

The Construction of Discovery: Crónica de Guiné, the Treaty of Tordesillas, and the Foundations of Iberian Colonial Sovereignty (1453–1494)

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Abstract This paper examines the emergence of the concept of “discovery” in the late fifteenth century during the territorial and maritime disputes between Portugal and Castile-Aragon. By examining key texts like *Crónica de Guiné*, treaties, including Alcáçovas-Toledo (1479-1480) and Tordesillas (1494), and analyzing the evolving role of the papacy, the paper illustrates how Portugal transformed the basis of its claims of rights in the Atlantic from Christian apostolic authority to maritime discovery. This shift, influenced by changing political dynamics in Western Christendom, is reflected in texts like *Crónica de Guiné*, which was reshaped to align with Portugal’s maritime ambitions. The paper highlights how overseas conflicts, particularly through treaties and foundational texts, helped establish “discovery” as a tool to legitimize European expansion. It contributes to scholarship by reevaluating the legacy of discovery, emphasizing the complexities of European imperial narratives and their long-term impacts on indigenous societies.

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Keywords:

Atlantic territorial disputes, *Crónica de Guiné*, Early Modern empires, Iberian Colonial Sovereignty, Maritime Discovery, Portuguese Expansion, Treaty of Tordesillas.

La construcción del descubrimiento: Crónica de Guiné, el Tratado de Tordesillas y los fundamentos de la soberanía colonial ibérica (1453-1494)

Resumen Este artículo examina el surgimiento del concepto de “descubrimiento” a finales del siglo XV, en el contexto de las disputas territoriales y marítimas entre Portugal y Castilla-Aragón. A través del análisis de textos clave como la *Crónica de Guinea*, de tratados como los de Alcáçovas-Toledo (1479-1480) y Tordesillas (1494), y del papel cambiante del papado, el artículo muestra cómo Portugal transformó la base de sus reivindicaciones de derechos en el Atlántico, pasando de una autoridad apostólica cristiana a una legitimación basada en el descubrimiento marítimo. Este cambio, influido por las dinámicas políticas en transformación de la cristiandad occidental, se refleja en textos como la *Crónica de Guinea*, que fue reelaborada para alinearse con las ambiciones marítimas portuguesas. El artículo destaca cómo los conflictos ultramarinos, especialmente a través de tratados y textos fundacionales, contribuyeron a establecer el “descubrimiento” como una herramienta para legitimar la expansión europea. De esta manera contribuye para la revisión crítica del legado del descubrimiento, subrayando las complejidades de las narrativas imperiales europeas y sus impactos duraderos sobre las sociedades indígenas.

Palabras clave:

Imperios de la Edad Moderna, soberanía colonial ibérica, expansión portuguesa, descubrimiento marítimo, *Crónica de Guinea*, Tratado de Tordesillas, disputas territoriales atlánticas.

A construção da descoberta: *Crónica de Guiné, o Tratado de Tordesilhas e os fundamentos da soberania colonial ibérica (1453-1494)*

Resumo Este artigo examina o surgimento do conceito de «descoberta» no final do século XV, durante as disputas territoriais e marítimas entre Portugal e Castela-Aragão. Ao examinar textos importantes como a *Crónica de Guiné*, tratados, incluindo Alcáçovas-Toledo (1479-1480) e Tordesilhas (1494), e analisar a evolução do papel do papado, o artigo ilustra como Portugal transformou a base das suas reivindicações de direitos no Atlântico, passando da autoridade apostólica cristã para a descoberta marítima. Essa mudança, influenciada pelas dinâmicas políticas em transformação na cristandade ocidental, refletiu-se em textos como a *Crónica de Guiné*, que foi reformulada para se alinhar às ambições marítimas de Portugal. O artigo destaca como os conflitos ultramarinos, particularmente por meio de tratados e textos fundadores, ajudaram a estabelecer a “descoberta” como uma ferramenta para legitimar a expansão europeia. Ele contribui para a academia ao reavaliar o legado da descoberta, enfatizando as complexidades das narrativas imperiais europeias e seus impactos de longo prazo nas sociedades indígenas.

Palavras-chave:

Impérios da Idade Moderna, soberania colonial ibérica, expansão portuguesa, descobertas marítimas, *Crónica de Guiné*, Tratado de Tordesilhas, disputas territoriais atlânticas.

The concept of “discovery” has been increasingly scrutinized by both academic and public historians, particularly due to its traditional association with European colonization and the establishment of overseas empires. In the historiography of European expansion, scholars have debated how these narratives often elevate European explorers as singular agents of discovery, marginalizing the presence and contributions of indigenous civilizations. However, recent scholarship has shifted toward more inclusive perspectives that recognize the experiences of Native American, Asian, and African populations. In reexamining the origins and evolution of the concept of discovery, particularly during the fifteenth-century disputes between Portugal and Castile-Aragon, we uncover a turning point in the construction of Iberian colonial sovereignty. This paper examines how territorial conflicts, particularly through key texts like *Crónica de Guiné* and treaties such as Alcáçovas-Toledo (1479-1480) and Tordesillas (1494), shaped discovery as a tool to legitimize European expansion. Through these treaties the discourse of discovery extended earlier religious justifications for non-European claims, signaling broader political and religious transformations within Western Christendom during the mid-fifteenth to early-sixteenth centuries – transformations prompted by increased interactions with non-Christian societies in Africa, the Americas, and Asia.

These transformations are evident in the mid-fifteenth-century disputes between Portugal and Castile over the Canary Islands and other Atlantic territories. Castile’s persistence in claiming these territories, despite papal endorsements favoring Portugal, weakened the influence of Catholic apostolic authority in *Crónica de Guiné*. This text, originally promoting Portugal’s divine mandate in the Atlantic, had to adapt to the emerging political reality by reflecting the Crown’s shift toward discovery-based claims. By the end of the 1470s, new agreements between the Portuguese and Castilian crowns

formalized a new deal concerning these disputes. These agreements represented in the Treaties of Alcáçovas-Toledo (1479-1480)¹ and Tordesillas (1494)² embody a shift from religious warfare for territorial expansion to a more practical view of sovereignty based on the authority of non-Christian territories. Likewise, these treaties indicated a decline in papal governance regarding the relationship between Christians and non-Christians. Consequently, *Crónica de Guiné* had to adapt to this transition and the Portuguese Crown's demand for a renewed historical narrative about the Atlantic activities of Infante Henrique, which could reflect the dynamic alterations concerning the Portuguese-Castilian rivalry following these treaties.

The concept of discovery during the late fifteenth century not only served as a political instrument for asserting overseas claims but also intersected with emerging scientific understandings of exploration. While this paper primarily focuses on the political use of discovery as a legitimizing tool for Portuguese and Castilian territorial claims, it is essential to acknowledge that the notion of discovery also carried implications for knowledge production and control over the natural world. Concepts from political domains often influence scientific paradigms and vice versa, suggesting that discovery's political application may have shaped or paralleled contemporary scientific inquiries into geography and natural history (Cohen, 1985). Moreover, representations of knowledge and political authority are often intertwined. During the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the intellectual context of discovery extended beyond territorial claims to encompass evolving perceptions of nature, geography, and empirical inquiry (Brown, 2009). This overlap invites further exploration of how the political discourse of

¹ "Ratificação do Tratado de Alcáçovas feita e assinada por D. Fernando e D. Isabel, reis de Castela, Leão e Aragão, e entregue a Fernando da Silva para a dar ao Rei e ao Príncipe de Portugal," March 6, 1480, Gavetas, Gav. 17, mç. 6, n. 16 / Código de Referência: PT/TT/GAV/17/6/16, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), PT-PT-GAV-17-6-16_m0028_derivada-m0029_derivada.

² "Ratificação do Tratado de Tordesilhas feito com D. João II, assinada por D. Isabel e D. Fernando, reis de Castela, Leão e Aragão, e por seu filho, o Príncipe D. João", 2 de julho de 1494, Gavetas, Gav. 17, mç. 2, n. 24 || PT/TT/GAV/17/2/24, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT).

discovery, as formalized in treaties such as Alcáçovas-Toledo (1479-1480) and Tordesillas (1494), may have influenced or paralleled emerging scientific discourses concerning geographical exploration and natural knowledge. While this connection is beyond the immediate scope of the present study, it highlights the broader intellectual transformations accompanying the development of discovery as a legitimizing tool.

The impetus for this historical narrative revision concerning the Portuguese fifteenth-century activities in the Atlantic was driven by the emergence of the concept of maritime discovery – *descobrimento* in Portuguese – which I claim developed in response to the political realignments between the Portuguese and Castilian crowns. These shifts reflected a transition from the earlier framework of Catholic apostolic authority, as represented by papal governance, to a more secular jurisdiction dominated by the Iberian monarchies. This new concept of discovery became a pivotal tool in legitimizing territorial claims and marked the beginning of a new phase in Iberian colonialism. With it came heightened ambitions for territorial expansion and exploitation, extending beyond the Atlantic and equatorial regions and eventually encompassing the Americas.

Consequently, this historical narrative revision also had an impact on the person involved with those overseas activities, Infante Henrique. His portrayal as a Christian apostle, constructed by Zurara in *Crónica de Guiné*, began to give way to a less religious description. After the 1480s, particularly during the reign of King João II, the focus shifted from Henrique's religious mission to his pioneering role in Portugal's overseas activities. Therefore, the *Crónica de Guiné*, which had initially emphasized the religious conquest of West Africa through slave raids, gradually became recast as part of the broader history of the new-born Portuguese maritime discoveries narrative, positioning Infante Henrique as a key figure in the exploration that ultimately led to the opening of new routes to the Indies.

