



INTRODUCTION

Victory Lap or Hasty Retreat? King Manuel in the Early Modern World

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Abstract

Essays appearing in this issue, authored by scholars who gathered at the University of Coimbra in 2021–22, display a range of approaches to historicizing the emergence of the global Portuguese empire in the passage from the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The present introduction contextualizes their contributions by tracing a shift in the Portuguese and international historiography over the last half century. By and large, scholars have moved away from narratives of exceptionalism concentrated on elite figures such as King Manuel I of Portugal, and gravitated instead to grappling with how the early modern Portuguese empire was co-created with the wider world through vectors of violence, exchange, and reciprocity. These new scholarly imperatives prompt an adoption of novel spatial and disciplinary frameworks for tracing critical transformations in early modern global history.

Keywords: Historiography; Early Modern Global History; Portuguese Empire; King Manuel I of Portugal

Introduction

Far from his kingdom's shores, projecting authority and sangfroid, King Manuel I of Portugal (r. 1495–1521) rides a mottled sea monster on a sheet of Martin Waldseemüller's 1516 world atlas, the *Carta Marina* (see [Figure 1](#)). By placing the seafaring monarch off the coast of Southern Africa, on a folio devoted to the Western Indian Ocean, the German cartographer and his associates marshalled the latest news trickling into Europe about the contours of the world's continents, reworking tradition to meet new ends. Instead of representing the Roman god Neptune astride a sea creature, as precedent would have it, the creators of the *Carta Marina* showed “Emanuel, the very Christian King of Portugal” raising a scepter in the high seas.¹ Confirming this projection of Lusitanian power, the figure of Manuel holds in his other hand both a long cross (to which is tied a banner adorned with the Portuguese crest) and the bridle of a sea creature whose head emerges from the surf with a bit in its jaws. The otherwise ominous marine monster, of the kind that medieval and early modern cartographers traditionally inserted to represent the limits of human influence, appears under Manuel's grip to be tamed and steered in the direction desired by the monarch. The placement of the figure and its accompanying text, which proclaims

¹ Chet Van Duzer, *Martin Waldseemüller's 'Carta marina' of 1514: Study and Transcription of the Long Legends* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Open, 2020): 135.

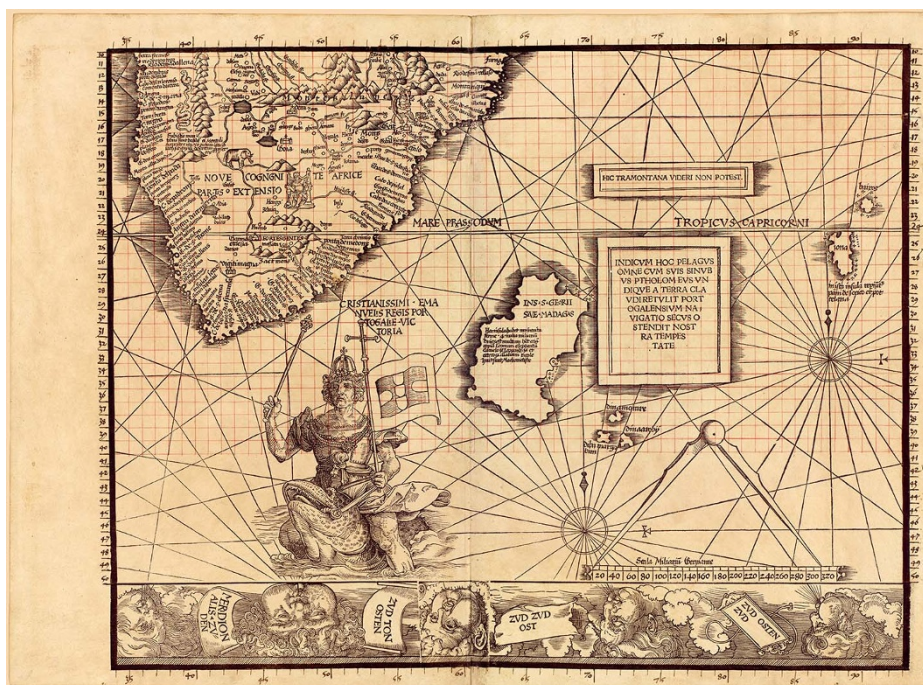


Figure 1. Depiction of King Manuel I astride a sea creature in the Southwestern Indian Ocean. Martin Waldseemüller, “Carta marina navigatoria Portvgallen navigationes...” Plate II. (Strasbourg, 1516). Jay I. Kislak Collection, United States Library of Congress.

Manuel’s ‘victory,’² hammers home the point: just as Portugal’s sovereign tamed the sea monster, so had he subjected under his authority – or at least aspired to subject – the navigators and traffickers who transited with increasing frequency during the years of his reign between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.

There was the assertion of domination and there was the far messier reality. The perception of this disjuncture between idealized and realized claims was as debated in Manuel’s time as it has been in the centuries since. Some five hundred years after the death of Manuel, a group of international scholars came together at the University of Coimbra, in a conference series held by the Centre for the History of Society and Culture, to consider and debate old and new historical treatments of the early modern monarch and the sprawling imperial enterprises launched during his reign.³ Like the cartographers of Waldseemüller’s day, the scholars gathered in Coimbra selectively borrowed from precedent while also diverging from conventional readings of global history. The conference’s point of departure, and the representative essays of participants gathered in the present volume, reject in various ways the centrality of Portugal, let alone Manuel, for the emergence of the early modern global order. Contributors presented a range of interventions that grappled with a central provocation: How does deemphasizing the exceptionality or centrality of Portugal, and

² What is truly at the map’s centre is not Manuel, but a written note: “Ptolemy said that this Indian sea with all its bays was totally enclosed by land, but recent Portuguese voyages demonstrate otherwise.” Van Duzer, *Martin Waldseemüller’s*, 137. Something that had long been known by millennial traditions of seafarers of the Indian Ocean – that the basin was not circumscribed, but opened up to multitudes, fraught conjunctures and fluid power relations – was news to many Europeans of Manuel’s day.

