Until 1507, all extant Portuguese sources mention only the southern fringes of the Persian world—the Persian Gulf and the island of Hormuz, whose commercial importance had been stressed by them since 1500. It was Portugal's activity in the Persian Gulf that fostered further contacts with Persia, although up until 1750 Persian officials viewed Portuguese presence with mixed feelings, ranging from cooperation to hostility. The Gulf remained the key place for Portuguese imperial defense policy in the western Indian Ocean throughout the early Modern Age, as the security of Portugal's Asian empire included the Middle East for political and economical reasons. It was



in this juncture that Safavid Persia became a privileged ally for Portugal since the 1510s, even if in the long term their alliance broke up occasionally, or had some periods of aloofness (Aubin, 1994, pp. 27-28; Idem, 2000, pp. 287-89). Notwithstanding the tactical alliance in the Middle East, Portugal viewed Safavid desires of expansion to India as a threat to her security through the eventual allegiance of the Deccani sultanates to Shi'ism. Portuguese fears proved unsound, as Safavid political ambitions in India never materialized, and only Golkonda remained Shi'ite from inception until her conquest by Awrangzeb (r. 1658-1707) in 1687. However, the constant passage of Safavid envoys to the Deccan, along with the traditional migratory flow of people from the Middle East that provided the Indian sultanates with soldiers and bureaucrats, made Portugal fearful of an eventual Muslim coalition against her interests and possessions in India (Haneda, 1997, pp. 129-38; Thomaz, 2004, pp. 70-128). The fear only materialized once, in 1570-71, but the concern persisted until the 17th century.

Upon conquering Hormuz in 1507, Afonso de Albuquerque met some Safavid officials from Shiraz on the mainland. They had probably been sent by Kālil-Solṭān Du'l-Qadar, the governor of Shiraz, to collect the *moqarrariya* (a tribute paid by Hormuz to the neighboring sovereigns to allow the passage of her commerce, which allowed them to trade tax free until a certain amount, varying according to their importance) due in arrear by Hormuz, as its ruler Seyf-al-Din Abā Naẓar (r. 1505-14) had recently recognized [Shah Esmā'il I's](#) (r. 1501-24) suzerainty over the island. It was then that Albuquerque received information on the shah's conquests, and knew that he and his supporters, known as "those with red turban" (that is, *qezelbāš*), were Shi'ites. Albuquerque, who was more familiar with Maghreb's Sunnite Islam, thought of them as followers of 'Ali, and not of the Prophet (*Comentários*, I/1, pp. 193-97; *Viagens*, pp. 281-83). Albuquerque's incorrect religious affiliation survived, and resurfaced in the writings of other Portuguese authors, who had remained baffled with the Twelver Shi'ism, and the *qezelbāš* behavior accentuated that oddness to their eyes (*Itinerários*, pp. 12-15; Carreira, 1997, pp. 134-42). Another persistence was the title "Sofi," registered in Portuguese for the first time in 1511 (Matos, 1972, p. 30), to name the Safavid sovereign, together with "Xequé Ismael" (*Šeyḵ Esmā'il*), which, although it alluded to Esmā'il I's role as the religious leader, was applied to his successors during the 16th century. This was not an isolated case, as Fr. Gaspar de São Bernardino made Ṭahmāsb I (r. 1524-76) the ruling shah in 1602 (São Bernardino, p. 141).



Albuquerque lost Hormuz in 1508, and only in 1515 did he take it back, placing the island under Portuguese “protectorate” until 1622, thus making it a bone of contention with Persia, whose sovereigns saw it as a vassal state. The conflict survived the conquest of Hormuz by [Shah ‘Abbās I](#) (r. 1588-1629) in 1622, as the Safavids feared Portuguese presence in the Gulf, which was seen as too expansionist for their liking.

Diplomacy and messianic projects (1507-1524). Though there was no direct contact on Persian soil until 1514, both sides had engaged in diplomatic exchanges in India since 1510 and developed projects of cooperation. European diplomacy, especially the Venetian and the Papal, had been trying to establish alliances with Shah Esmā‘il I since 1504 (Setton, III, pp. 1-104). Portuguese diplomatic initiatives, however, did not always coincide in time with those developed by other European powers which had their own agendas. Moreover, as far as Venice is concerned, a certain rivalry persisted between the two during the 16th century, which was fuelled by the spice trade (Wake, pp. 371-87). In the beginning of the 16th century the Ottomans were the enemy in southern Europe, but Portugal’s enemies were, for economical and political reasons, the Mamluk sultans of Cairo, as both states were fighting to dominate the distribution of Asian spices to Europe. Not only had Mamluk Sultan Qānṣawh II al-Ġawri (r. 1501-16) threatened the Portuguese through Rome, but disturbing news of the Mamluk naval build-up in the Indian Ocean were starting to alarm Lisbon (Barros, I/2, pp. 174-91; II/1, pp. 173-80). Shah Esmā‘il I appeared to be a privileged ally, since he also nourished projects of expansion at the expense of the Mamluks. Like his Portuguese counterpart, king Dom Manuel (r. 1495-1521), Shah Esmā‘il I had messianic plans of conquest, and he found in Portugal’s monarch a keen listener, and eventually an ally (Aubin, 1988, pp. 36-126; Thomaz, 1994, pp. 189-97).

The appointment of Afonso de Albuquerque as governor of India in 1509 facilitated the alliance, as he shared his king’s policy and was its key enforcer in Asia. Curiously, Albuquerque feared Shah Esmā‘il I’s expansionism in India, which was stated to him by one of the shah’s ambassadors, a certain K̄vāja Amir, after the conquest of Goa in 1510, and substantiated in the constant passage of Persian envoys to the Deccani courts (*Comentários*, I/2, pp. 131-35). The Safavid alliance, however, gained momentum in both Portugal and India, and after the first ill-fated embassy of 1511 Albuquerque managed to send the second one headed by Miguel Ferreira in 1514-15. The embassy did not achieve the results aimed by Dom Manuel, especially since the Ottomans



defeated Shah Esmā'īl I at Čālderān in 1514, but Ferreira remained unaware of this until he left Persia in 1515 accompanied by another Persian envoy K̄vāja 'Ali Khan (Correia, II, pp. 353-60, 410-17; Smith, pp. 13-29).

While Ferreira lingered in Tabriz, Albuquerque sent his nephew Pêro de Albuquerque to get recent news regarding Safavid expansion in the Persian Gulf. The data gathered alarmed Albuquerque, as he learnt about the actions of Rayšahr's captain, Mir Abu Eshāq, and the formal acceptance of the shah's suzerainty by Turānšāh V (r. 1514-22), the ruler of Hormuz (Castanheda, II, pp. 311-12; *Cartas*, I, pp. 345-49). The governor decided to gain control over Hormuz in order to stop its eventual Safavid annexation, which would destroy his plans regarding horse trade to India, and in 1515 he conquered the island for the second time. While there, Albuquerque received the above-mentioned K̄vāja 'Ali Khan in full pageant to impress him by the magnificence and power of Dom Manuel—a policy already followed by Ferreira near the shah without clear results. Still in Hormuz, in 1515-16 Albuquerque dispatched Fernão Gomes de Lemos with gifts and instructions to negotiate a treaty with Esmā'īl I against the Mamluks, according to which the shah would keep Mecca and Medina as spoils of war, and Dom Manuel would have Jerusalem. It was only after the embassy's departure that Albuquerque heard of Čālderān for the first time, realizing perhaps that the shah was not the ally his king had thought him to be (Correia, II, pp. 423-25; *Comentários*, II/2, pp. 152-79, 213-17; *Cartas*, I, pp. 387-90).

