

The Other's portrait and historical truth in classical authors and Portuguese 16th Century chroniclers

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RES Antiquitatis 1 (2019): 4-13

Abstract

A portrait of the Other can be seen throughout the literature of classical antiquity, from Homer to the Roman authors, in an implicit awareness that identity cannot exist without alterity. This is a core question in the *Iliad*, in the conflict that pitted Greeks against Trojans. It is also a recurring subject in the *Odyssey*, in the Other's (Ulysses') wanderings, from Troy to his return to Ithaca. The quest for the Golden Fleece also contemplates the confrontation between Argonauts and the arrival to Colchis. This issue is taken up in Greek historiography with Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, but now with a focus on historical truth, with the internal conflict between Athenians and Spartans (Thucydides) and the external conflict between Athenians and Persians (Herodotus, Xenophon).

In the same way that Virgil directs his attention to Carthage and Queen Dido in his epic poem the *Aeneid*, foreseeing a future conflict, the Punic Wars, Roman historiography, with Titus Livius, Sallust, and Julius Caesar's memoirs of the conquest of Gaul, dedicate particular attention to the portrait of the Other as a counterpoint to the awareness of identity.

Historical truth, in terms of heuristics (*documentum*) and exemplary Ciceronian pedagogy (*monumentum*), is, on the other hand, the main concern of Roman historiography, as a favored form of civic intervention to attain a national identity (*res romana*).

Having inherited this methodological approach from Classical Antiquity, 16th century Portuguese chroniclers like João de Barros, Fernão Lopes de Castanheda, Gaspar Correia and Diogo do Couto, and others, link historiography sources to the issue of national identity and alterity.

The objective of this paper is to examine how the 16th century Portuguese chroniclers assimilated Classical Antiquity, in an explicit and implicit way.

Keywords: alterity, identity, sources, historical truth, exemplary pedagogy.

Date of submission: 3/1/2018

Date of approval: 8/3/2018

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Introduction

In this paper we will analyze the 16th century Portuguese chroniclers' treatment of two core questions in the writings of Classical authors: the portrait of the Other, and historical truth. These questions were important for both groups of authors, as they have been vital for historical and autobiographical narrative throughout the ages.

The portrait of the Other implies the awareness of individual identity, in a collective sense, while historical truth is the main concern of any historian and includes a heuristic research of the relevant sources.

In this way the Classical authors leave an invaluable humanist legacy that is espoused by the Portuguese chroniclers of the 16th century, conscious that it is the greatest of spiritual riches.

The portrait of the Other

The Europeans' re-discovery at the end of the second millennium of the importance of the representation of the Other in history and literature, generated by the complex phenomenon of intercontinental expansion, was a contribution to the creation and consolidation of Europe's political and cultural identity.

From the bibliography about exoticism in French literature, pioneer in the studies of literary theory, we can distinguish the books of Todorov (Todorov 1989) and Jean-Marc Moura (Moura 1992). The first author analyzes the dialectic in nationalism and liberalism, racism and exoticism, humanism and anti-humanism, tolerance and intolerance, freedom and despotism. As an alternative to this historical dialectic trend, he proposes a moderate humanism which combines the equality of human rights with a hierarchy of values; individual freedom and independence with solidarity; public morality with tolerance: "Un humanisme bien tempéré pourrait nous garantir contre les errements d'hier et d'aujourd'hui" (Todorov 1989, 436). The second author reserves the term exotic to the contact with cultures outside of Europe (Moura 1992, 14), as identified by Paul Valéry ("Pour que ce nom produise à l'esprit de quelqu'un son plein et entier effet, il faut sur toute chose n'avoir jamais été dans la contrée mal déterminée qu'il désigne » Bezombes 1953, cit.

¹ This paper had the support of CHAM (FCSH/NOVA-UAc), through the strategic project sponsored by FCT (UID/HIS/04666/2013).

in Moura 1992, III), literary exoticism as a reverie of something faraway: «D'une manière générale, on entendra donc par exotisme une rêverie qui s'attache à un espace lointain et se réalise dans une écriture» (Moura 1992, 4). In this perspective, literary exoticism is clearly favoured in the Age of the Discoveries, in contrast to the mythical space of Antiquity and the Middle Ages, on the one hand, and the interior space of the Romantic and post-Romantic period, on the other hand (Moura 1992, 16-17).

