

Discovery, Settlement, and Demographics

1. The Islands

Located in the middle of the North Atlantic (at $36^{\circ} 55'$ N and $39^{\circ} 45'$ N latitude and $24^{\circ} 45'$ and $31^{\circ} 17'$ W), the Azores are part of *Macaronesia*, a region of the Atlantic that also includes the Madeira Islands, the Canary Islands, the Cape Verde Islands and northeast Africa. The archipelago of the Azores is made up of nine islands, occupies an area of 2,329.67 km² and is divided into three island groups, each with various islets near the coastlines.¹ The Eastern Group comprises the islands of Santa Maria (97 km²) and São Miguel (747 km²), the Central Group includes the islands of Terceira (397 km²), Graciosa (61 km²), São Jorge (238 km²), Faial (173 km²) and Pico (447 km²), while the Western Group is made up of the islands of Flores (143 km²) and Corvo (17 km²).

The origin of the archipelago is volcanic, given its location where the Eurasian, American and African tectonic plates meet. This factor has determined Azorean history, which has been shaped by the multiple eruptions, earthquakes and seaquakes, some felt and others not, that have accompanied life on the islands since the first settlement. While Graciosa, Flores, Corvo and Santa Maria have not been subjected to earthquakes since the 15th century, the remaining islands have been plagued by various periods of seismic crisis over the centuries. At times, the population has been gravely affected, as happened in 1522 (São Miguel), in 1580 (São Jorge and Pico), from 1718-1720 (Pico), in 1757 (São Jorge), in 1957 (Faial), in 1980 (Terceira), and most recently in 1998 (Faial). Presently, the attenuated vestiges of the volcanic nature of the islands are visible daily, for example, on the

¹ The total landmass of the islands and islets measures 2,344 km².

island of São Miguel, in the hot springs located in the Valley of Furnas and in the village of Ribeira Seca near the city of Ribeira Grande; on the island of Graciosa, in the *Furna do Enxofre* [Sulfur Cave]; and on Terceira Island, in the *Caldeira de Guilherme Moniz* [hot spring]. The volcanic nature of the Azores has led to the formation of a particular landscape, uniform in kind but with unique contours in each island; examples are the beautiful lakes contained within sunken craters in Faial, Flores and São Miguel; the highest mountain peak in Portugal which shapes the island of Pico (2,341 meters high); or the steep coastline leading to the *Fajãs* [flatlands] on the island of São Jorge.²

The name attributed to the Azores is explained in different ways. One relates the name *açor* [goshawk] to the presence of many birds of this species when the islands were first discovered, although no such birds are presently found on the archipelago. The first historian of the Azores, Gaspar Frutuoso, already referred to the probable confusion of the first settlers, who mistook the *milhafre*, another type of hawk that is still very common on the islands,³ for the *açor*. Another explanation for the name of the islands is related to the Italian word *azzurri* [blues, *azuis* in Portuguese], attributed to the tonality of the islands by Genovese sailors who encountered the region before the Portuguese. Finally, we might relate the name of the islands to the great devotion that Frei Gonçalo Velho Cabral, the first Portuguese explorer to land on the islands, had for the statue of *Santa Maria dos Açores*, which is venerated in his home town of Belmonte.⁴

Whatever its origin, the name of the Azores did not prevent official documents of the time of the Discoveries from referring to the archipelago as the *ilhas terceiras* [third islands], “the common name by which the inhabitants of Portugal referred to the islands of the Azores”⁵ at the time. This usage has nothing to do with the island of Terceira in particular, but with the context of Portuguese expansionism, which considered the Canary Islands the first archipelago discovered in the Atlantic Ocean; Madeira was the second and the Azores constituted the “third islands” under Portuguese sovereignty.⁶

Within the archipelago, two other terms are used: *ilhas floreas* [the floral islands], to refer to the Western group of Flores and Corvo; and *ilhas de baixo* [the lower islands], used by the inhabitants of São Miguel to designate the islands in

² For more information about the geography, geology, climate, seismology and recent demographics of the Azores, please consult the *Atlas Básico dos Açores / The Basic Atlas of the Azores*, a bilingual edition published by Victor Hugo Forjaz in 2004.

³ Frutuoso, IV, 1: 11.

⁴ For more information about the name of the islands, please see “História-Idade Moderna” available at <http://pg.azores.gov.pt/drac/cca/enciclopedia>.

⁵ Frutuoso, III: 128.

⁶ Gaspar Frutuoso suggested that the name *ilhas terceiras* appeared after the discovery of the archipelagos of Cape Verde and Madeira. However, since the references to Cape Verde appear after references to the Azores (circa 1460), it seems more logical that the sequence would have been the Canary Islands, Madeira and the Azores, all the more because, at this time, Portugal was still fighting for possession of the Canary Islands, a struggle which would only end in 1479 (cf. Frutuoso, VII: 4).

the Central and Western groups, that is, "the islands located where the sun goes down."⁷ Originally uninhabited, these temperate, humid islands came to know human activity only in the 15th century, through a settlement process that would last more than one hundred years.