Esmā'īl I received Lemos in his camp, but no concrete results were obtained, as he had lost military initiative to the Uzbeks in the east and to the Ottomans in the west, thus postponing *sine die* any offensive against the Mamluks. Besides that, Esmā'īl I was not pleased with the Portuguese conquest of Hormuz, considering it an offence made by an ally, and made it known to Lemos through Ebrāhim Beg, thus making Hormuz an issue of Safavid policy until 1622. Worse than Hormuz coming under the control of Portugal was the fortress built by Albuquerque on the island, which, for the Safavids, was a clear sign of Portuguese imperial presence there. Begun in 1507 as a tower, the fortress structures were hastily erected by Albuquerque in 1515, to be subsequently renewed, augmented, and modernized until its capture by Shah 'Abbās I in 1622, thus keeping pace with the development of European and Portuguese military architecture. Safavid elite admired it as a proof of Western technical skill, but the Portuguese did not build any more fortresses of stone and mortar in Persia, except for the one they erected on Qešm Island,



as they took advantage of those facilities made of adobe which existed already, like the one in Bandar-e Gombron (later [Bandar-e 'Abbās](#)), which belonged to Hormuz. The development of stone and mortar fortresses accompanied the development of artillery and siege techniques, which allowed Hormuz to withstand attacks until its fall to an Anglo-Persian alliance that managed to cut the island's supplies by sea. After the fall, a Persian garrison was stationed within the fortress walls, and parts of it were repaired, although most of its artillery was sent to Shiraz by the order of [Emāmqoli Khan](#). In Tavernier's time (second half of the 17th century), there was still a garrison in Hormuz, but its commander lived in Bandar-e 'Abbās (*Comentários Rui Freire*, pp. 224-31; Godinho, p. 108, Tavernier, pp. 327-30; Moreira, pp. 143-58; Kleiss, pp. 166-83).

Anyhow, in 1515 Shah Esmā'il I tried to obtain military help against the Porte, and still nourished plans to take Bahrain and Qaṭif with Portuguese help. Esmā'il's plans never came to fruition, as by 1515-16 the Ottomans were not Portugal's enemies in the Indian Ocean, and the messianic plans of cooperation stopped with Albuquerque dismissal and death in 1515 (*Cartas*, II, pp. 233-50; 251-52).

Apart from a joint expedition to Makrān to subdue the “nautaque” pirates in 1515, which happened still during Albuquerque's sojourn in Hormuz and only because they also harassed Portuguese interests, the military cooperation between Persia and Portugal had always remained practically virtual. If Esmā'il I nurtured any ideas of military assistance, these vanished in 1516, when his captains requested Portuguese assistance to transport some 6,000-7,000 men from Hormuz to Bahrain and al-Ḥasā and were politely rejected with a vague promise of help after consulting Goa and Lisbon. Only during Shah Ṭahmāsb I's reign did the Portuguese assist Persia again, this time to subdue Šāh-'Ali Beg, Rayšahr's captain, who was acting too independently and trying to get Ottoman help. After a disastrous campaign conducted in 1534, it was only in 1540 that a Portuguese naval blockade in cooperation with Safavid forces headed by Fārs governor, Ġāzi Khan Du'l-Qadar, managed to obtain Šāh-'Ali Beg's capitulation (*Cartas*, VII, pp. 166-67; Castanheda, IV, pp. 571-72; Farinha, p. 471; Aubin, 1994, pp. 36-43). Like in 1515, the Portuguese intervened because trade and maritime security in the Gulf were at stake, and they did it again in the 1690s and in the early 1700s, as both countries shared a common enemy, Ya'rubid Oman, but after endless negotiations the project never came to fruition.



Though Shah Esmā'īl I cultivated diplomatic ties with European countries, he declined to send ambassadors to Dom Manuel, preferring instead to send them to the king's deputy in India, thus establishing a pattern in Persian-Portuguese relations (*Cartas*, II, p. 237; Castanheda, II, pp. 352-53). His successors would follow him and preferred to negotiate with the viceroy or the governor of the “Estado da Índia” in Goa who had powers to sign treaties, rather than to send envoys to Lisbon. Exceptions are known, but these coincided with periods of intense diplomatic exchanges with Europe to obtain an alliance against the Ottomans, like in the thirty-year period starting in 1585, during the reign of Shah Moḥammad Ḳodābanda (r. 1578-88), until *ca.* 1615, already in Shah ‘Abbās I’s time. After 1619 Portugal received no Persian diplomatic mission, as her role of potential ally had vanished due to her decline in Asia. Like her Persian counterpart, the Portuguese crown also preferred to have diplomatic missions sent directly from Goa, although exceptions are known, as when Miguel de Abreu de Lima was dispatched to Shah Ṭahmāsb I from Lisbon in 1572-76 (Serrão, I, p. 230).

After 1515 there was a shift in Portuguese imperial policy for Asia. Shah Esmā'īl I momentarily lost all attractiveness he had enjoyed, as Lisbon sensed danger in the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, which gave Istanbul an open access to the Indian Ocean, where they could launch attacks after having seized the Mamluk fleet. Though the shah’s alliance was still appealing to other European states, Portugal’s interests for the time being lay in the Red Sea, where her ships waged war on the Ottoman new navy, and carried a rather effective commercial blockade (Barros, III/1, pp. 14-69; Correia, II/2, pp. 578-83). No new embassy was sent to Esmā'īl I, until the uprising against Portuguese power in the Persian Gulf in 1521-23 brought Persia back to the limelight. The shah became involved in Ra’is Šaraf-al-Din Loṭf-Allāh Fāli’s dealings, since the vizier of Hormuz had sought his help, but Persian troops arrived when India’s governor, Dom Duarte de Meneses, had already uprooted the revolt. Those Safavid forces positioned in the mainland paralyzed Hormuz’s trade, and the blockade persisted until Ra’is Šaraf-al-Din Loṭf-Allāh paid them to leave. The affair, however, was far from settled, and Meneses decided to send Baltasar Pessoa to Shah Esmā'īl I in 1523. Pessoa only reached the shah’s camp in 1524, but Esmā'īl’s death ended his mission due to the ensuing political turmoil (*Itinerário*, pp. 3-44; Couto, pp. 191-210).

Vicissitudes of an alliance (1524-1602). The new king Dom João III (r. 1521-57) introduced changes in his Asian empire. He adopted a more circumspect



policy to consolidate the Portuguese presence, thus discarding his father's messianic plans. In the Middle East, Dom João III faced Ottoman expansion, which threatened Portuguese interests in the Indian Ocean, as the Porte was also trying to maintain open the trade routes between the spice producing areas and her Levantine ports (Özbaran, pp. 67-74; Inalcik, 2000, pp. 315-25). With the former Mamluk fleet in hands, Istanbul could challenge Portugal in her own ground—in the Indian Ocean. The Porte, however, took a decade (1517-27) to launch an offensive, and every Ottoman attack against the “Estado da Índia” failed: those of Salmān Ra'is in 1527-28, Kādem Solaymān Pāšā in 1538, Pir-e Ra'is in 1552, Morād Ra'is in 1553, and Seydi 'Ali Ra'is in 1554. No great Ottoman action was taken after 1560, even though in 1565-75 they supported all uprisings against the Portuguese in Asia with technical expertise and money, and despite Mir 'Ali Beg's incursions in Muscat in 1581 and in Africa's east coast in 1588-91 (do Couto, IV/1, pp. 208-15; V/1, pp. 246-448; VI/2, pp. 404-27, 465-71, 485-94, 537-48; VII/1, pp. 46-50; X/1, pp. 84-99; XI, pp. 26-47).

By the mid 1530s the tide had turned in the Middle East, after Sultan Solaymān II (r. 1520-66) conquered Iraq, where, during his sojourn in Baghdad in 1534-35, he received the allegiance of several Gulf rulers including some of those who had earlier recognized Portuguese suzerainty. Portugal followed all Ottoman moves attentively, but no counter-actions were taken until the 1550s, when the war begun, though Basra had fallen into Sultan Solaymān II's hands in 1546 (*Obras*, III, pp. 116-17; Özbaran, pp. 125-31). The Ottomans had at last secured a port in the Gulf, which they could use to launch attacks against the Portuguese. In that juncture, Persia was looked at as a plausible ally against the Porte by the European powers, namely the Habsburgs, who had been trying to get Shah Ṭahmāsb I's assistance to fight Sultan Solaymān II since the late 1520s (Membré, pp. 110-11; Aubin, 1996, pp. 385-99). The shah had recently begun to rule alone (since 1533), and started a process of political, administrative, and military reforms to strengthen his power. He faced two simultaneous external pressures: the Ottomans in the west and the Uzbeks in the east. Despite Ṭahmāsb I's military reforms, he lacked the means to equip an army equal to that of Sultan Solaymān II, and until 1540, when he reached a peaceful status quo with the Uzbeks, he had to divide his forces between two fronts (Roemer, pp. 233-48; Floor, pp. 133-37; Haneda, pp. 47-50). Ṭahmāsb I was hardly the ally Europe was looking for to attack the Ottomans, and vice-versa, and the Europeans were not the only ones who had drawn plans to strike their enemy in the back, since Sultan Solaymān II had also allied with the Uzbeks to do the same, as it happened ca. 1530 (Membré, p. 109).



