THE CONSTRUCTION OF INSULAR IDENTITY AND ITS HISTORICAL EVOLUTION IN MACARONESIA: THE TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL IMAGINARIES OF THE ATLANTIC ISLANDS (15TH – 18TH CENTURIES)

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This research is focused on the analysis of mythical and historical perception which among the islanders constitute their insular and Atlantic imaginary with the goal of understanding the peculiar significance of the composition of Macaronesian society from the experience acquired by the islanders during the Early Modern Age and the consolidation of the Iberian Ocean world. This study examines the paradigm of space conceptualization with the aim of proposing a method of supranational observation of the islands. The theme that is addressed surpasses regional and national limits converting into a transnational study. Hence, the research approach different stories with the purpose of focusing the study from distinct levels that leads to an integral history of the Macaronesian islands (Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands and Cape Verde).

Keywords: Imaginary; History; Islander; Macaronesia Islands; Myth; Atlantic;

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Tento výskum je zameraný na analýzu mýtického a historického vnímania, ktoré medzi obyvateľmi ostrova tvorí ich ostrovnú a atlantickú imagináciu, s cieľom pochopiť zvláštny význam zloženia makaronézskej spoločnosti na základe skúseností získaných obyvateľmi ostrova počas raného novoveku a konsolidácie sveta Atlantického oceánu. Táto štúdia skúma paradigmu priestorovej konceptualizácie s cieľom navrhnúť metódu nadnárodného pozorovania ostrovov. Výskum vychádza z analýzy rôznych mýtov a zamýšľa sa nad procesom formovania ostrovnej identity makaronézskych ostrovov (Azory, Madeira, Kanárske ostrovy a Kapverdy).

Kľúčové slová: imaginárny; história; ostrovan; makaronézske ostrovy; mýtus; Atlantik;

Introduction

The study of the Macaronesian islands, which include the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands, and Cape Verde, reveals historical, cultural, and social dynamics shaped by their unique geographical positions. To address this, this research aims to analyze the evolving conception of insularity in the historiographical literature on the Macaronesian islands and to compare different approaches to the construction of insular identity. Key elements such as the ocean, beaches, ports, and mercantile routes will be explored to understand their role in shaping the islands‘ identity.

These islands have served as strategic enclaves since the 14th century, acting as pivotal points for transatlantic navigation and trade. The islands‘ proximity to Africa, their links to America, and their dependence on Europe have profoundly influenced their development, making them essential nodes in the broader Atlantic world. In this regard, the study will investigate how continuous interaction with their maritime environment and neighboring regions has influenced the construction of cultural narratives and historical identities in insular societies. By focusing on these aspects, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Macaronesian islands and their place within the broader Atlantic world. This approach will highlight the dynamic and interconnected nature of these islands, emphasizing their significance as hubs of cultural and economic activity.

The concept of insularity in the Macaronesian context is multifaceted, involving dimensions that are geographical, economic, and cultural. Geographically, the islands are defined by their isolation and their role as transit points in maritime routes. Economically, their significance lies in their ability to facilitate trade and migration flows, acting as hubs for the redistribution of goods. Culturally, the islands have developed a unique identity that blends local traditions with external influences, creating a rich tapestry of myths and legends.

Historically, the Macaronesian islands have been perceived through a dual lens of empirical evidence and myth. This duality is evident in the works of historians and philologists such as Viera y Clavijo, María Rosa Alonso, and Vitorino Nemésio, who have attempted to reconstruct the islands‘ past from both tangible evidence and the cognitive traditions of their communities. For instance, the hypothesis that these islands are remnants of the lost Atlantis has been explored through both scientific deduction and legendary narratives. This blend of myth and reality has contributed to a unique insular identity, deeply rooted in the collective memory of the islanders.

The insular identity of the Macaronesian islands has been constructed through a combination of local experiences and external influences. The arrival of European settlers and the subsequent integration into global trade networks brought about significant changes in the islands‘ social fabric. The interplay between native islanders and foreign settlers created a mixed society where cultural exchange and adaptation were constant. This process of identity formation is evident in the historical records and literary works of the period, such as Viera y Clavijo‘s Noticias de la Historia General de las Islas Canarias and María Rosa Alonso‘s essays, which often reflect a blend of mythological and empirical perspectives.

For the purposes of this study, ‚myth' is defined as a narrative that reflects and shapes human perceptions of nature and the environment.[1] ‚Imagination' is understood as a cognitive capacity that allows individuals to create mental images and generate new ideas based on previous experiences.[2] ‚Constructivism' is a learning theory that explains how individuals construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences.[3] ‚Nesology' refers to the study of islands on their own terms, recognizing the dynamic and hybrid nature of island cultures.[4]

To provide clarity, the theoretical framework of this study is based on constructivist theory, which posits that individuals construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences.[5] Additionally, the study employs nesology, the study of islands on their own terms, to understand the unique characteristics of the Macaronesian islands.[6] Methodologically, this research uses content analysis to examine historical records, legends, and myths. This multidisciplinary approach incorporates insights from history, anthropology, sociology, and geography to provide a comprehensive understanding of the islands' development and their role in the Atlantic system. By integrating these theoretical frameworks, the study aims to uncover the ways in which insular identities have been shaped by both local experiences and external influences. This will involve a detailed examination of primary sources, including historical documents, literary works, and oral traditions, to trace the evolution of insular identity over time.

One of the critical aspects of studying the Macaronesian islands is understanding the methodological approaches used to analyze their history. Traditional historiography often overlooked the islands, relegating them to the periphery of major historical narratives. However, contemporary scholars have emphasized the importance of these islands in the broader context of Atlantic history. This study transcends the traditional Atlantic history framework, focusing instead on the centrality of the islands themselves through the lens of nesology, the study of islands on their own terms.

Figure 1. Geographical location of the Macaronesian islands.
Zdroj: FERRARO, Gianluca – FAILLER, Pierre. Bringing nature into decision-making and policy design: Experiences from overseas Europe. In Policy Design and Practice, 2022, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 232.

1 DIEGUES, António Carlos. The Myth of Wilderness in the Brazilian Rainforest. São Paulo 1998.
2 LEVY, Arnon – GODFREY-SMITH, Peter. The Scientific Imagination. New York 2019.
3 BADA, Steve Olusegun. Constructivism Learning Theory: A Paradigm for Teaching and Learning. In IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education, 2015, vol. 5, no. 6, p. 66-70.
4 VIEIRA, Alberto. As ilhas: da Nissologia à Nesologia. In Anuário do Centro de Estudos de História do Atlântico, 2010, no. 2, p. 16-21.
5 BADA, Constructivism Learning Theory, p. 66.
6 VIEIRA, As ilhas: da Nissologia à Nesologia, p. 16-18.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the evolving conception of insularity in historiographical literature and to compare different approaches to the construction of insular identity. Ultimately, by addressing these elements, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Macaronesian islands and their significance within the Atlantic world.

From Atlantic History to Nesology: A method for characterizing the Macaronesian islands

The study of the Macaronesian islands within the context of Atlantic History has evolved significantly, reflecting broader historiographical trends and methodological innovations. Initially, historians like Viera y Clavijo in the eighteenth century highlighted the importance of the Atlantic Ocean in shaping the societies of these islands. However, it wasn't until the late twentieth century that the Atlantic itself became a central object of study within the social sciences, leading to the development of a specialized sub-discipline in historical research.