³ See the conference website: <https://para.alem.dmanuel.uc.pt/en/>

examining more closely the ways in which the Iberian empire was co-created with the wider world, transform understandings of the chronologies, spatial frameworks, and agents of change traditionally used to narrate histories of the dawn of the Portuguese empire?

This proposition likely would not have been on the table half a century ago. In the latter decades of the twentieth century, as independence movements in the formal possessions of the Portuguese empire in Asia and Africa gave way to a postcolonial and neo-imperial world order, scholars in Portugal subjecting King Manuel I and his era to renewed scrutiny helped launch an internationalist project adopting moderately critical forms of remembrance.⁴ Nevertheless, perspectives in vogue at the time tended to underscore the singular figure of the monarch, his entourage, and the ideological contours of elite European political culture as a key driver of Portuguese imperialism denoted as ‘expansion.’

For Luís Filipe Thomaz, who lent much emphasis to the image of the monarch in Waldseemüller’s map, the messianic and eschatological thought of Manuel and his most hawkish advisers went a long way towards explaining the *why* and the *how* of Portuguese imperialism in the early sixteenth century.⁵ According to this view, Vasco da Gama’s first voyage to India (1497–8) helped foment an imperial ideology resting on the tenets of oceanic domination, commerce, and evangelization. In 1506, the year after the first viceroy was appointed to govern Portuguese India, the royal secretary Duarte Galvão outlined in his *Crónica de D. Afonso Henriques* the prophetic emergence of a Christian empire that would span the globe, destroying Muslim enemies of Christ re-encountered by the Portuguese in Asia, and allowing for the evangelization of all the world. In the same period, Duarte Pacheco Pereira, in his politico-geographic treatise *Esmeraldo de situ orbis*, dubbed the king ‘Manuel Caesar.’ This global imperial ideal steeped in eschatological and classical thought, so central in Thomaz’s influential account of Manuel and Portugal’s rise to global prominence, gradually grew from the pens and minds of officials in the royal court and, importantly, in Rome. At the seat of the Catholic church, where European kingdoms began to have permanent representation, the Italian poet and clergyman Egidio da Viterbo proclaimed Manuel in 1507 to be a ‘Lusitanian David,’ echoing the messianic perspectives on the king that were being dreamed up in Lisbon.⁶ Waldseemüller’s representation of Manuel in the *Carta Marina*, a decade later, is of a piece with this generation of imperial boosters foregrounding the figure of the king in global space and religious history.

Other major Portuguese scholars in the twentieth century brought more material concerns to bear on their treatment of Manuel. For Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, commercial initiatives in which the state played a central role constituted a focal point of Manuel’s power and, by extension, Portugal’s place in the early modern world. In a dense and exhaustive analysis influenced by Annales school methodologies, Godinho proposed that mercantile domination spurred the Portuguese crown’s expansionist projects from which the ‘pepper king’ derived his empire. In an interpretation that went on to be influential

⁴ Miguel Jerónimo and José Pedro Monteiro, *Internationalism, Imperialism and the Formation of the Contemporary World* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018); Miguel Bandeira Jerónimo, *The “Civilising Mission” of Portuguese Colonialism, 1870–1930* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015); Roquinaldo Ferreira, “Taking Stock: Portuguese Imperial Historiography Twelve Years after the e-JPH Debate,” *e-journal of Portuguese History* 84.1 (June 2016). For an analogous reflection on a changing Portuguese disciplinary formation with deep ties to colonial legacies in the late twentieth century, Cristiana Bastos, “A década de 1990: Os anos da internacionalização,” *Etnográfica* 18.2 (2014): 385–401.

⁵ Luís Filipe Thomaz, “L’idée impériale manuéline,” in *La Découverte, le Portugal et l’Europe - Actes du Colloque*, ed. Jean Aubin (Paris: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian - Centre Culturel Portugais, 1990), 35–103.

⁶ On the construction of these “official images of empire,” see the foundational Giuseppe Marcocci, *A consciência de um império. Portugal e o seu mundo (sécs. XV–XVII)* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2012), 73–106. For Giles of Viterbo’s discourse, see John W. O’Malley, “Fulfillment of the Christian Golden Age under Pope Julius II: Text of a Discourse of Giles of Viterbo, 1507,” *Traditio* 25 (1969): 265–368.

with many economic and social historians outside of Portugal, this commercial empire laid the structural foundations for the early modern world economy.⁷ For others such as Luís de Albuquerque, Portuguese maritime enterprises furthered empirical approaches to understanding the natural world in emergent disciplinary formations of science, mathematics, and cartography – a thread that has been taken up by many scholars since.⁸ The material foundations of empire and its ancillary projects entailed, in these frameworks of analysis, specifically Portuguese contributions to world history.