Though such plans never succeeded, Europeans and Ottomans persisted in their idea of synchronous military offensives. Only after 1540 did the shah undertook an offensive in the west, coinciding with Michele Membré's mission, but Ṭahmāsb I's actions were disastrous not to him only, but also to Portuguese interests in the Shatt al-Arab area. The consolidation of Safavid presence in Dezful around 1544-45 prompted a neighboring ruler to ask for protection from the Ottomans, whose intervention ultimately led to the conquest of Basra in 1546, possibly facilitated by rumors of a Persian army stationed in Kuzestān (Membré, pp. 1-50; *Obras*, III, p. 133). It was in 1548 when the "Estado da Índia" collected fresh data on Persia, together with information on Ottoman power, supply lines, and trade routes, since the Portuguese were hinting a forthcoming war in the Gulf (*Livro que trata*, pp. 72-74, 117-20, 132-33).

Portuguese interest in Persia continued after 1524, as Goa and Lisbon still monitored all shah's moves in the Gulf, and especially in India. Following his father's footsteps, Shah Ṭahmāsb I still aimed at obtaining the allegiance of the Deccani sultanates to Shi'ism, for which he sent several embassies to India. In this, he had some success after 1558, as Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, and Golkonda ended by professing Shi'ism simultaneously for a short time, although the political outcome was not what the shah had expected it to be (Thomaz, 2004, pp. 87, 100-02, 112-14). Another sensible matter for the "Estado" was the continuous migration of Persian soldiers, bureaucrats, and missionaries through the Gulf towards India and southeastern Asia. It was impossible to control this flow, and accidents occurred occasionally when an overzealous Portuguese customs official stopped one of the shah's envoys to tax him, especially since Hormuz had gained importance for his commerce. Frequent wars with the Ottomans had meant the interruption of the traditional Persian trade routes to the Levant, particularly from 1545 to 1555, which increased the role of Hormuz as Persia's gateway for foreign trade. This made customs incidents usual because the shah was entitled to trade there under the *moqarrariya* system (*Obras*, III, pp. 123-25, 128-29, 270-71, 286). Besides, Ṭahmāsb I kept pressing the Portuguese by claiming his rights over Hormuz and by demanding the payment of the *moqarrariya* dues to him (Correia, IV, p. 222).

Shah Ṭahmāsb I's pressure on Hormuz was not isolated, as Lār princes had been doing the same since the end of the 15th century. The ruling family of Lār had tried in vain to obtain the control of India's trade routes departing from



Hormuz, but they only managed to make the *lāri* the most widely used currency throughout the western Indian Ocean (Aubin, 2000, pp. 344-45). If the shah and the semi-independent prince of Lār lacked a navy to attack Hormuz, Lār was well positioned for both halting all Persia's caravan traffic and also to siege Hormuz's fortresses and ports on the continent. Under Lār's last independent ruler, Ebrāhim Khan, whose reign ended in 1601-02, caravans were frequently halted, and he also fomented uprisings against Hormuz's domains in Persia (*Obras*, III, pp. 64, 246, 254-55, 357; do Couto, X/2, pp. 219-22).

In 1549 all signs showed that a confrontation with the Ottomans was inevitable. After all diplomatic arrangements with Istanbul had failed (Sousa, II, pp. 213-15), Portugal decided to renew ties with her Persian ally, and so Dom João III ordered the "Estado" to send an envoy to Persia. The plan was to get Shah Ṭahmāsb I's support to attack the Ottomans, thus diverting a part of Sultan Solaymān II's onslaught. However, an incident in Hormuz in 1550, where the Dutch Jesuit Fr. Gaspar Barzaeus had converted to Christianity the wife of Sayyed "Madune," one of the shah's envoys to India, led to the inglorious end of Henrique de Macedo's mission of 1550-51 (*Indica*, II, pp. 50-54, 113-15). In general, Ṭahmāsb I's attitude towards the Portuguese during his reign was ambiguous and aloof. Though he had stayed unmoved by the request of Hadhramaut's emir Badr Bu Ṭuwayriq to break away from the Portuguese *ca.* 1530 (Membré, p. 108), there is evidence that he seldom cherished his alliance with them, the exception being the two expeditions against Rayšahr in 1534 and in 1540. His political timing rarely coincided with that of the Portuguese, particularly in the international arena, and in some areas, like in India and in the Gulf, their interests clashed. Furthermore, suspicion about the other side's real intentions was mutual, and this point was never really overcome by both sides. One of the sensible areas was military assistance, which had started in Shah Esmā'il I's time, and, in spite of the presence of Portuguese harquebusiers and gunners in Shah Ṭahmāsb I's army (Savory, 1987, pp. 79-81), these men had no link with the "Estado da Índia." Though Albuquerque had sent two pieces of artillery and six matchlocks to Esmā'il I in 1515 (*Cartas*, II, p. 234), they must be regarded as gifts, since, legally, no Portuguese was allowed to sell or supply weapons to non-Christian powers, especially to the Muslims (*Ordenações Manuelinas*, V, pp. 240-41; *Ordenações Filipinas*, III, pp. 403-04). Smuggling weapons to Persia was feasible and was practiced, but those Portuguese, who served in the Safavid army either as mercenaries or as cannon-founders, did it individually for economic



and social reasons, like many others were doing the same throughout Asia (Subrahmanyam, 1987, pp. 107-12; Idem, 1993, pp. 256-61). Despite later claims of help or arms supply (Savory, 1960, pp. 1098-1100), Portuguese official military assistance to Persia never involved either weapons supply or sending experts to serve in or to instruct the Safavid army. Even if cooperation against the Ottomans in Basra was debated in 1547-48, these plans did not come to fruition due to Goa's opposition to them (*Obras*, III, pp. 481, 506-07).

When war broke in the Gulf in 1550, the two reluctant allies made no effort to coordinate their forces against the Ottomans until 1555. Shah Ṭahmāsb I wanted to prevent the renewal of a war in two fronts, which would have weakened him externally and internally, especially if the Uzbeks attacked Khorasan—something that K̄vāja Pirqoli had recognized as possible in his report to governor Garcia de Sá in 1548 (*Livro que trata*, p. 133). The shah also lacked the means to face Sultan Solaymān II's army, and he desired an external respite and time to consolidate his reforms, which he obtained through the Treaty of Amasya concluded in 1555, even though for him it meant the loss of Iraq. The treaty also presumed that Persia had ceased to play any role in an eventual Portuguese diplomatic offensive against the Porte, and Goa emphatically did not send any new mission to Shah Ṭahmāsb I for a long time after 1551, as the shah stood by the peace treaty until his death (Gulbenkian, 1986, p. 489; Matthee, 2003b, pp. 165-66). Portugal was left to stay alone and contain the Ottoman offensive in the Gulf, which was obtained after a decade of war, when both sides signed truces *ca.* 1563 (Özbaran, pp. 129-40). While Istanbul's plans to expand to the Indian Ocean ended without success, new alliances against Ottoman power had formed in Central and Northern Europe, threatening the core of Ottoman power. A novel danger to the Ottomans (Muscovy) had also risen in the Volga basin, menacing Ottoman positions in the Caucasus and at the Black Sea (Inalcik, 2000b, pp. 38-39). Though the new geopolitical situation favored long distance commerce between India, Persia, and Muscovy, by extending the route used before from which Hormuz had benefited, this did not attract Portuguese merchants who were more interested in the commercial axis between India and Basra (*Indica*, I, p. 647; *Documentação Ultramarina*, I, pp. 213-15; Matthee, 2003a, pp. 104-05, 108).

Ṭahmāsb I remained committed to peace, and he did not change his position even when in 1565-66 emperor Maximilian II tried to get his support against Sultan Solaymān II through Portuguese channels (Aubin, 1996, pp. 407-31).



After the battle of Lepanto (1571), there was a renewal of European diplomatic activity towards Persia to revive the old encirclement policy, and Portugal accompanied the Papal and Spanish attempts for it. That happened because king Dom Sebastião (r. 1557-78) had projects for the western Mediterranean basin, and in 1572 he appointed Miguel de Abreu de Lima his ambassador to the shah, but the embassy reached Persia in 1574 only (do Couto, IX, pp. 148-49). Abreu de Lima's mission was a failure, as he arrived in the twilight of Tahmāsb I's reign. The Portuguese envoy was probably in Persia when the shah died in 1576, and he left for India without accomplishing any of the objectives set by Dom Sebastião. Within two years Persia had plunged into chaos, and the political turmoil was promising enough for the Ottoman Sultan Morād III (r. 1574-95) to break the peace treaty and invade the country in 1578 (Don Juan de Persia, pp. 128-33). Meanwhile, Dom Sebastião died in the same year at the battle of Alcazar, plunging Portugal into a dynastic crisis that was solved only in 1580, when Philip II of Spain became Filipe I of Portugal (r. 1580-1598), thus making the Portuguese diplomacy for the Middle East subsidiary of the Spanish one.