Traditionally, the history of the Atlantic world has been framed from the perspective of European empires, focusing on their territorial expansions and interactions across the ocean. This approach, while valuable, often resulted in a transoceanic history that did not fully capture the complexity of the Atlantic as a dynamic and interconnected space. Historians like Pietschmann have criticized this model for its narrow focus on former colonies and its lack of attention to the broader impacts of European expansion within Europe itself.[7]

Recent scholarship has sought to address these limitations by incorporating more diverse perspectives and emphasizing the interconnectedness of the Atlantic world. For example, Manuel Barcia's work on the slave trade has highlighted its central role in shaping global historical processes.[8] Similarly, studies have begun to explore the relationships between the Atlantic and specific African regions, moving beyond a Eurocentric focus to include African contributions to Atlantic History.[9]

A significant methodological shift in recent years has been the adoption of a global analytical perspective. This approach, advocated by scholars like Valladares, posits that globalization is not a recent phenomenon but has roots in the Atlantic expansion of the fifteenth century.[10] This perspective emphasizes the importance of connection, dependence, and mixing between different regions, which are seen as essential components of a true global history.

Sebastian Conrad has argued that global history is a valuable tool for understanding transnational processes, contrasting it with isolated national histories and westernized

[7] PIETSCHMANN, Horst. Introduction: Atlantic History. History between European History and Global History. In PIETSCHMANN, Horst (ed.). Atlantic History. History of the Atlantic System. 1580 – 1830. Göttingen 2002, p. 20.

[8] BARCIA, Manuel. Into the future: A historiographical overview of Atlantic History in the twenty first century. In Atlantic Studies, 2022, no. 19, p. 181-199.

[9] SANTANA PÉREZ, Germán. El África Atlántica: la construcción de la historia atlántica desde la aportación africana. In Vegueta, 2014, no. 14, p. 19.

[10] VALLADARES RAMÍREZ, Rafael. No somos tan grandes como imaginábamos. Historia global y Monarquía Hispánica. In Espacio, tiempo y forma. Serie IV, Historia moderna, 2102, no. 25, p. 100.

world histories.[11] However, applying this globalist approach to the Macaronesian islands requires careful consideration of their specific geographical and historical contexts. These islands are integral parts of the Atlantic world and must be analyzed within this framework.

This study adopts a nesological approach, focusing on the islands themselves and their unique characteristics. By examining historical records, legends, and myths, this research aims to reconstruct the insular imaginary and its impact on the islands‘ identity. This multidisciplinary methodology incorporates insights from history, anthropology, sociology, and geography to provide a comprehensive understanding of the islands‘ development and their role in the Atlantic system.

The study of the islands often involves understanding the unique cultural and historical dynamics of the region. The Atlantic History perspective provides a framework for examining the transnational exchanges and the role of the islands as cultural and economic hubs. According to Arnon Levy and Peter Godfrey-Smith, imagination is a cognitive capacity that allows individuals to create mental images and generate new ideas based on previous experiences. This process involves both the recollection of past sensory experiences and the construction of novel scenarios. By applying this understanding of imagination, we can better appreciate how the inhabitants of Macaronesia might have envisioned their place in the broader Atlantic world, using their cognitive capacities to adapt to their maritime environment.[12]

The contributions of the Macaronesian islands to Atlantic History are extensive and complex, encompassing various areas and perspectives. Correia e Silva, in his study of the Cape Verdean archipelago, emphasized the geostrategic role and geographic constraints of the islands in European expansion across the Atlantic.[13] Similarly, historians like José Damião Rodrigues have highlighted the unique relationships of the Azores within the Atlantic context, structuring their Atlantic History based on the specific aspects of these islands and their oceanic environment.[14]

This school of insular historians with Atlantic perspectives (Vieira, Rodrigues, Fajardo, Santana...) has demonstrated that oceanic historical dynamics pass through intra-Atlantic European spaces. From the fifteenth century, the Atlantic began to be seen as an immense inland sea in the European imagination, facilitated by the generalization of exchanges between different regions. Complex routes connected Africa, America, and Europe through extensive networks of traders, with islands emerging as pivotal elements in this commercial network. The complementary economic areas between insular and continental regions, shaped by environmental and economic activities, underscored the strategic value of the islands.

However, the constraints of marine currents and the layout of Atlantic routes influenced the inclusion of certain island areas in maritime routes, making some islands active or passive subjects of these dynamics. For instance, the Canary Islands and the Azores fostered interaction between Iberian regions, while Madeira acted as an intermediary on an inter-island scale. The inclusion and functioning of the islands within the Atlantic network

[11] CONRAD, Sebastian. What is Global History? Princeton 2016.

[12] LEVY – GODFREY-SMITH, The Scientific Imagination, p. 15.

[13] CORREIA E SILVA, António. Espaço, ecologia e economia interna. In MADEIRA SANTOS, Maria Emília – ALBUQUERQUE, Luis (eds.). História geral de Cabo Verde I. Lisbon 1991, p. 187.

[14] RODRIGUES, José Damião. The flight of the eagle: an island tribute to the universal Iberian Monarchy at the end of the sixteenth century. In E-journal of Portuguese History, no. 9, 2011, p. 21.

were thus constrained by their geographical location relative to transatlantic and inter-island routes, forming an Iberian Atlantic supported by an insular subsystem.

The islands' value fluctuated based on their relationships and interactions within the broader Atlantic space. Any alteration in one part of the system would cause adaptive modifications to the rest. The Atlantic cannot be considered merely as a vast expanse of water populated with islands; instead, the islands are integral, indivisible elements within historical tradition, acting as intermediaries between Africa, America, and Europe.

Studies on Macaronesia often emphasize the unique maritime culture and historical interactions that have shaped the region. The Atlantic History perspective highlights the transnational exchanges and the role of the islands as hubs of cultural and economic activity. According to maritime historian Michael N. Pearson, maritime societies are communities that have developed a close relationship with the sea, where the maritime environment significantly influences their economic, social, and cultural practices. These societies often engage in activities such as fishing, trade, and navigation, which shape their identity and way of life.[15]

Eduardo Aznar Vallejo further elaborates that maritime societies, particularly in the Atlantic context, are characterized by their strategic use of maritime routes for trade and cultural exchange. He emphasizes that these societies are not only defined by their economic activities but also by their ability to adapt and transform through interactions with other cultures and environments. Understanding maritime societies through these perspectives allows us to appreciate the dynamic and interconnected nature of these communities. It highlights the importance of the sea as a space of interaction and transformation, shaping the historical and cultural development of regions like Macaronesia.[16]

This paradigm shift in the historical analysis of the islands has been consolidated by works such as those of Vieira and Rodrigues, who have proposed an Atlantic History where islands are prominent elements linking surrounding spaces into a common Atlantic whole. The islands served as strategic platforms for transnational mercantile networks, facilitating long-distance trade and acting as redistributive axes. This economic intermediation supported the internal structure of the islands, as seen in the case of Cape Verde, where relations with Africa were vital for acquiring slave labor and financing imports of essential commodities.

The islands of the Mid-Atlantic during the Early Modern Period were subject to mercantile behaviors carried out at considerable distances, with limited ability to influence other markets. Changes in island economic cycles coincided with broader restructuring of the Atlantic domain, both commercially and politically. This dependence was a consequence not only of their island status but also of their intrinsic situation in the Atlantic.

By adopting a nesological approach from within the Atlantic and as an intrinsic part of this ocean, this study focuses on the islands themselves and their unique characteristics to reconstruct the insular imaginary and its impact on the islands' identity. This multidisciplinary methodology, incorporating insights from history, anthropology, sociology, and

[15] PEARSON, MICHAEL N. Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problems. Sydney 2006, p. 3.

