

The Creation and Concept of Europe and the Ideological Germs of Racism

by

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Abstract

This paper offers a discussion about historical facts and ideological causes and consequences of *Reconquista* and the Crusades, religious wars sanctioned and promoted by the Roman Catholic Church in Medieval Europe, and the history of the Iberian Peninsula. The argument presented in this study is that the history of circa 400 years of religious and military warfare between Islam and Christianity starting with the first Crusade in 1096 and the fall of the last Moorish Empire in 1492 to expanding Christian kingdoms played a fundamental role in the creation of a concept of Europe and the European predatory ethics against both non-Europeans and non-Christians. Moreover, it discusses the ideological involvement of the Roman Catholic Church in the definition of a condition of inferiority as justification for the enslavement of African people and the ideological germs of racism. In conclusion, the paper argues that the economic and religious motives behind human trafficking at a massive scale in modern times and the exploitation of a free labor force by Europe was done in the name of and justified by the attribution of some sort of moral defect/condition of inferiority determined by origin in Africa and denoted by phenotype, exacerbated by a religious fundamentalist perspective that deemed Africans not only as pagans but *infidels*, the moral defect from which they could not be saved and justified their enslavement.

Introduction

There is a tendency to think about Portugal in its devastating interactions with Africans as having started in the 15th century while in fact, there is a much earlier and consistent contact between the Portuguese and the peoples of Africa; it is the period of roughly 780 years during which the Moors established and ran highly developed and strong cultural centers and kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula after the first Moorish invasions in 711 to the fall of Faro (Portugal) in 1249 and that of Granada (Spain) in 1492; but it is also the history of the unabated and consistent religious and military warfare of *Reconquista* (Reconquest) following the re-occupation of the Central Plateau by the Christian Castilian-Leonese forces unified under the neo(visi)gothic myth in the 12-13th century (Nogueira, 2001) that swept all over Mediterranean kingdoms, states, and city-states and extended throughout the 15th century of the Common Era; and the history of the *Crusades*, religious military expeditions against Muslims (1095-1291) promoted and sponsored by the Roman Catholic Church that together with western European kings sought to recapture former Christian territories, liberate the Holy Land, and regain control of the Mediterranean (Bloch, 1982). It is in this parallel history of the foundation of Portugal and the creation of Spain in the process of becoming a unified nation after 1492 that the roots of racism are to be found as well as the legitimating of the humanitarian catastrophe triggered by the Portuguese expansionist campaigns in Africa and trade in enslaved African peoples (Fonseca, 2010; Fitz, Portela e Novoa, 2014).

These centuries of bloody warfare developed in two distinct and yet inter-related fronts between the Eastern and Western centers of Christianity and between Islam and Christianity as Arabs started their expansionist drive north and west of the Arabian Peninsula in the seventh century. Thus, they are important and fundamental factors to understand the political and religious implications of what was to become the concept of 16th century Europe; its values, beliefs, and prevalent ideology; how it set the stage for the disaster that befell the African continent and its peoples; how it justified the predatory ethics of European Modernity and a new world order. Therefore, the discussion of this topic will revolve around the history of facts and history of ideas and their intertwined relationships.

The History of Facts

During several centuries of its dominance and despite its diversity and regional political variations, the unifying power of the Western Roman Empire had established over the European continent a shared sense of cultural unity under *Pax Romana*, built upon the extended incorporation of Roman law, and the religious ideology of Christianity as underlying common and integrating factors (Heather, 2006). After its collapse, six facts in the history of Europe during the first millennium, covering the Middle Ages up to the 15th century, stand as central in explaining the propitiatory conditions for the creation of a political, economic, social, and cultural concept of Europe.

First, with the collapse of the Western Roman Empire marked by the abdication of Romulus Augustulus in September 4, 476 and as its power waned, Rome and Constantinople, the two centers of Christianity in Europe, entered a process of competition for expansion and consolidation of alliances actively pursuing political and economic relationships between religious and secular institutions in their search for power and influence (Durant, 1992; Heather, 2006). Second, after the collapse of the gigantic grip of the Western Roman Empire, western and southern Europe witnessed a reenactment of previous warfare conditions, assailed by massive invasions of northern and eastern groups ravaged by famines. As a result, during the second half of the first millennium western and southern European kingdoms were still struggling for the consolidation of their geographical boundaries after the establishment of independent political units with central governments (Smith, 2005). Third, as kingdoms consolidated, centralized power, and pacified their territories, they also organized their political, social, and economic systems of support. Medieval Europe's economic and military subsistence relied on (1) a feudal system of *servitude*, economic in genesis, and (2) *slavery* as the result and practice of war. In that feudal economic system, the serf could not leave the land. He provided labor in times of peace, and contributed to the effort of war whenever the king required his lordship's armies; while the enslaved, on the other hand, could be bought and sold and had, for that reason, some kind of mobility. In fact, captives and slaves brought from all parties were one of the most valuable trades of war, and skin color was not a distinctive trace of slavery (Backman, 2003; Fonseca, 2010; Mattoso, 1982).

