

The First Globalization: Portugal, the Age of Exploration, and Engaging the “Other” in the
Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries

In 1463, the Portuguese royal chronicler Gomes Eanes de Zurara completed his *Chronica do Descobrimento e Conquista de Guiné*, “The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea.” In his work, Zurara states five reasons outlining the Portuguese decision to expand from metropolitan Portugal.¹ Interestingly, though, Zurara proposes his own sixth reason for Portuguese expansion—“the inclination of the heavenly wheels.”² It is the transition from this sense of divine will to an agenda distinguished by material realism that defines Portuguese overseas expansion. During the Age of Exploration, the Portuguese hoped to institute trade relations with India and the Orient by finding a sea route around the west coast of Africa. A sea route to Asia would theoretically allow the Portuguese to bypass land-trade through the Islamic controlled Levant, increasing profit margins and avoiding conflict with the Muslim-dominated region. Throughout this period, the Portuguese experienced a series of initial encounters. Opening trade relations and building an empire was a process, not a decision—a process that was defined by the confronting of new peoples whose alien customs often proved tough to understand. Furthermore, language barriers made communication between natives and non-natives complicated. A.J.R. Russell-Wood states, “the Portuguese were exposed to a

¹ Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *The Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*, vol 1. C.R. Beasley and Edgar Prestage eds. and trans., (New York: Burt Franklin Publisher: Works of the Hakluyt Society; 1st Ser., No. 95), 29.

² Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol 1. 29.

diversity of political regimes and commercial practices, as well as to all major religions.”³ As the process of globalization lasted over a century, so too did these encounters. In Africa, Asia, and the Americas, Portugal was the first European power to initiate encounters between Muslims and Christians, Europeans and Africans, and Asians and Americans, on a truly global scale.

What began as an endeavor to connect two economic hubs, however, evolved into an era of imperialism that affected the European perception of foreigners and inevitably “shrunk” the world. In tracing the Portuguese Voyages of Discovery down the west coast of Africa, around the Cape of Good Hope, and into the Pacific maritime system, **it becomes apparent that encounters with the “other”⁴ were tied to economic realities, and that these realities changed depending on the location of the Portuguese Empire. While initial exploration was motivated by a nostalgic crusader enthusiasm, this was replaced by the financial realities of expansion and the complexities of developing an advanced international system of commerce.** Despite an early tendency to rely on force, the Portuguese quickly realized that overt conquest was not a feasible means of maximizing profit. Consequently, they abandoned the practice of slave raiding in North Atlantic Africa in favor of the more financially rewarding slave trade. Sailing further down the Atlantic coast of Africa, the Portuguese relied more heavily on African intermediaries and transformed themselves into diplomats. In the Kingdom of Kongo, they found an ally that was willing to adopt both their cultural and religious practices in a uniquely African manner. Once the Portuguese reached the Orient, relations with the “other”

³ A.J.R. Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire, 1415-1808: A World on the Move*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 10.

⁴ I use the term “other” to designate any non-Portuguese actors in the process of globalization. While “race-relations” would describe a similar concept, the notion of race is a modern concept that does not accurately relate the relationship between the Portuguese and foreigners.

increasingly depended on cooperation and trust. Even though the Portuguese were embarrassed on their first voyage to India, they modified their approach to empire and learned how to insert themselves into the local trade systems by collaborating with the “other” . Ultimately, **the notion of *native* and *foreigner* becomes unclear because the most effective method of navigating alien spheres was to integrate oneself into the local practices.** Moreover, initial encounters and the ensuing development of relations with the “other” shed light on the evolution of Medieval society into the early modern period by exhibiting the slow change in the priorities of the Portuguese official and unofficial agenda. The methods by which the Portuguese engaged with the “other” matured and were reshaped with the growth of the empire.

The Importance of Ceuta

Portuguese overseas expansion began in 1415 with the military operation to capture the North African city of Ceuta. The impetus for expansion, however, began with the disputed regal succession of 1383 because the death of King Fernando raised the question of Portugal as an independent kingdom. Fernando and Leonor Teles (queen consort) had only one daughter, Beatriz, who married Juan I of Castile. Juan I sought the Portuguese throne upon the death of Fernando, hoping to integrate Portugal into the Castilian kingdom. The Portuguese elite, called the House of twenty-four, were opposed to uniting under the Castilian crown and advocated for João of Avis, the bastard son of Pedro I, to ascend to the throne. Leonor Teles fled to Castile in an attempt to escape from João of Avis and João assumed de facto control of Lisbon in 1384. At the Portuguese *cortes*⁵ of 1385, notable jurist João das Regras (literally John of the Rules), argued in favor of João of Avis’ claim to the Portuguese throne, and in 1387 João of Avis

⁵ Representative assembly composed of members of the nobility, clergy, and bourgeoisie.

married Philippa of Lancaster, establishing an Anglo-Portuguese alliance that rivaled the alliance of Castile and France.⁶ With the threat of English support, João of Avis was able to solidify control of Portugal and establish the Dynasty of Avis (1385-1580) that would rule during the subsequent Age of Exploration.

After João of Avis had become king, the Portuguese wanted to demonstrate that it had become a legitimate world power. Historian A.R. Disney writes “the impact of ‘plague’ had subsided and João I had established himself securely on the Portuguese throne. In 1411, peace had been made with Castile, and Portugal entered upon a period of economic recovery and political renewal.”⁷ The notion of reconquest, then, became the initial motivation for Portuguese expansion. Disney affirms, “The Kings of Portugal, Castile and Aragon all claimed to be the rightful heirs to an ancient Visigothic North Africa wrongfully taken from their forefathers by Muslim conquerors in the early eighth century.”⁸ The seizure of Ceuta served two purposes; it sent a message to other European powers that Portugal was a legitimate kingdom, and it evoked the time-honored sentiment of reconquest. Furthermore, it taught the Portuguese valuable lessons regarding expansion. Firstly, the Portuguese would need better ships if they were to sail down the coast of Africa, a lesson that resulted in the development of the *caravela latina*. “The *caravela latina*,” Disney says, “was a small vessel, usually of between twenty and eighty tons...[its] cargo capacity was rather limited; but it was highly maneuverable, performed well in both inshore and ocean waters and could sail far closer to the wind than that other contemporary

⁶ Ana Valdez, “Prince Henrique the Navigator.” (Lecture, University of Massachusetts Lowell, Lowell, MA, February 2, 2015).

⁷ A.R. Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire, vol. II*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 2.

⁸ Disney, *vol. II*, 2.

work-horse, the square rigged *barca*.”⁹ Second, the Portuguese realized that they would need better supplies and supply lines to support overseas expansion. Lastly, the Portuguese would need to prepare for the extreme African climates.¹⁰ Royal chronicler Gomes Eanes de Zurara alluded to these realizations in his narrative of the *Infante*¹¹ Dom Henrique (1394-1460), who João I trusted with the operational command of the Capture of Ceuta. Written three decades after the sack of the city, Zurara recounted,

On that day, the blows dealt out were conspicuous beyond those of all other men...neither the heat, though it was very great, nor the amount of his toil, were able to make him retire and take any rest...Yet he was not well content with his victory, because the chance of taking the town of Gibraltar, for which he had made preparation, did not offer itself to him. The chief reason of his being thus hindered was the roughness of the winter, which was just beginning; for although the sea at that time is dangerous everywhere, it is much more so at that very part because of the great currents that are there.¹²

Additionally, Zurara described the colonization of “five islands” which provided convenient locations for the Portuguese to resupply during expeditions to and from the west African coast. Zurara notes, “he [Dom Henrique] caused to be peopled in the great Sea of Ocean five islands...especially Madeira; and from this isle, as well as the others, our country drew large supplies of wheat, sugar, wax, honey and wood...”¹³ These islands were likely the Azores and Canary Islands.¹⁴

Ideally, the takeover of Ceuta would have been the blueprint for Portuguese expansion. C.R. Boxer maintains, “the occupation of Ceuta undoubtedly enabled the Portuguese to obtain some information about the Negro lands of the Upper Niger and Senegal rivers here the gold

⁹ Disney, *vol. II*, 40.