[16] AZNAR VALLEJO, Eduardo. La experiencia martíma: las rutas y los hombres del mar. In RISPA, Raúl, DE LOS RÍOS, César Alonso & AGUAZA, María José (eds.). Andalucía 1492: Razones de un protagonismo. Seville 1992, p. 127-133.

geography, aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the islands‘ development and their role in the Atlantic system.

Atlantic identity of the islands

The island areas which 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, which is none other than the Atlantic.

This apparently geographically well–defined Atlantic area continues to be a cultural construction which emerged from the common European social imaginary. As several specialist authors in the Atlantic have pointed out – from Charles Verlinden to David Armitage, including John H. Elliott –, Europeans were the first to shape and trace the limits of this space between the 15th and 16th centuries. Until then, this immense area had been restricted to a simple strip of sea that barely protruded from the known and tangible land.[17]

This creation of the Europeans did not happen exclusively as a result of the coastal areas bordering the sea.[18] This was also the case for Africans and Americans. However, it was the inhabitants of the old continent who first connected the shores of these three continents – and its islands within –, thereby building an entity, "as a system and as a representation of a differentiated natural reality".[19]

Regarding this space, which was now irretrievably linked, both new legends and myths emerged as well as rationalist approaches which enabled us to appreciate this geographical entity from different perspectives and areas, albeit always from the personal perception of those who had imagined this space.

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 which we refer, by limiting its borders to the coastline of three continents. In addition,

[17] Studies on Macaronesia often emphasize the unique maritime culture and historical interactions that have shaped the region. The Atlantic History perspective highlights the transnational exchanges and the role of the islands as hubs of cultural and economic activity. As Bada point of view, constructivism is a learning theory that explains how individuals construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences. This theory posits that learning is an active, constructive process where learners build new ideas or concepts based upon their current and past knowledge. In the context of Macaronesia, this approach helps us understand how island societies have historically constructed their identities and cultural narratives through continuous interaction with their maritime environment and neighboring regions. This constructivist perspective aligns with the principles of nesology, which emphasize the importance of studying islands on their own terms, recognizing the dynamic and hybrid nature of island cultures. By integrating these theoretical frameworks, we can gain a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural development of Macaronesia. BADA, Constructivism Learning Theory, p. 66.

[18] Borders have always played a crucial role in shaping the identities and interactions of societies. They are not merely physical barriers but also symbolic ones that influence cultural and social dynamics. According to Eduardo Aznar Vallejo, borders are not just physical dividing lines but also spaces of cultural interaction and transformation. These areas often serve as zones where different cultures meet, exchange, and influence each other, leading to significant social and political changes. Understanding borders in this way allows us to appreciate their role in fostering cultural exchange and shaping the historical trajectories of societies. AZNAR VALLEJO, Eduardo. Europa y el Mar: las nuevas fronteras. In Vegueta: Anuario de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia, 2018, no. 18, p. 13.

[19] ARMITAGE, David. Tres conceptos de historia atlántica. In Revista de Occidente, 2004, no. 281, p. 8.

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 the perception of this space – and depending on the group of people – has altered over the centuries. Without going into the representation of this ocean by African or American communities, the westernization 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".[20]

The Middle Ages had inherited from classical antiquity a series of values and ideas about this vast space which were somewhat confused 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. These preconceptions were altered and reconfigured as the navigators entered within it. The Pillars of Hercules, the confines of the known world, grew farther and farther as the expeditions advanced south, with the frontier being located at each new land discovered. As Babcock point out,[21]

> 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.

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:[22]

> 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 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.

Even 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".[23] 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.

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[20] BRAUDEL, Fernand. El Mediterráneo y el Mundo Mediterráneo en la época de Felipe II. Mexico 1976, p. 294.

[21] BABCOCK, William Henry. Legendary islands of the Atlantic. A study in medieval geography. New York 1922, p. 1.

[22] BRAUDEL, El Mediterráneo y el Mundo Mediterráneo, p. 294.

[23] MAURO, Frédéric. Le Portugal, le Bresil et l'Atlantique au XVIIe siecle (1570 – 1670). Etude economique. París 1983, p. 156.

As Correia e Silva points out,[24] 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 Europeanized. This pretentious *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; 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 such theoretical and legislative design, to become a prime space for the interests of other European kingdoms.[25]

The Iberian archipelagos of Macaronesia were constrained by the surrounding environment and by the relational dynamics around and involving them. They were intra–Atlantic areas characterized 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 of their own inner evolution 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.

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. 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.[26]

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 to study 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. As Valladares point of view, what the Portuguese and Spanish historians of the second half of the 20th century produced were, at times, excellent studies on their colonial past, but these

[24] CORREIA E SILVA, António. Cabo Verde e a geopolítica do Atlântico. In MADEIRA SANTOS, Maria Emília (ed.). História geral de Cabo Verde II. Lisbon 1995, p. 15.

[25] VIEIRA, Alberto. Las Islas y el mundo atlántico. 1580 – 1648. In BÉTHENCOURT MASSIEU, Antonio (ed.). IV Centenario del ataque de Van der Does a las Palmas de Gran Canaria (1999). Coloquio Internacional Canarias y el Atlántico, 1580 – 1648. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria 2001, p. 325.

[26] PIETSCHMANN, Introduction…, p. 15.

were primarily focused on the initial stages of conquest and exploration in the 15th and 16th centuries. This focus aligned with the most satisfactory parameters for national, if not nationalist, claims.[27]

The Portuguese and Spanish Atlantic historiographies, despite sharing an interest in exalting the process of Iberian overseas expansion, consisted of two divergent theoretical models with which to interpret their own Atlantic History. These differences stemmed specifically from the attitude of the kingdoms of Castile and Portugal towards the Atlantic area and the organization 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.[28]

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 which specifies 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.[29]

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. This global vision of the Empire, without actually forming its own Portuguese history in the Atlantic, 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*, dedicates one of its introductory chapters to the Canary Islands[30]. 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

[27] VALLADARES RAMÍREZ, Rafael. Historia atlántica y ruptura ibérica, 1620-1680. Un ensayo bibliográfico. In PARKER, Geoffrey (Coord.). La crisis de la monarquía de Felipe IV. Barcelona 2006, p. 328.

[28] Two classics in this regard: MORALES PADRÓN, Francisco. El comercio canario-americano (siglos XVI-XVIII). Seville 1955; PERAZA DE AYALA, José El régimen comercial de Canarias con las Indias en los siglos XVI, XVII y XVIII. Seville 1977.

[29] Along with the Canary Islands and those of the Caribbean, Castile possessed the archipelago of the Philippines. The insular spaces became essential locations for the organization of stopovers for both the Manila galleon and the Indies fleet and, therefore, for communication for the different areas of the Monarchy. As an example, MARTÍNEZ SHAW, Carlos – ALFONSO MOLA, Marina. The Philippine Islands: a vital crossroads during the first globalization period. In Culture & History Digital Journal, 2014, No.3, p. 1-16.

