

Record: 1

Title: CHAPTER 4: PORTUGAL'S PEOPLE AND CULTURE.

Subject Terms: CULTURE; LIFESTYLES; PORTUGUESE; ETHNOLOGY -- Portugal; PORTUGUESE language; RELIGION & literature

Geographic Terms: PORTUGAL

Source: Portugal; 2005, p38(Click to view "Table of Contents") 8p, 4 color

Publisher: Mason Crest Publishers

ISBN: 1422200590

Abstract: This chapter provides information on the people and culture of Portugal. Majority of the population have their origins traced to the Celt-Iberians. Information is provided about the Portuguese language. An overview of Portugal's religion and literature is presented. (Copyright applies to all Abstracts)

Lexile: 770

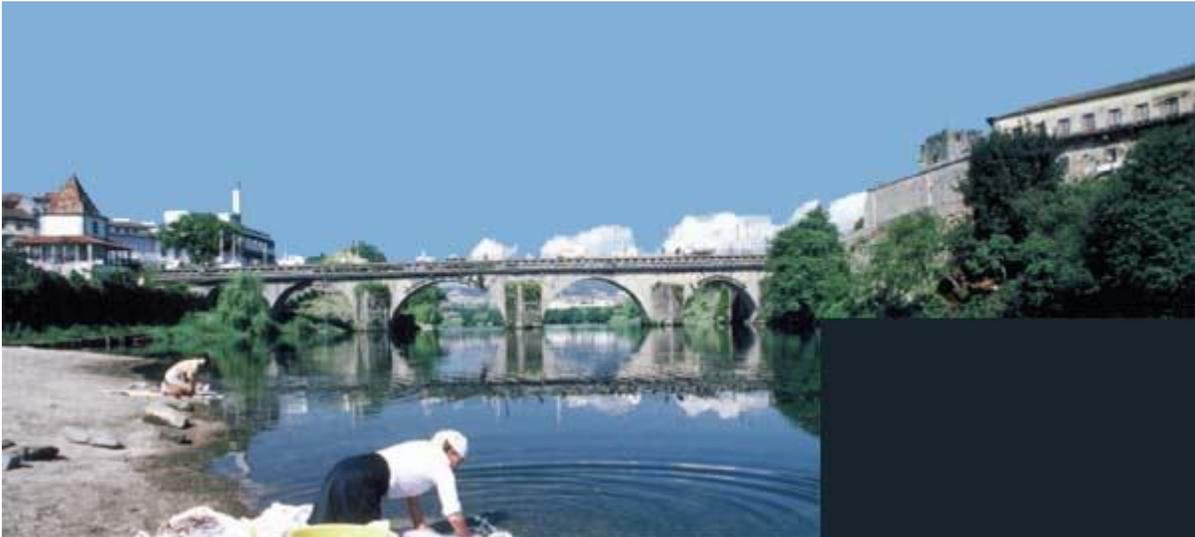
Full Text Word Count: 901

Accession Number: 19409533

Database: Book Collection: Nonfiction

CHAPTER 4: PORTUGAL'S PEOPLE AND CULTURE

Portugal tends to have a homogeneous population, although the cities are more ethnically diverse. Most Portuguese are descended from the Celt-Iberians; this group mixed with the Romans and Visigoths who later invaded the area. Only about 4 percent of the population today is made up of immigrants, most of whom are Ukrainians, Brazilians, Cape Verdeans, and Angolans. The lack of diversity means that most Portuguese people have strong ties, socially and historically, to each other; this has created a rich and interesting culture in Portugal.



Women doing laundry in the Cavado River

THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

Spoken by 200 million people, Portuguese is the third most spoken European language in the world, following English and Spanish. This is a visible reminder left by the Portuguese empire in its former colonies, in places like Brazil, Angola, Cape Verde, and East Timor.

In Portugal, the overwhelming majority of people speak Portuguese, which is the official language. Many people have been taught Spanish, English, and French, and can speak them fluently, as in many other European countries.

