

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-84644-8 - Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800

Edited by Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto

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PORTUGUESE OCEANIC EXPANSION, 1400–1800

This book presents a unique overview of Portuguese oceanic expansion between 1400 and 1800. The chapters treat a wide range of subjects – economy and society, politics and institutions, cultural configurations and comparative dimensions – and radically update data on and interpretations of the economic and financial trends of the Portuguese empire.

Interregional networks are analyzed in a substantial way. Patterns of settlement, political configurations, ecclesiastical structures, and local powers are put in global context. Language and literature, the arts, and science and technology are revisited with refreshing and innovative approaches. The interaction between Portuguese and local people is studied in different contexts, and the entire imperial and colonial culture of the Portuguese world is looked at synthetically for the first time. In short, this book provides a broad understanding of the Portuguese empire in its first four centuries as a factor in the history of the world and as a major component of European expansion.

Francisco Bethencourt is Charles Boxer Professor, King's College London. He is the author of *O imaginário da magia* and *L'inquisition à l'époque moderne: Espagne, Portugal, Italie, XV^e–XIX^e siècles* and the editor of *História da expansão Portuguesa* (with Kirti Chaudhuri) and *A memória da Nação* (with Diogo Ramada Curto). From 1982 to 1996 he taught at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa, and he has been a visiting professor at the Universidade de São Paulo and at Brown University. He has been Director of the National Library of Portugal and of the Gulbenkian Foundation Cultural Center in Paris.

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FOREWORD

Norman Fiering

The year 1998 marked the 500th anniversary of the landing of Vasco da Gama on the west coast of India after rounding the southern tip of Africa and crossing the Indian Ocean. The voyage was the outcome of decades of systematic effort by the Portuguese. Two years later, in 2000, the 500th anniversary of the Portuguese landing in Brazil was recognized internationally. These two events of incomparable importance changed the world forever.

In the mid-1990s, at Brown University, which is a national center for Luso-Brazilian studies, in the aftermath of the international commemorations of Columbus's historic voyages sponsored by the Spanish, we felt a certain responsibility to recognize the much less appreciated Portuguese achievement in that era of European expansion and global encounters.

Brown has a Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies, one of the few in the United States; an endowed Vasco da Gama Chair of History; and an unequalled collection of colonial Braziliana at the John Carter Brown Library, an independently funded and administered center for advanced research located on the campus. Representatives of these three different constituencies – specifically Onésimo Almeida, Francisco Bethencourt, Diogo Ramada Curto, and I – met for lunch in 1997 determined to use the Portuguese quincentenaries as a springboard for remedial action.

Our principal goal was to provide the English-speaking academic world with better, more up-to-date intellectual resources for telling the story of the Portuguese expansion in the early modern era. Good scholarly literature on the Portuguese colonial empire was at best scarce (the field has always been a small one in the United States), sometimes dated, and most of the time written in the Portuguese language.

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We drew up a hypothetical table of contents of a comprehensive collection of essays on the early Portuguese empire, with each essay designed to review a major area of activity in that era and to address the salient questions. We then sought foundation support, first to underwrite the commissioning of these essays and second to bring all of the proposed authors together in Providence over a period of several days for group critiques of each contribution.

Money was forthcoming from several foundations in Portugal, for which we are deeply grateful, and our mini-conference on Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400 to 1800, was held June 11 to 13, 1999. It is a pleasure to note here all who were present at this remarkable gathering, where each paper was intensively scrutinized and recommendations made for revision: Luis Felipe de Alencastro, Brazil; Francisco Bethencourt, Portugal; Diogo Ramada Curto, Portugal; Anthony Disney, Australia; Felipe Fernández-Armesto, United Kingdom; Malyn Newitt, United Kingdom; Michael Pearson, Australia; Jorge Pedreira, Portugal; John Russell-Wood, United States; Isabel dos Guimarães Sá, Portugal; Stuart Schwartz, United States; Luís Moura Sobral, Canada; John Thornton, United States; and George Winius, the Netherlands. Two contributors to the resulting volume of essays were not able to be present at this meeting: Francisco Domingues, Portugal, and Luís de Sousa Rebelo, United Kingdom. In the end, not all of those present ultimately produced an essay for the volume.