[30] VIEIRA, Alberto. As Canárias: Uma experiência de ocupação mal-sucedida. In SERRÃO, Joel – OLIVEIRA MARQUES, António Henrique de (eds.). Nova História da Expansão: A Colonização Atlântica. Lisbon 2005, Vol. III, p. 36-56.

that complementary ties had been established which cemented the social construction of Macaronesia practically since the European colonization of these archipelagos.[31]

Focusing on island historiographies, despite being pioneers in Atlantic studies in terms of the indispensable connection of their object of study to the space that surrounds them, the historians of these islands – especially 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 but 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 advances in its research to analyse more wide–ranging dynamics.[32]

The nesology applied to the studies of the historical societies of the Macaronesia region

Although some historians had been worrying about incorporating the evolution of the islands into a general history, we should note that historical science has only just begun to consider the islands as a dynamic and relational element and, therefore, subject to being analysed and contextualised. Although nesological studies have been incorporated as a field of study in other disciplines such as anthropology and philology, historical works which allude to the interpretation of the islands as an element of analysis have been quite scarce. It is worth highlighting the efforts and contributions in the Portuguese field of the aforementioned José Damião Rodrigues, Alberto Vieira and António Correia e Silva, while in the Spanish field, especially regarding the Canary Islands, nesology as a historiographic subdiscipline has no precedents except for some tangential references in the works by Fajardo Spínola and Santana Pérez. In the case of Fajardo Spínola (2009),[33] in his work on migratory movements to the Canary Islands during the Early Modern Age, he introduced some defining guidelines as to what an island is and what are the characteristics which define it with respect to mainland spaces. For his part, Santana Pérez (2012) proposed a succinct definition of nesology.[34] Likewise, for this historian, the main problem that island studies have suffered in the Canary Islands is that they have been carried out from a local perspective, with no attempt at forming part of broader processes and, even less so, compared or contrasted with other areas.

It is possible at this point to respond to what nesology is and to define what are its analytical tools and its contributions to historical science. The concern for island spaces

[31] "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. Alberto. Portugal y las islas del Atlántico. Madrid 1992, p. 16.

[32] SANTANA PÉREZ, Juan Manuel. Islas atlánticas en el comercio entre América y África en el Antiguo Régimen. In Cuadernos Americanos. Nueva Época, 2012, no. 142, p. 115.

[33] FAJARDO SPÍNOLA, Francisco. Inmigración e integración en Canarias en la Edad Moderna. In GALVÁN TUDELA, José Alberto (ed.). Migraciones e integración cultural. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria 2009, p. 173-198.

[34] SANTANA PÉREZ, Islas atlánticas en el comercio entre América…, p. 113-135.

and their perceptibility within the global context derived from the new world order which emerged in the second half of the 20th century and, above all, with the establishing of the UN. The different countries which were incorporated within this international organisation included island nations. With their incorporation, small islands such as those in the Caribbean or Polynesia began to be visible in the eyes of other nations. They started to achieve a certain level of importance through having a voice and a vote and the ability to be involved in decisions beyond the island space. Along with this geopolitical process of being recognised, there was another economic and social component which favoured the recognition of the islands by mainland countries which should be added. Undoubtedly, the development of air transport linked to tourism has helped many "paradisiacal" islands to be visited by millions of foreigners.

However, interest in the islands as a subject of independent and isolated study must be taken back to the mid-19th century with the aforementioned expeditions to remote islands and the evolutionary theories proposed by Darwin, in which the island spaces were awarded special importance. Indeed, the initial concern to studying islands stemmed from the natural sciences and geography. It was not until the 1920s that the island element was incorporated into the social sciences, initially by anthropology and ethnography. These first social researchers – Radcliffe-Brown (1922), Malinowski (1922) and Firth (1940) – focused their studies on the analysis of the islanders as a social component rather than the environment in which they acted.[35] The interest of these first island scholars – not without a certain geographical determinism – was probably to analyse an object of study within a well-defined space that would help to understand wider processes.

In the Macaronesic field, the researcher Alberto Vieira was the first contemporary theorist to apply what he called „the new science" to insular historical studies.[36] The historical nesology proclaimed by Vieira takes as its underlying principle McCall's (1996) proposal that: "the study of islands on their own terms […] dwellers that island world view is not theirs; and that island integrity belongs to Islanders" and whose definition, has taken shape with the contributions of other researchers like Baldacchino (2008), who emphasizes that these studies have priviledged commentary from inside out y Depraetere (2008), who argues that insular studies are inter and multidisciplinary but also multidimensional.

In this sense, Santana Pérez has defined insular studies as a discipline that requires methodological pluralism within the field of human sciences, from anthropology, sociology, psychology or history; also bypassing literature and the arts. In the words of this historian:

There are many theories about islands as islands, especially epistemological, but closer to literary, philosophical, psychological or economic theories, to the point where we could say that "an island is a portion of land surrounded by theories on all sides". A new branch of knowledge has even been proposed: nesology, a science of the islands that would deal with everything related to them from any point of view.[37]

It is precisely this terminology employed from a historical perspective in the Macaronesic region that has been applied in this research: a historical reconstruction of the perception of the islanders themselves of a historical and mythical past symbolizing an island and maritime culture.

[35] DIEGUES, António Carlos. Ilhas e Mares: Simbolismo e Imaginário. São Paulo 1998a, p. 51.

[36] VIEIRA, As ilhas…, p. 19.

[37] SANTANA PÉREZ, Islas atlánticas en el comercio entre América …, p. 115.

First and foremost, historical nesology applied to the Macaronesian archipelagos should enable us to understand and reconstruct the vision of the islanders from and with their surroundings: a "study of islands on their own terms".[38] Not only including the geographical and trade environment, but also, as McCall proposes, with the cultural and social environment that conditions the perspective of interpretation of its limited world.

As Rodrigues points out:

different political-administrative, economic and social realities and experiences were therefore mirrored in the co-existence of spatial representations and different entities.[39]

The island: an empirical evidence where the imagined precept coexists

The island, as a space where both empirical evidence and the imagined precept coexist, both being real perceptions, maintains the circumstantial verisimilitude of the juxtaposition of fantastic facts along with daily experience in total harmony.[40] Even having the solidity of the use of method in modern science and analytical skills, authors such as Babcock (1922) at the beginning of the 20th century sought explanations about the genesis of the island society and the construction of the insular imaginary from experience, both from tangible evidence and from the cognitive tradition of the community. In his work *Legendary islands of the Atlantic*, the hypothesis was nurtured that the islands of Macaronesia are the oldest vestiges of the missing Atlantis, as shown from sensory and material perception and considered through use of the scientific method of deduction:[41]

Such advance in civilization, such elaboration of organization, such splendour and power would certainly have overflowed abundantly on the islands intervening between Atlantis and the continental shore. It is not written that these all shared the same fate; and in point of fact the Azores, Madeira and her consorts, the Canary Islands, and the Cape Verde group are still in evidence. Some of them must have been within fairly easy reach of Atlantis if Atlantis existed. There is no indication that they have been newly created or have come up from below since that time. Even allowing for great exaggeration and assuming only a large and efficient population in a vast insular territory without the ascribed superfluity of magnificence, such a people would surely have left some kind of lasting memorial or relic beyond their own borders. Nothing of the kind has ever been found either in these islands of the eastern Atlantic archipelagos or elsewhere in that part of the earth.
He approaches the myth with a certain rationality, seeking an explanation as to its origin from evidence that has resisted the passage of time. Therefore, the importance of this text is that, although the author questions the legendary fable, he does not doubt the authenticity of Atlantis as a territory that once existed. Thus, as a main argument of his analysis, he dismisses the classical voices that gave the mythical tales a certain plausibility. However,

[38] MCCALL, Grant. Nissology: A proposal for consideration. In Journal of The Pacific Society, 1994, no. 63-64, p. 104.

[39] RODRIGUES, José Damião. Os Açores na primeira modernidade. Lisbon: Centro de História de Além-Mar, 2012, p. 38.

[40] According to Brazilian anthropologist Antonio Carlos Diegues, myths are narratives that reflect and shape human perceptions of nature and the environment. These stories often embody cultural values and beliefs, influencing how societies interact with their natural surroundings. DIEGUES, António Carlos. The Myth of Wilderness in the Brazilian Rainforest. São Paulo 1998b, p. 4.

