

A CONCISE HISTORY OF PORTUGAL

This concise, illustrated history of Portugal offers an introduction to the people and culture of the country, its empire, and its search for economic modernisation, political stability and international partnership. It remains the standard single-volume work on Portugal, studying the effects of the vast wealth mined from Portuguese Brazil, the growth of the wine trade, and the evolution of international ties. 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Portuguese Revolution of 1820 to 1851 created a liberal monarchy, but in 1910 the king was overthrown and, by 1926, had been replaced by a dictatorship. In 1975, Portugal withdrew from its African colonies and looked north to become a democratic member of the European Community in 1986. This third edition brings the story up to date, with a new afterword to reflect recent changes in Portugal, Europe, and the wider world.

DAVID BIRMINGHAM is Emeritus Professor of Modern History at the University of Kent, Canterbury.

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A CONCISE HISTORY OF PORTUGAL

Third Edition

DAVID BIRMINGHAM

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For
Alberto Romão Dias
and
Jill R. Dias

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The first edition of this book was researched in the 1980s after many Portuguese academics had returned from exile following the revolution of 1974. It was based on their published works and their original research. My own contribution derived from a feeling for Portuguese culture gained while studying the history of the Portuguese empire in Africa. That work culminated in the publication of *A Short History of Modern Angola* in 2015. Since the earlier edition of the present history was written, post-imperial Portugal has rolled on as the country took steps to ally itself with Europe in a free trade area and eventually a currency union.

In this third, enhanced edition of the book, prepared in 2017, I have attempted to stand back and assess the changes that have affected Portuguese society as its leaders negotiated the economic hiccups of the twenty-first century. The country was harshly hit by the financial crash of 2008 and many employees in the state sector saw their standard of living deteriorate. By contrast, a few private sector branches of industry did rather well combining middle levels of technology with relatively cheap rates of pay. Agriculture, however, continued to struggle and even the booming tourist industry went through years of rollercoaster uncertainty.

Migration had been a central feature of Portuguese experience since late medieval times and continued to be a dynamic influence in the twenty-first century. High-flying Portuguese, be they football players, bureaucrats, engineers or financiers,

found lucrative first-world positions in Europe and North America. Meanwhile, middle-ranking artisans grasped new employment opportunities which opened up in Africa as Angola benefited from a temporary boom in the price of crude oil and from Chinese investment in infrastructure projects. Portuguese craftsmen and managers – probably 100,000 or more – travelled south with the building trade. An important feature of the Africa dimension was a kind of ‘reverse neo-colonialism’ as the ruling families of Angola invested some of their bounty in Portugal. Portuguese service and financial industries, which had been targeted by Spanish investors when Portugal first entered Europe, fell into the hands of Angolans as the government negotiated the rocky road to austere survival by privatising state-owned industries.

By 2017 Portugal was once more quietly flourishing. Its pride had been enhanced by the grant of the Nobel Prize in Literature to José Saramago, and the world recognised the skill of its leaders by electing a former prime minister, António Guterres, to be Secretary-General of the United Nations.



Map 1 Portugal

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