THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF THE ATLANTIC IDENTITY OF THE ISLANDS OF MACARONESIA

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ABSTRACT: Every individual who has not been born on an island is a foreigner, an intruder. Consequently, the construction of human island identity involves a contrast with the other, the non-islander. The objective of this study is to ascertain the historical origin of the identity of the Macaronesian islander. The island areas that are being addressed are conditioned by their geographical location in relation to their surrounding territories. That is, their proximity to Africa, their link to America and their dependence on Europe. In short, social, economic and cultural development is determined by the related dynamic ocean environment, i.e. the Atlantic. This research analyses the fluid contacts, complementarity and historical dependencies between the Macaronesian islands that promoted not only a feeling of belonging to supranational Iberian monarchies, but also a sense of belonging to the same region formed by a Portuguese and Spanish population of extra-peninsular origin with its nexus being its insularity.

KEYWORDS: islandness, narratives, relationality

Historical theory and Atlantic construction

In recent years, an analytical perspective based on the principle of the globality of historical processes has spread within the historiographic field. This approach has largely subsumed Atlantic History, in particular studies of the Modern Age (between the 15th and 18th centuries), within the construction of the idea of globalisation which is associated with this period[1]. Global history, according to its advocates, allows us to understand the Hispanic Monarchy – from a perspective focused on comparisons and syntheses– in relation to its global character (Valladares, 2016, p. 23). Consequently, globalisation is not regarded as a recent process but rather one underlying the beginning of the Atlantic expansion of the 15th century[2]. For this approach and, therefore, the

[1] "To pretend that Atlantic history offers better possibilities than global history in understanding the Modern Age is a noble attempt to avoid the former historiography being subsumed within the latter" (Valladares, 2016: 40).

[2] "Far from being "eurocentrist", the result of this reorientation of history towards a global history is a new social theory on the Atlantic World. This theory highlights the empirical evidence demonstrating that globalization is not a recent phenomenon – although this belief was previously accepted as fact, and still is by some scholars – but an underlying globalization process dating as far back as the 15th century, if not earlier" (Crespo Solana, 2014: 1).

concept of global history, to be credible in this context, three conditions are necessary: connection, dependence and mixing between areas. As a result it is only from the Modern Age that we can speak of a true cosmopolitanism in the region. The embodiment of this idea of universality is associated with the exploration of the world and the awareness of the connection of all its parts (Valladares, 2016, p. 75). This perspective of global analysis therefore encompasses the areas in which imperial history and even Atlantic history have focused their studies.

The key to global history, Valladares points out, would be to Asianise and Africanise globalist discourse in the field of modern history, which is why modernists have progressively incorporated the Asia–Pacific dimension to explain the globalisation of the Hispanic monarchy (Valladares, 2016, p. 74). The undertaking of a global history would allow us to solve old problems – and discover new ones – through the analysis of a worldwide Empire that was formed during the period of the Iberian Union (1580-1640). In fact, the application of this method of globalist analysis in relation to our field of study must be taken with caution. We have to be aware that the Atlantic islands are an immovable, intra–Atlantic object that cannot be subtracted to be categorised outside the geographical context in which they are located. These archipelagos are objects of analysis located within the Atlantic and its history. In this regard, Rodrigues argues for the communion between the islands and the spaces which surround them and, accordingly, his analysis also leads to making them part of such general processes. That is to say:

> *no island is isolated, it is always part of a much larger whole and, in this context, also part of 'global' history, with use of the 'local' perhaps showing itself to be enlightening* (Rodrigues, 2012, p. 21).

For this study, I have followed the method of analysing the Atlantic world proposed by David Armitage. To summarise, this researcher proposes three models of establishing history in relation to the Atlantic: *circumatlantic* – as a history of movements, *transatlantic* – as a history of comparisons, and *cisatlantic* – as local history in relation to its surroundings.

Circumatlantic history concerns processes of exchange, circulation and transmission. From this perspective, the coastal regions are included in the analysis as active parts of Atlantic dynamics, extending beyond the national point of view. This type of history is circumatlantic insofar as it encompasses the contour of the Atlantic. In addition, it provides a mobile and relational perspective by emphasising the analysis of the human and commercial flows which have taken place within this space. *Transatlantic* history is the history of the Atlantic world told through the use of comparisons. This approach focuses on the oceanic coastline and assumes the existence of natibons and states as well as societies and economic groups. Consequently, transatlantic history connects political entities – nations, states and regions – using the comparative method and brings these histories together in one or more Atlantic systems (Armitage, 2004, p. 18). For its part, *cisatlantic* history analyses specific places or subjects within the Atlantic and tries to define their singularity based on the interaction between the specific nature of what is local and the Atlantic world in which it is encapsulated. It is precisely this model of Atlantic History that I have used in this study. Cisatlantic history takes advantage of the specific aspects of a circumscribed space to demolish artificial border constructions, which are built on the opposition of elements. At this level, we can study those places which had more intense relations with the Atlantic environment and, therefore, significant transformations are shown as a result of these close ties. In this study,

cisatlantic history allows us to identify the changes which occurred in Macaronesia as a consequence of the political union of the Iberian kingdoms, as well as the defining elements of Portuguese interventionism in this Atlantic area of Castilian sovereignty.

This form of making history, including local awareness in the interpretation of larger dynamics, solves the doubts raised by John Elliott (2001) about the limited contributions of local studies to more global histories. The inability of microhistories to maintain a dialogue with other historical processes, as far as this historian was concerned, prevented a process of comparison between spaces and, therefore, the establishing of an Atlantic History[3]. However, this analysis of the more particular has turned out to be essential in collating different histories linked by Atlantic dynamics. Nevertheless, not every region participated in this global dynamic in the same way. The establishing of networks regarding a certain territory depends on the synergies between spaces, with these – to a greater or lesser extent – being asymmetric and unequal (Crespo Solana, 2014, p.3). This type of history requires a comparative exercise to enable the connection of a multiplicity of relationships while still paying attention to the characteristics and singularities of each scenario. In short, Cañizares-Esguerra and Seeman (2018, p. 25) point out that, "the Atlantic was a co-creation of many peoples who mingled and fought with one another".

