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978-0-521-84318-8 - A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire: From Beginnings to 1807, Volume I: Portugal

A. R. Disney

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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.

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A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire

From Beginnings to 1807
Volume I: Portugal

A. R. DISNEY

La Trobe University



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Abbreviations

AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
BAR	<i>British Archaeological Reports</i>
CEHCA	Centro de Estudos de História e Cartografia Antiga
CIP	Antunes M (ed) <i>Como interpretar Pombal? No bicentenário de sua morte</i>
CNCDP	Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses
CP	Marques A H de O (ed) <i>Chancelarias portuguesas. D. Afonso IV</i>
CRB OM	Boxer C R <i>Opera Minora</i>
DA	Turner J (ed) <i>The dictionary of art</i>
DHDP	Albuquerque L de (dir) <i>Dicionário de história dos descobrimentos portugueses</i>
DHP	Serrão J (ed) <i>Dicionário de história de Portugal</i>
DIHP	<i>Dicionário ilustrado da história de Portugal</i>
EI	Gibb H A R et al (eds) <i>Encyclopaedia of Islam</i>
GE	<i>Grande encyclopédia portuguesa e brasileira</i>
HA	Chicó M et al (eds) <i>História da arte em Portugal</i>
HAHR	<i>Hispanic American Historical Review</i>
HEPM	Baião A, Cidade H and Múrias M (eds) <i>História da expansão portuguesa no mundo</i>
HP	Mattoso J (dir) <i>História de Portugal</i>
LMS	Jayyusi S K et al (eds) <i>The legacy of Muslim Spain</i>
MedHP	Medina J (dir) <i>História de Portugal dos tempos pré-históricos aos nossos dias</i>
MHP	Marques A H de O <i>History of Portugal</i> vol 1

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NHEP	Serrão J and Marques A H de O (dirs) <i>Nova história da expansão portuguesa</i>
NHP	Serrão J and Marques A H de O (dirs) <i>Nova história de Portugal</i>
PDH	<i>Portugal – dicionário histórico, corográfico, heráldico, biográfico, bibliográfico, numismático e artístico</i>
PHP	Peres D (dir) <i>História de Portugal. Edição monumental</i>
RHC	Rodrigues F <i>História da companhia de Jesús na assistência de Portugal</i>
RHES	<i>Revista de história económica e social</i>
SHP	Serrão J V <i>História de Portugal</i>

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Preface

Fort Jesus, the Portuguese-built stronghold that stands sentinel over the gently shimmering waters of Mombasa harbour with their clustered dhows, first drew me to Portugal's history. As a boy I lived on a farm in western Kenya. Occasionally, when the price of maize was favourable or coffee had had a particularly good year, my father would treat my mother, my sister and me to a holiday on the coast. There, each time, would be the fort – a quietly brooding monument to Mombasa's turbulent past and to the seemingly mysterious role played in it by the Portuguese.

In Oxford, on a cool November day of 1960, my interest in Fort Jesus was unexpectedly re-kindled. Gazing at a display in Blackwell's window, I caught sight of a new book with a bright, glossy dust jacket: *Fort Jesus and the Portuguese in Mombasa* by C. R. Boxer and Carlos de Azevedo. There, splashed across the front, was a photograph of the fort, its mellowed seawalls supporting their serrated Arab battlements, fringed by gently swaying coconut palms, with the little beach nearby. As soon as I could, I scraped together from my modest student allowance the required twenty-one shillings and bought that book. It was the fort, and the book about the fort, that led me in due course to write *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire: From Beginnings to 1807*.

One of the first European kingdoms to establish stable borders, Portugal has had an unusually long and rich history. Emerging in the twelfth century from the confusion of the Iberian Reconquest, it remained for long a relatively small and struggling frontier kingdom – until its fortunes began to change, and its importance to grow, from the early fifteenth century. Underlying this enhancement was the fact that the Portuguese, almost by accident, had begun to accumulate, bit by bit, what would eventually become one of the most remarkable and wide-flung of all the European empires. The aim of the present

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book is to make available to English-speaking readers a quite comprehensive view of how all this happened, tracing Portugal's story from its earliest beginnings down to the demise of the Old Regime at the start of the nineteenth century.

As its title indicates, this first volume is about metropolitan Portugal only. It consists of fourteen chapters which recount the country's history through a succession of epochs, from pre-historic times to 1807. Each chapter contains a mixture of narrative, description, comment and analysis, which I have endeavoured to integrate in such a way that they form a coherent, readable and intellectually stimulating whole. Further, all chapters are divided into sections with headings. If readers so desire, they can therefore easily single out sections that are of particular interest to them and read these in isolation. Nevertheless, all chapters are designed to form integrated wholes – and in my view it is better to treat them as such.

Chapters 1 to 4 are concerned with Portuguese space and the people who lived in it, in the eras before the existence of Portugal as a discrete political entity. They describe how successive waves of Roman, Germanic and Islamic intruders overlaid an Hispanic base that was already much affected by the impact of Mediterranean 'Orientalising' and northern 'Celticising' influences. Although the experiences of these times do not explain the subsequent emergence of Portugal as a kingdom, and as a nation, they were fundamental in the formation of the Portuguese people and their characteristic culture.