However, the portrait of the Other can be seen throughout the literature of Classical antiquity, from Homer to the Romans, in an implicit awareness that there is no identity without alterity.

It is a core question in the *Iliad*, in the conflict between Greeks and Trojans. In Book 6 the narrator describes a domestic scene of great tenderness and intimacy in which the Trojan hero Hector bids farewell to his son before going off to war. Seeing his father's fearsome aspect with "bronze and a horse hair plume" (VI, 469, Pereira 1995, 25), the child cries to his nurse, while the parents laugh at their son's reaction, and the father seizes the moment to pray to Zeus, after kissing his beloved son and rocking him in his arms: "Zeus (...), grant me that my son / be like me, and distinguished among the Trojans, / become strong and govern Ilion with his power" (VI, 476-478, Pereira 1995, 25). In contrast with this intimate scene, at the end of the story, in Book 24 Achilles' is characterized by his cruel vengeance when he carries out the ritual of dragging Hector's body "three times around the tomb / of the son of Menoetius" (XXIV, 16-17, Pereira 1995, 43), that is, his friend Patroclus, who had been defeated by the Trojan hero.

This is also a recurring question in the *Odyssey*, in the adventures of the Other, from Troy to Ulysses' return to Ithaca. Among the nations described by the narrator, he extols the Phaeacians in utopian terms. After imploring to Athena that he be welcomed with friendship and compassion (*Od.*, VI, 324-327), Ulysses encounters in the court of the "magnanimous" king Alcinous a palace with "bronze walls", "a blue enamel frieze", "gold gates", silver sides, "dogs in gold and silver" forged by Hephaestus "with his subtle art" (VI, 85-92, *in Ib.*, 68). The gardens, with their "tall lush trees", are the realization of the golden age, for "never do they stop bearing fruit / neither in winter or summer, they are unending" (VII, 114. 117-118, *in Ib.*, 69). As a welcomed guest, the "divine Ulysses, who has greatly suffered" (VI, 133, *in Ib.*), is received with "numerous feasts" (VII, 176, *in Ib.*, 70) in which the libations of the gods are not lacking (VII, 180, *in Ib.*, 71), nor the offerings of hospitality (VIII, 387-395, *in Ib.*, 73).

The quest for the Golden Fleece also contemplates the confrontation between the Argonauts, and the arrival in Colchis, a region south of the Caucasus and east of the Black Sea, the modern-day Republic of Georgia, and where in Greek mythology the Golden Fleece was located. The Golden Fleece was a gift of the gods that brought prosperity to its owner. Jason travelled aboard his ship Argo, from Argos, next to Corinth in the Peloponnesian, until he found the treasure, having received help from the sorceress Medea, daughter of king Aetes, who had fallen in love with him. The image of the Other marked by conflict is thus averted with love. In the poem written by Apollonius of Rhodes (c. 295 to 230 B.C), Hera and Athena call upon Aphrodite to help the Greeks obtain their objective, not by force or cunning, but with love (*Argonautica* III, 36-100). Medea's dream pits daughter against

father in the conflict with the outsiders: “But both were inclined / towards proceeding according to her wish / And suddenly, without regard for the parents, she chose / the outsider” (*Ib.*, 628-631, *in Ib.*, 461).

Greek historiography, with Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, takes up this issue again, now with a focus on historical truth, with the internal conflict between Athenians and Spartans (Thucydides) and the external conflict between Athenians and Persians (Herodotus and Xenophon).

The Lydian king, Croesus, admirer of the Greek sage Solon, is forgiven by Cyrus, king of Persia, when he realizes that Croesus was saved by Apollo after a sudden rain put out the flames of the pyre where he had been condemned to burn to death for raising an army against the Persians. When questioned about his motifs for going to war, Croesus answers: “Oh King, I proceeded thus for your good fortune and my misfortune. The culprit of this was the god of the Greeks, who incited me to go to war. For no one is foolish enough to prefer war to peace” (Herodotus, *Book I*, *in Ib.*, 221).

