

The Unexpected Architecture of Olhão: Roof Varieties, Mirantes and Contra-Mirantes.

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Introduction

The traditional masonry houses in Olhão are, in their architectural appearance, special in the Algarve: The city is popularly known as "The Cubist City" and has been mentioned in numerous numerous publications for its roof terraces, mirants and counter-mirants, which led to that different authors put forward different hypotheses about its origin [1]. These hypotheses often focused on the discussion whether the construction systems of the typical houses in Olhão are the result of the "Islamic heritage" in the region or of a modern influence. the East. This was also the main focus of Orlando Ribeiro, in the chapter "Açoteias de Olhão en Telhados de Tavira" of his work *Geografia e Civilização*, originally published in 1961 and this is also the basic focus of this short essay investigated.

Particularly interesting if we take into account the recent origins of the masonry structures in the city of Olhão, which date back to the 18th century, which separates them from the end date of Islamic rule of the area by more than five centuries.

On the other hand, it is not correct to consider the roof terraces as exclusive to Olhão, as they can be found everywhere in the Algarve, with a particular focus on Sotavento, both in the coastal areas and in the Barrocal. It is also not the only regional example of widespread roof terrace use, as it also competes with the neighboring village of Fuseta.

How original are the roof terraces in Olhao? Can we or cannot we consider them as a unique case in the architectural panorama of the Algarve? There seems to be something special and unique about this Cubist City, something that inspired Raul Brandão to write the following words in *Os Pescadores*, in 1922: "In the morning I leave Olhão blinded. Sky of a faint blue - under limestone slabs. Reflection of the sun, and the brightest blue, the whitest white. Cubes, geometric lines, animal light that vibrates and vibrates like the wings of a cicada." [two]. Despite the demolition and modernization of the original center of Olhão, which took place mainly in recent decades, in this essay we will try to recover some of that individuality that dazzled Raul Brandão and others..

Olhão: origins and evolution

De oorsprong van het visserstadje

Sítio de Olham, Logar de Olham, Praia do Olham or Logar do Poço do Olham, are designations used to refer to the coastal town east of Faro in written sources after the 16th century [3]. Little is known about the age of the site, except that it is already mentioned in a royal charter from 1378 as the "Logo do Olham" [4]. What if the place existed before that date? It is very likely, because "where there is water, there are people" [5], and right there was a source (or several) of fresh water, a great water source of such importance that it derived the toponym "Olham". later "Olhao".

A more certain fact to point out, however, is that at the beginning of the 17th century there would already be in Praia do Olham, next to the source, some fishermen from Faro [6], in any case numerous enough to justify its existence , in the first decade of that century, of a hermitage dedicated to Nossa Senhora do Rosário, the current church of Nossa Senhora da Soledade. They were also sufficiently numerous that in 1614, when the site of Quelfes, located further inland, became a parish autonomous from the parish of São Pedro de Faro, the site of Olhão was incorporated there, making it part of the Compromisso Marítimo of that city [7].

[1] See for example authors such as: Raul BRANDÃO, *Os Pescadores* (1922), 1986; Aquilino Ribeiro, "Olhão", in Raul PROENÇA (Coord.) *Guia de Portugal* (1927), part II, 1983; José Leite de VASCONCELOS, *Portuguese Ethnography*, Part VI, 1975; and Orlando RIBEIRO, *Geography and Civilization* (1961), 1992

[2] Raul BRANDÃO, *Os Pescadores*, 1986, p.149.

[3] Cf. Antero NOBRE, *Short history of the village of Olhão da Restauração*, 1984, p.19.

[4] Cf. Ditto, *Ibid.*

[5] António Rosa MENDES, *Olhão made itself*, 2009, p.15.

[6] Cf. The same.

[7] Cf. Antero NOBRE, *Short history of the village....*, 1984, pp.19-20.

*Fig.1
Foto antiga dos
pescadores e respetivas
cabanas de colmo, da
Praia de Faro.
Os olhanenses habitariam
originalmente em
cabanas muito
semelhantes a estas.*



During the century of the 1600s, the population, consisting of people who lived almost exclusively from fishing, grew significantly. The strong growth explains the creation in 1695 of a new parish, that of Nossa Senhora do Rosário de Olhão, separate from that of São Sebastião de Quelfes [8]. And just three years later, on June 4, 1698, the foundation stone was laid for a new main church, which opened for worship in 1715[9], more suitable to accommodate all the inhabitants of Praia do Olhão than the small chapel that already existed. A memorial tombstone placed on the eastern corner of the façade shows what the landscape of Lugar do Olhão looked like at the time: At the expense of the sea men of this people, this temple was built in the time when only a few cabins were where they lived.