Collections such as this typically take a long time to evolve from the initial manuscript stage to printed book – in our case, an embarrassing seven years – and still, despite the luxury of time, the result never quite realizes early dreams of encyclopedic comprehensiveness. Some critics of this volume therefore may be quick to notice what is *not* in it, despite the broad promise of the title. News of such deficiencies will not be a surprise to those who put the book together. We accomplished what we could, given the usual practical limits.

The greatest obstacle to gaining a true understanding of the past is our human tendency to read the present into it. Because Portugal is not a world power at the moment, historians feel free to give it scant attention even when writing about sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. One of the missions of the John Carter Brown Library is to encourage approaches to the era of European expansion between 1400 and 1800 that take fully into account the astonishing initiatives of the Dutch and Portuguese, small countries that were big players at a particular moment. The expansion of Europe was without question the most important phenomenon in modern history, with an impact on every square inch of the globe. The consequences in moral terms were mixed, to say the least, but the sheer scope of the impact

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cannot be denied. The state of the world today traces back to the era of European expansion with only the slightest effort.

The organization of the study and teaching of history in the United States has in the past one hundred years been biased toward the history of the “great powers” of the past two centuries: England, France, Germany, and Russia. It is a case of history belonging to the victors. Yet anyone viewing the world in about 1600 without knowledge of what was to come would not have the same prejudices as existed around 1900.

The active interest by historians in what is now commonly called the “early modern period,” which has the advantage of paying little heed to such traditional continental European categories as “Renaissance” and “Enlightenment,” has compelled attention to the actual world situation between 1400 and 1800 and to the European overseas incursions that led to a reshaping of the world (as well as to the transformation of Europe itself).

In such contexts as “early modern” and “European expansion,” little Portugal is seen to have played a large role, to have met and conquered tremendous hurdles, and to have been pathbreaking in discoveries and deeds.

In viewing this early modern world and its overseas empires, it has become increasingly apparent how much these empires interacted with one another as economic and political rivals in vast maritime settings such as the Atlantic and the Indian oceans. Historians now speak regularly of an “Atlantic history,” which necessitates attention to Brazil and Angola and ultimately to the Portuguese empire as a whole.

Moreover, if history was written backward when the story of the “great powers” became dominant in the curriculum, it may also be written backward again when events at the end of the twentieth century reveal the past in a different light. With Iberia now a full participant in the community of European nations, some periods in Portugal’s past can only be seen as temporary digressions away from Europe, and the history of Portugal must be retold as having been integral to European history. As the progeny of Portuguese expansion continue to develop, such as in the case of Brazil, it also becomes more urgent to understand the nature and impact of Portuguese culture around the world. As Brazil grows in economic power and gains in stature in international affairs, the need will persist to understand its past and then by implication the past of the Portuguese empire as a whole.

The importance of the Portuguese empire in the history of mankind may be measured by the extraordinary number of people in different parts of the globe for whom to this day the Portuguese language is their mother tongue. The Lusophone world stretches from Macao to East Timor, to Goa, to Angola and Mozambique, to the Cape Verde islands and the Azores, and

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Brazil. Portuguese speakers outnumber nearly all other speakers of European languages – English and Spanish excepted. Goa, on the west coast of India, the virtual capital of the Portuguese Asian empire since 1510, was wrested from the Portuguese by the new nation-state of India only in 1961, after some 450 years of Portuguese rule. The stamp of Portuguese culture upon Goa is indelible, and to this day it remains a unique enclave on the Indian subcontinent.

Avoiding on the one hand a glorified or triumphal Eurocentrism and on the other a vapid, politicized multiculturalism or decentered “world history” that lacks a coherent narrative structure, the objective study of the facts of European expansion recognizes the central dynamic of modern history, but it does not gloss over the negative and profoundly disruptive effects of that expansion. Such a study does not fail to observe as well that in the great global interaction that followed, Europe was itself a huge beneficiary.

The economic integration of humankind, which is so overwhelmingly obvious today, had its beginnings under Portuguese auspices more than 500 years ago. If one is to arrive at a sound knowledge of this process of globalization, the Portuguese case must be closely considered, along with Spanish, Dutch, French, and English territorial and maritime expansion. This volume will make it infinitely easier for students and scholars to confront the Portuguese story.