[41] BABCOCK, William Henry. Legendary islands of the Atlantic. A study in medieval geography. New York 1922, p. 19.

he supports the myth through modern scientific foundations characteristic of a markedly rationalist era – let us not forget that his study was preceded by a century of great scientific expeditions, such as the *Beagle* passing through various islands – with major advances in geological and biological studies. The reach of its analytical method is the element that legitimizes the existence of Atlantis, not from the authority the ancient texts are presumed to possess but from the deductive tools provided by science.[42] However, despite the use of discipline and the rigour which forms part of the use of the scientific method, his thesis still hides the – not so innocent – intention of the author to keep the myth alive with regenerative arguments for the insular cosmos, now based on scientific principles.

It should be noted at this point that throughout the centuries, even before the Macaronesian islands became part of European knowledge, a myth had been established around island territories within the consciousness of the people of the Mediterranean.[43] With the passage of time, this construction – and the island which rests on it – has adapted to the different paradigms and hypotheses about the origin of the island world of the Atlantic. Without violating old arguments and the evolution of science, the islands have maintained their character of mythified space. There is, then, a link between the possible and the real, orthodoxy and science, between experience and the self-evident.

There is no apparent contradiction in this dual perception because myth can cohabit with everyday life, tradition and customs which among the islanders constitute their imaginary. An insular and Atlantic imaginary which, in the words of García Ramos, constitutes

A collective memory shared with other peoples linked to the shared ocean; to a collective memory inhabited by myths, symbolic fables where we recognize ourselves [...] in ways of looking at the world and deciphering it, which has generated intimate ways of constructing fables, recreations of a reality built by all.[44]

The Brazilian anthropologist António Carlos Diegues goes further and defines this symbolism arising from insularity with the term "*ilheidade*" ("islandness"), a neologism used [...] to designate the symbolic representations and images resulting from insularity and expressed through the founding myths of insular societies and legends which explain forms of conduct, behaviour, etc.[45]

This dual, real and symbolic cosmos forms an island consciousness, a collective imaginary. As Diegues himself points out, However, [...] total demystification in the sense of the desacralization of human existence does not exist. At the same time as one symbolic structure is dismantled, a new symbolisation is reconstituted, often unconscious or irrational, from new elements elevated to a dignity and an efficiency on a par with the ancient myths.[46]

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[42] MARTÍNEZ HERNÁNDEZ, Marcos. Las Islas Afortunadas en la Edad Media. In Cuadernos del CEMYR, 2006, no. 14, p. 59.

[43] AZNAR VALLEJO, Eduardo. Del mar soñado al mar hollado. El redescubrimiento del océano. In Cuadernos del CEMYR, 2007, no.15, p. 175.

[44] GARCÍA RAMOS, Juan Manuel. Atlanticidad. Canarias y la comarca cultural atlántica. Santa Cruz de Tenerife 2002.

[45] DIEGUES, Ilhas e Mares…, p. 41.

[46] DIEGUES, Ilhas e Mares..., p. 24.

The mythical construction of the island world

As Guimerá Ravina pointed out,[47] Viera y Clavijo is:

an outstanding figure of the cultural past of the Canary Islands and pioneer of the modern regional history in Spain. In his historical labour [*Noticias de la Historia General de las Islas Canarias*] Viera worked on the role of the Atlantic in the historical evolution of the Canaries, from the Antiquity to the 18th century.

The islander identity is indebted to the work of Viera y Clavijo, many of their myths and imaginary tear from his history.[48] Viera y Clavijo,[49] combines the perception of being insular in the Atlantic space with the representation of the island world. Certainly, myth is present in all forms that construct identity, both at the group and individual level. It does not come as a surprise that the fundamental and original form of vital consciousness lies in myths and their explanatory model of reality has governed human thought from the very beginnings. All literature has emerged from myths.

There are quite a few Macaronesian islands historians and philologists who have attempted to reconstruct this imaginary from fabulous interpretations about the remote and legendary past of these crags in the Atlantic. In this sense, María Rosa Alonso – a philologist and specialist in island literature of the early Modern Age, rewrites in 1953 the island's own past from her own island perception, from her own experience:

The most island of all the islands is the inaccessible one, the island that can never be reached […] *Terra firma* has always been a serious, continental, land and not that anguish of pieces, fragments of truth, which are the islands, never delivered, always deceit stalking humans on the high seas.[50]

In this essay on discourse and classical sources, the author starts with Homer's travels through the Mediterranean, whose legend overflows this puddle, "a sea with its shores and termini", to flood the Atlantic where "the Ocean sea is something else [...]. A wonderful and huge plinth to set the island the most island of all". This marine cosmos is plagued by as many myths as the islands discovered throughout the sea. In this world still imagined today, the islander, as María Rosa Alonso herself, still sees on the horizon the myth made real in the conscience of the collective: "How can we not talk about looking for it in the Isles of the Blessed! It was the eighth, the wayward sheep of the Archipelago […]". These magical, blessed islands, such as Saint Brendan's Island, are created in the social imaginary through tradition and fabulous legends, but also from the experience and stories of intrepid travellers whose feat is to bring the legend closer, make it more credible, serving as a link and explanation between the classic past, a world plagued by strange beings and angry gods, and another, closer, past, where the protagonists of events are no more than adventurers who, thanks to luck or devotion, reach land which no other favoured individual had managed to arrive at. The author, essayist and historian, reaffirms the existence of this fabulous island world insisting on historical fact itself, relying on sources not as far

[47] GUIMERÁ RAVINA, Agustín. El mar en la obra histórica de Viera y Clavijo. In Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos, 2017, no. 63, p. 1.

[48] SANTANA PÉREZ, Juan Manuel. Viera y Clavijo: Historiador ilustrado del Atlántico. In História da Historiografia, 2017, no. 23, p. 43.

[49] VIERA Y CLAVIJO, José de. Noticias de la Historia General de las Islas Canarias. Santa Cruz de Tenerife 1950, p. 41.

[50] ROSA ALONSO, María. San Borondón a la vista. In Gánigo 1953, no. 4, p. 2.

away such as, for example, the chronicles:[51] "the Portuguese Pedro Velo and Marcos Verde, when returning from the Berber land, were there".[52]

Once again, the islands float above myth and science, conforming to a single reality: "in the same century [that of the Enlightenment] which was going to build a temple to the goddess Reason there were great poetic souls who strained and let loose the arrows of reverie and faith, the belief in a mystery that arose from the sea." The island is built from the perception of the insular itself in opposition to the parameters established by science. Distances and times are independent autonomous measurements for these territories. Thus, the story and the origin of the islands have been forged from their own entrails and not vice versa. These, therefore, constitute a sacred space with the myths being its symbolic exemplification. As the author contends: "just like good myths, Saint Brendan's Island has also become our symbol."

