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C H A P T E R - III

RISE OF PORTUGUESE BASSEIN

The year that followed the treaty of Bassein experienced one of the most fierce fightings between the Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat and the Mughals. The Mughal Emperor Humayun had waged a fullfledged war against Gujarat and his armies were advancing towards the various parts of the Sultanate. As Bassein was formerly under Gujarat, the Mughals decided to attack the town.<sup>1</sup> The Portuguese in Bassein were not in a position to save the town from the Mughal attack. Nuno da Cunha had gone to Goa and he had appointed Garcia de Sa to look after the defence of Bassein. Moreover, the Portuguese had nothing in the town at this time. They had constructed a small factory and minor fortifications for its defence.

Meanwhile, Gaspar Preto, who came from the mainland confirmed the news of the Mughal attack and disclosed that they were marching towards Bassein with a powerful army of 20,000 warriors including cavalry and infantry.<sup>2</sup> As it was quite difficult to defend the town against the powerful Mughul army, Garcia de Sa decided to vacate it and retire to some other place for safety.<sup>3</sup> The local people and the foreign merchants who

1. Barros, Decada IV, Part II, op.cit., p.92.

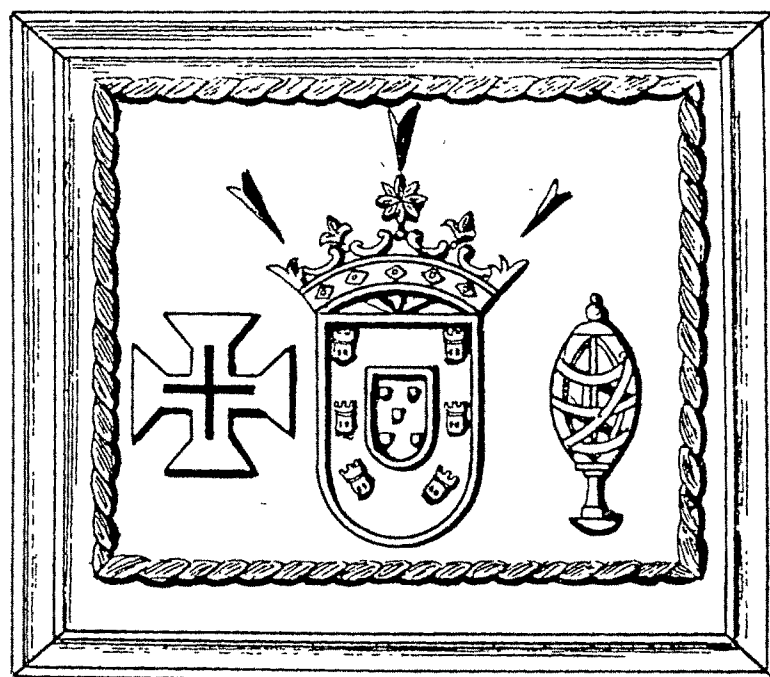
2. Barros, op.cit., p.93.

Castanheda, Tomo IV, Liv.VIII, Cap.CXX, pp.369-398.

Julio Gonsalves, op.cit., p.71.

3. Castanheda, op.cit., p.396.

Barros, op.cit., p.93.



ARMS OF THE CITY OF BASSEIN  
SCULPTURED ON THE MAIN DOORWAY OF THE CAMARA

were present in Bassein during this period were terribly afraid, and the rumour of the Mughal attack created panic in the town. Women and children started shouting and lamenting.<sup>4</sup>

At this critical juncture, Antonio Galvão, a Portuguese warrior rose to the occasion. He did not like the idea of Gracia de Sa vacating the town. He argued that the plan of leaving Bassein without resistance, would bring the great humiliation to the Portuguese, especially at the time when they had earned the confidence of Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat.<sup>5</sup> He further asserted that the town could be defended with the help of the army available in Bassein and requested Gracia de Sa to face the Mughal challenge.<sup>6</sup>

But some other captains and the Fidalgos did not approve of the Antonio Galvão's suggestion. They thought that it was highly impossible to defend the town against the mighty Mughals. Gracia de Sa, a man of indecision, hesitated.<sup>7</sup> Antonio Galvão, however, stood firm and finally Gracia de Sa complied and decided to defend the city.

The Mughals, who had come to the vicinity of Bassein noticed that the Portuguese were fully prepared to defend the

4. Castanheda, op.cit., p.397.

5. Barros, op.cit., p.94.

Castanheda, op.cit., p.396.

6. Barros, op.cit., p.94.

7. Barros, op.cit., p.95.

town and they gave up their plan to attack Bassein and finally retreated. The Portuguese proved their valour and their prestige was enhanced. The victory, without a battle, was attributed to Antonio Galvão.<sup>8</sup>

### Construction of the Citadel

The governor, Nuno da Cunha, was informed of the attempted Mughul attack on Bassein, when he came to Diu. He did not want to keep Bassein undefended to be easy prey to any enemy, since he had conquered it from the Muslims with a memorable victory. So he came to Bassein to study the situation. When he reached the town, he found a great quantity of material for the building of a fortress. He inspected the site and consulting the captains and the Fidalgos who were present there, confirmed the position of the doors and towers of the proposed citadel.<sup>9</sup> Then he ordered that good masons, carpenters and other workers be invited from the neighbouring villages and ordered to gather the building material for the citadel.<sup>10</sup>

With the initial preparations for the construction of the citadel over, the governor asked that a Solemn Mass be celebrated in honour of St. Sebastian because on his feast day, he had won the victory over the Muslims. After the religious celebration and blessing of the site by the vicar-general and other priests, the governor took a shovel and started digging.

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8. Barros, op.cit., p.95.

9. Gaspar Correa, op.cit., Livro III, part III, p.689.

10. Couto, Decada IV, part I, op.cit., p.321.

It was repeated by Gracia de Sa and other Fidalgos and with many workers they set the foundation. The governor fixed the first stone and put under it the coins of gold and other relics.<sup>11</sup>

There is a controversy regarding the date of the foundation of this citadel.<sup>12</sup> João de Barros and Diogo de Couto who are considered very important authorities on this subject, give two different dates. Couto says that it was laid on 20th January 1535.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, Barros gives 1536 as the year of the foundation and says that Nuno da Cunha left Diu on 20th March 1536 and came to Bassein with his armada. He finalised the site for the citadel and asked Antonio Galvão to lay the foundation stone, who had saved the town from the Mughal attack.<sup>14</sup>

The year 1536 as given by Barros is more correct for various reasons. First, the citadel was definitely constructed after the Mughal attack in early 1536, so Couto's date (1535) can not be accepted. Secondly, before the description of the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone of the citadel, Gaspar Correa says "The governor departed from Diu to Bassein

11. Gaspar Correa, op.cit., part III, p.689.

12. Braz Fernandes gives it at 20th January 1525, Ref.ARMAS, op.cit., pp. 12 and 116 which cannot be correct as Bassein was under the Muslim control at this time.