Linked to my object of analysis, and associated with cisatlantic history, is the recent commitment on the part of Atlantic historiography to describe general processes from the study of globally connected bounded spaces. From this perspective, in line with Lefebvre, human relations are necessary for the geographical and social construction of history. These bonds have to be analysed according to movements within the space and the mechanics arising from social networks. This set of social ties is defined as "an informal association of a group of people based on a relationship of trust and a continuous exchange of services or favours within a reciprocal system" (Crespo Solana, 2014, p.6). The contributions of social studies to Atlantic History are not new, with Verlinden (1992) having already shown the will to build a more integrated history or a history of the 'Atlantic civilization'. However, this story involves deciphering the intrinsic functioning of this space and this requires knowing the people who act within this system of networks which makes up the Atlantic. These relationships are based on trust, exchange and reciprocity between members of the same network. Therefore, these groups and the networks in which they participate are continually being reconstructed. In the case of the communities active in the Atlantic, such as the merchants of the *Ancient Régime*, the space in which they acted was created and destroyed altering political borders – even cultural and religious ones – to seek success in the globalised world which was presented to them in the Modern Age. Precisely, as Ueda (2018, p. 171) point out, "the Canaries, Azores, Madeiras, and eastern West Indies were corridors through which institutions, economic patterns, and people of the Mediterranean region began to pass into the Atlantic basin".

The Atlantic identity of the Macaronesian islands

It is understood that the Atlantic is a historical construction, at the level of other concepts such as 'nation' or 'state'. We could establish spatial limits in this vast ocean to

[3] "I fear that we are in danger of losing the big picture which has been replaced by an infinity of tiny images" (Elliott, 2001: 21).

which we refer by limiting its borders to the coastline of three continents. In addition, chronologically, this space was opened following the first transoceanic voyage made by Columbus. However, the delimitation of the Atlantic as an object of historical analysis is much more complex since perception of this space – depending on the group of people involved – has altered over the centuries. Without going into the representation of this ocean by African or American communities, the westernisation of the Atlantic – that is, the construction of an inland sea designed by Europeans – has been a long and constant process. As Braudel points out:

> *It was the case that in the 16th century the ocean did not yet have complete autonomy. Human beings were just beginning to get an idea of it and construct an identity for it* (Braudel, 1976, p. 294).

The Middle Ages had inherited from classical antiquity a series of values and ideas about this vast space which were somewhat confusing and contradictory, far from any empirical interpretation. This appreciation was due, to a large extent, to its marginal situation in relation to the world known to the Europeans (Aznar Vallejo, 2007, p. 175). These preconceptions were altered and reconfigured as the navigators entered it[4]. The Beyond the Pillars of Hercules, the confines of the known world, grew farther and farther as expeditions advanced south, with the frontier being located at each new land discovered. (Aznar Vallejo, 2007, p. 179).

This first period of timid forays into an Atlantic, within an unknown silhouette, was what Verlinden, from his "civilizing" perspective, called "protocolonialism" (Verlinden, 1992, p. 649). This was the phase prior to the European occupation of the Atlantic, characterised by expeditions over this sea without managing to conquer any territory, except for the ephemeral occupation of a certain site. Paradoxically, these first incursions were carried out by non–Iberian sailors, such as the Normans or Genoese. For Verlinden, the latter – the Genoese – were precisely the heirs to the classical tradition of colonisation of the Mediterranean and whose model they would export to the first settlements in the non–European Atlantic (Verlinden, 1953, p. 385). Beyond this initial phase of the European occupation of the Atlantic, I am interested to analyse the structure of the Iberian Atlantic that started to be configured with the treaties between the Iberian kingdoms at the end of the 16th century concerning the division of the world to be conquered. This and which was consolidated for the circumatlantic territories with the *Mare Clausum* statement during the period of the Philipps. In this Iberian Atlantic, although ruled by a single voice and inaccessible to outsiders, solid and indivisible, various Atlantics or subsystems coexisted.

Braudel has already pointed out the existence of various models of interpretation of the Atlantic according to the ties to this space of each territory or kingdom. Thus, he contrasted the Spanish Atlantic with the Portuguese based on the relationship of each of these kingdoms with the arrangement of their overseas colonial territories, giving special consideration to geographic constraints:

> *The Atlantic of the Spanish is an ellipse in which Seville, the Canaries, the Antilles and the Azores mark the route, being both ports of arrival and their*

[4] "We cannot tell at what early era the men of the eastern Mediterranean first ventured through the Strait of Gibraltar out on the open ocean, nor even when they first allowed their fancies free rein to follow the same path and picture islands in the great western mystery" (Babcock, 1922: 1).

> *driving forces. The Atlantic of the Portuguese is that immense triangle of the central and southern ocean: the first side goes from Lisbon to Brazil; the second, from Brazil to the Cape of Good Hope; the third is that line that sailboats follow on their return trip from the Indies, from Santa Helena along the African coast* (Braudel, 1976, p. 295).

Mauro also warned about the particularities of the Portuguese Atlantic model. This historian, in a subtle comparison, understood that the "Portuguese colonial Empire in the 17th century was also a thalassocracy, like the Athenian Empire of the 5th century" (Mauro, 1983, p. 156). Therefore, although there were similarities and parallels between models of occupancy of the circumatlantic space, and even despite juxtaposed and synchronous influences and types, neither the Portuguese nor the Spanish colonial examples – least of all the British one – followed a homogeneous model for historical development in the Atlantic.

