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CASAS SENHORIAIS E AS SUAS VIVÊNCIAS PORTUGAL, BRASIL & GOA

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HOUSES OF DOMINANCE: AN OVERVIEW OF THE PORTUGUESE MANOR HOUSES IN THE PROVINCE OF THE NORTH (1521-1739)¹

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THE FORTIFIED MANOR HOUSES IN PORTUGAL

Since the beginning of its formation process as a territorially defined nation-state during the 12th century, fortified houses (*domus fortis*)² were built throughout the territory that would later become Portugal as a form of territorial defence and administration and to ensure the loyalty of the Portuguese aristocracy. However, given the abuses perpetrated by the Portuguese nobility (Mattoso 1995, 1: 95), a strong limitation was imposed on the construction of these houses: they could only be built with royal authorization. Use of battlements in buildings alluding to fortifications was severely restricted by the juridical principle of *ius crenelandi*, that is, the right to use battlements; thus, the construction of fortifications became a royal monopoly (Barroca, 1997, p. 45-85).

The first Portuguese residential fortified houses had towered shapes, perhaps inspired by some “county castles” (*castelos condais*) such as that of Trancoso, or even by the newly arrived keeps to the Portuguese poleorhetics’ panorama, like the keeps of the castles of Pombal, Soure, or Tomar. The towers of Refóios (Ponte de Lima) (Image 1), Dornelas (Amares),

Oriz in Santa Marinha (Vila Verde), and Vasconcelos in Ferreiros (Amares) are examples of this category of fortified manor towers. However, given their small size and living conditions, little by little residential wings began to be added to the towers as happened, for example, with Paço de Guela (Arcos de Valdevez) (Image 2) or Paço dos Vasconcelos in Santiago da Guarda (Ansião), initially fortified tower-houses.



Image 1 – Tower of Refóios (Ponte de Lima) (photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos)



Image 2 – Paço de Gela (Arcos de Valdevez) *(photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos)*

The increasing centralization of the royal power, from the late 14th century onwards, provided favourable conditions for aristocrats directly related to the Royal House, such as those from the House of Avis and, above all, the powerful House of Braganza, to build manor houses (*paços*) with fortified characteristics, as can be seen with the manor houses of the Dukes of Braganza in Guimarães and in Barcelos, or the castellated houses of Porto de Mós (Image 3), Soure, and Évoramonte. The reformulation of some obsolete castles for a residential function, as happened to the old “rocky castles” (*castelos roqueiros*) of Feira (Santa Maria da Feira) or Penedono (Image 4), and the construction of new fortified manor houses, such as the castellated house of Alvito, were allowed only under regal authorization and in very sporadic cases. Interestingly, the construction of towered manor houses did not cease completely, reappearing in the mid-15th century and during part of the 16th century, such as the towers of Águias in Brotas (Mora) (Image 5), Esporão (Reguengos de Monsaraz), and Carvalhal in Escoural (Montemor-o-Novo).



Image 3 – Castellated palace of Porto de Mós (*photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos*)