2. The Discovery

Just as the origin of the name is controversial, so is the discovery of the Azores. Gaspar Frutuoso refers to an eventual presence of Carthaginians (mentioned by Aristotle in relation to voyages made by these people to islands located in the Atlantic), although he questions the notion that the Azores are part of the mythical archipelago of Atlantis described by Plato.⁸ The possibility that humans had reached the islands much earlier gained acceptance with the discovery of Phoenician coins on the island of Corvo in 1746 and with the reference made by the chronicler Damião de Góis to the existence, at the time of the first Portuguese landing on the same island, of an equestrian statue attributed to the Phoenicians or the Carthaginians.⁹ With respect to other documentation, references to the Azores appear in *El Libro del Conoscimiento*, written by a Spanish Franciscan monk between 1345 and 1348,¹⁰ and in the drawings found in the various navigation maps and charts that are characteristic of 14th century cartography. These depict nine islands located approximately in the area of the Azores, although their orientation is incorrect.¹¹ Such is the case with the map drawn by the Genovese cartographer Battista Beccario (1435). Next to the islands located in the area of the Azores and named *capraria*, *brazir*, *columbis*, *ventura*, *san zorzo*, *li conigi* and *corvi marini*, Beccario wrote "*insule de novo reperte*," that is, "islands recently found."¹²

In fact, whether the islands were known before the Portuguese Discoveries, or not, is secondary. Given the long maritime tradition of the Phoenicians, the Genovese and others, it is quite admissible that, at different times and under varied cir-

⁷ Carlos Guilherme Riley relates the geographic designation of "lower islands" to an "ethnocentric perspective of centrality" on the part of the inhabitants of São Miguel Island (cf. Riley, 1995: 57-70).

⁸ Frutuoso, I: 247-80.

⁹ This equestrian statue, mentioned by Damião de Góis in his *Chronica do Príncipe Dom João*, was torn down and removed from the island by order of King Manuel I (cf. *Arquivo dos Açores*, II: 515-19).

¹⁰ Arruda, 1989: XLVI.

¹¹ Examples taken from the cartography of the time are: the Mediceu Atlas of 1351; the Catalan Atlas of 1375-1377, which already includes islands designated as "*corvo marino*" and "*san zorzo*"; the Soleri Map of 1385; the map made by Battista Beccario in 1435; and the chart made by Gabriel de Valsequa in 1439, among others. For a synopsis of this topic, please see Arruda, 1989: XXXIII-LIV.

¹² *Idem*: XLI.

cumstances, these navigators may have seen the Azorean islands and eventually disembarked, whatever might have been the design of their vessels and the navigation techniques of the time.¹³ What does seem relevant, however, is that, through the epic achievement of Portuguese maritime expansion, the discovery led by Prince Henry the Navigator presented Europe with a new western frontier, as stated by Carlos Riley. Whether this was a discovery or a rediscovery, it was the dynamic expansion of the Kingdom of Portugal that came to integrate the Azores into the map of Europe, not merely in the sense of geographical identification (as had happened until then), but especially in the sense of a true “humanization” project. It is only natural, therefore, that maps drawn after the voyage of Gonçalo Velho Cabral (1432) came to depict the nine islands of the Azores in the proper arrangement and correct location, as happened in the map drawn by the Moroccan Gabriel de Valseca (1439). Even if this example ends up proving the precedence of the discovery led by Prince Henry and disproving all the other theories defending previous knowledge of the islands, it was only at this time that the Azores became relevant to the European continent, at the same time that they became one of the pillars of the Atlantic destiny of Europe.¹⁴

Integrated, as such, within the epic of Portuguese maritime expansion, the discovery of the Azores was first indicated by cartographers as having occurred in 1427, when Diogo de Silves reached the Eastern and Central groups of islands.¹⁵ Gaspar Frutuoso, however, attributed the feat to Gonçalo Velho Cabral, who in the year of 1432 landed on the easternmost island, which he named Santa Maria in honor of Holy Mary, patron of the day in the Church calendar. According to the same source, Prince Henry ordered a new voyage to this island soon after, to disembark “cows, and sheep, and goats, and rabbits, and other things, and domestic birds so that they might grow and multiply on the land.” This initiative, which would be repeated on the island of São Miguel,¹⁶ deserves our attention since it is a clear indication of Prince Henry’s intent not only to demarcate the islands as an integral part of Portuguese territory (a very important factor given the longstanding struggle between Portugal and Spain¹⁷ for possession of the archipelago of the Canary Islands), but also to prepare the islands as fertile areas for future settle

¹³ The fact that the Portuguese referred to some of the islands with the same names that appeared in the cartography drawn up before the 15th century indicates that Portuguese navigators had known of the existence of the Azores before they reached the archipelago.

¹⁴ An example would be the letter, dated January 20, 1453, in which King Afonso V gave the island of Corvo to his uncle Dom Afonso, Duke of Bragança. This gesture is, undoubtedly, an offering that pretended to define the limits of Portuguese sovereignty in the Atlantic (Riley, 1993-1995, XI: 87-134).

¹⁵ This is according to the map drawn by Gabriel de Valseca in 1439.

¹⁶ Frutuoso, III: 12.

¹⁷ Historically speaking, the designation “Spain” is incorrect because, at this time, the Iberian Peninsula was divided into various kingdoms: Castile, Aragon, Leon, Granada, Cataluña and Portugal. To simplify matters, however, we have opted for the term, while being aware that Spain as a state did not yet exist.

ment.¹⁸ In 1439, Prince Henry would receive orders from his nephew, King Afonso V, to settle the islands. Four years later, the Crown would promote the settlement of Santa Maria by exempting all products from fees during five years.