International scholars outside of Portugal working contemporaneously to Thomaz, Godinho, and Albuquerque channeled some of these insights towards more ample perspectives, in an arena of scholarly historical production that tended to reinforce some of the more Eurocentric premises of the Portuguese imperial historians. Charles Boxer pioneered a vision of the particularities of Portugal's early global enterprises in relation to other European empires, though he did not foreground Manuel's specific role.⁹ Later, Russell-Wood focused on the impact of the maritime Portuguese voyages on the circulation of people, commodities, natural products, and ideas, but still in a framework centred on the motivations and rhythms imposed by the Portuguese.¹⁰

By contrast, in an approach pioneered by scholars of the early modern Indian Ocean world, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Ângela Barreto Xavier, Jorge Flores, and others recontextualized the arrival of Europeans within the longstanding realities and conjunctures of South Asian and, more broadly, maritime trading routes and political cultures.¹¹ In a

⁷ Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *Os Descobrimentos e a Economia Mundial* (Lisboa: Arcádia, 1963–1971), 2 vols. and Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, *L'économie de l'empire Portugais aux XV^{ème} et XVI^{ème} siècles* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1969); Manuel Nunes Dias, *O capitalismo monárquico português (1415–1549): Contribuição para o estudo das origens do capitalismo moderno* (Coimbra: Instituto de Estudos Históricos, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, 1963); Pierre Chaunu and Huguette Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique: 1504–1650*. 5 vols. (Paris: A. Colin, 1955–9); Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, Économie et Capitalisme, XV^e–XVIII^e siècle* (A. Colin, 1979); Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, vol. 1: *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 1974); Barbara Solow, "Capitalism in the Exceedingly Long Run." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7.4 (1987): 711–737; for examples of contemporary works that privilege African and African diasporic perspectives on these histories, see Walter Rodney, *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970); Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Press, 1983).

⁸ Luís de Albuquerque, *Ciência e experiência nos descobrimentos portugueses* (Lisboa: Instituto de Cultura e Língua Portuguesa, 1983) and Luís de Albuquerque, *Introdução à história dos descobrimentos portugueses* (Mem Martins: Europa-America, 1989); Francisco Contente Domingues, *Navios e viagens. A experiência portuguesa nos séculos XV a XVIII* (Lisboa: Tribuna da História, 2008); Surekha Davies, *Renaissance Ethnography and the Invention of the Human: New Worlds, Maps and Monsters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Onésimo T. Almeida, *O século dos prodígios: A ciência no Portugal da expansão* (Lisboa: Quetzal, 2018); Hugh Cagle, *Assembling the Tropics: Science and Medicine in Portugal's Empire, 1450–1700* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁹ For Boxer, Afonso de Albuquerque was the principal creator of "Portuguese India." Charles Ralph Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire 1415–1825* (London: Hutchinson, 1969); for an influential essay advancing similar points for different purposes – namely, the development of what has become known as actor-network theory – see John Law, "On the Methods of Long-Distance Control: Vessels, Navigation, and the Portuguese Route to India." *The Sociological Review* 32.S1 (1984): 234–263. Later, Bouchon produced the most consistent study of Albuquerque, emphasising his capacity to negotiate with a range of local Asian powers – see Geneviève Bouchon, *Albuquerque: Le Lion des Mers d'Asie* (Paris: Desjonqueres, 1992).

¹⁰ A. J. R. Russel-Wood, *A World on the Move: The Portuguese in Africa, Asia, and America, 1415–1808* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1992).

¹¹ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500–1700: A Political and Economic History* (New York: Longman Publishing, 1993); Ângela Barreto Xavier, *A invenção de Goa: Poder imperial e conversões culturais nos séculos XVI e XVII*; Jorge Flores, *O estado da Índia e a expansão mogol ca. 1570–1640* (2015); Jorge Flores, "Floating Franks. The Portuguese and their empire as seen from early modern Asia," in Aldrich, Robert and Kirsten McKenzie, eds., *The Routledge History of western empires* (London: New York: Routledge, 2014) 33–45; Michael Pearson, *Port Cities and Intruders: The Swahili Coast, Indian, and Portugal in the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Anthony Disney, *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire*, Vols. 1–2 (New York: Cambridge

certain sense, many of these perspectives were first opened up by Jean Aubin. His studies, addressing a range of dimensions and spatial contexts, introduced new analytical horizons by decentring the gaze from the Manueline court and redirecting it towards an understanding of Asian power brokers and the decisive role they played in shaping the configuration of Portuguese influence (or the lack thereof) in Asia.¹² The figure of Manuel in Waldsemüller's map required new interpretations.

An international community of scholars have since risen to the occasion. Into the first decades of the twenty-first century, a confluence of historiographic currents has significantly changed modes of writing and conceptualizing the global dimensions of the early modern Portuguese world. Such emergent frameworks include but are not limited to:

- a) a rise to prominence in the study of material and visual culture;¹³
- b) multi-scalar methodologies incorporating local and oceanic frameworks of analysis;¹⁴
- c) attention to political culture in new iterations of diplomatic history;¹⁵
- d) critical engagements with trans-regional histories of enslavement, ethnicity, race-making, gender, religion, capitalism, and other modalities of inclusion and exclusion;¹⁶
- e) questions of individual, collective and non-human agency, and the varied modalities of resistance.¹⁷

This renewal in the historiographic landscape has propelled new approaches, many of them anticipated by the Portuguese historians Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada

University Press, 2009). See also Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Across the Green Sea: Histories from the Western Indian Ocean, 1440-1640* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2024).

¹² Jean Aubin, *Le Latin et l'Astrolabe*, 3 vols. (Paris: Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian, 1996-2006).

¹³ Cécile Fromont: *The Art of Conversion. Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of Kongo* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Urte Krass, ed., *Visualizing Portuguese Power: The Political Use of Images in Portugal and its Overseas Empire, 16th-18th Century* (Zurich: Diaphanes, 2017); Maria Berbara, *Sacrifice and Conversion in the Early Modern Atlantic World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022); Alessandra Russo, *A New Antiquity: Art and Humanity as Universal, 1400-1600* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2024).

¹⁴ Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *A Nation Upon the Ocean Sea: Portugal's Atlantic Diaspora and the Crisis of Spanish Empire, 1492-1640* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Malyn Newitt, *Emigration and the Sea: An Alternative History of Portugal and the Portuguese* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁵ Diogo Ramada Curto, *Imperial culture and colonial projects. The Portuguese-speaking World from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2022); Pedro Cardim and Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, eds., *Political Thought in Portugal and its Empire, c. 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); John Thornton, *Afonso I Mvemba a Nzinga, King of Kongo: His Life & Correspondence*, trans. By Luís Madureira, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2023).