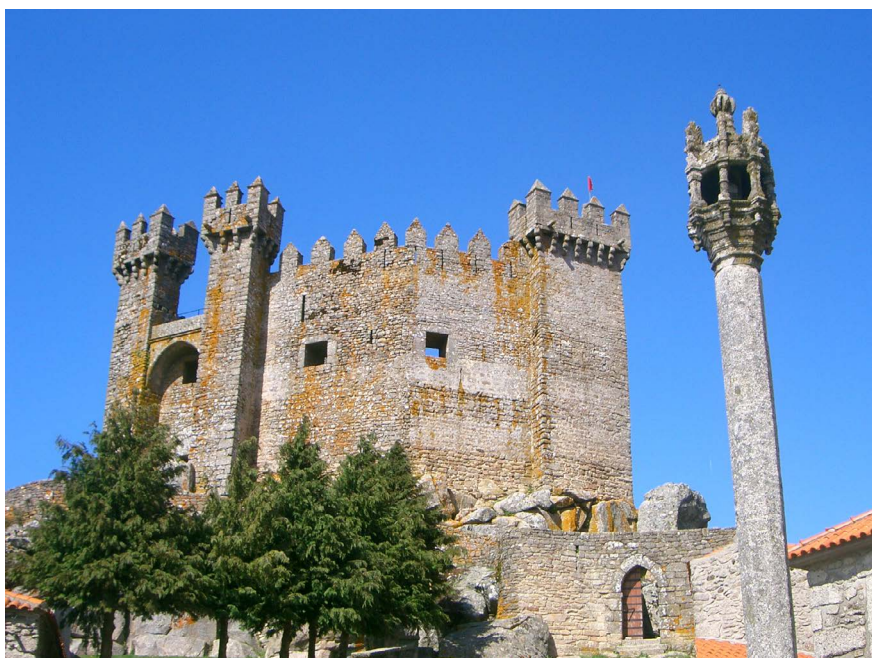


Image 4 – Castellated palace of Penedono, built over an ancient castle
(*photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos*)



Image 5 – Tower of Águias in Brotas (Mora) (source: Wikimedia)

THE FORTIFIED MANOR HOUSES IN PORTUGUESE COLONIAL SPACES

This resurgence of towered residences amidst the Portuguese maritime exploration extended to the overseas territories under Portuguese colonization. Matters of security and manorial assertion were, in many aspects, like those of the Portuguese territory formation in the early days of nationality. Notably, the fortified manor houses only appeared where there was an effective colonization (or an attempt at colonization) of the overseas territories by the transfer of land to Portuguese tenants (or foreigners or natives in service of Portugal).

The Esmeraldos' Manor House (Ponta do Sol) (Image 6), located in Madeira Island and built by the merchant Jeanin Esmenaut (João Esmeraldo), appears to have initially been a manor tower to which residential wings were added later. Looking at the façade of this manor house we can envision what appears to be the primitive tower. This may be one of the oldest fortified manor houses still existing, among those built during the colonial period—Madeira was the first territory colonized by Portugal.



Image 6 – Esmeraldos' Manor House (Ponta do Sol, Madeira) (source: Wikimedia)

Another territory colonized by the Portuguese was Brazil,³ where the ruins of a manor house can be found that, initially, would consist of a tower: the Tower House of Garcia d'Àvila, in Praia do Forte (Mata de São João, Bahia) (Image 7). This would have been the second fortified manor house in Brazil, the first being the fortified house of Duarte Coelho, in Olinda (Recife), of which some iconographic representations are known. Incidentally, we can find in ancient iconography several examples of fortified houses in Brazil that no longer exist, such as the strong house of Peria (Maranhão). The existence of remains pertaining to Brazilian fortified farmhouses is also significant, both in terms of iconography and ruins, as is the case with the fortified farmhouse of São Jorge dos Erasmos, in Santos (São Paulo).

As for the East, the iconographic illustrations and manuscripts left us references to the existence of fortified houses in territories colonized by the Portuguese, especially in India and Sri Lanka. Regarding the latter, former Ceylon was a territory targeted by an effective attempt at colonization by the Portuguese State of India (*Estado da Índia*); thus, we can find representations of what appear to be fortified houses in Weligama, Kalutara, and Neduntivu Island. In fact, this last island still hosts the ruined remains of the Portuguese landlord's fortified house (perhaps that of

António Rebelo) (Image 8) which is currently part of an ongoing research project (Santos, 2019).