In 1444, the same Gonçalo Velho Cabral would reach the island of São Miguel, probably for the second time, in the company of navigators from the Algarve. The island was named for the patron saint honored on the day of arrival, the Archangel Michael. The islands of Terceira, São Jorge and Graciosa would follow.¹⁹ Three years later (1447), the king would extend the 1443 fee exemption in Santa Maria to the settlers of São Miguel. Then, in 1449 King Afonso V repeated the same order he had given to Prince Henry in 1439 to proceed with the settlement of the Azores. Does this mean that the Azores were deserted in 1449? In this year the islands of the Eastern group must have harbored a few clusters of settlers since the fee exemptions granted by the Crown in 1443 (Santa Maria) and in 1447 (São Miguel) were meant to promote settlement. On the other hand, it is known that a group of Flemish settlers disembarked in Terceira in January of 1449. This means, therefore, that the order given by the king in 1449 reflected the intention of the Portuguese monarch to continue with the settlement of the islands, and to impede any aspirations on the part of the Flemish Dukedom.

The pace of settlement was slow, in fact, but the Portuguese monarchy was responsible for this. The reasons were varied. First, the Crown preferred to concentrate its efforts on gaining power in northern Africa and exploring the western coast of this continent. It seized control of Tangier in 1437 and had rounded Cape Bojador in 1434. Second, the Portuguese Crown was investing in the development of the archipelago of Madeira, which quickly began to attract settlers from the mainland after its discovery in 1420. Third, Portugal maintained an on-going conflict with Castile, which followed the Revolution of 1383-1385 and only ended in 1431. Fourth, there were conflicts within the monarchy, between Dom Pedro and his nephew Dom Afonso V, which only ended with the death of Dom Pedro in the Battle of Alfarrobeira in 1449. These four situations led to the slow settlement of the Azores since the monarchy directed its attention to these affairs, which were clearly given political priority. Still, it is necessary to note the importance that Dom Pedro gave to the archipelago. As owner of the island of São Miguel, named after the archangel that he venerated with special devotion, Dom Pedro governed in a manner which indicated that he was aware of the importance of the Azores as the source of future economic resources and strategic benefits.

After Santa Maria and São Miguel, the island of Terceira was discovered in 1449. The other islands of the Central group followed, although the exact dates are not known due to the inexistence of historical sources. Nonetheless, given the geographic proximity of these islands, they must have been identified at the same time, probably between 1449 and 1451. Finally, Flores and Corvo must have been

¹⁸ Only with the Treaty of Alcáçovas, signed in 1479, did Portugal give up the struggle for the Canary Islands, while Castile promised to abandon any pretensions to the African coast and seas.

¹⁹ Frutuoso, III: 113.

discovered in 1452 by Diogo de Teive.²⁰ By the end of the 1450s, therefore, the archipelago of the Azores had been completely identified. In his last will and testament, written on October 13, 1460, Prince Henry refers to nine islands considered to be the Azores, even though they are given names that are different from the ones we know.²¹

In terms of the early settlement of the Azores, documentation is scarce. The Eastern group must have received its first inhabitants in the 1440s, since it was the first to be discovered and it is located closer to the mainland. The Central group began to receive settlers after 1450, the year in which Prince Henry asked Jácome de Bruges to populate Terceira. São Jorge followed in 1460, Faial in 1467-1468, Graciosa probably in 1473 and Pico after 1480. Attempts were made to settle the Western group at the end of the 15th century, but these were only successful after 1508.²² Discovered in 1427 (?), the Azores began to receive settlers in 1443 (?) and continued to receive successive waves of diverse peoples, to whom we will now turn our attention.

3. The Settlement

The pace of settlement of the Azores varied according to the different dates of discovery, the investment and interest of the Crown, the intrinsic potentialities of each island, and the number of prospective settlers.²³ All things considered, this number was relatively high, especially given the many challenges that would lie ahead. In fact, the first settlers were put to the test as soon as they tried to land, since most of the islands had very inaccessible coastlines. Then, they had to tame the land in order to provide for their survival. They had to find water to drink; they had to raise animals for food and for transportation and agricul-

²⁰ In 1448, the map drawn by the Venetian André Bianco does not include the Western group, but these islands do appear in the map drawn by Soligo in 1456 (“História-Idade Moderna” available at <http://pg.azores.gov.pt/drac/cca/enciclopedia>).

²¹ Indeed, Prince Henry would write: “Also I established and ordained the church of *são Luís* and the church of *são Dinis* in the island of *são Dinis*; and the church of *são Jorge* in the island of *são Jorge*; and the church of *são Thomaz* in the island of *são Thomaz*; and the church of *santa Eiria* in the island of *santa Eiria*. Also I ordained and established the church of *Jesu christo* in the island of *Jesus christo*; and another church in the island of *graciosa*. Also I ordained and established the church of *são Miguel* in the island of *são Miguel*; and the church of *santa Maria* in the island of *santa Maria*” in Arruda, 1989: 141-42. Recently, João Silva de Sousa has identified the church of *São Luís* in the island of Pico; the church of *São Dinis* in the island of Faial; the church of *São Tomás* in the island of Flores, and the church of *Santa Iria* in the island of Corvo (cf. “Henrique (D.) e os Açores: Conjuntura e objetivos” available at <http://pg.azores.gov.pt/drac/cca/enciclopedia>).

²² Gomes, 1997: 23-42. Also please see Leite, 2004: 483-92.

²³ For a complete and up-to-date synthesis of the important issues related to the settlement of the Azores, please see Meneses, 2005: 209-306.

tural activities; they had to cut wood to construct homes and boats, to make agricultural and domestic tools, and to serve as a source of energy. And all of this could be accompanied by volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.

