

Note

1. The concise description attributed to Marco Polo is pertinent to the subject of this conference and in the context of our increased understanding is worth quoting:

He said of Hormuz:

Merchants come thither from India with ships loaded with spicery and precious stones, pearls, cloths of silk and gold, elephants' teeth and many other wares, which they sell to the merchants of Hormos and which these in turn carry all over the world to dispose of...

There ships are wretched affairs, and many of them get lost; for they have no iron fastenings and are only stitched together with twine made from the husk of the Indian nut. They beat this husk until it becomes like horse-hair, and from that they spin twine, and with this stitch the planks of the ships together. It keeps well, and is not corroded by the sea-water, but it will not stand well in a storm. The ships are not pitched, but are rubbed with fish oil. They have one mast, one sail and one rudder, and have no deck, but only a cover spread over the cargo when loaded. This cover consists of hides, and on top of these hides they put the horses which they take to India for sale. They have no iron to make nails of, and for this reason they use only wooden nails in their shipbuilding and then stitch the planks with twine as I have told you. Hence it is a perilous business to go a voyage in one of these ships, and many of them are lost, for in that Sea of India the storms are often terrible.