13. Couto, Decada IV op.cit., part II, Liv.IX, Cap.II, p.321.

14. Barros, Decada IV, op.cit., part II, p.102.

in the middle of March 1536"<sup>15</sup> and then he gives the details of the ceremony.

The above mentioned statement of Gaspar Correa corresponds with a similar statement of Barros as "on 29th March 1536 the governor left Diu for Bassein".<sup>16</sup> And lastly, the inscription which is affixed on the circular<sup>17</sup> bastion of the same citadel gives the year 1536 as the year of construction.<sup>18</sup> But the date given in the inscription can be of the day of the foundation because according to the information given by Gaspar Correa, the latter proves that at the beginning of 1538, Gracia de Sa had completed the whole fortress upto the battlements (no andar das ameas).<sup>19</sup>

There is another controversy regarding the person who laid the foundation stone of the citadel. Though Gaspar Correa says that the foundation stone was laid by the governor, Nuno da Cunha himself, his statement is contradicted by the information given not only by many modern historians<sup>20</sup> but also the early Portuguese historians<sup>21</sup> who say that the Governor asked Antonio Galvão to lay the foundation stone.<sup>22</sup> Diogo de Couto

15. Gaspar Correa, op.cit.; part II, p.689.

16. Barros, Decada IV, op.cit., p.102.

17. Braz Fernandes, ARMAS, op.cit., plate No.1

18. See the original inscription in the form of photo after this page.

19. Gaspar Correa, op.cit., III, p.837.

20. Braz Fernandes, J.G. d Cunha, James Campbell.

21. Castanheda and Barros.

22. Castanheda op.cit., p.405. Barros, op.cit., p.102.

does not mention the name of Antonio Galvão in the laying the foundation.

The modern historians have referred to Barros and Castanheda. Moreover, Castanheda was the contemporary historian of the event who was in India and it might even be possible that he was present at the time of this ceremony as he was an eyewitness of some of the important events of the early Portuguese conquests.

This issue can be finalised with the statement of Braz Fernandes who says in an article that Nuno da Cunha laid the foundation of the new citadel of Bassein having told Antonio Galvão to lay the corner-stone.<sup>24</sup> We can infer from this statement that the main ceremony of the foundation was completed by the governor himself Antonio Galvão being asked to fix merely the corner-stone of the foundation as a token of gratitude.

But it is important to note that Braz Fernandes makes confusing statements regarding the very existence of this citadel which was constructed by the Portuguese. In his article "Antiquities of Chaul and Bassein"<sup>25</sup> at one place he says that this citadel was the original Musalman fort which was taken by

23. Couto, Decada IV, part II, liv.IX, cap.II, p.32.

24. Braz Fernandes, "Antiquities", op.cit., p.517.

25. Braz Fernandes, "Antiquities", op.cit.,

Nuno de Cunha in 1533.<sup>26</sup> But earlier he says that after the conquest of Bassein, "Nuno da Cunha razed the citadel to the ground".<sup>27</sup> The reason of his confusion may be a statement of Antonio Bocarro regarding an old wall adjoining the citadel which, he says, belonged to the old palace of Muslims before the Portuguese occupation.<sup>28</sup> But the point regarding the construction of the citadel is completely clarified by a stone inscription fixed on the circular bastion of the citadel which is still eligible.

It runs.

HO PRIMEIRO CAPITAM QVE  
EDIFICOV ESTA FORTAIEZA  
FOI GARCIA DE SA POR  
MANDADO DO GOVERNADOR  
NUNO DA CUNHA ERA DE  
1536.<sup>29</sup>

#### Translation

The first captain, who constructed this fortress was Garcia de Sa, by the order of the governor, Nuno da Cunha, in the year 1536.

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26. Braz Fernandes "Antiquities", op.cit., p.523.

27. Ibid., p.517.

28. Antonio Bocarro, Livro das Plantas ...op.cit., Ed.by Cunha Rivara in O Chronista da Tissuary, Part III, p.243.

29. This inscription is first recorded by J.G. da Cunha in Chaul and Bassein, op.cit., 217, then by James Campbell in Bombay Gazetter, op.cit., p.39 and published with photograph by Braz Fernandes, in ARMAS, op.cit., pp 11 and 115.



Thus after laying the foundation of this new fort, Nuno da Cunha appointed officially Garcia de Sa<sup>30</sup> as the first captain of Bassein. He completed the erection of the citadel. The gateway of the citadel was built on the site of the Mohamedan fort which was destroyed earlier.<sup>31</sup> Thus the fort was specially built and became known as the fort of St. Sebastian.<sup>32</sup>

This fort<sup>33</sup> was an irregular decagon with a strong square tower<sup>34</sup> to the left of the entrance gate and three half round bastions on the west and the north. The Captain, Jeronimo de Noronha, stayed at this residential place to the North which was attached to the Chapel of Our Lady.<sup>35</sup> The citadel was very small and weak and considered the weakest fortress in India.<sup>36</sup> Garcia de Sa, the first captain wanted

30. Joseph Wicki, Documenta Indica, Vol.X, pp.4-5.

Garcia de Sa was the brother-in-law of Nuno da Cunha, who belonged to a reputed family of Portugal. He was the grand son of Francisco Poeta João Rodriques de Sa, nephew of the first count of Mathosinhos and the son of Veador da Fazenda, of Porto. Later on, he was promoted the governor general of Portuguese India.

31. Braz Fernandes, ARMAS, op.cit., pp.12 and 16.

Braz Fernandes, A Guide to the Ruins of Bassein, op.cit. p.12.

32. Couto, op.cit., part II, p.321.

33. The sketches of this citadel can be seen in Luis Silveira, Ensaio de Iconografia das Cidades Portuguesas do Ultramar (Lisboa 1955-56) Vol.III, pp.348-50.

Gaspar Correa, op.cit., III, p.689.

34. This tower is intact in the citadel even today.

35. George Schurhammer, Life and Times of St. Francis Xavier, translated by C.M. Joseph, (Rome, 1977) Vol.II, p.406.

36. George Schurhammer, op.cit., Foot Note No.5.

to rebuilt the fortress when he was appointed as governor, but died soon after.

