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“THE ARMS AND THE HEROES”: BELLIC ASPECTS OF THE PORTUGUESE PRESENCE IN THE EAST

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The arrival of Vasco da Gama and his men in Calicut, on May of 1498, marked the beginning of a direct, and from then on uninterrupted, relationship between Portugal and the East. In the simple words of one of the exiled prisoners who sailed on board one of the ships, the Portuguese went to “get Christians and spices”¹. In effect, during the second half of the 15th century, the Portuguese Crown would systematically invest significant means in the exploration of the Southern Atlantic, in the attempt to chart the maritime route which, sailing around the southernmost African cape, would allow for the direct access to an Eastern world of drugs and spices.

The crossing of the Cape of Good Hope in 1488 opened up this possibility, which would be

¹ João Pedro Machado & Viriato Campos, *Vasco da Gama e a sua Viagem de Descobrimento* (Lisboa: Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, 1969), p. 164.

effectively realized a decade later, due to a silent technological revolution which had taken place in the previous decades, both in the areas of naval engineering and in the sailing arts. However, even with all the careful preparation put into Vasco da Gama's expedition, the Portuguese were still lacking in dependable and truthful information on the East, a destination they were so anxious to reach.²

The *Relação de viagem*, attributed to Álvaro Velho, which details in the form of a diary the main episodes of the historical journey, documents many of the surprises and some of the questions and misunderstandings of this first historical encounter. It also allows us to discern several fundamental discoveries, which would determine the future of the Portuguese presence in the East. Firstly, the Portuguese were able to understand and confirm that the Cape route was perfectly viable with the nautical means which were then at their disposal. Although the voyage was extremely long and crossed two oceans, which meant considerable technical and human problems, it was possible to sail from Lisbon to the Indies and return to safety. Secondly, the exotic goods available in Indian ports had in no way disappointed the European newcomers, neither in their variety nor in their abundance. In truth, the more optimistic of expectations about the existence and availability of the most valuable of oriental drugs and spices found themselves wholly met. Thirdly, it had been possible to confirm the existence of a complex and well established mercantile network in the Eastern seas, which linked the ports of the western Indian coast to many coastal African and Asian cities, through which circulated a seemingly endless amount of valuable products, which would be of great interest to the European markets. Fourthly, and this was the more worrying discovery, the Portuguese realized that it would be extremely difficult to peacefully insert themselves into the main mercantile Eastern circuits, since there existed a number of powerful parties who, both on the coasts of India and in other regions, completely controlled the production and circulation of the most valuable merchandises.

The latter conclusion, however, was immediately toned down by a fifth discovery: in nautical and military terms, the Europeans already had the upper hand in technology, since their ships, in addition to being more robust in appearance, were equipped with more advanced artillery, which

² On the Portuguese expansion of the 1400s see Rui Manuel Loureiro, *Em demanda do Oriente: Viagens e navegações quatrocentistas* (Lisboa: Grupo de Trabalho do Ministério da Educação para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1998), *passim*.

was in turn handled by more efficient gunners. This meant that the Portuguese had a competitive advantage in the complex maritime Eastern world discovered by Vasco da Gama's men. This also means that since the first Portuguese contacts with the East, the problem of *violence* became a relevant one, since violence would have to be utilized to impose a significant presence in the lands to the east of the Cape of Good Hope. However, unlike what has sometimes been suggested, in no way were the Portuguese the first to introduce war into a previously cordial and peaceful Eastern World.³ As it happened in every area of the World, violent means were more or less common in Eastern lands, where, almost everywhere and for a variety of reasons, regular confrontations occurred between enemy forces, in the shape of skirmishes, battles, or sieges. Violence also existed in the Eastern Seas, where maritime battles and piracy were not uncommon, being in fact frequently connected to the main mercantile routes. In reality, in the beginning of the 1500s, Europe shared with many Eastern regions not only the larger part of its military technology, but also many characteristics of the arts of war and the perceived importance of the bearing of arms.⁴

In the years which followed the return of Gama's expedition to Lisbon, the Portuguese Crown committed to building a solid presence in the Eastern Indies, with the objective of actively participating in the euro-Asian trade through the Cape route. It began to regularly send powerful armadas to the East, consisted of dozens of carracks and caravels, which carried thousands of men, equipped with the corresponding heavy or light armament, and who in the space of few years would build a loose knit but well articulated network of forts and trading posts, established in strategic points along the eastern coast of Africa and all through Asia's coast. This disperse imperial constellation, or the *India State*, as it would soon be known, would during the following fifteen years extend itself from the island of Mozambique to the coasts of China to the easternmost lands of the Malay Archipelago. The extraordinary speed of this maritime expansion was mainly due to four causes. Firstly, to the extraordinary mobility of the Portuguese ships, which made possible not only the journeys to the East, but also the regular connections between the ever growing number of Portuguese hubs. Secondly, to the systematic employment of

³ Michael N. Pearson recently broached this question, in "Os Portugueses e a violência no Oceano Índico, algumas considerações", *Oriente* (Lisboa), n. 12, 2005, pp. 11-23.

⁴ For a generic vision of this problematic, see the essays collected in *War in the Early Modern Worlds*, ed. Jeremy Black (Londres: Routledge, 1999), *passim*; see also Thomas Arnold, *The Renaissance at War* (Londres: Cassell, 2002), *passim*, which presents a rigorous and informed synthesis.

specialist staff of Eastern origin, such as pilots, cartographers and sailors, which then shared with the Portuguese a wealth of strategic information on the regions the latter were negotiating with and on the seas they must cross. Thirdly, to the Portuguese's remarkable capacity for adaptation to the most diverse of eastern environs, which came about through the adopting of efficient strategies on approach and dialogue with other peoples and cultures, mostly through spontaneous, more or less profound acculturation. Lastly, the Portuguese, in a general way, knew how to manage and efficiently utilize their weapons, which frequently became the decisive argument in the more violent interactions with the East.⁵

The first years of contact with the East were, to the Portuguese, years of urgent learning. The construction of a maritime empire demanded the systematic and rigorous gathering of information on various realities. It was necessary to explore and chart the extensive afro-Asian coastline; to chart maritime routes which were dependable and safe, marking ports and piers, potable water sources and islands, shoals and reefs; to decipher weather systems such as monsoons and seasonal winds which influenced navigation in Eastern seas. It was also fundamental to "chart" the mercantile world, identifying products, their characteristics and uses, production and distribution centres, prices and customs taxes, currency and measures. It was also important to identify the friendlier negotiators, potential allies and declared enemies, understanding cultural practices, models of political and social organization, religious beliefs of the inhabitants of the coastline of eastern Africa and maritime Asia. It was, most of all, essential to understand and know the bellic potential of the peoples to contact, the sort of weaponry they possessed and the efficiency with which they used it, as well as their proficiency in military planning. Only when all this information had been gathered would it be possible to clearly define a strategy for the implantation of a network of Portuguese establishments in the East, which would then prove viable Portugal's planned intervention in the trade of the most valuable and luxurious Eastern merchandise.⁶

⁵ See the updated synthesis of the establishment of the State of India in Luís Filipe Barreto, *Lavrar o Mar: Os Portugueses e a Ásia, c.1480-c.1630* (Lisboa: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2000), *passim*.