In its modern sense, the noun ‘discovery’ that describes Portuguese overseas activities during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries did not emerge until the end of the fifteenth century.³ In this sense, the classification of *Crónica de Guiné* as a history of Portuguese discoveries should indeed be a critical issue in historical scholarship. If the concept of ‘discovery’ did not emerge until the late fifteenth century, then *Crónica de Guiné* cannot be accurately categorized as a history of Portuguese discoveries, despite the long-standing scholarly tradition of labeling it as such since its first printed publication in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ However, it appears that ideological interpretations often outweigh factual accuracy, as evidenced by the tendency of scholarship to search for the presence of the concept of ‘discovery’ in *Crónica de Guiné* and other related documents, even in the absence of direct references or explicit terminology. While *Crónica de Guiné* may be seen by some as reflecting the nascent stages of the concept of discovery, this assertion lacks substantial documentary support.⁵

³ Jaime Cortesão’s historicization of this noun focuses on its geographic sense, referring to the discovery of new territories that expanded the contemporary understanding of the world. See: Jaime Cortesão (1990, pp. 651-660).

⁴ *Crónica de Guiné* has traditionally been interpreted by Portuguese nationalism scholars as disconnected from any political activity, viewed merely as a panegyric narrative about Infante Henrique and his overseas ventures on the Atlantic Ocean in what has been commonly named *Descobrimientos Portugueses*. These interpretations date back to the *Crónica de Guiné*’s first printed edition in the nineteenth century, where its editor, the 2º Visconde de Santarém (1791-1856) – whose interpretation itself was influenced by perspectives dating back to the sixteenth century – presented the chronicle as the first history of Portuguese maritime discoveries led by Infante Henrique. See: Manuel Francisco de Barros e Sousa Santarém (1841), *Memoria sobre a prioridade dos descobrimientos portugueses na costa d’Africa occidental: para servir de illustração á Chronica da conquista de Guiné por Azurara*. This perspective has been perpetuated over time, appearing in more recent works such as Peter Russell’s biography of the Portuguese prince, which continues to uphold this dual view. See: Russell (2000), *Prince Henry “the Navigator”: A Life*.

⁵ For instance, despite acknowledging the use of the term ‘discovery’ only towards the end of the fifteenth century, Cortesão argues that the notion of geographical discoveries, in its scientific sense, was already beginning to take shape during the lifetime of Infante Henrique. He attributes the conceptualization of this idea to Infante Henrique, the central figure in Zurara’s chronicle. According to Cortesão, while the specific terminology of ‘discovery’ does not appear in the text, the foundational idea, as it would later be defined, is implicitly present in the actions and ambitions of Infante Henrique as documented by Zurara. See: Jaime Cortesão (1990, pp. 651-660).

A comprehensive reassessment of Jaime Cortesão’s contributions to Portuguese

The emergence and early use of the term ‘discovery’ in the late fifteenth century reveal how the Iberian Crowns conceptualized their relations with non-Christian societies. The noun ‘discovery’ first appeared in technical language, royal chancellery records, and later in documents produced by high-level intelligentsia and royal administrators, particularly between 1494 and 1505. Notably, the term emerged in the vernacular Portuguese-Castille, rather than in Latin, reflecting its practical application in royal and administrative contexts, rather than as part of a broader rhetorical or philosophical discourse. In this context the noun signified a more pragmatic function, focused on the geographical and political realities of newly claimed overseas territories, rather than on grand, abstract notions of exploration or scientific inquiry. This shift in language underscores the transition of the European perspective toward a more secular and expansionist understanding of its overseas activities, as opposed to the religious purview that had dominated during the earlier phases of Iberian colonialism.⁶

The noun ‘discovery’ – derived from the verb *descobrir/descubrir* in Portuguese and Castilian – and the adjective ‘discovered’ (*descoberto(a)/descubierto(a)*) entered the political discourse of the Iberian monarchies after the 1480s. These terms, denoting the act of Portuguese and Castilian mariners ‘finding’ unknown non-Christian territories and labeling them as ‘discovered,’ emerged from the shifting

imperial studies is essential to appreciate his complex legacy. Though gifted with a remarkable sense of intuition, Cortesão faced criticism from both Salazarists and anti-Salazarists, particularly concerning his controversial “Teoria do Sigilo.” Despite the scarcity of documentary evidence supporting this theory, Cortesão perceptively identified a significant transformation in the Portuguese Crown’s approach to maritime ventures during the reign of King João II. His work, though often polarizing, provides valuable insights into the evolving strategies of the Portuguese empire, underscoring the need for a more balanced evaluation of his contributions to the field. For further analysis of Cortesão’s theories and their impact on Portuguese historiography, see: Jaime Cortesão (1940b) *Teoria Geral dos Descobrimentos Portugueses* (pp. 35-44); Jaime Cortesão (1940a) “Teoria do sigilo,” in *Congresso do mundo português* (vol. 11, Tomo 1, pp. 1-19); Eduardo Holderle Peruzzo (2018), *Jaime Cortesão, trajetória intelectual e projeto historiográfico (1910-1960)*.

⁶ Concerning the evolving notion of *discovery*, which increasingly intertwined with European colonial practices, particularly in the Americas. See, Anthony Pagden (1993), *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism*.

geopolitical framework formalized by the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo (1479-1480).⁷ The Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo reveals the emergence of the concept of discovery as a decisive factor in arbitrating territorial claims between Portugal and Castile. Unlike the *Crónica de Guiné* or the papal bulls of the 1450s, which do not explicitly introduce or rely on the notion of discovery, this treaty signals a significant shift in the legal and diplomatic framework governing territorial claims. The emphasis on “lands discovered and to be discovered” reflects a

⁷ See the fragment of the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo (1479-1480) that follows; “[Rei y Reina de Aragon y Castila] prometerõ de ahora para entodo tiempo que por si nin por otro publico nin secreto nin sus herederos e subcesores non turbarã molestarã nin disquietaran de fecho nin de derecho en juyzio nin fuera de juyzio los dichos señõres rrey e principe de portogal nin los rreyes que por tiempo fueren de portogal nin sus rreynos la posesiõn e casi posesiõn enque estan entodos los trautos tíerras rescates de guinea con sus minas e oros E quales quier otros yslas costas tíerras descubiertas e por descubrir falladas E por fallar yslas ala madeira puerto santo e desierta e todas las yslas delos açores e yslas delas flores E asy las yslas de cabo verde e todas las yslas que agora tiene descubiertas. E qualësquer otras yslas que se fallaren o conquirieren de las yslas de canaria para baxo contra guinea por que todo lo que es fallado E se fallare conquistar o descubrir en los dhcos [dichos] terminos allende de lo que ya es fallado ocupado descubierto fínca alos dhcos [dichos] rrey E príncipe de portogal /e sus rreynos/ tirando solamente las yslas de canaria .f. lançarote palma fuerte ventura la gomera El fierro la graciosa la gran Canaria tenerife E todas las otras yslas de Canaria ganadas o por ganar .las quales fincan also Reynos de castilia E bien aly non asy non turbaran molestaran ni inçetarã çlsquer personas quelos dichos tractos de guinea nin las dichas costas tierras descuciertas e por descubrir en nonbre o dela mano dels dhos [dichos] Señõres Reys e príncipe o de sus subçeçores negoçiaren trataren o conçrieren por qualçer titulo modo o manera que sea o ser pueda antes por est[re] presente prometen e seguran a buena fee Syn mal enganõ alos dihos [dichos] señõres Rey e principe e asus subçesores que non mãdaran por sy ni por otro nin consyntiran ante defenderan que syn liçencia delos dichos Señõres Rey e p[ri]ncipe de portogal non vayan a negociar alos dhos [dichos] tractos ni yslas tierras de guinea descubiertas e por descubrir sus gentes naturales o subditos entodo lugar o tiempo e entodo caso cuydado o nõ cuydado nin otras quales çer gentes estrangeras ç estoufieren en sus Reynos e senorios o en sus puertos armaren o se abitullaren ni daran a ello alguña ocasio fauor lugar ayuda nin consentimiento direto ni yndireto ni consentiran armar nin cargar para alla en mana [maneira] algũa e sy algũo delos naturales o suditos delos Reynos de castella o estranjeros qual[e]s çer ç sean fuerẽ tratar y[m]pedir damficar rrobar o conçirir la d[ic]ha guinea tractos Resgates minas e tierras yslas dellas descubiertas o por descubrir syn licencia e cõsentim[en]to espreso dels dichos señõres Rey e principe o de sus subcesores ç los tal[e]s sean pugnidos en aq[ue]lla manã [maneira] lugar e forma ç es ordenado por el d[ic]ho capitulo desta nueva Reformation e rretificacion dels tractos delas pazes ç se tenia e deue tener e las cosas dela mar contra los ç salen d tierra en las costas prayas puertos abras a rrobar danificar o malfazer o en el mar largo las dichas cosas fazen [...]” Ratificação do Tratado de Alcáçovas feita e assinada por D. Fernando e D. Isabel, reis de Castela, Leão e Aragão, e entregue a Fernando da Silva para a dar ao Rei e ao Príncipe de Portugal,” March 6, 1480, Gavetas, Gav. 17, mç. 6, n. 16 / Código de Referência: PT/TT/GAV/17/6/16, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), PT-TT-GAV-17-6-16_m0028_derivada-m0029_derivada.

new criterion for ownership, placing primacy on discovery over earlier notions of Christian apostolic authority.⁸

Before the 1480s, as depicted in the *Crónica de Guiné*, overseas and territorial claims over non-Christian lands were primarily justified through religious authority, conversion, and missionary efforts. Infante Henrique, portrayed as a Christian apostle, exemplifies this earlier strategy where the extension of Christendom and the conversion of non-Christians through enslavement served as the principal legitimization for Christian possession and authority. However, with the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo we see the diplomatic discourse shift toward colonial sovereignty through maritime discoveries, superseding religious justifications.⁹

This shift is evident in the treaty where it states, in favor of the Portuguese Crown, that “all the trading routes, lands, and rescues in Guinea with its gold mines and any other islands, coasts, lands discovered and to be discovered, found and to be found” were to remain under Portuguese control. This demonstrates how Portugal’s rights to Guinea and beyond were not tied to religious conquest but to territorial discovery. Castile promised that it “will not disturb, molest, or disquiet” Portugal’s possession of Guinea and other overseas territories. Instead, the treaty stipulated that “everything that has been found or will be found, conquered, or discovered in the said terms beyond what is already found, occupied, or discovered belongs to the said King and Prince of Portugal and their kingdoms.”¹⁰

This language signifies a significant shift in which sovereignty

⁸ “Ratificação do Tratado de Alcáçovas feita e assinada por D. Fernando e D. Isabel, reis de Castela, Leão e Aragão, e entregue a Fernando da Silva para a dar ao Rei e ao Príncipe de Portugal,” March 6, 1480, Gavetas, Gav. 17, mc. 6, n. 16 / Código de Referência: PT/TT/GAV/17/6/16, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), pt-tt-gav-17-6-16_m0028_derivada-m0029_derivada.

