

“them, and in all of them I have found this desire” (i.e. to leave Basra district): “and I am sure that all have it, and I do not wonder, because by this means they think they will be able to escape from being slaves, and have the liberty they wish . . . and this is their principal object.

“Second, There is a country not far from here called *Bahrain*, which had been in the possession of the Portuguese, and now the Persian holds it; but at present the Portuguese are talking a great deal about retaking it. Should this come to pass, that land is what the men here desire; but so long as it is doubtful, there is another, not very distant in Arabia, called *Dubba*,<sup>1</sup> which not long since was taken by the Portuguese. It has water, palm-trees, and crops can be sowed (which is what they most want). That these people should go to our countries in Europe never entered my mind, nor these people’s. . . .

“Third, It seems to me that, once they were among us” (i.e. the Portuguese) “and had taken root under our rule, this” (i.e. conversion to the Catholic Faith) “would be a very easy matter. . . . Ordinarily they tell me that, once they are (living) among us, they would do whatever we bid them. If, perchance, complete satisfaction should not be obtained over the present persons, their children remaining under our teaching and in our countries would soon forget their ceremonies, especially as their priests would soon come to an end, for there are few of them, and no new ones would be made. . . .

“Before I wrote this letter to the Sac. Congregation, in order to do so on a surer basis, I summoned to this Residence the chief men of their community and showed them the letter regarding their business and explained the points in it and the desire to help them. They expressed gratitude and at once talked about wanting to send one or two (of themselves) with the reply” (i.e. to Rome) “to express it the more clearly. . . . But the most essential difficulties . . . which now occur to me are:

“(a), which I put in first place—the inconstancy of these people, and the small credit one can give to their words. . . .

“(b) to put any intention of their own into execution is very difficult, because on the one hand many have wives, children and other impediments, . . . on the other, when this project is learnt by the Pasha and the other magnates under whose control they live, when they see them deserting their lands, they” (the Pasha, etc.) “will do a great deal of harm to the others who remain here, not only in order to hinder them from going, but, what is worse, on account of those who have already run away . . . and so it might result in hurt for the innocent. . . . It would be best if the Pasha would be willing to give them liberty to go in such respect; but as the country draws no small benefit from this community, who serve the Muslim Arabs in every way, I much doubt whether it could be obtained. Another difficulty is the method how they are to leave, for it is not so easy to find ships: and for that reason, if the business takes effect, it would be well for the Portuguese, who come here, to have instructions to carry away those who should want to go: and they (the Portuguese) can do this very conveniently.

“I do not think it should come ill to the king of Spain to have these people in his dominions, because, apart from the service he would be rendering God, they are very good men for soldiers, of whom there is such dearth here, that the *very Muslim Arabs use them to make war on (other) Muslim Arabs*.<sup>2</sup> It will be some four months ago that I sent off to

<sup>1</sup> *Duba*, usually spelt *Doba* on maps, is NW. of *Suhar* on the coast of *’Uman*, in the territory of the Sultan of *Masqat* and *’Uman* (though one quarter is under a local *Shaikh*), and due E. of *Sharja*.

<sup>2</sup> In connection with the operations of war of the Pasha of *Basra*, it is interesting to note here two cases in which Fr. *Basil*’s assistance was invoked and which because of the prohibitions in the *’Bulla Coenae* he thought well to refer to Rome. (a) 20.2.1630. The Pasha wished to have from India at least 1,000 bamboo canes for making lances, and asked for a licence. It was not a case, remarked Fr. *Basil*, of prohibiting them as they might be used against Christians, for at this juncture the point was to defend *Basra* against the Persians, and the Portuguese were aiding the Pasha with their ships. The Sac. Cong. in its reply (*S.R.*, vol. 115, p. 419) pointed out that the Bull in question excommunicated those who supplied weapons for use against Christians. (b) 26.2.1628. *Tutunaya* (antimony) and *Qal’a* (block tin) were metals that had always been shipped from India, where the Portuguese were so strict but had never stopped these metals, which were not used for making arms, but by silversmiths, as pigments, for tinning vessels. The Fathers at *Isfahan* were raising unnecessary scruples, he thought.