The early inhabitants of Portugal did not know that the land they occupied would one day become a separate kingdom with its own language, traditions and institutions. In Chapter 5, it is argued that the decisive steps that eventually led to this outcome were taken in the mid-twelfth century. It was then that the kingdom of Portugal emerged as a by-product of the Reconquest and the evolution of feudal relationships in the northwestern segment of the Iberian peninsula. A long struggle to make the kingdom viable followed. This involved not only consolidating it against various disruptive forces from within but also defending it from residual Islamic enemies without – and from the seductive attractions of pan-Hispanism.

During the two centuries or so after the creation of the kingdom, Portugal experienced a gradual transition into nationhood. This process is discussed in Chapter 6, which also contains an overview of Portugal at the peak of its rather modest Medieval prosperity in the early fourteenth century. It then goes on to describe the demographic, economic and political crises that together almost destroyed the young kingdom from the late 1330s. An account of Portugal's recovery in the fifteenth century, and of the gradual strengthening of royal government under the early Avis kings, follows in Chapter 7.

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In the early sixteenth century, Portugal experienced a remarkable ‘Golden Age’ – which, however, all too quickly tarnished from that century’s middle years. During the Golden Age, some groups and individuals in the kingdom attained considerable prosperity, largely as a consequence of overseas trade and expansion. But the situation gradually changed for the worse as Portugal was overtaken by an array of economic and political problems, culminating in the disastrous defeat of Al-Ksar al-Kabir and the ensuing loss of independence in 1578–80. All this is recounted in Chapters 8 and 9. Then in Chapter 10, I go on to describe how Portugal fared when its crown was united with that of Castile, what eventually caused the union to fail and the manner in which Portugal’s separate identity was recovered in 1640.

Chapter 11 is about the nature of the Bragança Restoration, the struggle to sheet it home and the kind of regime its adherents sought to entrench. It also explains how the situation was gradually stabilised in the late seventeenth century. The first half of the eighteenth century, an ‘Age of Gold and Baroque Splendour’, when Old Regime Portugal was at its apogee, but the seeds of change were also beginning to germinate, is examined in Chapter 12. This is followed by two chapters reviewing in turn the extraordinary ascendancy of Pombal and the associated reform program, the subsequent Marian reaction and the series of events that culminated in the *ano tormentoso* of 1807. That was the year that saw Portugal invaded by Napoleonic troops, causing the royal family and court to withdraw to Brazil – dramatic moves that marked the beginning of the end, if not the end itself, of the Portuguese Old Regime.

I am deeply conscious of the extent to which I have relied on the research of others – particularly of my Portuguese predecessors and colleagues – in the writing of this volume. Only occasionally, when I considered it particularly necessary or desirable, have I gone directly to the primary sources myself. Any reader who wishes to ascertain the precise material on which the volume is based may readily do so by referring to the footnotes, in conjunction with the bibliography. However, I must point out that the latter is limited to works cited in the notes only. It should not therefore be regarded as a comprehensive guide to Portuguese historical writings – though it might perhaps serve as a preliminary indicator. Those who wish to inquire further should consult the bibliographies in the several multi-volume Portuguese histories discussed in the following pages, especially in the *Nova história de Portugal*.

Portugal has a strong tradition of producing quality multi-volume national histories, several of which have been invaluable sources for my own work. This tradition began with the so-called ‘Barcelos’ history, the monumental seven-volume *História de Portugal*, directed by Damião Peres (1928–35). The Barcelos history, which set new standards of rigorous scholarship at the time, still remains of value today, especially for political developments. However, with

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the major upsurge in Portuguese historical writing from the early 1970s, the need for a new updated synthesis became more imperative. To date, four massive multi-volume publications have appeared in response to this need.

The earliest of these four works is Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão's *História de Portugal* (Editorial Verbo, Lisbon, 1977–2001). This publication comprises fourteen volumes, of which the first six together take the history of Portugal down to the start of the nineteenth century. Veríssimo Serrão offers the reader a reliable, well-documented empirical history, written from a generally conservative viewpoint. Next, there is the lavishly illustrated eight-volume *História de Portugal*, directed by the distinguished Medievalist José Mattoso (Editorial Estampa, Lisbon, 1993). The first four volumes of the 'Mattoso' history are relevant to the period before 1807. However, although there is much of value in this work, the various volume editors have adopted widely different approaches. This has resulted in considerable loss of overall coherence and left major gaps.

A third collective history is the *História de Portugal dos tempos pré-históricos aos nossos dias* (Clube Internacional do Livro, Amadora, 1995). This was written by various contributors, under the overall direction of the Lisbon historian João Medina. There are fifteen volumes in the 'Medina' history, the first seven of which take us down to the end of the eighteenth century. I found volume 7, which deals with the Habsburg period, especially useful, but again, there are major gaps, notably the late seventeenth century.