⁹ In fact, these elements did not disappear but were instead integrated into the Portuguese Crown’s efforts to expand and maintain its empire through the *Padroado Régio* and Jesuit missions. For further details, see C. R. Boxer (1970), “The Problem of the Native Clergy in the Portuguese and Spanish Empires from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries;” and Giuseppe Marcocci (2019, pp. 241-265).

¹⁰ “Ratificação do Tratado de Alcáçovas feita e assinada por D. Fernando e D. Isabel, reis de Castela, Leão e Aragão...,” March 6, 1480, Gavetas, Gav. 17, mc. 6, n. 16 / Código de Referência: PT/TT/GAV/17/6/16, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (antt), PT-TT-GAV-17-6-16_m0028_derivada-m0029_derivada.

over non-Christian territories is claimed on the basis of discovery rather than on appeal to religion or papal authority. The treaty explicitly stipulated that Castile would have no right to interfere in “lands discovered or to be discovered” by Portugal, except for the Canary Islands, which were expressly granted to Castile. This new formulation also recognized Castile’s rights over these Atlantic islands, for within this conceptual framework they were acknowledged as the first Christians to discover the Canaries in the early fifteenth century. This recognition arose from the support of Enrique III of Castile (1379-1406) for Jean de Béthencourt (1362-1425) during his expedition to the islands in 1402.¹¹ This agreement thus cemented the notion that ‘discovery’ granted exclusive rights to non-Christian territories and overseas trading routes, marking a new intellectual and legal understanding that departed from previous papal decrees, such as the bulls issued by Nicholas V and Calixtus III in the 1450s, which had sanctioned religious conquest and forced conversion.

Moreover, the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo underscores that Portugal’s rights over non-Christian overseas territories were not to be questioned. Castile was required to prevent “any of the natives or subjects of the Kingdoms of Castile or foreigners of any kind” from going to Guinea or other territories without the express consent of the Portuguese Crown, ensuring Portugal’s exclusive rights over these areas. The treaty stated that any individuals who violated this would “be punished in the manner, place, and form ordered” by the Portuguese, further reinforcing Portugal’s control based on discovery.¹²

This shift becomes even more pronounced in the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494), where the Iberian Crowns further negotiate their rights over newly discovered lands beyond Europe, primarily in the Americas. The use of the terms “discover” and “discovered”

¹¹ “Ratificação do Tratado de Alcáçovas feita e assinada por D. Fernando e D. Isabel, reis de Castela, Leão e Aragão...” March 6, 1480, Gavetas, Gav. 17, mç. 6, n. 16 / Código de Referência: PT/TT/GAV/17/6/16, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), PT-TT-GAV-17-6-16_m0028_derivada-m0029_derivada.

¹² “Ratificação do Tratado de Alcáçovas feita e assinada por D. Fernando e D. Isabel, reis de Castela, Leão e Aragão, e entregue a Fernando da Silva para a dar ao Rei e ao Príncipe de Portugal,” March 6, 1480, Gavetas, Gav. 17, mç. 6, n. 16 / Código de Referência: PT/TT/GAV/17/6/16, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), PT-TT-GAV-17-6-16_m0028_derivada-m0029_derivada.

for overseas claims reflects the evolving intellectual and legal context, which increasingly favored exploitation and colonization over religious authority. The Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo laid the groundwork for this transition by prioritizing ‘discovery’ as the legal foundation for Portugal’s claims to all non-Christian overseas territories ‘first’ encountered by the Portuguese.

In this way, the *Crónica de Guiné* and these later treaties mark two distinct phases in the development of Portugal’s overseas empire. While the *Crónica de Guiné* centers on forced conversion and apostolic authority, the Treaties of Alcáçovas-Toledo and Tordesillas elevate the notion of discovery as the dominant framework for Iberian colonial expansion, signaling the transition from religious to territorial justifications for European domination in the non-Christian world.¹³

In this context, the notion that Infante Henrique advocated for an understanding of maritime discoveries before the 1480s is contradicted by historical evidence. In *Crónica de Guiné*, the Portuguese prince is depicted by Zurara as a Christian apostle, aligning

¹³ We disagree with Jaime Cortesão’s view that the concept of discovery is heavily influenced by geographical exploration and scientific innovation, which affects his understanding of its historical development. The specific meaning sought by Cortesão, which leads him to overlook the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo (1479-1480), aligns more closely with the tone of scientific innovation or, in other words, a ‘geographic discovery’ that pertains to “a empresa do Infante D. Henrique” in its “aspecto propriamente geográfico.” Cortesão was primarily interested in the concept of discovery as it relates to geographical exploration and scientific advancement, rather than as a political or legal instrument, which may explain his neglect of the treaty’s significance in the historical development of the concept. In this sense, Cortesão perpetuates centuries of historical interpretation that conflates distinct temporalities and events, each with its own context and meaning. By anachronistically attributing a prescient perspective to Infante Henrique, Cortesão asserts that “melhor do que ninguém, [Infante Henrique], o inventor conhecia a invenção.” This approach misinterprets the historical context, projecting later concepts of discovery onto a period and figure that did not conceive of exploration in such terms. As a result, Cortesão’s interpretation reinforces a narrative that oversimplifies the complexities of historical developments and the evolving understanding of discovery. Cortesão struggles to accept the actual emergence of the concept of discovery, wherein the geographical aspect functions as an instrument of primacy in encounters that secure Portuguese-Castilian claims over Atlantic territories. This concept effectively replaces the notion of Catholic apostolic authority emphasized in *Crónica de Guiné*. By not fully acknowledging this shift, Cortesão overlooks how the notion of discovery evolved to serve political and territorial ambitions, moving beyond the purely religious framework that had previously dominated such narratives (Cortesão, 1990, pp. 652-653).

with the framework of apostolic authority that mediated Christian overseas activities and interactions with non-Christians prior to the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo. Evidence supporting the idea that Infante Henrique operated within this contextual framework can be found in a letter he wrote in 1457, which was later reproduced by King Afonso V. While the letter employs the term “to discover,” it does not reflect the broader conceptualization of discovery that was formalized after the 1480s. Instead, the use of this term indicates the new line of commercial goods that he identified and brought to Portugal.¹⁴

Contrary to assertions that Infante Henrique viewed his actions as acts of maritime or geographical discovery from the conquest of Ceuta until his death in the 1460s, there is no substantive evidence to support this perspective. Neither *Crónica de Guiné* nor Infante Henrique’s own writings align with the late fifteenth-century language of discovery. Instead, he contextualized his activities within the narrative of apostolic authority presented in Zurara’s chronicle. The Portuguese prince framed his achievements as religious conquests, emphasizing the capture of individuals through forced conversions, rather than as voyages of discovery to non-Christian territories (Corteseão, 1926). This interpretation is further reinforced by his nephew Afonso V, who, in a 1454 decree, granted the Order of Christ governance over Guinea. In this letter, Afonso V describes these endeavors as coastal occupations, stating that Infante Henrique was “driven by our authority in his conquests of the beaches of Guinea, Nubia, and Ethiopia.”¹⁵

This view is also echoed in Zurara’s *Crónica de Guiné*, which, like Afonso V’s letters, depicts these ventures as a form of religious

¹⁴ Jaime Corteseão transcribed the document and published it in modern Portuguese. See: Corteseão (1926, pp. 3-15), “Africa Nostra - III: O Âmbito da Obra do Infante.” The original can be found in a sixteenth-century transcription of the documents from the Order of Christ, see: Pedro Álvares Seco (Manuscript, 1579-1571), “Compilação das escrituras da Ordem de Cristo - Tomo II ou segunda parte”, Folio 29. For a study about Pedro Álvares Seco’s transcription and the documentation of the Order of Christ, see: Joana Lencart (2018).

¹⁵ “tangido p[or] autoriade nossa conquistou as prayas de guinea de nubia E ethiopia”; “Carta de D. Afonso V outorgando e concedendo à Ordem de Cristo a espiritualidade da Guiné, Núbia e Etiópia, sendo seu administrador o Infante D. Henrique,” June 7, 1454, Coleção Especial, cx. 35, n. 8 | PT/TT/CESP/35/08, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT).

warfare. The *Crónica* emphasizes slave-raiding and the capture of non-Christians rather than geographic exploration. Infante Henrique's role is portrayed as one of expanding Christendom through the forced conversion of captives brought from African territories, a mission underscored in his own words in the letter addressed to Afonso V:

May our Lord grant me certain knowledge and wisdom about those parts from the said Cape of Nam up to beyond all the land of Berberia and Nubia. And likewise, the land of Guinea, about three hundred leagues. From there until now, both at the beginning through war and later through trade and barter, a great number of infidel captives have come to Christianity. For this, giving great praises to our Lord, the majority have been converted to His holy faith, and many more are well-prepared to come.¹⁶

In this context, Infante Henrique emphasizes the forced conversion of West Africans, further supporting the notion that the focus was on religious warfare through episodes of slave raiding, rather than on maritime exploration and discovery. Zurara's frequent use of the term 'to capture' and its derivatives – *filhar*, *filhado*, and *filhou* in Portuguese – in *Crónica de Guiné* reinforces this interpretation, illustrating how Portuguese overseas activities were centered on the forced conversion of non-Europeans.¹⁷ This emphasis later shifted to commercial exchange after 1448, as Zurara himself notes in the conclusion of his narrative. Infante Henrique's commentary reflects this perspective, stating that his maritime activities along the West African shores were carried out "at the beginning through