The Ottoman invasion to Persia in 1578, together with the new Uzbek onslaught in the east, made the European alliance attractive to Shah Moḥammad Ḳodābanda, and it led him to deploy several diplomatic initiatives to find support (Roemer, pp. 260-61). Though still enshrouded in mystery, it is almost certain that viceroy Dom Luís de Ataíde (1578-81) decided to send a mission to Persia in 1580-81, and appointed the Augustinian Fr. Simão de Moraes to head it for his knowledge of Persian and for being in Hormuz at that time (*Documentação Padroado*, XII, pp. 102-03, 188). Fr. Simão's mission had an exploratory character, and when he returned to Goa to present his report he found out that Dom Luís had died and in his place was Dom Francisco Mascarenhas (1581-84). Dom Francisco had been sent to India by the new king, Filipe I, to obtain the acknowledgement of his rule by his new Asian empire, and with specific instructions regarding Persia, to whose shah he was to offer naval assistance to strike a diversionary maneuver against the Ottomans in the Red Sea. Habsburg Spain wanted to defend her interests in the Mediterranean vis-à-vis Ottoman expansionism, and so Mascarenhas sent Fr. Simão again to Shah Moḥammad Ḳodābanda in 1583. Fr. Simão joined the shah in Khorasan, where the latter was campaigning against the Uzbeks. There were good prospects for cooperation, so much so that Shah Moḥammad Ḳodābanda for the first time appointed a Persian ambassador to be sent to Europe via the Cape Route, but the latter's death en route to Lisbon in 1585



wrecked all hopes of cooperation (do Couto, X/1, pp. 514-20, X-2, p. 24).

Safavid diplomacy was very active in the mid 1580s, as Shah Moḥammad Ḳodābanda had also dispatched the first official mission to Muscovy, where he hoped to find an ally that would attack Sultan Morād III in the Caucasus. Besides that, he received a Papal envoy, Giovanbattista Vecchietti, with offers to supply Persia with weapons, experts, and money through Hormuz (Tucci, pp. 151-53; Matthee, 2003a, pp. 108-09). While the shah waited for results of his diplomatic moves, the international situation in Europe had changed, and Habsburg Spain was eager to reach an agreement in the Mediterranean that would enable her to have free hands in Flanders and in the North Atlantic. At the same time that the Persian envoy sailed to Lisbon, Philip II of Spain/Filipe I of Portugal signed truces with Sultan Morād III in 1585 (Dominguez Ortiz, p. 90), shattering all prospects of cooperation for more than a decade. All Shah Moḥammad Ḳodābanda's projects crumbled before completion, and his internal frailty led to his abdication in 1588, in favor of his son 'Abbās I. Despite his recent truces with Istanbul, Filipe I continued to watch closely the evolution of Persian affairs, and he tried vainly to exchange correspondence and ambassadors with the new shah during the 1590s, hoping that Shah 'Abbas I would resume war against the Ottomans, with whom the shah had signed a grievous peace treaty in 1590. Whereas Lisbon (that is, Madrid) had in mind a possible cooperation with Persia for her Mediterranean politics, Goa, on the other hand, was more interested in preventing any possible Safavid cooperation with Mughal India, as they feared that the Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) might use his Sind ports to build up a naval force in the Arabian Sea (*Boletim*, no. 2, pp. 213, 301, no. 3, pp. 419, 446; Cunha, pp. 20-21).

From cooperation to conflict (1602-1650). Notwithstanding the unprecedented level of diplomatic exchange between Persia and Portugal/Spain in the beginning of the 17th century, its core had the seed that would lead to open conflict between both countries. As the Portuguese/Spanish diplomacy used different channels according to its origin (Madrid, Lisbon, or Goa), so did vary its objectives according to their interests, and some would prove to be antagonistic and damaging to the cohesion of the negotiations carried with Shah 'Abbās I. As in the past, there was little understanding of how the internal situation in Persia conditioned her foreign policy, even if reports and other data arrived regularly at Portuguese decision centers. Shah 'Abbās I's priorities passed through the strengthening of his power, and he also made efforts to reform and modernize his army through the redevelopment of



permanent corps equipped with firearms, to increase his direct control over the provinces so that the revenues would flow to the center to pay for his army, and to reorganize the central and provincial administration by promoting his men, many of whom were *golāms*, to key places. All this took time to accomplish after his accession to the throne, and meanwhile the shah had to comply with the demands of his traditional enemies: the Ottomans and the Uzbeks (Haneda, pp. 50-57; Roemer, pp. 261-66).

That was the reason why ‘Abbās I stayed unmoved when Portugal tried to attract him to an anti-Ottoman league during the 1590s. Lisbon’s interest towards Persia persisted, and so did her requests for more information on the shah, along with orders to send letters and ambassadors to him (*Arquivo*, 3, pp. 269-70, 377-78, 415, 434, 601-02, 914). Shah ‘Abbās I began his diplomatic overture in 1594, when his ambassador visited Goa en route to the Deccani sultanates. Though his main objective was to invite the Adelshahid ruler of Bijapur Ebrāhim II (r. 1579-1626) to return to Shi‘ism, he left a door open, which was cultivated by Portugal without success in the following years. Despite several attempts, there was no correspondence between the shah and Filipe I, who wanted him to break the peace with Istanbul, and prevent an eventual alliance with Akbar (BNL, cod. 1976, fols. 7-11, 104-08v; *Arquivo*, 3, pp. 813-14). After the shah had taken advantage of Shaybanid ‘Abd-Allāh Khan II’s (r. 1583-98) death to launch a victorious offensive against the Uzbeks, Dom António de Lima, captain of Hormuz, sent to him a mission headed by Rui de Gouveia in 1599. Gouveia’s sojourn in Isfahan coincided with that of Fr. Nicolau de Melo of the Order of Saint Augustine and Sir Anthony Shirley, whose presence revived in Shah ‘Abbās I the wish to send an embassy to Europe, particularly now that he had strengthened his internal position and had defeated the Uzbeks. The shah felt free to regain the provinces lost to the Ottomans, and he wanted Habsburg assistance for that task, but Shirley persuaded him to enlarge the embassy’s scope and to include other European powers, some of which were Spain’s enemies. News of the mission headed by Ḥosayn-‘Ali Beg and Sir Anthony Shirley reached Goa after their departure in May, and this led viceroy count of Vidigueira (1597-1600) to warn Filipe II (r. 1598-1621) about the Englishman’s true plans (AN/TT, Graça, cx. 3-6ηL, fol. 419; BNL, cod. 1976, fols. 144-47, 180-80v.).

During Shah ‘Abbās I’s reign, Persia’s diplomacy became very active in Europe, and five of his embassies went to or passed through Portugal/Spain: Ḥosayn-‘Ali Beg with Sir Anthony Shirley in 1599-1603, Bastāmqli Beg in 1604-05,



Pākiza Emāmqli Beg in 1607-10, Sir Robert Shirley in 1608-15, and Čengiz Beg in 1610-13. Three missions overlapped in time, and Bastāmqli Beg died during the sea-voyage to Portugal. Bastāmqli Beg's secretary succeeded his dead master as ambassador, but was assassinated in Valladolid by a converted Persian known as don Felipe de Pérsia. The intense diplomatic movement left the Portuguese and the Spanish authorities with the difficult task to find out which offer was still standing; and one of 'Abbās I's diplomats, Sir Anthony Shirley, changed side soon after his arrival in Europe, where he offered his services to several countries before ending as a counselor in Spain (*Documentos remetidos*, I, p. 115; Gulbenkian, 1986, pp. 492-96; Steensgaard, pp. 211-24, 237-44). 'Abbās I wanted to get military cooperation to attack the Ottomans, and he found an audience for his plans in Central and Southern Europe, especially among the Austrian Habsburgs, to whom he sent two missions in 1603-04. The Austrian Habsburgs pressed on their Spanish relatives, who also ruled over Portugal since 1580, to adopt a more bellicose attitude towards Istanbul, but Spain had no plans to break the truces signed in 1581. Madrid's foreign policy was then involved in a grand design vis-à-vis her northern enemies (England and the Netherlands), and Philip III had to deal with an internal problem, the "Moriscos," whose expulsion in 1609-10 coincided in time with two Persian diplomatic missions (Dominguez Ortiz, pp. 302-07). The Portuguese crown had also no pending issue with the sultan since the 1590s, but since anti-Ottoman feelings still ran strong in Portugal and Spain, Philip III, as Filipe II of Portugal (r. 1598-1621), engaged his two crowns in a long negotiation with the shah to discuss an alliance without thinking what could happen if it was eventually abandoned.