After the insolence of Cambyses and the magus, the Persians discuss the best form of government: monarchy, oligarchy or democracy. Incredulous, the Greeks hear Otanes prefer a democratic isonomy, like that of Athens, while Megabyzus expresses his preference for an oligarchy, and Darius favors a monarchy. After being outvoted, Otanes gives up his power on the condition that, neither himself nor his descendants, be subjected to the orders of the interlocutors (*Id.*, *Book III*, 80-83, *in Ib.*, 500-502).

The Athenian author Thucydides praises the overthrow of the Greek tyrannies, with the exception of the Sicilian one, by the Lacedaemonians (Thucydides, *Book I*, X, 2, *in Ib.*, 293). The falling-out between the two groups, after the Thirty Years' Peace Treaty signed following the taking of Euboea, may have been caused by the Lacedaemonians' fear of Athenian empowerment (*Id.*, *in Ib.*, XXIII, 4-6, *in Ib.*, 294).

Conscious of the importance of harmonious social interaction, Xenophon declares that “eulogy is the sweetest sound of all” (Xenophon, 1832, *Hiero*, ch. 3, 626). In his work *Anabasis* he shows his affiliation to the Ten Thousand, an army of mercenaries recruited by Cyrus to overthrow his brother Artaxerxes II. In this condition he is able to penetrate the web of intrigues to seize power and witness the various images of the Other.

Similarly, in his epic poem *Aeneas*, Virgil turns his attention to Carthage and Queen Dido, prophesying a conflict that would result in the Punic Wars. Ilioneus, the oldest Trojan among Aeneas' followers, recognizes in the foundress of Carthage a gift of Jupiter to “restrain proud nations through justice” (*Aen.*, I, 524, Virgil 2011, 32). By welcoming the strangers, the compassionate queen shows that she does not make a “distinction between Tyrians and Trojans” (*Ib.*, I, 574-575, *in Ib.*: 33), while she prepares a great reception for the hero with whom she will fall in love (*Ib.*, 630-651).

Roman historiography, with Titus Livius, Sallust and Julius Caesar's autobiographic literature about Gaul, also focuses on the portrait of the Other as a counterpoint of identity.

Hannibal, Phillip V of Macedonia, and Perseus are enemies of Rome who merit considerable attention by the psychologist-painter Titus Livius. Perseus is characterized by

a series of moral flaws, of which avarice is particularly conspicuous “ipse pecuniae quam regni melior custos”, a better guardian of riches than of the kingdom – T. Live, 1998, *L. XLIV, 26, 12*; Cf. *XLIV, 27, 12*), although in the view of his adversary Eumenes, he also has an undeniable aptitude for leadership (Id., *LIV, 25, 3*).

Despite being an ally of the Romans in the war of Numantia, Jugarta, grandnephew of the king of Numidia, appears in Sallust's work *Bellum Iugurthinum* as a cruel, corrupt and ambitious character. His qualities as a warrior are overridden by his discernible defects. In fact, following the death of the king, he proceeds to eliminate the legitimate heirs to the throne, Hiempsal and Adherbal, (the later having attempted to seek refuge in Rome). He is eventually betrayed by his ally Bocchus, king of Mauritania, who delivers him to the Romans. The *excursos* about the multi-party regime (“mos partium et factionum”) explains the decadence of the *res publica* caused by internal dissent (Sallust, 2007, *Bellum Iurguthinum*, XLI-XLII).

In his *Commentarii Rerum Gestarum*, Julius Caesar recounts his military campaigns in Gaul between 58 and 52 B.C.E. in a form of memoir. His *excursos* on Gauls and Germans present a very different image of the Other from the Romans, but not lacking civilization and religion (J. Caesar, 2009. *L. VI, passim*).

Having inherited this ethno-anthropological aspect from Classical Antiquity, the 16th century Portuguese chroniclers give a great deal of attention to the issue of national identity and alterity, and portraying the Other, whether African, Asian or Amerindian, assumes undisputed relevance.

