

THE PORTUGUESE IN WEST AFRICA, 1415–1670

A Documentary History

Edited by
Malyn Newitt

CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE

www.cambridge.org/9780521768948

This page intentionally left blank

THE PORTUGUESE IN WEST AFRICA, 1415–1670

The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415–1670, brings together a collection of documents – the majority in new English translation – that illustrate aspects of the encounters between the Portuguese and the peoples of north and west Africa. This period witnessed the diaspora of the Sephardic Jews, the emigration of Portuguese to west Africa and the islands, and the beginnings of the black diaspora associated with the slave trade. The documents show how the Portuguese tried to understand the societies with which they came into contact, and to reconcile their experience with the myths and legends inherited from classical and medieval learning. They also show how Africans reacted to the coming of Europeans, adapting Christian ideas to local beliefs and making use of exotic imports and European technologies. The documents also describe the evolution of the black Portuguese communities in Guinea and the islands, as well as the slave trade and the way that it was organized, understood and justified.

Malyn Newitt is Emeritus Professor in the Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at King's College London. He is the author or editor of twelve books on Portuguese colonial history, including *History of Portuguese Overseas Expansion*, as well as multiple journal articles.

THE PORTUGUESE IN WEST AFRICA, 1415–1670

A Documentary History

Edited by

MALYN NEWITT

King's College London



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521768948

© Malyn Newitt 2010

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provision of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published in print format 2010

ISBN-13 978-0-511-77163-7 eBook (Adobe Reader)

ISBN-13 978-0-521-76894-8 Hardback

ISBN-13 978-0-521-15914-2 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of urls for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

<i>List of Maps</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
Introduction	1
1. The Portuguese in Morocco	25
Doc. 1 The Portuguese celebrate Mass in the mosque in Ceuta, 1415	25
Doc. 2 Christians and Moors – single combat in the struggle to control Ceuta during the Moroccan wars	28
Doc. 3 The Moors of Massa recognize Portuguese overlordship	31
Doc. 4 Letter Patent of Dom Manuel to the Jews of Safi, 1509	35
Doc. 5 Letter of João de Meneses to Dom Manuel on the state of Azamour, 1514	37
Doc. 6 The Portuguese of Azamour raid the Bedouins, 1519	40
2. The early voyages to west Africa	43
Doc. 7 Prince Henry ‘the Navigator’ is remembered	43
Doc. 8 Slave raiding on the Sahara coast, 1445	44
Doc. 9 The Portuguese run into opposition, 1446	47
Doc. 10 Duarte Pacheco Pereira tries to come to terms with ‘difference’	51
3. The Atlantic Islands	55
Doc. 11 Madeira and the Canary Islands in the fifteenth century	55
Doc. 12 How to survive tropical heat and disease	60
Doc. 13 Sugar and slaves	61

	Doc. 14 Hunting escaped slaves in São Tomé	63
	Doc. 15 New Christians have poisoned the bishop of São Tomé	65
4.	The Upper Guinea Coast and Sierra Leone	67
	Doc. 16 Cadamosto meets Budomel	67
	Doc. 17 Markets and dances: Africa responds to Europe	71
	Doc. 18 The Wolof kingdom at the end of the fifteenth century	74
	Doc. 19 Relations between the coastal peoples of Upper Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands	78
	Doc. 20 Trade and piracy on the Senegal coast	82
	Doc. 21 The slave trade and royal luxury in the land of the Bussis	85
5.	Elmina and Benin	90
	Doc. 22 The foundation of the castle and city of São Jorge da Mina, 1482	90
	Doc. 23 The importance of reaching an accommodation with the private traders	96
	Doc. 24 Christianity and the Obas of Benin	97
6.	Discovery of the Kingdom of Kongo	100
	Doc. 25 The Manisonyo embraces Christianity, 1491	100
	Doc. 26 The arrival of the Portuguese embassy at the Kongo Court, 1491	103
	Doc. 27 The king of Kongo is baptized and goes to war, 1491	106
	Doc. 28 The province of Mbata and its relations with the Portuguese and the Kongo king	108
	Doc. 29 The accession of Dom Afonso I of Kongo	111
	Doc. 30 Relations between Kongo and the Portuguese of São Tomé	116
7.	Angola, Paulo Dias and the founding of Luanda	121
	Doc. 31 Early relations with Angola	121
	Doc. 32 Donation charter to Paulo Dias de Novais, 1571	123
	Doc. 33 Warfare in the Kongo and Angola	136
	Doc. 34 The escape of Paulo Dias from Angola and the founding of Luanda	142
8.	The slave trade	148
	Doc. 35 The arrival of slaves from west Africa in Lagos, 1444	148
	Doc. 36 The slave trade is good for the Kongo	151