To make his offer more attractive, Shah 'Abbās I proposed the shipment of Persian silk through the Cape Route on Portuguese ships. By redirecting the Persian silk trade route 'Abbās I planned to damage the Ottomans economically, while he also hoped for more earnings from this trade, which would finance his reforms, especially his standing army (Matthee, 1999, pp. 78-83). Unfortunately the shah's plan had two major flaws: the first and foremost was that the silk continued to be traded through traditional land routes despite his attempts to divert it; and, secondly, the Portuguese, be it the Crown or private merchants, were simply not interested in his offer. Portuguese merchants had been trading in Persian silk since the 16th century, but they sold it in Sind, and had no plans of shipping it to Portugal. Except for a handful of traded goods—like horses (vital for India's warring sultanates, thence Albuquerque's interest to control their commerce), dates, sulphur,



textiles, and especially silver currency which was pumped to India after the 1570s—Persia and the Gulf were peripheral for the Portuguese investments in Asia. Portuguese merchants were more eager to invest in the international trade carried through the Gulf to the Levant, even if they dealt in forbidden goods, like spices, although by the 1590s Indian textiles had become the bulk product traded through that route (Cunha, pp. 106-37).

Meanwhile, Shah ‘Abbās I was moving closer to the Portuguese strongholds in the Gulf. [Allāhverdi Khan](#) (d. 1613), governor of Shiraz, conquered Lār in 1601-02, and Bahrain, reclaimed by Persia, fell to his thrust in 1602. The latter was a Portuguese protectorate, and its annexation was seen as an act of aggression from an ally, thus becoming a thorny issue in the relations. The year 1602 was also marked by the foundation of the Augustinian convent in Isfahan, kept open until 1748, which acted as an informal Portuguese embassy near the shah. Until then missionary work had been largely absent in the Portuguese relations with Persia, although Albuquerque had instructed Ferreira and Lemos to collect all data they could on Armenian Christians. No new attempt to establish a missionary bridgehead was made until 1548, when the Jesuits opened a house in Hormuz. Yet, despite being the best-endowed Catholic congregation to carry out missionary work, they closed it in 1568, as Islam proved to be barren ground for conversion. While Rome was trying to send missionaries to Persia, which would act under the Pope’s jurisdiction, the Portuguese “Padroado” was also sending its missionaries in the 1580s through their base in Hormuz, where they were present since 1573. The first Portuguese Augustinian mission arrived in Persia in 1583, but they only managed to establish a house in Isfahan in 1602, which coincided with the widespread rumor in Europe that ‘Abbās I was on the verge of conversion to Catholicism (*Documentação Padroado*, XI, pp. 202-06; Lockhart, pp. 388-89).

After the return of the first mission to Goa in 1603, another Augustinian mission left for Persia in that year being accompanied by Ḥosayn-‘Ali Beg and Luís Pereira de Lacerda, who had been appointed ambassador to Shah ‘Abbās I with the objective to recover Bahrain and pacify the Persian-Portuguese relations. It was during their sojourn that the displaced Armenians from Jolfā arrived in Isfahan, and the Augustinians started to work among them, which aroused suspicion in Shah ‘Abbās I and resistance among the Armenians (Gulbenkian, 1995, II, pp. 131-59). Mingling diplomacy with religion would bring mistrust on Augustinian activity in Persia, as ‘Abbās I and his successors would see their work as interference in Persian affairs, especially after the



friars had succeeded in briefly uniting the Armenians with Rome in 1607, and later, when they begun working in Armenia and Georgia, from where they were expelled in 1649. The relative tolerance enjoyed by the Augustinians gave place to hostility, particularly after the accession of Shah Solaymān I in 1668. The clash had some virulent moments, as in the controversy aroused in Persia by Father Jerome Xavier's abridged Persian version of his *Fuente de Vida*, presented in the work of Sayyed Aḥmad 'Alawi (see [AḤMAD B. ZAYN-AL-'ĀBEDIN 'ALAWI](#)) entitled *Meşqal-e şafā* (Polisher of Purity) and composed in 1622. Another case was the conversion to Shi'ism of some friars, like Fr. António de Jesus, who took the name 'Aliqoli Jadid-al-Eslām in 1697, became an apologist of Islam, and, besides that, acted as an official interpreter during the reign of Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn (r. 1694-1722; see Camps, pp. 175-76; Richard, pp. 73-85). Even the Armenians resented the way in which the Augustinians intruded into their affairs, as it left the community vulnerable to the intervention of the shahs and of the Shi'ite clergy. In their turn, the Augustinians resented the Carmelites and the Jesuits, who worked in Persia under the jurisdiction of the "Propaganda Fide," and the friction never waned completely in their relationship. Conversions had no lasting success in Persia, but the Augustinians managed to maintain open their house in Isfahan until 1748, even during Persian-Portuguese conflicts, as both sides knew that they provided a needed informal diplomatic channel between them. However, with Dom Fr. António de Gouveia's ill-fated mission, no other Augustinian enjoyed the ambassadorial status to the shah's court after 1614 (*Documentação Padroado*, XI, pp. 202-06; XII, pp. 188-92, 200-33).

While the Portuguese/Spanish authorities were trapped in endless negotiations until 1619, the shah developed other diplomatic initiatives where he achieved clear results with Muscovy and especially with Istanbul. 'Abbās I used his negotiations with European powers as a way to pressure the Ottomans to make peace in his terms, which he obtained in 1618 (Shaw, I, pp. 188-89; Matthee, 1999, pp. 77-78, 82-83). The Portuguese/Spanish authorities played a similar game, as their offers of help remained vague; their objective was simply to keep the shah's alliance to have the Ottomans sue for peace in Central Europe and in the Mediterranean. If the European objective was successful (peace with the Austrian Habsburgs was signed in 1615 for 20 years), it was obtained at the expense of Portugal's possessions in the Gulf. While negotiations endured, the shah began halting Hormuz caravans to demand the *moqarrarya* dues be paid to him, and then Allāhverdi Khan took "Bandel do Comorão" (the future Bandar-e 'Abbās) in 1614. The viceroy and his



councilors in Goa had finally found a pretext to put an end to undesirable diplomatic negotiations, but to no avail, since Lisbon and Madrid were still lured by the shah's offers. Shah 'Abbās I outmaneuvered the Dual Crown again, when he negotiated the shipment of silk with the British East India Company (see [EAST INDIA COMPANY, THE BRITISH](#)), whose main interest was to have access to gold and silver coins. After opening Bandar-e Jāsk to them in 1615, the shah signed an offensive alliance with the English, and eventually let them open a factory in Bandar-e 'Abbās. In the ensuing war, Portugal lost Hormuz in 1622, and Persian forces invaded Oman and briefly occupied Ṣoḥār, but 'Abbās I failed to get English assistance to take Muscat, and the newly-arrived Dutch were not interested in helping the shah's expansionism in the Gulf in exchange for commercial privileges (AN/TT, Graça, cx. 6-2ηE, fols. 423-39, 447-53; Luz, pp. 334-56; Gulbenkian, 1986, pp. 493-500; Shaw, I, p. 189; Steensgaard, pp. 323-43).

By 1623 Shah 'Abbās I had lost his outpost in Oman with the Portuguese counter-offensive headed by Rui Freire de Andrada. Portuguese forces were vital to defend Basra from Emāmqoli Khan's army from 1624 to 1629, thus keeping open a vital trade route to the Levant, despite the Safavid thrust into Iraq, with the subsequent fall of Baghdad in 1623. Rui Freire, however, could not take Hormuz back, but his campaigns in the Gulf damaged Persian commercial interests, which led the governor of Fārs Emāmqoli Khan to negotiate truces with him in 1628, without 'Abbās I's knowledge. A peaceful understanding was reached in 1629-30, by which the Portuguese were allowed to have a factory in Bandar-e Kong, with half of its customs revenue (*Comentários Rui Freire*, pp. 238-61; Cunha, pp. 42-67). Shah 'Abbās I's death in 1629 possibly helped to formalize the agreement, although its acknowledgment by the sovereigns of both countries was not done until the 1650s, or even later. All new agreements on Bandar-e Kong were initially established with the port's *šāhbandar* (port official) and the governor of Lārestān, and on a later stage with the central government and the shah. A half of the customs revenue, and later the annual rent of 1,100 *tumāns*, was paid by Bandar-e Kong's *šāhbandar* to the Portuguese factor at that port. Bandar-e Kong thrived thanks to convoys of Indian merchants escorted by Portuguese warships making the route from Gujarat and Sind to Basra and back. Besides that, Bandar-e Kong also managed to control the seed-pearl trade made in the Gulf, as Fr. Manuel Godinho recorded in 1661 (Godinho, pp. 122-30; Tavernier, pp. 331, 337-38). Bandar-e Kong prospered, and the office of *šāhbandar* became a desirable position, whose appointment fell regularly in



the family of the Khan's of Lār. In 1661 the post belonged to a son, and in the late 1690s it was given to a brother of 'Abbāsqli Khan, the governor of Lārestān, while another brother of his was the *šāhbandar* of Bandar-e 'Abbās (Godinho, p. 123; Calmard, p. 673).