Along with these difficulties, we must keep in mind that the reduced population of the Kingdom did not allow for great numbers of settlers. At a time when the population of mainland Portugal numbered approximately one million inhabitants, there were various possible destinations for those who wanted to settle elsewhere: northern Africa, the western coast of Africa and the archipelago of Madeira.²⁴ Nonetheless, most of the first inhabitants of the islands were Portuguese, as can be proven in various ways. The chronicles written in the 16th and 17th centuries register personal names and place names that reflect a variety of settlers from the regions of Algarve, Alentejo, Beira-Alta, Entre-Douro, and also from the Lisbon area. It is interesting to note that many had already passed through Madeira before reaching the Azores. In fact, between the 15th and 16th centuries, these two archipelagos were in frequent contact because of either matrimonial or commercial connections.

These first settlers had different motivations for embarking on their adventure, motivations that have been more or less constant throughout human history. Most came from the lower classes and saw immigration as an opportunity to attain a better life in a new land. They were also attracted by the economic and fiscal benefits granted by the Portuguese Crown during the first years. These settlers usually took their families and ended up transplanting their "home." Overwhelmingly, they were persons who had left behind little more than what they would find in the new land. In the mid-16th century, Gaspar Frutuoso pointed to this reality since he observes that, whenever the grain-producing lands of São Miguel become worn out, the "poor farmers are neither able nor willing to abandon the lands that they rent, even if they are losing profits, for they have no other livelihood."

Far less common were settlers with high social standing. Some had participated in the discovery of the islands; some had gained the trust of their leaders and had been granted royal appointments, while others would be responsible for the political, administrative and economic organization of the islands, as was the case of Gonçalo Velho Cabral and Jácome de Bruges. Still, these were mainly esquires, the lowest rung in the hierarchy of the nobility.²⁵ As such, they saw their move to the Azores as a way of moving up the social ladder by assuming control of land and government posts. This was an elite class that used the archipelago to rise in

²⁴ Due to the absence of clear, reliable data about the population of Portugal in the 15th century, we have based our observations on the first national census conducted from 1527-1532, by order of King John III (almost one century after the period under analysis). This census indicates a minimum population of 1,000,000 and a maximum of 1,500,000, with an average density of 12 to 18 inhabitants per km², depending on the area (cf. Marques, 1985, I: 286).

²⁵ For more on the settlement of the Azores, and especially Terceira, we recommend Gregório, 2007.

society, but their prominence would be felt only in the context of the islands, and not on the mainland.

In other cases, dishonor that had befallen the family name prompted some to look to the islands as a place to take refuge or to regain the social prestige that had been lost. A very interesting example of this would be the Canto family. The first member of the clan to reach the Azores was Pedro Anes do Canto, a native of Guimarães.²⁶ His grandfather was Vasco Afonso do Canto, whose paternal grandparents were nobles from Galiza, while his maternal grandparents came from England. He fought on the side of Dom Pedro in the Battle of Alfarrobeira and, with the defeat, fell “into great disfavor” with King Afonso V. By fighting in the campaign to conquer Morocco, he regained the confidence of the Crown, which rewarded him in 1527 with the directorship of the District Office of the Armadas, based in the island of Terceira.

Along with this voluntary migration, the historical sources that are available indicate that individuals who were under a variety of constraints also came to the islands. The situation of the Jews, expelled from the Kingdom by order of King Manuel I in 1496,²⁷ is a paradigmatic example of how the maritime territories served as a dumping ground for so-called “undesirable” groups of individuals, which also included the Moors and recent converts. Similarly, some prisoners were forced to serve their sentences on the islands. In 1455, for example, King Afonso V pardoned João de Lisboa, who had been sent to Santa Maria in 1446 to be imprisoned for homicide.²⁸ After having served nine years of his 15-year sentence, this criminal returned to the mainland. These are situations that illustrate two aspects of the early settlement of the region. First, since the Crown had difficulty in recruiting persons, it forced some to migrate. Second, in the mid 15th century, the settlement was still so sparse that not even the most underprivileged were attracted. Finally, this process also included the importation of slaves.

The rich human heritage of the Azores derives from this variety of origins, which can now be corroborated by studies in genetics that compliment the usual documentation available to historians. Rute Gregório, a researcher at the University of the Azores, was the first to join history to biology through the study of genetics.²⁹ Subsequently, studies about the DNA composition of the Azorean population have been developed, not only by the Bio-Demographics team at the Uni-

²⁶ Gregório, 2001.

²⁷ While reflecting the efforts of King Manuel I to unite Iberia, the expulsion of the Jews from Portugal brought economic consequences to the kingdom. Even though Jews were socially segregated and forced to live in *Judiarias* (areas that were walled with gates that were locked every night) and even though their numbers were not significant (about 30,000 at the end of the 15th century), the activity of the Jews was important in the urban centers of Portugal, where they were involved mainly in banking, commerce and medicine, areas where the activity of the Catholic population was limited (cf. Marques, 1985, I: 289-90).

²⁸ Arruda, 1989: 127-28.

²⁹ Gregório, 2007.

versity of the Azores, coordinated by Manuela Lima,³⁰ but also by the staff of the Genetics and Molecular Pathology Units of the Ponta Delgada Hospital, (directed by Luísa Mota Vieira) and the comparable Unit of the Angra do Heroísmo Hospital, (coordinated by Jácome de Ornelas Bruges Armas).