Doc. 37	The slave trade from west Africa to the Cape Verde Islands in the sixteenth century	153
Doc. 38	The slave trade in the Cape Verde Islands, 1594	155
9.	Conflict in the kingdom of Kongo in the 1560s	159
Doc. 39	Christianity and a disputed succession in the kingdom of Kongo	159
Doc. 40	The Jaga invasions	162
10.	Christianity in the Kongo	167
Doc. 41	Support sought from Portugal to maintain the true faith	167
Doc. 42	Noble Kongolese youths are sent to Portugal and Rome to be educated, 1539	169
Doc. 43	Report of the visit <i>ad limina</i> of Francisco de Villanova, bishop of São Tomé, 1597	171
Doc. 44	<i>Maleficium</i> and its forms	174
11.	The Angolan wars	178
Doc. 45	Conflict between the Portuguese and Kongo in the early seventeenth century	178
Doc. 46	The life of Dom Pedro II Afonso	181
Doc. 47	An Essex man in the Angolan wars	183
Doc. 48	War in the reed beds – Angola after the expulsion of the Dutch	186
Doc. 49	Account of the battle of Mbwila, 1665	192
Doc. 50	Portuguese defeat in Sonyo in 1670	200
12.	People and places	205
Doc. 51	The town of Cacheu in the early seventeenth century	205
Doc. 52	São Salvador, capital of the kingdom of Kongo	209
Doc. 53	The Court of the kings of Kongo	211
Doc. 54	Losses suffered by white traders	214
Doc. 55	The kingdom of Kongo in 1595	218
Doc. 56	The laws and customs of the Wolofs	226
Doc. 57	Black ants, Tangomaos and the Bagas	228
	<i>Glossary</i>	231
	<i>Bibliography</i>	235
	<i>Index</i>	239

MAPS

Portuguese possessions in Morocco	<i>page</i> xii
The north-east Atlantic	xiii
Senegambia region	xiv
Upper Guinea	xv
Sierra Leone region	xvi
Gulf of Guinea	xvii
Kongo and Angola	xviii