As Correia & Silva points out, if during the first incursions into the Atlantic it was those European conflicts which were projected onto this space, later, it was the Atlantic dynamics which ended up being Europeanised (Correia & Silva, 1995, p. 15). This *Mare Clausum* (or Iberian Atlantic), jealously distributed between the Castilians and the Portuguese, became the reflection of European tensions and, on occasions, the cause of these disturbances. The Atlantic is *de facto* an immense ocean unreachable by distant royal authority. The impossibility of bringing the effective power of the Iberian monarchies to such a faraway, distant and varied territory; the insufficiency of the imperial administration to pragmatically extend and enforce itself[5]; and the inability to understand and transmit actual common perceptions between central Europe and the circumatlantic periphery are the main reasons why the Atlantic quickly ceased to be an exclusively Iberian domain, beyond theoretical and legislative design, and became a prime space for the interests of other European kingdoms[6].

The the effect of the United Provinces on the Iberian overseas territory went beyond a mere act of war like the looting of the city of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria by Pieter van der Does in 1599. They responded to the needs of an economic model which sought to expand a thriving mercantile economy which was constrained by the Portuguese–Spanish monopoly. To increase its trade and encourage economic activity, the Dutch navy occupied the island of Bezeguiche, in Dakar, Senegal. It took various possessions on the African coast and in the Gulf of Guinea and then conquered Loango (around the mouth of the Congo), Bahía Mina in Brazil, as well as Guyana, Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire in the Caribbean. These intrusions forced a reinterpretation of the area over the ashes of the Iberian monopoly (Correia & Silva, 1995, p. 15). However, this interference was not exclusive to the Atlantic. The Dutch navy were interested in this area when they could obtain an economic benefit by intervening in the monopoly of the Hispanic Monarchy.

[5] "In these kind of relationships between central and local powers, the latter have an area of immunity and self-government attributed to them, so that access to central power by the community is only possible through the mediation of agents who, being on the one hand the heads of local communities, on the other, they ensure their representation in the larger political sphere where they are inserted. The type of legitimacy of these agents is their local prestige (honor), usually based on economic and social supremacy (sanior pars)" (Hespanha, 1984:71).

[6] "The new situation (of the Iberian Union) caused changes in terms of the political geography of the Atlantic area, causing it to be the main stage for conflicts between the European powers" (Vieira, 2001: 325).

Hence the Dutch did not limit themselves to incursions in the Atlantic area, but also sought to occupy strategic locations to develop their commercial network in the Iberian Pacific.

The dream of an Iberian Atlantic had died during the 17th century despite all legal attempts and preventive measures. By the time the Hispanic Monarchy realised how untamed this ocean was, it had already been divided into multiple areas of influence and was fundamentally marked by instability and conflict. The alterations in the spatial domain had repercussions on a society and an economy as open and dependent on the Atlantic circuits as the insular society and economy of the Macaronesian archipelagos were. Viera states that:

> *The period between the end of the sixteenth century and the first half of the following century was the decisive moment for the History of the islands and of the Atlantic* (Vieira, 2001, p.309).

Indeed, the Iberian archipelagos of Macaronesia (Figure 1) were constrained by the surrounding environment and by the relational dynamics around and involving them. They were intra–Atlantic areas characterised both by their evident geographical location and by their ties to and dependence on the flows extending around them. The Atlantic thus became the nexus connecting insular life with the outside transoceanic world and, in the same way, the islands were interior elements linking circumatlantic relations. However, until very recently, the islands had not formed part of the history of the Atlantic as pivotal backbone elements since, as we have seen, the history of this ocean had been carried out based on the internationality of the continents which had sought to construct national or, at best, imperial histories[7].

For Iberian historiography, Horst Pietschmann pointed out that the Atlantic has been one more element of its own history, which has prevented this going beyond the limits of national parameters to build a relational history between three continents which would, finally, provide for a real evolution in the conception of Atlantic History[8]. The dominant historiographical model in Spain and Portugal followed the French school, transposing the Braudelian model from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Until the second half of the 20th century, it was rare for the Spanish historian who studied the Portuguese empire and vice versa. We can find exceptions, such as the short period of the Iberian Union, but this was always dealt with from a national perspective. What Iberian historians used to produce were works which praised the initial stage of conquest and exploration to satisfy national, even nationalist, demands (Valladares Ramírez, 2006, p.328).

[7] Pietschmann, in his introduction to the conclusions of the Conference on the 'Atlantic system', pointed out the importance of the islands for the Iberian empires as part of the transatlantic connections: "First it seems important, that both powers had acquired and settled all the Atlantic archipelagos situated comparatively close to Europe and Africa very early (…). They became important intermediaries in the process of expansion and transatlantic shipping" (Pietschmann, 2002, p 15).

[8] In addition, he pointed out that the concept of 'Atlantic' was rapidly incorporated into Iberian historiography as a descriptive basis for the processes of expansion: "The 'Atlantic' in the Iberian history of expansion was accepted very early and, incidentally, switched directly from a historiography marked by the concept of 'discover and conquest' to an 'Atlantic phase' and if it at all took up the concepts linked to 'expansion' only occasionally and late" (Pietschmann, 2002, p. 15).