Initially, the houses of the Portuguese villages, with their palm leaf roofs were grouped around the fortress.<sup>37</sup> In 1546, Burhan-ul-Mulk,<sup>38</sup> the admiral of the king of Gujarat, threatened this Portuguese settlement and so it was temporarily surrounded by a board and tall earthen wall by a palisade.<sup>39</sup> There was a settlement of the native people known as Mudrapur<sup>40</sup> to the north-west of the fortress as Bacaim de cima connected with the mainland by a bridge.<sup>41</sup>

According to Antonia Bocarro, the south-east part of the citadel in Bassein fort was occupied by a building called the governor's palace when the governor of the Province of the North started residing in Bassein at a later stage.<sup>42</sup> Bocarro says that it was surrounded by an old wall which seems to have been of the palace of the residence of the Muslims to whom Bassein

37. Castanheda, op.cit., pp. 9, 25.

38. Portuguese call him Bramaluco. João de Castro, Cartas... Coligidas e anotadas por Elaine Sanceau, (Lisboa, 1954) p.243.

39. A. Baião, Cartas de Afonso de Albuquerque para el rei D. Manuel I (Lisboa, 1942) p.183.

40. Mudrapur is modern Koliwada and the area around and not modern Manikpur as stated by Aitchison. Ref. R.D.D'Silva, Christamandire, Preface.

41. Castanheda, op.cit., 8, 62, 9, 2.

42. The Governor of the Province of the North was appointed in Bassein from 1690.

belonged before the Portuguese occupation.<sup>43</sup> The residence of the governor was an elegant building perched on the bastion with the windows opening on all four sides well above the citadel walls. The west door opened on the semi-circular bastion behind a second passage going to the church from this bastion.<sup>44</sup> The Portuguese utilised the local labourers, slaves as well as the Portuguese soldiers for the construction of the citadel. Some of them died during the work. We get a reference in a letter dated 22nd December 1546 of Vincent d'Eça in which he mentions the death of his brother at the time of the construction of the citadel of Bassein. He also requested the king, in the same letter, to appoint him as the captain of the Bassein Fort.<sup>45</sup>

#### Other Buildings

The Captain's palace was a building isolated from the other buildings in the fort. It was constructed against the bastion of St. Sebastian, towards the northeast side of the fort. Here, in this solitary building, the captain of Bassein resided and in it, all the military activities were carried out. The captain's palace was purposely kept away from the religious and social centres inside the fort. It was a single storeyed building, the ground floor opening to the parade ground.<sup>46</sup>

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43. Bocarro, O Livro, op.cit., Part III, p.243.

44. Braz Fernandes, Guide, op.cit., p.13.

45. Mss, ANTT, Corpo Chronologico Parte I, Maço, 78, No.107.

46. Braz Fernandes, Guide, op.cit., pp. 31-32.



*The Entrance of the Citadel*

Like other Portuguese colonies, the fort-town of Bassein had a civil body known as camara or municipality to look after the civil affairs of the town. The camara in the Bassein fort had an independent building which was constructed to the south of the Dominican church and was separated from it by a narrow path. The modern authors like J.G. da Cunha and E.R.Hull have confused the readers regarding the identity of this building. J.G.da Cunha says that this building was the palace of the captain. E.R.Hull also admits da Cunha's identification.<sup>48</sup>

But this presumption is not correct. An old Portuguese map<sup>49</sup> of this fort which is preserved in the National Library of Paris shows this building as the camara. The foreign travellers who visited this fort in the later half of the 17th century have also identified it as the camara.<sup>50</sup>

In front of the Church called Nossa Senhora da Vida, there was a huge hospital of Mercy or Misericordia founded in 1540<sup>51</sup> which was looked after by the priests of the Order of St.John of God. The hospital looked after the medical needs of the soldiers who returned wounded from their campaigns as

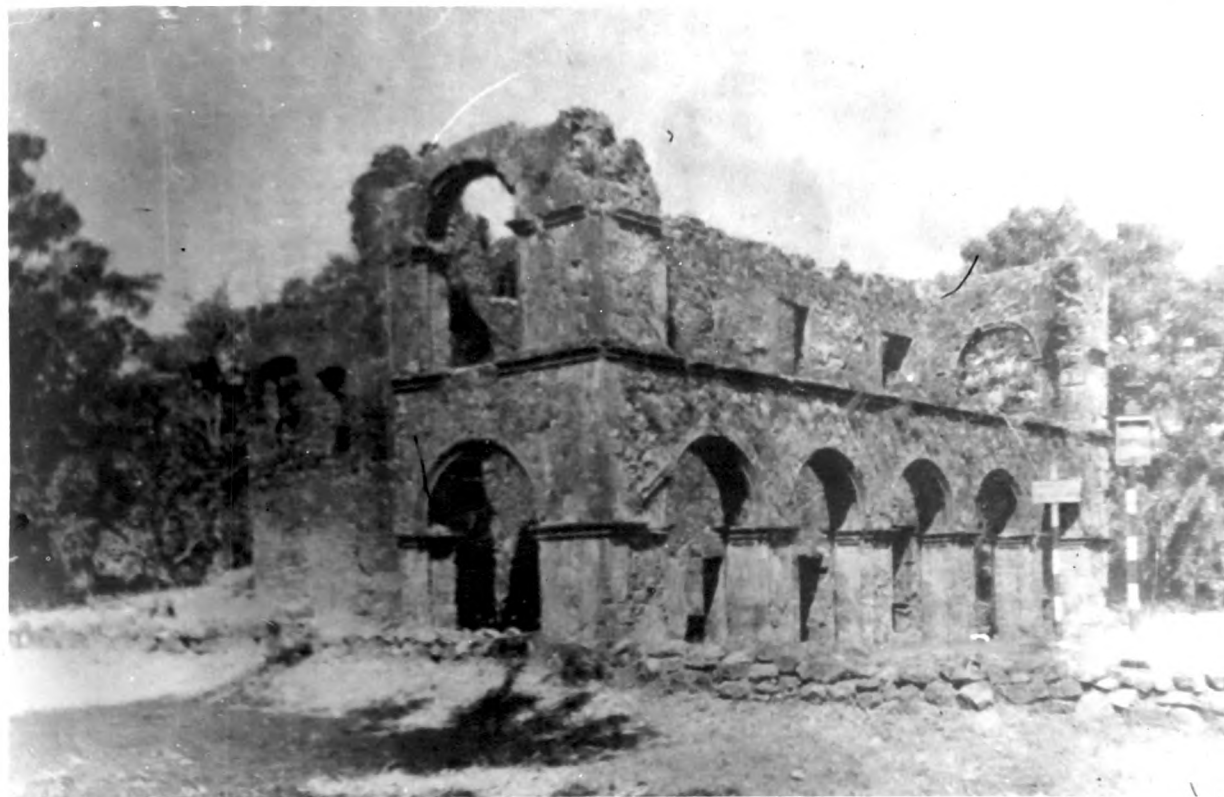
47. J.G. da Cunha, Chaul and Bassein, op.cit., p.219.