¹⁰ P. E. Russell, *Prince Henrique "the Navigator": a life*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 42.

¹¹ Prince

¹² Zurara, *Chronicle. vol I.*, 17-18.

¹³ Zurara, *Chronicle. vol. I.*, 18.

¹⁴ C. R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415-1825*. 2nd ed. (Manchester: Carcanet in Association with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1991), 16.

came from.”¹⁵ A.R. Disney, likewise, asserts, “After 1415 every Portuguese ruler from João I to Manuel I became deeply enmeshed in North Africa.”¹⁶ What is noteworthy about this maneuver, though, is that it was primarily inspired by Medieval ideals, and the lessons learned from the sack were not directly applicable to future expeditions. Zurara’s treatment of the Infante Dom Henrique, who stimulated African exploration, is shrouded with tones of chivalry, imperial romanticism, and crusading fervor. The mass and knighting ceremony performed by João after the capture of the city reflects these Medieval concerns. “The king,” related Zurara,

arrived accompanied by his sons, by the Constable, the Master of the Order of Christ and the Prior of the Hospital, joining all the other barons and nobles and great lords who were assembled there, all clothed with great magnificence in honor of so important a festival...When they came before the king, first the Infante Dom Duarte fell to his knees and, drawing his sword from the scabbard, kissed it and gave it to him, and from the hand of his father he was made a knight. And his brothers did the same, and when this was over they kissed the hand of the king...¹⁷

Portuguese exploration down the west coast of Africa is also characterized by similar Medieval values. Consequently, initial encounters with natives are best understood through a Medieval lens—that is, one that considers Portuguese action as distinguished by its search for glory as much as for commerce. The further that the Portuguese reach from their metropolis, however, the less useful this lens becomes because this value system was not an effective method of instituting positive relations. In short, as the Portuguese journey further from the Iberian Peninsula, the more progressive they become in their relationships with foreigners.

From Raiders to Traders

¹⁵ Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 19.

¹⁶ Disney, *vol. II.*, 5.

¹⁷ Gomes Eanes de Zurara, *Crónica da Tomada de Ceuta*, Malyn Newitt trans. In M.D. Newitt, *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2010), 27-28.

The introduction to Zurara's *Chronicle of the Discovery and Conquest of Guinea*

exemplifies the Medieval tone that would mark the experience of the Portuguese in northwest Africa. "Here beginneth the Chronicle," Zurara exclaimed,

in which set down all the notable deeds that were achieved in the Conquest of Guinea, written by command of the most high and revered Prince and most virtuous Lord the Infant Don Henrique, Duke of Viseu and Lord of Covilham, Ruler and Governor of the Chivalry of the Order of Jesus Christ. The which Chronicle was collected into this volume by command of the most high and excellent, and most powerful Lord the King Don Affonso the Fifth of Portugal.¹⁸

Clearly, Zurara is concerned with the reputation of his Kingdom and the prestige and honor that foreign exploration would bring to Portugal. It is of particular importance to notice one of the titles held by Prince Henrique—*Ruler and Governor of the Chivalry of the Order of Jesus Christ*. Prince Henrique held a monopoly on African exploration until 1460. Consequently, salvation was the primary justification for the enslavement of locals. This salvation was confirmed by a plenary indulgence given to Henrique by Pope Eugene IV, and would be supported by three Papal Bulls in the 1490's.¹⁹ Likewise, the search for "Prester John," a legendary Christian king that supposedly resided in the heart of Africa, propelled Portuguese exploration, albeit after the initial wave of success in Guinea. Connecting with a Christian empire in Africa would have given Portugal an ally against Islam in the southern hemisphere.²⁰

Before this plenary indulgence, however, a ship captained by Antam Gonçalves brought back the first captives to Portugal in 1441. During the 1430's Prince Henrique had sent multiple

¹⁸ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I., 1.

¹⁹ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I., 53.

²⁰ Francisco Alvares, *The Prester John of the Indies; a True Relation of the Lands of the Prester John, Being the Narrative of the Portuguese Embassy to Ethiopia in 1520*. Lord Stanley of Alderley trans., C.F. Beckingham and G.W.B. Huntingford eds. (Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society ; 2nd Ser., No. 114-115. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).

expeditions down the coast with the goal of rounding Cape Bojador,²¹ which had not hitherto been explored “not from cowardice or want of good will, but from the novelty of the thing and the wide-spread and ancient rumor about this Cape.”²² In 1434, under the captainship of one of Henrique’s squires, Gil Eanes, the Portuguese rounded the intimidating “Cape Bojador.” Soon after, they reached what Zurara called the “*Rio d’Ouro*.”²³ At the *Rio d’Ouro* the Portuguese came across gold dust and seals, which “provided the first material evidence that voyaging beyond the known sea lanes of Atlantic Morocco might yield commercial dividends.”²⁴

Despite having acquired an abundant amount of seals, Gonçalves was not content with his ships booty. After giving a speech about the Portuguese “right” to capture a native, Gonçalves chose a group of nine men to disembark from their vessel and go ashore and track down a group of natives whom “if God grant us to encounter them, the very least part of our victory will be the capture of one of them, with the which the Infante will feel no small content, getting knowledge by that means of what kind are other dwellers of this land.”²⁵ The belief that the Portuguese were entitled to apprehend a local manifests the Medieval mindset that typified Portuguese action up to this point.

The nine men tracked down a group of forty or fifty natives but could not manage an attack on such a large group.²⁶ On the way back to their ship, however, “they saw a naked man

²¹ According to Disney, this Cape was most likely not the modern Cape Bojador, but rather Cape Juby, some 200 kilometers to the north of Cape Bojador. Nevertheless, “the 1434 voyage represented a significant psychological breakthrough which owed much to Henrique’s persistence.”

Disney, *vol. II.*, 5.

²² Zurara, *Chronicle*, *vol. I.*, 31.

²³ *River of Gold*. This was actually a deep bay that the Portuguese mistook for a river.

²⁴ Disney, *vol. II.*, 31.

²⁵ Zurara, *Chronicle*, *vol. I.*, 41.

²⁶ Zurara, *Chronicle*, *vol. I.*, 42.

following a camel, with two *assegais*²⁷ in his hand...But though he was only one, and saw the others that they were many; yet had he had a mind to prove those arms of his right worthily and began to defend himself as best he could, shewing [sic] a bolder front than his strength warranted. But Affonso Gotterres wounded him with a javelin, and put the Moor in such great fear that he threw down his arms like a beaten thing.”²⁸ The crew also captured a “black Mooress” on the way back to their ship, whom they believed was a slave of the party they were tracking.²⁹

An interesting facet of this initial encounter is Gonçalves’s assertion that the Portuguese had a God given right to apprehend and enslave a foreigner.³⁰ The notion that the Portuguese were somehow “better” than the “others” they encountered pervades Zurara’s recounting of the event. On the contrary, the fact that Zurara recalled the bravery of the naked man suggests that on one level the Portuguese admired the raw courage of the “other,” or perhaps, saw a bit of themselves within the naked man. After all, this initial encounter was not one sided, and this was most likely the first time that the naked man had seen a white person. A later expedition recalled the shock that a group of natives had upon first seeing Portuguese ships: “It is asserted that when for the first time they saw the sails, that is, ships, on the sea (which neither they nor their forefathers had ever seen before), they believed that they were great sea-birds with white wings, which were flying, and had come from some strange place; when the sails were lowered for the landing, some of them, watching from far off, thought that the ships were fishes...”³¹ For the

²⁷ A type of spear.