Image 7 – Tower House of Garcia d'Ávila, in Praia do Forte (Mata de São João, Bahia, Brasil)
(photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos)



Image 8 – Fortified manor house in Neduntivu Island (Sri Lanka)
(photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos)

In India there are written and iconographic mentions of fortified manor houses in some territories targeted by the Portuguese colonisation. For example, we have iconographic representation of the Bishop of Cochin's fortified palace in Vaypiin (Kerala); the bishop Fr. António da Purificação (best known as António José de Noronha) was arrested by the British in a fortified house in São Tomé de Meliapor (now part of Chennai); and the Captain's House in Paço de Naroá (Divar Island, Goa), just to mention a few cases. A few Brahmin Catholic houses in Goa still have some fortified characteristics, such as the tower of the Lobos House (Image 9) which was later surrounded by residential buildings, or the casemate tower of the Gama Pinto House, both in Anjuná. But it was the Northern Province which underwent a clear attempt at systematic colonization, with land donated to Portuguese tenants who built fortified manor houses for the better governance and defence of their respective properties.



Image 9 – Old tower of Lobos' House, Anjuna (Goa, India) (photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos)

THE NORTHERN PROVINCE OF THE STATE OF INDIA

Located in a strategic geographical area on the west coast of India, the northern region of Konkan, in the present-day northern parts of the state

of Maharashtra, the Western parts of the Union Territory of Daman, and the southern parts of the state of Gujarat, have attracted communities and maritime trade since time immemorial. The arrival and establishment of the Portuguese on these lands in the early 16th century caused a paradigm shift in terms of maritime trade and territorial dominance. The Portuguese State of India⁴, in its mission to monopolise the maritime trade in the Indian Ocean, introduced the trend of its militarisation and forceful imposition through the *cartaz* system (a kind of paid trade permit given by the Portuguese to all non-Portuguese trading ships). As a part of this strategy, they first settled in Revdanda (*Chaul*) in 1516 by first building a small factory and later a fort in 1524 in the territory of the Sultanate of Ahmednagar. In 1534, the territory between Karanja Island (*Ilha de Caranjá*) and Agashi (*Agaçaim*) was ceded to the Portuguese by the Sultanate of Gujarat, and a fort was built in Vasai (*Baçaim*). In the following year they settled in Diu, a prosperous port on the south coast of the Sultanate of Gujarat. Little by little, the Portuguese expanded their territory into the north, until they managed to conquer Daman (*Damão*) in 1559. This fertile coastal territory, measuring approximately 200 kilometres in length and 40 kilometres in width and occupying an area of almost 5.000–7.500 km² at its maximum extension, became known as the Northern Province (*Província do Norte*). With Vasai as its capital, the Northern Province had a continuous territory made up of the districts of Vasai and Daman, which were joined by the two isolated captaincies of Revdanda and Diu.

The Portuguese governance adopted for this territory generally linked the pre-existing local administration system, adapting it to its needs by replacing land concessionaires with others appointed by itself which were granted as rights to nobles, soldiers, and orders of Portuguese ecclesiastics. The landlords were responsible for cultivating these lands, as well as defending them, and collecting rents. During the existence of the Northern Province (c.16th–18th centuries), the Portuguese had to face threats from the sultanates of Gujarat, Ahmednagar, and Bijapur; the Mughals and Kolis; kings of Rampur and Jawhar; the Ottomans and Omanis; the Dutch and British; and finally the Malabar pirates. Except for the territory of Bombay, ceded to the British in 1661, the Portuguese maintained control of the Northern Province until 1739, when they were defeated by the Marathas. Only Daman and Diu remained under Portuguese rule until 1961.

During their two-century occupation in Northern Konkan, the Portuguese were responsible for introducing artistic, architectural, cultural, and religious practices and traditions. Many of these have been rapidly disappearing due to the accelerated urbanization of the territory around Mumbai. However, among the remnants that can still be found in the former Northern Province territory are the remains of manor houses built by Portuguese landlords.⁵ The local populations sometimes refer to these remains as “*killas*” (fort), often pointing to a Maratha origin (generally from Chhatrapati Shivaji) and other times to the *Firangi*—as the Portuguese were often called at that time. Almost all these manor houses, the traces of which have not disappeared, are now in ruins and their remains are completely neglected.

