

**SALİH ÖZBARAN, AL-ATRAK AL-'OSMANIYYUN
VE'L BURTUKALIYYUN FI'L-HALICI'L'-ARABI
1534-1585**

Translation by 'Abdu'l-Cebbar Naci

**English Title: *The Ottoman Turks and the Portuguese in the
Arab Gulf 1534-1581***

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*Doç. Dr. Mehdi İLHAN**

The work is the synopsis of Salih Özbaran's Ph.D. Thesis presented to London School of Oriental and African Studies in 1969 as pointed out in the forward written by the publishers. The work is no doubt based on the Ottoman and Portuguese archival material. The author, according to the translator, lacks in referring to the Arabic sources and material. The translator fills in these gaps¹.

The work was, originally, published in the *Journal of Asian Studies* (Wiesbaden) volume 6, (1972), pp. 45-88. The author deals with the struggle between the Ottoman and the Portuguese. He studies the arrival of the latter in the Red Sea and the Gulf and of course later the arrival of the former first to Bagdad in 1534 and then to Basra in 1546. The author eventually concentrates on the historical and military events that took place between these two super powers of their time.

The translator in his Introduction further points out the brief history of the Ottoman conquest in the Red Sea, Yemen and the

* Middle East Technical University, ANKARA.

1. The subject has been much enlarged and studied from a different angle by the author and presented as Post doctorate thesis and published under the title "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Hindistan Yolu: Onaltıncı Yüzyılda Ticaret Yolları Üzerinde Türk Portekiz Rekabet ve İlişkileri" in *Tarih Dergisi*, 31/March 1977, İstanbul 1978, pp. 65-146.

Gulf, and summarizes the sources and the secondary works that the author has based his thesis on. The translator also brings to our notice that the author has lacked to point out the Arabic resistance and struggle against the Portuguese and gives some examples with the Arabic documents immediately after the Introduction. The translator then enumerates a list of Arabic books that the author has not referred to. The translator then points out the struggle of Arabs against the Portuguese that the author, according to him, has ignored.

The author enters the subject in the first chapter dealing with the presence of Ottoman and Portuguese in the Gulf from 1535 to 1581. It appears that the Portuguese entered the Gulf for two reasons firstly economic and secondly in search for John Pester. It was Pero de Covilhao who came to Hormuz for the first time in 1488-89 to gather information on the trade route from Asia. Consequently the Portuguese were able to enter the Gulf and then to cross over to India at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In 1510, they occupied Goa that became the main centre of their activities in India. In 1515, the Portuguese with the help of Indians conquered Hormuz where they stayed till 1622.

The Portuguese, in 1521, forced the people of Al-Ahsa and Bahrain to pay taxes to their governors in Hormuz. Shortly after that in 1523, they monopolized the trade in the Indian Ocean putting restrictions on the merchant ships. They interfered with the affairs of Basra in 1529 and supported Rashid bin Mughamis, its governor, against the governor of Jezayir (Cezire), and in return asked him to hand over to them six of his worship. However, when Rashid refused, the Portuguese devastated some of the Arab settlements along the coast of the Gulf and withdrew to Hormuz.

This atrocious act of Portuguese most probably gave an incentive to Rashid al-Mughamis. Therefore he handed over the keys of Basra to Sultan Suleyman who had just conquered Bagdad in 1534. However, it was only after 1538 that Basra became an Ottoman province where khutba was read and coins were struck in the Sultan's name. It was only then that the Ottoman got in close contact with the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean. The Ottoman had an arsenal built in Basra for making ships. The timber necessary for this arsenal was carried from the forests of Marash via Birecik on the river Euphrates. Katif, on the Eastern coast of Saudi Arabia, also

served as an important Ottoman port besides Basra in struggle against the Portuguese.

The Portuguese meanwhile had come to realize the Ottoman threat against them in the Gulf. Therefore, in 1546, the Portuguese, with the encouragement of local tribal chiefs, sent a force comprising 1200 men and seven big ships of galley type under the command of Antao de Noronha against 400 Turks stationed in Katif. Another 3.000 man of Sherafeddin, the ruler of Hormuz, and of Majid, the ruler of Moghistan, sided with that of Portuguese. Katif was put under siege and the Turks eventually had to surrender.