*Director and Librarian Emeritus
The John Carter Brown Library*

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PREFACE

Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto

The planning for this volume took place during an extended period of collective work that began as a conference at the John Carter Brown Library in June 1999. At this meeting, we discussed the potential significance of the collection and circulated initial versions of our texts. A second, more extended discussion followed, with revised versions of the chapters and a clearer and more coherent sense of the overall shape of the volume to follow. In some cases, the process of redacting and correcting texts in English led to further delays in a process that at its outset was conceived as being far less lengthy than it turned out to be. However, the structure of the collection was relatively stable from the very beginning, notwithstanding certain lacunae that became difficult to fill.

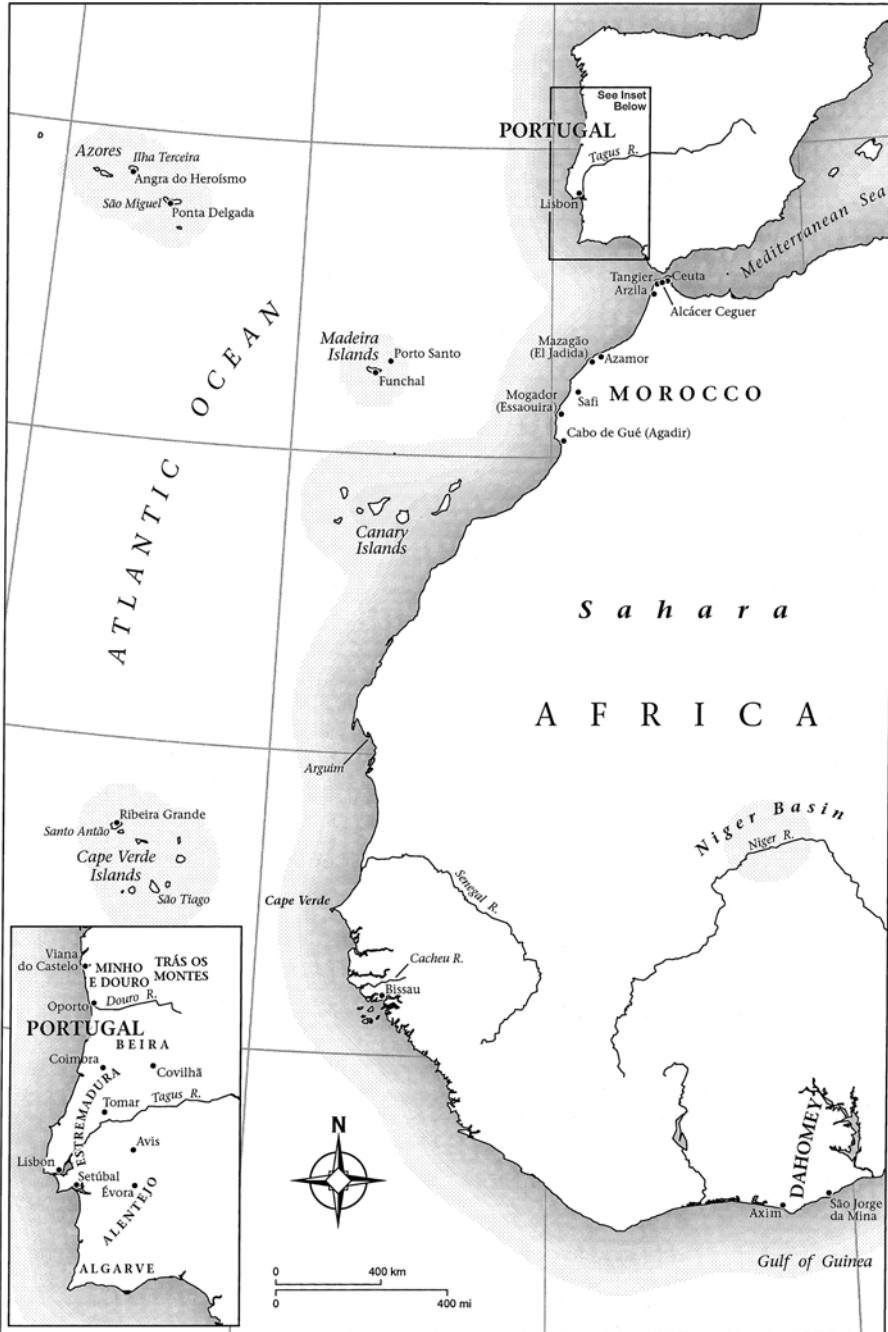
Our special thanks go to Onésimo Teotónio Almeida of the Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at Brown University, who took the initial planning and organizational stages of the conference upon himself and followed the project through to its completion. We are indebted as well to Professor Philip Benedict for his close reading of one of the essays. Another expression of gratitude goes to Dr. José Blanco of the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian and to Dr. Rui Machette of the Luso-American Development Foundation (FLAD) for making the conference possible. The final product owes a great debt to Norman Fiering, Director of the John Carter Brown Library until July 2006, for accepting the project at the exemplary institution he oversaw for twenty-three years, for taking a principal role in the discussions of the texts, and for consistently stimulating us in our role as coordinators of the project. He has also played a crucial part in revising the texts, demanding that unclear ideas be made more explicit and correcting successive versions of the papers. His efforts made it possible for two