From thatched huts to brick houses

At the beginning of the 18th century, the only two masonry constructions in Olhão would therefore be the small chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário and the new and imposing Igreja Matriz; from there to the beach would be a cluster of modest thatched huts. In 1712, Father António Carvalho da Costa described this scenario well: “Olhão is a mile from the city of Faro, located on a sandbank. It has three hundred neighbors who live in thatched houses covered with straw, because they do not allow them to be made of stone and lime: these are rich people who live from fishing” [10]. This priest testifies to an important reality: the inhabitants of Olhão, who were even “rich”, lived only in huts because the Faro Council did not allow them to build in masonry. The first permit for a construction in stone and lime dates from just three years after that testimony, after a sailor on the beach of Olhão requested Queen D. Maria Ana of Austria, wife of D. João V, who complained about the successive fires to which his hut was subject [11]. This was followed by other requests, and in less than fifty years O Lugar de Olhão grew exponentially in population and in masonry houses. In 1758 it was described by the parish priest of Olhão, Father Sebastião de Sousa, as “one of the largest villages of the Algarve, in which there are more than five hundred houses and more than three hundred huts, whose number is becoming smaller every day as they are replaced by houses become” [12].

[8] In this regard, see what António Rosa MENDES writes in chapter 5, “The Parish, First Separatism,” of his study that Olhão himself made, 2009, pp.24-25.

[9] Cf. Paulo FERNANDES, Mother Church of Olhão and Chapel of Our Lady of the Afflicted, SIPA Inventory Sheet – Information System for Architectural Heritage, IHRU – Institute for Housing and Urban Rehabilitation, 2001 [available at www.monumentos.pt, accessed until 02/ 13 /2011].

[10] António Carvalho da COSTA, Portuguese Choreography and Topographical Description of the Famous Kingdom of Portugal, Part III, 1712, p.17.

[11] In this regard, see what António Rosa MENDES writes in chapter 6, “The Fábrica das casa”, of his study that Olhão himself made, 2009, pp.31-33.

[12] Testimony collected by Alberto Iria, O Compromisso Marítimo da Vila de Olhão da Restauração (Grants for the History of Seafarers and Fishing Companies in the Algarve), in Mensário das Casas do Povo, No. 120, June 1958, quoted by: Orlando RIBEIRO, Geography and Civilization., 1992, p.72; and António Rosa MENDES, Olhão made itself., 2009, p.33.



Fig. 2
Foto antiga de parte da
fachada da Igreja
Matriz de Olhão.



Fig. 3
Foto antiga, data de 7
de dezembro de 1922, do
edifício do Compromisso
Marítimo de Olhão.

Therefore, the development of the village dates back to the first half of the 18th century, and from then on, the importance of which was reaffirmed in 1765, by charter of D. José I, dated June 6, declaring the separation of the Compromisso Marítimo approved from the Casa Confraria do Corpo Santo de Faro. Therefore, the Royal Brotherhood of Corpo Santo dos Mareantes and Casa do Compromisso de Olhão is founded and in 1771 the headquarters, where it was housed, was completed.

As late as the 1980s, with the “profits from trade with besiegers and besieged during the sieges of Cádiz and Gibraltar” [13], sailors from Olhão managed to convert the last huts into masonry houses. The population gradually grew and in 1808 it was elevated to a city and in 1826 to a municipal town. The fishing port quickly became one of the most important in the Algarve.

This rapid growth resulted in a seemingly disordered urban development, characterized by “winding alleys and dead-end streets” [14] composed of unusual terraced houses. This is precisely the panorama that roughly corresponds to the two typical neighborhoods in Olhão: Barreta, to the west, “with its typical Travessa dos Abragos” and Levante, to the east, “with its no less typical Rua dos Sete-Cotevelos”. ” [15].