¹⁶ "Prouve a nosso señor me dar certa enformação e sabedoria daquellas partes des o dito cabo de Nam até passante toda a terra de Berberia e Nubia. E assi mesmo terra de Guinea bem trezentas legoas. Donde até aguora assi no começo per guerra como depois per maneira de trauto de mercadoria e resgates, he vindo aa christindade muito grande de infies cativos. Do qual dando grãdes louvores a nosso señor, a maior parte som tornados aa sua santa fee. E estaa bem aparelhado pera mujtos mais virem" (Cortesão, 1926, pp. 6-8)

¹⁷ "[...] fizemos aquy fim como dcto | com entençaõ de fazermos out/o/ liuro que chegue a taa fim dos fctos do jffât/e/ ajnda que as cousas seguintes nõ forõ t/r/adas cõ tanto trabalho e fortelleza como as passadas ca despois deste ão [1448] auante sempre seos feitos daquellas partes t/r/atarõ mais per t/r/atos e auêças de mercadarya q p fortelleza nem trabalho das armas." Gomes Eanes de Zurara, "Portugais 41 [Crónica dos feitos da Guiné], Bibliothèque Nationale de France" (Manuscript, 1453), Fonds Portugais, 41 | Variante de Cota Port. 41 | Olim Fonds du Supplément français, 236, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fol. 157v.

war and later through trade and barter” to convert non-Christians to Christianity (Cortese, 1926, pp. 6-8). This process entailed enslavement from 1434 to 1448 and later evolved into the slave trade.¹⁸ Furthermore, the emergence of the term ‘to discover’ in the context of the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo and its later formalization in the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) reflects a significant shift in political and legal language. These treaties introduced discovery as a key criterion for territorial claims, but this occurred only after the 1480s. Before this shift, Portuguese expansion focused on conquest, religious warfare, and securing captives for conversion, as Infante Henrique’s letter and the *Crónica de Guiné* make clear.

Papal bulls like *Dum Diversas* (1452) and *Romanus Pontifex* (1455) further illuminate this framework, granting the Portuguese Crown Catholic apostolic authority over newly encountered lands but focusing on religious and political justifications for expansion, rather than discovery. These documents, which are often considered foundational to the so-called Doctrine of Discovery,¹⁹ do not contain any direct references to discovery. Instead, they prioritize the Christianization of non-Christian territories and the legitimization of Portuguese sovereignty through religious means.

The terminology used in the papal bull *Dum Diversas* illustrates a focus on conquest and control rather than the modern concept of discovery. For example, *Dum Diversas* employs terms such as

¹⁸ The Portuguese shifted to trade in West Africa after experiencing significant losses in their early confrontations with Sub-Saharan Black Africans. For instance, Infante Henrique subsequently promoted peaceful relations, leading to a focus on trade, even as Portugal maintained a European reputation as crusaders against African infidels. This shift is illustrated in chapter 86, titled “Capitollo Lxxxvj. como foe morto: Nu^{no} t[ri]l ftam em terra de guinee e çães morrerõ com elle,” and chapter 87, titled “Cap. Lxxxvij como Alu[ar]lo fríz tornou ouĩ vez a atãra dos neg[r]os e das coufas çla fez” from *Crónica de Guiné*, which recounts the setbacks faced by Christians. The text notes that many “morrerom por ç aquela peçonha era assy artefficiosamente cõposta que com peçna ferida soamente que auentasse sangue trazya os homẽs ao seu derradeiro finin.” Gomes Eanes de Zurara (Manuscript, 1453), “Portugais 41 [Crónica dos feitos da Guiné], Bibliothèque Nationale de France”, Fonds Portugais, 41 | Variante de Cota Port. 41 | Olim Fonds du Supplément français, 236, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fol. 138v. For further discussion on this shift to trade, see Saunders (1982, pp. 220-221).

¹⁹ This is a common view among Anglophone scholars, who trace the notion of discovery from political language following the Treaty of Tordesillas back to the mid-fifteenth century. For example, this perspective is reproduced in Robert J. Miller *et al.* (2010), *Discovering Indigenous Lands. The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies* (pp. 11-14).

inuadendi, conquirendi, expugnandi, debellandi, and subiugandi, all of which emphasize invasion, conquest, subjugation, and domination. When referring to territories that have been or may be acquired, the document uses the phrase “by the force of these present letters, what has already been acquired and what shall be acquired in the future, after it has been acquired” (*presentium litterarum vigore iam acquisita et quae in futurum acquiri contigerit, postquam acquisita fuerint*), underscoring the legal authority over both current and future acquisitions.²⁰ Additionally, phrases like “to be spread in unknown places” (*incognitis locis divulgari*) or “to be navigated, and it would be so unknown to us in the West” (*navigari illudque nobis occiduis adeo foret incognitum*) may imply exploration, but they do not explicitly reference the concept of discovery as it would later be understood.²¹ Instead, these terms highlight the conquest and acquisition of non-European lands, reflecting that the language of these documents is more concerned with asserting control and expansion than with any pioneering notion of discovery.

The documents from the early stages of Portuguese maritime activities beyond Cape Bojador, such as the donation letter by King Duarte to Infante Henrique in 1433²² and the 1474²³ letter from King Afonso V to João Soares de Sousa, consistently reflect a focus on conquest and governance rather than discovery. From King Duarte’s granting of all spiritual rights of the islands of Madeira, Porto Santo, and Deserta to the Order of Christ, to King Afonso

²⁰ Portugal Comissão Executiva das Comemorações do Quinto Centenário da Morte do Infante D Henrique (1971), *Monumenta henricina: Volume XII (1454-1456)* (vol. 12, p. 77).

²¹ Portugal Comissão Executiva das Comemorações do Quinto Centenário da Morte do Infante D Henrique (1971, vol. 12, p. 73).

²² “26 Setembro 1433, Carta de el-rei D. Duarte, a doar vitaliciamente ao infante D. Henrique as ilhas da Madeira, Porto Santo e Deserta com todos os direitos, rendas e jurisdição cível e crime, menos em sentença de morte e de mutilação [...]” and “26 Setembro 14, Carta de el-rei D. Duarte, a doar à Ordem de Cristo o espiritual das ilhas da Madeira, Porto Santo e Deserta, a requerimento do infante D. Henrique, Regedor e Governador da mesma Ordem [...],” in Portugal Comissão Executiva das Comemorações do Quinto Centenário da Morte do Infante D Henrique (1962), *Monumenta henricina: Volume IV (1431-1434)* (vol. 4, pp. 257-260).

²³ “Carta de D. Afonso V, de 13 de Julho de 1474 pela qual confirma o cargo de capitão donatario da Ilha de Santa Maria, feito por D. Beatriz como tutora de seu filho, a João Soares de Sousa, em carta de 12 de Maio do dito anno,” in *Archivo dos Açores: Historia Açoriana* (1878, vol. 1, pp. 15-18).

V's confirmation of João Soares de Sousa as captain-major (*capitão donatário*), these texts emphasize control and spiritual authority over maritime territories. As discussed at the beginning of this paper, this conceptual pattern remains prevalent up until the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo, with no reference to maritime or territorial discovery. The emphasis on governance and spiritual rights, rather than discovery, further illustrates the absence of the concept of discovery in the documentation from this period.

The period following the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo marked a significant shift in the terminology associated with Portuguese overseas activities, reflecting a new understanding of these fifteenth-century activities. During the reigns of João II and Manuel I, a new historical narrative materialized combining maritime discoveries with the portrayal of Infante Henrique as the pioneer – *pioneiro* or *descobridor* in Portuguese – of those early fifteenth-century overseas activities. The earliest occurrence of this terminology is found in a complaint about non-Portuguese residents living in the Azores during the *cortes* in 1481, which states, “Infante Henrique the discoverer of these lands, sensing the damage that such residents could cause, defended that they should not be allowed to stay there.”²⁴ This usage indicates that Infante Henrique was recognized as the discoverer of the islands, illustrating how his role was being redefined within this evolving narrative of maritime exploration. By emphasizing his identity as a discoverer, the shift in terminology reflects a changing narrative surrounding Portuguese maritime ventures, highlighting Infante Henrique's foundational role in the emerging narrative of the Portuguese overseas expansion.

This narrative shift is also reflected in the reception of *Crónica de Guiné* after the 1480s, particularly in the version found in *Codex Hispanus 27*, also known as the *Manuscrito Valentim Fernandes*. This manuscript, a collection of texts concerning Portuguese maritime voyages along the Atlantic shores of Africa, was compiled by a German typographer in King Manuel I's court, Valentim Fernandes

²⁴ “Iffamte dom Amrique Inmentor dellas, semtindo o dapno que os taes estantes podiam fazer, defemdeo que nam fosse hi consentidos.” *Archivo dos Açores: Historia Açoriana* (1881, vol. 3, p. 10).

(c. 1450 - c. 1518). The codex's final signature dates to 1510, though some texts within it are dated as early as 1506.²⁵ The manuscript includes Fernandes' transcription of Zurara's *Crónica de Guiné* alongside descriptions of the Atlantic islands and African shores, which are believed to have been based on oral testimonies or copied from other texts by different authors. The codex is organized into three main sections: *De prima inuentione Guinee* (On the First Discovery of Guinea), *De insulis primo inventis in mare occidentis* (On the Islands First Discovered in the Western Sea), and *De inuentione insularum de Açores* (On the Discovery of the Azores Islands).

On the first page of the Fernandes' transcription of *Crónica de Guiné*, the chronicle title page is divided into four paragraphs: the title of the book, the content, and the authorship. There is, however, a slight variation between this and the *Portugais 41* manuscript, the 1450s version of Zurara's chronicle, specifically in the first three paragraphs and the *Portugais 41*'s incipit. These differences hint at a broader transformation in the narrative style and focus of the chronicle during its transcription and compilation process, as the evolving political and intellectual contexts after the 1480s began to prioritize the notion of discovery over apostolic authority, as can be seen below:

Here begins the chronicle in which all the notable deeds that occurred in the conquest of Guinea by the command of the very high and most honored prince and most virtuous lord, the Infante Dom Henrique, Duke of Viseu and Lord of Covilhã, Regent and Governor of the Order of St. John of Christ. This chronicle was compiled in this volume by the command of the very high and most excellent prince and most powerful lord, King Afonso V of Portugal.²⁶

²⁵ Gomes Eanes de Zurara and Valentim Fernandes, "Codex Hispanus 27 [Manuscrito Valentim Fernandes]" (1506-1510), Cod.hisp. 27, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 216r.