⁶ The research done by the Portuguese in the Manueline period are systematised by António Alberto Banha de Andrade, *Mundos Novos do Mundo: Panorama da difusão, pela Europa, de notícias dos Descobrimentos Geográficos Portugueses*, 2 vols. (Lisboa: Junta de Investigações do Ultramar, 1972), *passim*. For periods after the 16th century see the impressive synthesis of Donald F. Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe – The Century of Discovery – vol. 1*, 2 tms. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), *passim*.

In the beginning of the 16th century, the bearing of bladed weapons was common practice in Portugal, from the members of the higher social classes (who would commonly wear their weapons in daily life), to the more popular classes, who would be always in possession of some sort of dagger or poignard. This regular day to day bearing of arms was extended and added to in special circumstances. A hunting expedition, for example, could mean the usage of bows or crossbows, with their respective arrows and bolts, of shafted weapons, such as spears, or even portable firearms. Professional soldiers, and all who were called to fight in conflicts of larger importance, bore a variety of shafted weapons, such as halberds, battle sickles, battle hammers, and also defensive weapons, which might include shields, helmets, chainmail, breastplates, and various pieces of armour. Individual firearms, such as pistols, muskets and rifles, were then becoming common, with their respective accessories (bullets, powder horns, matches). It all depended on the nature of the conflict, the available resources, and the time of preparation, although, in reality, the usage of weapons was part of the education, and of the entertainment, of a large part of the Portuguese population. The manufacturing and production of national armament was the responsibility of a wide variety of artisans, who sometimes struggled to meet Portuguese demand, especially after the beginning of maritime expansion, and as such there was a systematic demand for imported weapons. Both defensive and offensive weapons, beyond their utilitarian functions, have always carried heavy symbolic meaning relating to the rituals of the exercise of power. For that same reason, weapons made with rare and valuable materials, and elaborately adorned, were frequently given as prestigious presents and offerings.⁷

As such, the varied role of weapons in the Eastern world, both as bellic instruments and symbolic artefacts, is recognized from the beginning by the Portuguese, even before Vasco da Gama sets sail to India. In fact, it can be said that arms were akin to a *lingua franca* all through the Eurasian continent, since there were plenty of similarities in type and function, even if the technological levels were substantially different. It was undoubtedly for this motive that the captain of the first Portuguese expedition to the East gave the King of Malindi “a rich sword which was brought in a

⁷ See some examples or armament in Augusto Mascarenhas Barreto, José Eduardo Pisani Burnay, Rainer Daehnhardt & António Miguel Trigueiros, *Os Descobrimentos Portugueses e a Europa do Renascimento: Armaria dos Séculos XV a XVII* (Lisboa: Commissariado para a XVII Exposição Europeia de Arte, Ciência e Cultura, 1983) *passim*; and also in J. de Oliveira Simões, *As Armas nos Lusíadas* (Lisboa: Publicações Alfa, 1989), *passim*. For a first exploration of these themes, with extensive bibliographic indications see João Marinho dos Santos, *A Guerra e as Guerras na Expansão Portuguesa – Séculos XV e XVI* (Lisboa: Grupo de Trabalho do Ministério da Educação para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1998), pp. 145-258.

tailor made box, which was made of rich gold and enamel, with very rich straps”, as well as “a spear of golden iron, and a leather shield lined with crimson satin embroidered with gold thread”. As it would be later mentioned by the chronicler Gaspar Correia, who lived in India on the first half of the 16th century and wrote about this episode in his *Lendas da Índia*, the ceremonial offering of weapons had a long tradition in Europe.⁸ In these first interactions between the Portuguese and Eastern peoples it was possible to document, in what concerns personal weapons, clear parallels with Europe, since the men at arms of the Saamoothir of Calicut were “all armed with swords and gisarmes and shields and bows and arrows”⁹, like the Europeans. The most significant difference would perhaps relate to the frequent usage by the Portuguese of metal protections for the head and other parts of the body, in combat situations, something which was still not customary in most Eastern regions.

These Eastern regions were also very different from each other, and the Portuguese had to face very distinct realities in terms of armament, technology, and military technique. A single occurrence, which happened in 1509-1510, is a good example of the large diversity of situations which might be found from a bellic point of view, as well the eventual surprises that might occur. After being involved in a number of military altercations through his years of living in India, where he had established the foundations of the growing Portuguese rule, D. Francisco de Almeida was returning to Europe, on one of the large ships who annually connected the ports of the Indian eastern coast and Lisbon. On the occasion of a stopover near the Cape of Good Hope, in the Aguada de Saldanha, a conflict arose with the inhabitants of that area. The motives are not clear, but were apparently related to the acquisition of supplies by the European sailors. The skirmish resulted in the death of half a hundred Portuguese, among these the former Viceroy, who, after being hit “with a rock in one knee”, was killed by “a seasoned stick, with which they pierced through his neck and throat”, since, on that occasion, he was not wearing a helm¹⁰. The disastrous death of D. Francisco, lamented by all the contemporary chronicles, revealed that on occasion the outcome of a conflict depended not on the quality of the weapons in use, but was instead dependent on more random factors. At the same time, it drew attention to the need to strictly follow certain instructions sent by Lisbon, since the regiment that accompanied D.

⁸ Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, ed. M. Lopes de Almeida, 4 vols. (Porto: Lello & Irmão, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 55-56.

⁹ João Pedro Machado & Viriato Campos, *Vasco da Gama*, p. 188.

¹⁰ Gaspar Correia, *Lendas da Índia*, vol. 2, pp. 993-994.