In the first volume of his chronicle *Decadas da Asia*, João de Barros describes *Caramança* (Kwamin Ansah), the lord of São Jorge da Mina, center of a thriving gold trade, wearing gold bracelets and rings on his arms and legs, and a gold neckpiece. His court reinforces these symbols of power: his entourage “in war dress, with a great clamor of drums, horns, bells and other things, which hurt the ears more than it delighted them” (Barros 1778, I, I, III, I, 157). His deliberate gait is part of the solemn ritual of this portrait: “The continence of this person is to come in slow strides, one foot in front of the other, with no movement of the head” (Barros 1778, I, I, III, I, 158). The way he receives the visitors holds a hierarchical meaning: “after wetting the finger in their mouth and wiping it on their chest, they touched him, which is done from the least to the most important person, at the end of the greeting ...; because they say that there could be poison on this finger if they don't clean it first in this manner” (Barros 1778, I, I, III, I, 159). Despite his prudent reluctance to having a Portuguese fortress built in his territories, and suspicious about being baptized, *Caramança* is finally persuaded by Diogo de Azambuja's argument (Barros 1778, I, I, III, I, 159-170).

Pêro Vaz de Caminha provides the king with the cultural novelty of the discovery of the Brazilian Indians, with a physical description of their skin, face and feathered head-dresses, the innocence of their nakedness and their weapons (bows and arrows) (Caminha 1974, 89-91).

Diogo de Couto's description of Zamorin reflects the Asian penchant for luxury and social ostentation as a proof of authority:

“He carried on his body many riches, on his arms he wore many bracelets with precious stones that went from his elbows to his wrists and were so heavy that he required an attendant to hold each arm. From his neck hung a necklace of immeasurable value. In his ears he wore heavy earring with beautiful rubies and diamonds that extended to his shoulders, whereby he carried on himself immense richness” (Couto 1778, Déc. XII, L. IV, C. I, 352-353).

Likewise, the riches of the king of Brahma were a display of his political power after his victory over the kingdom of Pegu (Couto 1778, Déc. XII, L. IV, C. I, 465-466).

Heuristics and historical truth (documentum)

The word history (*istoria* in Greek) was coined by Herodotus; it entailed the exposition of information and included analyzing the causes of what were considered to be historical facts and recording great feats with a moralizing and edifying objective. Thus, historical truth underlies these motivations:

“This is the exposition of information of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, with the objective that the feats of men not be erased over time, and that grandiose and admirable acts, be it of the Greeks or the Barbarians, don’t lose their significance; and especially, the reason why they entered into conflict with each other.” (Pereira 1995, 217)

Thucydides, referring to the conflict between Athenians and Spartans, searches for the origin and reasons that were at its root. As always, political and social issues take precedence in historical research, analyzed by the Athenian historian in the light of social psychology, going beyond a superficial vision of the parties involved and their official discourse:

“(The war) began when the thirty-year treaty that had been signed after the capture of Euboea between Athenians and Peloponnesians, was broken. To explain this breach, I first wrote about the causes and reasons for the misunderstanding, so that the question of how this great war between Greeks originated would not arise one day. In fact, the truest cause is the least obvious. I think that the Athenians became powerful, and began to infuse fear among the Lacedaemonians, forcing them into war with each other. The motifs that were declared publicly by both parties to make them renounce the treaty are those I enumerate.” (Thucydides, 1942, *Book I*, XXIII, 4-6.)

Historical truth, from the perspective of heuristics (*documentum*) and exemplary Ciceronian pedagogy (*monumentum*), is also a leading concern of Roman historiography as the preferred form of civic intervention for attaining a national identity (*res romana*).