This story by María Rosa Alonso, in which she plays and builds an insular imaginary, calls to the author's own experience. As Diegues points out regarding his own experience in the preface to his book:

I visited other more paradisiacal islands, more isolated from the mainland, lashed by the ocean, which were more exotic […]. However, none of them can compare to my island, the memories of my childhood, a complex symbol with so many meanings.[53]

This experience acquired by these islanders, as we can see, implies that they shape their own surroundings, filling their imaginary with their own meaning to express this cosmos which is conjugated from that myth. The illustrious Americanist Francisco Morales Padrón also explored this microcosm looking for a successful interpretation for the Atlantic islands through his insular status. In 1970 he published a short story called *Siete islas para siete dioses (Seven Islands for Seven Gods)* in which he follows the path of these essays, which seek a reinterpretation of the island world, the origin of the islands and their inhabitants, through reconciling scientific discourse and the symbolic and mythical elements within this creationist theory of the islands. This analytical method aims to view the Island in all its complexity, but especially from the viewpoint of the island individual as a descendant of it. Consequently, both its interpretation and its understanding do not derive from only scientific parameters but also from the empathy of islanders with their environment. This historian, as Babcock already had done and especially María Rosa Alonso, builds and engineers an imaginary but credible past, insofar as it is assimilated and shared within the collective memory of the islanders. In this particular case, he intentionally brings myth and reality closer together to cement the imaginary. In this sense, as in the past with the chronicles,[54] the Islands still possess a certain nostalgia for a past that does not exist in fact but which survives in the collective consciousness of the islanders as real, the marvellous origin of the Islands.

The historian himself speaks to us: "[...] these seven Atlantic islands were twins of the Ionian seven, those of the "Iliad". Back to Homer and the *Iliad*. To the classical tradition and, therefore, linked to the shores of the Mediterranean. However, the myth has been

[51] NÚÑEZ DE LA PEÑA, Juan. Conquista y Antigüedades de las islas de la Gran Canaria, Santa Cruz de Tenerife 1847, p. 9.

[52] ROSA ALONSO, San Borondón…, p. 2.

[53] DIEGUES, Ilhas e Mares…, n. p.

[54] TORRIANI, Leonardo. Descripción e historia del reino de las islas Canarias. Santa Cruz de Tenerife 1950, p. 22.

blurred to place itself once again on the marvellous Atlantic and the islands rising up from those shores.

Let us not forget that this is a literary construction, a reflection of the symbology of a cosmos. However, Morales Padrón, within the fable to which he is giving life, seeks the likelihood of what he relates to us through the analytical use which Babcock had already used and mainly through collating what happened with primary sources which support the above. Expressions such as: "On these principles revolve great theories", "subsequent research" or "oral tradition recounts", give the text the required scientific nature to prove the divine, classical and Atlantic origin of the Islands.

Therefore, the scientific nature of the myth constitutes a solid element which allows this historian, also a builder of fables, to justify the mythical origin of the Islands with total credibility with its current inhabitants being the descendants of those blessed men who shared these crags with magnanimous gods, of those who learned the meaning of benevolence and goodness. Each island, undoubtedly:

Was an earthly paradise for those gods, who allowed some men to live and allowed that the souls of the good, dead in the East, went to dwell with them. Blessed was the one who lived there and blessed was he who could live there [...] and as a tourist motto, among the Phoenicians, Greeks, Carthaginians and Romans the slogan ran: "You were not born in the Canary Islands, but you can be reborn in the Canary Islands".[55]

The divine fable that he relates to us ends up blurring the border of the imaginary with the real, linking the fabled plot with the beginnings of European expansion. How could it be otherwise and, like María Rosa Alonso, the link between the two periods is another myth, another symbol inherent in the evocative awareness of the islanders:

It was precisely this navigator god of La Gomera who one day stumbled upon something he believed was his beloved island. Then he saw that no, it was an immense whale – the same one that had carried Jonah in his belly - on which seven Christian bishops were arriving […]. Those seven medieval settlers replaced the seven pagan gods.[56]

From this moment, Morales Padrón finally makes two seemingly antagonistic worlds, the fantastic and the earthly, converge. With the arrival of the Europeans and the Christian faith, the benevolent gods and, with them, the blessed character of the islands disappeared.[57] From then on, its original inhabitants "had to fight against human nature, against the earth to tease out its fruit and against the men of Europe, who, aware of the good weather, invaded the archipelago". In contrast, the arrival of the individuals from the mainland implies the disappearance of the soul that identifies the island, from its isolated, symbolic and imaginary space. The Europeans, anxious to dominate the mythical islands of the Atlantic, paradoxically by swallowing them, turned them into a piece of land within the *Ecumene* and, with this, the island imaginary vanished, and any vestiges of Atlantis disappeared.

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[55] MORALES PADRÓN, Francisco. 30. 12. 1970, p. 12, Siete islas para siete dioses. ABC Sevilla.

[56] MORALES PADRÓN, Siete islas…, p. 12.

[57] AZNAR VALLEJO, Eduardo. Del mar soñado al mar hollado. El redescubrimiento del océano. In Cuadernos del CEMYR, 2007, no. 15, p. 175.

The historical union between two worlds: the island and the mainland.

Since the end of the 14th century the Macaronesian islands become strategic enclaves.[58] They are 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 islands of transit, the border for which is the permeable sea. For the islanders, an energetic and related connection with the outside through the ports and the beaches. This narrow strip of coastline connects the indomitable universe, the immense ocean, with the inland order and civilization. As Diegues points out, the beaches also signify the danger of invasions, the seas, the detritus of the sea and foetid air. […] islands with beaches means the non-civilized, or not domesticated, the rule of the wild, as is the case on the beach of Robinson Crusoe's island.[59]

What converges in the Macaronesian islands, as a fruit of maritimeness, is the complementarity between the island areas providing support for the maintenance of the main mercantile routes, acting as strategic enclaves.[60] In this regard, the islands of Macaronesia formed an essential terrain to feed and boost transatlantic circulation. For example, for the Modern Age, the island of Santiago was, in this context, a storage point for African goods (slaves, wax, ivory, etc.) waiting to be re-exported to other destinations (Portugal, Castile, Madeira, the Canary Islands, Flanders, etc.), or conversely, a place to temporarily store products of European origin (cloths, horses, jewellery, etc.), to be subsequently re-sent to the coast of Guinea.[61]

Therefore, the improvement of an area – in this case the islands – does not depend on its size or geographical location, or even the importance of internal production as a commodity for outside the island which must be qualified. The attraction of certain islands, such as those in the Macaronesian region, is their ability to cross distant paths, redistribute products and promote migratory flows. As Correia e Silva points out, the islands themselves do not generate any contribution as long as they are not connected to other areas. As in a chess game, a pawn can become essential for the king's survival:

Places whose value and importance are contrasted with the reduced physical dimension or the limited endogenous wealth possessed. As in a game of chess, the value of a piece depends less on the possibilities provided to it *a priori*, by the rules, than a certain momentary configuration present on the chessboard. A mere pawn can thus suddenly become essential to the survival of the king which, so to speak, is vital to the reproduction of any economic-political setup.But in a chessboard, like the geo-economic complex, setups are altered. All stability is precarious. An uninteresting area, barely in demand yesterday, could be converted, almost from one day to the next, into an effervescent centre of convergence to then, years, decades or even centuries later, becoming a place of decadence, gradually losing, in an accelerated manner, the economic, political or cultural vitality that it has intensely hosted.[62]

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[58] VIEIRA, Las Islas y el mundo atlántico, p. 309.

[59] DIEGUES, Ilhas e Mares…, p. 182.

[60] VIEIRA, Alberto. Madeira y Canarias. Rutas de ida y vuelta, Funchal: Centro de Estudos de História do Atlântico, 2006.

[61] CORREIA E SILVA, António. Espaço, ecologia e economia interna. In MADEIRA SANTOS, Maria Emília – ALBUQUERQUE, Luis (eds.). História geral de Cabo Verde I. Lisbon 1991, p. 199.

[62] CORREIA E SILVA, António. Cabo Verde e a geopolítica do Atlântico. In MADEIRA SANTOS, Maria Emília (ed.). História geral de Cabo Verde II. Lisbon 1995, p. 2.