²⁸ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I., 42-43.

²⁹ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I., 43.

³⁰ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I., 41.

³¹ Cadamosto, Alouïsde da, *The Voyages of Cadamosto and other documents on Western Africa in the second half of the fifteenth century*. G.R. Crone, trans. and ed., (London: Hakluyt Society, 1937), 20.

Portuguese, this lack of European technological progress on the part of the natives warranted a paternalistic approach to empire. The same journal, reflecting on the fear that the natives likely felt said, “You should know that these people have no knowledge of any Christians except the Portuguese, against whom they have waged war for [thirteen or] fourteen years, many of them having been taken prisoners, as I have already said, and sold into slavery.”³²

Gonçalves quickly realized that neither he, nor his “Arab interpreter,” could converse with the captives. Language at this point, however, was not a primary concern for the Portuguese because they were acting as looters and had no explicit need to engage in conversation with the natives.³³ The novelty of a foreign body was enough to satisfy the Portuguese, and specifically, Prince Henrique. Moreover, a few Portuguese freelancers had begun to penetrate the Upper Guinean interior and would act as valuable intermediaries in the second half of the fifteenth century.³⁴ It is puzzling, though, that Zurara omits a description of the physical characteristics of the captives considering that this was the first recorded incident in which the Portuguese had seen a West-African in his native territory. Additionally, it should have been telling that because these captives did not speak “Arab,” they were not Northwest African Muslims. Nonetheless, this *was* the first direct recorded encounter between Europeans and West-Africans and the Portuguese were to learn from their actions.

Zurara expresses his conflicting feelings regarding the treatment of natives after the Gonçalves crew, supported by a second vessel, made another successful raid in which they

³² Cadamosto, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, 20.

³³ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I., 45.

³⁴ Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 31.

detained a supposed nobleman. “As you know that naturally every prisoner desireth to be free,”

Zurara relayed,

...seeing himself held in captivity, although he was very gently treated, greatly desired to be free, and often asked Antam Gonçalvez to take him back to his country, where he declared he would give for himself five or six Black Moors; and also he said that there were among the other captives two youths for whom a like ransom would be given...For as the Moor told him, the least they would give for them would be ten Moors, and it was better to save ten souls than three—for though they were black, yet had they souls like the others, all the more as these blacks were not of the lineage of the Moors but were gentiles, and so the better to bring into the path of salvation.³⁵

As with the naked man, Zurara expressed a type of sympathy for the situation of the nobleman.

Taken from his home and displayed in front of Prince Henrique, the nobleman was a living trophy. That said, Zurara again relies on the idea of salvation to justify Portuguese actions. That the noble could be exchanged for ten or more Moors legitimized Portuguese slave raiding because if the exchange occurred, not just one, but ten men would be “saved.” In this instance, then, the Portuguese were acting as raiders and enslavers for the glory of God and their patron Prince Henrique. Even though Zurara is sympathetic towards the nobleman, salvation was a critical aspect of Portuguese exploration at this time and would continue to be the ideology held throughout the 1440’s. One encounter was particularly gruesome, amounting to the capture of 165 men, women, and children, in which mothers were drowning their children to avoid capture.³⁶ Despite this brutality, Zurara reported, “And at last our Lord God, who giveth a reward for every good deed, willed that for the toil they had undergone in his service, they should that day obtain victory over their enemies...”³⁷ Again, Zurara’s account here exhibits the Medieval features of initial exploration.

³⁵ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I., 55.

³⁶ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I., 66.

³⁷ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I., 66.

When the first captives eventually reached Portugal, they served to inspire more exploration. “When they [those who had doubted Prince Henry],” Zurara declared, “saw the first Moorish captives brought home...they became already somewhat doubtful about the opinion they had at first expressed; and altogether renounced it when they saw the third consignment that Nuno Tristam brought home, captured in so short a time, and with so little trouble...And so they were forced to turn their blame into public praise; for they said it was plain the Infante was another Alexander...”³⁸ From this point on, G.R. Crone claims that “Discovery was no longer pursued for its own ends, but as a source of personal gain.”³⁹ Zurara’s comparison of Prince Henrique to Alexander the Great epitomizes the Portuguese reverence for the past and exhibits the Medieval mindset that still defined the Portuguese attitude regarding exploration. The encounter with the noble, however, foreshadowed a change in the approach to interacting with the “other”. Notably, there was now an incentive for the Portuguese to converse with the foreigners with whom they were interacting because slave trading was more profitable than slave raiding. C.R. Boxer estimates that the Portuguese acquired around 150,000 slaves between 1450 and 1500, most of which were acquired via trade with powerful African chiefs who “were always willing partners in the slave trade.”⁴⁰ Thus, over time, the Portuguese would transform from pirates to diplomats.

Part of this transformation can be seen in the journal of the voyages of Alouise Cadamosto, an Italian merchant hired by Prince Henrique. Unlike Zurara, Cadamosto had no direct ties to the Portuguese crown. As a result, his journal is more impartial when compared to

³⁸ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I., 61.

³⁹ G.R. Crone, *Notes regarding The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents on Western Africa in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century*. G.R. Crone, trans. and ed., (London: Hakluyt Society, 1937), 20.

⁴⁰ Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 31.

Zurara's. Even so, he was a patron of Prince Henrique, and his journals reflect the Portuguese official agenda. G.R. Crone, the translator of Cadamostos' journal, reaffirms this agenda saying "The voyages initiated by Prince Henry were not, therefore, thrusts into the unknown, but part of a sustained attempt to wrest control of an important economic artery then in alien and often hostile hands."⁴¹ Cadamosto's first hand experience on the voyages themselves paints a different picture of foreigners than those retold by Zurara. Likewise, he makes it a point to describe the physical appearance of the "others" that he came across during his voyage.

Setting sail from Cape St. Vicente on March 22, 1455, Cadamosto immediately strove to report on the appearance of foreigners and the trade routes which they employed. Describing modern day Ras Nouadhibou, Cadamosto said,

You should also know that behind this Cauo Bianco [Capo Blanco] the land, is a place called Hoden [Wadan], which is about six days inland by camel. This place is not walled, but is frequented by Arabs...they are Muhammadans, and very hostile to Christians. They never remain sealed, but are always wandering over these deserts. These are the men who go to the land of the Blacks, and also to our nearer Barbary. They are very numerous, and have many camels on which they carry brass and silver from Barbary and other things to Tanbutu [Timbuktu]. Thence they carry away gold and pepper (malaguetta pepper), which they bring hither. They are brown complexioned, and wear white cloaks edged with a red stripe: their women also dress thus, without shifts. On their heads the men wear turbans in the Moorish fashion, and they always go barefooted."⁴²

As opposed to Zurara, Cadamosto is beginning to learn about the local West-African trade routes and the people that inhabited those lands. This is important because, in order for the Portuguese to insert themselves into the existing regional economic system, they would need to familiarize themselves with the locals. It is also noteworthy that Cadamosto mentions the women he sees because intermarriage with locals would become a primary source of support after the

⁴¹ G.R. Crone, Intro to *The Voyages of Cadamosto and Other Documents on Western Africa in the Second Half of the Fifteenth Century*. G.R. Crone, trans. and ed., (London: Hakluyt Society, 1937), xix.