The result of this research is truly interesting. The presence of European genes varies from 51.1% (via the Y chromosome) to 81.2% (via the female X chromosome).³¹ Biology confirms history, by corroborating that migration from mainland Portugal is the basis of the Azorean population. Place names illustrate this too. On the island of São Miguel, for example, we find reference to the Algarve (*Pico da Algarvia, Lomba da Algarvia, Ponta de Estêvão Dias* and *Lagoa*) and in Santa Maria to the Alentejo (*Marvão* and *Flor da Rosa*). Agricultural utensils and tools used by the Azoreans also indicate this relationship, as do the houses and chimneys found in Santa Maria, which resemble those found in the south of Portugal, while those found in São Miguel resemble the Alentejo tradition. To varying degrees, the vocabulary and the accents heard in the islands also point to strong links between the mainland and the archipelago.³²

This European component is not limited to mainland Portugal, however. The islands received settlers from other parts of Europe, including Flanders, Genoa, Florence, France, and England, among others. The Flemish presence in the Azores stems from the connection between the Kingdom of Portugal and the Dukedom of Flanders, which resulted from the marriage of Dona Isabel, daughter of King Duarte, to Dom Felipe, the Duke of Bourgogne. Once in Flanders, the Portuguese princess promoted the migration of people to the islands. It must have been then that Jós Dutra came to Faial, along with his family and other Flemish citizens, such as Antóñio Dutra, Arnequim, Pita da Rosa, etc.³³ The island of São Jorge was also the destination of the Flemish, in the person of Guilherme da Silveira, who settled in Topo around 1460, after a brief passage through Faial. The Flemish presence in the Azores is concentrated in the Central group of islands. Because the Eastern islands of Santa Maria and São Miguel had already absorbed an appreciable number of settlers from the mainland, the Central islands of Graciosa, São Jorge, Pico and Faial, with the possible exception of Terceira, were more available for settlement. Even today, Flemish influence is still felt in the Central group, as can be seen in Faial, in place names (*Flamengos, Monte da Espalamaca, Ribeira dos Flamengos*, etc.) and in many family names (*Brum, Dutra, Silveira, Terra, Goulart*, etc.).

³⁰ The research being done by Manuela Lima deserves attention, not only in this particular case, where it highlights the undeniable relationship between biological anthropology and history, but also in other areas, such as her study of the Machado-Joseph disease in the Azores, which was presented in 1998 and published in the Biological Anthropology report available at <http://www.db.uac.pt/publicacoes.php>.

³¹ For a specific analysis, please see the article by Santos and Lima, 2003. We have not had direct access to all of the work done in this area, but utilized the data furnished by Gregório, 2007.

³² For more information about this, please see Matos, 1993, I: 185-88.

³³ Frutuoso, VI: 252 and 254.

People from Genoa and Florence also contributed to the settlement of the islands and their presence can still be traced, in the islands of Terceira, São Miguel, São Jorge and Faial, to such names as *Geraldes* (derived from “Giraldi”) and *Corvelo* (derived from Corvinelli), both originally from Florence; and *Espinola*, *Cacena* (derived from Cassana) and *Dória* (derived from Darja), all originally from Genoa. This presence also resulted in *Rua dos Italianos*, the name given to a street in the city of Angra in Terceira, in memory of the Genovese and Florentine architects (including Tommaso Benedetto) who contributed to the building of the city in the 16th century. The fact that the Genovese Christopher Columbus stopped on the island of Santa Maria in 1493, when he was returning from his first voyage to the “West Indies,” proves that voyages between these two Italian cities and the Azores were frequent. In fact, Christopher Columbus had yet a stronger connection to Portugal: he was married to Filipa Moniz, daughter of the first captain of Porto Santo, in the Madeira archipelago.³⁴

Perhaps less intense was the presence of the French and English. Bettencourt, a family name that still exists in the islands, probably derived from the French *Betancor*. This was the last name of Dona Maria, the wife of Rui Gonçalves da Câmara, the second Captain of São Miguel that Gaspar Frutuoso describes as being French.³⁵ From the end of the 15th century on, English settlers were involved in commercial activity in Terceira. This presence would become more active in the 17th century, when it spread to the islands of São Miguel and Faial, as can be corroborated today by the existence of such family names as *Stone*, *Read*, *Dart*, *Hickling* and *Riley*, among others.³⁶

Before arriving in the Azores, most of these individuals and families had first passed through the archipelago of Madeira. In fact, this archipelago was an almost mandatory stop for those who ventured to the Atlantic islands, and ended up being the place where some decided to settle. With its development based on sugar production, Madeira was extremely attractive for those who embarked on a maritime adventure in the 15th and 16th centuries. The Flemish settler Guilherme da Silveira was well acquainted with the prosperity of Madeira, since he had stopped there before sailing to Faial, at the invitation of his friend Jós Dutra. Gaspar Frutuoso makes this very clear in the following descriptive passage: “And, seeing that he wanted to depart, the inhabitants of the island of Madeira pleaded and begged him not to take his leave but to remain with them on the island, where he and all in his company would be granted homes and many lands and abundant assets; which much pleased Guilherme da Silveira, who declined all that was offered to him, for he had given his word to the captain of the island of Faial to go and live on said island.”³⁷

³⁴ About the presence of Florentine and Genovese settlers in the Azores, please see “Florentinos (os) e os Açores” and “Genoveses (os) e os Açores” available at <http://pg.azores.gov.pt/drac/cca/enciclopedia>.

³⁵ Frutuoso, IV, 2: 269.

³⁶ Rodrigues, 1996: 41-68; Sousa, 1988: 25-100; Riley, 1992: 99-119.

³⁷ Frutuoso, VI: 257.

This was a significant phenomenon, which certainly made the settlement of the Azores all the more challenging. In fact, Madeira was seen as more attractive than the Azorean archipelago because of its proximity to the mainland and its much greater level of development at this time, all of which left the Azores at a disadvantage. The fact that the Azores were a more virgin territory could be seen as an advantage, however, since the virtual lack of competition at the time could offer the possibility of greater economic gains and more solid political advantages.