Francisco Almeida in 1505, when he left for India, specifically instructed that “we so order you and defend that in any place [...] you will at any time come ashore, excluding the places where our fortresses are, with the exception of places which are uninhabited”.¹¹

The person who was most responsible for the establishment of the *State of India* with firm and secure foundations was undoubtedly Afonso de Albuquerque, a genius strategist who knew how to utilize in an extremely effective way all the human and physical means placed at his disposal by the Portuguese Crown.¹² In 1515, the year of his death, the Portuguese had, besides many smaller establishments, three fortified bases in three strategic points in the Eastern seas: Hormuz, a desert island on the entrance of the Persian Gulf, of which its royal house had been from 1507 subjected to a Portuguese protectorate following a clear demonstration of naval and military might; the territory of Goa, occupied in 1510 when of a violent naval and terrestrial campaign against the sultan of Bijapur; and the city of Malacca, conquered from its Malay ruler by an expeditionary detachment which landed there in 1511. From then on, and well until the 17th century, the existing forts in these three landmarks would be fundamental pillars of the Eastern Portuguese Empire.

The establishing of the *State of India* was made possible by a grouping of two lines of action: on one hand, the construction of stone forts in the European style in geographically strategic places, defended by military contingents of varied importance; on the other hand, the usage of significant naval and human means for the control and monitoring of routes and maritime areas of relevance. The Portuguese fortifications were a notable novelty in numerous regions of the Eastern world (namely in the Asian East, where until then the usual construction materials were of vegetable origin), permitting the long-term settlement of the recently arrived Europeans in settlements in Eastern Africa, the Persian Gulf, in the western coast of Hindustan, in Ceylon, in the Malay Peninsula and in the Malay Archipelago. Some of these fortresses were established by force, with the aid of significant military means, as opposed to Eastern intermediaries; others were established with treaties and cooperation agreements, with the purpose of benefiting all

¹¹ Joaquim Candeia Silva, *O Fundador do “Estado Português da Índia”: D. Francisco de Almeida, 1457(?)–1510* (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda & Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1996), p. 287.

¹² On Albuquerque, see the rigorous synthesis by Geneviève Bouchon, *Albuquerque: Le lion des mers d’Asie* (Paris: Éditions Desjonqueres, 1992), *passim*.

concerned parties; others yet, by request from the local rulers, with the objective of securing military aid from the Europeans, in disputes and confrontations with more aggressive neighbours. Around many of these forts, mixed-race population settlements began to develop, which contributed to a more solid Portuguese presence in those parts. These European fortresses, exported and adapted to different overseas contexts, were innovative not only for their specific architecture and construction materials, but also due to the fact that they were equipped with heavy artillery, which could be effectively used to repel external attacks and sieges. The construction of foundries specializing in artillery soon began in some of the eastern Portuguese trading posts, to assure the supply of the dense network of Portuguese bases which was spreading all through the East.

Firearms were not unknown in the Eastern world¹³. In reality, both the invention of gunpowder as its utilization for the launching of projectiles would have occurred a long time before in China, from where it would then spread until it reached the West.¹⁴ During the naval battles which took place in the Cambaia Gulf in 1508-1509, between the Portuguese and a confederation of Gujaratees and Mamelucks, both parties made use of the artillery present aboard their respective ships. When of the conquest of Goa by Afonso de Albuquerque in 1510, the Indian forces had an abundance of artillery pieces, which were then captured by the Portuguese. Finally, when of the conquest of Malacca in 1511, the Malay forces had at their disposal numerous bombards, which were used in the attempt to repel the European conquerors. There are many more examples which could be given, in reference to other places of Coastal Asia, and namely of China, where the imperial navy used fire weapons on board of their powerful junks. However, most of the eastern pyrobolic artillery seemed ungainly and inefficient when confronted with the heavy firearms of the newly arrived Europeans, being mostly used, offensively and defensively, in attacks against walled urban centres.

As a complement to the fortifications built in the East, the Portuguese kept, through all of the 16th Century, important naval and military means in the Eastern seas, in terms of ships, men at arms, heavy artillery and portable armament. Carracks and caravels built in Europe would soon

¹³ For a generic vision see Kenneth Chase, *Firearms: A Global History to 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), *passim*, which references the essential bibliography.

¹⁴ Ver Joseph Needham, Ho Ping-Yü, Lu Gwei-Djen & Wang Ling, *Science and Civilisation in China – vol. 5, pt. 7: Military Technology; The Gunpowder Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 111 e sgs.

be complemented by a multitude of ships built locally, including galleys, galiots, bringantines, *fustas*, *paraus*, *manchuas*, *lancharas*, etc. One of the more original features of the Portuguese eastern expansion was, in fact, the fast integration in their armadas of ships built in eastern shipyards and locally hired crews. Many of these ships, either of European or Asian origin, were equipped with firearms of smaller or larger dimensions, and which frequently decided the outcome of the naval conflicts and battles. Documentation from the time is filled with references to *leões*, *serpes*, *camelos*, *esperas*, *pedreiros*, falconettes and *berços*, pieces of pyroballistic artillery which were systematically used aboard Portuguese and luso-asian ships. This armament demanded the recruitment of specialized gunners, many from Northern Europe. Through the first decades of the Portuguese presence in the East, the naval artillery proved its terrible efficacy, in terms of power, cadence and precision, when facing Eastern ships which were not used to long distance naval combat, but were instead more inclined to attack by boarding, which meant that naval battles were mere combats between on-board military forces.¹⁵

The consolidation of the Portuguese presence in the East, as has been noted before, demanded a systematic gathering of news on Eastern realities. In the field of armament, this urgency for information is clearly shown in documents which came from the royal chancelleries, which requested from the captains of the first armadas on their way to the Indian Ocean the sourcing and obtaining of reliable intelligence. For example, the royal regiment given to Diogo Lopes de Sequeira in 1508, who was heading to the Malay Archipelago, asked that he would inform himself not only about the inhabitants of the island of S. Lourenço, “if they have elephants or horses, and which weapons they have, and if they have any sort of artillery, and if they are a weak or warrior-like people”, but also about the Chinese, namely “if they are weak or warrior men and if they have weapons or artillery”.¹⁶ Since, as a general rule, all Portuguese captains received similar instructions, the Portuguese informers would very quickly amass a significant amount of news concerning all these questions related to the Eastern bellic world. From the southern-most regions of Africa, where metal instruments were practically unknown and the African populations used weapons built with wood, vegetable fibres and pieces of bone, to far away

¹⁵ The naval aspects of the war in the East are studied by Vitor Luís Gaspar Rodrigues, “A Guerra na Índia”, in *Nova História Militar de Portugal*, dir. Manuel Themudo Barata & Nuno Severiano Teixeira, 5 vols. (Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2004), vol. 2 (coord. António Manuel Hespanha), pp. 198-223.