¹⁶ António Almeida Mendes, "Portugal e o tráfico de escravos na primeira metade do século XVI." *Africana Studia* 7 (2004): 13-30; David Wheat, *Atlantic Africa and the Spanish Caribbean, 1570-1640* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Herman Bennett, *African Kings and Black Slaves: Sovereignty and Dispossession in the Early Modern Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019); Ananya Chakravarti, *The Empire of Apostles: Religion, Accommodatio, and the Imagination of Empire in Early Modern Brazil and India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Jennifer Morgan, *Reckoning with Slavery: Gender, Kinship and Capitalism in the Early Black Atlantic*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021).

¹⁷ João José Reis & Flávio dos Santos Gomes, eds., *Liberdade por um fio: História dos quilombos no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996); Cátia Antunes & Karwan Fatah-Black, eds., *Explorations in History and Globalization* (London: New York: Routledge, 2016); Ângela Bareto Xavier, Cristina Nogueira da Silva and Michel Cahen, eds., *Slave subjectivities in the Iberian Worlds (16th-20th centuries)*, eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2023); Gabriel de Avilez Rocha, "Evasion Ecology in the Contact Era: Fugitive Social Movements and the Circum-Atlantic Dimensions of Marronage, 1480s-1530s." *The William & Mary Quarterly* 82.1 (January 2025): 3-48.

Curto. In the introduction to their landmark edited volume from 2008, the authors argued against conceiving the Portuguese empire as a bounded entity.¹⁸ Bethencourt's own contribution in the same volume figured among the first to argue for the 'improvised' nature of empire, dependent on conquests, negotiations, and compromises with others.¹⁹ Likewise, emphases on the importance of the role played by individual actors at the margins of formal structures of empire who crossed diverse boundaries was suggested by Cátia Antunes and Amélia Polónia.²⁰ Polónia also sought to foreground the role of individuals and networks organized in spaces outside of Lisbon.²¹ These approaches tend to be more compatible with rendering non-European perspectives with more precision, and the perceptions that diverse peoples who interacted with the Portuguese from Manuel's time onward gradually constructed of the Portuguese – angles of analysis that have been the subject of key interventions by scholars working in Asian, African, and Indigenous Brazilian histories.²²

These recent trends, which benefit from collaborative investigation and bring together authors from various scholarly traditions, have used connected and comparative analyses of the early modern Iberian empires, an avenue opened by the work of Serge Gruzinski, who insisted that the supposedly inevitable and unstoppable advance of the Iberian empires in the early decades of the sixteenth century is an illusion.²³ The Islamic world, the Aztec eagle, and the Chinese dragon, to use his metaphor, confirm the contingent nature of a multipolar world. These interpretations tend to underscore the many entanglements and reciprocal influences that characterized those Iberian empires, which otherwise tend to be read in oppositional terms.²⁴ By contrast, scholars have increasingly seen the dynamics of

¹⁸ Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (eds.), *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1-18. This call is echoed more recently by Cristiana Bastos, "Intersections of Empire: Post-Empire, and Diaspora: De-Imperializing Lusophone Studies," *Journal of Lusophone Studies* 5.2 (Fall 2020): 27-54.

¹⁹ Francisco Bethencourt, "Political Configurations and Local Powers," in *Portuguese Oceanic Expansion, 1400-1800*, ed. Francisco Bethencourt and Diogo Ramada Curto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 197-254; Malyn Newitt, "Formal and informal empire in the history of Portuguese expansion" *Portuguese Studies* 2001; Havik, Philip J. and Malyn Newitt, eds., *Creole Societies in the Portuguese Colonial Empire* (2015); António Hespanha, *Filhos da Terra: identidades mestiças nos confins da expansão portuguesa* (Lisboa: Tinta-da-China, 2019)

²⁰ Cátia Antunes, "Free Agents and Formal Institutions in the Portuguese Empire. Towards a Framework of Analysis," *Portuguese Studies* 28:2 (2012), 173-185; Cátia Antunes and Amélia Polónia (eds.), *Beyond Empires: Global, Self-Organizing, Cross-Imperial Networks, 1500-1800* (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

²¹ Amélia Polónia, "Indivíduos e redes auto-organizadas na construção do império ultramarino português," in *Estudos de homenagem a Joaquim Romero Magalhães. Economia, instituições e império*, ed. Álvaro Garrido, Leonor Freire Costa, and Luís Miguel Duarte (Coimbra: Almedina, 2012), 349-371.

²² Some works for Africa include: George E. Brooks, *Landlords and Strangers: Ecology, Society and Trade in Western Africa, 1000-1630* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); José Lingna Nafafé, *Colonial Encounters: Issues of Culture, Hybridity and Creolisation: Portuguese Mercantile Settlers in West Africa* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2007); for Brazil, Manuela Carneiro da Cunha, ed., *História dos índios no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1992); John Manuel Monteiro, *Negros da terra: Índios e bandeirantes nas origens de São Paulo* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1994); Kaká Werá Jecupé, *A terra dos mil povos: História indígena do Brasil contada por um índio*, 2nd ed., rev. (São Paulo: Peirópolis, 2020); For Asia, see footnote 11

²³ Serge Gruzinski, *Les quatre parties du monde. Histoire d'une Mondialisation* (Paris: La Martinière, 2004) and especially Serge Gruzinski, *L'aigle et le dragon. Demesure européenne et mondialisation au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2012).