The Portuguese manor houses constitute a category of their own within Indo-Portuguese architecture in Northern Konkan. The system of long-term lease (*foro*) implemented by the State of India for the Northern Province enabled many Portuguese tenants to settle down with their families in these fertile agricultural territories. Due to their solidity and grandeur, these manor houses included a defensive function that ensured the security of their lands, often complementing the Portuguese fortifications. Importantly, the very core of British colonial activities in former Bombay—the Bombay castle—was an old Portuguese manor house, formerly belonging to the famous Portuguese physician and naturalist Garcia da Orta, the landlord of Bombay in the 16th century (Image 10).

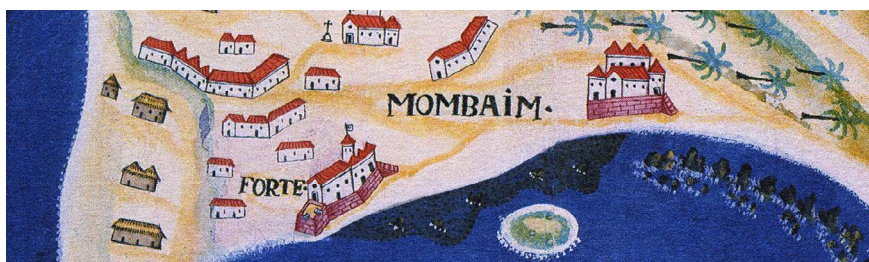


Image 10 – Detail of the Mombaim depict, by Pedro Barreto de Resnde, 1634. It is possible to see the fortified manor house of Garcia da Orta, in Bombay, as well as the fortified manor house of Mazgaon (source: courtesy of the Portuguese National Library, Lisbon)

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Archaeological and archival studies on the archaeology of European expansion have been conducted by Mayur Thakare for over a decade. First through archaeological surveys conducted since 2010 in the service of the Archaeological Survey of India – Mumbai Circle, in the former Northern Province and on the Konkan coast. Systematic village-by-village search resulted in the discovery of more than fifty sites with hitherto unknown Portuguese remains, many of them published by the Archaeological Survey of India's bulletin *Indian Archaeology – A Review*, especially in 2012-2013. The system of Portuguese fortifications and settlement pattern amidst the famous Luso-Maratha war (1737-1739) was also studied as part of Mayur Thakare's doctoral thesis. Later, the Heritage Conservation Society of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority sponsored a project to document the early European remains (1498-1818) in the Daman-Revdanda region, which was conducted by Mayur Thakare between 2014 and 2018.

Recently, Mayur Thakare started a post-doctoral project at ARTIS – Institute of Art History, School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon, entitled “The Lost World – Tracing the Historicity and Functionality of the Surviving Structural Remains and Settlements in the Portuguese Northern Province as the Case Study of Archaeology of European Expansion/ Colonial Archaeology (1534 – 1739 C.E.)”, under advisement of Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos, André Teixeira, and Vítor Serrão. This ongoing research has enabled expanding the number of archaeological sites and, above all, defining more precisely the map and site distribution of the former Northern Province by the careful analysis of the Vasai and Daman registration books (*tombos*).

Importantly, the fortified manor houses of the Northern Province were briefly mentioned in the exceptional research project “Bombay Before the British: The Indo-Portuguese Layer”, coordinated by Walter Rossa and Paulo Varela Gomes and conducted between 2004 and 2007. As part of this project, Sidh Mendiratta discussed the fortified manor houses in his doctoral thesis, and in 2019 he published the book *Domus-Fortis in Æquator*, in which he also addressed this issue.

IMPLEMENTATION OF FORTIFIED MANOR HOUSES

There are currently 47 known and recorded sites of Portuguese manor houses spread across the former Northern Province territory, as presented in the map (Image 11). One can still find traces of a set of structures with either residential or military function—although everything suggests that they could have been watchtowers, as with the towers of Edwan (District of Palghar) and Firangipada and Belapur (District of Thane). Comparisons with historical documentation on the Northern Province points to the existence of more manor houses scattered throughout the territory, in places like Dahanu (District of Palghar), Nagale Bandar and Gaimukh (District of Thane), Mazgaon (District of Mumbai City). The remains of manor houses suffered heavy damage and eventually disappeared under later constructions.