From renewal to the end (1650-1750). The death of Shah 'Abbās I in 1629 made Persian-Portuguese relations easier. By then Portuguese power in Asia was declining, and the "Estado" had to face new challenges posed by Asians and Europeans alike, and relations with Persia were not a priority. Despite having lost their supremacy in the Gulf after 1622, the Portuguese managed to control a great part of Oman's littoral up to 1633, and they clung to Muscat until their expulsion by the Ya'rubids in 1650. The Ya'rubids became Portugal's fiercest enemy in Africa, India, and in the Indian Ocean until the 1730s (Risso, p. 13). After 1650 Portugal still held a privileged position in Basra for having helped 'Ali Pāšā Afrāsiāb in 1624-29, although the revolt headed by Ḥosayn Pāšā Afrāsiāb against the Porte in 1665-66 led to the seizure of Portuguese goods which were not returned to them until 1680, when a new treaty was signed between António Machado de Brito and Kālil Pāšā (AHU, *Índia*, cx. [36] 66, doc. 5).

The loss of Muscat led viceroy Dom Filipe de Mascarenhas to revive the Persian alliance through the governor of Lār. There was no reply to Mascarenhas' offer, as he had asked for Hormuz in exchange for transporting Persian forces to Oman aboard Portuguese ships. The viceroy was playing a double game, as he had also approached the Ya'rubid Solṭān I b. Sayf (r. 1649-*ca.* 1680) with the intention of recovering Muscat in exchange for not transporting the Persians to Oman. Mascarenhas' maneuvers ended in a double fiasco, but it was thanks to his dealings in Sind that the "Estado" managed to maintain running the profitable route from India to Basra via Bandar-e Kong under the escort of Portuguese warships (Pissurlencar, III, pp. 518-19). Bandar-e Kong's factory remained open until the 1720s with some setbacks, but the customs half was seldom paid after Muscat's loss. Dom Rodrigo da Costa, the captain-general of the Strait Fleet, and Bandar-e Kong's *šāhbandar* reached a new agreement in 1680, by which the Portuguese crown received 9,000 *tumāns* for payments due in arrears, and another 1,100 *tumāns* were to be paid annually in exchange for the cessation of the customs half (AN/TT, *Graça*, cx. 6-3η E, fol. 270). Nevertheless, the payment was made randomly, and Gregório Pereira Fidalgo in his embassy to Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn in 1696-97 had to ask for paying the rent, but without lasting results (Aubin,



1972, pp. 12-13). The sum, when paid, covered the expenses made by the Strait Fleet in its annual call to Bandar-e Kong, and it provided the Augustinian convent in Isfahan with funds or ways of obtaining credit, leaving a surplus of 15,000 “xerafins” (silver coins of Goa). In Goa, it was debated whether this accidental source of income was really profitable, but the gentry and the small nobility were always interested in serving in the Gulf for the sake of plundering merchant vessels, and so they pressed the “Estado” to equip a fleet yearly. In 1682, the Gulf fleet under Dom Rodrigo’s command seized some 15 ships from Surat, whose spoils rendered 5,000 *tumāns*. Besides plunder, Bandar-e Kong remained the best source to obtain hard currency in Asia, and around 1720 Goa’s exchequer made more than 89,890 “xerafins” with the sale of Venetian ducats coming from Persia (AHU, cx. [31] 56, doc. 140; cx. [35] 64, doc. 16; cx. [36] 66, doc. 6; cod. 475, fol. 3v).

The Gulf, and concomitantly Persia, had ceased to attract Portuguese private capital after 1650-60, and if Fr. Manuel Godinho named a few merchants dealing in Bandar-e Kong in 1661, he made no mention of any of his countrymen in Basra, as the route was mainly used by Indians, and by a few Persians (Godinho, pp. 122, 137-40). Some merchants based in Bandar-e Kong, like ‘Abd-al-Šayk in the 1690s, regularly informed authorities of Goa on local matters, but the latter’s connection with Portugal led to the arrest of his ships in ca. 1702 in order to press on Francisco Pereira da Silva to assist the Persian war effort against Oman (AHU, cx. [46] 77, doc. 19; Aubin, 1972, p. 23; *Boletim*, no. 35-37, 1968, p. 407). After 1650 Persia gained renewed importance for Portugal, as the shah was viewed as a possible ally to attack Oman. Ya‘rubid naval power threatened the safety of Portuguese sea routes and possessions in India, where Bombay (1661-62), Diu (1668 and 1676), and Bassein (1674) fell prey to their attacks, but their thrust was felt particularly in the Swahili Coast in 1670, 1698-1710, and 1729. Once peace was signed with the Dutch in 1662, Lisbon and Goa started rebuilding what was left of the “Estado,” and one of their perennial objectives until 1750 was to defeat Oman. Persia, as a continental state, did not see the Ya‘rubid naval power as an impending menace, and Portugal had lost all interest in Persia as an ally. Besides, Safavid borders had become stable both in the west, after the Treaty of Zuhāb (1639), and in the east, after the conquest of Qandahār in 1648; and they remained so until the fall of the dynasty. Safavid remoteness to maritime matters allowed the Ya‘rubid navy to raid Bandar-e Kong thrice in 1651, 1670, and 1695, and, in time, Oman’s threat to Persian ports and maritime connections along the coast of Lārestān increased. Meanwhile, Portugal’s relations with Persia had



improved in spite of past incidents, especially since India had ceased to be the source of conflict thanks to the Mughal annexation of Deccani sultanates (Pissurlencar, IV, pp. 163-67, 175, 177).

A combination of local and regional factors made the alliance feasible again. ‘Abbāsqli Khan, who controlled the coastal strip from Bandar-e ‘Abbas to Bandar-e Rig as the governor of Lārestān, wanted to protect his economic interests from Ya‘rubid harassment, and India’s viceroy, the count of Vila Verde, needed an offensive in the Gulf to diminish Oman’s threat to Mombassa which underwent a long siege in 1696-98. The viceroy also nurtured plans for the Mughal prince Moḥammad Akbar exiled in Isfahan, as he intended to intervene in Awrangzeb’s succession. Despite high expectations, Vila Verde’s ambassador Gregório Pereira Fidalgo found a less congenial reception in Isfahan. Though Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn was inclined to the alliance, his chief ministers were too divided to reach an agreement, even if the venal grand vizier (*e’temād al-dawla*) Mirzā Ṭāher Qazvini favored it. Preparations for the incoming campaign started in Fārs, but in November 1696 the shah gave order to suspend everything (Aubin, 1972, pp. 14-25). In 1697 it became clear that the Persian-Portuguese joint expedition to Muscat had been postponed indefinitely, though there were rumors that a force of Omanis and Baluchis planned to seize Bandar-e ‘Abbās, to take Lār, and to raid Fārs (Aubin, 1972, pp. 77, 79). Persia continued to search for an ally to move against Oman, and the shah tried to attract Louis XIV to league with him, but the French alliance came to no fruition either (Kroell, pp. 1-77). Portuguese hardliners, especially the Augustinians in Isfahan, kept insisting on new offensives against Oman, like the one in 1702, when they took advantage of the presence of J. Hoogcamer, who headed a Dutch mission, to ask Goa to send a fleet to protect Portugal’s interests, as they stated that the envoy had proposed to subsidize Persia’s war with Muscat in exchange for the cession of Bandar-e Kong to the Dutch East India Company (see [DUTCH-PERSIAN RELATIONS](#)). This was not true, since it was Shah Solṭān-Ḥosayn who had willingly manipulated the Augustinians, and they took advantage of the presence of Francisco Pereira da Silva’s fleet in Bandar-e Kong to involve him in the expedition, once again without results as the Persian commander in Lār was more interested in taking advantage of the situation to his profit (cf. AHU, cx. [44] 75, doc. 4; cx. [45] 76, doc. 9; cx. [46] 77, doc. 19; Matthee, 1999, pp. 206-12).

