Portugal held overseas possessions in Africa, South America and Asia from the beginning of the fifteenth century till very recently. This empire was the result of conquests of cities that belonged to other kingdoms, such as in the Maghreb or India, the establishment of commercial outposts in key points of the maritime routes along the Atlantic and Indian oceans coasts, or the creation of colonies in newfound lands, such as some Atlantic archipelagos or Brazil. The Moroccan project was a fundamental part of this overseas expansion.\(^1\) Amidst several motivations, the Crusader spirit was certainly one of the most important drives for the Portuguese to assault Northern Africa from the early 1400s to 1500s.

The Portuguese presence in the region lasted from 1415, when King João I (1385–1433) started what would become a series of conquests, to 1769. This last date represents the epilogue of a political, military, and commercial investment in the Maghreb, when the evacuation of the last stronghold was decided in Lisbon. For more than three and a half centuries, the Portuguese main expression of its territorial expansion consisted in isolated enclaves along the Strait of Gibraltar and Atlantic coasts, which corresponds today to a long seashore stretch in the Kingdom of Morocco, with exception of the Spanish city of Ceuta. This territory was never understood as a full colony by the Crown, with autonomous jurisdiction. It was rather based on the conquest and occupation of pre-existing Arab and Muslim cities, resulting in a network of isolated possessions directly ruled by the king through local captains and governors.

The arrival of a new power, the Portuguese, carrying with them the Christian faith, also implied a reconfiguration of the urban fabric. As mentioned before, the most frequent military approach was the conquest which took over pre-existing established cities belonging to Maghreb political spheres such as Fez and Marrakesh. Occupied cities were, most of the time, too large for the Portuguese military resources to keep in permanent state of defense. In the cities the Portuguese occupied a pragmatic attitude was the rule, oriented towards sustainability in a hostile environment. Therefore, urban appropriations shrunk cities, erased suburbs, and promoted the opening of new streets and squares, closer to a Portuguese identification of the built environment. Significant reductions in perimeter and surface were carried out, in a procedure known as *atalho* (downsizing).\(^2\) In some cases, opportunities to experiment with more elaborate systems have left an urban heritage that is still present today.

All political and military seizures had carried with them a complete separation between the Christian populations inside the walls and the Muslims, whether Arab or Berbers, outside the fortified boundary. Only a few exceptions were permitted by the new city tenants.\(^3\) From north to

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1 Luis Filipe Thomaz, *De Ceuta a Timor* (Lisboa: Difel, 1990).
3 The so-called ‘peace moor’ (*mouros de pazes*) status, assigned to a limited number of native allies, was one instance. The other was that of the Jewish community but, even so, its neighborhood—*mellah*—within the walls was only sometimes authorized and instead relocated next door, with military protection offered by the Portuguese.
south, the most relevant case studies include Ceuta (1415–1640), Ksar Seghir (Alcácer Cequer, 1458–1550), Tangier (Tânger, 1471–1662), Asilah (Arzila, 1471–1550), Azemmour (Azamor, 1513–41) and Safi (Safim, 1508–41).

The establishment of new settlements over non-previously urbanized areas was another paradigm of expanding the Portuguese presence, if yet less successful (Figure 24.1). The foundation of Mazagão (today a neighborhood called Cité Portugaise in El Jadida), in 1541, represents its outmost case study. Recent research has shown how this town's urban layout can be universally considered as a sacred precinct, the climax of all the urban experience acquired in a region where city walls generally meant a frontier for faith and possession.

This chapter's interest lies in the effective imposition of European and Christian models over an Islamic matrix that the new Portuguese overlords carried out in cities now empty of their native population, and the effects observed in the urban space, religious and civic architecture. Methodologically speaking, the research uses cartographical resources, morphological evidence, and field work to foster a cross-disciplinary approach between architectural history, archaeology, and history. The first steps of the analysis are directed towards the interpretation of the Christian basilica profile, in dialogue with or opposition to Muslim religious space, and the adaptation of mosques to churches. Parallel analyses will stress how administrative buildings, now devoid of their original function, used military architecture symbology as a discourse of power and as political reinforcement of this Christian claim in the early modern period. The overall urban image of the conquered and new-settled cities will be explored for an interpretation of its religious message, wishing to address Mazagão as an ultimate Christian creation by the Portuguese in North Africa.

1 The Historical and Geographical Context

Portugal’s experience with the Muslim world had already been a daily struggle when this young kingdom began its territorial fight against the Almoravid (1040–1147) and Almohad (1124–1269) Berber dynasties in twelfth and thirteenth-century Southern Iberia. Since the formation and recognition of Portugal as an independent kingdom in 1143, the main political aim of Afonso Henriques (1143–85), the first Portuguese king, and his successors, was a military war against the ‘infidel.’ Until 1249, when the Al-Gharb al-Ândaluz (nowadays the region of Algarve in southern Portugal) was definitively conquered by Afonso III (1248–79), conquest was followed by the expulsion of Arab forces from the western Iberian strip. During the fourteenth century, mutual sea raids and skirmishes between Portugal and North Africa were frequent. The dispute over the Canary Islands and Italian ventures along the Maghreb Atlantic coast, demonstrated a growing interest in Northern Africa by European powers. Frequent Portuguese incursions in search of rich fishing resources or opportunities for piracy confirm the increasing knowledge of topographical information available to merchants. Therefore, the first organized Portuguese military campaign against Ceuta in 145 should be seen not only as the starting point of the Portuguese overseas enterprise but also as the pursuing of long military interactions with Islam previously in Iberia Peninsula.

In fact, rather than a strictly territorial conflict, military conquests of Southern Iberian and Northern Maghreb Muslim strongholds carried with them an objective program of regaining former Christian areas and re-establishing the

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To further readings on this population, please address to: José Alberto Tavim, Os Judeus na Expansão Portuguesa em Marrocos durante o Século XVI (Braga: APACDM, 1997).

Original Portuguese names and dates of Portuguese occupation are indicated between brackets.

5 Joaquim Veríssimo Serrão, História de Portugal (Lisbon: Editorial Verbo, 2001), i, 89–90.

6 Serrão, História de Portugal, i, 137–140.