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.
A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire

From Beginnings to 1807
Volume I: Portugal

A. R. DISNEY
La Trobe University
Contents

Contents for Volume 2  
Abbreviations  
List of maps  
Preface  
Maps

Introduction: The Geographical Setting  
1. Hunter-Gatherers to Iron Age Farmers  
   The early hunter-gatherers  
   The Neolithic revolution  
   The metallurgical cultures  
   The coming of the Celts  
   Orientalisation

2. The Roman Experience  
   The Roman conquest  
   Towns and roads  
   Villas and mines  
   Free and slave  
   Roman administration and the idea of Portugal  
   The gods

3. The Germanic Kingdoms  
   The barbarian invasions  
   The Suevic kingdom  
   The Visigoths  
   Society and economy  
   Church, faith and phobias

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4. Gharb al-Andalus
   - The Muslim conquest
   - Islamic rule
   - Social and economic fabric
   - Muslim faith and culture
   - Christians and Jews under Islam
   - The Christian Reconquest of the North

5. The Medieval Kingdom
   - The condado Portucalense
   - Afonso Henriques and the founding of the kingdom
   - Expanding south
   - The fates of the conquered
   - Settling and developing
   - Castles, churches and religious institutions
   - Crown, seigneurs and ecclesiastical rights
   - Afonso III and King Dinis

6. The Fourteenth Century
   - Becoming a nation
   - The economic base
   - Towns and the beginnings of commercial capitalism
   - The ordering of society: theory and practice
   - The Black Death and its aftermath
   - Afonso IV and Pedro I
   - Fernando and the Castilian wars
   - Dynastic crisis: a Castilian usurper or a Portuguese bastard?
   - Aljubarrota

7. The Making of Avis Portugal
   - The coming of João I: a bourgeois revolution?
   - Settling the dynasty: war, peace and royal marriages
   - Change and continuity in the noble estate
   - King Duarte and the regency of Prince Pedro
   - Regression under Afonso V
   - João II, noble conspiracies and royal power
   - João II: the later years
   - Law and taxes
   - The changing art of war

8. The Golden Age
   - The character and contradictions of the Golden Age
   - The Golden Age economy
   - The court and the king’s majesty
   - The Castilian connection and the Jews
   - Elite society, government and bureaucracy
   - Church reform without a Reformation
## Contents

Social welfare and the *Misericórdia* 162  
The Portuguese literary Renaissance 163  
The Arts 166  

9. The Tarnished Age 172  
   João III and his fated family 172  
   Sebastião and Henrique 173  
   A faltering economy? 176  
   The coming of the Inquisition 180  
   The Inquisition in action 182  
   Portugal, the Council of Trent and the Jesuits 186  
   The fate of Letters and the Arts 189  
   The crisis of 1580 and the succession of Filipe I 192  

10. Habsburg Portugal 198  
    Filipe I in Lisbon 198  
    Institutional change, marginalisation and ambiguous autonomy 200  
    The Habsburg economy 204  
    The union of crowns and foreign relations 209  
    The reform program of Olivares 212  
    The defection of the Portuguese nobility 215  
    The revolt of 1640 218  

11. Restoration and Reconstruction 221  
    The Restoration 221  
    João IV, war and diplomacy 225  
    Afonso VI and national survival 228  
    Pedro II and the stabilising of the Bragança monarchy 232  
    The internal balance of power 235  
    The seventeenth-century *cortes* 240  
    Restoration Portugal in the international economy 243  

12. The Age of Gold and Baroque Splendour 249  
    Setting the scene 249  
    Gold, diamonds and João V 252  
    Population and agriculture 256  
    The wine industry and the patterns of overseas trade 259  
    Eighteenth-century Joaõine absolutism 264  
    Baroque culture and the royal court 268  
    The Enlightenment and the Portuguese public 274  

13. The Age of Pombal 280  
    Pombal and Pombalism 280  
    The 1755 earthquake 283  
    Pombal and Portuguese trade 286
## Contents