The fourth and most important in this sequence of multi-volume national histories is the *Nova história de Portugal*, directed by Joel Serrão and A. H. de Oliveira Marques (Editorial Presença, Lisbon, 1986–). At the time of writing, this projected thirteen-volume collective history is still incomplete. However, of the first eight volumes – which are the ones relevant here – all except volume six (on the Habsburg era) and volume eight (on the second half of the eighteenth century) are now published. This history prioritises 'structures' over political and narrative history. It is also indisputably the most comprehensive, the most balanced and the most scholarly of the national histories briefly reviewed above – and it was a fundamental source for the present work.

Before finishing with the general sources, it might be useful to mention briefly what is available in English. National histories of metropolitan Portugal in English that devote substantial attention to the pre-nineteenth-century period are, it has to be said, rather rare, but there is no doubt which is the most authoritative. It is A. H. de Oliveira Marques's *History of Portugal* (2 vols., Columbia University Press, 1972). This history, which includes chapters and sections on the empire as well as the metropolis, again downplays politics in favour of structures. However, it was written before the post-1974 upsurge in new historical writing and is therefore now somewhat outdated.

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H. V. Livermore's *A New History of Portugal* (Cambridge University Press, 1966) still remains useful as a traditional political history.

Apart from the general histories discussed above, a rapidly growing number of more specialist works concerning Portugal's past – monographs, regional studies, case studies, biographies, journal articles and so forth – have appeared in the now almost four decades since the change of regime in the early 1970s. One of the aims of the present volume is to draw on a wide selection of these works to inform a fresh synthesis – an overview, for English-speaking readers, of new scholarship. However, I must stress that in writing this volume no attempt has been made to take into account *every* significant work on Portuguese history of the last generation. Rather the aim has been to utilise a sufficiently representative selection of such works, while also not neglecting meritorious older sources. Again, the present volume is fully documented, so that by referring to the footnotes, in conjunction with the bibliography, the reader may go back to the particular sources on which the book is based.

A question that inevitably arises for historians writing about Portugal in English is how to present and standardise foreign names. In what follows I have, with few exceptions, left non-English European names in the forms in which they are customarily written in their respective languages, rather than Anglicising some and not others. This means a few historical personages appear in a guise that may at first seem unfamiliar to English-speaking readers – such as Prince Henrique rather than Henry the Navigator, or Fernando and Isabel of Spain rather than Ferdinand and Isabella. It seemed to me that this would be a small price to pay for greater consistency, while also enabling Portuguese names to be clearly distinguished from their Castilian equivalents. The relatively few names of individuals and places in Arabic that occur in the text have simply been transcribed into Roman script, without the use of diacritical marks.

In the course of writing this volume, I have incurred many debts of gratitude – to mentors, fellow scholars, university colleagues and friends. I owe particular thanks to the late António H. de Oliveira Marques, a giant figure in Portuguese historiography; Luís Filipe Reis Thomaz, who generously gave me the run of his library at Parede; Maria Augusto Lima Cruz, who so kindly showed me round Braga and took me to see the remarkable ruins of Citânia de Briteiros; the patient and ever-hospitable Artur Teodoro de Matos and Maria de Jesus dos Mártires Lopes; Teotónio de Souza, who so kindly secured for me various books I could not access in Australia; João Zilhão, Alfredo Pinheiro Marques and Jorge Filipe de Almeida, who also all kindly sent me publications; Sanjay Subrahmanyam; Dauril Alden; Jorge Flores and Malyn Newitt. I acknowledge gratefully the indispensable financial support of the Australian Research Grants Commission that enabled me to travel and to undertake research in Portugal