Furthermore, the great center of development was the Mediterranean basin: the crossroads of commerce, knowledge, culture, and civilizations. From the times of the splendor of Kemetic civilization, and Asian and Persian Empires, Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, Turks, Africans, and Arabs all gravitated around the Mediterranean Sea making and unmaking nations, kingdoms, states, and city-states. For the first thirteen centuries of the Common Era political and economic control of the Mediterranean world was also polarized between outbreaks of Christian religion followed by that of Islam around the sixth century. Next, the political and religious history of Christendom in Eastern and Western Europe up to the Great Schism of the East in 1054, reflects the century-long struggle of different political and religious centers to gain power and leadership: Constantinople, Rome, Alexandria, and Venice as one of the many effects of the continuous struggle amongst these centers of religious and political power was the increasingly swift and overwhelming thrust of Arab/Muslim invasions: (1) of Eastern Europe in 634, and the conquest and collapse of the Byzantine Empire with the siege of Constantinople in 717-718; (2) the Arab conquest of ancient Egypt starting in 639 and subsequent Arab invasions of the African continent, especially North African nations between 652 and 665; (3) the Moorish conquest of Sicily in 700; and finally (4) the Moorish settlements in the Iberian Peninsula starting in 711 (Armstrong, 2002).

Finally, the dispute over the Mediterranean Sea between Christians and Muslims was therefore a pivotal question for Christianity since in less than one century both European centers of Christianity – Constantinople and Rome - saw their areas of influence encircled and endangered by the overwhelmingly fast grip of Islam through the East, South, and West simultaneously.

The Foundations of Portugal and Spain

The foundations of Portugal and Spain are intimately related to the need of the Christian church in the West to recover, rebuild, and secure the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula.

Portugal established its first national nucleus in 1143 and the consolidation of its geographical present-day borders took place by 1249 after Portuguese King Afonso III's conquest of Faro, the southernmost town in the Algarve (the Moorish Al-Gharb Al-Andalus). And as facts and timelines described ahead will demonstrate, the history of the foundation of the Portuguese nation is not only associated with that of *Reconquista* on the West of the Iberian Peninsula but especially with the spirit and the letter of the Crusades.

Portugalense county, the founding unit of what is Portugal today, was offered by the king of Leon and Castilla to one of the first Crusaders, a French Count, Henri de Bologne, as was the customary rule and reward for those who distinguished themselves in the fight against the so-called *infidels*. Under the protective sponsorship of the Roman Catholic Church, in the name of God and the Christian Faith (Ramos, 2009) Portugalense county increased and expanded its territory by warfare against the common enemy: the Moors or *infidels*; and both the reconquest of Lisbon by his son, the first Portuguese king Afonso Henriques, and subsequent recovery of the territories beyond the river Tagus and the Algarve that consolidated Portuguese borders, were only possible with the help of hosts of French and Anglo-Saxon Crusaders on their way to Jerusalem during the fourth and fifth Crusades (*ibidem*).

In Medieval Western Europe, a religious renovation and explosion of ancient Christian values was underway at that time. As the powers of the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church increased they also attempted to recover the control of Jerusalem and the Bible Lands by taking advantage of the instability created by the Turkish armies against the Muslims. And exhortations to public acts of faith by means of pilgrimages to the Holy Lands were called upon and Christian kings and noblemen were encouraged to join in the effort of protecting pious pilgrims and sacred places from the ravaging attacks of the so-called *infidels*.

The Crusades: Military Expeditions

Crusades were military expeditions organized by the Christian kingdoms of Western Europe and supported, indeed actively sponsored and promoted by the Roman Catholic Church between 11th and 13th centuries in order to recover the control of Jerusalem and the Holy Lands under Muslim influence since the 7th century. They numbered a total of nine, and included the infamous Children's crusade in 1212.

The first Crusade took place in 1096-1099 after the Pope's proclamation of total and complete absolution of sins and a torrent of indulgences promised to all those who would travel East in defense of the Holy Lands and Christian pilgrims. Moreover, the council of Clermont also pronounced excommunication against anyone who should invade the possessions of a prince engaged in this Holy War while any debt obligation would cease immediately for those joining the Crusades (Monreal, 1705). For the common people of the Middle Ages, serfs to the land and confined to their impoverished villages, living an oppressive life of famine and pestilence, this opportunity to be blessed with prodigious promises of indulgence, to break away from the cycle of poverty, bondage, and hopelessness came as a relief. No wonder therefore, that under the medieval spirit of gloomy religiosity whose last resort for the Christian soul was the Judgment Day, a new feverish wave of faith swept Europe by this extended promise of redemption (Nogueira, 2001).