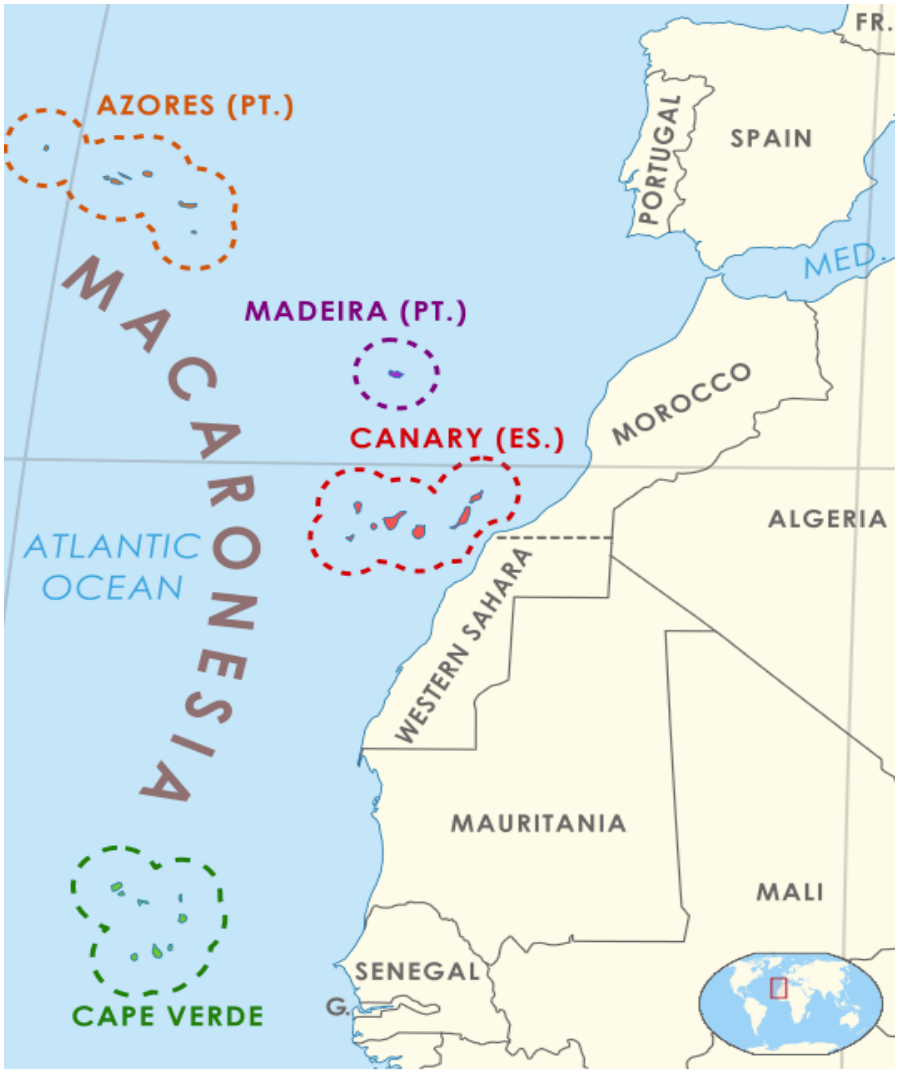

Figure 1 – The Macaronesian archipelagos and their relation to Iberia and West Africa (Wikimedia Commons, 2022).

The Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic historiographies, despite sharing an interest in exalting the process of Iberian overseas expansion, consisted of two divergent theoretical models through which they interpreted their own Atlantic History. These differences stemmed specifically from the attitude of the kingdoms of Castile and Portugal towards the Atlantic area and the organisation of their colonial territories, giving rise to two interpretations of the history of empires as synonyms for the construction of the history of the Atlantic. In the case of Spanish historiography, the history of America has traditionally been assimilated with the history of the Spanish Empire, and this was even disguised as Atlantic history. In relation to the islands, Americanist studies have understood insular spaces as the exception to the Sevillian monopoly, as an outlier to the

rule, the importance of which lay in their position as stopovers towards the Indies and, therefore, historiographically dependent on the commercial history of America[9]. Recently, Spanish historiography has begun to build a history of the Atlantic that goes beyond this bilateral Seville–America approach, contributing new elements to the analysis that specify an overall vision reaching beyond the Atlantic framework itself. This multi–continental approach – as in the study of the Atlantic/Pacific subsystem – considers the insular structure within the Hispanic Monarchy as the backbone of the Empire networks in the Atlantic[10].

For its part, bodies of work on the Portuguese Empire have proliferated in Portuguese historiography, due to the particularities of its own history overseas with possessions scattered across both America as well as in Africa and Asia. Without actually forming its own Portuguese history in the Atlantic, this global vision of the Empire has allowed Portuguese historians to recount and counterpose the colonial structures within the Atlantic area beyond the Portuguese domains themselves, methodologically enabling a better appreciation of the Atlantic area and the term 'Atlantic' itself. In this sense, one should not be surprised that one of the main works on the Portuguese Empire, the *Nova História da expansão portuguesa: A colonização atlántica* (Serrão & Marque, Eds., 2005) dedicates one of its introductory chapters to the Canary Islands (Viera, 2005). The archipelago is dealt with as one more object of analysis within a discourse evoking a much broader and cosmopolitan Portuguese Atlantic. Furthermore, Portuguese insular historiography has systematically dealt with the history of the Portuguese islands, including the Canaries, as an integral part of its own insular universe, justified by the fact that complementary ties had been established that cemented the social construction of Macaronesia practically since the European colonisation of these archipelagos[11].

Despite being pioneers in Atlantic studies in terms of the indispensable connection of their object of study to the space that surrounds them, the authors of these island historiographies – especially those of the Canaries – have complained about the omission of their works from national histories and that they have hardly been considered in works that include the analysis of broader and more complex processes. Insular historiography has even been branded as localist, since its object of analysis is seen as a simple anecdote on the periphery of the monarchy and the court and, therefore, of the centre of administration, power and history. That said, these arguments should at the least be more nuanced. Although it is true that the islands have had a secondary role in Spanish historiography, only until recently has Canarian historiography had a real interest in extending its research to analyse wider–ranging dynamics (Pérez, 2002, p. 115).

I have mentioned previously how, since Braudel's pioneering transnational work, the Atlantic islands have played a prominent role in a historical explanation as border areas with the continental coastline, thereby becoming essential sites for European expansion.

[9] There are two classics in this regard: Morales Padrón, F (1955) and de Ayala, J (1977).

[10] Along with the Canary Islands and those of the Caribbean, Castile possessed the the Philippine archipelago. The insular spaces became essential locations for the organisation of stopovers for both the Manila galleon and the Indies fleet and, therefore, for communication for the different areas of the Monarchy. See, for example, Martínez Shaw and Mola (2014).

[11] "The insular world created by the Portuguese in the vast ocean shows numerous specific aspects, but also considerable affiliation with neighboring continental spaces, so it cannot be separated from this context (…) the four archipelagos defined by their twenty-four islands actively participated in the process of the Portuguese affirming themselves in the western Atlantic" (Vieira, 1992: 16).