¹⁶ *Documentos sobre os Portugueses em Moçambique e na África Central*, ed. António da Silva Rego & outros, 9 vols. (Lisboa: Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos & Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical, 1962-1989), vol. 2, 264].

China, a powerful and extensive empire, who could mobilize vast naval, material and human resources, including plentiful and sophisticated armament, the Portuguese, in their rapid expansion through Eastern lands and seas, had to face an extraordinary diversity of situations.

The *Suma Oriental*, concluded by Tomé Pires in 1515, and the *Livro das cousas do Oriente*, of which the first version was concluded by Duarte Barbosa in 1516, are early examples of treaties of eastern geography, where an attempt is made to organize the avidly collected news from Goa and other Portuguese outposts. The authors, both Tomé Pires, an apothecary, and Duarte Barbosa, a trading post foreman, would supply essential data on the arts of war in a number of oriental provinces, allowing for an understanding of the terms of the first contacts between the Portuguese and Asia. Let us then explore some telling examples, following these geographical guides, both of which unfold from West to East. For Tomé Pires, the Arabs are “a warrior-like [people] who fight on horseback in our manner with spurs, the reins in one hand and the spear in the other”.¹⁷ Barbosa agrees with this appreciation, stating that “they are very good warriors; they have many horses of which they make use in war with plenty and good weapons”.¹⁸ About the Persians, Pires states that they are “horsemen bearing many weapons with beautiful ornaments and well made swords”.¹⁹ Barbosa observes that Sheik Ishmael, the title attributed to the Safavid ruler “does not fight with his people if not bodily”.²⁰ The Nutkani, inhabitants of the Balochistan region, according to Pires, “are archers” of great ability, who, besides “arches”, equally use “sword lances”.²¹ These hardened people impressed the imagination of the times so much that the representation of the combat of Nutkani, “thieves which steal at sea” is present in the so called *Códice Casanatense*, a curious and unusual watercolour album, produced in India in the middle of the 16th century by an anonymous luso-eastern painter.²²

Among the peoples of the coastal regions to the west of Hindustan, according to the information collected by the two Portuguese informers, the predominant weaponry consisted mainly of bladed

¹⁷ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental de Tomé Pires e o Livro de Francisco Rodrigues* (Coimbra: Acta Universitatis Conimbrigensis, 1978), p. 143.

¹⁸ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, ed. Maria Augusta da Veiga e Sousa, 2 vols. (Lisboa: Instituto de Investigação Científica Tropical & Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 1996-2000), vol. 1, p. 117.

¹⁹ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 152.

²⁰ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 1, p. 147.

²¹ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 160.

²² *Imagens do Oriente no século XVI: Reprodução do códice português da Biblioteca Casanatense*, ed. Luís de

weapons, besides arches. There are no significant references concerning the use of heavy artillery or personal firearms. During the entirety of the 16th century, the Portuguese would firmly hold on to the occupied positions in the kingdom on Hormuz, limiting themselves to sailing around the coasts of Arabia, Persia and Sind with their ships, with occasional incursions into land and regularly intercepting the mercantile traffic which existed in those waters. Sporadic conflicts which occurred in the Red Sea, the Hadhramaut, the Gulf of Oman and the margins of the Persian Gulf would mean no particular interference in the military balance established with the two main powers of the region, since the Portuguese benefitted of a certain impunity in the maritime domain, while the Ottoman empire and the Safavid empire were mostly interested in issues on dry land.²³

From the side of Khambhat, while still accompanying the geographical trip of the two Portuguese writers, Tomé Pires states that the Gujaratis are given to “all the exercises of war”, possess beautiful weapons, “both blades and mail”, besides “spears of beautiful long irons swords leather shields”. In their constant wars against neighbouring peoples, the Gujarati employ numerous mercenaries, namely Egyptians, Arabs, Rûms, Persians and Abyssinians, “all clean people”.²⁴ The Sultan of Khambhat can raise up to “thirty thousand horsemen”.²⁵ Duarte Barbosa confirms these observations, referring that moors and gentiles “of this kingdom are very fast men and riders”, making use of “very strong round shields, embellished with silk”, besides some of his men at arms wearing “two swords, a dagger and a Turkish bow with very good arrows”, while still others make use of “chain mail”.²⁶ The author of the *Livro das cousas do Oriente* adds that the Gujarati from an upper social class would usually own “cross-belts very well ornamented with gold and silver, according to the person who is wearing them”.²⁷ In conclusion, Barbosa notices a common characteristic between Europeans and Asians, which could be found in so

Matos (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional – Casa da Moeda, 1985), est. xxi.

²³ On the Portuguese presence in the Arabic coast see R.B. Serjeant, *The Portuguese Off the South Arabian Coast* (Beirute: Librairie du Liban, 1974), *passim*. On the Persian Gulf, abundant information can be gleaned in Willem Floor, *The Persian Gulf: A Political and Economic History of Five Port Cities, 1500-1730* (Washington DC: Mage Publishers, 2006), pp. 89-138; e também em Dejanirah Couto & Rui Manuel Loureiro, *Ormuz 1507-1622: Conquista e Perda* (Lisboa: Tribuna da História, 2007), *passim*. The Portuguese presence in Sind has not yet been the subject of any monograph, see however Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The Portuguese, Thatta and the external trade of Sind, 1515-1635”, *Revista de Cultura* (Macau), ns. 13-14, 1991, pp. 48-58. In what respects the art of war in these Eastern regions, for a generic vision see Kenneth Chase, *Firearms: A Global History to 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 112-140, which makes reference to the essential bibliography.

²⁴ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 163.

²⁵ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 197.

²⁶ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 1, p. 189.

²⁷ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 1, p. 191.

many Eastern regions: the fondness for weapons ornamented with precious stones and metals.