²⁶ "Aqy fe começa a cronica na q'l fom fc[il]tos todollos feitos notaaues q̃ fe passarõ na conquista de Guinee per mandado do muy alto e muyto honrado pncipe e muyto vertuoso senhor õ Jffante dom Henriq̃ duq̃ de viseu e senhor de Vouilhaã Regedor e governador da cauallarya da ordem de Jhũ xpõ ¶ A qual cronica foe ajuntada em este velume p mandado do muyto /alto/ e muyto excelente p/i/ncipe E muyto poderoso senhor elRey dom Affonso o q/i/nto de Portugal." Gomes Eanes de Zurara (Manuscript, 1453), "Portugais 41 [Crónica dos feitos da Guiné], Bibliothèque Nationale de France," Fonds Portugais, 41 | Variante de Cota Port. 41 | Olim Fonds du Supplément français, 236, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, fol. 6r.

The incipit from *Codex Hispanus 27* presents a different structure when compared to *Portugais 41*, as can be verified below:

First paragraph: King Afonso ordered the collection of this chronicle of his uncle, which he organized on the discovery of Guinea.²⁷

Second paragraph: The Infante Dom Henrique, Duke of Viseu and Lord of Covilhã, and perpetual administrator in both spiritual and temporal matters of the Order of St. John.²⁸

Third paragraph: The chronicler was Gomes Eanes de Zurara, a noble knight and commander in the Order of St. John.²⁹

Fourth paragraph: God benefits in three ways from this discovery: the first for the many souls that were and still will be saved; the second for the general service we receive from them; the third for the honor that the kingdom receives from this in many parts of the world, subjugating such great power of enemies so far from our land.³⁰

This subtle difference underscores how the *Crónica de Guiné*, originally focused on the Christian mission under Infante Henrique, gradually began to align with the emerging language of maritime discovery. The inclusion of other texts related to other overseas activities after 1448 in *Codex Hispanus 27* reflects the shift towards valorizing navigational achievements and the expansion of geographical knowledge, aligning with Portugal's growing emphasis

²⁷ “Elrey dō affonfo mādou colleger esta coronica de feu tyo .f. q̃ elle ordenou no descobrimēto de guynee.” Gomes Eanes de Zurara and Valentim Fernandes (1506-1510), “Codex Hispanus 27 [Manuscrito Valentim Fernandes],” Cod.hisp. 27, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek, fol. 216r.

²⁸ “Ho Jffante dom anriq̃ duq̃ de viseu e sñor de couilhã E amfrador ppetuo no spirtual e temporal da caualleria da ordem de j̃p̃o.” Gomes Eanes de Zurara and Valentim Fernandes (1506-1510), “Codex Hispanus 27 [Manuscrito Valentim Fernandes],” Cod. hisp. 27, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek, fol. 216r.

²⁹ “Ho conifita foy gomes eAnes de zurara p̃fello caulleiy/o/ e comēdador na ordē de j̃p̃o.” Gomes Eanes de Zurara and Valentim Fernandes (1506-1510), “Codex Hispanus 27 [Manuscrito Valentim Fernandes],” Cod.hisp. 27, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek, fol. 216r.

³⁰ “Bñfficios de ds em tres maneyras def̃t e descobrimēto / a p̃meyra por muytas almas q̃ fe faluarō e ajnda saluarō / a segunda q̃ geeralmete deles recebemos em noffa seruitia / a 3.ª p̃lla honrra do regno q̃ defto recebe e muytas p̃tes do mundo fojugado tammanho poder de emmjgos tã lōge da noffa tra.” Gomes Eanes de Zurara and Valentim Fernandes (1506-1510), “Codex Hispanus 27 [Manuscrito Valentim Fernandes],” Cod.hisp. 27, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek, fol. 216r.

on discovery and territorial possession, as seen in treaties such as Alcáçovas-Toledo and Tordesillas.

The incipit of *Portugais 41* emphasizes the noble and virtuous nature of Infante Henrique's endeavors, as well as the royal endorsement by King Afonso V. It frames the narrative as a formal chronicle of conquests, highlighting Infante Henrique's significant role under the direct command of the king. In contrast, *Codex Hispanus 27* adopts a slightly different approach. While the first three paragraphs also acknowledge the contributions of Infante Henrique and Gomes Eanes de Zurara, they do so without the same level of formal elevation found in *Portugais 41*. The fourth paragraph diverges by replacing 'conquest' with 'discovery,' mixing the chronicle's themes of capture and forced conversion with the concept of territorial discovery. Therefore, this suggests that the narrative in *Codex Hispanus 27* was designed to emphasize the geographical implications of these events, rather than solely focusing on apostolic authority, as appears in *Portugais 41*.

The structure of *Codex Hispanus 27*, with its sections on the discovery of Guinea, the Atlantic islands, and the Azores, also reinforces this transition. The use of terms like *inuentione* in the titles marks a departure from the earlier focus on religious conquest, indicating the gradual adoption of a discourse centered on discovery – an intellectual framework that would come to dominate European colonial narratives in the following decades.³¹

The changes in the text's vocabulary are not mere updates to its language but reflect a significant shift in its purpose. A key detail in the *Codex Hispanus 27* incipit further highlights this shift: in the fourth paragraph Fernandes added a glossa in the right margin that states "blessings from God regarding this discovery."³² This

³¹ For example, *História do descobrimento & conquista da Índia pelos portugueses*, by Fernão Lopes de Castanheda (1552-1561); *Tratado que compôs o nobre & notavel capitão Antonio Galvão, dos diversos & desuayrados caminhos, por onde nos tempos passados a pimenta & especearia veyo da Índia ás nossas partes, & assi de todos os descobrimentos antigos & modernos, que são feitos até a era de mil & quinhentos & cincoenta*, by Antonio Galvão (1563); *Discurso de la nauegacion que los Portugueses hazen à los reinos y prouincias del Oriente*, by Bernardino de Escalante (1577); and *Asia Portuguesa*, by Manuel de Faria e Sousa (1666).

³² "Bñfficios de ds. açerca deste descobrimêto." Gomes Eanes de Zurara and Valentim

annotation reinforces the idea that the narrated events are to be understood as part of Portugal's history of maritime discoveries, thus subtly erasing the focus on religious conquest and slave raids, which were prominent in the 1450s version of *Crónica de Guiné*. In this later version, the term “discovery” is fully developed and reflects the maritime activities of Infante Henrique, presenting his efforts as part of a continuous sequence of explorations, culminating in the eventual Portuguese move toward India.

These changes were likely aimed at updating the orthography and adapting the text to suit the contemporary linguistic and cultural standards of the early sixteenth century, as some scholars (such as Torquato de Sousa Soares) have proposed. The variations in spelling, the merging of chapters, and the editorial decisions Fernandes made may also indicate that he was preparing the material for printing and distribution to a contemporary audience that was more familiar with the language of “discovery” than with the earlier vocabulary employed by Zurara.

In the copy of the *Crónica de Guiné* made by Valentim Fernandes there are several glosses that indicate a shift in the historical account of those early maritime ventures sponsored by Infante Henrique, now viewed through the lens of the concept of discovery. The emergence of this new politics of overseas sovereignty, based on the notion of discovery, rendered Zurara's original chronicle less relevant, as it was anchored in a different set of principles. However, Valentim Fernandes' reinterpretation of the *Crónica de Guiné* through this new framework of maritime discovery suggests the potential for Zurara's chronicle to be revived and realigned with the evolving political context of overseas sovereignty. Despite its original purpose, which differed from the new paradigm, the *Crónica de Guiné* remained an attractive document due to its focus on overseas ventures in Africa and Infante Henrique's role in them. Ultimately, these adaptations reflect a growing perception in the early sixteenth century that the events of Infante Henrique's life were increasingly viewed as part of a broader narrative of Portuguese maritime expansion, in a geographical sense, not simply religious warfare and commercial activities.

Fernandes (1506-1510), “Codex Hispanus 27 [Manuscrito Valentim Fernandes],” Cod. hisp. 27, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, fol. 216r.

This shift is detectable in a narrative that is contemporaneous with Valentim Fernandes, that of Hieronymus Münzer (c. 1437/47 - 1508) in his *De inventione Africae maritimae et occidentalis videlicet Guineae per Infantem Henricum Portugalliae*, which is the preface that opens all the volumes of the *Leitura Nova* (1504-1521), the *Crónica de D. Afonso V* (1500?) as rewritten by Rui de Pina. In these works, the concept of discovery is utilized to explain Portuguese overseas activities and to elevate the role of Infante Henrique alongside King Manuel I, positioning them as pivotal figures in the narrative of Portuguese expansion.

Hieronymus Münzer (also known as Jerome Munzer) was a German physician and humanist who traveled to the Iberian Peninsula between 1494 and 1495. His journey was part of a broader tradition of humanist exploration during the fifteenth century, through which educated Europeans sought to expand their knowledge of the world. Münzer's travels took him through various regions of the Iberian Peninsula³³ He recorded his observations in a detailed account known as the *Itinerarium*, which provides a valuable historical record of the places he visited.³⁴ Attached to this *Itinerarium* is a narrative titled *De inventione Africae maritimae et occidentalis videlicet Guineae per Infantem Henricum Portugalliae*. Although not completely dismissing the slave raiding element, Münzer exemplifies the growing trend of framing Portuguese overseas actions within the discourse of discovery. In this narrative, Münzer provides a detailed account of the Portuguese overseas activities in the fifteenth century, particularly focusing on West Africa. The use of the term *inventione* in the Latin title reflects the contemporary

³³ Hieronymus Münzer was particularly interested in the emerging Atlantic trading routes and meticulously documented the burgeoning maritime activities he encountered during his travels in the Iberian Peninsula. For more detailed information about Münzer's journey to the Iberian Peninsula, see: Paulo Catarino Lopes (2022, pp. 116-30), and Elena Muñoz Gómez (2022, pp. 61-84).