The typical houses of Olhão and their roof terraces: construction system

In Olhão it is not only the urban design of the winding alleys that is striking. The roof terraces give the city of Olhão a unique character in the panorama of the Algarve region. That's not because we can't find flat roofs in other corners of the Algarve. It is a fairly common type of roofing, especially in Sotavento, both on the coast and in the more inland areas of the Barrocal. However, what is striking in Olhão is the widespread use of the roof terraces as roofs of the houses, and their dominant presence. As Francisco Fernandes Lopes rightly noted, “Olhão is not just a «sea of açoteias» (like the next village of Fuzeta)”[16], because the roof terrace there will take on a completely different dimension and manifest itself as an element that is nowhere in the Algarve occurs so frequently.

The typical Olhão house, originally with only a ground floor [17], was crowned by a tiled roof terrace, to which access is via an internal staircase called pangaio, which “forcefully penetrates the terrace” [18] and to which the simple cube-shaped chimney is attached. This pangaio differs from the pangaio usually found on the terraces of houses in the countryside, because it has tiles instead of a tiled roof, and also because in Olhão has adopted the system of providing access through sloping stairs to a horizontal square Mirant, surrounded by a parapet where it forms a “nascent viewpoint”. [19]

[13] Orlando RIBEIRO, Geography and Civilization., p.72.

[14] Idem, Ibidem, p.74.

[15] Francisco Fernandes LOPES, Olhão, Terra de Mistério, Mareantes en Mirantes, 1948, unnumbered page.

[16] Francisco Fernandes LOPES, Olhão, Terra de Mistério, by Mareantes..., 1948, unnumbered page. [17] The layouts were generally divided as follows: the street door gives access to the house from the outside, from which a corridor leads to the dining room, kitchen or rear garden and, on either side of the corridor, the bedrooms.

Cf. José Leite de VASCONCELOS, Etnografia Portuguesa, part VI, 1975, pp.290-291.

[18] Francisco Fernandes LOPES, Olhão, Terra de Mistério, by Mareantes..., 1948, unnumbered page.

[19] Same, Ibid.

Fig. 4
 Pormenor de um mapa de Olhão datado de 1873, com a localização de:
 1 – Igreja Matriz de Nossa Senhora do Rosário;
 2 – Compromisso Marítimo; 3 – Ermida de Nossa Senhora do Rosário (atual Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Soledade);
 4 – Bairro da Barreta;
 5 – Bairro do Levante.

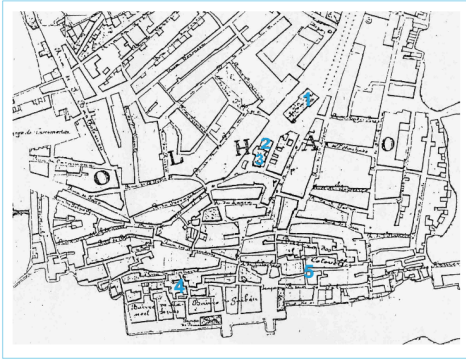


Fig. 5
 Foto antiga, da década de 10 do século XX, de uma travessa sinuosa, a Travessa António Bento.



Fig. 6
 Foto antiga do panorama das olhanenses, com os seus mirant. Ao fundo, a Igreja Matriz.



Fig. 7
 Foto antiga do panorama das açoteias olhanenses.

The real vantage point arose at a later stage when, possibly due to lack of space, new parts of the house were built on part of the original roof terrace, with this “Mirant” in turn taking over the role of roof roof. This viewpoint, which is sometimes so large that it can also be called a roof terrace, is climbed via a brick external staircase, adjacent to the wall of the new building. Such is the importance of this new addition to the house that the original roof terrace is sometimes “reduced to a small backyard on the 1st floor” [20].

However, the originality of the houses in Olhão does not stop there. In some cases, on top of this new cubic structure, which overlaps the original, a new lookout post is added, which can cover as much as half of the terrace or be reduced to a corner of it. This third part is called the Contra-Mirant. The viewpoint serves as a “watchtower” because from there you can see the sea and it is even possible to see the fishermen's boats sailing around the Ria Formosa in front of Olhão. Formerly crucial for the city with a population mainly devoted to fishing. On the remaining tiled terraces it was common to dry figs and carob, clothes lines were used to dry sailors' clothes and oilcloth, but strangely “fish is never dried – sometimes only octopus is hung on the wires” [21].