Hence, this space occupied by the islands is called the 'Atlantic Mediterranean'. Other historians, such as Pierre Chaunu (1955-1960), have also highlighted the importance of the islands as ports-of-call in commercial relations between Castile and the other Castilian territories in America. In the same way, Mauro (1983) has emphasised the occupation of the islands for the development of the Portuguese Atlantic[12]. However, these successor works in the Braudelian school still maintained a certain geographical determinism in the application of their results. The islands were still considered fragile spaces and dependent on the outside for their subsistence, as well as vulnerable to climatic conditions[13]. However, the history of the islands of Macaronesia has always been linked to Atlantic history due to their condition of being large rocks inserted in the ocean and dependent on the environment that surrounds them. It was not by chance that one of the main manifestos on Atlantic history was presented in the Canary Islands by the historian John H. Elliott in 2000 during the celebration of the 14th Colloquium of Canarian–American history. Using four seemingly independent intersecting events – the discovery of Brazil, the birth of Carlos V, the establishment of the Bourbon dynasty in Spain and the birth of Juan de Palafox – he argues for the existence of a common history, with its nexus being the Atlantic. In short, relationships and comparisons are utilised as an analytical method to counteract the fragmentation of historical knowledge in favour of an Atlantic perspective.

At the same time as continental western historiography was shaping the Atlantic and laying the foundations for an Atlantic history, other historians on the islands were also dedicated to constructing the image of the Atlantic, but as a singularity. This Atlantic history was no longer designed based on the analysis of the relations between metropolis and empire, but rather based on a specific space – that of the islands – with their closest environment.

The Atlanticity of the islands

In the texts of the island chroniclers we can find historiographical antecedents that already pointed to the particular relationship the islands had with the Atlantic as an element surrounding them and their history. In the dedication to Carlos III in the work *Noticias de la Historia General de las Islas Canarias* ('News of the General History of the Canary Islands') by José de Viera & Clavijo, the Canary archipelago is presented as the geographical and strategic centre of the Atlantic and, therefore, for the monarchy and the control of its empire p

> *From the bosom of the Atlantic Sea and in the middle of those happy Islands that serve as the prime meridian and as a bridge to the communication*

[12] "The islands thus play an essential role. Following the Treaty of Tordesilhas, they were all Portuguese, except for the Canaries and Fernando Pó, and these were also almost Portuguese" (Mauro, 1983: 150).

[13] Continuing with Mauro, in his work he emphasises that the geomorphological explanations of the islands would determine their historical evolution. It is enough to point out the following description: "In the first place their volcanic origin. They are the culminating points of the great underwater features that divide the Ocean. Given its compact, trapezoidal or pyramidal shape for the sailor that thus overlooks the horizon, they sometimes stretch out as true defensive walls (São Jorge island in the Azores), forming the appearance of an oscillating block (Corvo), or surmounted by a peak , such as Tenerife (Pico, in the Azores, Ano Bom)" (Mauro, 1983: 150).

> *between the two worlds subject to the glorious empire of the best of Kings* (Viera & Clavijo, 1950, p.3).

Following this concern about the impression left by the Atlantic on the islands, future generations of island historians continued to be concerned with analysing how the islands were determined by the exogenous Atlantic dynamics that had repercussions both for the inclusion of their local economies in the major commercial circuits and in the configuration of a frontier society and the construction of a European culture on an island scale. Morales Padrón (1955), Béthencourt Massieu (1956) and Morales Lezcano (1970) are just some of the pioneering Canarian historians who methodologically generalised from their local analysis to integrate their insular studies within broader processes. We still cannot speak of Atlantic history since the purpose of these works was to explain the relationships between two spaces without paying attention to other circumstantial phenomena involving the Atlantic environment. However, in these works the Atlantic became the central, related element in their works. Whether Seville, the Indies or with England, the internal dynamics of the Atlantic linked the Canary Islands with these territories.

At the same time that in Europe and in the United States, the image of the Atlantic was beginning to form, and the first theories that would support the principles of Atlantic history were disseminated, Canary Islands historians such as those previously mentioned and, in particular, Antonio Rumeu de Armas, were already dealing with the concept of 'Atlantic' as a category of historical analysis. In 1955, the year in which Godechot and Palmer presented their paper 'Le problème de l'Atlantique du XVIIIe au XXe siècle', with little impact, Rumeu de Armas was promoting the *Yearbook of Atlantic Studies* project under his coordination. This historian was indeed the main promoter of the Atlantic experience in Canarian historical studies with the publication of his 1947 work *Piratería y ataques navales contra las islas Canarias* ('Piracy and naval attacks against the Canary Islands') – renamed in a second edition in 1991 as *Canarias y el Atlántico Piraterías y ataques navales* ('The Canaries and the Atlantic, piracy and naval attacks'). Under the pretext of detailing external offensives on the islands, the author shows the close relationship of the Canary Islands with their surroundings, in a much fraughter context.

Although the Canary archipelago forms the object of his study, the events he recounts extend beyond the insular experience itself and his line of argumentation increases with the incorporation of new factors introduced within his historical construction. The philologist García Ramos (2002, p. 31), when analysing this work by Rumeu de Armas, particularly when it refers to Francis Drake's attack on the archipelago, wonders whether these events exclusively belong to the history of the Canary Islands, that of England or even that of the Caribbean[14]. The answer, without any doubt, is that they concern all these spaces together in a common history of the Atlantic insofar as the events related condition the history of each one of these regions individually while at the same time affecting them as a whole.

In his monumental work, Rumeu de Armas turns the local and peripheral into an essential element for the construction of a supranational history. The pirate and corsair attacks on the islands provide a pretext for him to analyse the relationships between the

[14] "Where could all those events starring Francis Drake be enclosed? In the history of England, in that of colonial Spain, in the particular history of the Canary Islands, as Rumeu does, or in that of the present-day Caribbean?" (García Ramos, 2002: 31.).

different Atlantic spaces and the archipelago. He studied both their economy, social organisation and local administration of the islands but this local analysis is linked to what happened in the Atlantic which surrounds it. He addresses the presence of pirates and corsairs in the Canary Islands as defined groups based on their activity, with their nationality being a secondary element of his discourse. This goes beyond the history of nations to include other intersecting communities that have participated in the dynamics of the Atlantic, such as the Jews. In this way, the author manages to build an Atlantic history crisscrossed by different kingdoms, continents and times.

