

LITTLE HISTORY OF PORTUGAL

Throughout the centuries which witnessed the conquest of Lusitania and destruction of Carthaginian power by Rome, the establishment and decline of Latin civilization, the invasion by Alani, Suevi and other barbarian races, the resettlement under Visigothic rule and the overthrow of the Visigoths by Arab and Berber tribes from Africa, today's Portugal remained an undifferentiated part of Iberian Peninsula, without sign of national consciousness.

The Portuguese people have sought to identify their race with the ancient Lusitani, and have claimed for it a separate and continuous existence dating from the 2nd century B.C. The revolt of Lusitania against the Romans has been regarded as an early manifestation of Portuguese love of liberty, Viriathus as a national hero. This reality was perpetuated in the title of the *Lusiadas* epic, has no historical foundation, and Viriathus has also been born in Loriga, in the Hermínius mountains, current `Serra da Estrela`, in Portugal. In 1095 Portugal was an obscure border fief of the kingdom of Leon. Its territories, far from the centers of European civilization and consisting largely of mountain, moorland and forest, were bounded on the north by the Minho, on the south by the Mondego.

Its name (Portucelia, Terra portucalensis) was derived from the little seaport of Portus Cale or Vila Nova de Gaia, now a suburb of Porto, at the mouth of the Douro. Its inhabitants, surrounded by Moorish and Christian enemies and distracted by civil war, derived such rudiments of civilization as they possessed from Arabic or Leonese sources. But from these obscure beginnings Portugal rose in four centuries to be the greatest maritime, commercial and colonial power in Europe.

The history of the nation comprises eleven periods.

1095 - 1279 A Portuguese kingdom was established independent from Leon and extended southwards until it reached its present continental limits.

1279 - 1415 The monarchy was gradually consolidated in spite of resistance from the Church, the nobles and the rival kingdom of Castile.

1415 - 1499 A period of crusades and discoveries, culminating in the discovery of an ocean-route to India (1497—1499).

1499 - 1580 Portugal acquired an empire stretching from Brazil eastward to the Moluccas, reached the zenith of its prosperity and entered upon a period of swift decline.

1581 - 1640 Spanish kings ruled over Portugal

1640 - 1755 The chief event of these years was the restoration of the Portuguese monarchy.

1755 - 1826 The reforms of the Marquis of Pombal and the Peninsular War prepared the country for a change from absolutism to constitutional monarchy.

1826 - 1910 Portugal was a constitutional Monarchy, and Brazil becomes independent.

1910 - 1926 The Republic was established.

1926 - 1974 Portugal was under a dictatorial regime.

1974 A democratic regime was established.

Existing as a country since 1140, and with almost always the same main territory border line since the 13th century, Portugal has always been turned to the sea. Since early, fishing and overseas commerce have been main economical activities. The political separation induced slow differentiation of Galician-Portuguese into today's Galician and Portuguese languages, though there are still lots of commonalities.

Henry the Navigator's interest in exploration together with some technological developments in navigation brought together, gave way to the Portuguese expansion and to great geographical knowledge advancements.

Pedro Alvares Cabral sailed to India but steered far westward to avoid the winds and currents of the Guinea coast, reached Brazil (1500) and claimed it for his sovereign. João da Nova discovered Ascension in 1501 and Saint Helena 1502; Tristão da Cunha was the first to sight the archipelago still known by his name 1506. In East Africa small Islamic states along the coast of Mozambique, Kilwa, Brava and Mombasa were destroyed or became subjects or allies of Portugal. Pedro de Covilham had reached Abyssinia as early as 1490; In the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, one of Cabral's ships discovered Madagascar (1501), which was partly explored by Tristão da Cunha (1507); Mauritius was discovered in 1507, Socotra occupied in 1506, and in the same year D. Lourenco d'Almeida visited Ceylon.

In the Red Sea Massawa was the most northerly point frequented by the Portuguese until 1541, when a fleet under Estevão da Gama penetrated as far as Suez. Mormuz, in the Persian Gulf, was seized by Alfonso d'Albuquerque (1515), who also entered into diplomatic relations with Persia.

On the Asiatic mainland the first trading-stations were established by Cabral at Cochín and Calicut (1501); more important, however, were the conquest of Goa (1510) and Malacca (1511) by Albuquerque, and the acquisition of Diu (1535) by Martim Afonso de Sousa. East of Malacca, Albuquerque sent Duarte Fernandes as envoy to Thailand (1511), and dispatched to the Moluccas two expeditions (1512, 1514), which founded the Portuguese dominion in the Malay Archipelago (q.v.). Fernão Pires de Andrade visited Canton in 1517 and opened up trade with China, where in 1557 the Portuguese were permitted to occupy Macao. Japan, accidentally reached by three Portuguese traders in 1542, soon attracted large numbers of merchants and missionaries. In 1522 one of the ships in the expedition that portuguese Ferdinand Magellan organized in the Spanish service completed the first voyage around the world.

By the end of the 15th century, Portugal expelled the local Jews, including those refugees that came from Castile and Aragon after 1492.

However, lots of Jews converted to Catholicism and remained as Conversos. Many remained as hiddenly Jewish and were persecuted by the Portuguese Inquisition. Those who fled reached such prominence in commerce that for centuries a "Portuguese" abroad was presumed a Jew of Portuguese descent. On December 1, 1640, Portugal regained its independence from Spain and John IV of Portugal became king. Spain recognized Portugal as an independent nation on February 13, 1668.

Following its heyday as a world power during the 15th and 16th centuries, Portugal lost much of its wealth and status with the destruction of Lisbon in a giant 1755 earthquake. The centuries alliance with England brought French occupation during the Napoleonic Wars. Another blow was the loss of its Brazilian colony in 1822. A 1910 revolution deposed the monarchy starting then a period of chaotic republicanism (primeira Republica); in 1926 a nationalist military coup began a period of more than five decades of repressive fascist governments, mostly under the rule of António de Oliveira Salazar. Lots of poor Portuguese had to emigrate to Brazil and Northwestern Europe. On April 25, 1974, a effectively bloodless left-wing military coup installed a government that instituted broad democratic reforms. The following year Portugal granted independence to its colonies in Africa (Portuguese East Africa, Portuguese West Africa, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe and Portuguese Guinea) and lost its colony of Portuguese Timor in Asia to an Indonesian invasion. Portugal entered the EC in January 1, 1986 and joined the euro single currency in 2002. The last world exposition of the 20th century was held in Lisbon in 1998 and the country organized the 2004 European football championship. Macao was devolved to the People's Republic of China in 1999.