In the decade of 1530, when they were already firmly established in the East, The Portuguese managed to found a fortress in Diu, which from then on would become one of the most strategically important military bases of the *State of India*. In addition to being the stage to other minor conflicts, this Portuguese fortification suffered in 1538 and 1546 two very violent sieges, which were dutifully celebrated in the writings of the time, as relevant achievements of war. In both occasions, the Portuguese, with reduced human and material means, managed to resist the powerful attacking forces which, besides the Indian armies, included important Ottoman contingents, which had been directly dispatched from Suez. On both occasions, but always with no success, the Sublime Porte had attempted to launch the foundations for an active presence in the Indian Ocean.²⁸ It is certain that in both sieges, and on both sides of the conflict, heavy artillery was put to intense use. However, as referred in the contemporary accounts of Damião de Góis, Diogo de Teive or Lopo de Sousa Coutinho, much of the fighting took place hand to hand, near the walls of the fortress or in frequent surges, undoubtedly with some usage of firearms but mostly of bladed weapons.²⁹ The circumstances of war clearly demanded this. However, the Portuguese writers which tell of these feats of weapons always stress the importance of these hand to hand combats, using bladed weapons, in the context of Portuguese frame of mind, since the valour of a man at arms could be more clearly demonstrated in this sort of fight. The weapons which killed or maimed from a distance were, in fact, subjected to certain ethical reservations, namely among the higher social classes, always mindful of questions of honour. For some reason, Portuguese authors classed firearms as an “invention more hellish than human”, which compromised the values of honour which were so dear to medieval chivalry.³⁰

Tomé Pires and Duarte Barbosa also write about the potentates of interior Hindustan. In the *Suma Oriental*, the kingdom of Narsingha, or Vijayanagar, who then ruled over extensive regions in the south of India is given a special importance. According to the Portuguese author, “this is a

²⁸ From the vast bibliography available on the sieges of Diu see José Manuel Garcia, “A Historiografia Portuguesa Quinhentista do Segundo Cerco de Diu”, *Mare Liberum* (Lisboa), n. 9, 1995, pp. 133-137.

²⁹ About these relations see Luís de Matos, *L'Expansion Portugaise dans la Littérature Latine de la Renaissance* (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1991), pp. 425-474.

³⁰ Fernando Oliveira, *A Arte da Guerra do Mar*, ed. Henrique Quirino da Fonseca & Alfredo Botelho de Sousa (Lisboa: Edições Culturais da Marinha, 1983), p. 41. Ver João Marinho dos Santos, *A Guerra e as Guerras*, pp. 151 e 258.

warrior king who walks often in the field of battle with more than forty thousand horsemen”, as well as the never-ending “people on foot”, and more than two hundred war “elephants”.³¹ Here we may find a relative novelty to the Europeans, the usage of war elephants, a practice that was then widespread through all the Eastern regions where the ecological condition for the existence of these pachyderms was met. The *Códice Casanatense*, attentive to novelties, also includes a drawing of an “elephant of war”.³² The *Livro das cousas do Oriente*, in turn, refers to the kingdom of Delhi, in the north of Hindustan, where one might find “very good warrior-like horsemen”, who make use of “very good lances, shields and swords, maces, small axes” and “some wheels of steel” sharpened like razors, with which they “make great war and are very skilled with them”.³³ The usage of a large variety of bows was then very common through all of India. It was an offensive weapon which was both extremely fast and reliable, when handled by experienced hands, which could in fact supplant a firearm in lethal capacity. In the mid 16th century, the Portuguese writer Fernando de Oliveira would write in his *Arte da guerra do mar* that while “you set up a crossbow or attack with an harquebus, twenty shots are fired with arrows”.³⁴ However, and in general, the Portuguese presence in Hindustan was limited to the coastal regions, which could be accessed from the sea, the official contacts with interior regions being limited to sporadic visits from Portuguese emissaries or rare interchanges of a political and diplomatic nature. In these regions which were far from the sea, there were frequent battles between very large armies of dozens or even hundreds of men, in impressive pitched battles involving infantry and cavalry, which are sometimes referred to in Portuguese chronicles, namely when there were Portuguese mercenaries involved, hired by Asian potentates.³⁵

In certain coastal areas of Malabar, several potentates retained a persistent hostility towards the Portuguese presence. Due to this, the Portuguese observers would pay special attention to the warrior castes, namely to the Nair, who Tomé Pires describes as “men of war by sword and shield and archers”.³⁶ Duarte Barbosa, who served as overseer in the trading post in Kannur, was

³¹ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 171.

³² *Imagens do Oriente no século XVI*, est. xlii. On war elephants see Simon Digby, *War-horse and Elephant in the Delhi Sultanate: A Study of Military Supplies* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1971), *passim*; and also Jos Gommans, *Mughal Warfare: Indian Frontiers and High Roads to Empire 1500-1700* (Londres: Routledge, 2002), pp. 121-130.

³³ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 2, pp. 98-99.

³⁴ Fernando Oliveira, *A Arte da Guerra do Mar*, p. 61.

³⁵ See Jos Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, *passim*.

³⁶ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 173.

well acquainted with this particular social class of “noblemen”, who “do not have another profession than to fight wherever they are needed”. The Nair, in his words, “continuously bring their weapons and do it out of honour and gallantry”, some wearing “naked swords in their hands and shields”, other wearing “bows and arrows”, and yet others “spears”.³⁷ Professional warriors, the Nair learnt the handling of these weapons from a very young age, becoming over time highly skilled in their occupation. A depiction of a Nair couple, the man bearing a sword and leather shield, is present in the *Códice Casanatense*.³⁸ The Samutiri of Calicut, a persistent adversary to the Portuguese presence in the Indian western coast, would regularly employ Nair armies for hostilities against the Portuguese. The King of Cochin, however, a long-established ally of the State of India, would also employ these professionals of war.

The Portuguese chronicles of the 1500s recount the regular armed conflicts between the Portuguese forces and their Indian adversaries, in many areas of the large Hindustani coastal area, both at sea and on land. Several Portuguese fortresses were repeatedly under siege by Indian monarchs, but the Portuguese were generally able to maintain their positions, due to the quality of their military constructions, the massive use of artillery, and adequate organization of the available human resources. From their fortresses, the Portuguese managed to keep active a growing number of various types of ships, which assured a relative hegemony in their maritime domain. The Portuguese also, as a system, tried to only wage combat near the sea or bodies of water, waging battles in formation, with rifle discharges followed by infantry and cavalry charges, with hand to hand combat, but where they could be supported by artillery mounted on board their own ships.³⁹ In some coastal regions, as a dissuasion technique, the Portuguese would introduce an innovative form to wage war, regularly destroying palm tree plantations, which were then one of the most important economic resources of coastal populations. In general terms, we may reach the conclusion that in the Portuguese sources of the 1500s, in what relates to India, and in what regards the description of weaponry and warrior practices, we find no great surprises, since identical typologies could be found almost everywhere in this rather vast geographical area. However, from region to region there would be variations on the raw materials which were used, on the shape of the hilt and the blades of weapons and on the use of purely decorative ornaments.