In the preface of his monumental work, Titus Livius reports the facts (*alii...alii*) and the collected traditions (*fertur...fama est*), reflecting this heuristic concern. Facing the cultural legacy of the founding legends and myths, and not forgetting the Ciceronian distinction between historical truth and poetry (Cícero, 2008. *De Legibus*, I, 5), he doesn’t fall into the temptation of adhering to the charm of these

poetic fables which obscure the precision of historical facts ("Praefatio", 6), asserting his prudence and neutrality: "ea nec adfirmare nec refellere in animo est" (*ib.*). In an impressive anticipation of the modern historical-cultural reassessment of mythology, whose pillars were Mircea Eliade and Georges Dumézil, there is substantiation of the importance of identity of the *mythos*, in terms of a contamination with the *logos*, associating religion and history in the cultural heritage of a people: "Datur haec uenia antiquitati ut miscendo humana diuinis primordia urbium augustiora faciat" – exonerating antiquity from the mixture between the most august human origins and the divine of the cities (*Ib.*, 7). In the case of the Roman people, for the historian of the Augustan era, this foundational legitimacy is clearly supported by the military greatness of the power in question, as if defying unbelievers and agnostics, for if they don't believe in divine intervention at least they should open their eyes to the proof of uncontested supremacy (*ib.*). Relativizing the question posed (*Ib.*, 8), he focuses his attention on the cultural element of his work: ethno-anthropological, socio-political and psycho-cultural. Once again, the convergence with current times, now with the self-designated New *History* trend (*Ib.*, 9).

This is also the mental framework of the *Decadas Da Asia* by João de Barros, João Baptista Lavanha, Diogo do Couto and António Bocarro. Comparing history to a field in which all the sciences have been sown, Barros, alluding to the pedagogical character of this interdisciplinary art, points out that with "all the divine, moral, rational and instrumental doctrine sown", "those who eat the fruit will acquire the understanding and memory for a just cause and perfect life, to please God and men" (Barros 1777, Dec. III, P. I, "Prologue").

However, a search for the truth does not prevent the narrator from getting personally involved in history, as exemplified by Titus Livius, who feels relieved when he reaches the end of the Punic Wars, as if he had actually been living the dangers and exhaustion of the military adventure (1998, L. XXXI, 1,1). At the beginning of the history of the republican era, he ponders two conflicting values: freedom and concordance. While one had the special flavor of a tough conquest (L. II, 1, 1), the other could easily be put in jeopardy in such a new nation (*Ib.*, 6).

Similarly, the Portuguese chroniclers, independently of the censorship issue, feel free to express their judgement about the facts, praising and criticizing their national heroes. Let us recall the constant use of satire by authors like Fernão Mendes Pinto and Diogo do Couto to condemn people's avarice, which is tragically punished by destiny in frequent shipwrecks. João de Barros felt freer as a historian than as a panegyrist:

"Those who speak generally of kings are not subject to any laws, nor is anything more expected of them. They have all the freedom they want, taking and leaving what they feel like, without ever being punished; (...) but the panegyric is not like that; ... he must give equal praise to people's merits; an author who fails to do this is at great fault, either because he considers the undertaking beneath him, or because he doesn't want to give him due credit; he who praises a good prince too little is as guilty as he who speaks badly of him." (Barros 1943, 160).

For Titus Livius this commitment to *veritas* does not affect the literary objective of the historian. Recognizing that contemporary readers' interest in Roman proto-history is not very strong ("Praefatio", 4), he nevertheless provides in his work the advantage of offering an alternative to the degrading spectacle of recent history ("a conspectu malorum quae nostra tot per anos uidit aetas" – *Ib.*, 5).

Diogo do Couto fully espouses this same commitment, which is not always easy for a historian as it most often brings hassles, incomprehension and persecution², a posture also adopted in the 17th century by António Bocarro, for whom history is the *soul of life*³. João de Barros, despite contesting the excessive prophetic denunciation of past and present evils with his aristocratic ideology⁴, that he recognized in Titus Livius⁵, and others, complains, like Couto, of being a victim of that incomprehension and ingratitude on the part of his fellow citizens in regard to his work.⁶

After completing the first five volumes of his work, Titus Livius assesses the difficulties encountered so far: excessive temporal distance, scarcity of written records, single loyal guardians of historical facts, destruction by fire of most of the pontifical records and other public and private documents (Lívio *Ib.*: L. VI, 1,2). After that (385 B.C.E.) he is reassured by what he calls the second founding of the City, the metaphor of the tree that is reborn, given the conditions of clearer certainty regarding the subject to be narrated (*Ib.*, 1, 3).