It is also interesting to verify that the presence of non-European genes in the different groups of islands is not homogeneous: the Eastern group has the highest percentage (24.3%), followed by the Central group (15%) and finally the Western group (6.3%). If the analysis is based on mitochondrial DNA, passed on by the maternal line only, there are also differences in the percentage of genes from the Middle East (which includes Jews) and from Africa, as we see below in Table 1.

The highest percentage of African genes is found in Santa Maria and São Miguel, the Eastern group, and reflects the presence of black slaves on these islands. The explanation for this is historical. We know that one of the first settlements in São Miguel was comprised of *mouriscos de África* [Moorish people from Africa], ordered by Prince Henry to accompany Gonçalo Velho Cabral.³⁸

The highest percentage of Jewish genes is found in the Central group of islands. The settlement of Pico may explain this, for the presence of Jews in the *ilha montanha* [mountain island] goes back to 1503.³⁹ This presence reflects the fact that, in 1496, King Manuel I of Portugal expelled all Jewish families who had not converted to Catholicism. At this time, the Azores would have been an attractive destination for three reasons: the archipelago was distant from the mainland; royal authority was virtually nonexistent, which meant that Jewish exiles could maintain their religion; and the islands offered the possibility of developing commercial, financial and industrial activities. Such activities did in fact happen, not so much on Pico, but on São Miguel and Terceira.

The case of Flores and Corvo, the Western group, is quite interesting. While no Jewish settlement is recorded on these islands, the presence of Africans is significant. In all probability, this has mainly to do with Corvo. After several failed attempts at settlement, this small island was finally inhabited by African slaves brought by Captain Gonçalo de Sousa in the middle of the 16th century.⁴⁰

In sum, the main source of human settlement in the Azores is mainland Portugal. Along with this central core, other peoples from Europe, particularly from Flanders and Italy, also settled in the archipelago. Less numerous, but no less relevant, is the presence of people from Africa and the Middle East. If we compare the situation to a chess game, we can say that, in the end, the pawns (the

³⁸ Frutuoso, IV: 20.

³⁹ Chagas, 1989: 511-14.

⁴⁰ Frutuoso, VI: 350.

Table 1. Genetic Analysis of the Azorean Population

Azorean Islands (By Groups)	Genes from the Middle East (Mainly Jews) %	Genes from Africa %
Eastern Group	6.1	18.2
Central Group	10.0	5.0
Western Group	0.0	6.3

slaves and the Jews) would become intermingled with the more powerful members of society.

4. Demographic Growth

In 1474, when João Soares de Albergaria, successor to Gonçalo Velho Cabral, sold the captaincy of São Miguel to Rui Gonçalves da Câmara, Santa Maria was the only island exhibiting any vitality, since it was the “better and most populated.”⁴¹ Some years later, the inhabitants of Terceira were still so few that “a quarter measure of olive oil was sufficient to supply all the people living there for one year.”⁴² The settlement of the Azores was difficult at the beginning, as we have observed. But slowly, the population would grow. Although the rate varied according to the time period and the particular island, the increase was clear and steady. At the beginning, Terceira only received per year one or two ships “that transported few supplies since the people on land were few.” However, the truth is that these same ships “brought people to populate the land.”⁴³ Economic incentives were also applied to the settlement of Santa Maria and São Miguel. On this latter island, for example, the Crown offered tax exemptions to all those who settled on the southern coast, on easily accessible land that was “free of taxes and other duties, so that this island might be better populated.”⁴⁴ This was the birth of Vila Franca do Campo, the town that would be the most important center on the island of São Miguel until the earthquake of 1522.

Information about population growth during the 15th and 16th centuries can only be found in scattered sources, such as those we have mentioned. By the end of the 1500s, however, it is possible to find more information and concrete data about the demographic growth of each island. The source of this information is Gaspar Frutuoso, who registered the number of hearths and of souls over seven years of age in his monumental work, *Saudades da Terra*. Excluded were children

⁴¹ *Idem*: 26.

⁴² *Idem*: 9.

⁴³ *Idem*.

⁴⁴ *Idem*, IV, 2: 36.

under seven, the minimum age required for the sacrament of Confession.⁴⁵ Later, the Church would begin to register baptisms, marriages and funerals in Parish Registries. Today, these books of registry allow us to study this information and better understand the demographic situation in different places and at different times in the past.

This type of ecclesiastic information is fundamental since it sheds light on births (number of births, age of the mother, time of conception); marriages (number of marriages, age of the couple, social and geographic relationships); and deaths (lifespan, aspects related to gender, times when more or less deaths occurred, etc.). Nonetheless, since these registries did not exist at the time of settlement and few of those from subsequent periods have survived to our days, any kind of exhaustive study based on these sources is impossible. Only in the 18th century does the state manifest interest in counting its subjects, with clear fiscal and military intentions, although it still utilized the Church for this process. With this intent, King José I wrote a letter in 1767 to the Bishop of Angra, Dom António Caetano da Rocha, ordering him to register, annually, all the inhabitants of the diocese, by dividing them into three categories: "all those who are of age to take Communion," "all those who have died" with the respective indication of the age; and "all those on whom Baptism has been conferred . . . in each of the years referred."⁴⁶ Because of this orientation, it is after the middle of the 18th century that we can obtain more credible information about the Azorean population, augmented by census taking, which began in 1864. Population growth in the Azores from the 16th century to the present is illustrated in Figure 1.