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A. R. Disney

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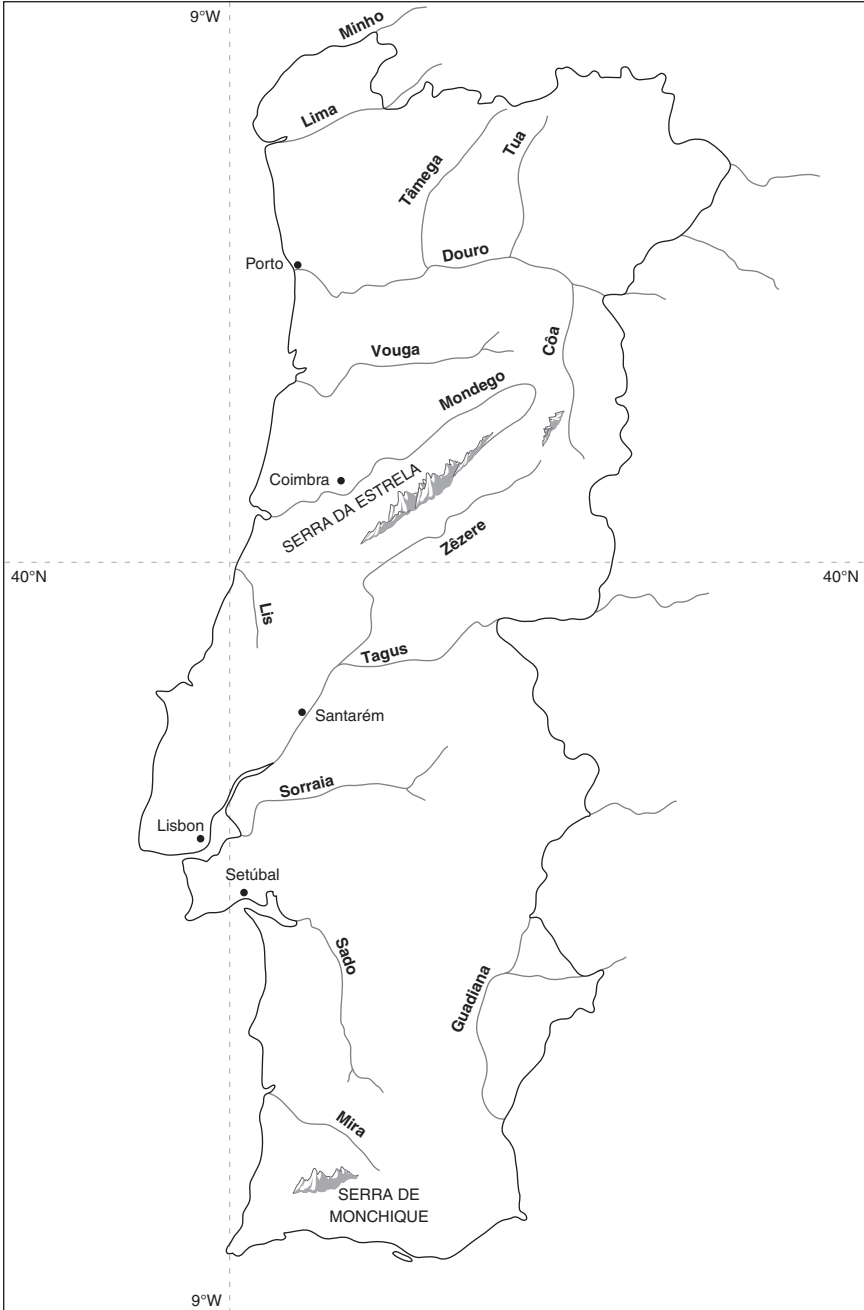
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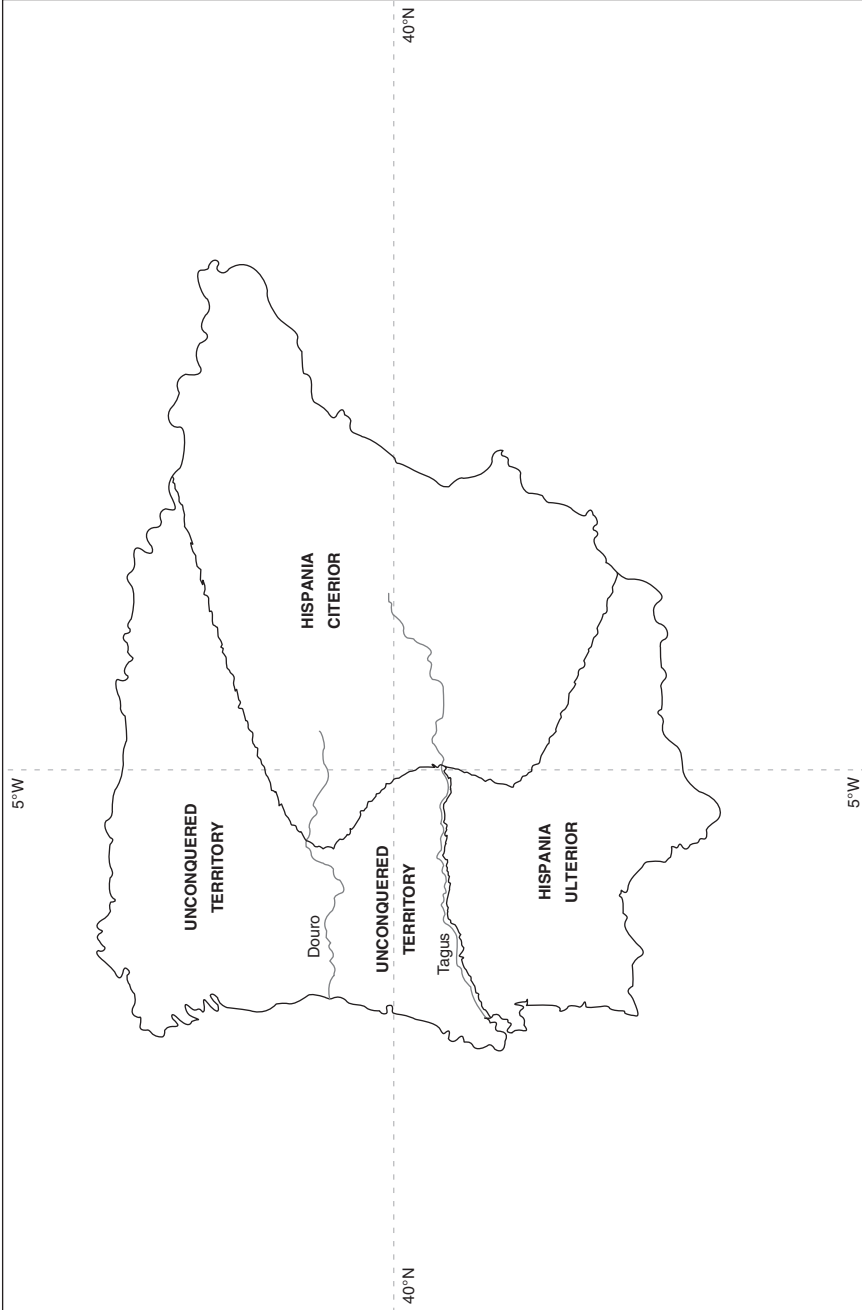
Preface