48. E.R.Hull A Short Guide to Bassein, (Bombay,1941) p.20.

49. Refer map on the next page.

50. John Fryer who visited this fort in 1675 says that it was a state House or Senate where the Governor consulted the Fidalgos every morning. New Account ... op.cit., p.75.

51. Simão Botelho, Tombo do Estado da India, op.cit.,p.217.  
George Schurhammer op.cit., p.406.



*Camara, or Town Hall (Municipality)*

well as other people in the town.<sup>52</sup> The citizens of Bassein contributed 600 xerafins per year towards the maintenance of this hospital. It also received a government grant.<sup>53</sup> The government gave 1680 pardãos and 4800 reis for the payment of the staff and the maintenance of the hospital. The doctor was paid 100 pardãos and 30 for a clerk or writer. The yearly maintenance charges per patient was 150 pardaos.<sup>54</sup>

The custom house was extremely small, and was the earliest building constructed by the Portuguese in Bassein immediately after the possession in 1534.<sup>55</sup> It was necessitated by the treaty of Bassein itself which compelled all the ships from the kingdom of Gujarat, bound for the Red Sea or anywhere, to visit Bassein in order to collect cartazes, and on their return voyage to pay the duties. The custom house or mandovi was fortified by a stockade and defended by a garrison of twenty nine European soldiers on the land and a gunboat on the river.<sup>56</sup>

A factory was built in 1535 soon after the custom house.<sup>57</sup> The merchandise was stored here when Bassein was merely a trading centre for the Portuguese. When it became a wealthy prospering city, there was no more need of the factory. So it

52. Mss ANTT.Calleccção São Vicente, Vol.XVIX, fl.150.

53. Mss.Historical Archieves of Goa, Livros das Manções No.58, fl.155 Hereafter as HAG.

54. Ibid.

55. Castanheda, op.cit., p.339, Gaspar Correa op.cit., p.485.

56. Bocarro, op.cit., part II, p.247.

57. Gaspar Correa, op.cit., III, p.586.

Simão Botelho, Tombo, op.cit., p.216.

was converted into a public granary in which the grain was stored so that the city could be provided with provisions at cheap rates. It was from this granary that the poor people in the city obtained very cheap rice. Later on, the management of this granary was entrusted to the Jesuits of the city, who managed it so well that from the profit they made out of the sale, they bought new land and cultivated it providing more and cheaper rice to the poor.<sup>58</sup>

#### Minor Buildings

The open place in the front of the citadel gate was the market place, where the goods from all over the country were brought for sale once a week. This was the busiest thoroughfare in the city.<sup>59</sup>

On the yard facing the church of Misericordia under the walls of the fort, there was a jail<sup>60</sup> during the Portuguese time. Here the people used to gather early in the morning to see the culprits. People who were arrested, on various counts, were brought before the magistrate of the city in the adjoining court. It was large and magnificent. This building must have been completed in 1639, the year, when Andre Salema da Cunha became the captain of Bassein.<sup>61</sup>

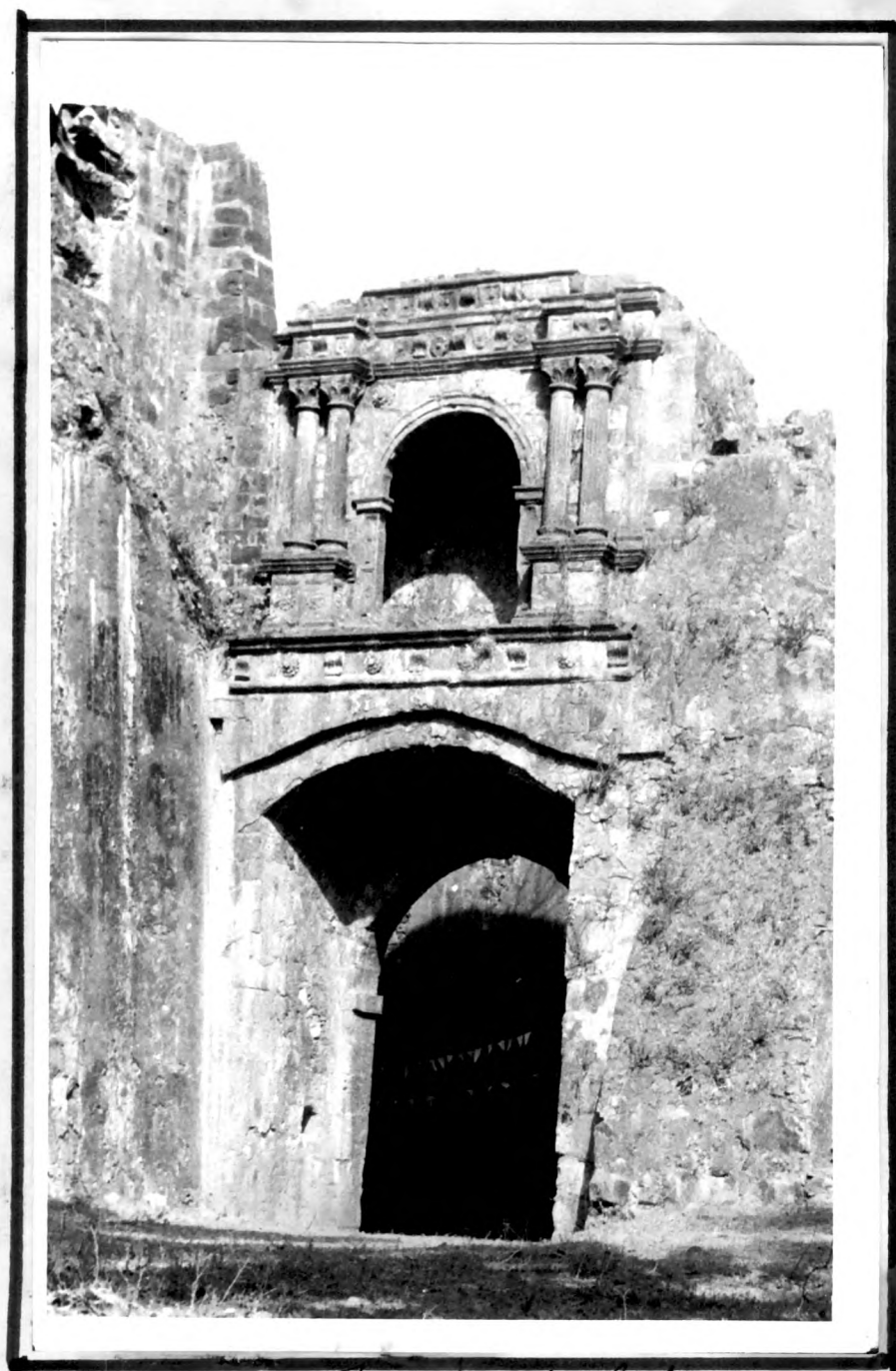
58. Mss HAG, Livros das Manções No.58, fl.342.