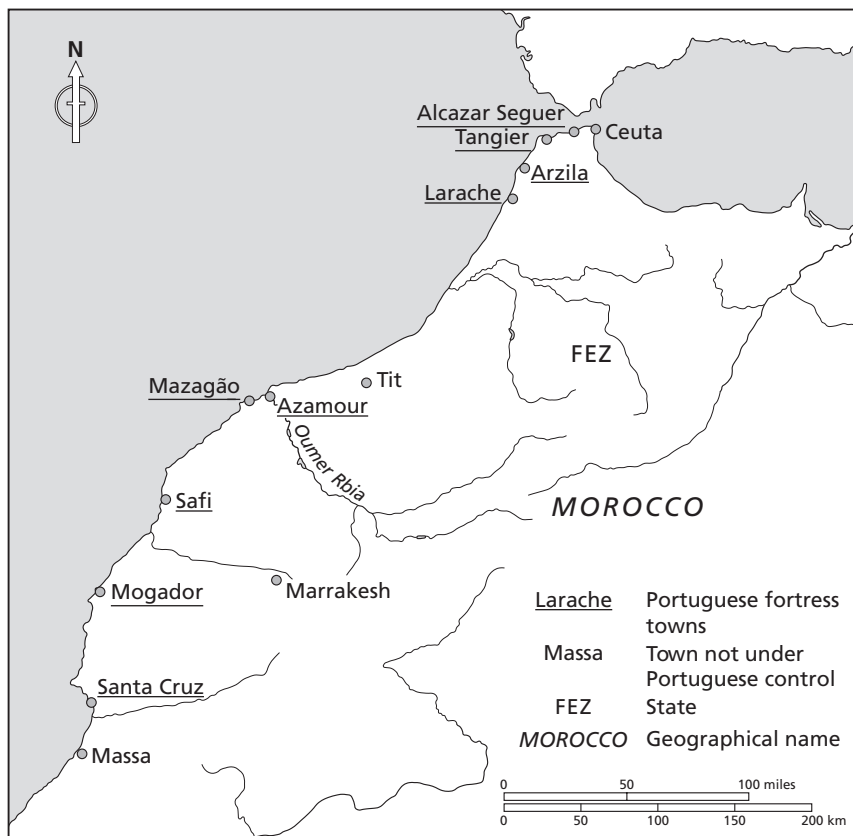
PREFACE

This book was originally designed to be part of a series of publications (since discontinued) entitled *Portuguese Encounters with the World in the Age of the Discoveries*, and was to be the companion volume to the one on east Africa that was published by Ashgate in 2002. The general editor of the series laid down the format to which all the volumes were to conform. The object of the series was to provide a selection of original sources in English translation that would illustrate the interaction of the Portuguese with the peoples of Africa, Asia and America in the period from 1400 to 1700. The emphasis would be on the way Europeans and non-Europeans reacted to these first contacts, and how their mentalities and cultures were changed by the experience. This volume follows closely the original conception of the *Portuguese Encounters* series.

Anyone approaching the history of the Portuguese in northern and western Africa soon becomes dependent on the great collections of documents edited by Pierre de Cenival, António Brásio and Louis Jadin, which have never been translated into English. English readers have had to rely on the publications of the Hakluyt Society and the scholarly volumes edited by Paul Hair and Avelino Teixeira da Mota. These are the main sources from which the documents in this collection have been drawn, supplemented with extracts from von Ehingen, Pigafetta, Cadornega, Carletti, the Anonymous Pilot who wrote about São Tomé and the manuscript of Valentim Fernandes.

I am immensely grateful for the scholarly insights and editorial skills of John Villiers, the General Editor of the original *Portuguese Encounters* series. His vision and persistence are responsible for the appearance of the volumes, which have contributed substantially to widening the understanding of Portuguese expansion in the English-speaking world.

I would especially like to acknowledge help with translation received from Alexander Keese and Maria Eduarda Pinheiro.



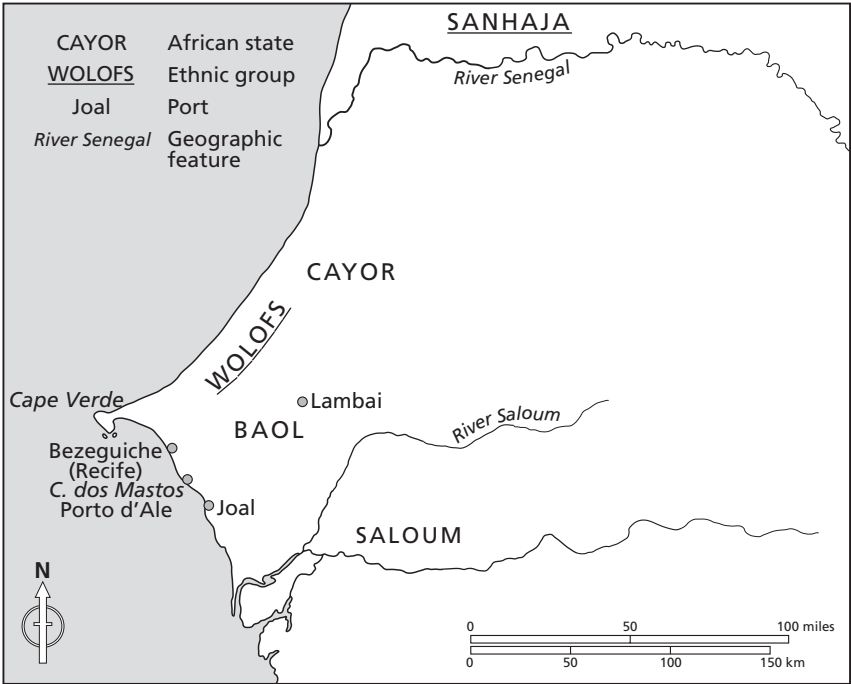
Portuguese possessions in Morocco.



