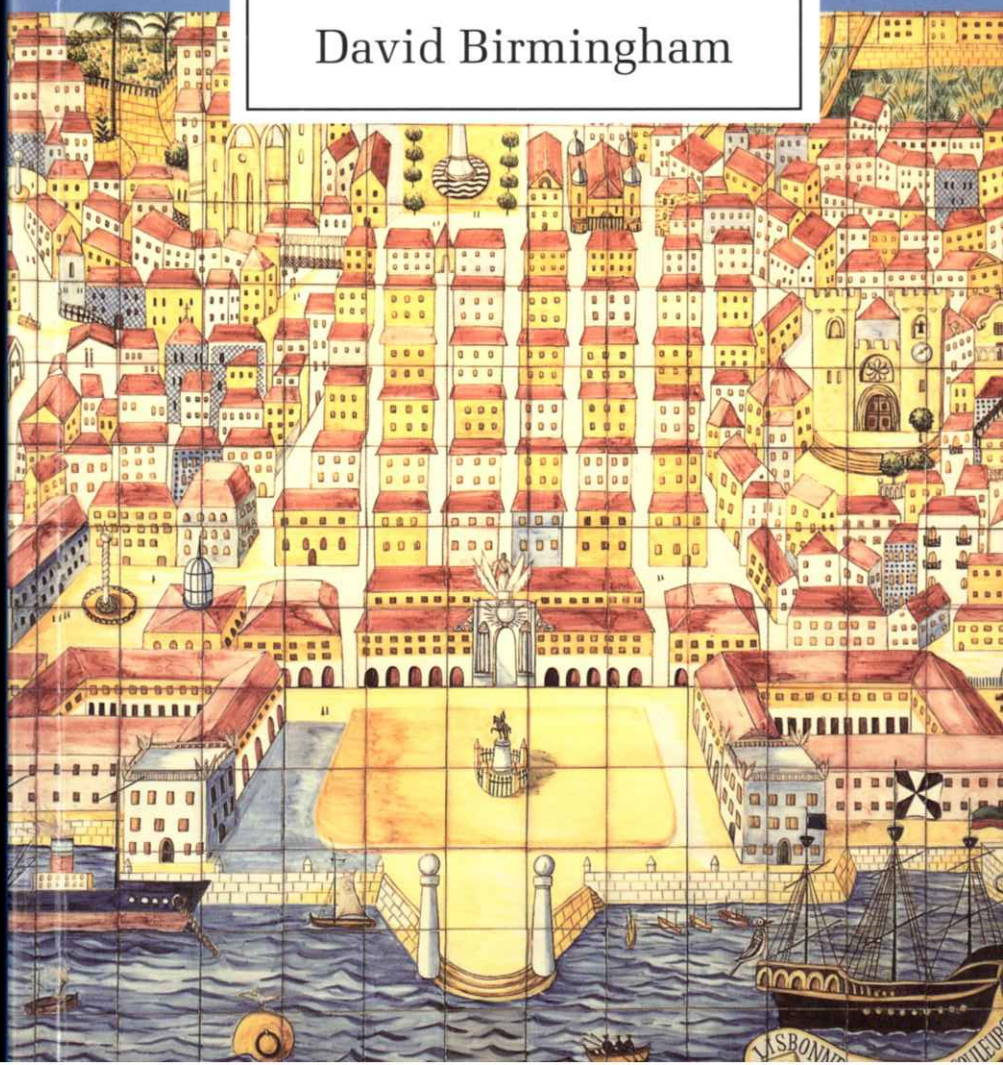


A Concise History of PORTUGAL

SECOND EDITION

David Birmingham



A Concise History of Portugal

This concise, illustrated history of Portugal offers an introduction to the people and culture of the country and its empire, and to its search for economic modernisation, political stability and international partnership.

It is the first modern account of Portugal's history to be written in English since the days of dictatorship. A short introduction to Portugal's classical, Islamic and Hispanic history culminates in the revolution of 1640. The book then studies the effects of the vast wealth mined from Portuguese Brazil, the growth of the wine trade and the evolution of close ties with England, Portugal's 'oldest ally'. The Portuguese Revolution of 1820 to 1851 created a liberal monarchy, but in 1910 the king was overthrown and, by 1926, had been replaced by a dictatorship which tried to overcome Portugal's poverty by building a new empire in Africa. In 1975 Portugal withdrew from its African colonies and turned north to become a democratic member of the European Community in 1986.

David Birmingham visited Portugal as a summer student in Coimbra while training as a historian at the University of Ghana in 1960. His first major book was a history of early modern Angola and he has since co-edited a three-volume history of Central Africa. He has also written biography, with a study of Kwame Nkrumah, local history, with a book on a Swiss village, and thematic history, with a work on nationalism. The present *Concise History* was researched during the years which followed the fall of Portugal's dictators in 1974, and it has since become the standard single-volume work. This second edition brings the story up to date and the revised bibliography discusses the current state of historical writing on Portugal.

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5 This oak panel painted in 1445 by Nuno Gonçalves shows the beatified Prince Ferdinand flanked by his sister Isabel of Burgundy, and his brother Henry 'the Navigator'.

SELECTED WORKS PUBLISHED SINCE 1990

A Monarquia Feudal 1096-1480 by José Mattoso and Armindo de Sousa (Estampa, Lisbon, 1993) is the second volume of the monumental *História de Portugal* commissioned by José Mattoso. It contains his own illuminating reassessment of the social and cultural history of the Portuguese middle ages. For an extensive bibliography of historical works on Portugal, and a comprehensive index of people and topics, see volume eight of the Mattoso set.

Jorge de Almeida and Maria de Albuquerque have written a graphic study, *Os Painéis de Nuno Gonçalves* (Verbo, Lisbon, 2000), which decodes the symbolism of the double triptych of the Portuguese court and its retainers mourning the martyrdom of Prince Fernando. The display shows two pictures of the beatified prince who had been left in Morocco as a hostage by his brother Henry and who was subsequently killed in 1443 when he ceased to have any value as a hostage. The authors authenticate the attribution of the painting to Nuno Gonçalves while convincingly suggesting that the work was commissioned in 1445, a surprisingly early date subsequently made more plausible by dendrochronological counts on the six panels of Baltic oak.

Prince Henry 'the Navigator' A Life (Yale, New Haven, 2000) is the culmination of a life's work by an Oxford scholar, Peter Russell, who quietly unravelled the patriotic mythologies surrounding the 'Lancastrian' Portuguese prince and wrote an outstanding alternative account of fifteenth-century Portugal and its overseas aspirations.

Luis Vaz de Camões: The Lusiads (Oxford University Press, 1997) is a prize-winning poetic translation of the great Camões epic of empire by one of the leading historians of the Portuguese empire, Landeg White, who is also a published poet in his own right.

David Birmingham's *Trade and Empire in the Atlantic 1400-1600* (Routledge, London, 2000) is for those who like their history succinct but felt

Birmingham's Concise History of Portugal is concise, straightforward, and well-illustrated. There is little else to be said in its favor. Portugal's distinctive national character--so different from that of neighboring Spain--owes much to the circumstances of its past.Â Moreover, Birmingham provides little historical context, so it is often difficult to discern how the events he mentions related to larger trends in European and world history. Birmingham addresses some of the major themes of Portuguese history, such as the tension between centralized and aristocratic power and Portugal's special relationship with England, but he skims over other crucial topics, such as the creation of Portugal's far-flung colonial empire.