²⁴ Key works in this vein include: Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Holding the World in Balance. The Connected Histories of the Iberian Overseas Empires, 1500-1640," *American Historical Review*, 112, 5 (2007): 1359-1385; Pedro Cardim, Tamar Herzog, José Javier Ruiz Ibañez and Gaetano Sabatini, eds., *Polycentric monarchies. How did Early Modern Spain and Portugal achieve and maintain a global hegemony?* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2014); Ângela Xavier, Federico Palomo and Roberta Stumpf, eds., *Monarquias Ibéricas em Perspectiva Comparada (séculos XVI-XVIII): dinâmicas imperiais e circulação de modelos administrativos* (Lisbon: Instituto de Ciências Sociais, 2018); Fernando

territorial and economic expansion of both Portugal and Spain's empires as a continuation of processes with roots in the medieval Christian *reconquista* of the Iberian Peninsula. The pattern would have seen the substitution of neighboring Muslim authorities with their conquerors, the imposition of rule by Christian kings, the forced removal and forcible baptism of Jewish populations, the doling out of land concessions to new proprietors, the attribution of subaltern status to newly subjected populations – all concerted political acts enforced through violence.²⁵ Building on this connected perspective, further works position Iberian empires as key but not sole instigators of globalization.²⁶ Opening the vantage point to “global interconnectivity” and ever more intensifying dynamics of integration spurred by the voyages of Vasco da Gama and Pedro Álvares Cabral appear in a recent synthesis of the scholarship marked by a global historical approach, a scholarly current that has likewise brought important new contributions to the field.²⁷

Global horizons nevertheless are still hobbled by blind spots. French, Dutch, and English rivalries with Iberian empires have been a perennial topic of European historiographies – inspiring a host of comparativist treatments usually oriented more towards highlighting contrasts between empires – but the recent approaches pioneered by scholars of Portugal and Spain before and after the union of the Iberian crowns in 1580 provide important lessons for comprehending the co-constructed nature of broader trans-European imperial configurations in the early modern era. The emerging vision is one of shared chronologies, contested spaces, and overlapping networks. Franco-Iberian relations in the Manueline era and its aftermath offer an underexplored and consequential arena of inquiry, where rivalries on the Brazilian coast, the Caribbean, and Atlantic Africa prefigured important global European disputes in later decades and centuries.²⁸ That mapmakers in Dieppe in 1547 chose to depict the French monarch François I astride a sea creature off the southern African coast in what has since become known as the Vallard Atlas – a figure explicitly rivaling Manuel's depiction in Waldseemüller – suggests that antagonisms and conflicts among elites in Europe entailed less a diametrically opposed approach to empire-building than a form of interaction in their own right, aligned in the ways in which they sought to further European interests in a larger world.²⁹

A similar area for further research, already pursued by scholars of Indigenous Americas and critical archival studies, involves integrating European space and agents into coeval global circuits, rather than seeing historical change in a world arena as driven by

Bouza, Pedro Cardim and Antonio Feros, eds., *The Iberian world 1450-1820* (London: New York: Routledge, 2021); Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, “Early Modern Iberian Empires, Global History and the History of Globalization,” *Journal of Global History* 17, 3 (2022): 539-561.

²⁵ Pedro Cardim and António Manuel Hespanha, “A estrutura territorial das duas monarquias ibéricas,” in *Monarquias Ibéricas em Perspectiva Comparada (séculos XVI-XVIII): dinâmicas imperiais e circulação de modelos administrativos*, eds. Ângela Xavier, Federico Palomo, and Roberta Stumpf (Lisbon: Instituto de Ciências Sociais, 2018), 51-95.

²⁶ Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, *Iberian World Empires and the Globalization of Europe 1415-1668* (Singapore: Palgrave, 2019).

²⁷ Edgar Pereira, “1498-1500 Calicut and Porto Seguro: the Birth of Pluricontinentalism,” in *The Global History of Portugal. From Prehistory to the Modern World*, eds. Carlos Fiolhais, José Eduardo Franco and José Pedro Paiva (Brighton; Chicago; Toronto: Sussex Academic Press, 2022) 184-188.

²⁸ Leyla Perrone-Moisés, *Vinte Luas: Viagem de Paulmier de Gonneville ao Brasil, 1503-1505* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1992); Ana Maria Ferreira, *Problemas marítimos entre Portugal e a França na primeira metade do século XVI* (Lisboa: Patrimônia, 1995); For a recent discussion of the Vallard Atlas and the Dieppe School, see Peter Mancall, *Nature and Culture in the Early Modern Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

²⁹ Chet van Duzer, *op. cit.*, 46.

outwardly moving Europeans.³⁰ Discourses of novelty have long structured this framing. The years of Manuel's reign represented, as is widely recognized, a world-historical conjuncture when Portuguese and European elite discourses touted newness from the parapets, particularly in relation to the opening of 'new' oceanic routes, the expansionist designs on the so-called 'New' World of the Americas, and the production and diffusion in previously unmatched volumes of commodities like sugar. Yet developments closer to Portuguese shores were also afoot, as a national historiography has traced in detail the character of municipal reforms that included the reissue of 'new' town charters (*forais novos*) and other legal and administrative restructurings generally glossed as '*Leitura Nova*.' The fact that, with the notable exception of recent work by Ângela Barreto Xavier,³¹ continental Portuguese reforms tend not to be seen in the light of global transformations, even as they also participated in coeval discourses of newness, suggests that understanding strategies of rule in 'metropolitan' spaces as a function of global processes might yield new perspectives on Portugal's place in the early modern world. The consideration of this historiographic disjunction between kingdom and empire, or more broadly, Europe and the world, suggests that there is more work to do beyond this special issue to consider the potentials for embedding histories of Portugal and the Portuguese empire in the transformations of the early modern world.