RELIGION

Most of Portugal's people are Roman Catholic. Almost 95 percent say they belong to this faith. Protestants make up the largest religious minority, followed by Muslims and Hindus. There is also a tiny number of Jews living in the country. Despite this lack of religious diversity, Portugal's constitution guarantees its citizens the right to the freedom of religion.

LITERATURE THROUGH THE AGES

Portugal's literature took off during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when troubadours, traveling musicians, and poets spread knowledge throughout the area. In the 1500s, poet Luís de Camões and dramatist Gil Vicente wrote and published several works. De Camões, who wrote the epic *The Lusiad*, is celebrated as a national cultural hero today.



Interior of one of Portugal's many churches



Typical Portuguese fare

Portugal boasts several modern-day writers who have achieved fame. Modern literature includes several poets, including Frenando Pessoa, who wrote during the early 1900s, and writer José Saramago, who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1998.

THE ARTS: MUSIC AND ARCHITECTURE

Portugal lays claim to the fado, a local form of music unique to the country and often described as sad and melancholy. The songs, of which there are thousands, are said to have come from the music of sailors during the sixteenth century, African slave songs, and Arabic music. Folk dancing sometimes accompanies these fados.

Other types of music are popular as well. Hip Hop Tuga, a type of music that is a mix of pop, African music, and reggae, is listened to by the younger generation.

The architecture that can be found in Portugal's cities, as well as its countryside, is often stunning. The Romans, the Moors, and today's modernism all influenced the country's buildings. Portugal is also home to one of the best schools for architecture in the world, the Escola do Porto.

SPORTS

As in other European countries, the most popular sport in Portugal is soccer (or football, as it's known in Europe). The Portuguese love to play as much as watch. Portugal has excellent teams, ranked eighth in the world in 2004, and the city of Porto's team has won several world cup titles.

Portugal also has a type of national martial arts, called Jogo do Pau, or Portuguese stick combat, since it involves wooden sticks as weapons. The sport originated during medieval times and was used as a style of dueling between young men fighting over a woman. Today, it is a way to celebrate the Portuguese national heritage.

PORTUGUESE CUISINE

The country's close proximity to the sea means that fish and shellfish are a major part of the Portuguese diet. Cod is one of the most widely used fish and is often made into codfish cakes or grilled. Popular foods include grilled sardines (sardinhas assadas) and tuna steak (bife de atum). Menus also contain other food grown on Portuguese land, especially potatoes. Perhaps one of the foods most identified with Portugal's cuisine is a custard tart known as a pastéis de nata.

Portuguese wines (vinhos) are world famous and are enjoyed with meals. Strong coffee is also popular, particularly with dessert.



Child repairing a net

EDUCATION

Education in Portugal has improved over the past few years, which will hopefully lead to an improvement in the economy when there are more educated workers. Right now, the country has a relatively high illiteracy rate.

The current system is divided into pré-escolar, which is attended by children younger than six; the ensino básico, which children go to for nine years; ensino secundário, a three-year level; and ensino superior, made up of universities and polytechnic schools. School is free and compulsory for nine years, but more and more people are attending higher-level schools.

Education is hoped to bring about changes in jobs, health care, housing, and other social problems. Being a part of the EU also makes these changes real possibilities for the future.

QUICK FACTS: THE PEOPLE OF PORTUGAL

Population: 10,566,212

Age structure:

- **0-14 years:** 16.6%

- **15-64 years:** 66.3%
- **65 years and over:** 17.1%

Population growth rate: 0.39%

Birth rate: 10.82 births/1,000 population

Death rate: 10.43 deaths/1,000 population

Migration rate: 3.49 migrant(s)/1,000 population

Infant mortality rate: 5.05 deaths/1,000 live births

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: 77.53 years

male: 74.25 years

female: 81.03 years

Total fertility rate: 1.47 children born/woman

Religions: Roman Catholic 94%, Protestant (1995)

Languages: Portuguese (official), Mirandese (not official but locally used)

Literacy: total population: 93.3%

Note: All figures are from 2005 unless otherwise noted. Source: www.cia.gov, 2005.

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Source: Portugal