Figs, carob and other important fruits in the regional diet were also dried on the terraces and sometimes two superimposed elements of roof terraces in the interior of the Algarve. In fact, what seems to constitute the originality of Olhão in Barreta and Levante is the systematic and general use of the two original cores of the house and sporadically the third part; the Contra-Mirant. The typical house of Olhão is thus divided into two or three cubic volumes, and it is from this continuously repeated constructive system that Olhão received the nickname with which it became known: “The Cubist City”.

[20] Idem, *ibid.*

[21] Orlando RIBEIRO, *Geography and Civilization*, p.68.

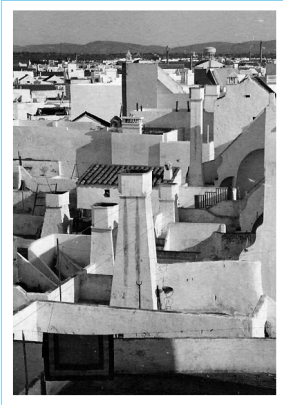


Fig. 8
Foto antiga do panorama das açoteias olhanenses, com particular destaque para as chaminés.

The origins of the roof terraces in Olhao

Both Olhão's sinuous urbanism and its unique architecture have led various authors to propose different hypotheses about its origins. Wilhelm Giese puts the question bluntly and emphasizes that the problem of the origin of the roof terraces in Olhão is "to know whether they are houses that continue the Arab, or rather Moorish, tradition in the Algarve, or whether they are a more modern one from the East" [22]. However, we can also approach the question from other angles: are the roof terraces in Olhão a response to the climatic factors in the region? Or will they be the result of rapid urban growth, adapted to the needs of the population? Or could they be the result of a general constructive taste?

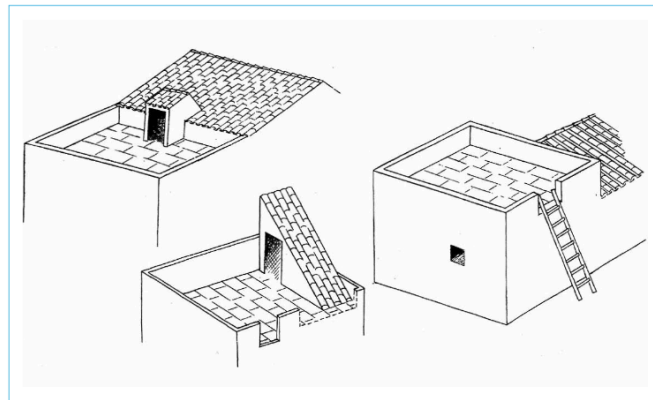


Fig. 9
Sistemas de acessos às açoteias nas casas rurais. Note-se ao centro o pangaio, que em Olhão aparece ladrilhado e não coberto de telha, e que acaba por dar origem ao primitivo mirante.

Açoteia is a term that undoubtedly comes from Arabic [23] and it is common to find this type of roof in Mediterranean regions, especially in Andalusia [24] and in North Africa. In Olhão, it is an exclusive form and is associated with an apparently disordered urban development, giving rise to curious names associated with Islamic traditions.

Aquilino Ribeiro, for example, characterizes the place as follows: "The old part of Olhão is a maze of narrow and dirty streets and alleys, where white one-story houses rub against each other, with Moorish roof terraces" [25]. Francisco Fernandes Lopes points out that roof terraces not only exist in Olhão, but also confirm its character as "undoubtedly a Moorish residue" [26]. Orlando

Ribeiro goes further when he states that Olhão is "the only example of a modern city with a Moorish quarter, built in a place where there was no Muslim or Moorish population to which he could be affiliated" [27]. For this master, the appearance of masonry houses in Olhão only in the 18th century does not alter the kinship resulting from the transmission of customs and customs from the Muslim population to the Christian population, and from the attachment to traditions [28].

[22] Wilhelm Giese, "On the origin of the old houses in Olhanenses", in *Portugale*, v. Porto, 1932, pp.145-150; "O Problema da Açoteia Algarvia", in *Biblos*, vol XI, Coimbra, 1935, pp.54-59, cited by Orlando RIBEIRO, *Geografia e Civilização*, p.71.

[23] Cf. João Batista M. VARGENS, *Portuguese Lexicon of Arabic Origin*, Grants for Philological Studies, 2007.

