

A medieval manuscript illustration depicting a scene of battle or a triumph. In the center, a knight in blue and gold armor lies on the ground, his head tilted back in a pained or dying expression. He wears a red and white patterned surcoat. To his left, another knight in blue armor stands, holding a sword aloft. To the right, a knight in blue armor with a gold crown-like element on his helmet stands over the fallen knight. In the background, other knights in armor are visible, some on horseback. The scene is set in a landscape with green hills and a building in the distance. The entire illustration is framed by a decorative border.

A HISTORY
OF PORTUGAL
AND THE
PORTUGUESE
EMPIRE

— VOLUME ONE —

Portugal

A. R. Disney

CAMBRIDGE

514 le Roy de castille a du

A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire

The Kingdom of Portugal was created as a by-product of the Christian Reconquest of Hispania. With no geographical *raison d'être* and no obvious political roots in its Roman, Germanic, or Islamic pasts, it long remained a small, struggling realm on Europe's outer fringe. Then, in the early fifteenth century, this unlikely springboard for Western expansion suddenly began to accumulate an empire of its own – eventually extending more than halfway around the globe. *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire*, drawing particularly on historical scholarship postdating the 1974 Portuguese Revolution, offers readers a comprehensive overview and reinterpretation of how all this happened – the first such account to appear in English for more than a generation. Volume I concerns the history of Portugal itself from pre-Roman times to the climactic French invasion of 1807, and Volume II traces the history of the Portuguese overseas empire.

A. R. Disney was educated at Oxford and Harvard universities and has taught history at Melbourne and La Trobe universities. His publications include *Twilight of the Pepper Empire* (1978) and numerous articles, papers, and essays, published variously in the *Economic History Review*, *Studia Indica*, *Mare Liberum*, *Anais de Historia de Alem-mar*, and other journals and proceedings.

remains of both Gama and of the national poet Luís de Camões were transferred to the Jerónimos, though in neither case was their authenticity certain.⁷⁵

Most Portuguese painting in the Manueline era was run-of-the-mill and did not achieve the same distinction as the country's architecture. The greatest and most celebrated of all Portuguese paintings – the magnificent polyptych rediscovered in 1882 in the patriarchal palace of São Vicente de Fora and now in the Lisbon Museum of Ancient Art – was produced half a century before Manuel's accession. In a remarkable piece of detective work, Jorge Filipe de Almeida and Maria Manuela Barroso de Albuquerque have recently demonstrated that this painting was certainly the work of Nuno Gonçalves, whose discreetly disguised monogrammatic signature is worked into the boots of two of the figures portrayed.⁷⁶ Partly on the basis of dendrochronology, the same authors also show that the polyptych was painted in 1445 – towards the end of the regency of Prince Pedro – and not 1471–2 as previously thought.⁷⁷ It was commissioned by the brotherhood of Santo António in honour of Prince Fernando, the 'holy prince' who had died in captivity in Fez in 1443 and was widely regarded as a martyr.⁷⁸ Fernando appears as the central figure in each of the two principal panels. He is surrounded by his mourning family and other clearly identifiable individuals, the group including King Duarte (by then deceased), Queen Leonor, King Afonso V at the age of thirteen, Prince Pedro as regent and – most renowned of all – Prince Henrique wearing a dark Burgundian hat. Painted in the Flemish tradition, the work is a masterly portrayal of fifty-eight persons, most of them known royal, noble or clerical celebrities. All are drawn with extraordinary realism. There is no background landscape, the focus being entirely on the human figures.⁷⁹

While this celebrated polyptych of Nuno Gonçalves is clearly a stunning achievement, it is also unique in Portugal, with no known parallels and no successors. Gonçalves, who was court painter to Afonso V and João II, died in 1493 apparently without disciples, and the extraordinary originality that he represented was lost with him. Artists at the sixteenth-century Manueline and early Joanine courts, as in most contemporary provincial centres, continued to paint in the Flemish tradition, but mostly routine religious compositions. Many altarpieces with multiple panels set in gilt wood were produced, either by immigrants from Flanders or by Portuguese trained in the same tradition.

⁷⁵ Subrahmanyam S 1997, pp 11–16.

⁷⁶ Almeida J F de and Albuquerque M M B de 2003, pp 13, 22–7, 30–40.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 41–4.

⁷⁸ For Prince Fernando's death see ch 15.

⁷⁹ Almeida J F de and Albuquerque M M B de 2003, pp 77–94. See also Smith R C 1968, pp 195–7; NHP vol 4, pp 450–1.

Bibliography

Printed Sources

- Abun-Nasr J M 1987 *A history of the Maghrib in the Islamic period*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Ackerland S R 1990 *King Dinis of Portugal and the Alfonsine heritage*. Peter Lang, New York.
- Ahmad A 1991 *Indo-Portuguese trade in seventeenth century (1600-1663)*. Gian Publishing House, New Delhi.
- Alarcão J de 1988 *Roman Portugal* (2 vols). Aris and Phillips, Warminster, vol 1.
- Albuquerque L de 1989 *Introdução a história dos descobrimentos portugueses*. 4th edn Publicações Europa-América, Lisbon.
- Albuquerque L de (dir) 1994 *Dicionário de história dos descobrimentos portugueses* (2 vols). Caminho, Lisbon.
- Alden D 1968 *Royal government in colonial Brazil with special reference to the administration of the marquis of Lavradio, viceroy, 1769-1779*. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles.
- Alden D 1984 Sugar planters by necessity, not choice: the role of the Jesuits in the cane sugar industry of colonial Brazil, 1601-1759. In J A Cole (ed) *The church and society in Latin America*. Center for Latin American Studies, Tulane University, New Orleans, pp 139-70.
- Alden D 1996 *The making of an enterprise. The Society of Jesus in Portugal, its empire, and beyond, 1540-1750*. Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Alden D 2000 The suppression of the Society of Jesus in the Portuguese assistancy in Asia: the fate of survivors, 1760-77. In *VGL*, pp 361-86.
- Alexandre V 1993 *Os sentidos do império: questão nacional e questão colonial na crise do antigo regime*. Edições Afrontamento, Porto.
- Almeida F de 1967 *História da igreja em Portugal* (4 vols). 2nd edn Portucalense Editora, Porto.
- Almeida J F de and Albuquerque M M B de 2003 *Os painéis de Nuno Gonçalves*. Verbo, Lisbon.
- Alves A M 1984 A etiqueta de corte no período Manuelino. *Nova história* 1: 5-26.