In spite of having limited manpower, ships, and funds to achieve their aim, Portugal and the “Estado” persisted in their policy towards Persia, not



knowing how fragile Safavid power had become. However, around 1715 authorities in Goa and the Augustinians in Isfahan already had some perception of its decline (*Arquivo*, I, 3-2, pp. 165-66, 223-24). By insisting in the payment of Bandar-e Kong's rent, seldom made, Portugal hindered her bargaining position, worsened by the "Estado's" declining naval power, whose small escort to Indian shipping from Surat to Basra via Bandar-e Kong had diminished the latter's incomes. Portugal's obsession with Ya'rubid Oman led her to be used time and again by Shah Solţān-Ḥosayn, with the usual willingness of the Augustinians. That pattern continued despite occasional incidents, like the one that occurred in 1710 and involved the forceful conversion to Islam of Bandar-e Kong's Portuguese interpreter, and the forthwith factory invasion. These events were avenged in 1711 by a Portuguese flotilla (*Arquivo*, I, 3-2, pp. 37-38, 73, 191; Kroell, pp. 37-38; Esparteiro, pp. 49-52). Though Oman faced internal problems after 1711, and Solţān II b. Seyf I (r. 1711-18) sued for truces with the "Estado," he soon returned to Ya'rubid expansionism once he squandered his inheritance and started occupying Persian islands in the Gulf. Bahrain, Qeşm, and Lārak fell to his thrust until 1717, and he also raided Bandar-e Kong in 1715 (Risso, p. 39).

As no great European power was willing to attack Oman, Shah Solţān-Ḥosayn had to turn for Portuguese help, and from 1715 to 1719 preparations were made in Bandar-e Kong, in cooperation with Lār's governor, to assemble troops and materials. As in 1716 Persia declined the proposals of the Portuguese—who insisted in the return of Hormuz to Portugal and in the payment of Bandar-e Kong's rent due in arrears—an ambassador, Ṭahmurat Beg, a relative of the grand vizier (*e'temād al-dawla*) [Fath-ʿAli Khan Dāġestāni](#), was sent to Goa to discuss a new treaty. Portugal's position strengthened Persian suspicion vis-à-vis her real objectives for the Gulf. While the new governor of Lār, Loţf-ʿAli Khan, a nephew of the vizier, made preparations for the campaign, events in Oman took a different course in 1718-19. Strife for power ravaged Oman after 1718, thus making the expedition's objective attainable at last. Though the Portuguese fleet commanded by António de Figueiredo Utra obtained a naval victory over Oman's navy in 1719, by November the plan was abandoned again when Maḥmud b. Mir Ways invaded Kermān, and Fath-ʿAli Khan Dāġestāni dispatched Loţf-ʿAli Khan to meet the Afghans with the troops assembled for the expedition. After a pointless exchange of letters with the shah and the vizier, Utra abandoned Bandar-e Kong with his ships (*Boletim*, 46, pp. 316-29, 341-46; Esparteiro, pp. 63-69, 134-39, 146-72; Matthee, 2004, pp. 208-9).



No new attempt was made until the collapse of the Safavids, which made any alliance unsustainable after 1722, and the effort to equip a fleet was by then too big for the depleted finances of “Estado.” During the 1720s, however, new plans were drawn to expand Portuguese power in the Gulf taking advantage of the internal situation in Oman and in Persia, but ultimately they came to no fruition as Goa lacked funds. By 1728 Shah Ṭahmāsb II (r. 1722-32) contacted a Spanish adventurer serving the Portuguese Crown, the marquis of Cienfuegos, to establish an alliance with Goa after having failed to get Russian help. Ṭahmāsb II’s plan did not materialize, as Cienfuegos never contacted him back, and the prince’s envoy died ablaze aboard a ship ca. 1730 while sailing to India. The Gulf and Persia slipped to a secondary plan when the Marathas attacked the Northern Province in India during the 1730s. Goa and Lisbon had other priorities, but king Dom João V (r. 1706-1750) insisted in maintaining open the Augustinian convent in Isfahan, despite growing problems to keep it running, since Bandar-e Kong was abandoned in 1725. After coping with difficulties for years, particularly when the friars started being harassed by the Ghilzays (see [ĠILZI](#)) and the [Afsharids](#) known for being orthodox Sunnites, and with no money to keep the house open, the last prior Fr. José de Santa Teresa left Isfahan for good in 1748, thus ending a relation which began more than two centuries earlier (Matos, 1972, pp. 355-60, 362; *Documentação Padroado*, XI, pp. 204-5).

Attitudes, views, and exchanges. Though Persia and Portugal seldom shared common goals simultaneously, and even rarely were these materialized, politics remained the core of their relations during two hundred and fifty years. That came as no surprise, because each country had different horizons. While Persia was a continental power with an episodic presence in her adjacent sea—the Persian Gulf, Portugal had built the first maritime empire in early modern history, and so had an intermittent interest in landmasses. For geographical reasons, Persia was peripheral to the “Estado da Índia,” and she remained so unless someone threatened Portuguese power through naval means. On the other hand, Portugal episodically got interested in Persia as a hypothetical ally against the Ottomans, but the shahs soon found the Portuguese less trustworthy than it had initially been expected due to political shifts in Lisbon and in Goa. These short-term changes in policy tended to feed Safavid suspicions regarding the true meaning of the Portuguese alliance. Besides, Safavid reservations were fuelled by the Portugal possessions in the Gulf and in Persia, and also by Portugal’s constant interference in regional politics, even if with Persian allies and vassal states. A good example was the support which



the “Estado” offered for the Moša’sa’ from the 1590s up to 1614, which ended without any visible result after Sayyed Mobārak’s death in 1616. Another example was the Augustinian presence in Georgia from 1627 to 1649, as their missionary activities revived fears among the Safavids of conversion of Muslims to Catholicism (Gulbenkian, 1995, II, pp. 343-80).

After an initial state of grace, the association subsided for a long time, with an interval of renewed interest (1585-1619) followed by conflict (1619-29). Meaningfully, as the “Estado” declined during the 17th century, all diplomatic contacts were carried by the Augustinians or by Bandar-e Kong’s factors, whereas more European countries sent their ambassadors to the shah’s court, in many cases reciprocating a Persian mission. Portugal’s political weakness in Asia also meant that her alliance was no longer important to Persia, whose frontiers had become more stable after 1639. The attitude of Portugal and the “Estado” towards Persia remained unmoved, because it was thought that the Augustinians provided the adequate level of diplomatic representation in the current state of affairs. In 1696, it was obvious that Portugal had lost her know-how in Persian affairs, as in 1696-97 Pereira Fidalgo took with him as a guide the book written by Don Garcia da Silva y Figueroa on his embassy of 1615-19. However, that did not prevent him from committing faux-pas during his mission, like in his refusal to accept the money offered by ‘Abbāsqli Khan to pay his expenses—which Persian sovereigns had always done—as something demeaning to Portuguese honor, although his 16th-century predecessors had accepted it without offence (Aubin, 1972, pp. 37, 39, 41, 101, 119). In 1718, Pereira Fidalgo’s Persian counterpart Ṭahmurat Beg not only accepted money during his stay in Goa, but he lived in a palace put at his disposal without finding it demeaning to Persian honor (*Arquivo*, I, 3-2, pp. 365-66). Moreover, his predecessor in 1584-85 even lived in an annex of the Augustinian convent during his stay in Goa (do Couto, X/1, p. 519).