A force comprising 25 big ships (kadirga), 4 galleons (kalyon) and another vessel carrying 850 men under the command of Piri Reis set out from Suez in April 1552 heading for Hürmüz. Piri Reis who was unable to force the Portuguese to surrender Hürmüz withdrew to the island of Kishm where he seized a booty of 100.000 Crauzados from the merchants and then returned to Basra. However, he paid this failure with his life when he left the Ottoman fleet in Basra and returned to Suez in 1553 with three ships, carrying the booty and the Portuguese slaves.

Kubad Pasa, the beylerbey of Basra sent a report to the Sultan underestimating the activities of Piri Reis. Therefore, Piri Reis left Basra for Suez with the booty in protest that cost him his life in 1553.

This was the last Ottoman attempt to gain control over the Gulf. They concentrated on the Eastern coast of Arabia, Bahrain, the straight of Hürmüz, and also intensified ship building in the arsenal of Basra. The Portuguese on the other hand made preparations to take the revenge of their losses at the hand of Piri Reis. Murad Reis who suffered at the hand of D. Diago de Menezes in the straight of Hürmüz returned to Basra. Then Sultan Süleyman appointed Seydi Ali Reis who left Basra with fifteen ships on 2 July 1554. Seydi Ali Reis confronted the Portuguese ships under the command of Dr. Fernando de Noronha at Horfekkan and forced them to retreat to Lima on 9 April 1554. However, the latter later returned with 34 ships and gave a heavy blow to Seydi Ali Reis who then headed for Yemen with his remaining mine ships, but heavy winds forced him to take refuge in Gujarat. Seydi Ali Reis left Gujarat by way of land and arrived in Istanbul in May 1557.

The Ottomans tried to compete with the Portuguese by forming Habes Eyaleti (the Province of Abyssinia) and establishing full control over the Red Sea. The Portuguese continued with their activities in the Gulf and even incited the chiefs of Arab tribes against the Ottomans in 1556. The Ottomans first in 1559 and then according to a document dated 25 May 1573 perhaps in 1553 and also in 1575 attempted to conquer Bahrain that had strategic importance for merchandise activities. Ali Beg, ..., left the Red Sea in 1581 with four galleys for Muscat that he plundered and returned back.

In short it appears that the Portuguese had succeeded in establishing themselves in the Gulf by the time the Ottomans arrived there. The Ottomans were not so successful against the Portuguese and they even failed in their attempt to gain Bahrain. They were only able to establish themselves in Basra, Al-Hassa and Katif thanks to their ability of transporting necessities by way of land.

The first part of the book has a supplement with four documents as follows: i) A letter from Manuel de Lima, the ruler of Hürmüz, to Joao de Castro, the ruler of India, dated 23 June 1547; ii) A letter of Novaddin (the ruler of India)² carried to Java by Farnao Forto, dated 30 October 1552; iii) A document dated 30 April 1572 from *Ruus defters* showing income distribution of Basra province; iv) A decree dated 30 May 1575 and addressed to the beylerbey of Bagdad from *Mühimme defters* regarding the need for the conquest of Bahrain.

The second part of the book consists of an article on the two letters of Dom Alvaro³ de Noronha and an epilogue by the translator.

Unfortunately no care has been taken in editing the book. Therefore, the mistakes are numerous throughout the book. The following example may clarify the point: Bitlis is misspelled in Arabic (p. 28); The Portuguese "Mello" is transliterated into Arabic letters as Meylo (.....) (p. 23); The Portuguese surname Menerez is

2. According to the translator this person is Alvaro de Noronha, the ruler of Hürmüz, and not Nureddin, the ruler of India.

3. These letters were translated by the author and published as an article entitled "Two letters of Dom Alvaro de Noronha from Hormuz: The Turkish Activities along the coast of Arabia: 1550-1552" in *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 9/1978, İstanbul 1978, pp. 241-292.

transliterated into Arabic as Noronha (p. 48) and Noronha as Menezes (p. 49); the footnote 83 is left out entirely (p. 48); The Encyclopedia of Islam (new edition) is written as Encyclopedia of lalam (New edition) (p. 127). The examples are numerous and many particularly in the Bibliography.

Although the book is not voluminous, I believe an index would have saved a great time for the reader. However, the translator has made a good contribution to a field on which Arabic literature is scant.