Rumeu de Armas participated in the historic construction of the Atlantic, as well as promoting Atlanticity as an element of identity for those who were actively involved in this area. Just as Braudel overflowed the shores of the Mediterranean, Rumeu's story went beyond the contours of the ocean itself. It focuses on the presence of Europeans in the islands, through pirates, but it also describes a cisatlantic space related to other border territories. The links that he studies span the Atlantic as a whole, beyond the ties of dependency on the metropolis and the European world. The Canary Islands are joined with Portuguese America. For example, using the story of the 40 Jesuit martyrs in Tazacorte REF?, he introduces us to the evangeliising process in Brazil. Likewise, Africa also appears in this scenario as a prominent element of the history he constructs. Through the Canarian expeditions to the African coasts, he describes the geographical, social and economic environment in which these expeditionaries found themselves. He introduces into his story the vision of the island people regarding the Indigenous and Portuguese groups that they come into contact. In addition, he produces a detailed description of the coastline up to the Senegal River.

Certainly, this historian had a special sensitivity for African studies[15], but also had the added merit of being one of the first researchers to incorporate the African continent into Atlantic studies, even before there was an increase in studies on slavery and the slave trade in the United States in the 1960s (Lucena Giraldo, 2010, p. 43). However, within the insular historiographic milieu, despite the proximity of the Canary Islands to Africa and the traditional ties between both regions, Rumeu's efforts to unite both histories under the umbrella of Atlantic History were not continued. Only since the last decade have Canarian historians addressed the relationships between both spaces beyond local perspectives[16]. Germán and Juan Manuel Santana Pérez, from the Modern History Area of the University of Las Palmas, have carried out a historical analysis complementing the history of the Atlantic archipelagos and the neighboring continent[17]. This historiographic interest gave rise to the publication of *La puerta fortunada* (2002). This work manages to build a global history through the particularities of analysing a microspace through this unprecedented contextualiisation as a part of insular

[15] *España y el África atlántica* (Spain and Atlantic Africa) also stands out among his works, published in Madrid in 1956.

[16] It is true that this was not the first time that certain issues regarding Canarian-African history had been addressed. Contacts with the Berber Coast had been a matter studied in depth by Anaya Hernández (2006), as well as slavery in the Canary Islands and relations with Cape Verde by Lobo Cabrera & Bruquetas de Castro, F (1998).

[17] Recently, and as a result of focusing on this line of work, for the first time a monograph on the history of Atlantic Africa was published in a journal from the Archipelago. I am referring to issue number 14 of the magazine *Vegueta* of the University of Las Palmas.

historiography[18]. It is a circumatlantic history which goes beyond national limits and classical spatial borders to focus on the coherent bonds connecting both regions – Canarian and African – within the domestic space represented by the Atlantic.

Rumeu de Armas' interest in including the Canary Islands in the history of the Atlantic led to him raise the need to create a scientific reference work, which had a holistic approach – unusual for the time – namely the *Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos* ('Yearbook of Atlantic Studies') (Figure 2). In the aims and statement of intent, he established the Atlantic orientation of the publication:

> *The Yearbook of Atlantic Studies, in line with its emblem, has chosen the Canary Islands as the central motif for its research and studies, but not in a localistic, introverted sense, but praising its universal greatness and scale (…). There is no exaggeration in this, since from their remote geological origin to the present day they have remained faithful to their ecumenical destiny (…)* (Rumeu de Armas, 1955, p.8)[19].

Therefore, this historian, as a precursor and pioneer of Atlantic studies, early on redesigned the ocean as a unitary marine space where insular and continental historical experiences are interrelated:

> *The Atlantic has enough unity in itself so that everything related to this ocean is preferentially connected to us (…). Interdependencies are constant, without however avoiding the neighbouring continental coasts that close and surround it* (Rumeu de Armas, 1955, p. 8).

Antonio Béthencourt Massieu, who was also involved in the origins of Atlantic historiography for the Canary Islands, points out, in the prologue to the indexing edition of the 2006 *Yearbook*, how the islands as subjects of analysis for Atlantic History have been valued, thanks to the efforts of his colleague Rumeu de Armas and the contribution of this publication to historical research which has come down to the present day:

> *This is not the appropriate place to praise the relevance and significance of the Yearbook, and the merit of its Director. But it is convenient to point out, albeit briefly, the success of Professor Rumeu in perceiving the Archipelago as one of the keys to understanding the Atlantic Ocean. The Ocean as a historical entity and as a Civilization created by Western Maritime Europe, as Sir John Elliott assures us. In other words, the role played by the Canary Islands between the Great Discoveries and the Era of Globalization. Without the Canary Islands, the history of the Atlantic would have been different (…). Indeed, in these fifty–two years, the Yearbook has been an essential, and not inconsiderable, tool with which to understand the Atlantic conception of the archipelagos and the importance of the Ocean for the past, present and future of the Canary Islands. The Canary Islands, a bridge between the three continents, as Antonio so designed in the emblem that looks down over the*

[18]This is reflected by the authors themselves: "the studies on this continent have some interesting works on the *Antiguo Régimen*, almost always referring to a specific area. However, there is an absence in the research on the global relationship of the Canary Islands with the whole of Africa over a prolonged period of time" (Santana Pérez & Pérez, 2002: 8).

[19] We should note that the emblem of the yearbook is a design by Rumeu de Armas.

Yearbook: Fortunatae Insulae Orbis Novi Pons, between the two Pillars of Hercules with their individual signs which read: Plus and Ultra (Béthencourt Massieu, 2006).