An area where scholars of the Lusophone world have most clearly engaged in this line of inquiry is in Iberian confessional politics, and specifically the persecution of Jews and Muslims during the reign of D. Manuel. A culmination of complex processes of multi-confessional negotiation and religious orthodoxy, the royal Portuguese decrees of 1496-7 forced tens of thousands of Jewish people in Portugal to convert to Christianity. In the same sequence of promulgations, Crown officials also forced scores of Muslim people into exile. Scholars have explored how these royal policies involved deliberate calculations on the part of Manuel and his court, with an eye to the internal politics of the kingdom, dynastic maneuvering with Castile, and regional conjunctures in Europe, North Africa, and beyond.³² Waves of persecution against religious minorities in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Iberia portended great consequences for the fortunes of the Portuguese royal treasury, the peninsula's religious composition, Muslim-Christian relations writ large, and the subsequent contours of the Western Sephardic Diaspora.³³ For sixteenth-century Jewish chroniclers such as Samuel Usque, Manuel was less the 'Fortunate' king lauded by his

³⁰ Nancy Van Deusen, *Global Indios* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Caroline Dodds Pennock, *On Savage Shores: How Indigenous Americans Discovered Europe* (New York: Knopf, 2023); Byron Hamann, *The Invention of the Colonial Americas: Data, Architecture, and the Archive of the Indies, 1781-1844* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2022).

³¹ Ângela Barreto Xavier, "Village Normativities and the Portuguese Imperial Order: The Case of Early Modern Goa," in *Norms beyond empire: law-making and local normativities in Iberian Asia, 1500-1800*, ed. Manuel Bastias Saavedra (Leiden: Brill, 2022), 32-71.

³² Maria José Pimenta Ferro Tavares, *Os Judeus em Portugal no Século XV* (Lisbon: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1982); Giuseppe Marcocci, "... per capillos adductos ad pillam." Il dibattito cinquecentesco sulla validità del battesimo forzato degli ebrei in Portogallo (1496-1497)," in *Salvezza delle anime disciplina dei corpi. Un seminario sulla storia del battesimo*, ed. Adriano Prosperi (Pisa: Edizione della Normale, 2006) 339-423; François Soyer, *The Persecution of the Jews and Muslims of Portugal: King Manuel I and the End of Religious Tolerance (1496-7)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Maria Filomena Lopes de Barros, *Tempos e espaços de mouros: a minoria muçulmana no reino português (séculos XII a XV)*. (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2007); José Alberto Silva Tavim, Maria Filomena Lopes de Barros and Lúcia Liba Mucznik, eds. *In the Iberian Peninsula and Beyond: A History of Jews and Muslims (15th-17th Centuries)*, 2 vols. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015).

³³ Francisco Bethencourt, *Strangers Within. The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Trading Elite* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2024); Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the "Shebet Yehudah"* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1976); José Alberto Rodrigues da Silva Tavim, "'Um retorno ao Massacre de 1506': Os judeus que moravam em Lisboa na época do massacre." *CADMO: Journal for Ancient History*, vol. 33 (2023): 195-205; Jonathan Israel, *Diasporas within a Diaspora: Jews, Crypto-Jews and the World Maritime Empires*

supporters than he was an unjust monarch who betrayed the Iberian Sephardim.³⁴ Although no firsthand sixteenth-century accounts of the Manueline expulsions of Muslims have survived, many of those who experienced or witnessed them no doubt shared a similar critique, while others silenced their opposition and accepted the forced baptism policies.³⁵

Manuel's persecution of religious minorities burnished his militant Roman Catholic credentials, but some unintended consequences of the expulsions would soon become evident to the Portuguese royal court. Decades earlier, Jews in the Algarve had formed a critical hub of the nascent printing industry on the Peninsula. The first-ever printed book in Portugal, from the presses of the Algarve typographer Samuel Porteiro in the 1480s, was in Hebrew.³⁶ Following the expulsions, Manuel's court encountered greater difficulties than they otherwise would have to find a printer in Portugal with the technology and capacity to publish the latest edition of a revamped legal compendium known as the *Ordenações Manuelinas*.³⁷ They looked in the 1510s to the Seville-based printer Jakob Cromberger. It is likely, as argued Clive Griffin, that the 1521 Cromberger edition of the *Ordenações*, which claimed to be published in Lisbon and Évora, was in fact made in Seville.³⁸ Extending this hypothesis, Gabriel Rocha found that paper used in a copy held at the John Carter Brown Library of Cromberger's 1521 *Ordenações* bears the distinctive watermark of a scepter and armillary sphere: symbols that were associated with Manuel and would come to enter the symbology of the Portuguese Crown and later nation-state (see Figure 2). In European papermaking technology of Manuel's time, watermarks were introduced at the point of production, and the high-quality paper required by a sumptuous display of Portuguese royal power would likely have been produced and imported from Italy.³⁹ As such, an instrument of Portuguese law intended to project the monarch's authority outward to the kingdom's vassals and the broader world likely exemplified, in its material composition, a Portugal shaped by external forces. Likewise, few months after the completion of Cromberger's 1521 *Ordenações Manuelinas*, the Portuguese king expired in Lisbon from a transcontinental outbreak of bubonic plague.⁴⁰

Recent historiographical currents examining Portugal in early modern global history, as discussed above, open the possibility of comprehending, among other things, how a

(1540–1740) (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Rogério de Oliveira Ribas, *Filhos de Mafoma: Mouriscos, Cripto-islamismo e Inquisição no Portugal Quinhentista* (Niterói: EDUFF, 2023).

³⁴ Samuel Usque, *Consolação às Tribulações de Israel*. 2 vols., ed. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and José V. de Pina Martins (Lisbon: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1989).

³⁵ Though of a later generation, the Bishop Jeronimo Osório, in his 1571 *De rebus Emmanuelis*, criticized Manuel's policy of Muslim and Jewish expulsions. See José Pedro Paiva, "I vescovi portoghesi e il battesimo forzato degli ebrei nel 1497," *Rivista di Storia del Cristianesimo* (Brescia), vol. VII, 1 (2010): 11–22.