[24] Regarding the region of Andalusia, Orlando Ribeiro mentions the examples of Cádiz, where the roof terrace also covers most houses, and Jerez de la Frontera, where it is also common. Cf. Orlando RIBEIRO, *Geography and Civilization*, p.68, note 22.

[25] Aquilino RIBEIRO, "Olhão", in Raul PROENÇA (coord.), *Guia de Portugal (1927)*, part II – Estremadura, Alentejo and Algarve, 1983, p. 246.

[26] Francisco Fernandes LOPES, *Olhão, Land of Mysteries*, by Mareantes..., 1948.

[27] Orlando RIBEIRO, *Geography and Civilization*, p.75.

[28] Cf. *Idem*, *ibid*, pp.75-76.

It is true that the winding streets of the Barreta and the Levante, divided into labyrinthine alleys where only the residents do not get lost, are reminiscent of the intricate alleys of the Islamic medinas, in which “the buildings touch each other, belong together and are almost next to each other stand” [29]. However, there are substantial differences in terms of the dwellings that make up the typical Islamic neighborhood that developed throughout Gharb al-Andalus between the 8th and 13th centuries, and the typical neighborhood in Olhao, which developed from the 18th century onwards.

For example, we can highlight the different organization of the private space: if in the Islamic house the rooms are often structured around a central courtyard, in typical Olhão houses we can find a small courtyard, but not a central one. However, the main difference concerns the type of roofing, where the most common in Islamic houses is the single-slope canudo tile roof, and in Olhão houses, as mentioned earlier, we find a roof terrace widespread. Faced with this, it becomes difficult to understand the connection commonly made between the roof terraces in Olhão and the Islamic tradition, especially when we have five centuries to separate the end of Islamic rule from the appearance of the first houses of stone and lime in Olhão, where there was only “a beach, a flat and wide beach”[30], and a freshwater spring.

Therefore, it does not seem credible, as defended by Orlando Ribeiro [31], that the neighborhoods in Olhão with their terraced houses emerged from the Islamic heritage in the region. Then where did they come from? The second hypothesis proposed is the frequent contact of fishermen from Olhão with Mediterranean ports.

Aquilino Ribeiro mentions that “the man from Olhão, as soon as the well-earned money in Cádiz, Gibraltar, Ceca and Meca rang in his pockets, he raised the stakes and the thatched roof of the huts and, on the same floor, with utter disregard for symmetry he built his piers of stone and lime”[32]. There is no doubt that part of the enrichment of sailors from Olhão came from companies based in various Mediterranean ports, either through the sale of figs, carob and dried fish, or through smuggling, which was very common [33].

Seafarers from Olhão therefore traveled not only along the coast of the Algarve, but also to the south of Spain and the north of the African continent, especially to Morocco; all these Mediterranean regions, with similar climatic characteristics and where it is common to use roof terraces, which would have been imitated by the people of Olhão..

Without rejecting the hypothesis that these contacts really had any influence on the type of cover used in Olhão, it seems to us more likely that its use results from climatic factors, common in Mediterranean regions [34], related to the daily needs. its population. Whether in the Algarve, or in the south of Spain or in the north of Morocco, we find a climate that is usually warm, with little annual rainfall, which is conducive to the spread of roof terraces, the ideal type of roof for light rain in winter, and to keep houses cool in summer.

In the specific case of Olhão, we can also point to other practical reasons for the widespread construction of roof terraces: the roof terrace was, as already mentioned, useful for drying figs and carob and eventually some fish; it was also useful for drying fishing clothes and oilskins; and behind all this one could see from the roof terrace the sea and in it the boats of the sailors.

[29] José Alberto ALEGRIA, "Islamic Architecture in Portugal: from Memories to Resurgence - the example of Architecture on Earth", in *Memórias Árabo-Islâmicas em Portugal*, exhibitioncatalogue, 1997, p.160.

[30] António Rosa MENDES, *Olhão made himself*, p.15.

[31] Orlando RIBEIRO, *Geography and Civilization*, pp.76-78.

[32] Aquilino RIBEIRO, "Olhão", in Raul PROENÇA (coordinator), *Guia de Portugal (1927)*, part II, 1983, p.247.

[33] See what Raul Brandão writes about the trade of sailors from Olhão in his work *Os Pescadores*, in the chapter on "Olhão", written in August 1922. Cf. Raul BRANDÃO, *The Fishermen*, 1986, pp.149-161.