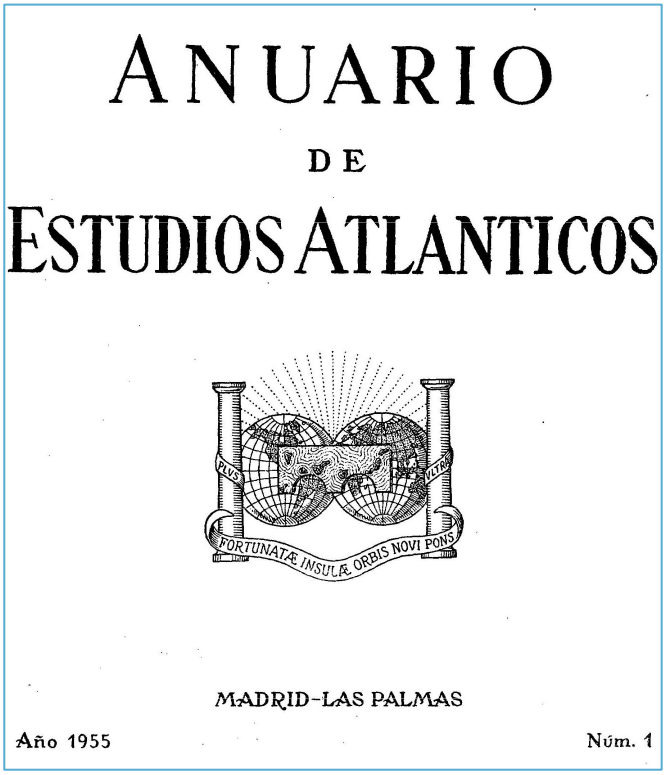

Figure 2 – Front cover of the first issue of *Anuario de Estudious Atlanticos* (1955)

Unfortunately, the Canarian historiographic tradition in recent decades has not consolidated the interest in cisatlantic history that Rumeu de Armas began. Paradoxically, Canarian historians have focused on commercial relations and migratory flows with other adjacent territories, but without integrating these analyses into an Atlantic context. There are classic studies on the close Canarian–American ties, such as the aforementioned publications of Morales Padrón (1955) and Peraza de Ayala (1977). Likewise, publications that address the relations between the archipelago and the European nations bordering the Atlantic and the integration of these foreign populations into its island society have been outstanding. However, a line of historical research has not emerged that identifies the Canary Islands as an Atlantic region and, therefore, addresses the relationships between the islands and their environment going beyond transnational history.

For its part, Portuguese insular historiography has also developed its particular vision of the relations between the Atlantic area and the Portuguese islands. On the one hand, since the middle of the 20th century, three important associations have promoted insular historical studies in the Azores: the Instituto Histórico da ilha Terceira, the Núcleo

Cultural da Horta and the Instituto Cultural de Ponta Delgada. On the other hand, in the mid–1980s, the Centro de Estudos de História do Atlântico was created in Madeira, headed by Professor Luis Albuquerque. This pioneering institution, unparalleled in any other Macaronesian archipelago, has had, since its inception, the aim of promoting historical knowledge about the Atlantic islands. This concern for the interpretation of island spaces in their oceanic context led to debates early on about the characterisation and island singularities within the historical construction of the Atlantic. In parallel with the role of the Centro de Estudos de História do Atlântico, the Instituto Histórico da ilha Terceira, Núcleo Cultural da Horta and Instituto Cultural de Ponta Delgada, all in the Azores, have been important cultural associations have promoted insular historical studies that since the mid-20th century.

Under the auspices of this centre, numerous international congresses have been held with some regularity in which the Atlantic islands have been considered from very different social scientific perspectives. However, as I will highlight later, it is worth mentioning that during the first meetings that were held during the 1980s, it was decided to include the islands as elements in the analysis of Atlantic History. The main figures of Atlantic historiography, such as Mauro or Verlinden, participated in these events, and made an effort to apply the general aspects of an Atlantic analytical method to the island spaces. However, also present were renowned specialists of the Iberian empires – such as Morales Padrón, Godinho and even Albuquerque – along with a new generation of island historians who were beginning to compose a comparative history between archipelagos. As a result of these encounters, the islands ceased to be merely an anecdote within general historical processes and became characteristic and unique elements with which to interpret Atlantic dynamics. The islands moved from the isolation of local history to being swallowed up by Atlantic history. Out of this new school, combining the particularism of island histories with the Atlantic environment, the figure of one of the main theorists of the Iberian Atlantic and the Macaronesia islands emerged, namely Alberto Vieira[20].

The Portuguese insular contributions to the field of Atlantic History have been even more extensive and complex, both in terms of different areas and different perspectives. Firstly, Correia e Silva, based on his study of the Cape Verdean archipelago, has emphasised the geostrategic role and the geographic constraints of the islands in the process of European expansion across the Atlantic (Correia e Silva, 1995, p. 15). Secondly, taking the Azores as a reference, other historians have raised the singularity of the relationships of these islands within the Atlantic context[21]. Of particular note within this Azorean insular historiography is the work of José Damião Rodrigues (2011). This historian structures his Atlantic History based on the specific aspects of the Azores and the cosmos which these islanders construct in relation to their oceanic environment. In short, he approaches insular history from the local, but with a global perspective in his approach which makes use of the comparative method[22].

[20] This historian has a vast bibliography within which the development of his analytical perspective of island spaces can be observed, from his first efforts to build an intra-archipelagic history to the most recent contributions to Atlantic History and nesology.

[21] The historian Avelino Meneses addressed the specific aspects of the administration of the archipelago under Philippine rule (Meneses, 1997: 81-104). For her part, Maria Gil has focused on the field of cultural exchanges (Gil, 1982; 349-415).