itself and released me for time to write. Likewise, I thank La Trobe University for its generous grants of study leave in the past – and for its continued support extended to me as an honorary associate, after my retirement from teaching. Last, but not least, I thank my wife, Jenny, who has listened to me long and patiently and read through the manuscript, offering many suggestions and drawing attention to errors.

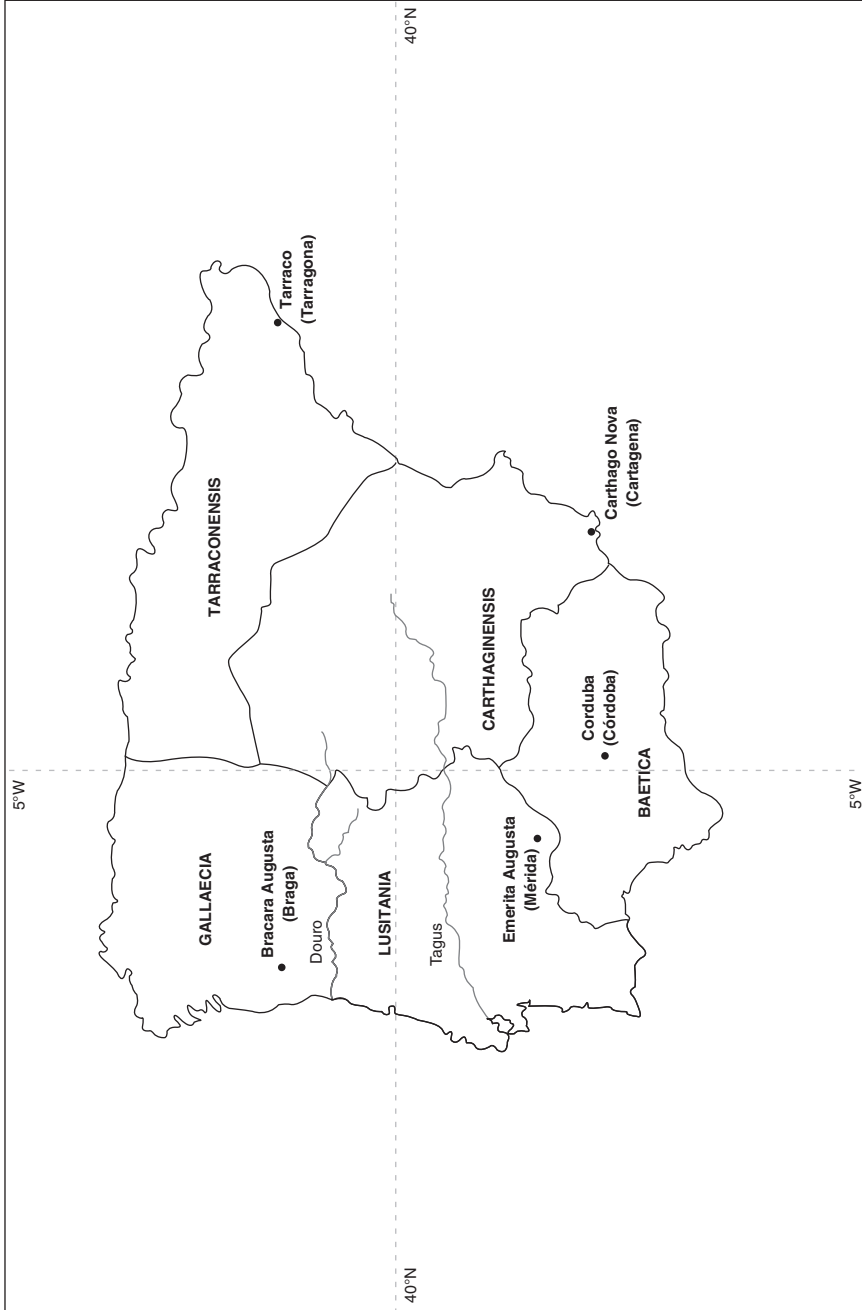
Anthony Disney
March 2008



MAP 1. Portugal: physical features.