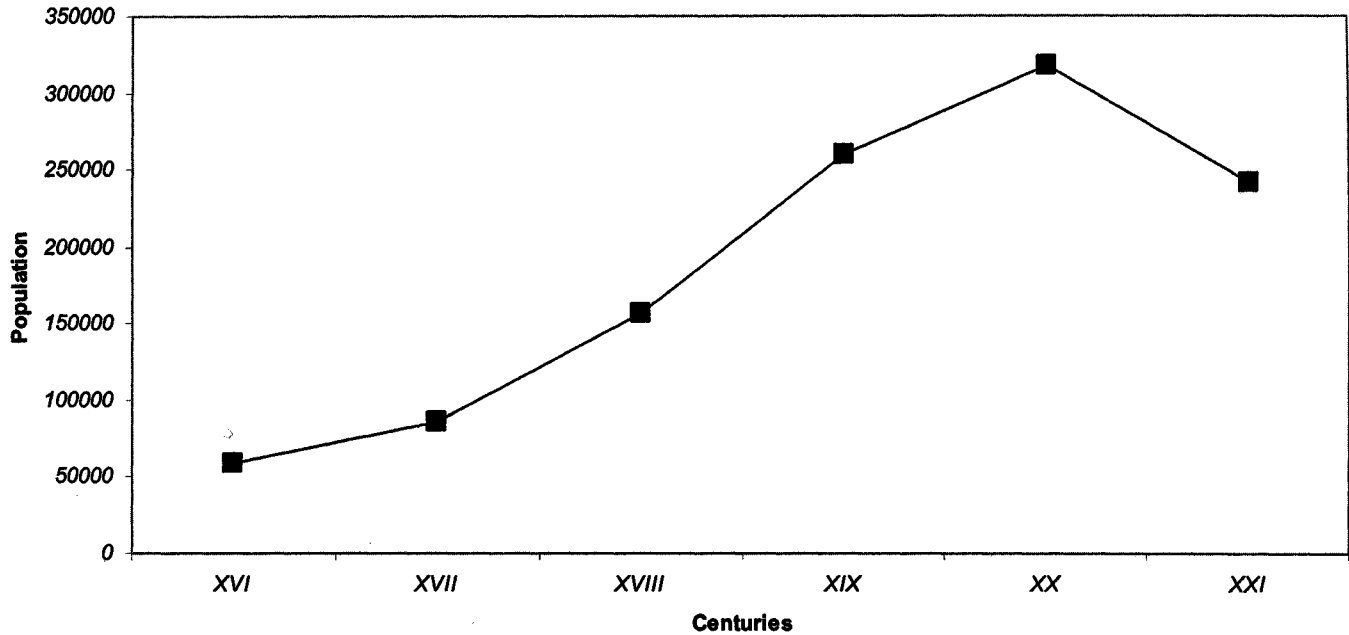
We can see that there was a slow but steady rise in population from the 16th to the 18th centuries. In fact, during these three hundred years, the population rose from 65,000 inhabitants to about 160,000 inhabitants. Then, from the end of the 18th century to the mid 19th century, an appreciable increase occurred, for the first national census, taken in 1864, indicated 249,399 Azoreans; that is, the population had doubled. This demographic growth would continue during the 20th century. Since a census was taken practically every 10 years, we can verify that the archipelago reached its highest population count in the mid-20th century, when the census of 1960 identified 327,476 inhabitants.

It was precisely after this decade that the decline in numbers became noteworthy. The 1970 census indicated a reduction of 42,261 inhabitants. In 1982, the number had fallen to 243,410 Azoreans (a reduction of 41,000 per decade). This decrease continued between 1980 and 1990 but became less pronounced,

⁴⁵ Gaspar Frutuoso had to collect data from the Records of the Confessed, short questionnaires that the Azorean priests would conduct by noting all of the households in their parish (number of inhabitants, relationships, gender, age and, at times, respective occupation or profession), in order to guarantee that all were in compliance with their Lenten obligation of going to Confession and taking Communion during Lent, the 40-day period of penance and sacrifice before Easter.

⁴⁶ Archive of the Parish of Nossa Senhora da Lagoa de São Miguel, *Livro de Capítulos de Visitas (1744-1809)*, folios 41v-42.

Figure 1. Azorean Population Growth (16th - 21st Centuries)



Note: The data indicated for the 21st century refers, of course, only to the 2001 census.

since the 1991 census registered 237,795 inhabitants, indicating a reduction of only 5,615 persons. The reversal of this trend would become palpable only during the 1990s, when a slight increase occurred, as was shown when the 2001 census registered 241,763 inhabitants. Statistically speaking, it is worth noting that, at the beginning of the 21st century, the population of the Azores is equal to what it was in the 19th century.

Since we are dealing with an archipelago made up of nine islands that are very different in size, it is necessary to consider which islands have most contributed to this phenomenon. São Miguel and Terceira were the two islands that attracted more settlers in the 16th century, as we see in Table 2. However, we should not forget that, although the number of inhabitants is higher for São Miguel, this figure does not correspond to the actual occupation of the land since this island is bigger than Terceira.

Next, we have Santa Maria and the islands of the Central group, with figures near or below 4,000 inhabitants each. The Western group comes last, with barely 700 persons. In this first century of settlement, diverse political and administrative centers began to emerge. In Terceira, Angra do Heroísmo was elevated to the status of a city in 1534; Praia da Vitória was named a town at the end of the 15th century; and São Sebastião became a town in 1503. In São Miguel, Ponta Delgada became a town in 1499 and a city in 1546; Ribeira Grande became a town in 1507; Nordeste in 1541; Água de Pau in 1515; and Lagoa in 1522. In São Jorge, Velas was named a town in 1490; Topo in 1510; and Calheta in 1534. In Graciosa, Santa Cruz became a town in 1500 and Praia in 1546.