Comparable, and perhaps more lamentable difficulties are disclosed by Diogo do Couto about the negligence of the governors of Goa in regard to historical documents which should have figured in the archives of the *Torre do Tombo* of Portuguese India (Couto 1973, 84-85), a regret later confirmed after his death by the viceroy Francisco da Gama at the

² Regarding the king's decision to order Fernão Lopes de Castanheda's volume to be seized, "by request of several Noblemen" who were thought to have been present in the second siege of Diu, "because I spoke the truth", complains the chronicler, reaffirming his steadfast commitment to historical truth: "Writers are exposed to these and other risks when they write about the actions of men who are still living; that is why we right less fearfully of things in the past (as the King ordered us to do) than events in the present, which we have also written, and thus in all of them we will not stop speaking because of respect or fear; and since at some point some of our volumes will be ordered to be seized, there will be others that speak of the deeds" (Couto 1973: 330).

³ "Nothing is more inherent to the duty of a chronicler than the obligation to proceed with his story with the true knowledge of all these things, and he should be so well-informed that not even the smallest intimate secret of the prince and his counsellors should be concealed from him; because history is the soul of life, so that those living today can learn from the past and order and structure the future" (Bocarro 1876, 5).

⁴ "The first and most important part of History is truth; and although some things don't require so much, in the name of justice, which results in cruelty, especially things that slander someone, even if they are true (Barros 1973, *Prologue to Década III*).

⁵ "As to concealing the cases, and the misfortunes that happened to the Prince, the people who should be praised for not deposing him, and twisting things and slandering his name, ... While Titus Livius' first report on how the French took Rome is eulogized, in the second he gained little by saying that they invaded Italy because of the wine, which was blasphemous. Recounting such prodigies, that Titus Livius, who wrote about them in his history, doesn't create them, a vice which Caesar also fell into for boasting about his feats, this is so strange in History that it suffers from hyperbole" (*ib.*).

⁶ "To those who dislike our work, we can affirm: these works are for the common good, and despite the criticism, they remain alive, as does the memory of their author, despite whatever attacks they receive during their life [...]. But the words of my co-citizens that exonerate me of mine, cannot force me with their law; for that same law does not want obligation where there is no acceptance. And because I am indebted to the foreigners who better accept my works; to meet their expectations of me, I apply my pen to those who like me, writing about the Geography of the discovered Orb, and the peoples therein" (*ib.*).

beginning of his second mandate (Baião 1947, vol. I, XLVII-IX), and by the archbishop of Goa (Baião 1947, vol. I, LIII).

The exemplary pedagogy of History (monumentum)

Anchored in the Ciceronian philosophy of History⁷, Titus Livius finds in the degrading spectacle of the civil wars in which Marius and Sulla, Pompeii and Caesar are protagonists, a good lesson for future generations regarding the political and moral resurgence of Rome. Like Sallust (2007, *Conj. Cat.*, 7-9; *Jug.*, 41, 2), he links the beginning of decadence in the period of Rome's conquests in the East to the rise of Hellenism (1998, L. XXXIX, 6, 7). Despite the Augustan re-moralization initiative, with laws regulating customs and marriage, in 28 and 18 B.C.E., and 9 A.D., he describes a negative social scenario of the discipline and customs of his period (Id., "Praefatio", 9). Hence, he draws his conclusion about the exemplary pedagogy of History: "omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri" (Id., *Ib.*, 10). The contrast between the past and present is marked by flagrant acuity, the criteria of evaluation of which is a sober and frugal collective existence, in the light of which luxury ("avaritia luxuriaque"), ostentation, cupidity ("cupiditatis"), and human ambition and avarice are condemned (Id., *Ib.*, 11-12).

Unlike João de Barros, who chronicled events in India based on contacts and documents that arrived in Lisbon, and whose view of events was somewhat euphoric and dream-like, Gaspar Correia and Diogo do Couto, like Camões, are influenced by *in loco* information, whereby they portray a decadent vision of the Portuguese expansion.