59. Bacarro, op.cit., p.243.

60. Dellon was kept in the same jail for some days on his voyage to Goa, says it was better than the jail of Daman. Ref. Braz Fernandes "Dellon and the Inquisistion of Goa", The Anglo Lusitano (Bombay, 1936).

61. Braz Fernandes, Guide, op.cit., p.16.





*The Lion Gate*

In front of the Jesuit college there was catechuminate for women. In 1568, the Jesuits bought a piece of land with a house on it in front of the college from Heitor Soares de Mello for 300 Pardãos.<sup>62</sup> This was a single-storeyed building of vast dimensions. It contained a chapel, workrooms on the ground floor and dormitories on the upper floor.<sup>63</sup> Although there was not a regular nunnery inside the fort, this was a place where the young ladies in difficulties were received and looked after. The wealthy citizens of Bassein contributed towards the fund for the maintenance of this institution. Initially there was an idea of building a convent in the fort of Bassein for the nuns of Santa Clara but with the erection of the convent of St. Monica in Goa the idea was given up.<sup>64</sup>

The place between the Franciscan and the Jesuit churches towards the southern side adjoining the rampart wall, was occupied by the bungalows of the Fidalgos who resided in the fort. Those directly connected with the administration of the city stayed inside the fort and some resided in beautiful villas on their estates in the neighbouring villages.<sup>65</sup>

#### Vacant Places in the Fort

On the northern side of the fort there was a huge plot of vacant land. Modern historians and travellers<sup>66</sup> have given different reasons for this unoccupied land which was about

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62. Mss. Foundations Goanae, Goa, 1575, fls.480-83.

63. Braz Fernandes, Guide, op.cit., p.25.

64. Cabinete Literario das Fountainhas (Nova Goa, 1846), Part IV.

65. Braz Fernandes, ARMAS, op.cit., pp.10 and 114.

66. Ibid.

one-third of the city. J.G. da Cunha gives two different reasons for it. First, he says that the plot was kept unoccupied deliberately to face the enemy attack where the cannon balls would naturally fall thicker than the other side as it was the only part from where the enemy attack of the mainland was possible. Secondly, at the time of emergency when the city was besieged for a longer time, this space of ground would be used by converting it into rice-fields using water from the neighbourhood.<sup>67</sup> Gemelli Careri<sup>68</sup> says that this portion of the city was deserted because of the plague, which swept the region in 1618, thus depopulating it.

We can not agree with J.G.Cunha who says that it was kept vacant to avoid the attack of enemy cannon balls. It was not possible to keep such a huge plot of land vacant in a compact city like Bassein for this reason. Secondly, it was not possible to convert this land into rice-fields irrigating it by bringing in water from the vicinity, as this was the only part adjoining the mainland, which could be susceptible to enemy attack. It was not feasible for the Portuguese to bring a water supply from this part as the enemy could have easily stopped it. Moreover, as presumed by J.G.da Cunha, this part was not converted into fields even though the

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67. J.G. da Cunha, Chaul and Bassein, op.cit., p.213.

68. Gemelli Careri was an Italian traveller who visited this fort in the year 1965. He has published his travel account which is translated and published by S.N.Sen, op.cit.,

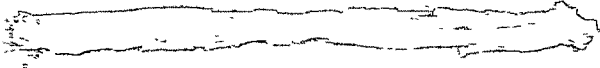


*The Sea Gate*

Portuguese were besieged in this fort for a longer time in 1739 by the Marathas, and especially when their food supply was cut off from Goa. On the other hand, they surrendered to the Marathas because of the shortage of food provisions.

Gemelli Careri's presumption can be easily rejected by the fact that this type of devastation was not possible by plague. There is not a single trace that this plot of land was inhabited by people. There should have been some traces of ruined houses of the people who had evacuated this part, as is the case in other parts of the fort.

Apparently, this vacant land was not kept for the above mentioned reasons. It is quite clear that this was a parade ground for the military which was stationed inside the fort. It will be observed from the bastion of St. Sebastian to the extreme east, that a series of cross walls were built against the rampart wall, which can be easily seen today. The chief purpose of this kind of construction was to provide cubicles for the cavalry. Secondly, this was the only possible place for the enemy attack during the time of the war. Thirdly, as the captain of the fort resided in this area, it showed that this part was a military centre which required enough space for the mobilization of the army. And lastly, as Bassein was the capital for the entire province extending from Diu in the north to Chaul in the south, this kind of vacant plot was necessary for the encampment of the incoming or outgoing army for some time. The outline map published in ARMAS ...op.cit. by Braz Fernandes clearly mentions this vacant land as a parade

ground. 

There is yet another assumption regarding this vacant land. If we look minutely at the old plan of the fort prepared during the Portuguese period, we notice the presence of some buildings. But the fort was leased twice to private individuals during the British period in 1830 and 1860. There is a possibility of removal of the debris of the fallen buildings by the persons who might have converted this part into fields to cultivate sugarcane which was needed for the proposed sugar factories.