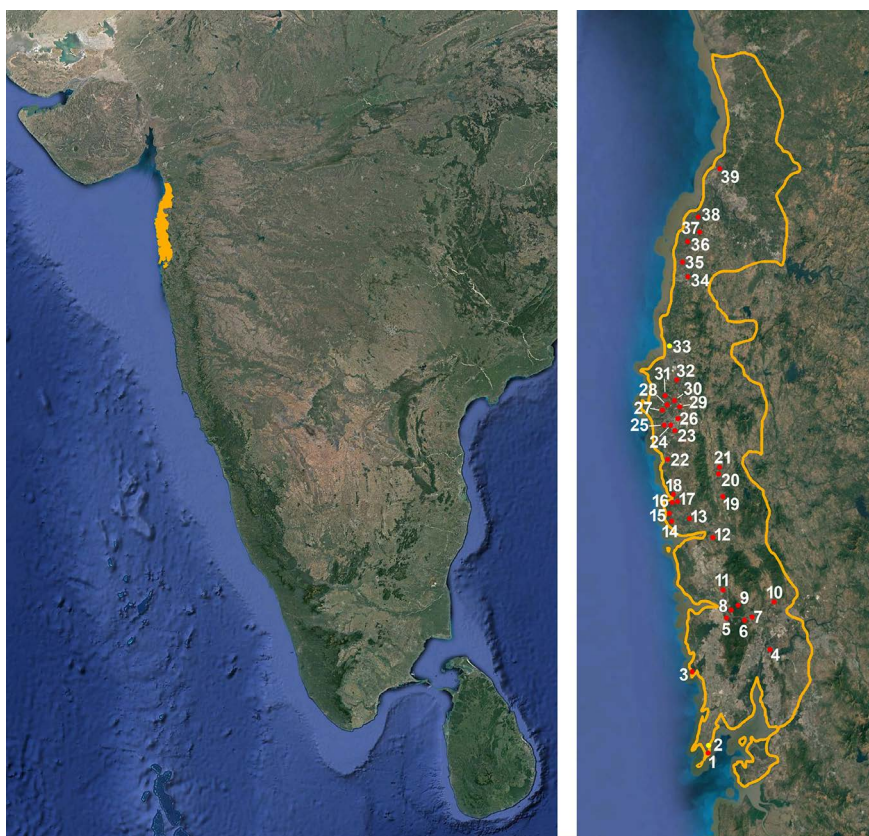


Image 11 – Map of the Northern Province, with the Portuguese manor houses
(source: map based on the HPIP website, with new information provided by Mayur Thakare)

Preliminary conclusions from the archaeological surveys conducted point to some general characteristics found in most Portuguese manor houses: they would generally be multifunctional, compartmentalized, relatively spacious, many certainly opulent, and most often with more than one floor, implanted in areas ranging from 150m² to 7500m². Their location was strategic for defence, economic, or accessibility reasons, usually next to rivers and on top of hills where they could enjoy panoramic views. For example, the houses of Padgam (District of Valsad); Nadgaon, Shirgaon, and Mathane (District of Palghar); and Madh (District of Mumbai Suburban) are located next to the sea. Those of Aasangaon (Image 12), Kelve, Danda, Pargaon, and Sasunavghar (District of Palghar) and Ghodbandar and Nagale Bandar (District of Thane), among others, are located next to rivers or creeks. Those in Fansa and Kalgam (District of Valsad), and Duktan, Virathan, Khamloli, Dahisar, Kelve, and Dongaripada (District of Palghar) can be highlighted among those located on hills or hillocks. Also noteworthy is a set of houses found within villages, such as those in Kalgam and Solsumba (District of Valsad), Bhimpore (Union Territory of Daman), and Koliwade, Kurgaon, Vengani, Kumbhavali, Koliwali, Boisar, Panchali (Image 13), Kore, and Jalsar (District of Palghar), to name a few.