The *aurea aetas* Hesiodic myth⁸ serves as a cultural pattern for both the author of the *Lendas da Índia* and the author of *O Soldado Prático* to express this vision of decadence. Such is the disenchantment that the writer carries in his soul that he is classified as a blasphemer (*praguejador*)⁹. Despite covering the events up to 1549, Gaspar Correia does not hesitate in expressing this increasing disenchantment as he records his work¹⁰. Exemplary pedagogy arises, therefore, as the only remedy capable of altering the erroneous course of human action¹¹.

The metaphor about gold is used by the Soldier, who denounces the decadence of India in the second version of the *Coutiano* dialogue: "Here I find relevant the warning words of a king of Cochin, who seeing that State deteriorating, said "as soon as it started slipping, three

⁷ "Historia uero testis temporum, lux ueritatis, uita memoriae, magistral uitae, nuntia uetustatis, qua uoce alia nisi oratoris immortalitati commentatur" (Cícero, 1942 *De Oratore*, II, 9, 36).

⁸ "I took on this work with pleasure, because the beginning of things in India were so golden that it looked like they didn't have the iron underneath that they were later discovered to have (Correia 1975, 1).

⁹ "Misfortunes will come, riches will dwindle, so that the writer of these woes can rightfully be called a blasphemer; and not a good writer of such illustrious deeds (Correia 1975, 1-2).

¹⁰ "It is true that when I started this occupation of writing about the things of India they were pleasant, because of their bounties, which gave great satisfaction to hear about; but the bounties became flawed and corrupted, like I will mention further on, and I will not refrain from writing so that each person will be rightfully acknowledged (*Ib.*, vol II, 5).

¹¹ "[...] because (the great and courageous Princes and Kings) ordering that the woes be recorded so that future ones are amended, and thus writing about the bounties to take as an example, wanting to award their forebears whom they praise (*Ib.* Vol. III, "Prologue", 5).

things stopped coming from Portugal: truth, big swords and Portuguese gold.” (Couto 1980, 130-131)

The most important beneficiary of the lessons in History, according to all the 16th century Portuguese chroniclers, is the highest-ranking person of national politics, as explained by Fernão Lopes de Castanheda:

[...] if a common man makes a mistake it is inconsequential because he only harms himself, and if a prince does this he harms all those who are under his governance [...]. It is therefore very important that the prince be more virtuous, more knowledgeable and more prudent than anyone else, and to learn these things there is no better means than history.” (Castanheda 1979, 3)¹²

On the other hand, the national identity, shaped in the womb of History, in similarity to the laws of genetics¹³, serves as an argument for Joao de Barros in the pedagogic interpellation, which, as a humanist conscious of his role of civic intervener, does of the King:

“If the business and things that happen in the life of a King are not entirely similar to those of the past, they conform with those that took place cut, so that present things seem more like those of the past than those that are strange and remote to the motherland.” (Barros 1973, Déc. III, P. I, “Prologue”).

Conclusion

The object of this paper was to analyze explicitly and implicitly how Classical Antiquity were assimilated by the Portuguese chroniclers of the 16th century, through two vectors: a portrayal of the Other, and historical truth.

The portrait of the Other, visible throughout all of the literature of Classical Antiquity, from Homer to the Romans, reveals an implicit awareness that identity cannot exist without alterity.

Historical truth, from the perspective of heuristics (*documentum*) and exemplary Ciceronian pedagogy (*monumentum*), which are a fundamental concern in Roman historiography, is presented as the favored form of civic intervention to achieve a national identity (*res romana*).

Having inherited this methodological perspective from Classical Antiquity, the 16th century Portuguese chroniclers interlink historiographic sources with the question of national identity and alterity, showing that History is not separate from these matters.

¹² Osório 1981.

¹³ “In the Kingdom business, and the order of government follows Nature’s process of multiplication of families; if the son does not have similarity with his father, he is very similar to his grandfather, or some other close relative, because Nature can never degenerate to the point that the person can become a monster outside his species” (Barros, J. de, *Ib.*, Déc. III, P. I, “Prologue”).

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