⁴² Cadamosto, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, 17.

Portuguese rounded the Cape of Good Hope and entered the Pacific maritime system. Thus began the interweaving narratives of economic development and necessary relationships with the “other.” That said, at this point the Portuguese still held a paternalistic attitude towards the natives, as is evident in Cadamosto’s account of native Canarians:

They continually wage war amongst themselves, slaying each other like beasts...they always go naked...[and] they live in caves or caverns in the mountain...they have no faith, nor do they believe in God: some worship the sun, others the moon and planets, and have strange idolatrous fantasies...⁴³

Classifying the Canarians as “beasts” and criticizing their beliefs was a way for the Portuguese to brand their actions as a noble enterprise. In fact, it was an effort to dehumanize the “other” to vindicate Portuguese exploits. The 1455 Papal Bull *Romanus Pontifex* served to reinforce this patriarchal attitude towards foreigners by celebrating the conversions of “many Guineamen and other negroes, taken by force.”⁴⁴ In this way, the early stage of Portuguese exploration was a type of predecessor to the “White Man’s Burden” that defined imperial action in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Despite the paternalistic attitude of initial Portuguese expansion, future expeditions soon realized the value of communication and trade with natives. The importance of the slave and gold trade can be seen at a *feitoria*⁴⁵ called Arguim built off of the coast of modern Mauritania

A.R. Disney claims, Arguim

possessed a safe anchorage, had reliable wells and was relatively easy to defend...But more important commercially was its relative proximity to Wadan...Arab and Sanhaja merchants brought horses, cloth and a range of other goods south by this route to exchange for African

⁴³ Cadamosto, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, 13.

⁴⁴ Nicholas V, *Romanus Pontifex*, January 8, 1455. University of Massachusetts Legal Department. accessed April 5, 2016 <https://www.nativeweb.org/pages/legal/indig-romanus-pontifex.html>

⁴⁵ Official Portuguese trading station overseas

slaves, and for gold dust from sources near the middle and upper reaches of the Volta river in modern Ghana.⁴⁶

Wadan was a significant trading post for exchange between West Africa and the Maghrib and the commercial benefit of the fort at Arguim allowed the Portuguese to mint a new gold coin called the *cruzado*.⁴⁷ It is crucial to point out here that until 1460 Prince Henry dictated Portuguese policy in the Atlantic. His decision to ban slave raids south of Cape Bojador, and his enactment of a royal license to trade with the Mauritanian interior exhibit the changing attitude of the Portuguese by showcasing the emphasis on economic cooperation over force.⁴⁸ Cadamosto recounted,

You should know that the said Lord Infante of Portugal has leased this island of Argin[sic] to Christians [for ten years], so that no one can enter the bay to trade with the Arabs save those who hold the license. These have dwellings on the island and factories where they buy and sell with the said Arabs who come to the coast to trade for merchandize[sic] of various kinds...they give in exchange slaves whom the Arabs bring from the land of the Blacks, and gold *tiber*...For this reason, Portuguese caravels are coming and going all the year to this island.⁴⁹

Prince Henry's enactment of a royal a license to trade with the fort at Arguim demonstrates how Portugal was shifting from a power that focused on *razias*⁵⁰ to one that prioritized constructive relationships with the "other." The fort at Arguim became so profitable that João II ordered the timber fort to be replaced by a permanent stone structure—one of the first long-term settlements in the Portuguese empire.⁵¹ Disney relates that, "At one stage a single horse could allegedly be sold for up to twenty-five or even thirty slaves. Altogether, about 1,000 slaves a year were

⁴⁶ Disney, *vol. II*, 45-46.

⁴⁷ Disney, *vol. II*, 46.

⁴⁸ Disney, *vol. II*, 46.

⁴⁹ Cadamosto, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, 17.

⁵⁰ Raids.

⁵¹ Disney, *vol. II*, 46.

passing through the *feitoria*.”⁵² Likewise, less prestigious Portuguese participants began to reap the benefits of the slave trade which stirred exploratory zeal.⁵³

In the mid 15th century, the Portuguese began to prioritize an effort to interact with natives and learn local customs. Cadamosto’s voyage to the coast of Senegal and up the River Gambia in 1455 gave insight into trade customs and the local culture.⁵⁴ Illustrating the Melli salt trade, Cadamosto explained how salt was mined in large blocks, carried by camels into the interior, broken into smaller pieces, and eventually carried on the heads of Africans further into the interior where it was exchanged for gold.⁵⁵ In this way, the Portuguese gathered information about trade routes *and* the local populations—anticipating the collaborative relationship that would form in the informal empire in the Pacific. Information concerning trade and knowledge of the local people were so interconnected, in fact, that Cadamosto referred to his visit to a Senegalese market as, “A market, and the people who went thither.”⁵⁶ “In this market,” Cadamosto expanded, “I perceived quite clearly that these people are exceedingly poor, judging from the wares they brought for sale...Men as well as women came to sell...It seemed to be a new experience to them to see Christians...some touched my hands and limbs, and rubbed me with their spittle to discover whether my whiteness was dye or flesh. Finding that it was flesh they were astounded.”⁵⁷ Perhaps more consequential, Cadamosto was able to meet the “king” of this region and comment on the area’s political structure and customs. “This is what I was able to observe of this lord and his manners, and his house,” Cadamosto recalled,

⁵² Disney, *vol. II*, 46.

⁵³ Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 24-25.

⁵⁴ Cadamosto, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, 21.

⁵⁵ Cadamosto, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, 22-23.

⁵⁶ Cadamosto, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, 48.

⁵⁷ Cadamosto, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, 48.

First, I saw clearly that, though these pass as lords, it must not be thought that they have castles or cities...The King of this realm had nothing save villages of grass huts, and Budomel was lord only of a part of this realm—a thing of little account. Such men are not lords by virtue of treasure or money, for they possess neither, nor do they expend any money: but on account of ceremonies and the following of people they may truly be called lords: indeed they receive beyond comparison more obedience than our lords.”⁵⁸

It is particularly compelling that Cadamosto compared the obedience of the inhabitants of Senegal to those of Portugal. Once more, this is an incident of Europeans seeing themselves, or an aspect of European metropolitan life, being reflected in the “other.” That the natives were loyal to their king Budomel for reasons other than profit was an unfamiliar concept to the Portuguese, however. Even though Cadamosto expressed a genuine interest in the habits of the Senegalese, he himself was at the financial mercy of the Portuguese. This is evident in Cadamosto’s subtle jab at the Senegalese market in which he associated “poor wares” with a group of natives who had never seen a white person before. Once more, this displays the interweaving narrative of economics and dealing with the “other”.

Another noteworthy aspect of Cadamosto’s journey is his concept of progressive contemporary science. Cadamosto expressed an understanding of the seasons and longitude and latitude, saying, “I enquired of them what the merchants of Melli did with this salt and was told that a small quantity is consumed in their country. Since it is below the meridional and on the equinoctial, where the day is constantly about as long as the night, it is extremely hot at certain seasons of the year: this causes the blood to putrefy, so that were it not for this salt, they would die.”⁵⁹ Also, the Portuguese had developed and acquired in-depth knowledge about the wind systems of the North and South Atlantic, and good navigators could calculate their position at sea

⁵⁸ Cadamosto, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, 37.