What most stands out in the 17th century is the stagnation of Terceira, while the other islands of the Central group, especially Faial and Pico, attracted more people. One hundred years later, the difference between São Miguel and Terceira had widened: the population of the first had reached 62,000 inhabitants, while the second had less than 30,000. Also noteworthy is the situation in Pico, which had 5,000 more persons than it had in the 17th century. That is, for the first time, the population of Pico was superior to that of the neighboring island of Faial, which along with Graciosa and Flores had populations that were decreasing.

However, the size of the respective island must not be forgotten. In the 16th century, the population density of São Miguel was 36.3, while that of Terceira was 54.3, as is shown in Table 3. This proves that, in the beginning, Terceira was the most successful island in attracting and retaining settlers. Two centuries later, the islands with the greatest population density were Graciosa and São Miguel, with 80 inhabitants per km²; Terceira and Faial had close to 70 inhabitants per km², while the rest of the islands were below 50 inhabitants per km², with Flores in last place.

In the 19th century, the population of the islands continued to increase at variable rates. During this one-hundred-year period, the difference between São Miguel and Terceira widened, since São Miguel, along with São Jorge, Faial and Flores, doubled in population. This demographic development would continue into the next century. In the 20th century, São Miguel was, without a doubt, the

Table 2. Population Growth Per Island (16th-20th Centuries)^a

Islands	Centuries				
	16 th	17 th	18 th	19 th	20 th
São Miguel	27,132	34,241	62,903	119,933	164,136
Santa Maria	2,600	4,235	4,871	6,378	11,788
Terceira	21,560	21,078	29,117	45,034	60,608
Graciosa	2,708	6,656	5,447	8,321	9,522
São Jorge	2,676	6,716	9,345	18,272	16,400
Faial	4,048	13,287	12,027	24,963	23,944
Pico	3,508	10,259	15,444	26,396	22,336
Flores	632	3,235	3,190	9,687	7,812
Corvo	80	478	551	850	731
Total	64,944	100,185	142,895	259,834	317,277

^a For the 16th century, data was collected from the work by Gaspar Frutuoso already mentioned. For the 17th century, the source was the work of Frei Diogo das Chagas, also previously noted. The statistics for the 18th century refer to the year of 1776 and were taken from the work of our colleague and friend Madeira, 1999. For the 19th century, we utilized data from the 1878 national census. For the 20th century, the reference is the national census of 1950. For a complete analysis of Azorean demography in the 20th century, please see Rocha, 1991.

Table 3. Population Density Per Island (16th, 18th, and 20th Centuries)

Islands	Centuries		
	16 th	18 th	20 th
São Miguel	36.3	84.2	219.7
Santa Maria	26.8	50.2	121.5
Terceira	54.3	73.3	152.6
Graciosa	44.3	89.2	156.0
São Jorge	11.2	39.2	68.9
Faial	23.3	69.5	138.4
Pico	8.0	34.5	49.9
Flores	4.4	22.3	54.6
Corvo	4.7	32.4	43.0

the most inhabited island, with a population of 164,136 and a density of 219.7 inhabitants per km². Terceira came next, followed by Santa Maria, Graciosa and Faial. São Jorge, Pico, Flores and Corvo were the most sparsely populated islands, though there were significant increases in each from the 18th to the 20th century.

All of these oscillations are due to numerous factors; birth rates, death rates, the aging of the population, immigration and inter-island mobility are the factors that have most affected each island. In terms of the Azores, the most significant variable has undoubtedly been immigration, which discussed in Chapter 5. Generally speaking, the archipelago lost a significant proportion of its population to immigration during two distinct periods: first, to Brazil in the 18th century and then to North America in the 20th century, particularly from Graciosa, Pico, Faial and Corvo in the 1950s, and from São Miguel, Santa Maria, Terceira and Flores in the 1960s. After 1980, immigration from the Azores reduced, although there was some migration to other destinations (such as the Bermuda Islands), but with much less impact on the population than before.

Other variables must not be forgotten, however. Life expectancy has increased in the Azores: an average 40-year life span in the 19th century has increased to 75 in 2001.⁴⁷ With respect to aging, differences between the islands are noteworthy. An aging population is characteristic of some islands (such as Pico, Graciosa, Flores and Corvo), in contrast to São Miguel, the island with the greatest proportion of young people. Along with aging, birth rate plays a very important role when it comes to demographic (un)balance, and the birth rate in the Azores has changed significantly over time; an average of over five children in the 18th century has been reduced, in the 21st century, to an average of 1.5 children, below the minimum necessary for population renewal.

In sum, the three factors that have most influenced population growth from the 16th century to the present are: the reduction in the birth rate, the increase of an aging population and the different phases of immigration.⁴⁸ Finally, the demographic disparities that characterized the settlement phase have increased dramatically in the present, with 54% of the population residing in São Miguel, 23% in Terceira and 23% distributed among the other seven islands. This means that the archipelago has solidified its peripheral status on two levels: on an external level, of the nine islands in relation to the outside world, and on an internal level, with three different degrees of periphery: São Miguel, Terceira and the rest of the islands. What follows will be a study of these peripheries, in terms of their political, economic, social and cultural significance.

⁴⁷ For a synthesis, please see "Demografia" available at <http://pg.azores.gov.pt/drac/cca/enciclopedia>. We also recommend Rocha, 1990: 849-63 and Rocha, 1991: 125-68.

⁴⁸ For more in-depth studies of Azorean population until the 18th century, please consult the previously-mentioned work by Madeira, 1999. For subsequent periods, please see Madeira and Rocha, 2003: 403-24; Rocha, 1990: 849-63 and Rocha, 1991: 125-68.