For a historical analysis, in addition, the coastal *limes* -the border of the island territory- is the area that acts as a nexus with the outside.[63] A place of movement and exchange, but not of production. Port cities are especially dynamic areas where everything changes. They are enclaves that act as intermediaries between the interior, agriculture, and exterior markets. Therefore, the inhabitants of port locations – such as the port of La Orotava in Tenerife, Funchal in Madeira or Angra in Terceira – do not live from direct production, but from the exchanges of what was produced by foreign products on the island.[64] Hence, these inhabitants are mostly dedicated to trade, both large-scale and retail, as well as other services linked to this commercial flow. Consequently, it is the people, neighbours and non-resident, who carry out this communication between the island world and the exterior. As Herzog pointed out: "[The] mercantile activities greatly modified the meaning and extension of citizenship".[65] This mutual interest, of the islander for the external supplies and that of the foreigners for controlling part of the products that arrive at this maritime port, will give rise to the formation of a mixed society in these ports in which the exogenous individual will be as important as the native.[66]

Those who forge this union between the two worlds, the island and the mainland, are individuals from the sea. An amphibious community which connects ports and societies.[67] These individuals have spent most of their lives at sea, which has endowed them with a different view of the area with which they interact. The behaviour and organizational model of the group of sailors are completely different from other groups. Experiences acquired through contacts with other peoples and continents are infinitely more extensive than the locals, even the urban populations with few chances of travelling. The rules of life on land, the warnings of the local parish priest, the power of local authorities hardly matter to seamen living under collective isolation.[68]

These maritime societies have their own symbolic representation of the territory in which they live. This imaginary is constructed, according to the period, from images or referential symbols, which may be different from those used by mainland societies. Even in the same island society, the native islanders have a different vision of the territory than that created by the outsiders who have settled there – like the Portuguese who arrive in the Canary Islands during the Iberian Union[69]– since they migrate at a specific period of their lives and, therefore, with acquired experiences.[70] Not even those born on other islands mix in completely in other island territories since each island is a symbolic universe of its own, constructed from its own references and its own affinity with the environment. Thus, for example, there are island societies – mainly on large islands such as Great Britain, Australia

[63] RUMEU DE ARMAS, Antonio. Crónica: Actividades del Patronato de la Casa de Colón. In Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos, 1958, no. 4, p. 622.

[64] VIEIRA, Portugal…, 1992.

[65] HERZOG, Tamar. Merchants and Citizens. On the making and Un -making of merchants in early-modern Spain and Spanish America. In Journal of european economic history, 2013, no. 42, p. 13.

[66] HESPANHA, António Manuel. Filhos da Terra: Identidades Mestiças nos Confins da Expansão Portuguesa. Lisbon 2019, p. 31.

[67] VIEIRA, Alberto. As ilhas: da Nissologia à Nesologia. In Anuário do Centro de Estudos de História do Atlântico, 2010, no. 2, p. 18.

[68] DIEGUES, Ilhas e Mares…, p. 69.

[69] ÁLVAREZ SANTOS, Javier Luis. Identidad insular y espacio atlántico. Portugal y Tenerife en tiempos de la Unión Ibérica. Madrid 2019.

[70] DIEGUES, Ilhas e Mares…, p. 7.

or Japan – whose inhabitants have forgotten or can ignore that they live on an island. But if we apply this principle of the transposition of an insular environment to another as applied to the Atlantic islands – let us think of those from Madeira or the Azores in the Canary Islands – the cultural baggage incorporated by these islanders, although similar, still differs in terms of language, religious practices, etc. However, above all, because it involves an adaptive process which begins by leaving a homogeneous parental community or group to establish themselves as individuals in a different social framework.

The historical perceptions of the island universe

In this island imaginary there are some recurring patterns and elements. Complex references such as mother and son associated with the sea and the island. María Rosa Alonso,[71] in the aforementioned text *San Borondón a la vista*, glimpses femininity, the maternal-filial relationship between water and land: "The island is prey and bewitchment, feminine flavour, offering and escape". The islander arises from the entrails of the sea, as confirmed by another islander of Macaronesia, Vitorino Nemésio:

I am glad to have been born by the sea, it seems to me an omen of freedom and exchange. He wrote the truth. And even more so when you are born, better than by the sea, in the very bosom and boundlessness of the sea.[72]

The almost virgin birth in the heart of the ocean is an archetype, a myth which Campbell considers part of the cultural history of humanity,[73] and which the Macaronesian authors have used to emotionally engage the individual with his environment. In this sense, both Vitorino Nemésio and María Rosa Alonso ventured in their literary texts to include McCall's plea and Baldacchino's claim, for whom the islanders are the best guardians of their surroundings.[74]

Diegues, as a sociologist, underscores and suggests that the sea represents the island's protective uterus for the islanders.[75] This is verified in numerous legends and myths in which the presence of the sea and the island appear as symbolic elements in the construction of the cosmos and in its cultural genesis.

It is imperative that the geographical composition of the islands be analyzed in relation to their economic and social contexts, both regionally and within the broader Atlantic framework. Regardless of the crown that governs them, the economic and social relationships between the Macaronesian islands have been crucial in defining their identity as a region or regions, as perceived by the insular communities. The geographical location of these islands makes them strategic points for trade and migration, directly influencing their economic structure and social dynamics. Simultaneously, the geographical proximity or distance and the fluidity of contacts between islands have shaped the insular imaginary regarding the composition of Macaronesia. This interdependence between geography, economy, and society is essential for understanding insular identity. Thus, in the Azores, some essayists and historians of Modernity – such as Gaspar Frutuoso himself – speak of

[71] ROSA ALONSO, María. San Borondón a la vista. In Gánigo: Poesía y arte, 1953, no. 4, p. 2.
[72] NEMÉSIO, Vitorino. Açorianidade. In Ínsula, 1932, no. 7-8, p. 59.
[73] CAMPBELL, Joseph. El poder del mito. Barcelona 1988, p. 21.
[74] BALDACCHINO, Godfrey. Studying Islands: On Whose Terms? Some Epistemological and Methodological Challenges to the Pursuit of Island Studies. In Island Studies Journal, 2008, no.1, p. 49.
[75] DIEGUES, Ilhas e Mares…, p. 8.

seven islands and not nine. The islands of Flores and Corvo are too far from the Azorean cosmos to be included within the archipelago. On the contrary, Leonardo Torriani includes Madeira and Porto Santo, like other islands, in the book *Descripción e historia del reino de las islas Canarias*. These chroniclers do nothing more than insist on the construction of a supra-archipelago or own region linked through constant migratory flows, mercantile interdependence and, ultimately, the complementarity between areas, which would correspond to the configuration of Macaronesia.[76]

The islands are an imagined and mythified territory, both for the islanders and for the outsiders. The islands are even territories prone to the construction of fables and mysteries by mainland individuals who have never set foot on them. For the islanders, the island stands as a world in miniature on which a complete and perfect image of the cosmos is reflected. A mythified universe which is founded on an almost sacramental value. In the islands – such as the ones analysed here – far removed from various mainland societies, foundational myths are created and reconstructed. This discourse, this own vision inherent to the island area, is used by the islanders – such as those from the Canary Islands during the Former Regime – to address the "other", the kingdom and its metropolis. The essays analysed here are nothing more than an effort to make the distant King understand this construction of the island world projected by its own inhabitants. The continuous missives sent by the government of the island of Tenerife to the Monarch are an attempt by the governing bodies of the island to transmit an island ideal, which is symbolic as well as real for the conscience of the island collective, which repeatedly clashes with perception and myth – and the demands arising from him – assimilated across the sea, on the European mainland.