⁵⁹ Cadamosto, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, 21.

using observed latitude and dead-reckoning.⁶⁰ Navigators, moreover, were using simple versions of the astrolabe and quadrants combined with mariners compasses acquired from the Chinese via Arab and Mediterranean intermediaries.⁶¹ Cadamosto's increasing comprehension of the natural world represents the slow change from Medieval to early modern ways of perceiving and understanding the world.

Not all encounters, however, went as smoothly as Cadamosto's voyage up the River Gambia. In 1482, the Portuguese began construction of a fortress at Elmina off of the coast of modern day Ghana, causing a dispute with the "blacks" that previously resided in the region. It was at Elmina that the Portuguese began to break from their Medieval tendencies by founding an entrepôt that would theoretically serve as an international hub for trade. The successor to Gomes Eanes de Zurara, Rui de Pina, said

...the captain went with the craftsmen he had brought to lay the foundation of the fortress [with stone] which they took from the top of some high rocks which were sacred to the blacks and adored by them...He sent the king and his people a good present of brass basins and manilhas, shawls, and other cloths, which were to be given to them to obtain their goodwill...When the blacks saw so much damage being done to their sacred rocks, and their hopes of salvation destroyed, they reacted very strongly and, burning with fury, took up their arms and treated the workmen so harshly that they could not resist and fled back to their boats.⁶²

By establishing a permanent presence on the West-African coast, the Portuguese were making a definitive change in their approach to empire. That said, the methods by which they interacted with the "other" were still superficial. Despite gifting the "blacks" a variety of goods, the Portuguese failed to understand the cultural significance of the sacred rocks. The Portuguese were no longer just explorers but imperialists. Prior to the construction of Elmina, explorers

⁶⁰ Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 27-28.

⁶¹ Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 28.

⁶² Rui de Pina, *Crónica de El-Rey D. João II*, Malyn Newitt trans. In M.D. Newitt, *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2010), 94.

would erect *padrões*⁶³ to commemorate their progress down the coast, but there were no official attempts to set up a trading center anywhere on the continent outside of Ceuta. Malyn Newitt asserts that “It was the king’s intention to make the gold trade an exclusive royal monopoly, which would be administered thousands of miles from Lisbon, that made this a major new departure in Portuguese policy and anticipated developments in the Indian Ocean in the sixteenth century.”⁶⁴ This overt attitude of imperialism, however, quickly became a problem, and the violent outbreak that occurred at Elmina manifests an inherent issue in relations with the “other” up to this point—trade relations could not be established by conquest, rather, it would take cooperation. The Portuguese must interact with the Africans and respect their leaders to foster positive relations and build trade networks. That the incident at Elmina was the result of a miscommunication about the gifts that the native king would receive is symbolic of this need for change.⁶⁵ This shift from slave raiding to trading stabilized Portuguese commercial ventures and promoted further exploration.

From Traders to Diplomats

The first official state recognized by the Portuguese in Africa was the Kingdom of Kongo in 1491.⁶⁶ Here, the Portuguese found an open recipient to Christian indoctrination and profitable trade. Wyatt MacGaffey, however, claims that this could have been a result of a cultural misunderstanding.⁶⁷ In what is now northern Angola, the old kingdom of the Kongo

⁶³ Inscribed pillar built by Portuguese explorers to mark the progress of voyages

⁶⁴ M.D. Newitt, *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2010), 90.

⁶⁵ Ruia de Pina, *Crónica* in M.D. Newitt, *The Portuguese in West Africa*, 95.

⁶⁶ Ruia de Pina, *Crónica* in M.D. Newitt, *The Portuguese in West Africa*, 103.

⁶⁷ Wyatt MacGaffey, “Dialogues of the Deaf: Europeans on the Atlantic Coast of Africa,” in *Implicit Understandings: Observing, Reporting and Reflecting on the Encounters Between Europeans and Other*

stretched from the mouth of the River Zaire, inland to about Malebo Pool, and south to the River Dande [figure 1?].⁶⁸ Contact with the Kongoleses was initiated by Diego Cão in the 1480's, and the Portuguese quickly realized the potential for strong relations with the kingdom. "The day that the Christians reached the [Kongoleses] court," Rui de Pina wrote, "they were received with great noise by countless people...The mode of receiving them was that the king sent to the captain and friars many courtiers who danced in a demented manner...all singing the praises of the King of Portugal and, with great joy, extolling his greatness."⁶⁹ In 1491, the *manicongo*⁷⁰ was baptized and adopted a Portuguese title and dress. Giving an account of the ceremony, João de Barros says "he [the *manicongo*] desired that he should be called João after him [King Dom João of Portugal...and gave her [his wife] the name of Leonor, after the queen of Portugal...so that both husband and wife, being now Christians, had the same names as those two most Christian princes..."⁷¹

The kingdom of Kongo represents a paradigm shift in Portuguese interactions with the "other," and furthermore, is symbolic of the changing relationship between natives and the Portuguese as the latter ventured further from metropolitan Portugal. Because the Portuguese were over a thousand miles from home, alliances outweighed the prestige of conquest. Moreover, the Kongo kingdom exemplifies a necessary change in interactions with the other—that is, both factions benefitted from a partnership. The Portuguese earned an ally in southern Africa which could be utilized as a trade center and supply point, and the Kongoleses

Peoples in the Early Modern Era, ed. Stuart B. Schwartz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.), 253.

⁶⁸ Disney, *vol. II*, 66.

⁶⁹ Rui de Pina, *Crónica* in M.D. Newitt, *The Portuguese in West Africa*, 104.

⁷⁰ Kongoleses king

⁷¹ João de Barros, *Da Ásia, Década 1, book 3, ch. 9* in Malyn Newitt *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2010), 90.

gained the support of a European power, which ultimately blossomed into the Luso-African society that persists to this day in Angola. Describing the post-Christianized Kongolese community a century after the Portuguese arrived, Duarte Lopes remarked, “the nobles of the court began to dress in the Portuguese fashion, wearing cloaks capes, scarlet tabards and silk robes...his [the *manicongo's*] Court was also reformed to some extent in imitation of that of the king of Portugal.”⁷² In this way, the line between being Portuguese and Kongolese began to blur. Even more interesting was the manner by which the judicial proceedings of the kingdom became a combination of Kongolese and Portuguese methods.⁷³

Wyatt MacGaffey in his article “Dialogues of the Deaf: Europeans on the Atlantic Coast of Africa” suggests that religious disconnect led to a bizarre relationship between the Portuguese and the kingdom of Kongo. In a discussion of the Portuguese and coastal West Africa, MacGaffey argues for a case of “double mistaken identity” in which the Portuguese misunderstood the Kongolese adoption of Christianity and the Kongolese misunderstood the nature of Christianity.⁷⁴ While this may be true, it does not diminish the essence of the relationship between the two groups. Even if there was a fundamental misunderstanding of the other, the cooperation between the two led to better outcomes for both parties. It is this type of cooperation that allowed the Portuguese to thrive in the east, albeit, the process of building cordial relationships with the “other” was distinctly a method of experimentation.

⁷² Duarte Lopes, *Relação do Reino do Congo e das Terras Circunvizinhas*, in Malyn Newitt *The Portuguese in West Africa, 1415-1670: A Documentary History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2010), 212.

⁷³ Duarte Lopes, *Relação*, in Malyn Newitt *The Portuguese in West Africa*, 214.

⁷⁴ MacGaffey, “Dialogues of the Deaf,” 253.