³⁴ For a Portuguese translation, see Hieronymus Münzer (1495b), BSB Clm 431 [*Itinerarium sive peregrinatio excellentissimi viri artium ac utriusque medicine doctoris Hieronimi Monetarii de Feltkirchen civis Nurembergensis*], Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (BSB Clm 431). For a Portuguese translation, see: Hieronymus Münzer (1930, 1932), "Itinerário" do Dr. Jerónimo Munzer, trans. Basílio de Vasconcelos, *O Instituto*, 80(5), 541-569; 83(12), 140-190. For an English translation, see: Münzer (2014), *Dr. Hieronymus Münzer's Itinerary and Discovery of Guinea*, trans. James Firth.

conceptualization of these events as discoveries, underscoring their significance in the broader narrative of Portuguese expansion exemplified by Fernandes' transcription of *Crónica de Guiné*.

Münzer's narrative is structured as a linear account of Portuguese 'discoveries', beginning with the conquest of Ceuta. He then details the slave-raiding expeditions along the African coast.³⁵ Significantly, Münzer highlights Infante Henrique's role in these discoveries, mentioning that he "remained unmarried, he took his brother Edward's son, called Ferdinand, as his heir, and made him lord of all that part which he discovered beyond Cape Verde, and would be discovered, along with all the islands of the western Ocean,"³⁶ which illustrate how Portuguese discoveries were understood as an ongoing and hereditary endeavor, passing from Infante Henrique to other members of the House of Aviz. For instance, after covering the period under Infante Henrique's discoveries, Münzer briefly touches on the continuation of Portuguese explorations under King Afonso V, though this section is more succinct, focusing mainly on descriptions of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Atlantic islands (Münzer, 1932).

Münzer's account reflects an understanding of Portuguese expansion as a deliberate and systematic process of maritime discovery. The emphasis on discovery aligns with the broader trend seen in Valentim Fernandes' alterations to the *Crónica de Guiné*, indicating that by the late fifteenth century the concept of discovery had become central to Portugal's historical narrative about its overseas activities and relation with non-Christians. Münzer's narrative, like Fernandes' revisions, reflects the shifting intellectual framework of

³⁵ Münzer argues that there was an incidental encounter in which some of King João I's vassals mistakenly reached the Canary Islands. This suggests a favorable position toward the Castilian crown's possession of these Atlantic territories, countering Portuguese claims. Notably, his interpretation relies on the narrative of discovery and is predicated on the assumption that the Portuguese did not organize maritime expeditions for discovery in the same manner as the Castilian mariners led by Jean de Béthencourt. Consequently, in his view, this undermines any justification for supporting Portuguese claims over those islands. Hieronymus Münzer (1495a), BSB Clm 431 [*De inventione Africae maritimae et occidentalis videlicet Guineae per Infantem Heinrichum Portugalliae*], Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (BSB Clm 431), folios 280-291

³⁶ "Heinricus autem quia innubilis mansit, cepit fratris Eduardi filium Fernandum dictum in heredem, fecitque eum dominum totius illius partis, quam ultra Caput Viride invenit et inventurus esset cum insulis omnibus Oceani occidentalibus" (Münzer, 1932, pp. 151-152).

the time, which increasingly viewed Portuguese maritime ventures as part of a larger, transformative process of European colonialism.

This historiographical framework is also visible in other early sixteenth century narratives, such as the *Leitura Nova* and the *Crónica de D. Afonso V* by Rui de Pina. These works similarly adopt the language of discovery to elevate Infante Henrique and subsequent Portuguese kings, positioning them as champions of Portuguese overseas expansion. By integrating the concept of discovery into official chronicles and historical accounts, the Portuguese Crown reinforced its territorial claims and linked its colonial ambitions to the broader European phenomenon of Iberian overseas exploration, thus securing its place in the emerging history of European colonialism.

In the *Leitura Nova*, several volumes include letters that highlight the necessity of maintaining and organizing records, a duty that kings and princes, placed on Earth by God, must uphold for the benefit of their realms and vassals. The letter emphasizes preserving the memory of past deeds and achievements, including the reconquest and defense of the kingdom, wars in Africa against the infidels, and the discovery and exploration of Guinea, which was achieved through great expense and sustained effort over many years. The letter goes on to emphasize the kingdom's expansion and the honor attained during King Manuel's reign through the discovery and conquest of India and other territories, accomplishments that had once seemed beyond human possibility.³⁷

In Rui de Pina's *Crónica de D. Afonso V*, a dedicated chapter focuses on the life and achievements of Infante Henrique. The text emphasizes Henrique's pivotal role in initiating the exploration and colonization of new lands, particularly the Madeira Islands, which were the first significant territories discovered and settled by the Portuguese in the Atlantic. This narrative reflects the emerging concept of discovery, increasingly guiding historical interpretations of Portuguese expansion.

³⁷ Martim de Albuquerque, Sylvie Deswarte, e Maria José Mexia Bigotte Chorão (1997), orgs., *Leitura Nova de Dom Manuel I*, História da cultura portuguesa; "Leitura Nova, liv. 1 [Livro 1 de Além-Douro]" (1521), Cota atual: Leitura Nova, liv. 1 / Código de referência: PT/TT/LN/0001, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT).

One illustrative passage reads:

After the capture and relief of Ceuta, [Infante Henrique] was first to command the navigation and discovery through the ocean where the rich and fertile islands of Madeira were soon found and populated, which were the first territories in the ocean that these kingdoms possessed. And so, from there onward, there were many others from which they and all of Christendom received much benefit. And thus, the aforementioned Infante, as advised and encouraged by divine inspiration, moved by the respect of a magnanimous prince and a very Catholic Christian, and as a very loyal vassal of the Kings and the crown of Portugal, desirous of increasing their glory and praise, yearning for the holy, honorable, and profitable conquest of Guinea, immediately requested and petitioned Pope Martin V in the Church of Rome, in the name of God, whose power he held, to grant and bestow upon the said Crown and its heirs forever [...] a solemn and perpetual donation, and he gave the proper lordship of all that which in the said ocean and in the adjacent seas, from the markers and capes of Nam and Bojador toward the south and the east, was found and would be found by them and their successors [...].³⁸

³⁸ See the complete passage: “[...] depois da tomada e descercos de cepta em q̃ foy mandou [Infante Henrique] p/i/meiramēte nauegar e descobrir pllo mar oceano onde se acharam logo e pouoarã as Ricas e fértils ylhas da madeira:q̃ forã as p/i/meiras que no mar oceano estes Regnos teuerã. E assy dhy em diante ouĩs muytas de q̃ elles e a x[ris]pindade toda muyto bem e p[ro]lueito Recebem. E asy o dcto jfante como acõselhado e esforçado já p̃ diuina jnspiraçam.movido aisso cõ Respectos de magnanimo p/i/ncepe /e muy catholico xpao : e como muy leal vassalo dos Rex / e da cora de Portugal : desejoso do acrecentamēto gloria e louuor deles : sospirando plla s[an]tã honrrada e proueitosa comq/i/sta de guynee : mandou logo pedir e soplicar ao papa martinho q/i/nto na i[gl]re[ia] de Roma p̃sidēte q̃ em nome de ds cuiu poder tinha : concedesse e fizesse aadcta coroa e herdeiros della pa sempre como cõ acordo e aprouaçã do sagrado colegio dos cardeaaes fez e cõcedeo sollēpne e p̃petua doaça:ẽ lhe deu ho Snõrio prop/i/o de todo oq̃ na costa do dcto mar oceano e nos mares aella aiacentes : dos marcos e cabos de nam e do bojador con[fr]a ho meo dia e oriente. p̃ elles e p̃ seus socessores e p̃ suas gentes pllos t̃põs endiante se achasse e descob/i/sse atee os jndios inclusiuamente. Aq̃l doaçam e cõcessã do dcto papa martinho depois o papa eugenio e o papa nicolaa e o papa sexto asopricaçã delRey dom affõm e delRey dom joham seu filho cõfirmarã e aprouram cõ sua g[ra]lças benções e liberdades aos Rex de Portugal p̃sentes e futuros q̃ a pseguissem. e cõ g[ra]lndes excomunhões g[ra]lues censuras e maldições atodollos xpãos que em q̃lq̃r maneira sem p̃zer e consentimēto dos dctos Rex de portugal con[fr]a ellas fossem como nas bullas applicas q̃ se disse concederã mais p̃feita e cõpridamēte se comthem. As q̃aes sendo huũ divino fauor e v/dadeiro e legitimo titolo pa se a dcta nauegaçã descob/i/mento e cõq/i/sta nauegar e p̃seguir. O dcto jfante logo p/i/meiramēte como s[an]c̃io e v/tuoso p/i/ncipio de tam bem auēturado fym aemp[re]nde e proseguiu. E cõ espantosos p/i/ncipios e meos de q̃ era prasmado e nũca foy vencido fez em sua vida o castello darguũ e mandou adiante descobrir e tratar atee asserra lyaõ cõ muyto p[ro]lueito do Regno. E despois de sua morte em t̃põ delRey dom affõm oq/i/nto seu sob/i/nho:aaalem do descob/i/mento do jfante se descobrio amina do ouro em que agora he acidade de sam jorge. q̃

This passage highlights how Infante Henrique was central to Portuguese expansion, portrayed not only as an explorer but as a devout Christian prince, motivated by divine inspiration and acting under papal sanction. According to the Chronicle, his efforts laid the groundwork for further discoveries, culminating in Portuguese dominance in the East during King Manuel's reign.