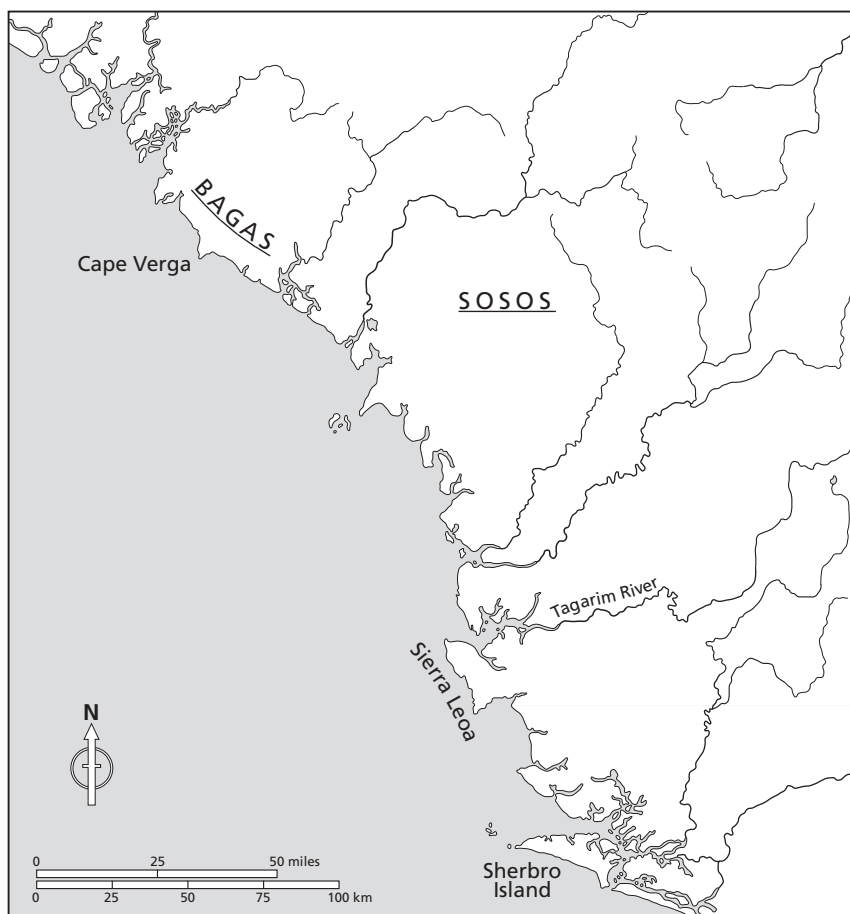
The north-east Atlantic.