Image 12 – Fortified manor house of Aasangaon (*photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos*)



Image 13 – Fortified manor house of Panchali (*photo: Mayur Thakare*)

BUILDING MATERIALS AND CONSTRUCTION SYSTEMS

Notably, the walls of these houses had an average thickness of approximately 1,00 metres and were generally built with irregular stone masonry using lime and sand mortars. The corners of the buildings had trimmed stones that gave stability to the structure. Occasionally, brick masonry walls were found on the upper floors which rested on irregular stone masonry, as in Solsumba (Image 14). We also have evidence on the use of lime plasters and even the use of colour, as in the houses of Kelve (Image 15), Danda, and Virathan, among others. Fenestration, mostly on the upper floors, was made with stone masonry or stonework, where the span widened from the outside to the inside.

Despite currently lacking any type of roof, the houses would have wooden structure roofs and ceramic tile coating, as suggested by the houses of Aasangaon and Dongaripada (the latter still with a roof and even a Portuguese-style double eaves) (Image 16). The ground floor of these houses would be made of compressed earth covered by stone slabs or

ceramic tiles, although no traces have been found. The holes for wooden beams found in the ground floor ceiling of most of these houses—as for example in Kalgam (Image 17), Padgam, and Aasangaon—suggest that the upper floors had wooden floors. Incidentally, the masonry stairs leading to the first floor in the houses of Danda and Virathan are still visible.



Image 14 – Fortified manor house of Solsumba, with a brick masonry wall on the upper floor, resting on irregular stone masonry



Image 15 – Fortified manor house of Kelve, with lime plaster and a window
(photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos)



Image 16 – Fortified manor house of Dongaripada, roof with a Portuguese-type double eave
(photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos)



Image 17 – Fortified manor house of Kalgam, holes of wooden beams found in the ground floor ceiling (*photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos*)

MORPHOLOGY

Most stately homes would be two stories high; however, some would reach three floors, as in Aasangaon and Khamloli. In fact, the first has the particularity of possessing a massive ground floor made completely of rubble masonry and without any type of fenestration. Its main entrance would be through the first floor, approximately 2,50 metres high, probably by folding wooden stairs in case of danger. Due to the high level of destruction of these residential structures, we lack means to understand their interior division and the respective functions. In cases where divisions can still be seen, as in Shirgaon (Image 18) and Ghodbandar, we can make possible attributions for the functional aspect of some of the spaces. In cases like Koliwade, Kurgaon, Kumbhavali, Kolivali, Vengani, Panchali, and Mathane, traces of interior divisions can also be found. Located on top of a hill, the Dongaripada house is still inhabited and has undergone few modifications (Image 19), so it may provide some clues to the interior arrangements of the Portuguese houses.



Image 18 – Fortified manor house of Shirgaon, wall divisions of the manor house (photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos)



Image 19 – Fortified manor house of Dongaripada, still inhabited (*photo: Mayur Thakare*)

While most of these houses could be constituted solely by the massive volume of the residence (some possibly surrounded by a wooden fence), we have also found houses with walled enclosures and other structures built inside such as Aasangaon, with a small outdoor patio, or Shirgaon, Virathan, and Sasunavaghar, with larger walled enclosures. Some manor houses, certainly belonging to wealthier landlords, even had semi-independent private chapels, as in Virathan (Image 20)—the chapel's pointed façade allows one to observe an image like many churches in the Northern Province—, Kelve, Danda, and Sasunavaghar. The largest houses also had wells for drinking water or cisterns within the walled enclosures, as in Danda (Image 21), or in their vicinity, as in Kalgam, Kurgaon, Vengani, Boisar, Kore, Khamloli, and Sasunavaghar.