³⁶ Manuel Cadafaz de Matos, "Três momentos para o estudo dos primórdios da imprensa bíblica (judaica e cristã) em Portugal: O período de 1487–1495" in *Bíblias de Portugal*, ed. Aires Nascimento (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional Casa da Moeda, 2004), 85–124.

³⁷ The Lisbon-based Moravian printer Valentim Fernandes, a key figure at the royal court, published earlier runs of the *Ordenações* in 1505 and contributed to a 1512–14 edition. He died in the late 1510s.

³⁸ Clive Griffin, *The Crombergers of Seville: The History of a Printing and Merchant Dynasty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

³⁹ Cromberger sourced high quality paper from Genoa, though he used Iberian-made paper for cheaper editions. Griffin, *The Crombergers*, 30–31. Recent scholars note that the oldest known Portuguese-made watermark following the Jewish expulsions dates from 1536. Theo Laurentius and Frans Laurentius, *Watermarks, 1450–1850: A Concise History of Paper in Western Europe* (Leiden: Brill, 2023): 40. Another notes of papermaking in Portugal at the time: "se a houve, deve ter sido muito fraca." Arnaldo Faria de Ataíde e Melo, *O papel como elemento de identificação* (Lisboa: Biblioteca Nacional, 1926): 27.

⁴⁰ Graça Maria Lains, *A peste em Portugal: Estudo de Demografia Histórica (Séculos XIV a XVI)*. (Lisbon: Editorial Estampa, 1982); Christopher Carlin, "The Last Will and Testament of Dom Manuel I." *Mediterranean Studies* 15 (2006): 62–94.



Figure 2. Reproduction of watermark depicting armillary sphere and star-pointed scepter included in *Ordenações Manuelinas*, Bk. 5 (Lisbon/Évora, 1521). John Carter Brown Library. Traced from image of original by Gabriel Rocha.

printed legal code claiming to have been printed in Lisbon and Évora emerged materially and politically from factors far beyond the Iberian kingdom's borders. In this way, the geographies by which historians of Portugal in the world centre their narratives is now, more than ever, an open question. Scholars are now more likely to accept, from the outset of analysis – as they did at our conference in Coimbra – the limitations of narratives and interpretations constructed around Portuguese or other European actors in early modern histories of global empires. Building on such important developments in the historiography, contributors to this special issue of *Itinerario* take this one step further by illustrating, individually and collectively, the multi-polar interactions that shaped the emergence of Portuguese imperial formations across various world regions. Where a previous historical model tended to approach the political and economic structures of empire as imposed by one group (whether restricted to political or economic elite with various degrees of connection to the court of Manuel I, or more broadly to subjects identified as Portuguese), the contributors here examine processes of change and struggle that created – from the earliest phases of Portuguese imperial enterprises – unstable and multiply determined social, political, religious, and cultural formations more than often marked by violence, hierarchy, pragmatism, and adaptation.

The contributions together help advance current historiographic debates around how to articulate what Sanjay Subrahmanyam has called “connected histories” at various scales, how best to account for the “equal shares of history,” as put forward by Romain Bertrand, or how to demystify Victor Lieberman’s “strange parallels” in cycles of transformation across disparate parts of the early modern world.⁴¹ The variety and commonalities of the issue’s contributions coalesce around (without being fundamentally circumscribed

⁴¹ A particularly influential text, later adopted and applied by other scholars towards different ends, was Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected histories: notes towards a reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asia Studies* 31:3 (1997), 735–762. See also Romain Bertrand, *L'Histoire à parts égales. Récits d'une rencontre, Orient-Occident: XVIe-XVIIe siècles*. (Paris: Le Seuil, 2011); Victor Lieberman, *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Context, c. 800–1830*, vols. 1–2, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008–9).

to) early modern Portuguese imperial spheres during Manuel's reign and its wake. Read together, they present a unique opportunity to break new ground in ascertaining plural perspectives and simultaneous explanatory frameworks inherent in early modern global histories.

As a whole, therefore, the dossier furthers a historiographic turn towards open-ended and non-teleological approaches of early modern global history at the pivotal historical conjuncture of Manuel I's reign. From different geographic, historiographic, and disciplinary vantage points, contributors help to better elucidate the role of non-Portuguese actors and contexts, in addition to the improvisations, adaptations, false starts, mutual influences and local experiences that influenced the trajectories of empires in the Manueline era. At heart, they offer a better sense of how histories traditionally deemed 'Portuguese' were interlaced with a broader world marked by swift and unexpected transformations. Such considerations help advance thinking on the range of methodologies that historians and other scholars in allied disciplines can use to study the ever 'entangled' multinational nature of early modern imperialism writ large.

To pursue these objectives, the issue's contributions variously cross disciplinary boundaries, drawing from methodologies that span History, Art History, Religious Studies, and/or Anthropology. Within History, they engage with distinct historiographical traditions, from Africa, the African Diaspora, and Colonial Latin America, to Native Studies of South America, the Indian Ocean World, and Early Modern Europe. Notably, aside from one of the co-editors, no participant in this dossier is a Portuguese national: an indication of the degree of internationalization of early modern Lusophone studies in recent decades, and a sign of how diverse scholarly traditions and backgrounds can continue to help reshape conventional understandings of Portugal's empire in the age of Manuel I.