#### Fortification and Defence

Bassein began to rise as a prosperous Portuguese settlement and a trading centre during the 16th century, but it was in constant danger of attack from the enemies of the Portuguese. In 1535 the Mughals tried to attack the city which was saved by the vallant attempt of Antonio Galvão as we have already seen.<sup>69</sup> Bassein was then attacked by a Gujarati officer Bramaluco, who sacked and plundered the neighbouring villages.<sup>70</sup> We get references in the documents regarding the suggestions made to the king by the Portuguese officials for the defence of the coast of Bassein in general and the fort in particular. Diogo de Mesquita refers to it in his letter dated 6th October 1537.<sup>71</sup> Pedro de Faria writes a letter from Goa

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69. Barros, Decada IV op.cit., Part II, pp.92-95. Castanheda op.cit., Tomo IV, Liv.VII, Cap.CXX, pp. 396-405.

70. Castanheda, op.cit., Liv.IX, Cap.VII, pp.535-42.

71. Mss. ANTT., Corpo Chronologico, Part I, Maço, 59 to 83.

dated 20th October 1537 to the king for the defence of Bassein against Turkish attack.<sup>72</sup> Garcia de Sa, the captain of Bassein informed the king about this attack in a letter dated 10th December 1538.<sup>73</sup>

There is a similar letter from Domingos de Paiva dated 19th January 1540.<sup>74</sup> Alexio Menezes, the bishop of Goa, informs the king by<sup>75</sup> a letter dated 17th December 1542, of an invasion of Nizam Malik, a Gujarati Officer and how 2000 Portuguese warriors with only 16 horses defended Bassein against the 3000 soldiers and 350 horses of the invader. He sounded the possibility of another attack from Gujarat. Pedro Fernandes informed the king through a letter from Goa dated 31st October 1545, about the weak defences of Bassein and urged the reinforcement of the fortification against the attack.<sup>76</sup> This kind of requests were repeated several times.<sup>77</sup>

Moreover, in the eastern coloniation, the Portuguese were followed by the Dutch, French and the British who were trying to carve out independent empires in the East. The colonial rivalry between the Dutch and the Portuguese had reached boiling point. The Dutch already started attacking Portuguese colonies in the East. So it was necessary for the Portuguese to fortify

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72. Mss, ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, Part I, Maço, 59 No.83.

73. Mss, ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, op.cit., Maço, 63, No.64.

74. Mss, ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, op.cit., Maço, 66, No.89.

75. Mss, ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, op.cit., Maço, 73, No.34

76. Mss, ANTT, Corpo Chronologico, op.cit., Maço, 76, No.123.

77. Mss, ANTT, Collecção São Lourenço, fls. 74<sub>v</sub> 104, 249.

*Governor*



*Residence of Governor -*



their eastern colonies, of which Bassein was an important settlement. They decided to fortify this city to save it from the enemy. The fortification of the city began in 1590 and was completed in 1600.<sup>78</sup>

Antonio Bocarro, has given the minute details of this fortification of the Bassein fort in his famous book O Livro das Plantas das Fortalezas da India<sup>79</sup> with other details of the fort. Most of the modern historians have followed Bocarro on this point.

Before describing the fortification of the fort let us clear one point regarding the total number of the bastions of the fortifications. Though most of the contemporary and modern historians speak about eleven bastions, there are only ten bastions. Even the oldest map of the entire fort prepared by Resende and which is preserved in the National Library of Paris, Lisbon and the British Museum,<sup>80,81</sup> shows ten bastions.<sup>82</sup>

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78. Braz Fernandes, Guide, op.cit., p.2.

79. Bocarro, op.cit., p.241 onwards.  
 Bragança Pereira, Ed. Ariquivo Portugues Oriental (Goa, 1937), Vol.II, Part I, pp.174-176.  
 Bragança Pereira - Reproduced once in O Oriente Portugues No. 7,8,9 1935, p.106 onwards.  
 The original manuscript of Bocarro's work is preserved in the Biblioteca Nacional de Lisboa, Secção Reservados Cod, 11057, fls.53 to 57<sub>v</sub>, regarding the Bassein Fort.

80. Three original copies of Resede's work are preserved in these archives.

81. BNL, Secção Reservados, Cod.11057.  
 BNP, Fonds Portugais, 1.  
 BML, Additional Collection, MS.5027 A.

82. See the map of the original drawing after this page.

Resende's Paris



Photograph of Resende's original painting  
from The National Library of Paris.

But Bocarro, who is followed by most of modern historians erroneously gives the names of eleven bastions. The bastion he calls Santiago between the bastions of Reis Magos and St. Gonsalo, in fact does not exist, even in the forms of ruins today.

It is quite possible that the bastion marked in the map as the bastion of St. Gonsalo was formerly called the bastion of Santiago because Gonsalo Garcia who was the resident of this city as an ordinary school boy earlier, was not declared a saint at the time of the construction of the fortification. So there was no question the bastion being after him. The name of the tower of Santiago must have been converted into St. Gonsalo when he was declared Blessed Gonsalo by the Roman religious authorities in 1627. Moreover, the description given by Antonio Bocarro and followed by many others, resembles each other. So Santiago and St. Gonsalo are the names of one and the same bastion, commonly known as St. Gonsalo.<sup>83</sup>

The names of the ten<sup>84</sup> bastions are Caveleiro, Nossa Senhora dos Remedios, Reis Magos, São Gonsalo or Santiago, Madre de Deus, São João, Elephante São Petro, São Paulo and São Sebastião.

i) Caveleiro - The bastion known as Cavaleiro is to the North of the rampart wall of the fort. It is thirty metres high and round in shape. It had a big gun weighing twelve pounds. The

83. All the bastions of the fort are intact even today.

84. British Museum, Additional Collection, MS 5027 A.fl.61.

distance of the wall from Cavaleiro to the bastion of Nossa Senhora dos Remedios is twenty metres.<sup>85</sup>

ii) Nosa Senhora dos Remedios - This bastion is about thirty metres and a half high and the height of the parapet is six palms, that is about three feet. The other side of the bastion which did not have a parapet during the earlier period, was completed later on. It had a gun of iron weighing two pounds. The distance of this bastion to the bastion of Reis Magos is twenty metres.<sup>86</sup>

iii) Reis Magos - This bastion is thirty metres high and the parapet is eight palms (about four feet). It had a bronze plaque weighing forty pounds. The distance of this bastion to the bastion of St.Gonsalo is thirty metres.<sup>87</sup>

iv) São Gonsalo - The bastion known as São Gonsalo is thirty metres high and has a distance outside the bastion of Madre de Deus which is thirty metres.<sup>88</sup>