The Portuguese in the *Estado da Índia* and Blurring the Notion of the “Other”

On July 8, 1497, four vessels commanded Vasco de Gama sailed from Lisbon with the intent to round the tip of Africa “to make discoveries and go in search of spices.”⁷⁵ The Cape had actually been rounded in 1487 by Bartolomeu Dias, but the expedition was costly and did not result in any immediate commercial benefits.⁷⁶ It is in the *Estado da Índia*⁷⁷ that the Portuguese intensified their empire. Contrary to the vision of Prince Henrique, though, this empire was not a dominant Christian empire. Rather, it was one that required careful negotiations between natives and non-natives and eventually one that was characterized by intermarriage and collaboration with the “other.” These *casados*—intermarriage and residence with the locals, produced a generation of Portuguese hybrids that became a principal facet of empire in the east. Moreover, economics increasingly determined the nature of relations with the “other.” As was the case on the voyages down the West-African coast, a process of trial and error shaped and solidified trading partners in the region. The journals of Álvaro Velho, Fernão Mendes Pinto, and Tomé Pires, manifest the development of the relationship between the “other” and the Portuguese in the growing eastern empire. That the Portuguese engaged with east-Africans, Arabs, Southeast- Asians, and Chinese, amongst other peoples, speaks to their

⁷⁵ Álvaro Velho, *A Journal of the First Voyage of Vasco da Gama 1497-1499*, João De Sá and Ernst Georg Ravenstein, eds. and trans. (New York: Hakluyt Society. Works ; No. 99.: B. Franklin, 1963.), 1.

⁷⁶ Disney, *vol. II*, 38. Dias and his crew had unknowingly rounded the southernmost point of Africa heading away from the coast in an effort to avoid the confusing wind patterns of the South Atlantic. When they veered back towards the shore they realized that the shoreline stretched due east, indicating that they had indeed rounded the tip. The crew was dangerously low on supplies and after constructing a *padrão* east of Algoa Bay, they began their return trip. Dias came upon the Khoikhoi people but there was nothing notable about the encounter except that the Portuguese attained some fresh water.

⁷⁷ Term used to describe the Portuguese Empire east of the Cape of Good Hope. Literally “State of India.” Included all cities, fortresses, and territories.

adaptability regarding initial encounters. Their ability to cooperate and insert themselves into the local trade systems and expand them into a complex, globalized network reflects the changing attitude of the times—an increased emphasis on profit and less of a focus on religious ardor.

The *Route to India*, a journal of the first voyage of Vasco da Gama demonstrates the need for a common language for commercial purposes, safety, and friendly exchanges. In Moçambique, Álvaro Velho, traveling with Vasco da Gama, explained how the fleet learned about the wealthy East African cities but were nearly killed after a cultural misunderstanding. Velho recounted, “These Moors, moreover, told us that along the route which we were about to follow we should meet with numerous shoals; that there were many cities along the coast, and also an island, one-half of the population of which consisted of Moors and the other half of Christians...the island was said to be very wealthy...All this we learned through a sailor the captain-major had with him, and who, having formerly been a prisoner among the Moors, understood their language.”⁷⁸ This information was valuable for the Portuguese, but it was a result of the locals believing that the Portuguese were Turks or Moors. Velho explains, “All this happened at the time when he [the chief] took us for Turks or Moors from some foreign land...But when they learnt that we were Christians they arranged to seize and kill us by treachery.”⁷⁹ Fortunately for the crew, one of their “pilots,” a native whom the Portuguese had contracted to help navigate the monsoon systems of the Indian Ocean, warned them of the impending treachery.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Álvaro Velho, *Journal*, 23-24.

⁷⁹ Álvaro Velho, *Journal*, 28.

⁸⁰ Álvaro Velho, *Journal*, 28.

Pilots were highly valuable on the *carreira da Índia*,⁸¹ because it was they who were in charge of navigation.⁸² Describing a Gujarati pilot acquired in Malindi, Velho mentioned,

We were much pleased with the Christian pilot whom the king sent us. We learnt from him that the island of which we heard at Moçambique as being inhabited by Christians was in reality an island subject to this same King of Moçambique; that half of it belonged to the Moors and the other half to the Christians; that many pearls were to be found there, and that it was called Queluyee [Kilwa]. This is the island the Moorish pilots wanted to take us to, and we also wished to go there, for we believed what they said was true.⁸³

Pilots are an example of the trust necessary to build and maintain an empire, and often it was their decisions or advice that led to Portuguese successes. One experienced pilot discussing how to navigate the monsoon system is said to have remarked, “The last day of February is time enough, but the first day of March is late.”⁸⁴ Without pilots for navigational purposes and contacts in the *Estado*, the Portuguese would literally have been lost in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, any cargo they may have come upon, and potentially their lives, would likely have been lost at sea during the monsoon. In that way, the Portuguese were entirely reliant on the kindness and experience of the “other.” That the Portuguese had evolved to trust the guidance of a group of Moors reflects the changing nature of these relations. Less than fifty years before the da Gama voyage, Zurara was hailed Prince Henrique for his holy campaign to destroy the “Infidel.”⁸⁵ By the turn of the century there was a reason to work together and trust one another. Yet, this was a process of trial and error, and finding a compatible pilot was not a simple task. Prior to receiving the Gujarati pilot, two pilots from Moçambique tried to lead the Portuguese into a hostile port where they would have been killed.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Standard voyage between Portugal and India.

⁸² Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 27-28.

⁸³ Álvaro Velho, *Journal*, 46.

⁸⁴ Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 206.

⁸⁵ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I, 28.

⁸⁶ Álvaro Velho, *Journal*, 37.

When the da Gama fleet reached India in 1498, experimentation continued to define the experience of the Portuguese. Having proper gifts for potential trading partners was a fundamental aspect of building trade relations and not having an adequate offering for a possible trading partner was disliked. Velho recalls the embarrassment of reaching India and the first meeting with the king of Calicut, saying “When they saw the present they laughed at it, saying that it was not a thing to offer a king, that the poorest merchant from Mecca, or any other part of India, gave more, and that if he wanted to make a present it should be in gold, as the king would not accept such things.”⁸⁷ This act of disrespect, however unintentional, almost got the Portuguese killed, and the captain was detained for a time before being allowed to return to his ship.⁸⁸

What the Portuguese did learn, though, is that material wealth was the catalyst for instituting positive relationships with the “other.” An encounter with the King of Mombaça (modern Kenya) shows how a proper exchange of goods could initiate friendly relations;

On Palm Sunday [April 8] the King of Mombaça sent the captain-major a sheep and large quantities of oranges, lemons, and sugar cane, together with a ring, as a pledge of safety, letting him know that in case of his entering the port he would be supplied with all he stood in need of... The captain-major sent the king a string of coral-beads as a return present, and let him know that he purposed [sic] to entering the port of the following day. On the same day the captain-major’s vessel was visited by four Moors of distinction.⁸⁹

That the Portuguese did not have acceptable gifts for the king of Calicut would be remedied on later voyages. The successful relations established with communities like Mombaça served as prototypes for engaging with the larger kingdoms in India, China, and Southeast Asia because

⁸⁷ Álvaro Velho, *Journal*, 60.

⁸⁸ Álvaro Velho, *Journal*, 65.

⁸⁹ Álvaro Velho, *Journal*, 36.

the Portuguese began to understand that cooperation was necessary for profitable trade and the best way to create cooperation was by abiding by the local customs of exchange.