The Crusaders of the upper classes, however, were of a very different nature and their motives strongly anchored on the military tradition of feudal aristocracy. They were warlords, zealots of Christianity and prone for raving, raiding, and the massacre of Moors considered as *infidels*. They were mostly second sons of European nobility who either professed the path of religious orders or that of the armies in venturous expeditions of war and conquest because they did not have the right to inherit; or knights in shining armors without titles and eager for the rewards, material rather than spiritual, which were promised to them by kings and Popes (Asbridge, 2010).

Since the Moors entered the Iberian Peninsula, a state of warfare immediately ensued between local Christian populations and the invaders. However, the war against the Moors didn't always show this ruthless face brought with the Crusaders and *Reconquista*. In fact, it was a common practice to enslave those defeated in war and as a result everybody could be found in a state of bondage depending on the whims of fortune. Thus, attempts to regain former Christian kingdoms (the Visigoths professed Christianity) were indeed part of a consistent warfare enterprise since 722 a decade after the Moors started establishing their Al-Andalus caliphates in the Iberian Peninsula (Mattoso, 1997).

Until Almohads' invasions (mid-twelfth century), Moorish settlements were peaceful and respectful of all other religious groups (Ibn-al-Quttiyya or Abenalcotia, sd.). For centuries Christians, Jews, and Muslims lived peacefully side-by-side to the great advantage of the former who learned from the Moorish culture about new agricultural practices, scientific developments in medicine and mathematics, and navigation techniques. These peoples commonly called Moors, who professed Muslim religion, and whose kingdoms prospered for almost 800 years in the Iberian Peninsula (711-1492) were indeed mostly African peoples, nomad Berbers, converted to Islam as Arab invasions extended from Egypt throughout north and west of the African continent. The term seems to derive from *Mauri* or people from Mauritania – North Africa – and was applied to North African Muslims in general. They brought with them Arab language and culture, and Muslim religion but they certainly and inevitably also brought their African cultures, knowledges, and traditions. And they left an immense cultural legacy throughout the Portuguese territory, evidence of which is still to be found in Lisbon today, for example in the name of one of the most famous and traditional neighborhoods, *Mouraria*: literally meaning the Moorish community where the Moors were relocated by the Portuguese king after the Reconquest of Lisbon in 1145. Actually, *Mouraria* is considered the birthplace of the traditional Portuguese song *Fado* and if we were to look for African influences left by the Moors in Portugal this musical genre should be undoubtedly one of the starting points of research.

The case is that in the Hispanic society, making and having slaves was a regular practice before the period of *Reconquista*, as elsewhere at that time: an immediate and expected outcome of warfare. Skin color and religious affiliation were not defining factors of enslavement; the hazards of the fight dictated the fate of men, and today's heroes could be found in captivity after a particular bloody battle (Serrão, 2004). However, there was a turning point in this concept and practice. And here the chronology of the historical facts of this period helps us realize that it took a long time before Christian Europe started a Holy War against the Moorish domination but it seems to have been Christian Europe religious reaction against Islam and the spirit of the Crusades that wheedled a whole difference rationale behind the practice of making people slaves. Under the religious zeal of the Roman Catholic Church the Moors were considered *infidels*, the enemy that in Hispania threatened the revival of Visigothic legitimacy (Nogueira, 2001); these dark-skinned *infidels* were portrayed as the embodiment of the devil and their enslavement justified precisely by associating them with everything negative. In fact, even to this day the word 'mouro' in Portuguese colloquial language is a derogatory term used by northerners frequently in a pejorative way to refer to the inhabitants of the southern parts of the country where Moors established the great majority of their communities (Lisbon, Alentejo, and the Algarve).

The Foundation of Portugal and the Creation of the United States

The history of the foundation of Portugal and the creation of the United States, although over 500 years apart, is marked by one common factor: the presence of enslaved Africans and the way in which political, social, religious, and cultural interactions developed between them and the Europeans; and how both countries profited from their experiences, their knowledge, and their work.

Unlike the United States, Portugal has never been a *slavocracy* since the consolidation of the first Iberian nation was not based on an economy supported by enslavement. Its economic viability and political sustainability relied heavily on agriculture by granting to military orders and municipalities large estates to administer and cultivate on condition that the occupiers should cultivate and/or colonize their lands (Melo, 2016). However, even if Portuguese economy was not supported by enslaved free labor, Portugal was a *society with slaves* that enormously profited both from their labor and their trade: in the 16th century Lisbon was the center of the African route of the European slave trade, a rotating platform of enslaved Africans, products of slave labor, and capital accumulation produced by the slave trade economy (Henriques, 2009).