85. Antonio Bocarro, op.cit., p.241.

APO. (BP), op.cit., p.174

OP. (BP), op.cit., p.106

86. Bocarro, op.cit., p.241.

APO. (BP), op.cit., p.174

OP. (BP), op.cit., p.106

87. Bocarro, op.cit., p.241.

APO. (BP), op.cit., p.175

OP. (BP), op.cit., p.106

88. Bocarro, op.cit., p.175

APO. (BP), op.cit., p.175

OP. (BP), op.cit., p.107

v) Madre de Deus - The bastion known as the Mother of God is twenty metres high. It had a Muslim iron plaque. The distance between this bastion and that of São João is twenty metres.<sup>89</sup>

vi) São João - The bastion of St. John which was on the bank of the river is twenty metres high. It had four bronze plaques, of which three weighed twenty pounds each and the fourth one was twelve pounds. The distance of this tower to the tower of elephant is twenty metres.<sup>90</sup>

vii) Elephante - The bastion known as Elephante is twenty metres high. It had four bronze plaques and a stone cannon, which weighed thirty pounds. It had another small cannon weighing twelve pounds. It had an iron cannon of ten pounds and another metal one, weighing eight pounds. The last two were inside the columns. The distance of this bastion to the bastion of São Pedro is twenty metres.<sup>91</sup>

viii) São Pedro - The bastion of St. Peter is twenty metres high. It had two plaques and a stone cannon which weighed thirty pounds, and one more iron weighing four pounds. The

89. Bocarro, op.cit., p.242.  
 APO. (BP), op.cit., p.175.  
 OP. (BP), op.cit., p.107.

90. Bocarro, op.cit., p.243.  
 APO. (BP), op.cit. p.175.  
 OP. (BP), op.cit., p.107.

91. Bocarro, op.cit., p.243.  
 APO. (BP), op.cit. p.175-6.  
 OP. (BP), op.cit., p.107.



*Church of Holy Name (Jesuit)*

distance of this bastion to the bastion of São Paulo is twenty metres having a parapet of six palms.<sup>92</sup>

ix) São Paulo - The bastion of São Paulo or St. Paul is ten metres high on one side and on the other side it is much lower because it had been eroded by the sea. It had two bronze plaques, of which one weighed twelve pounds and was in the column. It had also a stone cannon of thirty pounds. The distance of this tower to the tower of Sr. Sebastian is twenty metres.<sup>93</sup>

x) São Sebastião<sup>94</sup> - The bastion of St. Sebastian is forty metres

92. Bocarro op.cit., p.243  
APO. (BP), op.cit., p.176.  
OP. (BP), op.cit., p.107.

93. Antonio Bocarro op.cit., p.243  
APO. (BP), op.cit., p.175.  
OP. (BP), op.cit., p.107.

94. There is a controversy regarding the location of St. Sebastian bastion which become famous in the later history because we are informed that in 1739 the Marathas entered the fort making a breach to this bastion. First of all there is not unanimity regarding the location of that bastion. But fortunately the location of the St. Sebastian bastion is clarified by the same map preserved in the National Library of Paris, Lisbon and the British Museum in which the names of all the bastions are given. J.G. da Cunha, places St. Sebastian bastion behind the convent of the Franciscans. His observations followed by James Campbell in the Bombay Gazetteer and E.R. Hull in his Guide. Fr. Hull goes further saying that the breach which was made by the Marathas during the war was later on repaired by them. A careful observation of the wall from the Northeast corner of the fort of the Land Gate is covered with the marks of the cannon balls of the Maratha artillery. Had any portion of the wall breached and subsequently repaired, there could be no marks of the cannon balls on the new surface. Moreover, there is no reference in the Peshwa Daftar of Poona, any Peshwa Diary or any Marathi document available of any Peshwa or Maratha Officer Known as Sarsubhedar who repaired the broken bastion or the mention of the expenses for such kind of repairs. There would have been the reference of this account anywhere in the Peshwa Daftar when the Peshwas were so meticulous about keeping the records of accounts.

high having a parapet of three palms and a half. It had two bronze plaques weighing twenty pounds each and the other of iron which weighed eighty pounds. The distance of this bastion to the bastion of Cavaleiro is twenty metres having the parapet of six palms.<sup>95</sup>

The shape of the fort of Bassein is an irregular decagon the circumference of which is about a mile and a half and the interior of the fort from the East to the West is a little above two-thirds of a mile. It is not more than five feet thick on three sides - South, East and West. On the north front, however, the wall consists of a double front having an average thickness of forty five feet.

The fort had three gates, two main gates known as Porta da Terra or the Land Gate and Porta do Mar or the Sea Gate and a small portal to the West. Manuel Godinho who visited Bassein fort in 1662, on his way to Portugual, says that the city of Bassein was one thousand geometrical paces in a complete circle. It was surrounded by thick and high walls with eleven (sic) bastions with equal distance from each other.<sup>96</sup>

The fort was defended well against enemy attack. In addition to the cannon posted at various bastions, the fort was defended by twenty-one gunboats, each carrying seventeen or eighteen guns.<sup>97</sup> There were four hundred Europeans and two

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95. Bocarro op.cit., p. 243.

APO, (B.M.) op.cit., p.176.

96. Manuel Godinho, op.cit., p.27.

97. Mss. British Museum, Additional collection No.5027-A.fl.61. Bocarro, op.cit. p.250.





*Dominican Church*

hundred local Christians in the fort. Moreover, every European had three slaves for his personal service. This made, in case of emergency, an additional force of one thousand, and two hundred men in fair condition. Besides this force every Fidalgo had personal guards who were kept on their estates. The soldiers were available for the defence of the city of Bassein in a crisis.<sup>98</sup>

The fort town and the neighbouring villages, under the control of the Portuguese, were further defended by two more Portuguese fortresses in the northern jurisdiction of Bassein. They acted as the frontier forts to defend the mainland.<sup>100</sup>

In a letter dated 6th February 1589, The Portuguese king, D.Philip I, wrote to Duarte, the Viceroy of Portuguese India, about the bad condition of the defence of the fort which had not yet been fortified. He urged the need to undertake the fortifications.<sup>101</sup> The same is repeated again and again at several times in his urgent letters.<sup>102</sup>