³⁷ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 2, p. 164.

³⁸ *Imagens do Oriente no século XVI*, est. lxiii.

³⁹ See Vitor Luís Gaspar Rodrigues, “A Guerra na Índia”, pp. 214-219; and João Marinho dos Santos, *A Guerra e as Guerras*, *passim*.

Both the *Suma Oriental* and the *Livro das cousas do Oriente* pay special attention to Malacca, one of the most important marketplaces of the growing State of India, where Tomé Pires served as overseer of apothecaries. The Malay city stood as a true crossroads of peoples and cultures, since it stood in a strategic meeting point of mercantile routes originating from all around the Indian Ocean and the China's South Sea. In the words of Duarte Barbosa, "the city of Malacca is the richest port of the richest and more important traders and of most important navigation and handling that one can find today in the whole world".⁴⁰ Due to being extremely cosmopolitan, this port was also a privileged place for the observation of social and cultural practices of peoples originating from the Eastern most regions of Asia. The Malays themselves are carefully described by the Portuguese writers, who note that they wear "some daggers on their waist, ornamented with a very rich inlays which they call Kris".⁴¹ The singular Malayan Kris, of waved blade and ornamented hilt, soon arose the interest and curiosity of the Portuguese, who quickly adopted the weapon, which has the particular characteristic that the wounds it causes are very difficult to heal. On the occasion of the Portuguese assault of Malacca, like Barbosa writes, the defenders of the city used a large variety of weapons including, in addition to artillery, "rifles, poisoned arrows and many long lances as many valiant men, and also with many elephants armed with wooden castles and armed people on top":⁴²

Duarte Barbosa, in his description of Mallaca, also refers to the Javanese, who possessed "very good weapons", with which they "fight very well, fearlessly".⁴³ He also draws attention to a common custom between the Javanese, where in certain circumstances they become *amoucos*: "they take a dagger, curved like a snake, which they have made of very fine steel and cut, decorated with gold inlays, and they go out to the squares and kill everyone they find, not only men but women and children, and they go around like mad dogs killing until they are killed themselves".⁴⁴ These attacks of murderous fury could be brought about by various personal or social factors, but they were usually preceded by a vast consumption of palm "wine", as Tomé

⁴⁰ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 2, p. 366.

⁴¹ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 2, p. 368.

⁴² *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 2, pp. 373-374.

⁴³ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 2, p. 370.

⁴⁴ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 2, p. 371. Sobre os *amoucos* do mundo malaio-javanês, ver John C. Spores, *Running Amok: An Historical Inquiry* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1988), *passim*.

Pires mentions.⁴⁵ The *Livro das cousas do Oriente* also adds that the Javanese are very skilful mechanical manufacturers, since they “make many rifles and large rifles as well as many artifices of fire”.⁴⁶ The *Suma Oriental* draws attention to other bellic peculiarities of the Javanese, namely that they use “kris swords lances in many ways very ornamented with gold inlays”, pointing out that they are worthy opponents in any military conflict.⁴⁷ Barbosa also remembers some of the magical beliefs which the Javanese attribute to certain weapons, “made in certain hours, which they say the carriers of which may not die in battle or be defeated”.⁴⁸

In the following decades, the luso-javanese conflicts would become frequent, in the region of Malacca or the surrounding areas, the Javanese monarchs joining the Malay to attack the Malacca fortress.⁴⁹ After some initial attempts to establish a base in Sunda, in the southern Javanese coastline, the Portuguese, while keeping regular trade relations the island’s ports, never tried to solidly establish themselves in Java. In fact, the same procedure was adopted through almost all of the Malay Archipelago, with the exception of the easternmost islands, such as Ternate, Ambon, Banda and Flores, where through the 16th century several Portuguese fortified bases were built, mostly connected with the valuable spice trade.⁵⁰ In the Indonesian archipelago, the Portuguese found a large variety of weaponry and war practices, but which could be comparable, in what respects their typology and use of materials, to the ones found in the Malay Peninsula and in Java. In addition to a large variety of swords and daggers, shields, and several throwing weapons, emphasis should be given to the poisoned arrows, shot with arches or blowguns. This last weapon, which the Portuguese had previously found in other parts of the world, namely in Brazil and Africa, would be one of the greatest and deadliest novelties to be found in their conflicts with peoples from the Malay Archipelago.

The blowgun was, for example, very common in Sumatra, where, in Aceh, the Portuguese would meet their most unyielding and persistent opponents. This Islamic potentate progressively ruled

⁴⁵ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 299.

⁴⁶ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 2, p. 386.

⁴⁷ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 297.

⁴⁸ *O Livro de Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 2, p. 387. On magical weapons in the Malay world see Walter W. Skeat, *Malay Magic* (Singapura: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 522-532.

⁴⁹ On the history of the fortress of Malacca see Rui Manuel Loureiro, “Historical Notes on the Portuguese Fortress of Malacca (1511-1641)”, *Revista de Cultura / Review of Culture* (Macau), n. 27, 2008, pp. 74-92, in which the essential bibliography is referenced.

⁵⁰ On the Portuguese presenc in the Malay Archipelago see Manuel Lobato, *Política e Comércio dos Portugueses na Insulíndia: Malaca e as Molucas de 1575 a 1605* (Macau: Instituto Português do Oriente, 1999), *passim*.

all of the southernmost areas of the island through the 16th century, fiercely obstructing all the Portuguese attempts to settle in Pasai and launching attacks both by land and sea against the Malacca fortress. Some of those attacks engaged hundreds of ships and thousands of men at arms, carrying diverse sophisticated weaponry, imported from the Ottoman Empire. However, the Portuguese fortress and her defenders were always successful in repelling the Sumatran attacks.⁵¹ The *Códice Casanatense* tellingly includes an engraving of an Aceh warrior, accompanied by a woman, with an explicit description: “This people inhabits the island of Sumatra and are called *Dachens*; they are gentiles. Very warrior-like people, they fight with some blowguns with which they shoot small poisoned arrows”⁵². The same book of luso-eastern engravings also includes drawings of the populations of Maluco and Banda. Interestingly, both men are equipped with similar looking weaponry, consisting of a sword of broad leaf and a large rectangular shield, typical of those parts, which was made from *rota*, a type of Indian shoot. The weaponry available to the peoples of the Malay Archipelago, in addition to their varied warring techniques, did not hinder the Portuguese, which from their bases in Malacca and Maluco, and owing to their ships equipped with artillery, managed to retain a regular presence in many of the islands of that region throughout the 16th century, trading valuable products and becoming involved in local conflicts.⁵³.