Therefore, the conditions that propitiated the establishment of the United States as a slave economy are to be found in Portugal, and for that matter in Spain, whose path to the unification of kingdoms under the political power of a nation was always parallel to that of Portugal (Fitz, Portela e Novoa, 2014). They are to be found not only in the material acts of making slaves and trading slaves, the economic facilitator, but more significantly, on the moral and legal grounds provided by 16th century Portugal and Spain “justifiable” cause for the *practice and justice* of trade and enslavement of Africans. They had been given the legitimacy to conduct a ‘just war’ against the *infidels*, while the justifications that sustained the traffic and the violence behind dehumanizing practices endeavoring to deprive African peoples from their human dignity and ontological stance are to be found in a religious and political rationale germinating with racist thoughts as depicted by the heraldry of the times wherein examples can be found in the Arms of Bristol merchant and shipper William II Canynge (d.1474) at his tomb in St. Mary Redcliff Church as well as on the Coat of arms of Alcanadre, in La Rioja, Spain both depicting severed heads of slain Moors.

The History of Ideas

Slavery Before and After the 16th Century

Literature has shown that overtime conditions of servitude varied enormously throughout Europe as in other societies. It depended on the economic, political, and cultural conditions in which slavery was conducted; varied according to the moral will of individual slave owners but, in Europe, its dehumanizing viciousness was a direct consequence of the spirit of the Crusades and the Christian Holy War that would change and forever taint the pragmatic and balanced co-existence of different religious groups under the same administrative jurisdiction (Nogueira, 2001; Fonseca, 2010). There are, for instance, records of enslaved individuals in the Roman Empire who achieved relevant positions in the administration of the State; others who were granted high military ranks in the armies of Abbasid Caliphs. The Arabs valued strong men for military purposes and women were mostly used as concubines. Peoples thus enslaved could be spared physical punishment and some could even achieve a certain level of influence. They were enslaved, nonetheless. Characteristic of slavery was the production of unpaid labor. But even here there were exceptions. There was a class of slaves – wage slaves - who received partial wages paid to them allegedly as an incentive. They could hire themselves and usually used this money to pay off their freedom. In the Mediterranean cities but also in Brazil, they were called *Setmaneres* (setmanere=semana=week) who used to buy their freedom in a sort of installment system paying the master a certain fixed amount per day of their week wages (Silva, 1978; Fonseca, 2010). In 16th century Europe, the aristocracy and the reigning houses of Portugal and other Mediterranean nations, measured their status and wealth by the number of dark-skinned slaves and the exoticism of their places of origin as depicted in the paintings of the time. Examples can be found in the 16th century famous painting by Cristóvão de Morais of Dona Joana de Áustria, representing Portuguese king Don Sebastião's mother and her little African enslaved girl; it is also especially evident in the particular care with which Isabella D'Este, Marchesa of Mantua and one of the most notable women of the Italian Renaissance, was said to order and chose her female Negro slaves as the paradigm of the level of opulence and exoticism she deliberately wanted her court to convey to the world. In the Hispanic society, under the new ideology, dark-skin and for the most part enslaved Africans were subjected to the utmost severe treatment and physical punishments and regular duties of an enslaved person were always the dirtiest and the harshest tasks. In Lisbon, with poor sanitation, wastes of the city were carried to the river by the enslaved, a practice that would be found three centuries later in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where they gained the name of 'tigers' because the leaking acids resulting from chemical reactions taking place ran down their backs leaving white tiger-like strips marked on their skin (Silva, 1978).

As we discuss transformations on the conditions of enslavement brought about by *Reconquista* and the Crusades in Medieval Europe, it is also fundamental to understand that the structure of human bondage during Feudalism was not determined by hereditary.