MAP 2. Roman Hispania at approximately the death of Viriatus, 139 BC.



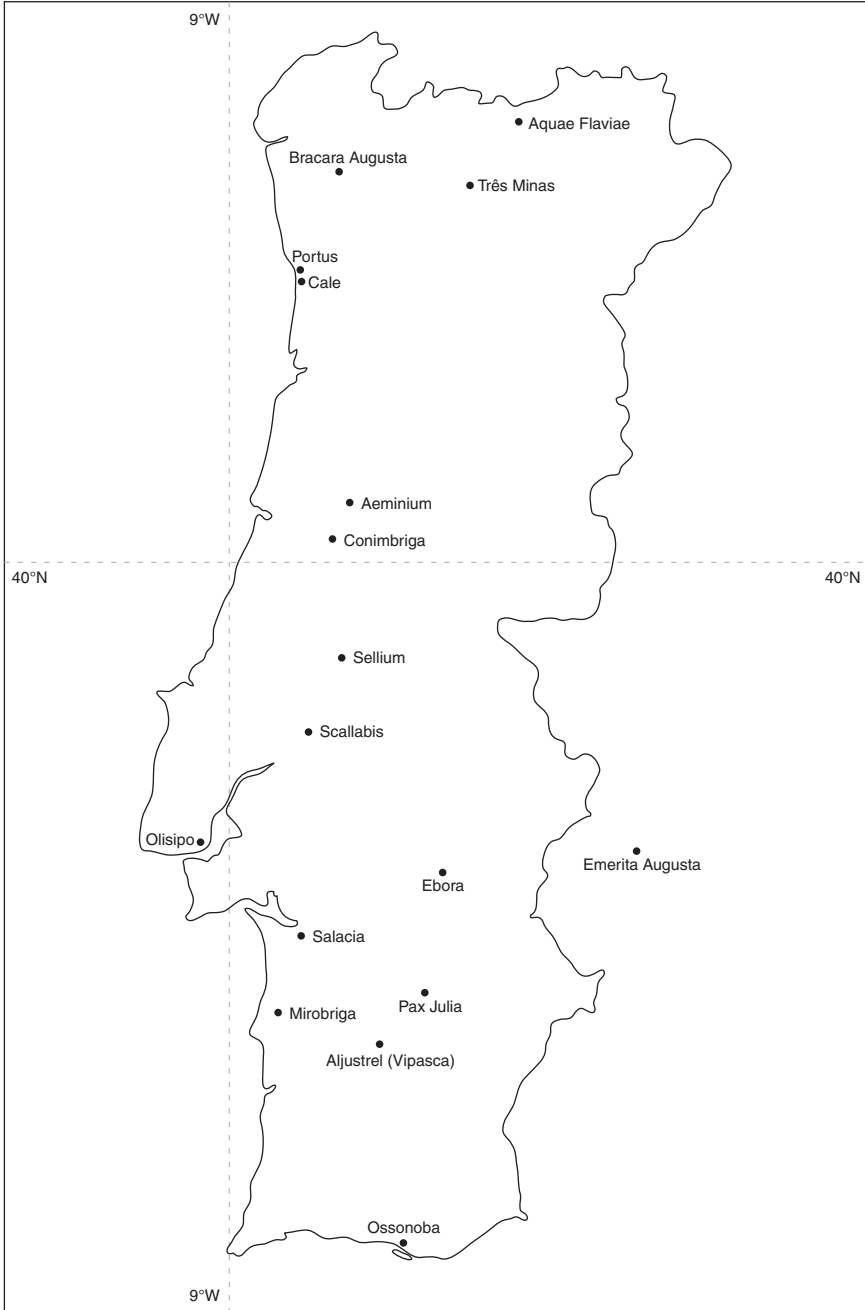
MAP 3. Late Roman Hispania showing provinces and provincial capitals.