On subsequent journeys to India and the Orient, the Portuguese were better prepared. Moreover, they began to settle around the *Estado da Índia*, which helped build networks of communication. Tomé Pires, a Portuguese apothecary who eventually rose to the position of Ambassador to China, arrived in India in 1511.⁹⁰ His *Suma Oriental* was an attempt to consolidate information regarding the *Estado* and correct previous mistakes regarding the status of the trading posts and kingdoms throughout Asia. His work offers descriptions of the physical traits of natives around the *Estado* and served as a recommendation for who the Portuguese would be able to trade with and whom they should avoid. On top of this, the work challenged the geographical ideas of the time. The fact that such a document existed is alone evidence of the growing presence of the Portuguese in the east.

The *Suma* is divided into four parts and addresses nearly all of the major cities and kingdoms of the *Estado* such as Arabia, Aden, Ormuz, Persia, Cambay, and Diu.⁹¹ Pires even compares the land and people of Portugal to those of Persia saying, “they are men of our colour, form and feature. There is no doubt that those who wear the red cap are more like the Portuguese than like people from anywhere else...it is not sterile and mountainous [but]

⁹⁰ Armando Cortesão, introduction to Tomé Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515 and The Book of Francisco Rodrigues: Rutter of a Voyage in the Red Sea, Nautical Rules, Almanack and Maps, Written and Drawn in the East before 1515. vol. I.* Armando Cortesão trans. (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, Reproduced by the permission of the Hakluyt Society, 1966), xviii.

⁹¹ Tomé Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515 and The Book of Francisco Rodrigues: Rutter of a Voyage in the Red Sea, Nautical Rules, Almanack and Maps, Written and Drawn in the East before 1515. vol. I.* Armando Cortesão trans. (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, Reproduced by the permission of the Hakluyt Society, 1966), 5.

abounding in all delights, with domestic men, full of courtesy, well-dressed, magnanimous and valiant in feats of arms, with beautiful horses”⁹² In a similar manner, Pires draws a parallel between the people of Cambay and Italy, professing “These [people] are [like] Italians in their knowledge of and dealings in merchandise...they are so properly steeped in the sound and harmony of it...”⁹³ Correspondingly, he illustrates the people of Tabriz and Shiraz (modern day Iran) to be “like those of Paris in France; they are domestic, handsome men and courtiers, but above all the women of Shiraz are praised for their beauty, their fairness of skin, their discretion and the neatness of their dress...”⁹⁴ Essentially, Pires is promoting the concept of *casados*—officially recognized married settlers. In describing “beautiful white women”⁹⁵ and boasting that the east “has fruits like ours in abundance,”⁹⁶ Pires is advertising the appeal of the *Estado* and encouraging settlers to become part of the Portuguese diaspora via intermarriage. These *casados* also produced a generation of multi-racial children who grew up speaking both Portuguese and a native tongue, which enabled Portuguese merchants to have reliable contacts overseas. Because of these groups of biracial progeny, traders relied less and less on middlemen to communicate with the “other”. What’s more, the notion of the “other” gradually diminished as this generation, and others after it, formed communities and assimilated into local societies. A.R. Disney declares, “Most of the Portuguese in northern East Africa acquired local wives, many gradually merged into society around them and some became Muslims.”⁹⁷ At the same time, the first generation of *lançados* was reaching adulthood in West-Africa. *Lançados*, which

⁹² Pires, *Suma*, 23.

⁹³ Pires, *Suma*, 41.

⁹⁴ Pires, *Suma*, 23.

⁹⁵ Pires, *Suma*, 20.

⁹⁶ Pires *Suma*, 20.

⁹⁷ Disney, *vol. II*, 178.

roughly translates as ‘outcasts’ were Portuguese freelancers who penetrated the African interior throughout the fifteenth century and acted as middlemen between the Portuguese and various tribes. Disney maintains that “Most *lançados* became in effect cultural hybrids, while their Afro-Portuguese descendants were inevitably from birth a people in-between. They spoke a Portuguese creole that was also widely used as West-Africa’s language of trade, and their community evolved a syncretic form of Catholicism adapted to West African conditions.”⁹⁸ C.R. Boxer similarly asserts “Through the medium of these *lançados*...Portuguese became and for centuries remained the *lingua-franca* of the coastal region of upper Guinea...armed conflicts were relatively few, and contacts on the whole remained friendly, since the conduct of the slave trade involved the active participation of the African chiefs and the co-operation of the *lançados* as intermediaries.”⁹⁹ When the Portuguese crown monopoly loosened in the early 16th century, intermarriages became more common and unofficial Portuguese settlements sprung into existence around the *Estado* because decentralization offered more opportunities for private trade.¹⁰⁰

The decentralization of the *Estado da Índia* in 1530 altered the nature of the Portuguese in the east and exhibits the growing tendency towards racial integration and cooperation. Prior to 1530, a viceroy who resided in Cochin [figure 2] had governed the *Estado da Índia*. In 1530 though, Goa, a city about 775km north of Cochin, became the permanent location of the viceroy.

¹⁰¹ Being further away from east and southeast Asia, the viceroy in Goa struggled to regulate trade around the *Estado* as effectively as it was once governed in Cochin. The *Travels of Mendes*

⁹⁸ Disney, *vol. II*, 52.

⁹⁹ Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, 31-32.

¹⁰⁰ Disney, *vol. II*, 182.

¹⁰¹ Disney, *vol. II*, 160.

Pinto manifest how the shift affected the Portuguese in the *Estado* by highlighting how cooperation with the “other” became an intrinsic aspect of international affairs. Not much is known about Fernão Mendes Pinto’s personal life except that he was born in the early fifteenth century and spent 21 years as a merchant-adventurer in Africa and Asia from 1537-1558. He returned to Portugal in 1558 where he wrote his *Travels* and died in 1583.¹⁰²

Racial cooperation was of great import because the exchange of knowledge and information was critical for safety and profit when traveling between ports. Also, the opening of the Atlantic-Pacific trade route naturally made foreign “worlds” more accessible. Consequently, interaction with the “other” became more common, and foreigners around the *Estado* grew accustomed to seeing and meeting nonnatives on a regular basis, particularly in merchant cities and kingdoms. A.J.R. Russell-Wood affirms that “A visitor to the wharves of sixteenth-century Lisbon, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, Luanda, Goa, Malacca, Macao, or Nagasaki, would have been acutely aware, by sight, hearing, and smell, of a world characterized not only by the ebb and flow of people, but also of an incredible diversity of merchandise.”¹⁰³ While on the quest to avenge the plundering of his ship by a marauding merchant named *Khoja*¹⁰⁴ Hassim, captain Antonio de Faria and Mendes Pinto depended on the word of non-Portuguese strangers for information. Describing an encounter with the local population outside of a village called *Taiquileu* (near present day Thailand), Pinto states,

They realized that we were a new race of people that had never been seen there before, they became quite frightened and began talking excitedly among themselves in this vein: ‘how strange that they should come here!...Let us hope that the good Lord did not send us that notorious race of bearded men who enrich themselves by spying out the land, acting like merchants, but returning later to attack

¹⁰² Rebecca D. Catz, into to Fernão Mendes Pinto, *The Travels of Mendes Pinto*, Rebecca D. Catz ed. and trans. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), xv.

¹⁰³ Russell-Wood, *The Portuguese Empire, 1415-1808: A World on the Move*, 123.