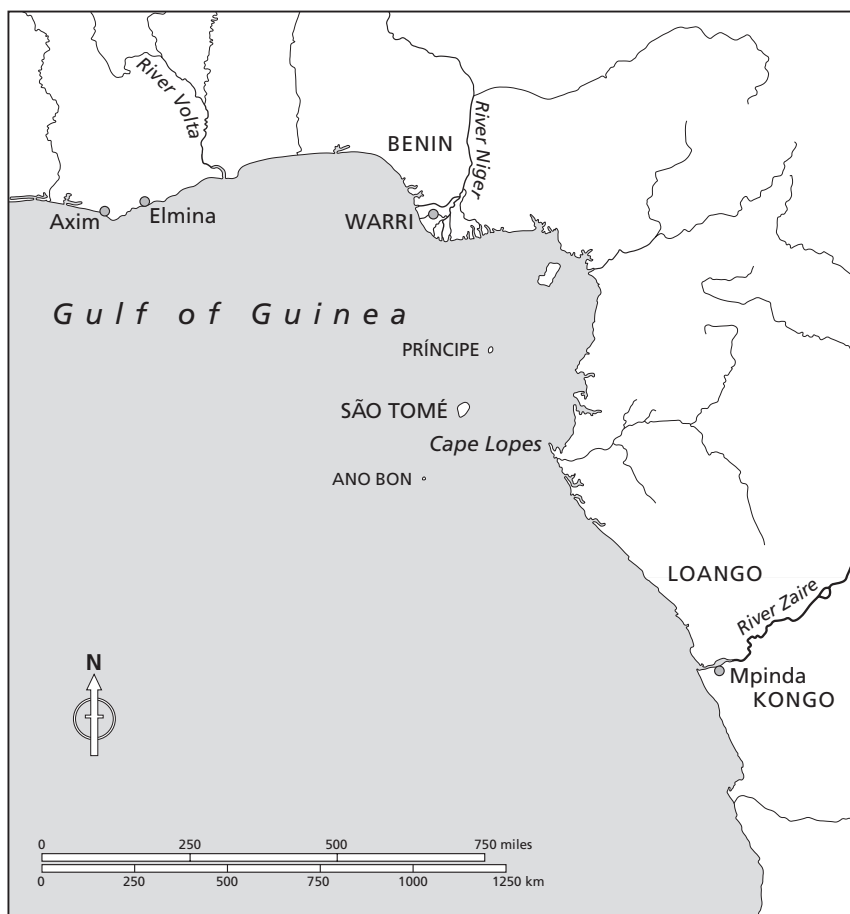
Senegambia region.



Upper Guinea.



Sierra Leone region.



Gulf of Guinea.



Kongo and Angola.

INTRODUCTION

The Creation of the Atlantic World

In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Portugal and Spain developed two economic and political systems in the Atlantic, comparable in many respects with the Mediterranean world which had dominated the culture and economy of Europe, north Africa and the Middle East since the days of the Greek and Persian empires. These Atlantic worlds linked western Africa, the eastern coasts of North and South America and the Atlantic coastline of Europe and north Africa, and included wholly new societies brought into being in the Atlantic islands. The Spanish Atlantic system eventually extended to the Pacific, the Philippines and China, while the Portuguese system was linked to the empire that Portugal created in the Indian Ocean. These systems were built up through constantly expanding and increasingly interdependent economic activity, and by migrations of population and the cultural interplay of religions and ideas from all four continents. One of the first consequences of this interdependence was that diseases that were endemic in one continent, and plant and animal species from hitherto ecologically distinct areas, now spread throughout the Atlantic basin. Moreover, although these imperial systems were based on old and established practices, their novelty and very size demanded new concepts of law and sovereignty.

The northern parts of the Atlantic, including North and Central America and the Caribbean basin, for some time remained a Spanish world, with the Canary Islands as an outlying fragment; the southern part of the ocean, in turn, was almost exclusively Portuguese. This 'Portuguese South Atlantic' originated as an enterprise sponsored, and controlled, by the Portuguese Crown through official expeditions and embassies, the appointment of royal governors and the operation of royal trade monopolies. However, this was only a part of the story, and by the seventeenth century much of this south Atlantic system

had evolved beyond the effective control of Lisbon. There were many people other than the Crown's immediate servants who embarked on economic enterprises and territorial expansion, or who were uprooted from their homelands to people this new world. The Portuguese Crown also enlisted many client groups to aid its enterprises. These included soldiers of fortune of many different nationalities, merchants, sugar growers and financiers from Italy, and later Africans and native Brazilians. Entrepreneurs, some of them Italians, were awarded captaincies in the uninhabited Atlantic islands, which they undertook to settle and which they developed in ways that sometimes ran counter to the interests of Lisbon, while the royal governors of the Moroccan fortresses and of the colony based at Luanda carried out their campaigns in search of booty and slaves with scant regard to any policy objectives laid down in Portugal. Other agencies were also at work. The missions sent out by the Church were, at first, instruments of royal policy, but by the end of the sixteenth century were acting largely independently of Lisbon. The Jesuits and the authorities of the Inquisition operated according to their own perceived objectives, while the direct intervention of Rome in the final years of the sixteenth century, and papal encouragement of non-Portuguese missionary orders, such as the Italian Capucins, challenged the control of the African Church by the Portuguese Crown.