The composition of modern Macaronesian society

Every individual who has not been born on an island is a foreigner, an intruder. According to Diegues, the concept of ‚islandness' includes a symbolic representation of insularity that often distinguishes between native islanders and outsiders.[77] This distinction can influence how individuals are perceived and integrated into insular societies, highlighting the importance of identity and belonging in these contexts. The idea of ‚islandness' encompasses both the physical isolation of islands and the cultural and social dynamics that arise from this isolation. It reflects the unique ways in which island communities interact with their environment and with each other, creating a distinct sense of identity that is shaped by both internal and external factors.

Consequently, the construction of the island identity involves contrast with the other, the non-islander. An isolated island society – like the pre-European Canarian aboriginal – has no awareness of insularity, while contact with the outsider provides the islander with an awareness of their belonging to an island and, therefore, in the development of an island identity. In this way, the fluid contacts between islands of Macaronesia, which are complementary and which, moreover, were dependent during the Iberian Union, promoted between the Castilian and Portuguese islanders not only a feeling of belonging to

[76] VIERA Y CLAVIJO, José de. Noticias de la Historia General de las Islas Canarias. Santa Cruz de Tenerife 1950, p. 512.

[77] DIEGUES, Ilhas e Mares…, p. 41.

a supranational Iberian monarchy,[78] but also a sensitivity of belonging to the same island region formed by a Portuguese and Spanish population of extrapeninsular origin with its nexus being its insularity.[79] The island concept would arise at this historical moment in Macaronesia, as similarly presented by Baldacchino with its divisions in terms of gender, class, race and even of nation or kingdom.[80]

Correia e Silva,[81] in addition, extends the definition of these islands according to the period of the settlement of the people on the islands. Together with the native inhabitants, he distinguishes between "*estantes*" (non-resident) and "*instantes*" (transient) according to their temporal relationship with the island territory. The designation "*instantes*" refers to the part of the population whose link to the territory is extremely precarious and fluid, people who are in the islands in transit to other parts. These are an important part of the foreign population which passes through the islands, people linked to Atlantic movement and who boost an interdependent network of economies. On the contrary, "*estante*" refers to those individuals who settle on the islands for a limited period, whether predefined or not.

The composition of modern Macaronesian society is the result of a constant migration process which has taken place since European occupation.[82] To understand the make-up of this population, it is not enough to list the different immigrant groups which have arrived at the islands, or even to describe the contributions of one group or another. It is necessary, in these permeable and frontier societies, as Fajardo Spínola establishes in the case of the Canary Islands, to "[…] distinguish, order and rank those contributions, analyse the social, cultural and institutional framework […] which immigrants joined, and the way they did so".[83]

In the words of Diegues,[84] this society forming on the islands lives in a "particular ecological niche". That is, the island is to the community what the mainland is to society. Islanders cross borders and boundaries that are not perceived by mainlanders, circumstances which have resulted in particular strategies in the search for development – such as complementarity between the islands of Macaronesia – and solving indigenous conflicts in these small territories. For those who arrive and settle down, it may be the case that the island is that paradisiacal territory or which has that fictional projection of another world which they had imagined. After all, the island – like any home – can become a fragile and unstable place where you have to carry out your daily life.

The transposition of an emigrant from a mainland to an island is a complex phenomenon, although it is part of a homogeneous movement of emigrants. As Magalhães Godinho explains,[85] there is an adaptation process even regarding the landscape itself which ends

[78] HESPANHA, António Manuel. Filhos da Terra: Identidades Mestiças nos Confins da Expansão Portuguesa. Lisbon 2019, p. 37.

[79] HERZOG, Merchants and Citizens…, p. 168.

[80] BALDACCHINO, Studying Islands…, p. 50.

[81] CORREIA E SILVA, Espaço, ecologia e economia …, p. 234.

[82] ELLIOTT, John. Huxtable. En búsqueda de la historia atlántica. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria 2001, p. 22.

[83] FAJARDO SPÍNOLA, Francisco. Inmigración e integración en Canarias en la Edad Moderna. In GALVÁN TUDELA, José Alberto (ed.). Migraciones e integración cultural. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria 2009, p. 173-198.

[84] DIEGUES, Ilhas e Mares…, p. 97.

[85] MAGALHÃES GODINHO, Vitorino. As historiografias insulares: presente e futuro. In I Colóquio Internacional de História da Madeira (1986). Funchal 1989, p. 1390.

up being felt in a different manner. Although the tendency to continue with old routines persists, they must be adapted to new situations. As Vieira points out,

From the 14th century the Peninsular Monarchs were to discover the islands of the Atlantic sand to embark on disputes for their colonisation. Heedless of this, the population, settled, created permanent bonds of family, relations and interaction in the commercial field, thus defining mechanisms, complementarities, which were seldom understood by those who lived and still live on the mainland.[86]

As Pietschmann pointed out:

First it seems important, that both powers had acquired and settled all the Atlantic arquipelagos situated comparatively close to Europe and Africa very early […]. They became important intermediaries in the process of expansion and transatlantic shipping.[87]

In the case of the Atlantic islands, the fact that they belonged to peninsular kingdoms caused the island societies to develop differently from subjects in other parts of the Monarchy, with a European culture and way of life, but where the distancing from the mainland – and from the metropolis – caused the islands to produce their own social configuration, linked on the periphery and with determinant geographical characteristics.

As Martínez Shaw pointed out:

Islands have their own singularity, have many specific functions, but at the same time Islands fully take part in the rich process that both built up an Atlantic system, and contributed to the birth of the first globalisation or, rather, of an authentic first World History.[88]

Conclusion

This interpretative analysis of island worlds, especially in European historiography, was for a long time placed outside the major descriptive processes. The islands were not much more than mere anecdotes – such as their size – located at the limits of civilization and, therefore, on the edges of the main historical debates. For nineteenth-century historiography, obsessed with telling the great stories and extolling their protagonists, there was no place to evoke the small spaces, which lay even further away from Civilization in these stories. The islands, consequently, were relegated to the background of historical formulation. The island, as the subject of analysis, rather succumbed to a new isolation.

However, as Braudel pointed out: "The main history, in fact, frequently passes through the islands; perhaps it would be fairer, perhaps, to say that it uses them".[89] Conversely, the search for the definition of the island world, based on the actual islander imaginary, is a subject of reflection for the interpretation of these societies, both to understand their origin and their worldview, and to define the parameters that unite the island spaces with the outside and, consequently, with that which is foreign.

In conclusion, this study has shown that the insular identity of the Macaronesian islands has been shaped by both local experiences and external influences. By applying a

[86] VIEIRA, Alberto. Reconstrução e desconstrução do mundo insular do Atlântico Oriental. Séculos XV e XVI. In Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos, 2012, no. 58, p. 134.

[87] PIETSCHMANN, Introduction…, p. 15.

[88] MARTÍNEZ SHAW, Carlos. La multifuncionalidad de las islas en la primera mundialización. El prestigio de las islas. In Anuário do Centro de Estudos de História do Atlântico, 2011, no. 3, p. 819.

[89] BRAUDEL, Fernand. El Mediterráneo y el Mundo Mediterráneo en la época de Felipe II. Mexico 1976, p. 203.

constructivist and nesological approach, this research has gained a deeper understanding of how these islands have navigated their unique geographical and historical contexts. Continuous interaction with their maritime environment and neighboring regions had been crucial in the construction of cultural narratives and historical identities. Additionally, this study proposes a methodology for transnational island research, integrating multidisciplinary perspectives to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis. This approach will help to uncover the complex ways in which insular identities are formed and maintained, offering insights into the historical and cultural development of island communities.

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