In this specific case of serfdom, entire populations were hostage to the land in a state of *vassalage* determined by the feudal economic, social, and political structure; serfs, peasants and laborers, subject to residence upon their lord's estate, though not destitute of property or civil rights, were not allowed to leave the land without his lordship's consent. In some places, the lord of the estate even inherited their goods excluding the peasant's kindred (Voltaire, 1961); they toiled the soil in times of peace and joined the lord's armies in times of war all in name of the protection to their villages and properties (Epstein, 2009). Up to the early Middle Ages, historical conditions of religious and political struggle for power and domination of economic routes were intimately associated with military warfare as well as the organization and creation of feudal societies where skin color was not a determinant factor of enslavement. During the late 12th and early 13th century it was still possible to see in Western Europe a large number of white-skinned slaves in the aftermath of the fourth Crusade's ransack of Constantinople between 1202 and 1204 or as a consequence of warfare between western and eastern Christian groups. There is also evidence that the Roman Church used to traffic Orthodox Christians of Eastern Europe exactly as Orthodox Christians persecuted, enslaved, and sold Manichean heretics of Bulgaria similarly to the way in which citizens of Florence and Venice were treated as rebels and enslaved respectively by Pope Gregory XI and Clemens V (Fonseca, 2010). In fact, slavery represented a specific economic and social type of relationship between dominating and dominated groups and the purpose of creating revenue and wealth either as a result of the labor produced by the slaves – value in the chain of production - or revenue generated by demand and supply of slaves – exchange value – with great political implications. In the aftermath of wars, captives were expected to be ransomed by their families. Slavery was always an intrinsic part of the spoils of war, playing a major role in the economy, for direct profit and benefit of those engaged in warfare. Exchanging and trading slaves was sanctioned and controlled by law and the legal system that protected the interests of the most powerful parties with the complicity and to the advantage of the religious institutions (Mattoso, 1982; Melo, 2016).

There were specific conditions leading to enslavement and regulations. They included life enslavement for debt payment, captives of war, slaves who had been either kidnapped, bought, inherited, or by any other means made the property of a master. In any case two characteristics stood out: first, slavery was legal and regulated by laws; second, it represented total dependence of a master. With the religious and political dynamics created by the Crusades and the Holy War, a third and decisive condition became meanwhile necessary: the establishment of some sort of inferiority or negative characteristic that could be attributed to someone in order to justify his/her oppression. Hence, a whole set of justifications were created that could run from differences in religion or religious practice (sects, heretics, fundamentalists, etc.) to political infidelity (Fonseca, 2010). With the persecution and enslavement of the Moors as an extension of the religious warfare between Christians and Muslims, skin color and physical features entered the list of justifications and soon they became synonymous to inferiority in civilization, development, intelligence, and conditions of humanity (Miteva, 2012).

The condition of *inferiority* to legitimize the enslavement of the enemies of Christianity gained importance and momentum as an intense theological but also legal debate about soul and slavery was taking place in Cluny (France) and Santiago de Compostela (Iberian Peninsula) that together with Rome stood as the most important secular and religious centers of Christianity in Western Europe at the time (Miteva, 2012). Following a renewed interest in the classics and trying to reconnect classical ideas with the Christian doctrine in their humanistic terms, kings, thinkers, and clergymen of the European Renaissance revised and rebuilt their doctrines after classical Greek philosophers and centered their debates about the existence and *justification* of slavery on Plato and Aristotle, Sophists and Stoics.

Among these classical thinkers, Plato and Aristotle highlighted the superiority of the European (Hellenic) culture in comparison to which all foreigners were considered as barbarians, *i.e.*, were in an inferior stage of development that justified their enslavement. Aristotle also believed in a 'natural' disposition of some to be masters while others were born to be ruled. He affirmed that their enslavement was not only *necessary* but *just*; advocated that slavery was justified because there are those for whom slavery is not only adequate but just precisely because nature gives some necessary strength for heavy work while others possess a more erect posture appropriate to ruling positions (Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I). Reinforcing this same perspective, Socrates' dialogue with some friends in Plato's *Republic* explains that it is not convenient for the Greeks to enslave their own people; only barbarians should be enslaved (Plato, *Republic*, Book V). Sophists, on the other hand, claimed that such distinctions had nothing to do with 'natural' attributes but with social conventions. In this they were supported by philosophers of the Stoic School since, they argued, the freeman of today could find himself in the future in the position of being enslaved as a consequence of war. And Seneca insisted that every man should be regarded as a man in first place; slave only by the tricks of fate that might have placed him in a subservient position. For this reason, in a letter to young Lucilius (Letter 47 on the Treatment of Slaves) Seneca advised him to treat those in an inferior position exactly the same way he would like his superior to treat him (Gummere, 1915).

Christianity shared some of these Stoic/Sophist principles and extended the discussion about freedom and enslavement of the human being into moral and ethical grounds, moral behavior, and the necessary forgiveness of sin. In the Christian theological thought the only true condition of enslavement was immoral life and deviation from the Christian doctrine and practice. For Saint Augustine, who identified freedom with virtue and enslavement with vice, material slavery - even if it was the result of war - represented the *just* punishment inflicted by God to the sinners (Santo Agostinho, *A Cidade de Deus*, Liv XIX, cap XV, pp. 1923-34). Therefore, even if a clear distinction was made between spiritual and material enslavement the later was always justified by the former.