Decades of contacts did not necessarily mean new attitudes, nor did they signify lack of cultural interest and exchange. That had existed since the beginning, being fuelled by political plans and by sheer curiosity of new things so typical of Portuguese expansion. Knowledge on Persia expanded from the coast to the interior, either by travelers or by collecting data. Tomé Pires in his *Suma Oriental* (1512-15) reflected that growth, as he gathered his data from a multitude of sources, including Persian ambassadors to India (Pires, pp. 21-30; Aubin, 1995, pp. 253-59). Duarte Barbosa could present a more complete picture, as he had sojourned in Hormuz, but his book written in 1515-18 still



mingled recent facts with late medieval ideas (Barbosa, I, pp. 82-87). Yet, it was through the Portuguese that more information on Persia was available throughout Europe, even if similar and earlier channels, like the Venetian one, kept doing the same. The complexity of Portuguese vision on Persia and Persians came from both viewers and viewed. Until the middle of the 16th century, most of the Portuguese who wrote first-hand accounts on Persia lacked classical learning, and so they reported what they saw in a candid way, depicting a society different from what they had seen or heard of before. Religion, of course, was the filter, and it stayed that way until 1750, but in that matter Portugal followed a European trend applied until the 19th century. Portugal's bewilderment in face of a new Islam was completed by Portuguese disconcertment on the society, the shah, and the *qezelbāš* that showed such un-Muslim behavior. The accounts of the early embassies leave no doubt on that puzzlement, and it persisted for a long time, although it was viewed from different perspectives. If Lemos and Ferreira showed amazement and reverence for the court ceremonial, less so for the orgiastic banquets they witnessed, their 17th-century successor Pereira Fidalgo was more worried with protocol than they had been, even if his notion and concern on etiquette was more European than Persian (*Cartas*, II, pp. 236-50; Correia, 2/1, pp. 410-17; Aubin, 1972, pp. 28-81). Of course, Persian society in Pereira's time had little to do with that described by Lemos and Ferreira.

Persia and Persians appeared frequently in travelogues, as the country stood in the land route to Portugal, and the first ones written during the 16th century, particularly the *Itinerário* of António Tenreiro, whose book run two editions in five years between 1560 and 1565, were admired and copied as models for later travelers. Tenreiro, who set up a Portuguese intelligence network in the Middle East, also provided material for chroniclers, as was the case of Fernão Lopes de Castanheda (Carreira, 1997, pp. 13-27, 116-42; Aubin, 2000, pp. 523-37). Not all Persia was covered in these descriptions. Most texts described Fārs and Lārestān, more visited for commercial reasons, while other parts of Persia appeared and vanished according to the prevalent political situation of the time. Tabriz and the northwest, including Armenia, disappeared after Esmā'il I's death, reappearing briefly in Mestre Afonso's travelogue of 1565-66 and then again with the Augustinian missionary activities there in 1623-49. The dislocation of Persia's capital to Isfahan under 'Abbās I consolidated the descriptions of her southern tracts, as all early 17th-century writers mostly traveled through that region and through 'Arabestān on their way to the Levant. With Augustinian missionaries working in



Armenia and Georgia from 1623 to 1649, Persia's geographic horizons in Portuguese texts broadened, but the eastern part, from Khorasan to Sistan, was almost absent, and only people entering Persia from Mughal India, like Fr. Sebastião Manrique in 1642, left their records of it. The exception was when someone had to travel to Khorasan for political reasons, like did Fr. Simão de Moraes, who visited Shah Moḥammad Ḳodābanda (*Itinerários*, pp. 172-257; do Couto, X/1, p. 518; Manrique, II, pp. 373-83; Carreira, 1980, pp. 69-175, 187-205). No new travelogues were written after the 1660s, and references to Persia in Portuguese works came either from letters, reports, and from reprinting old books, or still by translating and divulging information available in Europe—a trend visible after the 1700s, with four booklets published on recent Persian affairs between 1740 and 1758 (*Gazetas*, I, pp. 89, 93, 164, 183, II, pp. 65, 308, 309; Matos, pp. 344-63).

It was natural that, in time, stereotypes would be used to characterize people and landscapes in the Portuguese accounts of Persia. These contaminated the imagery of later texts and were depicted, for instance, in the codex “Casanatense” written ca. 1550 (*Imagens*, pls. XIV, XVII, XIX, XX). The initial candid portrait, with its simple and confused historical references on the recent past, gave way to more elaborate texts full of references, from the Achaemenid past to the Islamic present, and to citing classical authors so popular among European intelligentsia, particularly when the writer was a cleric (São Bernardino, pp. 151-254; Carreira, 1980, pp. 113-58). Materials on Persia came from Persian sources too, and Portuguese culture showed permeability and admiration to them, not only through oral accounts, but also in texts ranging from chronicles to geographic, nautical, and literary works. For his second *Década*, João de Barros used a chronicle of Hormuz written in Persian and translated by his secretary. By the time he wrote it (1550s), there was a visible interest in Persian works, and not only historical ones, as governor Dom João de Castro had asked in 1546 for the history of Alexander (*Eskandar-nāma*), probably the one by Neẓāmi, and Hormuz's captain Luís Falcão sent him another work not specified. Naturally, Persian texts were made available via Hormuz, while others came from India. A few works came directly from Persia, like the atlas showed to Diogo do Couto in Goa by Shah Moḥammad Ḳodābanda's ambassador in 1584-85, who also gave the future chronicler oral information regarding his country. There was a preponderance of historical works in this cultural exchange, and someone like Pedro Teixeira translated Mirḳānd's world history *Rawżat al-ṣafā'* into Castilian in the early 17th century (Barros, II/1, pp. 107-19; Matos, pp. 189-90;



Documentação Ultramarino, I, pp. 201-18; do Couto, V/2, pp. 379-87, X-1, p. 519; Teixeira, pp. 9-315).

Contacts fostered language exchanges, as Persian was widely used in the commercial world across the Indian Ocean, and some Persian words entered Portuguese, like “xabandar” (*šāhbandar*, port official), or “sodagar” (*sowdāgar*, merchant). Outside Persia, the Portuguese also used Persian as the diplomatic language in India, which meant that letters and treaties were written in that language until the 19th century. For that purpose, the Portuguese administration in India and in Persia employed men skilled in Persian, although gradually all these positions became held by locals, mostly Indians and some Armenians. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the Persian loanwords into Portuguese came via India, in an intercourse that lasted until the 20th century (Dalgado, 1989, pp. XVIII-XX; XXVIII-XXIX, LXIX-LXX, 236-37; Lopes, pp. 23-103).

Conversely, the influence was smaller, as there are perhaps no more than fifteen loan words of certified Portuguese origin in Persian, and culturally the Portuguese left few imprints on Persia. For instance, the chronicles of the Safavid period seldom refer to them, and when they do so, it is not in praiseworthy terms. In that sense, Persia followed an Asian pattern that depicted the Portuguese as a people of sea-robbers, who lived and had cities by the sea, and if the author was Muslim he would depict them as “infidel” Franks (Subrahmanyam, 2005, pp. 17-44). This was the vision of a landlocked country over another nation whose presence in Asia was maritime. Persia, on the other side, had a rich cultural tradition cultivated and protected by the Safavids. Persian relation with the Portuguese, and with other westerners alike, was full of contrasts. On the one hand, they viewed the Portuguese with suspicion, but, on the other, Safavid elite was fascinated by Portuguese technique, weapons, ships, and even by them as people. Though [Eskandar Beg Torkamān Monši](#), for instance, admired Hormuz fortifications as a rare example of Western skill, Shah Esmā‘il I laughed when one of his *qezelbāš* officers wearing a European cuirass fell on the ground. Yet, Esmā‘il I’s court showed interest for Western clothing, and one of his men was even dressed in Portuguese fashion and declared that he was a Frank (*Cartas*, II, pp. 237-39; Matthee, 2002, pp. 124-25, 142). That fascination for foreigners among the Safavid elite can be discerned in the miniatures made in Shah ‘Abbās I’s time, when the famous Persian artist Reżā-ye ‘Abbāsi and his disciples painted the Portuguese, immediately recognizable by their “bombachas” pants, with individual traits and not as



types. That attraction appears woven in the so-called “Portuguese” carpets, where men and vessels are depicted in the four corners.

Unlike neighboring Mughal India, whose emperors from Akbar (r. 1556-1605) to Šāh-Jahān (r. 1628-57) collected and showed interest in European art and technology acquired through the Jesuits who were present at their court, Safavid Persia took time to develop similar tastes. Although noticeable in the middle of the 16th century, European influence on Persian painting as a new trend begun around 1650 only, and the Portuguese took no part in it. Technology, books, and prints were simpler to import and adopt, but the Augustinians were not the most suited agents to conduct cultural crossovers, as the Jesuits were doing in Mughal India. Besides, political, religious, and social climate in Safavid Persia was completely different from the one imprinted by Akbar and his two immediate successors to the Mughal empire. Other Persian artifacts that arrived in Portugal, like textiles, carpets, ceramics, and tiles, had more to do with trade and consumption paradigms than with cultural exchange.

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Abbreviations in the text: AHU—Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Lisbon; AN/TT—Arquivos Nacionais/Torre do Tombo, Lisbon; BNL—Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa.

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