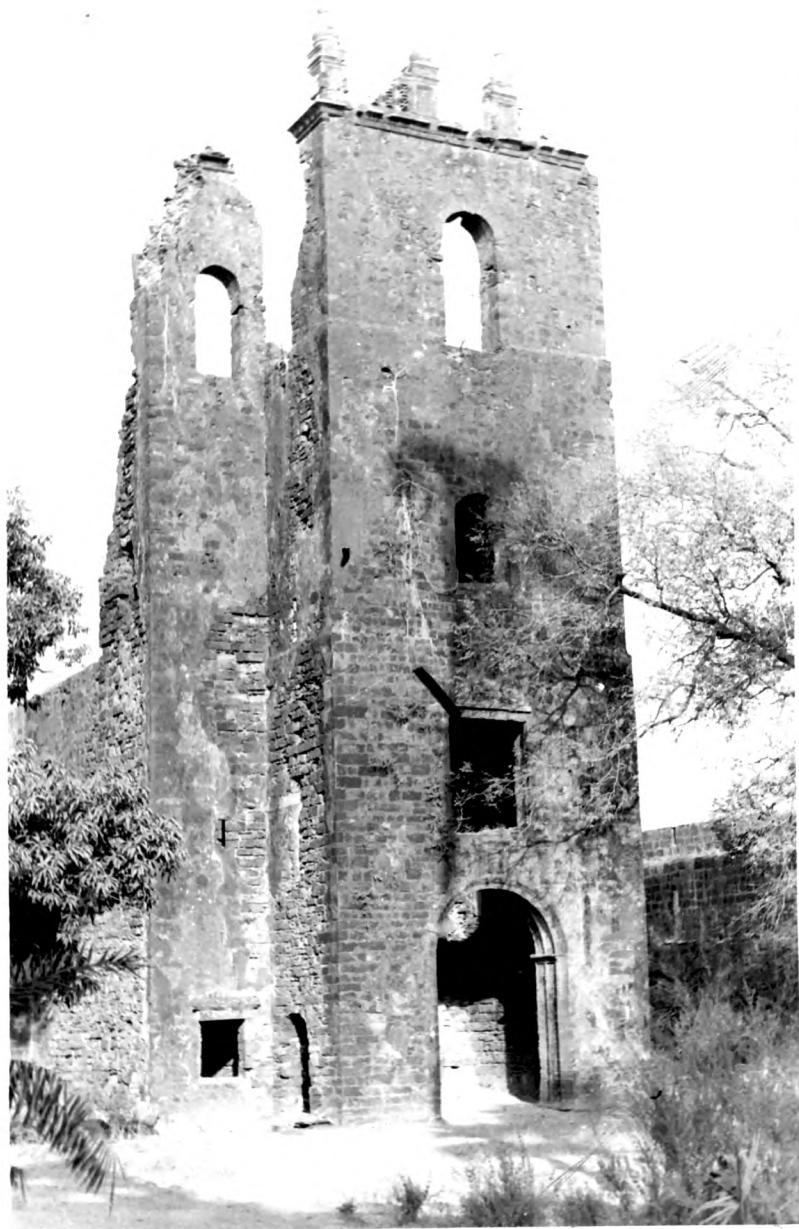
98. Mss.British Museum, Additional collection No.5027-A.fl.61. Bocarro, p.250.

99. Manore - Some writers have confused Manore with Manori, a village near Gorai in Salsette. Manore referred here is a town ten miles east of Palghar in Thane District.

100. Manuel Godinho, op.cit., p.27

101. Mss. HAG, Livros das Manções, Livro 3-A fl, 338v.

102. Archivo historico Ultramarino, Liboa, Caixa 10D.83 and Caixa --- 10 D.85 Hereafter referred as AHU.  
--- Documentos Remetidos da India (BP), p.26.



St. Joseph's Tower.

Even at a later stage, the officials of the camara of Bassein in a letter dated 31st March 1626, addressed and urged the king regarding the lack of the defence of the fort of Bassein. They suggested the imposition of extra taxes to cover the expenditure.<sup>103</sup> The same officials of the camara of Bassein wrote to the king 50 years after the beginning of the fortification of the Bassein town that the defence of the city was not adequate. Some of the bastions were not completed. Only four bastions were in perfect condition. The king gave instructions to impose additional taxes. The Viceroy, Mathias de Albuquerque, ordered that the factory of Bassein should spend 3000 pardãos for the defence of the fort.<sup>104</sup> At this time, the captain of Bassein requested to the governor to provide 566 cannons for the defence of the walls of the fort.<sup>105</sup> After the completion of the fort, the king was informed of it.<sup>106</sup>

#### Extension of Portuguese Influence

Having established the capital town at the southern part of Bassein, the Portuguese started to have their control over the northern part which was more flourishing. The missionaries of various orders had started the conversion of the local people on a large scale. They constructed many

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103. AHU, Caixa 9.D.93.

104. ACE (PP) Vo.II, p.26.

105. ACE (PP) op.cit.,

106. Mss. AHU, Goa 1935-57, Vol.II, p.301 Caixa 10D.85.

churches outside the fort and established parishes there. The parishes which came into existence during the Portuguese rule were :

	<u>Name of the Parish</u>	<u>Church</u>	<u>Year of Estt.</u>
1.	Sandor	St.Thomas Church	1566
2.	Nirmal	Holy Cross	1557-58 ?
3.	Agashi	St. James	1568
4.	Nandakhal	Holy Spirit	1573
5.	Papdi	Our Lady of Grace	1574
6.	Remedy	Our Lady of Remedy	1577
7.	Pali	Mother of God	1585
8.	Merces	Our Lady of Mercy	1606
9.	Manikpur	St. Michael	1606 <sup>107</sup>

These churches became the centres of Christian activity and were connected with their mother-houses inside the fort, The Portuguese Fidalgos, who obtained landed properties from the king or viceroys rented them to the new converts sometimes staying in the same villages. They kept their guards to defend their properties. In this way, the Portuguese extended their influence outside the fort.

The Portuguese were in possession of Bassein for more than two centuries, during which period it gradually rose to the state of grandeur and opulence that obtained for it the

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107. R.D.D'Silva Vasaitil Christi Dharma Va Christa Mandire, Marathi, op.cit., p.132.

noble appellation of Corte do Norte<sup>108</sup> or the 'Chief City of the North', in relation to their capital of Goa. It was elevated to the status of Evora in Portugal.<sup>109</sup> It became the resort of the wealthiest Fidalgos and the richest merchants of Portuguese India, so much so that it became proverbial in those times to call a great man Fidalgo de Baçaim.<sup>110</sup>

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108. L.A.Rodrigues, Boletim do Instituto Menezes Bragança, (Goa, 1975) No.110, p.22.  
Julio Gonsalves, op.cit., p.73.
109. DI (JW) Vol.II, p.24.
110. M.S.Commissariat, op.cit., p.532.  
J.G. da Cunha, Chaul & Bassein, op.cit., p.139.

Out Line map of  
Bassein