Pombaline industrial and agrarian reform 289  
The cowing of the higher nobility 292  
Pombaline regalism and the expulsion of the Jesuits 298  
Defence and education 305  

14. The Late Eighteenth Century: Finale of the Old Regime 311  
   Maria I and the *viradeira* 311  
   The Marian economy and the Marian Enlightenment 314  
   Subversion, police and internal security 319  
   Prince João and a world in turmoil 322  
   1807: the *ano tormentoso* 328  

*Glossary* 334  
*Bibliography* 341  
*Index* 356
Contents for Volume 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviations</th>
<th>page xiii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of maps</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps</td>
<td>xxiii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. North Africa
   Beginnings: the conquest of Ceuta 1
   The era of neo-Reconquest 5
   Retreat and stalemate 10
   Economic costs and benefits 13
   The disaster of Al-Ksar al-Kabir 16
   The fortresses after Al-Ksar al-Kabir 20

16. Exploring the Coasts of Atlantic Africa
   The role of Prince Henrique 27
   The Henrican voyages 30
   Coasts and rivers of Guinea 33
   Cão, Dias and the South Atlantic 35
   Long-distance voyaging and nautical technology 39
   Pêro de Covilhã and Prester John 42

17. Engaging with Atlantic Africa
   Profits on the fringes of the Sahara 45
   Dealing with competitors 47
   Crown and lançados in Upper Guinea 49
   Portuguese origins of Guinea-Bissau 54
   The gold of São Jorge da Mina 56
   Benin and the Niger delta 61
   The kingdom of Kongo 65
   The conquest of Ndongo 70
Contents for Volume 2

18. The Atlantic Islands and Fisheries
   - Portuguese beginnings in Madeira
   - Later development of Madeira: sugar, wine and over-population
   - Discovering, settling and developing the Azores
   - The Azores in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries
   - Portugal and the Canaries
   - The Cape Verde Islands: discovery, settlement and early growth
   - The Cape Verde Islands: the later years
   - São Tomé and Príncipe: the slave islands
   - The Newfoundland fisheries and the South Atlantic

19. Breakthrough to Maritime Asia
   - Vasco da Gama’s first voyage to India
   - Getting to know ‘the other’
   - Manueline dreaming
   - Albuquerque
   - Post-Albuquerquean consolidation
   - Escalating diplomacy

20. Empire in the East
   - The Estado da Índia
   - The crown and the pepper trade
   - Tapping into the inter-port trade
   - The carreira da Índia
   - Governing from afar
   - Late resurgent expansionism
   - Losses in the seventeenth century

21. Informal Presence in the East
   - Introducing the private trader
   - Private trade in western maritime Asia
   - Private trade in eastern maritime Asia
   - Soldiers-of-fortune
   - Informal settlements and settlers
   - Muzungos and prazo-holders in Mozambique
   - Catholics in an alien world

22. Brazil: Seizing and Keeping Possession
   - Early voyages and the age of feitorias
   - The Amerindians and their culture
   - Establishing settlements: the first hundred years
   - The disintegration of coastal Amerindian society
   - The impact of the Jesuits
# Contents for Volume 2

Early-seventeenth-century foreign European intrusions and the Dutch conquest of Pernambuco 221
The rule of Count Johan Maurits of Nassau-Siegen 223
The end of Netherlands Brazil 226

23. Formation of Colonial Brazil

   Trees and traders 232
   The coming of sugar 235
   The African slave trade to Brazil 238
   Ports and plantations; farms and ranches 241
   Portuguese colonists and miscegenation 244
   Early colonial slavery and slave society 247
   Escapees, the free poor and social control 252
   São Paulo and the southern interior 254
   The northeastern and northern interiors 259

24. Late Colonial Brazil

   Post-war reconstruction: sugar, tobacco and cattle 263
   The great mineral boom 267
   The free population of Minas Gerais in the age of gold 270
   Slavery in Minas Gerais 274
   Pombaline and post-Pombaline neo-mercantilism 277
   The economic resurgence of the late eighteenth century 280
   Extending the frontier and establishing borders in the north, west and south 285
   Intimations of separation 293