[22] An example is the global perspective that he introduces in the analysis of Gaspar Frutuoso's work: "Gaspar Frutuoso very clearly included the Azores in the overseas, Atlantic and insular worlds of the

This school of insular historians with Atlantic perspectives has shown that oceanic historical dynamics pass through the intra–Atlantic European spaces. The Atlantic began to be configured as an immense inland sea in the European imaginary from the 15th century through the generalisation of the exchanges between the different regions surrounding this ocean. Through the organisation of complex routes, voyages connected the African and American continents with Europe catering for extensive networks of traders established by mercantile Atlantic places. In this commercial network the islands emerged as a connecting and pivotal element between the different markets. This multiplicity of connections resulted from the complementary economic aspects of insular and continental areas, including the use of the environment and the economic activities spread throughout each of these Atlantic locations. However, this economy was also determined by geographical constraints relating to the ocean, resulting from the currents and the winds which shaped these routes. The islands were outposts in the Atlantic holding strategic value in supplying the vessels as well as redistributing the merchandise which arrived in the archipelagos.

Insular historiography has studied those European mercantile communities that in the first period of occupation were attracted, above all, by sugar export and commercialiisation. As happened later in the Canary Islands, the Flemish merchants who settled in Madeira interested in supplying this product to Northern Europe stood out. In this regard Viña Brito (2012, p. 172) has asserted that:

> *since the year 1500 factors, that is to say, permanent agents, Flemish, are temporarily established in Funchal and from this point, they will go to the Canary Islands. Some of the factors documented in the Plaza de Madeira are also found in the Canary Islands.*

But not only the Flemish settled in Madeira. The same author recalls the relevance of Jácome Bruges in the Azores, to whom Prince Henry the Navigator entrusted the organisation of Terceira. In short, the establishment of these extra-peninsular mercantile communities is motivated by the attraction to the economic performance of these emerging territories, recently occupied and exploited for European interests. Therefore, regarding this approach to a specific historical subject (i.e. the Flemish), we can conclude that in each of the insular spaces the framework of their actions goes beyond the limits of each island to draw a new inter-archipelagic border that constitutes, consequently, a greater intra-Atlantic space and, apparently, a unitary one.

The islands were a strategic point in the Atlantic commercial exchanges, but not only for the Iberian kingdoms. These contacts were stronger and more extensive, in which other maritime nations intervened. This internationalisation of the islands' trade is reflected in an account written by the Dutch captain Jan Huyghen van Linschoten at the end of the 16th century:

> *The Ilandes of Canaria are very fruitfull, and plentifull of all thinges, both victuailes and other necessaries. They have all kinds of corne, specially*

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sixteenth century and applauded the universal monarchy of Philip II, stating that the monarch 'is now the greatest lord in all the environs.' Just like other contemporary authors who wrote within the framework of the Catholic Monarchy, the object of the discourse is *local* but its horizon is *global*" (Rodrigues, 2011: 21).

> *excellent good Wine which from thence is carried into all places. There is likewise great store of Sugar, which is much esteemed, and also carried into all countries of Christendome, which causeth great trafficke unto those Ilands, as well by Spaniardes and Portingalles, as other nations, and is the common staple for the ships which sayle out of Spayne into the West Indies and refreshe themselves there, and also take in such Wyne as they commonly use to carry with them to the West Indies* (Van Linschoten, 1935, p.266).

However, the constraints of marine currents and the layout of the Atlantic routes discriminated against the inclusion of certain island areas in terms of their suitability in forming part of a maritime route, turning the islands into active or passive subjects of these Atlantic dynamics. In this sense, the Canary Islands and the Azores were living elements fostering interaction between the Iberian regions of the Atlantic. Meanwhile, the island of Madeira was a passive agent regarding transatlantic routes. However, on an inter–island scale, the Madeiran archipelago acted as an intermediary between the other two island areas by re–exporting and supplying goods. The inclusion and functioning of the islands within the Atlantic network was constrained by their geographical location in relation to both the transatlantic routes and the complementary inter–island routes, forming an Iberian Atlantic supported by an insular subsystem. As such, as Vieira affirms, knowledge of the historical past of the islands must transcend the limitations of the area itself and contextualise the particular insular world within the historical generality of the Atlantic (Vieira, 1992, p. 275).

Conclusions

Island spaces are part of the Atlantic narrative and are embedded in the dynamics of globalisation, but they are mainly affected by three other conditions: insularity, geographical location and their peripheral positioning. Therefore, the improvement of an area – in this case the islands – does not depend exclusively on its size, geographical location, internal production or foreign trade of products. The attraction of certain islands, such as those in the Macaronesian region, is their ability to redistribute products and promote migratory flows. What converges in the islands, as a fruit of their maritimeness, is the ability of the the islands to provide support for the maintenance of the main mercantile routes. In this regard, the islands of Macaronesia became an essential terrain to feed and boost transatlantic circulation. The islands become strategic enclaves, places for the entry and exit of people and products. They are dynamic spaces that act as doors between certain areas and others. They are places of transit, whose border is the permeable sea. This relationship between the islands and the Atlantic, as intrinsic spaces acting as a nexus between the coastal regions surrounding the ocean, transcends the flow of commerce which influences population movements and the cultural construction of the societies participating in Atlantic relations. Given this, it should also be remembered that the inhabitants of the Atlantic islands will also make up their own imaginary regarding their links with the ocean.

The islands, in relation to their circumatlantic environment during the period of the Iberian Union, must be interpreted in their full complexity and covered from all areas, beyond the embryonic bond with the metropolis and its other appendices in Africa and America. The islands of Macaronesia should also be understood in relation to other areas and agents which are included in the Atlantic, whether they were territories and subjects

of the same monarchy, or not. This 'Atlanticism' or 'Atlantic imaginary' of the islands represents the collective memory shared by different peoples who are linked by solid ties woven through constant interactions. The seas make their mark and the oceans even more so, shaping the impression of the island onto the space which surrounds it. The proximity to Africa, the traditional relations with America and the dependence on Europe are intermingled within a single Atlantic experience configuring the cultural identity of the islands. "It would not be amiss to remember here that the Ocean probably got its name from the islands and not vice versa", as stated by Rumeu de Armas in reference to the work of Herodotus (Rumeu de Armas, 1955, p. 9).

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