In this brief trip through the warring practices of the Eastern peoples, guided by the oldest Portuguese information, we arrive at the South China Sea, which was explored by the ships which came from Malacca from 1511-1512. As it had happened in the Indian Ocean and the seas of the Malay Archipelago, it was fairly straightforward for the Portuguese to obtain, and keep, a relative naval supremacy, supported by powerful ships, equipped with effective artillery. Also in these regions, the great political and military powers of Indochina, and especially the Celestial Empire, were in truth more concerned with the interior, regarding the coastal areas as secondary. The Portuguese, in the meantime, too distant from their main fortified bases, opted for more peaceful advances, establishing trading posts in several port cities in the Malay and Indochinese Peninsulas. Eventually, by the mid 16th century, they managed to establish a secure base in

⁵¹ The relationships of the Portugues with Sumatra are expanded on by Jorge Manuel dos Santos Alves, *O Domínio do Norte de Samatra: A história dos sultanatos de Samudera – Pacém e de Achém, e das suas relações com os Portugueses (1500-1580)* (Lisboa: Sociedade Histórica da Independência de Portugal, 1999), *passim*.

⁵² *Imagens do Oriente no século XVI*, est. lxxi.

⁵³ See Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988-1993), vol. 1, *passim*.

Macau, on the coast of the Chinese province of Guangdong, which in a few decades became one of the great emporiums of maritime Asia. The extraordinary success of the Macau port was due to a singular meeting of interests, since while the Portuguese were interested in taking part in the trade of valuable merchandise, the Chinese were happy to welcome these foreigners, who, while accepting every condition imposed on them, were able to maintain, with the aid of their cannons, a relative order in maritime regions previously infested by pirates.

The Portuguese observers were always attentive to the bellic capacities of the several peoples they had contact with, registering relevant information on the existing weaponry and how it was used in war. Tomé Pires notes, for example, that the Burmese are “horsemen with elephant horses”, and that their ruler maintained wars with Pegu, Rakhine, Bengal and Cambodia.⁵⁴ He also refers that the king of Champa “has horses has war with other Kings mainly with the King of Cochinchina”⁵⁵ The latter is also “very given to war and has many riflemen and small bombards”.⁵⁶

The Indochinese Peninsula, through the 16th century, suffered through innumerable conflicts between rival powers, who mobilized many thousands of men and mounts, resorting to relatively sophisticated arsenals, which included heavy and lightweight firearms.⁵⁷ In some of these conflicts there was Portuguese participation, either as mercenaries or military consultants, but the State of India, in general terms, managed to remain uninvolved in these violent confrontations. A later work, the *Peregrinação* by Fernão Mendes Pinto, a Portuguese adventurer who travelled through all these Asian regions in the mid 1500s, is a first-rate source for the gathering of information on the warring world on these regions of Asia, barely know before by the Europeans.

58

In what concerns China, the first Portuguese observations are rather equivocal, since the Chinese

⁵⁴ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 246.

⁵⁵ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 248.

⁵⁶ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 250.

⁵⁷ See Leonard Y. Andaya, “Interactions with the Outside World and Adaptation in Southeast Asian Society, 1500-1800”, in *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, ed. Nicholas Tarling, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), vol. 1, pp. 345- 401; e também Peter A. Lorge, *The Asian Military Revolution: From Gunpowder to the Bomb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 88-111.

⁵⁸ See a first and brief innumeration of clues in Rui Manuel Loureiro, “A violência na *Peregrinação*”, *História* (Lisboa), n. 107, 1988, pp. 46-53.

are described as “very weak people and easy to defeat”. Tomé Pires goes as far as reporting that the Portuguese who had visited the coastal areas of that vast Empire had told that “with ten carracks the Governor of the Indies”, Afonso de Albuquerque, “would subjugate all coastal China”.⁵⁹ In truth, the first luso-chinese exchanges took place in Malacca and in the deserted islands off Canton, and so the Portuguese had had contact only with Chinese merchants who would usually not carry any weapons, according to the existing rules of the Celestial Empire, which reserved for the soldiers of the Imperial Army the right to bear arms. In the following years, thanks to the increasingly regular trips to other Chinese ports, and even to sojourns into interior regions, the Portuguese would eventually obtain a more realistic grip on Chinese reality, realizing the gigantic dimensions of this Asian Empire. In what concerns terrestrial forces, in terms of available equipment, combat techniques and military tactics, the Chinese Empire was Europe’s match at the time.⁶⁰ However, and as the Portuguese informers point out, China’s military superiority came especially from her truly infinite bellic resources which the Chinese authorities had at their disposal, both in terms of men and weaponry.⁶¹ In any case, with the exceptions of some well localized maritime skirmishes, the Portuguese and the Chinese maintained a cordial relationship throughout the 16th century. In the meantime, from Macau, and in later years, the Portuguese would go as far as supply heavy artillery to the Chinese army in more complicated conjectures, so the latter could effectively face threats which were coming from the southern borders of the Empire.

Finally, the easternmost Asian region visited by the Portuguese, Japan, would also be the more surprising, from a bellic point of view. The Land of the Rising Sun, reached by the Portuguese only at the beginning of 1540, was then in the midst of civil war.⁶² Fierce armies, equipped with sophisticated armament, met in skirmishes, sieges and pitched battles, constantly redefining Japan’s political map. The very large variety of available weaponry included bladed weapons,

⁵⁹ Armando Cortesão, *A Suma Oriental*, p. 364.

⁶⁰ See a generic panoramic in Michael E. Haskew, Christer Jörgensenm Chris McNab, Eric Niderost & Rob S. Rice, *Fighting Techniques of the Oriental World, ad 1200-1860: Equipment, Combat Skills and Tactics* (London: Amber Books, 2008), *passim*.