This narrative of Infante Henrique as the pioneer of the Portuguese discoveries can be traced to King João II in a letter in which he addresses the problem of Castilian and Aragonese fishing activities in Guinea, a document that remains relatively obscure in scholarly circles.³⁹ King João II's elaboration on Infante Henrique's overseas activities in this letter marked a pivotal shift in how the Portuguese Crown narrated them. The letter reflects a new emphasis on the idea of discovery and the recognition of Infante Henrique's role as a central figure in these endeavors. Although the letter does not bear a date, it is likely from November 1490. This estimation is based on the fact that the letter was addressed to the Catholic Monarchs' ambassador, Gutierre de Cárdenas (1440-1503), who mediated disputes between the Portuguese Crown and the Crowns of Castile and Aragon concerning fishing activities in the Portuguese-

elRey dom iohã osegũdo mãdou nouamente edificar . e assy se descobrio mais p elRey dom affom atee ocabo de caterina. E despois deseu falecimẽto como elRey dom iohã osegundo seu filho ho socedeo : dali mandou p annos descobrir atee dobrarẽ ocabo de boa esperança. E seus descob/i/does chegaram atee o Rio do jfante: E daly sendo seu proposito nõ cessar atee descobrir ajndia por sua doença e morte q̃ se logo seguio cessou seu descob/i/mento. E como despois ho socedeo e Regnou apos elle elRey dom manuel o p/i/meiro nosso Sñor como p/i/ncipe que em tudo q/i/s erdar abeençam Reaaes custumes e clararas façanhas de Rex e p/i/ncepes tam gloriosos seus antecessores p seu mandado e cõ seus capitaães nauios e gentes p este caminho se descobrirã trataram e nauegarã com g[ra]ndes pigos e muytas dificuldades e jnumerauees despesas ouĩs nouas ilhas e trras e sobre tudo aarabia e ap[er]sai e ajndia com todallas especiarias pedrarias minas Riçzas e thesouros orientaees que oge possui e tõe cõ muyta segurança e prosp[er]ridade : fazendosse pacifico S[nh]or de muytos Rex e Sñores q̃ sua paz e senhorio cõpraram cõprara cõ Ricos e cotidianos t/i/butos como em sua cronica fara mençã [...]. [...] q̃ sempre se at/i/buirã ahõrra memoria memoria louour e merecimẽtos des v/tuoso p/incepe ejfante dom anrriq̃ como acausa e p/i/meiro jnuentor de tanto bẽ.” Rui de Pina (1500), “Crónicas no. 17 [Crónica de D. Afonso V, por Rui de Pina],” PT/TT/CRN/17, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT), folio 105-107.

³⁹ The letter is incorrectly attributed to King João III of Portugal; see the original: “Instruções do rei D. João III ao comendador-mor relativas às negociações com os Reis Católicos sobre as pescarias na Guiné,” (1490?), Gavetas, Gav. 2, mc. 10, no. 23 | PT/TT/GAV/2/10/23, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT).

claimed Atlantic territories.⁴⁰ Rooted in the historical context of diplomatic negotiations preceding the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494, this deduction aligns with the timeline of these disputes. By addressing King Fernando II of Aragon (1452-1516) and Isabel of Castile (1451-1504), João II underscores the significance of this emerging narrative of discoveries led by Infante Henrique within the broader context of Portuguese territorial claims. The Portuguese king says:

And if the king and queen, my siblings, were to consider this among their other matters, they would so clearly see it to be true that any other judgment would be unnecessary. For this reason, they must consider by how many labors and expenses my lord and father, the king, whose soul may God have, and ours, and by Prince Henry, my uncle, the first discoverer of these parts of Guinea, as well as by our subjects and natives, and their losses of ships and property, we discovered and acquired these lands, islands, and unknown seas, which those in the past always regarded as such dangerous and doubtful navigation, whereby any small thing from there must be highly esteemed by us.⁴¹

The emergence of Infante Henrique as a pioneer or inventor during this period reflects the formalization and defense of Portuguese maritime and territorial claims. As Portuguese sovereignty over new territories was increasingly asserted, King João II sought to justify these claims by referencing the ongoing negotiations with Castile about overseas sovereignty. He first reminds us of the 1450s papal bulls that endorsed Portuguese claims, using them as a foundation for Portugal's sovereignty. Notably, unlike the earlier papal bulls discussed in this paper, João II describes these documents using the political language of his time, emphasizing the maritime discoveries

⁴⁰ The expertise that Gutierre de Cárdenas had in maritime issues between the Iberian monarchs led to his nomination as the plenipotentiary for the Catholic Monarchs in the negotiations of the Treaty of Tordesillas. See: Juan Pedro Asencio Calatayud (2006, p. 235)

⁴¹ "E se ell rrey e a rrainha meus irmãaos a quisesem amtre os outros seus negocios ver achariam tam craramente ser asy que se escusary todo outro juizo. Pera a quall cousa deuem considerar com quamtos trabalhos e despesas del rrei meu ssenhor e padre cuja alma Deus aja e nossos e do ifante Dom Amrriqe meu tio primeiro enventor destas partes da Guinee e asy de nosos sobditos e naturaes e perdas dellos e de seos navios e fazemdas descobrymos e ouveemos estas partes ilhas e maares nam conhecidos que sempre os pasados ouveeram por tam perigosa e duvidosa navegaçam per homde quallquer pequena cousa de laa deve ser de nos muy istimada" (*As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo: Gaveta 1-11*, Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1962, vol. 1, pp. 920-923).

rather than the religious warfare that the original bulls articulated.

And thus, the first land that my uncle, the said prince, conquered and where he conducted trade were the said Capes of Bojador and Nam, which are in the land of the Alarves. And certainly, the Holy Fathers, moved not by frivolous causes, granted us their very generous and abundant bull of donation, recognizing how much glory, praise, and advancement of our holy faith it was for this land to be discovered. And immediately, to remove doubts and debates among us and all the Christian kings and princes who were and who would be in the future, they wanted to demarcate the lordship and conquest of Guinea by certain expressly defined boundaries, namely the Cape of Bojador and the Cape of Nam, within which all the lands, trades, provinces, islands, adjacent seas, fisheries, bays, and ports discovered and to be discovered, gained and to be gained, as far as the East and the Indies, were declared to belong to us and to the Crown of our kingdoms and to all their heirs and successors forever.⁴²

In his correspondence, João II strategically invokes the terms of the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo to assert Portugal's rights over the seas and territories it had discovered. He reminds the Catholic Monarchs of the agreement's provisions, which guaranteed Portuguese sovereignty over these maritime domains and lands. By emphasizing the discoveries made by Portugal, João II reinforces the notion that these rights were recognized and formalized through diplomatic agreements, thereby strengthening Portugal's claims against Castilian incursions, as in the following example:

And when peace was made between my lord and father, whom God rest, and us, and the said king and queen, our siblings, it was agreed that the islands that were found in the Ocean Sea opposite Guinea would be freely granted to us, and the Canaries, which were within these capes and

⁴² “E asy ha primeira teerra que conquistou e em que fez rresgate o dicto infante meu tio foy em os dictos cabos de Bojador e de Nam que he em a terra dos alarves. E ceerto os samtos paadres movidos nam com leeves causas nos deeram sua bulla de doaçam muy abastante e copiosa conhecendo quamta gloria louvor e acrescmentamento da nosa samta fee era ser esta teerra descuberta. E loguo por tirareem duvidas e debaates dantre nos e todollos rreix e principes christãaos que amtam eram e ao diamte fosem quiseram demarcar o senhorio e conquista de Guinee por certos marquos expresamente lemitados a saber cabo de Bojador e cabo de Naam dentro dos quaaes todallas teerras rresgates pprovincias ilhas maares ajacentes pescaryas abras e portos descubertos e por descobriir ganhaados e por ganhar atee Oriente e os indios declaram pertencereem a nos e aa coroa de nosos rreggnos e a todollos herdeiros e sobcesores dela pera senpre” (*As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo: Gaveta 1-II*, Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1962, vol. 1, pp. 920-923).

boundaries of Guinea and had at another time all or most of them been owned and possessed by Princes Henry and Ferdinand, my uncles, whose souls may God rest, would remain free and granted to the said king and queen and the crown of their kingdoms and successors. It was declared that all the land of Guinea, islands, seas, fisheries, bays, and ports, discovered and to be discovered, gained and to be gained, belonged to us, and that in no way should they or the kings of Castile who might come after them interfere, directly or indirectly, in any matter regarding Guinea, its lands, the islands of Madeira, and other islands, except only the islands of the Canaries [...].⁴³

João II's strategic use of geographical discoveries as a tool to guarantee Portuguese sovereignty marks a significant shift in the conceptualization of territorial claims. This approach emerged only after the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo, as the notion of discovery gradually became more common in diplomatic discourse. Initially, the Portuguese term *descobrimento* was translated into Latin as *inventio* in the context of Portuguese-Castilian negotiations. These terms and their derivatives appear in the papal bull *Inter Caetera Divinae Majestati*, issued by Pope Alexander VI on May 4, 1493, which granted the Catholic Monarchs territories 100 leagues west and south of any islands of the Azores and Cape Verde. Unlike the earlier bulls from the 1450s, which emphasized Catholic apostolic authority for the conquest and conversion of non-Christians, this document replaced that framework with the primacy of discovery as the decisive criterion for overseas sovereignty. This shift is evident in the application of the concept of discovery through its Latin translation *inventio*, as illustrated below:

⁴³ “E quando se fez a paz amtre el rrey meu ssenhor e padre que Deus aja e nos e os dictos rrey e rrainha nosos irmãaos porque as ilhas que se achaseem no mar Ouciano contra Guinee ficassem livremente despachadas a nos e as Canaryas que eram de dentro destes cabos e limites de Guinee que ja em outro teenpo todas ou a maior parte dellas foram avidas e pesuidas pellos ifantes Dom Amrrique e Dom Fernamdo meus tyos cujas almas Deus aja ficassem livres e despachadas aos dictos rrey e rrainha e a coroa de seus rregnons e sobcesores se declarou toda a teerra de Guinee ilhas maares pescaryas abras e portos descubertos e por descobriir ganhados e por ganhaar pertemcer a nos e que em maneira allgũa elles neem os rreix de Castella que hao diamte fossem nam se entremetessem direita e vell indireita em cousa algũa de Guinee suas teerras rregates ilhas da Madeira e outras ilhas e que tirando ssomeente as ilhas das Canaryas [...]” (*As Gavetas da Torre do Tombo: Gaveta I-II*, Centro de Estudos Históricos Ultramarinos, 1962, vol. 1, pp. 920-923).