The question of slavery was also extensively contemplated in the great book of law or the *Siete Partidas* codices compiled and sponsored by Alfonso X of Castilla and described as a humanistic encyclopedia. It condensed the best of secular and religious thought and action in the Iberian Peninsula throughout the Middle Ages well into the Modern Epoch. Here “servitude is [defined as] the vilest and most despicable lot among men: because man who is the noblest and most free of all beings created by God, will be in servitude under the power of another man in such a way that this can do whatever he wishes exactly like he does to an object he owns (...) it is so despicable a lot that the man who falls into it loses not only the ability to dispose of what he possesses but he cannot even do anything except what his master demands” (Fonseca, 2010, p. 26) [original text: “Servidumbre es la mas vil et la mas despreciada cosa que entre los homes puede seer; porque el home, que es la mas noble et libre criatura entre todas las otras criaturas que Dios fizo, se torna por ella en poder de otri, de guisa que pueden facer dél lo que quisieren como de otro su haber [...]: et tan despreciada cosa es esta servidumbre que el que en ella cae non tab solamente pierde poder de non facer de lo suyo lo que quisiere, mas aun de su persona mesma non es podereoso sinon quantol manda su señor” (Afonso X, Las siete partidas, Tomo III, Partida IV, Tít. V, p. 30)].

Involved in these debates were also Portuguese monarchs and clergymen while, with the help of the Crusaders, Portugal was securing its independence after the capitulation of the Moorish kingdom of Silves in 1243 and the conquest of Faro in 1249 since, together with the kingdoms of Leon and Castilla, these were the strongest outposts of Christianity in the Iberian Peninsula.

In face of these 13th century theological debates and the apparent condemnation of slavery as also asserted in Alfonso X’s codices and the laws created therein to protect the rights of the slaves, it is necessary to understand why and how did Christian Europe move from the condemnation to the escalation of enslavement and slave trade and its inherent dehumanization in the 16th century; how did 16th century religious and secular thinkers change the focus of the debate about slavery from its humanistic tones to moral, social, and legal justifications of the inhuman enterprise that befell African and Amerindian peoples thereafter.

Charles Boxer, in his study *Relações Raciais no Império Colonial Português (1415-1825)*, emphasizes the fact that there is no way a race can systematically enslave members of another race for over three centuries without developing a conscious or unconscious sense of racial superiority (1977, pp. 58-59). Racial prejudice was indeed the changing factor. However, as mentioned previously, until Crusaders started a Holy War against the *infidels*, skin color was not the determinant factor of enslavement. Over time, three major factors contributed to a transformation in perspective regarding slavery, especially considering skin color and a condition of inferiority that justified enslavement and established the basis of racial prejudice with which Portugal entered the 16th century.

First, it was the spirit and purpose of the Crusades itself to carry a Holy War against the *infidels*, the enemies of Christianity and the chosen people of a true God, whose representation was becoming more and more white per opposition to dark-skinned Moors, attaching this notion of religious infidelity to an inferior human condition. The second factor has to be understood in the light of the conditions of the Portuguese society of the time: second sons of nobility, knights, and sons of the bourgeoisie needed titles, wealth, and a ‘noble’ occupation that could only be found in the arms or religious orders. The third factor was the establishment of religious orders such as the *Templars* and the *Order of Christ* in Portugal, military institutions of the Roman Catholic Church (Mattoso, 1982). In fact, these two social groups – aristocracy and religious orders – in the recently created and rapidly changing Portuguese society would be the mainstay of Portuguese expansion. Low aristocracy pursued military honors and titles or acquired relevant positions as pious members of religious orders that in Portugal, with the forceful support of the king, were quickly growing in wealth and power (Franco, 2012). Sons of wealthy merchants, whose fortunes could not be shunned by monarchs and popes, determinant as they were in the economic survival of states, would also take advantage of their influence to acquire titles and estate. One of the most paradigmatic figures of this confluence of interests is Prince Henry, the Navigator, 3rd son of the Portuguese king John I. By the age of 20 he managed to secure the king’s support for his first military campaign against Ceuta in North Africa that granted Portugal total control of the Mediterranean trading routes; its occupation in 1415 started the Portuguese expansionist drive into Africa under the well-known anti-Muslim zeal of the prince and laid foundations for the colonization of Africa. Five years later he was made the Head of the religious Order of Christ, another fact that attests and illustrates Prince Henry’s pivotal role in the so-called ‘African adventure’ while reinforcing the anti-*infidels* spirit of the enterprise.