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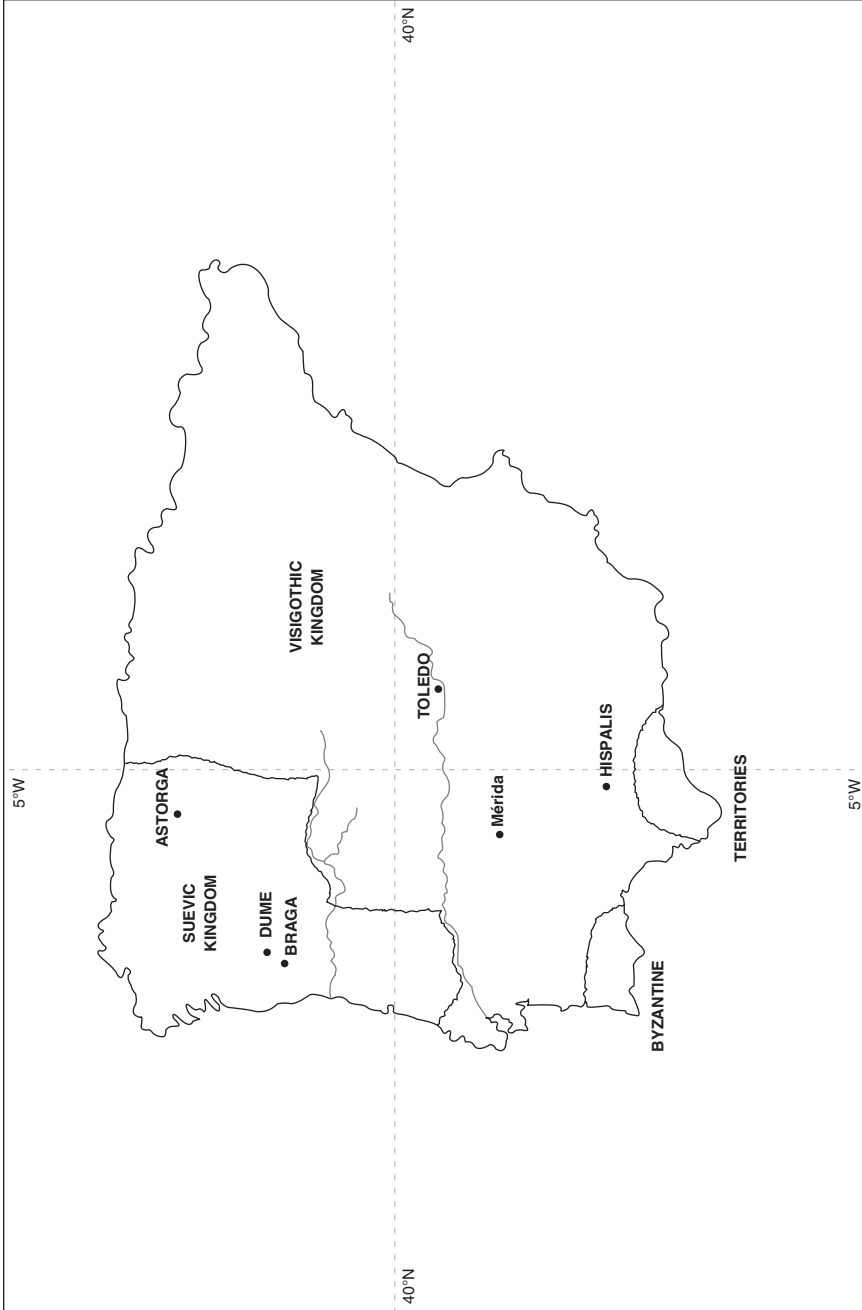
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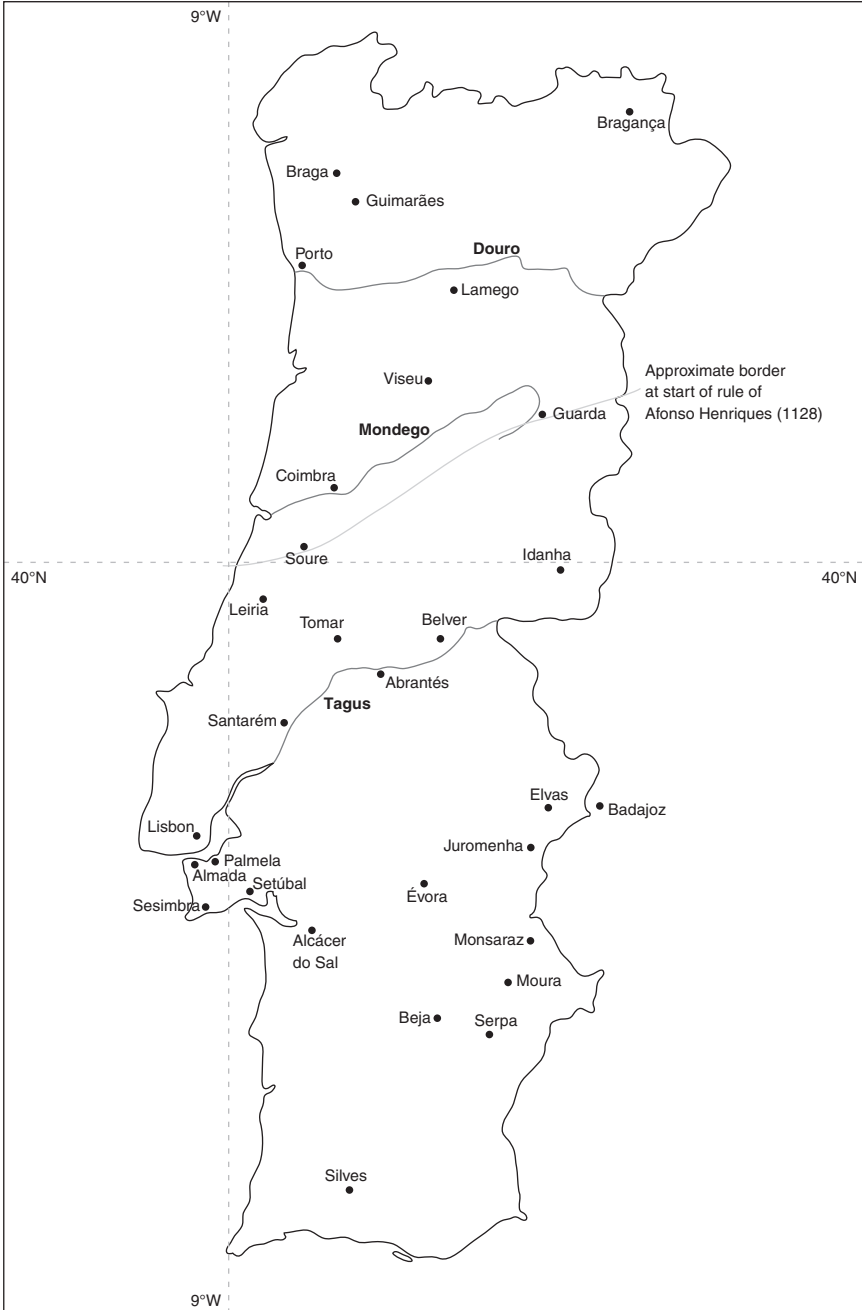
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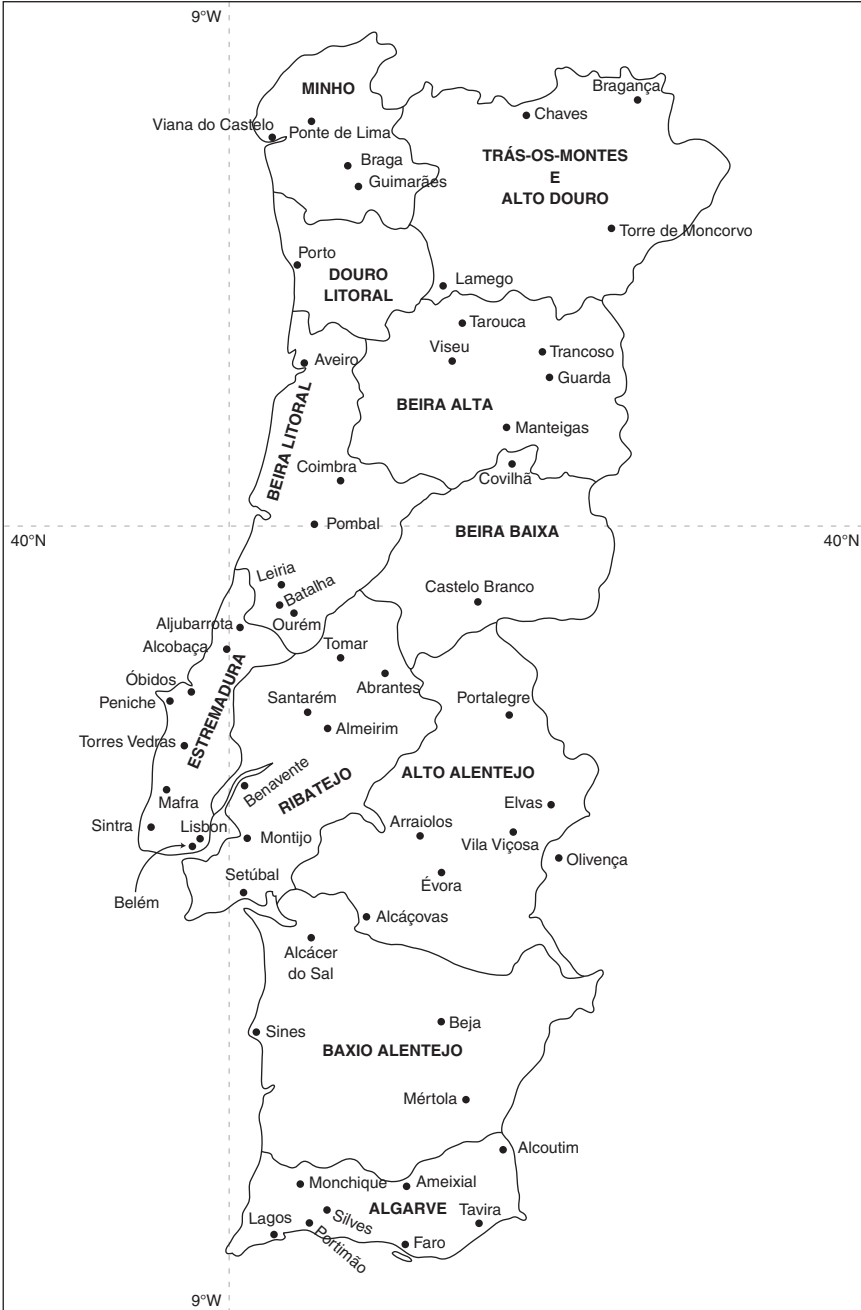
MAP 4. Portugal: major Roman cities and mining centres mentioned in the text.



MAP 5. Germanic Hispania: late sixth century AD.



MAP 7. Gharb al-Andalus and the Portuguese Reconquest.



MAP 8. Portugal: traditional provinces and some leading towns.