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Portuguese historians to serve as editors of a volume in which the majority of contributors were native English speakers. The publication of this volume would have been inconceivable without his involvement, dedication, and exemplary intellectual activity.

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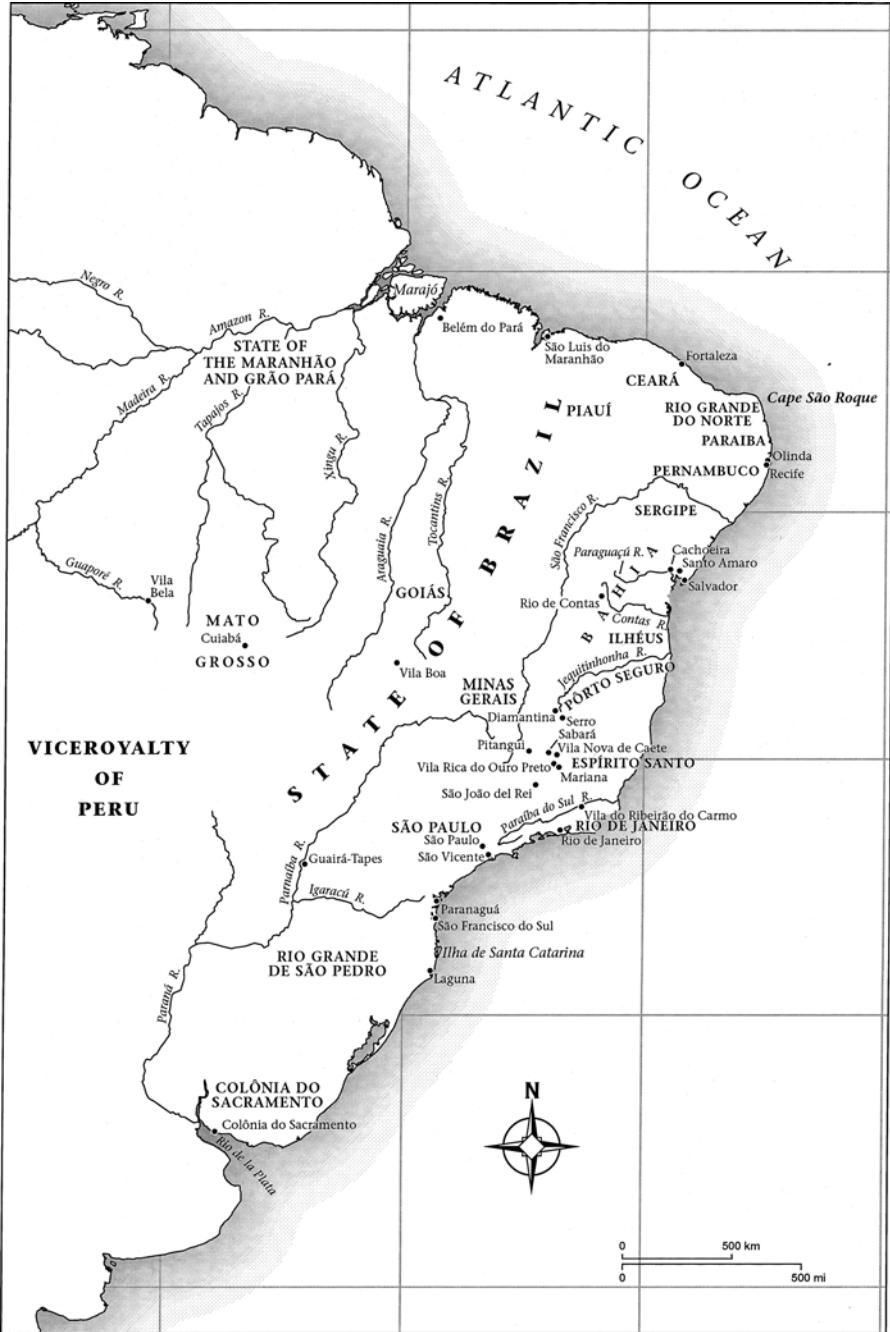
Map 1. Portuguese settlements on the west coast of Africa and on the Atlantic islands.