[34] For centuries, the Mediterranean Sea was the unifying element of the surrounding regions, defining and defining the cultural manifestations of its peoples. Regarding architecture, José Alberto Alegria's observation is interesting, that in the Mediterranean space "a common logic is observed that is also the result of other related frameworks: the climate, the physical environment and the organized rules of thought", in José Alberto ALEGRIA, "Islamic architecture in Portugal...", 1997, p.162.

Although we can consider all these factors as plausible, they are not sufficient to explain the common use of roof terraces in Olhão's original neighborhoods. fulfilled almost all the daily activities mentioned above (except maybe seeing the sea). To answer this question we can perhaps resort to the words of João Batista da Silva Lopes about the location: "It has few straight and wide streets; for the most part they are narrow alleys and alleys without order, with the houses in the same irregularity as the huts; extremely clean, however, and whitewashed up to the middle of the street, in which the women do their best" [35].

It is possible to conclude that the primitive clusters of thatched huts, very close together, came from masonry structures placed improvised next to each other, in the small plots originally occupied by the huts. This meant that the area of the plot was small, and the increasing need for space and the rapid increase in population imposed the vertical growth of the house, as it could not expand laterally, with the "roof becoming the patio". , a place where fishing chores and daily activities were prepared" [36]. This also explains the irregularity of the streets, which grew and became narrower according to the housing needs of the population.

According to Sandra Romba, in her study *Urban Evolution of Olhão*, despite the disorganized appearance of Olhão's neighborhoods, an initial attempt was made to create, where possible, a regular urban network, both in terms of the main structuring axes and in terms of built plots [37], which was not always possible as the plot structure evolved according to the owner's needs [38]. This explains why in a second construction phase the streets of the Barreta and Levante districts took on a chaotic and labyrinthine appearance, so typical of Islamic medinas. To demystify the issue of roof terraces, Sandra Romba also states that this type of roof would most likely not be contemporary with the original houses in Olhão, which would have "a gabled or gabled roof"[39], despite the fact that we not neglecting the hypothesis that "more than one type of coverage coexisted" [40].

Although Mediterranean climate conditions and maritime contacts may be illuminating about possible influences on Olhão's architecture, and although the rapid growth of stone and limestone houses in smaller areas, replacing clusters of huts, the winding streets and the widespread appearance of roof terraces instead of likely gabled or treasury roofs, due to the need for space and the performance of daily tasks, we are still left with a problem to be solved: that of the uniqueness of the building system, developed in three overlapping cubes of roof terraces, lookouts and counter lookouts. Precisely there lies the individuality of the buildings in Olhão, as we do not find these elements anywhere else in the Mediterranean regions, where roof terraces are also often found..

Perhaps Raul Brandão will give us a hint when he writes: 'I'm going to the roof - the best part of the house. The man from Olhão has a deep-rooted passion for her. If a neighbor raises it, he never lags behind – he raises it higher" [41]. Is the peculiarity of the roof terraces, migrants and counter-migrants a reflection of a deep-rooted taste that spread to the people of Olhão? It is certainly a reflection of an "unprecedented" architecture, as Francisco Fernandes Lopes [42] called it, which grew with the needs and tastes of seafarers in Olhão, and in equal conditions for all, were it not that from scratch, a " horizontal society", without hierarchies and tends to be egalitarian[43].

It is interesting to note that the same happens with the typical costume that the wives of seafarers from Olhão insisted on wearing until the 1920s, even after it was banned in 1892 by the then civil governor of the Algarve, Júlio Lourenço Pinto: it was this is the bioco, a black garment that covered them from head to toe and did not even allow differentiation or identification.

[35] João Batista da Silva LOPES, *Chorography of Economic, Statistical and Topographical Memory of the Kingdom of the Algarve*, 1841, p.341.

[36] Sandra ROMBA, *Urban Evolution of Olhão*, Master's thesis in Art History, Specialization in History of Portuguese Art, Faculty of Human and Social Sciences, University of Algarve, 2008, p.161.

[37] According to the author, the arrangement of the huts in the primitive cluster would have followed a certain regularity: "We believe that a large proportion of the huts would not have been arranged in an irregular and random manner. (...) A regular layout was sought, with the facades of the houses and huts facing the sea.", in Sandra ROMBA, *Evolução Urbana de Olhão*, Master's thesis in Art History, 2008, p.33.