Similarly, following the establishment of forts and factories in South America, Brazilian interests also became an agency in west African affairs and operated with little reference to the policies of Lisbon. By the seventeenth century, Brazilians traded directly with western Africa, supplying ships and trade goods and, in the years following the Dutch seizure of Luanda in 1641 when the Portuguese Crown was hard pressed in Europe, even providing governors and soldiers to reconquer and defend the Portuguese possessions in Angola.

Portuguese overseas expansion can also be understood as three separate but interconnected diasporas – three streams of migrants who mingled to form the new communities of the Atlantic world. One migrant stream was provided by ordinary people leaving the poverty-stricken rural communities of Portugal to make their living at sea or to search for new land in the islands on which to settle. Many of these eventually moved on from the islands to the mainlands of Africa and America as traders and settlers, carrying with them their language, religion, technical skills and networks of contacts.

These Christian Portuguese migrants met and mingled with the diaspora of the Sephardic Jews. The expulsion of the Iberian Jews who would not convert to Christianity took place in the final decade of the fifteenth century. Although many moved away from the territories of the

Iberian rulers altogether, others found that the Portuguese communities that were being formed in the Atlantic were more tolerant of religious difference. Many Jews went either to north Africa and settled in the fortified Portuguese port towns, or to the islands and the mainland trading posts, from where they could put down roots in the coastal African societies. Most of the Portuguese communities in west Africa had numbers of so-called New Christians (*cristãos novos*), who practised their ancestral Judaism more or less openly (Docs. 4, 15 and 56). Others moved to Brazil and played a large part in the development of the sugar industry, enjoying official toleration during the period of the Dutch occupation (1630–54) and spreading from there to the non-Portuguese world of the Caribbean and the north Atlantic.

The third diaspora was that of Africans, sold as slaves by their compatriots on the mainland and taken to Portugal, the islands and the Americas. These forced emigrants contributed substantially to the peopling of the Portuguese Atlantic, supplementing the limited numbers of settlers that mainland Portugal was able to provide. To a large extent, the Portuguese South Atlantic of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a creole world – peopled by the mixed descendants of Portuguese and Africans, speaking creole dialects of the Portuguese language, practising religions heavily coloured by African as well as European ideas and developing a texture of culture that owed its richness to European, Judaic and African traditions.

Medieval Portugal's Interaction with the Non-European World

Portugal, like Castile and Aragon, had a long tradition of contacts with the non-European world. Until the reconquest of the Algarve in 1249, southern Portugal had been part of the Islamic world of north Africa, and thereafter an Islamic and Jewish population continued to inhabit the south under Christian overlords. Commercial contacts with north Africa continued, and Christian Portuguese soldiers were often to be found fighting in the wars in Morocco. Portugal remained a country where Islamic, Judaic and Christian cultural influences met one another and merged, the mixture being constantly enriched by the import of slaves. The Portuguese obtained slaves from Muslim north Africa and, in the fourteenth century, took part in raids on the Canary Islands to capture slaves from among the native Guanches. Meanwhile, the Portuguese themselves were liable to be carried away as slaves to north Africa whenever the Moroccans raided the southern coasts of Portugal.

While medieval Portugal interacted constantly with the northwest Atlantic seaboard of Africa, it was also increasingly involved in the

political struggles of northern Europe and the commercial expansion of the Italian cities. The struggle for power between the Plantagenet rulers of England and the Capetian dynasty of France overflowed into the Iberian peninsula, and English, French and Castilian armies operated in northern Spain and Portugal, interfering in Portuguese politics and threatening the independence of the Portuguese kingdom. In 1385, one of the decisive battles of the Hundred Years War was fought at Aljubarrota north of Lisbon, where an Anglo-Portuguese force defeated an army made up of French and Castilians and installed a new dynasty under João, the Master of Avis and bastard son of the former king Dom Pedro.