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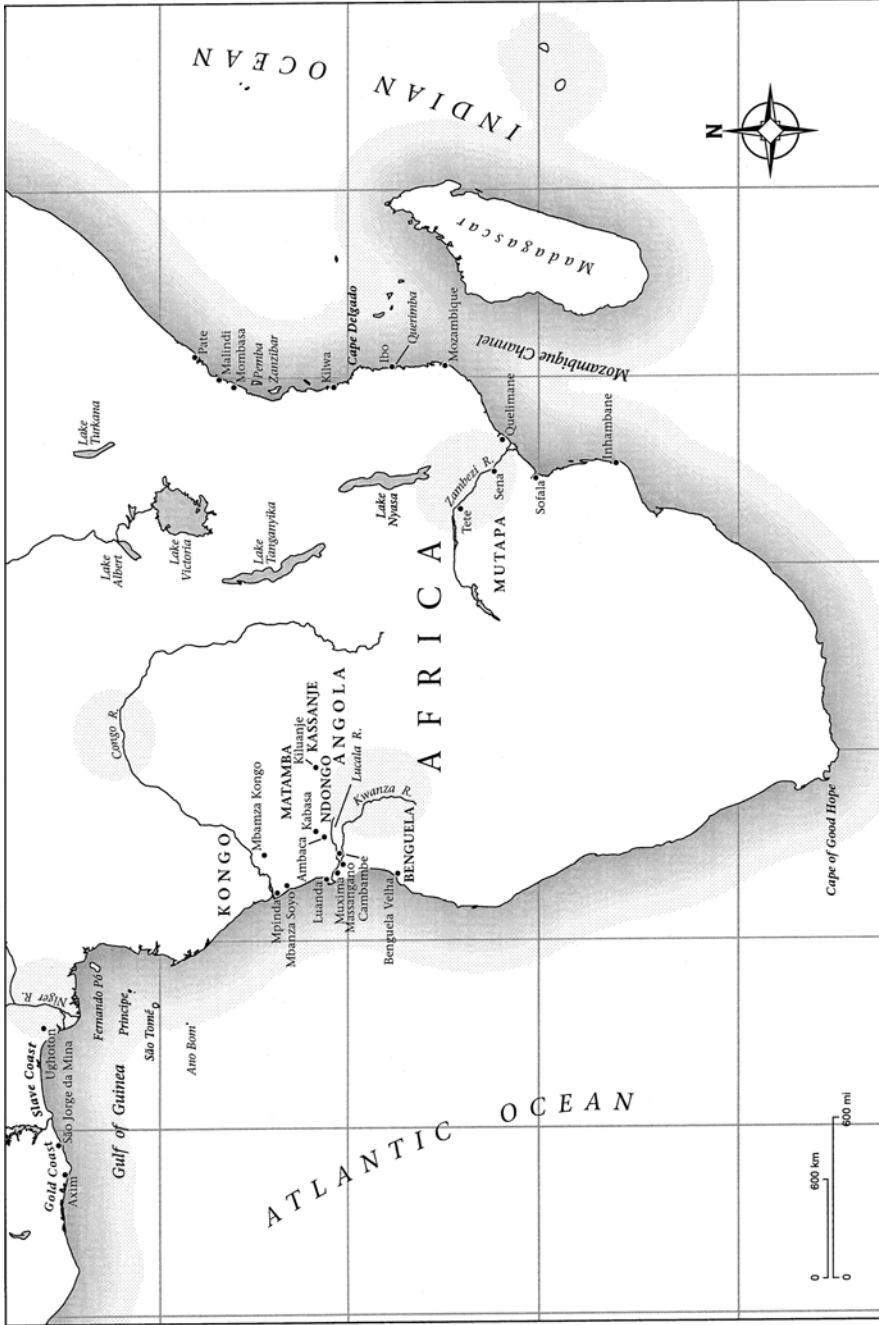
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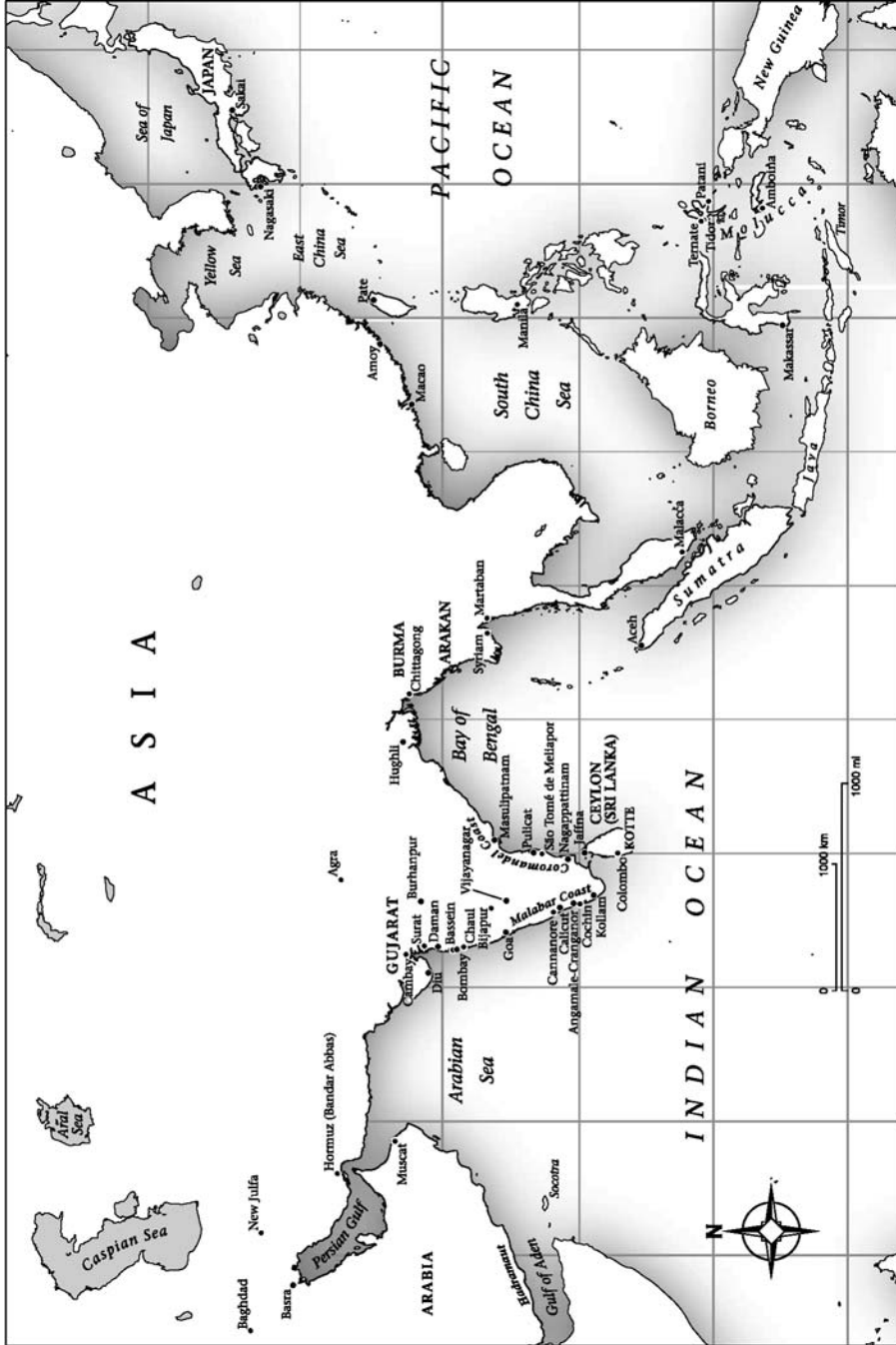
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Map 2. Portuguese settlements in Brazil.



Map 3. Portuguese settlements and main points of trade in Central and East Africa.

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Map 4. Portuguese settlements and main points of trade in Asia.