The Role of the Religious Orders in Portugal

The order of the Templars, whose primary mission was military, officially approved and endorsed by the Roman Catholic Church, received money, land, businesses, and noble-born sons from families who were eager to help with the fight in the Holy Lands. Portugal was, in fact, one of the first places where the Templars emporium settled down. From the very beginning, the Portuguese nobility gave Templars farms and estates at a dangerously fast pace, contributing significantly to the enrichment of the order increasing their source of income, giving them land as well as fortifications located in strategic areas of the country therefore assigning them a strong role in the sustainability of *Reconquista*. Portuguese kings recognized the military power of the Templars and attributed to them first line of defense against possible attacks both of Muslims and Castilians (Mattoso, 1997; Melo, 2016). The Order of Christ was created by king Afonso IV in the aftermath of the extinction of the order of the Templars by Pope Clemens V’s bull *Vox in Excelso* (1312) in order to absorb all their assets and properties in the Portuguese territory allegedly owing to misappropriation of pilgrims’ moneys and heretic behavior of some of its members (Franco, 2012).

This transfer of assets and power explains the relevant role that the Order of Christ played in the Portuguese maritime expansion similarly to the one that Templars and the Crusaders had in the *Reconquista* and foundation of the Portuguese nation while Portuguese kings and nobility developed strong vassal bonds with the Roman Catholic Church (Mattoso, 1997; Melo, 2012).

Portuguese Expansionism and Slave Trade

With Prince Henry, the spirit of the Crusaders and *Reconquista* did not stop in the Algarve. Portuguese conquest of fortified cities in North Africa followed by several incursions down south on the western African coast increased the number of enslaved African peoples in Lisbon that would grow in intensity by mid 15th century and made “Lisbon mother of Negroes” in the words of an anonymous traveler according to Villalba y Esteban (Fonseca, 2010, p. 84). Great number of these enslaved peoples was the result of medieval trafficking networks established during the Holy War against the *infidels* on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea. Although wars between Christian groups and the Moors trying to settle in the Iberian Peninsula would result in the enslavement of either ones or the others (depending on who was the victorious party), as Christian monarchs embraced the Crusades and the spirit of the Holy War they soon outlawed the enslavement of Christians as attested by the famous Alfonso X’s *Siete Partidas* codices. This means that the proclaimed humanistic stance of the codices was not applied equally to every human being. The religious fervor and ideology that defined Christians as chosen people of a white God considered them more human than the Moors. Clearly, the difference in religious practice that under the Roman Catholic Church was elevated to the level of holy warfare would forever taint the former peaceful co-existence of all creeds in the Iberian Peninsula (Marr, 2012) and it soon escalated to an ideology of inferior versus superior human groups. With it, a whole set of negative anathemas against African Muslims, distinctively identified by their skin color, started circulating creating the basis for their ‘justified’ enslavement.

As the overseas expansion sponsored by the kings of Aragon and Castilla also set forth after the collapse of the last Moorish kingdom of Granada in a parallel of causes and motivations with the ones described for Portugal, both the demand in enslaved labor and their justifications increased. Some authors even consider Christopher Columbus’ arrival in the West Indies one of the primary causes for the escalation of the Portuguese slave trade in order to answer to the increasing demand in enslaved Africans as demonstrated by the requirement to purchase 4,000 enslaved Africans to the Antilles in 1517 authorized by Casa de Contratacao de Sevilha, the Spanish Hiring Authority (Fonseca, 2010). In fact, evidence of tremendous acts of inhumanity in the enslavement of the Amerindian populations, their ruthless and abusive exploitation by the Spanish colonists leading in many cases almost to extinction (Galeano, 1973) was severely condemned by the Dominican priest Bartolomé de las Casas who re-ignited the debates about slavery and its legitimacy in Portugal and Spain.