And, so that you may more freely and boldly undertake the charge of such a great task, having been granted the province by the largesse of apostolic grace, of our own accord, not at the request of you or anyone else on your behalf, but from our own pure generosity and certain knowledge, and by the fullness of apostolic power, we grant all the islands and mainland discovered and to be discovered, found and to be found, towards the west and south, drawing and establishing a line from the Arctic pole, that is, the north, to the Antarctic pole, that is, the south, whether the mainland and islands discovered and to be discovered are towards India or any other part, which line shall be a hundred leagues distant towards the west and south from any of the islands commonly known as the Azores and Cape Verde, so that all islands and mainland discovered and to be discovered, found and to be found, from the said line towards the west and south [...].⁴⁴

The papal bull *Dudum Siquidem* further solidified the use of the concept of discovery as the basis for territorial claims by the Catholic Monarchs. Issued a few months later, this bull reaffirmed the donation to the Catholic Monarchs through the same notion of discovery, stating: “all and every one of the islands and mainland territories, discovered and to be discovered towards the west and south, that were not under the actual temporal dominion of any Christian lords.” This language illustrates the emerging priority of discovery over Christian apostolic authority in establishing claims

⁴⁴ “Et, ut tanti negotii provinciam apostolice gratie largitate donati liberius et audacius assumatis, motu proprio, non ad vestram vel alterius pro vobis super hoc nobis oblate petitionis instanciam, sed de nostra mera liberalitate et ex certa scientia ac de apostolice potestatis plenitudine, omnes insulas et terras firmas inventas et inveniendas, detectas et detegendas versus occidentem et meridiem fabricando et constituendo unam lineam a polo Arctico scilicet septentrione ad polum Antarcticum scilicet meridiem, sive terre firme et insule invente et inveniende sint versus Indiam aut versus aliam quancunque partem, que linea distet a qualibet insularum, que vulgariter nuncupantur de los Azores et Caboverde, centum leucis versus occidentem et meridiem, ita quod omnes insule et terre firme reperte et reperiende, detecte et detegende, a prefata linea versus occidentem et meridiem [...]” “Cópia do traslado autêntico da Bula ‘Inter caetera Divinae Majestati’ do papa Alexandre VI pela qual concedeu a D. Fernando de Castela, à rainha D. Isabel e a todos os seus sucessores, todas as ilhas e terra firme descobertas e por descobrir, desde o Setentrião até ao Meio Dia, tirada por uma linha desde o Polo Norte ao Polo Sul, a cem léguas das ilhas dos Açores e de Cabo Verde para Ocidente,” 4 de maio de 1494, Gavetas, Gav. 10, mç. 11, no. 16 || PT/TT/GAV/10/11/16, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT).

over non-European territories.⁴⁵ The definitive proof of this shift is found in the bull *Aeterni Regis*, issued by Pope Sixtus IV, which confirmed the Treaty of Alcáçovas-Toledo and clearly demonstrates the emergence of the concept of discovery within Portuguese-Castilian negotiations, prioritizing discovery as the criterion for overseas sovereignty.

The text underscores the legitimacy of territorial claims by stating that the Crowns of Castile, Aragon, and Sicily agreed to a “peace... firm, stable, and everlasting,” promising not to “disturb, molest, or harass” the King and Prince of Portugal regarding their “possession and quasi-possession” of lands and territories, including those that were “discovered or to be discovered.” This language not only validates existing claims but also frames discovery as a legal basis for ownership, reinforcing the idea that the act of discovery itself confers rights to sovereignty. Furthermore, the bull emphasizes a clear delineation of authority by specifying which territories remain with Castile, stating that “whatever has been discovered or will be discovered [...] shall remain with the said King and Prince of Portugal.” This assertion underscores the significance of discovery in establishing and maintaining territorial boundaries, while the papal endorsement imbues these claims with moral authority. By intertwining religious endorsement with political realities, the bull highlights how discovery was transformed into a powerful narrative justifying Iberian expansion and colonial ambitions.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ “omnes et singulas insulas et terras firmas, inventas et inveniendas versus occidentem et meridiem, que sub actuali dominio temporali aliquorum dominorum Christianorum constitute non essent.” “Bula ‘Dudum Siquidem’ del Papa Alejandro VI a los Reyes Católicos, ampliando su dominio sobre las tierras que pudiesen descubrir hacia el occidente y sur, y las que existiesen hacia el occidente, sur y oriente de las Indias,” 26 de septiembre de 1493, mp-bulas_breves, 3, Archivo General de Indias.


⁴⁶ “Item voluerunt prefati Rex et Regina Castelle, Aragonie, et Sicilie, et illis placuit, ut ista pax sit firma et stabilis ac semper duratura, [et] promiserunt ex nunc et in futurum quod nec per se nec per alium, secrete seu publice, nec per suos heredes et successores, turbabunt, molestabunt, nec inquietabunt, de facto vel de jure, in iudicio vel extra iudicium,, dictos dominos Regem et Principem Portugalie nec reges qui in futurum in dicto regno Portugalie regnabunt nec sua regna, super possessione et quasi possessione, in qua sunt, in omnibus commerciis, terris, et permutationibus sive resignatis Guinee, cum suis mineris seu aurifodinis, et quibuscunque aliis insulis, littoribus, seu costis maris, terris, detectis seu detegendis, inventis et inveniendis, insulis de la Madera, de Portu Sancto, et Insula Deserta, et omnibus insulis dictis de los Asores, id est, Ancipitrum,

The content of the papal bull passages is largely a translation from Castilian into Latin of the original treaty, with the term *acquirere* and its derivatives, used in the 1450s papal bulls, appearing alongside the new concept of *inventio*. While King João II may not have been solely responsible for the emergence of this Portuguese-Castilian concept, he played a crucial role in promoting its use and advocating for its benefits in Portuguese overseas expansion. As evidenced in the letter sent to the Catholic Monarchs, the term *descobrir* was inscribed on the *padrões*⁴⁷ – stone pillars left by Portuguese maritime explorers, such as Diogo Cão and Bartolomeu Dias, between the 1480s and 1490s.⁴⁸ These *padrões* served as both physical and symbolic declarations of Portuguese claims, inscribed with the royal coat of arms and other identifying information, and were strategically placed to assert sovereignty and secure territorial

et insulis Florum, et etiam insulis de Cabo Verde, id est, Promontorio Viridi, et insulis quas nunc invenit, et quibuscumque insulis que deinceps inveniuntur aut acquiruntur, ab insulis de Canaria ultra et citra et in conspectu Guinee, ita quod quicquid est inventum vel invenietur et acquiratur ultra in dictis terminis, id quod est inventum et detectum remaneat dictis Regi et Principi de Portugallia et suis regnis, exceptis duntaxat insulis de Canaria, Lanzarote, Lapalma, Forteventura, Lagomera, Ho Fierro, Ha Gratiola, Ha Gran Canaria, Tanarife, et omnibus aliis insulis de Canaria, acquisitis aut acquirendis, que remanent regnis Castelle; et ita non turbabunt nec molestabunt nec inquietabunt quascunque personas, que dicta mercimonia et contractus Guinee nec dictas terras et littora aut costas, inventas et inveniendas, nomine aut potentia et manu dictorum dominorum Regis et Principis Portugallie vel suorum successorum tractabunt, negociabuntur, vel acquirant, quocunque titulo, modo, vel manerie quod sit aut esse possit.” “Bula do Papa Sisto IV ‘Aeterni regis clementia’ pela qual aprovou e confirmou as bulas de Nicolau V e Calisto III pelas quais foram concedidas aos reis de Portugal todas as ilhas e terra firme, assim descobertas como por descobrir desde o Cabo Bojador e Cabo Não por toda a Guiné até à Índia e a jurisdição espiritual delas à Ordem de Cristo”, 21 de junho de 1481, Bulas, mc. 26, no. 10 || PT/TT/BUL/0026/000010, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT).

⁴⁷ The inscription on the *padrão* erected by Diogo Cão was first revealed by Luciano Cordeiro (1982), *Descobertas e descobridores: Diogo Cão - Memoria apresentada á 10a sessão do Congresso Internacional dos orientalistas* (pp. 18-21).

⁴⁸ There are three known surviving *padrões* made from limestone. The first is the *Padrão de Santo Agostinho*, placed by Diogo Cão between 1482-84, which has been in the possession of the Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa since 1892. The second is the *Malindi Vasco da Gama Pillar*, erected by Vasco da Gama in 1498, marking one of his significant landfalls during his voyage to India. The third is the *Padrão de São Gregório*, discovered by Eric Axelson, with the support of Leo Fouché, during a search and excavation in 1938 at Kwaihoek, near the mouth of The Bushman’s River in South Africa. This *padrão* is currently held by the University of the Witwatersrand. See: Eric Axelson (1988), *The Dias Voyage, 1487-1488: Toponymy and Padrões*; and “The Discovery of the Original Dias Cross,” (1941), *Public Works of South Africa*, 7(37), 5-6

rights during the reigns of João II and early Manuel I.⁴⁹ The concept of discovery inscribed on these stones was an attempt to assert Portugal's claim over newly encountered overseas territories. This concept became as strong and enduring as the stones themselves, with its use legitimizing overseas claims and securing recognition of their expansionist ambitions within Western Christendom 

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⁴⁹ For a study concerning the *padrões* as a symbol of sovereignty, see: Hava Önalán (2021, pp. 206-228).

- Bula do Papa Sisto IV 'Aeterni regis clementia' pela qual aprovou e confirmou as bulas de Nicolau V e Calisto III pelas quais foram concedidas aos reis de Portugal todas as ilhas e terra firme, assim descobertas como por descobrir desde o Cabo Bojador e Cabo Não por toda a Guiné até à Índia e a jurisdição espiritual delas à Ordem de Cristo. (1481, June 21). *Bulas*, mç. 26, n. 10 / *Código de Referência: PT/TT/BUL/0026/000010, Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (ANTT)*.
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