[38] Cf. Idem, *ibid.*, pp.31-49. [39] Idem, *ibid.*, p.39.

[40] Idem, *ibid.*, p.39.

[41] Raul BRANDÃO, *Os Pescadores*, p.155.

[42] Francisco Fernandes LOPES, *Olhão, Land of Mysteries*, by Mareantes..., 1948, unnumbered page.

[43] António Rosa MENDES refers to these characteristics of the people of Olhão in chapter 10 "A Horizontal Society" of his study that Olhão himself made, pp.37-39.

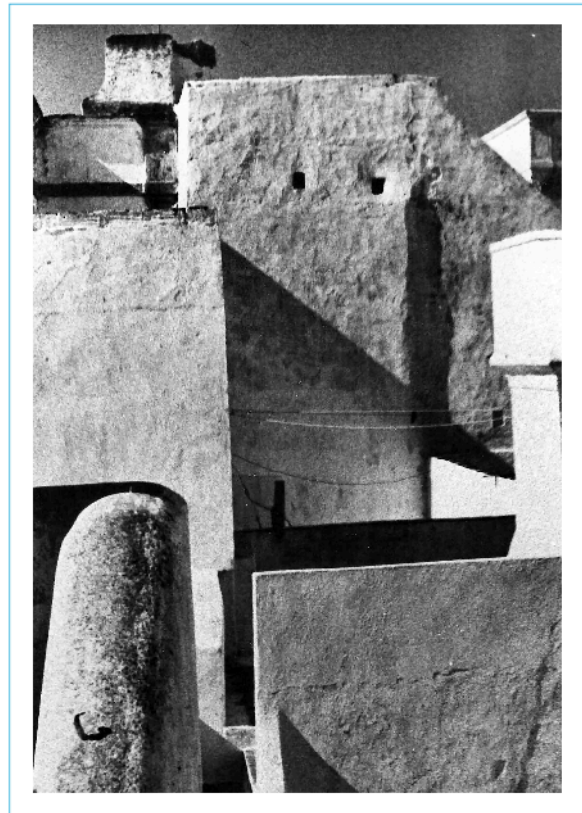


Fig. 10
Foto antiga de uma perspectiva
mais pormenorizada da
açoteia olhanense. Note-se a
arquitetura "inerudita" como a
designou Fernandes Lopes.

Conclusions:

Olhão has been an object of interest to several authors because of its apparently chaotic urbanism of winding alleys, composed of dwellings that unfold into roof terraces, mirants and counter-mirants. Due to these characteristics, which we mainly find in the Levante and Barreta neighborhoods – the primitive centers of the population cluster – the Cubist village is often associated by some scholars with the Islamic tradition in the Algarve; others associate it with a more modern Islamic influence, the result of sailors from Olhão's contact with North Africa.

In search of an answer to the question that arises, that is, whether or not the roof terraces of Olhão are a modern case of Islamic influence in the Algarve, it seems reasonable to assume that they are not. It is much more likely that the widespread use of roof terraces in Olhão arises from a constructive response to the climatic constraints of the Mediterranean, combined with the physical constraints of the primitive population cluster – the small size of the plots – and the practical needs of everyday life. A very rapid growth of the population cluster in the 18th century led to the primitive huts giving way to juxtaposed stone and lime structures; when there was a need to expand the number of houses, as there was no more space to expand laterally, they grew vertically, creating three overlapping cubic blocks, with terraces serving the different daily activities. Undoubtedly the result of "unprecedented" architecture, which grew with the needs and creative improvisation of the residents.

It becomes a little more complicated to try to understand the specifics of the buildings in Olhão, that is, the existence of mirants and counter-mirants. But then perhaps we should take into account the 'horizontal society' factor: if a seafarer had a house with a watchtower, everyone would have to have the same, because it was inconceivable that there was anything distinctive in terms of housing.

If we take into account hold with the regional panorama, the roof terraces in Olhão represent a unique and unique legacy, for what they should – and deserve! - being appreciated. Nowhere else will we find the beautiful sea of whitewashed terraces that we can see in Olhão. However, a heritage that has been greatly neglected and successively destroyed in recent decades, so there is an urgent need to preserve what little is left of it.