25. Holding on in India: The Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries 299

   Goa and its European rivals 299
   Portuguese, Omanis and Marathas 301
   Old and new patterns in the intercontinental trade 305
   The late colonial inter-port trade 310
   The *Estado da Índia*'s struggle for recovery in the late seventeenth century 314
   Conservatism and stagnation in the early eighteenth century 317
   Mid-eighteenth-century revival and expansion 319
   Goa and the reforms of Pombal 322
   The Pinto ‘conspiracy’ 327
   The British occupation of Goa 330

26. Eastern Empire in the Late Colonial Era: Peripheries 332

   The *Estado da Índia* beyond the sub-continent 332
   Macau and its trade: from crisis to recovery 332
   Macanese trade in the late eighteenth century 335
   A glimpse of Macanese society and government 337
   Macau and the mandarins of Guangzhou 339
### Contents for Volume 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macau’s relations with Beijing</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Macau câmara and the crown authorities</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toehold in Timor</td>
<td>347</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The loss of the Swahili coast</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ivory, gold and slave trades of Mozambique</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enter the Banias</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique: a territorial empire in the making?</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mozambique prazos after 1650</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique and the eighteenth-century reforms</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Glossary**                                                               | 368  |
**Bibliography**                                                          | 377  |
**Index**                                                                 | 401  |
Abbreviations

AHR  American Historical Review
BAR  British Archaeological Reports
CEHCA  Centro de Estudos de História e Cartografia Antiga
CIP  Antunes M (ed) Como interpretar Pombal? No bicenténário de sua morte
CNCDP  Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses
CP  Marques A H de O (ed) Chancelarias portuguesas. D. Afonso IV
CRB OM  Boxer C R Opera Minora
DA  Turner J (ed) The dictionary of art
DHDP  Albuquerque L de (dir) Dicionário de história dos descobrimentos portugueses
DHP  Serrão J (ed) Dicionário de história de Portugal
DIHP  Dicionário ilustrado da história de Portugal
EI  Gibb H A R et al (eds) Encyclopaedia of Islam
GE  Grande encyclopédia portuguesa e brasileira
HA  Chió M et al (eds) História da arte em Portugal
HAHR  Hispanic American Historical Review
HEPM  Baião A, Cidade H and Múrias M (eds) História da expansão portuguesa no mundo
HP  Mattoso J (dir) História de Portugal
LMS  Jayyusi S K et al (eds) The legacy of Muslim Spain
MedHP  Medina J (dir) História de Portugal dos tempos préhistoricos aos nossos dias
MHP  Marques A H de O History of Portugal vol 1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NHEP</td>
<td>Serrão J and Marques A H de O (dirs) Nova história da expansão portuguesa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHP</td>
<td>Serrão J and Marques A H de O (dirs) Nova história de Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDH</td>
<td>Portugal – dicionário histórico, corográfico, heráldico, biográfico, bibliográfico, numismático e artístico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHP</td>
<td>Peres D (dir) História de Portugal. Edição monumental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHC</td>
<td>Rodrigues F História da companhia de Jesus na assistência de Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHES</td>
<td>Revista de história económica e social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHP</td>
<td>Serrão J V História de Portugal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Maps

1. Portugal: physical features.
2. Roman Hispania at approximately the death of Viriatus, 139 BC.
3. Late Roman Hispania showing provinces and provincial capitals.
4. Portugal: major Roman cities and mining centres mentioned in the text.
5. Germanic Hispania: late sixth century AD.
6. Al-Andalus, mid-eighth century.
7. Gharb al-Andalus and the Portuguese Reconquest.
8. Portugal: traditional provinces and some leading towns.
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
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.
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 ascendency 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
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 Historia 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 Historia 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 Historia 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 historia 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.
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 last 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 Subrahmanyan; 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.
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.
MAP 4. Portugal: major Roman cities and mining centres mentioned in the text.
MAP 7. Gharb al-Andalus and the Portuguese Reconquest.
MAP 8. Portugal: traditional provinces and some leading towns.