⁶¹ For an analysis of the image of China in Portuguese sources of the 1500s see ver Rui Manuel Loureiro, *Fidalgos, Missionários e Mandarins: Portugal e a China no Século XVI* (Lisboa: Fundação Oriente, 2000), *passim*. Concerning the Chinese art of war at this time see a first approach in Peter Lorge, “War and warfare in China, 1450-1815”, in *War in the Early Modern Worlds*, pp. 87-103; Kenneth Chase, *Firearms*, pp. 141-171; and also Joseph Needham, Ho Ping-Yü, Lu Gwei-Djen & Wang Ling, *Science and Civilisation in China*, *passim*.

⁶² For generic visions see Paul Valery, “Warfare in Japan 1467-1600”, in *War in the Early Modern World*, pp. 53-86; and M.E. Berry, *The Culture of Civil War in Kyoto* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), *passim*.

shafted weapons, ballistic artillery, and complex armour. A feeling of overwhelming admiration is clear in the first Portuguese intelligence reports on the military preparation and bellic qualities of the samurai, Japan's professional warriors, their swords being constantly praised for their perfection and efficacy. One of the first Portuguese who visited Japan would write that all the Japanese would "generally carry swords, large and small", adding "they have many lances and halberds and other gisarmes. They are all in general very great bowmen of large bows". He also mentions that "they have body weapons, of mail and iron, very thin".⁶³

Interestingly, the Japanese did not use firearms. The Portuguese came ashore Japan as merchants and as proselytizers of the Christian religion, having never attempted a conquest or territorial control, since from the beginning they realized the impossibility of such a purpose, considering the available bellic power and the temperament of the Japanese military classes.⁶⁴ However, along with the first gifts offered to the Japanese daimyo, there were rifles of European make, which caused a tremendous impression among the Japanese. According to the later report by Fernão Mendes Pinto, who was among the first Portuguese to disembark in Japan, the proficient Japanese craftsmen immediately took apart these first rifles, starting immediately, from those specifications, to mass produce excellent lightweight firearms.⁶⁵ Paradoxically, and even though the previously available weaponry in Japan had been of excellent quality, it was these rifles which would be the determining factor in the Japanese civil war, since they would give a significant competitive advantage to Oda Nobunaga, the military chief who started the process of unification of Japan, which would then culminate in the Tokugawa hegemony.⁶⁶ Japan would subsequently initiate a never before seen process of abandoning the use of firearms, at the same time it would start isolating itself from the outside world, which would also mean distancing from the Portuguese.⁶⁷

⁶³ *Documentos del Japon, 1547-1557*, ed. Juan Ruiz-de-Medina (Roma: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1990), p. 11.

⁶⁴ See a generic and very stimulating panoramic of the Portuguese presence in Japan in Charles R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1993), *passim*.

⁶⁵ In what concerns the introduction by the Portuguese of rifles in Japan, see João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, *O Japão e o Cristianismo no Século XVI: Ensaios de História Luso-Nipônica* (Lisboa: Sociedade Histórica da Independência de Portugal, 1999), pp. 71- 86.

⁶⁶ See Kenneth Chase, *Firearms*, pp. 175-196. On the decisive battle of the Japanese civil war see Steven Turnbull, *Nagashino 1575: Slaughter at the barricades* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2004), *passim*. See as well Peter A. Lorge, *The Asian Military Revolution*, pp. 45-64.

⁶⁷ See Noel Perrin, *Giving Up the Gun: Japan's Reversion to the Sword, 1543-1879* (Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, 1979), *passim*.

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The meeting of the Portuguese with the Eastern world, from a bellic point of view, and how we can see from the above survey, was extremely diversified. From the Cape of Good Hope to the far away Japanese archipelago, there was a succession of civilisations and cultural realities very different from each other, which all proved challenging to adapt to, for the newly arrived Europeans. Different issues – economical, political, military, religious, cultural – would influence the Portuguese approach to all these different realities. At first, the interests of the Portuguese Crown are given priority, with the construction of solid trading posts in the East, in a way as to intervene consistently in the trade of valuable merchandise.

The cannons and the sails, to reference a notable phrase⁶⁸, would give a very large competitive advantage to the Portuguese, which would then be reinforced with the construction of fortresses according to European model. The foundation and establishing of the State of India would often be accomplished through armed violence. As a general rule, however, this violence was not random, being instead practiced on practical considerations. It was mostly violence by the State, but which was permanently permeated by incidents of a private nature, especially in the second stage, where the so called Portuguese shadow empire starts to develop, composed by communities of Portuguese ancestry which inhabited the extensive Asian coastal areas but who, for some reason, escaped the control of the royal Portuguese authorities, defending both autonomous interests, and exercising military functions for Eastern potentates.

The existence of a bellic component in the construction of the Portuguese presence in the East was the origin of various phenomena. Firstly, the Portuguese paid close attention to the arming of Eastern peoples they had contact with and to their warring practices, since a correct evaluation of the powers at play could determine the very existence and survival of the *State of India*. The Portuguese sources from 1500s are therefore filled with information on Eastern military arts, namely on the available weaponry, human mobilization abilities, movement capacities and predominant techniques.

⁶⁸ See Carlo M. Cipolla, *Canhões e velas na primeira fase da expansão europeia (1400-1700)* (Lisboa: Gradiva, 1989), *passim*.

Secondly, the Portuguese quickly managed to develop realistic appraisals of the bellic potential of their diverse contacts, in a way as to define viable strategies, and always customised ones, for implementation in particular Eastern regions. Thirdly, there were frequent interchanges and assimilations of weaponry and arts of war, between the Portuguese and Eastern peoples. If many Eastern monarchs became interested in Portuguese artillery and attempted to recruit European military specialists, the Portuguese, on the other hand, “Easternized” their customs, not only on a naval level, where they soon adopted local ships, but also in terms of the weaponry used, particularly bladed weapons, and combat techniques, with clear preference given to hand to hand combat.

The weapons, in the meanwhile, both on the Portuguese and Eastern sides, would often serve as instruments to bring both peoples closer together; on one hand, as prestigious gifts and offerings, and on the other hand as merchandise with a high exchange value. In fact, during the 16th century it is possible to detect numerous points of contact between the European and Eastern arts of war, in terms of available weapons, ways of combat and even warrior ethics. This is a fascinating subject which surely deserves a more thorough investigation.