¹⁰⁴ A title of respect applied to wealthy merchants, eunuchs, and people from sacred families; Hassim was a plundering merchant.

and plunder like thieves. Let us head for the jungle before they set fire to our houses and fields...God forbid! Still others explained...Let us speak softly and ask them in a friendly manner what they are doing here, and once we have learned the truth from them we will write to the *Hoyá Paquir* who is now in *Congrau*.¹⁰⁵

Despite the fact that this passage coming from the Portuguese perspective, it shows the ways in which both Portuguese and foreign perception of the “other” had changed. That the locals could recall a time when newcomers to their village often resulted violent outbreaks, yet still approach the Portuguese in a “friendly manner” speaks to the development of positive relations with the “other” on both sides. Once more, a commercial exchange was the foundation by which the groups interacted peacefully. Undoubtedly, peaceful interactions were necessary, especially if de Faria and Mendes Pinto “easily expect[ed] to make a profit of almost 600 percent” as the two merchants had hoped.¹⁰⁶ Speaking of the encounter Mendes Pinto reports, “Antonio de Faria welcomed them pleasantly and put them in a receptive mood by paying what they asked for their refreshments without permitting any haggling over prices.”¹⁰⁷ The locals told Antonio de Faria how to reach the nearest city and where the crew would fetch the highest prices for its cargo.¹⁰⁸ They also warned the captain about potential dangers and the safest travel routes, again indicating how the growing trust and mutual dependence between the Portuguese and the “other” corresponded with economic activity.¹⁰⁹ “Apart from these questions,” Pinto notes, “Antonio de Faria plied them with many more, and from their answers he learned many other interesting things about that country.”¹¹⁰ All of these conversations were had via interpreters, of

¹⁰⁵ Mendes Pinto, *Travels*, 73.

¹⁰⁶ Mendes Pinto, *Travels*, 63.

¹⁰⁷ Mendes Pinto, *Travels*, 73.

¹⁰⁸ Mendes Pinto, *Travels*, 73.

¹⁰⁹ Mendes Pinto, *Travels*, 74.

¹¹⁰ Mendes Pinto, *Travels* 74.

which there were many on board.¹¹¹ Throughout the rest of the expedition, Mendes Pinto successfully gathered intelligence throughout Southeast Asia, thoroughly explored India and China, traveled to Japan, and even granted a ship owner the right to navigate freely along the Chinese coast.¹¹² The only stipulation was that the Chinese ship must treat “all Portuguese as brothers wherever they chance to meet.”¹¹³

The travels of Mendes Pinto epitomize the new character of the *Estado*, and furthermore, the relaxing of Portuguese regulation in favor of a more informal empire. It should be pointed out, however, that some scholars argue that *The Travels of Mendes Pinto* is a work of satire criticizing the religious and political institutions of metropolitan Portugal.¹¹⁴ Rebecca Catz insists that “it represents a sweeping condemnation of the ideology of the crusade...”¹¹⁵ Regardless if this was the intent of Fernão Mendes Pinto, it does not diminish the value of the work for it demonstrates the loosening approach to empire and, moreover, the ability of Portuguese merchants to integrate themselves into the organizations of the “other”. In the same manner, it manifests the radical evolution of the Portuguese Empire between 1415-1580. What began as a “great desire to make increase in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and to bring him all the souls that should be saved”¹¹⁶ transformed into an enterprise that praised the “splendors of Peking,”¹¹⁷ the inquisitive Prince of Tangashima,¹¹⁸ and the “compassionate women of the Ryukus.”¹¹⁹

¹¹¹ Mendes Pinto, *Travels* 73.

¹¹² Mendes Pinto, *Travels* 78-80.

¹¹³ Mendes Pinto, *Travels*, 96.

¹¹⁴ Catz, intro to Mendes Pinto, *Travels*, xv.

¹¹⁵ Catz, intro to Mendes Pinto, *Travels*, xv.

¹¹⁶ Zurara, *Chronicle*, vol. I., 28.

¹¹⁷ Mendes Pinto, *Travels*, 212.

¹¹⁸ Mendes Pinto, *Travels*, 274.

¹¹⁹ Mendes Pinto, *Travels*, 294.

Conclusion

Examining the Portuguese Age of Discovery between 1415-1580 reveals that Portugal was a driving force in the opening of the Atlantic Ocean, and furthermore, set precedents that defined imperialism in the following centuries. Encountering the “other” was an inherent aspect of this process, and consequently, the Portuguese were required to adapt to the situations they faced during the Voyages of Discovery and subsequent trips throughout the empire. Profit was always part of the Portuguese agenda, but during the initial stages of exploration it was overshadowed by Prince Henrique’s devotion to his self-proclaimed holy campaign to fight infidels around the globe. Over time though, this crusading ideal was eclipsed by the financial realities of expansion and the necessary intricacies of building an international web of commerce. In spite of Prince Henrique’s wish to establish an imposing Christian empire, the Portuguese could not institute any profitable relationship with the “other” via conquest. The world was simply too large, and conquest too unproductive. Rather, it was a process of trial and error and an effort to work with and amongst the “other,” that ultimately allowed them to succeed. The first globalization, then, while certainly characterized by periods of violence and events of forcefulness, was fundamentally achieved by a process of collaborating with and becoming part of the “other.”

The impetus for this process was always economics. From the first initiative to conquer Ceuta, to the journey of Fernão Mendes Pinto around the *Estado*, wealth and the impulse for profit affected social change. When the Portuguese realized that slave raiding was not as profitable as slave trading, they changed their approach and began employing African chiefs in the service of the slave trade. When gold was discovered on the Guinean coast, this relationship

matured and the Portuguese developed closer ties to kingdoms in Africa, like that of the Kongo. When the Portuguese reached India and the Orient and were embarrassed by the king of Calicut, they learned from their mistakes, and brought more gold to negotiate with on following voyages. All the while, the Portuguese were peppering “their empire” with a Portuguese diaspora that obscured the entire notion of who was Portuguese and who was the “other.” To this day, Portuguese is an official language in Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, East Timor, Equatorial Guinea, Macau, Brazil, Mozambique, and São Tome and Principe. What’s more, the first globalization mirrors the shift away from Medieval and into the early modern. Not only did it take advancements in nautical science, shipbuilding, cartography, and linguistics, but it broke a barrier that physically and ideologically allowed the world to develop from an isolated one to one that was truly global.

Timeline of the Portuguese Age of Discovery

1385: João I of Avis ascends to the Portuguese throne establishing the Dynasty of Avis

1415: Portuguese capture North African city Ceuta

1434: Expedition of Gil Eanes successfully passes Cape Bojador

1441: First captives brought to back Portugal

- 1448:** Prince Henrique prohibits slave raids south of Cape Bojador
- 1448:** *Feitoria* established at Arguim
- 1460:** Prince Henrique's monopoly on African exploration reverts to the Portuguese crown
- 1482:** Fortress of St. John of Mina "Elmina" constructed
- 1485:** Portuguese encounter the Kingdom of Kongo
- 1486:** Diogo Cão reaches the Namibian coast
- 1487:** Bartolomeu Dias rounds the Cape of Good Hope
- 1491:** Manicongo of the Kingdom of Kongo baptized
- 1498:** India reached by ship on the first voyage of Vasco da Gama
- 1500:** Discovery of Brazil by Pedro Álvares Cabral
- 1511:** Tomé Pires arrives in India
- 1530:** Goa replaces Cochin as the permanent seat of the viceroy of the *Estado da Índia*
- 1537:** Fernão Mendes Pinto arrives in India

The **1470's were difficult for sailors because as the Portuguese crossed the equator the constellations changed and the Northern Star was no longer visible. The Portuguese now navigated using the Southern Cross.

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