Image 20 – Fortified manor house of Virathan, private chapel (*photo: Mayur Thakare*)



Image 21 – Fortified manor house of Danda, dome of the cistern
(*photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos*)

DIMENSION

Although many of the houses were relatively humble both in size (with construction areas between 150 m² and 350 m²) and appearance, some reached enormous building complexes with areas up to 650 m² and more, as would have happened with the houses in Kalgam, Bhimpore, Danda, Khamloli, and Sasunavghar, for example. Notably, there was a small group of houses that would have been a kind of palace complex implanted along the river creek connecting Vasai to Thane (*Taná*), most likely belonging to wealthy families in Vasai. In fact, while most of the houses served eminently residential purposes, some would reach a more luxurious level like the house of Nagale Bandar and, above all, that of Ghodbandar, located on a hill overlooking the river (Image 22). This house would have a U-shape, with a central patio open on one side; to the north side there was an archway that would allow one to enjoy picturesque views over the river.



Image 22 – Fortified manor house of Ghodbandar, a more luxurious palace located on a hill overlooking the river (*photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos*)

The British traveller John Fryer, a surgeon of the English East India Company who visited the Northern Province in 1673, mentioned in his travelogue the luxurious “country mansions” at 3 and 4 miles from

“Tanaw” (Thane) at an unnamed location and “Grebondel” (Ghodbandar), respectively. The first belonged to a Portuguese nobleman named “John de Melos” (João de Mello) and the second was owned by a Portuguese nobleman named “Martin Alphonso” (Martim Afonso). It seems that Fryer was referring to the manor house at Nagale Bandar in the first case (Fryer 1992, I: 190–191).

DEFENSIVE ELEMENTS

Finally, and regarding the duty to defend their lands, most tenant houses—especially those located in the further inland (*sertão*) and further away from Portuguese fortifications—would also have a defensive function, provided by the thickness and solidity of the walls, the height, their location on the ground, and the addition of structures associated with fortifications, namely firing slits, as in Aasangaon, Panchali (Image 23), and Kore. Incidentally, several fortified manor houses with bulwarks and bastions (such as the houses in Kelve and Danda) later evolved into fortifications, as happened with the houses of Dahanu, Shirgaon (Image 24), and Bombay.



Image 23 – Fortified manor house of Panchali, firing slits (or slits)
(photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos)



Image 24 – Fortified manor house of Shirgaon, defensive bastion of the manor house
(photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos)

CONCLUSION

From the above-cited representative sites holding the remains of fortified manor houses of various typologies in different landscapes, the Portuguese clearly introduced a distinct feature of European, especially Portuguese-influenced civil residential structures equipped with defence capabilities in the North Konkan region of the Western coast of India. The native vernacular architecture of the fortified residences belonging to the indigenous ruling or landed elites differed considerably from these European style manor houses in terms of architectural and spatial arrangement. Considering their present precarious and ruinous condition, it is paramount to devise effective strategies for their protection and preservation. Firstly, they need to be thoroughly documented with the help of the latest digital recording techniques such as drone and LiDAR surveys. This accurate recording will help us to understand their spatial placement, functionality, possible architectural evolution, and comparative analysis with similar sites in Portugal and former Portuguese colonial spaces.

The more extensive and better-preserved sites at Kalgam, Aasangaon, Shirgaon, Kelve, Danda, Virathan, Jalsar, Sasunavghar (Image 25), and Ghodbandar could undergo scientific excavations to understand their layout, construction techniques and possible construction period.



Image 25 – Fortified manor house of Sasunavghar (photo: Joaquim Rodrigues dos Santos)

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NOTES

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- 2 On manor houses in Portugal, see: Carita (2015); Silva (2002); Gomes (1998); Barroca (1997); Azevedo (1988).
- 3 On fortified houses in Brazil, see: Castro (2016).
- 4 About the Northern Province, see among others: Teixeira (2010); Ames (2008); Khobrekar (2002); Gomes and Rossa (2000); D'Silva (1985); Lobato (1985); Sardesai (1931-34); Cunha (1876).
- 5 On fortified manor houses in the Northern Province, see: Mendiratta (2019); Thakare (2018); Mendiratta (2012); Thomaz (1994).