These wars saw the growth of a military class, which depended for its status and its fortune upon plunder, ransoms, patronage, the seizure of land and the spoils of war in general. In 1411 Portugal was eventually able to make peace with Castile, but the military class of nobles and knights continued to demand opportunities for advancement and an outlet for their energies. So, in 1415, ten days after Henry V of England opened a new phase of the Hundred Years War with his invasion of Normandy, his uncle by marriage, Dom João I of Portugal, launched an invasion of Morocco. The attack on the north African port-city of Ceuta was an official enterprise, planned and carried out by the king's sons, the Royal Council and the agents of the Crown. The intention was to establish a bridgehead for the conquest of Morocco, and this aspect of the plan was supported by most of the leading nobility. The propaganda of the time represented this attack as a crusade against Islam, and Zurara, the chronicler who recorded the events thirty years later, shaped his narrative to reflect the ideals of chivalry in the same way that Jean Froissart, on whom he modelled his chronicles, had dignified the massacres and plundering raids of the Hundred Years War (Doc. 1).

Throughout the fifteenth century, the conquest of Morocco remained a royal project. An unsuccessful attack on Tangier in 1437 was followed – once the young king, Afonso 'O Africano', came of age – by the capture of Alcazar Seguer (the modern Ksar es Sghir) in 1458 and the surrender of Arzila and Tangier in 1471. This gave Portugal control of a strip of the northern coastline of Morocco. Dom João II (1481–95) attempted only one ill-considered campaign in Morocco, but his successor, Dom Manuel, encouraged the renewal of attempts to conquer territory. Between 1504 and 1514, the Portuguese captured and occupied most of the port-towns on the Atlantic coast of Morocco, including Safi, Mazagão, Mogador, Azamour and Agadir (called at that time Santa Cruz). It was only after the defeat of the Portuguese army at Mamora in 1514 that the conquest of

Morocco was recognized to be impractical, though none of the garrison towns was evacuated until the 1540s.

The capture of these Moroccan towns and the need to garrison them against the constant threat of attack meant that the Portuguese had to maintain an army at great expense. The Moroccan fortresses became a military frontier where generations of Portuguese soldiers were trained and saw their first active service. It was in these fortresses that outdated religious and military values were cultivated and became entrenched. Portuguese and Moroccans squared up to each other on the battlefield, re-enacting archaic rituals of single combat (Doc. 2), while the Portuguese commanders in the fortresses looked for opportunities to mount raids on the countryside to carry off prisoners, cattle and moveable goods (Docs. 5 and 6), as had been customary in the Iberian peninsula before the completion of the *Reconquista*.

Alongside the raids, however, a more peaceful interaction was taking place. Many Moroccans sought protection against plundering raids by recognizing Portuguese overlordship, and the Portuguese reciprocated by developing a thriving trade in horses, textiles and foodstuffs (Doc. 3). Jews expelled from mainland Portugal also settled in the Portuguese towns in north Africa and negotiated protection for themselves, the traditional tolerance of the Portuguese reasserting itself outside the borders of the kingdom of Portugal (Doc. 4). In these documents, one can see an informal empire of trade, religious toleration and cultural assimilation coming into existence alongside, and often in opposition to, the military purposes of the Crown and the aristocracy.

West African Trade

While the Crown and the military aristocracy took the lead in attempting to make conquests in Morocco, settlements were being made in the Atlantic islands. Although peace had been signed with Castile in 1411, adventurers from the two countries continued to compete for land and slaves in the Canary Islands. Slavers from both Portugal and Castile had regularly raided these islands in the fourteenth century, and various claims to seigneurial rights had been registered. The raiding continued in the fifteenth century with the difference that both Castilians and Portuguese now tried to establish permanent settlements, and frequently clashed with each other as well as with the native inhabitants. The attempt to control the islands should be seen in the same context as the warfare in Morocco. Like the Moroccan expeditions, the Portuguese fleets that attacked the Canaries were organized by members of the military aristocracy and were strongly backed by the Infante Dom Henrique

(‘Henry the Navigator’). Major expeditions were sent in 1425 and again during the 1440s and 1450s. In this war of raid and counter-raid, the Castilians gradually gained the upper hand, and eventually, in 1479, the Portuguese recognized Castilian sovereignty over the islands. Their subsequent conquest and division into *encomiendas* took place in the 1490s at exactly the time that Columbus was establishing the first Castilian settlements in the Caribbean.