We are pleased and grateful to have gathered leading scholars of early modern global history for this endeavor, as exciting as it is challenging. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, whose previous studies were integral to the recontextualization of Portugal in global history (see above), brings in the opening essay of this volume a focus on the impact of Islamic elite political and religious cultures across the Asian and African continents on nascent Portuguese imperial structures and strategies of rule. Subrahmanyam's contribution makes especially visible how the Portuguese neither determined the tempo by which their imperial holdings emerged, nor their subsequent transformations, strongly conditioned by non-European agents. Far beyond thinking of empire as part of an expansionist strategy delineated by Manuel I and his courtiers, Subrahmanyam's essay makes explicit how a series of geopolitical transformations triggered by the death of Timur in 1405 created complex repercussions in diverse Sunni, Mamluk, Timurid, Ottoman, Deccan, and Gujarati polities. At heart, he underscores that factors that were extrinsic to Portuguese designs, particularly the defeat of the Mamluks by the Ottomans in 1516-7, opened a window of opportunity for the Portuguese in Asia.

David Wheat examines the ocean-spanning social, economic, and cultural pathways that displaced scores of enslaved Africans to Europe, the Caribbean and the Americas in the sixteenth century. Through new archival finds, particularly from the vast holdings of the Archivo General de Indias that lay witness to the porous divide between Portuguese and Spanish mercantile interests, his essay examines how Iberian and other European merchants forged new connections with their African, Caribbean, and global counterparts in the span of the early sixteenth century around the emerging transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans. With keen attention to the changing fortunes and geographies of trafficking circuits, Wheat shows how European merchants and mariners coordinated to develop colonial entrepôt and plantation slavery enterprises across the East Atlantic islands - Madeira, Arguin, Canaries, Cabo Verde, and São Tomé - to traffic African people across

even greater expanses, including, from the last years of Manuel's reign onward, to the Americas. Undoubtedly, Portuguese people played primary roles in establishing the complex social and economic structures of slavery in the early Atlantic; nevertheless, Wheat's essay adds to the growing chorus of scholars showing that Portuguese mercantile and royal elites, let alone seafaring people from Portugal, did not act in isolation from other Europeans beyond their Iberian neighbors. Italy, the Low and Baltic Countries, England, Germany and France all contributed, to different degrees and at different moments – including in the times of Manuel I – their great shares of financiers, traders, and conveyors of early Atlantic slavery.

Adding to this reconceptualization of the Portuguese empire, Maria Regina Celestino de Almeida approaches the foundational role of diverse Native South American peoples – their societies and cultures, their political structures of rule and sovereignty – in making colonial Brazil. While Manuel's reign saw the arrival of the first waves of Portuguese (and other European) peoples in the vast lands previously known by some as Pindorama, and later as America, Celestino de Almeida shows that Native peoples brought forward, through the cataclysms of contact in the sixteenth century, longstanding cultural and social practices of exchange, taking on perseverant, vital and changing spiritual and political forms. These ongoing and transformative processes, driven foremost in Brazil by a diverse mosaic of Indigenous peoples including the Tupi-Guarani, influenced key aspects of Portuguese royal policy even as Native Brazilians faced multifaceted enterprises of trade and warfare that furthered European projects of slavery and dispossession in their lands. Celestino de Almeida's essay builds on key works in the historiography, as well as inter-disciplinary scholarly approaches particularly from Anthropology, that have established the foundational impact of Indigenous political culture on the Portuguese project of empire in the Americas as it began to take shape from the Manueline period. This synthetic approach suggests even further possibilities for piecing together histories of South America's reach in Atlantic and global histories.

Rounding out the collection, and charting other inter-disciplinary waters, Urte Krass offers a bracing portrait of the circulation of Roman Catholic relics and devotional objects, which she notes reflect changing patterns of religious devotion in colonial Iberian and European spaces. In an original approach centred on the material and visual culture of Christian spirituality, Krass also considers how a clerical error might have conditioned history: ancient texts registered a story of a German princess who set a deadline for her pagan fiancée to convert to Christianity, sending him to Rome accompanied by eleven virgin women. Centuries later, a medieval scribe read the 'eleven' as 'eleven thousand' and the error sparked the emergence of a crowded material and discursive field for the circulation of proliferating relic objects that took hold in Europe. This spiritual cult of saintly relics also gained traction in Manueline Portugal and, from then on, in bones and images, diffused and circulated across diverse spans of the Portuguese empire, from Goa to Brazil, assuming new characteristics, influencing new religious practices, and gaining new forms of visual representation.

The picture of Manuel that emerges from this quartet of essays presents a smaller silhouette of the monarch in a more crowded tableau of global actors. Taken together, these considerations transform potential readings of the image of Manuel in Waldseemüller's *Carta Marina*. Although the messianic and authoritative projection of power is undeniable, taking seriously the peripherality and strategic insertion of 'Portuguese' interests in the Indian Ocean – one that the engravers no doubt also knew – underscores that the figure of the monarch lies off-centre in the map, rather than at its core. Manuel's title – "King of the navigation, conquest, and commerce" – put forward a sovereign assertion not to the oceanic space itself, but to the mariners and merchants who sought access to a larger domain. From

this perspective, the grandiose claim appears more conditioned by the reality of limited power: Manuel's back is turned to the Indian Ocean, as if beating a hasty retreat. Beyond his reach lies the Atlantic African coast, where other sovereigns articulated their own geopolitical designs and economic schemes. Beyond that, still, lay the landmass that began to be known in some European circles in Manuel's years as America, with their diverse and powerful sovereign peoples. An oceanic mercantile network traversed these spaces in ways that monarchs and rulers of various parts of the world sought to regulate, inflect, and otherwise integrate with mixed success – Manuel and his European rivals, including the French king depicted in the Vallard atlas, among them. Seen in light of the trends in Portuguese imperial and early modern global historiography, therefore, the articles in this special issue help crystallize a new vision of the king portrayed by Waldsemüller: not just as exemplifying a gap between messianic vision and a messier reality, but rather illustrating an aspirational vision of supremacy that carried within its own articulation an attenuated view of what could be plausibly achieved. The king who wished to dominate the sea and trade, for all his messianic leanings, was limited to steering a sea creature away from the Indian Ocean, catching a ride on the ocean's mightier currents.

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