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Lagos in The Golden Age

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charitable institution maintained a hospital which cared not only for citizens but also injured or ill seamen from foreign ships. The "pestilence", probably malaria, was prevalent, and to combat it, the marshes east of the town, beyond the present-day railway station, were drained and converted into market gardens. The dug ditches still exist, but the gardens have long since departed for more fertile soil.

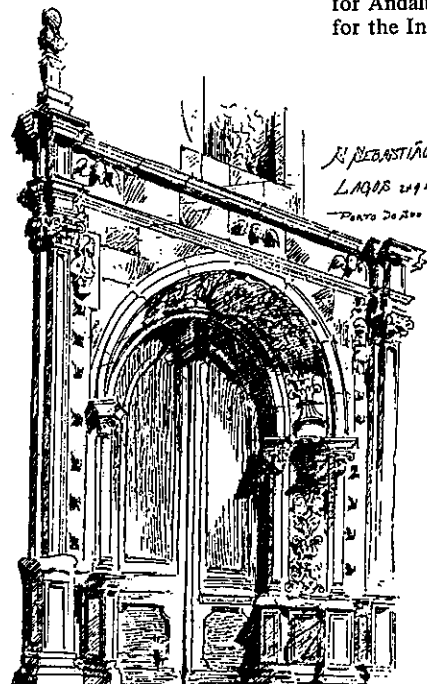
The economic history of the time and the region has been ably documented by Joaquim Romero Magalhães in *Algarve Económico Durante O Século XVI*, published in Lisbon in 1970. Commercial life was dominated by the sea, and the Algarvian's vision was directed southward. The Kingdom of the Algarve saw itself as both distinct and separate from Portugal, although it tolerated, always uneasily, the imposts of the Royal Treasury and the frequent demands for men and ships. Lagos was the home port of more than 400 ships of seventy tons or over, with the largest being about 200 tons. The trade routes of the Lagos ships were mainly to Andalusia and into the Mediterranean, across to North Africa and down the African coast as far as the mouth of the Congo, to Madeira, the Canaries, the Azores and across to the West Indies. At this time they took little part in the Brazil trade. Trade with Northern Europe was conducted by foreign ships or ones from Northern Portugal.

No record exists of the size of the fishing fleet, but it must have been extensive in view of the quantity of fish exported and the taxes that were paid. In the first half of the century tuna was the chief harvest of the sea. Salted tuna, known as *tonnina*, was shipped in great quantities to the Mediterranean countries, Italy and Spain being the major buyers. In mid-century the course followed by the tuna fish began to change, and as a con-

sequence the sardine fishery was developed. In search of the sardine the Lagos fishermen sailed as far south as Mazagan (the present-day El Jadida) on the African coast. The "first sale" of fresh fish was heavily taxed; fish had to be sold at designated depots, and the fishermen were paid for 6 only out of every 10 delivered. There were frequent vehement protests against the heavy tribute levied and considerable evasion of the tax. The system has endured in the present *lota* with its more modest tax of 13 per cent which, one is told, some still find too burdensome.

The constant need in the Algarve to purchase grain brought about a commercial invasion from Northern Europe. Exports had to be developed to pay for the wanted cereals. Not only fish but wine, olive oil, figs, vinegar, beeswax, lime, and esparto grass products (straw hats are specifically mentioned) were shipped out of Lagos. The port was also of importance in the lucrative slave trade. Over a five-year period 740 slaves were sold in the Lagos market, but most passing through Lagos went on to other countries. They were brought up from Cape Verde, São Tomé, and Guinea and many were sold in San Domingo and Puerto Rico, the slave ships bringing back cargoes of sugar. Into Lagos from Northern Europe came cloth and metals as well as grain, from Spain iron, tar from the Canaries. The fish trade created a heavy demand for salt. Some was obtained locally from Alvor, and some was brought by sea from Setubal and from Castro Marim. In 1552 a Lagos mariner, Francisco Cabeza, bringing salt from Setubal, had his boat seized by French corsairs, his cargo dumped and replaced with wine. It is not known whether the wine was for the crew's consumption or if it eventually reached some northern table as a dubious claret!

Shipbuilding played an important part in the commercial life of Lagos. The local yards built ships for Andalusia, for the Mahgreb, for the Indian trade. In 1546 Lagos



The Church of San Sebastião, with its lateral renaissance doors.

Nowadays the building is frequently used for concerts and recitals; last month the Gulbenkian Orchestra performed there. In the Golden Age, Lagos had many more churches than today; even the few Italian-speaking inhabitants engaged in the salted fish trade had their own place of worship.