It was this rivalry with Castile that prompted the Portuguese to advance their claims to the other island groups. Madeira and the Azores were uninhabited and had only occasionally been visited by sailors looking for a convenient landfall. However, in 1419 the Portuguese formally took possession of Madeira, and after 1431 began to establish themselves in the Azores. Once again, the nobility and the Crown became involved, eager to secure seigniorial rights to these new settlements. The islands were distributed as ‘captaincies’, a form of feudal overlordship that promoted the entrepreneurial settlement of the islands while preserving the essential rights of the Crown. The Infantes Henrique and Pedro secured titles to the islands and placed their own followers as hereditary captains. Henry also secured the ecclesiastical rights for the Order of Christ of which he was governor, having previously obtained similar privileges in Morocco.

However, the peopling of the islands was not entirely a royal enterprise. Once the first island settlements had been planted, considerable numbers of peasant farmers and fishermen migrated from Portugal. During the fourteenth century, the Portuguese countryside had become increasingly deserted. The Black Death had taken its toll while the poverty of the land and the custom of establishing *morgados* (entailed estates) discouraged peasant agriculture. The *Lei das Sesmarias* of 1375, which created a legal framework for bringing wasteland back into cultivation, was a sign that the Crown was aware of a serious social and economic malaise. More and more people moved to the coastal towns to seek employment in commerce and maritime activities. Madeira and the Azores offered attractive opportunities for farmers, as their soils and climate were extremely favourable, and they provided bases for commercial enterprise and deep-sea fishing.

Also involved in the island settlements were Italian entrepreneurs. Ever since the thirteenth century, the Italian city states had been increasing their trade with north Africa and northern Europe, and an Italian colony grew up in Lisbon as the city became an important port of call for ships bound from the Mediterranean to the north. There was also a Genoese factory in Ceuta at the time of the Portuguese conquest. The Italian presence in Portugal led to the spread of Mediterranean expertise

in ship design, map making and navigation, and to the Italians becoming partners in the entrepreneurial activities of the Portuguese kings. It was Genoese sugar growers looking for new land who became involved in the settlement of Madeira and the Azores, providing capital and setting up the first sugar industry in the islands. Italians were also to be prominent among the ship owners and traders who began to exploit the new commercial outlets in Africa. The Perestrello family were involved in the settlement of Madeira, Antonio di Noli was the first captain of Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands and a Venetian, Alvise da Cadamosto, not only traded to Senegambia but wrote the first detailed account of the island settlements and the trading activities on the African coast, giving a vivid picture of Europe's first encounters with sub-Saharan Africa (Docs. 11, 16 and 17).

The same combination of official enterprise and the activity of clients under contract to the Crown was to be followed when other island groups were discovered. The Cape Verde Islands were discovered and explored in the 1450s and 1460s, and once again Italians were foremost in their exploration and settlement, the institutional device of captaincies being used to secure their development. Here the Portuguese again faced Castilian competition, and during the war of 1474–79, the Castilians briefly occupied Santiago and claimed possession of the archipelago. Then, when the Guinea Islands were discovered in the 1470s, entrepreneurial captains were once again appointed to try to secure their settlement and commercial development.

Meanwhile, the traditional Portuguese practices of privateering and slaving were leading to the growth of commercial links with the African mainland. Ships would be sent to sea, either by their owners or sponsored by noblemen, to secure prizes and slaves to sell or important prisoners to ransom. If all else failed, the boats could return with a stinking cargo of seal pelts and oil. It was these privateers who first discovered the commercial potential of what appeared to be a barren Sahara coastline. In the 1430s, seamen began to raid the undefended villages of the coast, carrying off women and children and ransoming men of importance. Such raids put the local population on their guard, so that each year the raiders had to travel further to find undefended coastal villages (Docs. 8 and 9). In this way the raiders became explorers, seeking out ever more remote stretches of coastline. On one of these raids, contact was made with desert traders, who offered gold in exchange for foodstuffs and metal ware. The availability of gold attracted a lot of attention, and in 1443 it was decided to establish a permanent trading post on the island of Arguim off the coast of modern Mauretania, which the Crown leased to a consortium of merchants.