Known as the Valladolid debate of 1550-51, it represented a heated and extensive moral and theological argument about the existence of soul among the native peoples of West Indies and Brazil. Prompted by Pope Paul III's 1537 bull *Sublimis Deo*, Carlos V, king of Spain was forced to edit a "New Rule" in 1542 condemning the enslavement of the Indians, calling for the liberation of the enslaved ones and the restitution of their lands and properties (Fonseca, 2010). In Portugal, the Jesuit priest Manuel da Nóbrega, like las Casas, vehemently denounced the false pretexts and strategies used by the Portuguese colonists to enslave and exploit the native populations in Brazil, which also fuelled the debate about when was enslavement justified and under which conditions. For years, legal experts and theologians added arguments before a legal and moral conclusion could be achieved. Two of the greatest Portuguese thinkers, historians, and chroniclers of the time, Gomes Eanes de Zurara and Diogo Lopes Rebelo although moved by the tremendous suffering faces of the enslaved Africans just arriving on Portuguese shores, admitted however that "in certain cases it was Christian kings' right to make war: for instance, to defend and spread the Christian Faith, against infidels and barbarians who are blasphemous against Christ's name" (Fonseca, 2010, p. 37). In 1555, Fernão de Oliveira, a Dominican priest whose heterodox positions caused him to be the target of repeated Inquisition persecutions and imprisonments, wrote in his work *Arte da Guerra e do Mar* that a *just war* was the one that was led against heathens and all those who tried to prevent the expansion of Christianity. However, he could not sanction the idea that it was *just* to conduct war against those who had never heard of Christ before; or that it was *just* to enslave Africans by means of trickery and deceit with the false pretense of Christianizing them. He specifically could not understand that in the name of Christ the Portuguese would engage in the public and free enterprise of buying and selling free and peaceful human beings as if trading in beasts of burden. He reported with broken heart that it was exactly what they did: they led them as beasts, subjected and kept them at bay, chose and picked them with the same contempt and brutality with which cattle was handled in the stable (Fonseca, 2010). Another priest, Bartolomeu dos Remédios, on the contrary, advocated that it was totally justified to make the war against the *infidels* and the enemies of Christ; moreover, it was necessary and *just* the killing of the military leaders; the women, provided that they had contributed to the war against the spread of Christianity; and all those who might represent a future potential danger to Christianity (Sousa, 1975). Many other prominent voices joined the controversy and regardless of the fact that many would object that it was impossible to offer Christ in exchange for servitude, in 1570 also the Portuguese king Don Sebastião outlawed all forms of enslavement except as a result of *Just War*. The king justified it when it was caused by good intention; intended to recover what belonged to us and had been unjustly occupied (against Moors including North African fortified cities); and in reparation of serious offense, for instance, refusing the Christian faith (Mattoso, 1997; Melo, 2012). *Just War* was therefore defined, made legal against certain peoples, and their consequent enslavement morally and legally sanctioned and Portuguese monarchs, theologians, merchants, adventurers, and traders were appeased in their religious zeal and totally justified in their immoral and inhuman practices of capturing, enslaving, and trading in African peoples and exploiting the African continent.

Conclusion

Owing to all these intersecting factors Lisbon, indeed Portugal, entered the 16th century with the greatest Negro population in Europe and Lisbon was recognized as the major party in the African slave trade. An estimate dated from 1551 refers to 9,950 enslaved Africans living in Lisbon, which meant 9.95% of the urban population. This was due to the fact that the traffic in African peoples had long before been institutionalized and regulated under Portuguese king Manuel I. In order to secure total economic control of tariffs and taxes over the trade it was required by king's edit of 1512 that all slaves should be brought to Lisbon where they had to be registered prior to being sold to their final destinations. Lisbon in the 16th century was the rotating platform of all European slave trade; the revolving door through which all aspiring imperial powers would enter to engage in the exploitation of the African continent, their people, and resources at the expenses of the destabilization of their institutions and the undermining of their social, cultural, and spiritual values. With the Valladolid debate, religious and legal codices demanding the immediate liberation of the enslaved native peoples of the Americas, another factor was made evident. Amerindians and African peoples were not considered in the same category. While Bartolomé de las Casas advocated that natives of the American continent were submissive people, peaceful, virtuous, without guilt, and willing to worship the true God he himself proposed in his *Memorial de Remedios para as Indias* that the Spanish colonists be allowed to use 20 enslaved Africans for every freed native in their mining exploitations (Sousa, 1975; Poole, 1974; Merle, 1969). Clearly, there were economic and religious motives behind human trafficking of African peoples at a massive scale and the exploitation of enslaved peoples' free labor force all in the name of and justified by the attribution of some sort of condition of inferiority determined by origin in Africa and denoted by phenotype, therefore hereditary, and exacerbated by a religious fundamentalist perspective that deemed Africans not only as pagans but *infidels*, the moral defect from which they could not be saved and justified their enslavement.

This much was Modern Western European legacy to the world. In fact, European historians and thinkers like Karl Marx and Max Weber recognized the fundamental role played by Portuguese expansionism and the creation of new commerce routes and markets in the establishment of an economic and ideological project that historically defines European modernity. However, while capitalism and Enlightenment are praised by European intellectuals as the epitome of human progress, human development, and civilization, the power of reason and science, this is also a legacy of war and greed in a blend of religious fundamentalist indoctrination and economic exploitation, hand in hand with a fallacy of racial superiority that has so far dictated the path of the Western world. In a consummate contradiction, the modern European project of progress for the humanity translated into its most tragic and absolute disaster through the power of unreason of racist ideologies (Monteiro-Ferreira, 2014).

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