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Resumo: O artigo pretende examinar a participação de inserções com características biográficas no texto da principal obra do historiador oitocentista Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen (1816-1878), a *História geral do Brasil*, editada em dois volumes, nos anos de 1854 e 1857. O foco se direciona ao primeiro tomo da obra, recorte privilegiado à investigação da incorporação de pesquisas e publicações prévias de Varnhagen e de seu interesse particular por alguns personagens do passado colonial do Brasil. A hipótese levantada é a de que as considerações biográficas demarcadas evidenciam importantes aspectos heurísticos e narrativos da produção de Varnhagen.

Palavras-chave: Francisco A. Varnhagen; História do Brasil; gênero biográfico.

Abstract: This Article examines the use of narrative incorporations with biographical features in the text of the main work of the eighteenth century historian Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen (1816-1878) entitled *História geral do Brasil*, edited in two volumes, in 1854 and 1857. The focus of the article is in the first volume, which is a privileged framework for investigating the incorporation of previous research and publications by Varnhagen and his specific interest in some figures from Brazil's colonial past. The hypothesis proposed here is that the outlined biographical considerations display important heuristic and narrative aspects of Varnhagen's production.

Keywords: Francisco A. Varnhagen; Brazilian History; biographical genre.

As presented by Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen (1816-1878) in *Historia geral do Brazil* (*General History of Brazil*) - HGB, Brazil was discovered by Vasco da Gama, not by Pedro Alvares

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Cabral, who was no more than an adjutant: "Vasco da Gama, who directed the paths for Cabral's officers, is the one to whom we owe the felicitous discovery of this land – a discovery which, if not made by this first expedition that followed him, could not have failed to take place in the years that immediately followed, ever since navigating from India became frequent." (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 17).² Brazil was transformed into the image the character helped to create in a location launched into an inexorable temporality.

How did this movement take place? Lucia Maria Paschoal Guimarães comments that, recognizing the commercial interests of the Avis dynasty in regards to the spice trade, the author of the *HGB* demarcated the role of Vasco da Gama, "a hypothesis that is proven by a previously unknown witness to whom Varnhagen had access during his research in the archives of Tombo Tower: the *Instruções* of the journey of Captain General Pedro Alvares Cabral". The historian also concludes that "the source shows that the routes taken by the navigating officers of the fleet were planned according to the detailed recommendations of Vasco da Gama, in the final analysis, the main person responsible for the formidable discovery" (GUIMARÃES, 2001, p. 81). In fact, the process of incorporation of the character, as in many other cases present in the work, is precisely that: a determined document found could determine the insertion of a name in history or stimulate its oblivion. Thus, although Gama is not an example of a biography subject in *HGB*, his strategic presence in the text leaves a biographical mark.

Among the multitude of names entered into the pages of the *HGB*, the eminently biographical interpolations are the object of our reading. Who are those whose lives comprise the "convenient proportions that Varnhagen's frames delimited for his *Historia*?"³ Amerigo Vespucci provides us with a first example:

Amerigo Vespucci, que, segundo ha pouco vimos, acompanhou a primeira destas expedições que correram para loeste a parte septentrional da nossa costa, e que depois visitou por duas vezes o littoral, desde o cabo de S. Roque para o sul, foi naturalmente o primeiro europeu que navegou por toda a extensão da fronteira marítima do actual imperio do Brazil, e foi tambem o primeiro que por si proprio se inteirou da grande extensão continental que hoje se chama America do Sul, e que sem injustiça se poderia chamar *America*, como os geographos, estranhos á Hespanha e á patria daquelle navegador, propozeram [...] (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 26-27).

Varnhagen's interest, and the records of his incessant research on the life and work of Vespucci, would lead to discussions on the historiographical polemics and doubts that entered the 20th century and became part of the history of historiography (RODRIGUES, 1979).⁴ Being the first to sail the entire coast of the Brazilian territory ensured that the travelers' names were added to

the subject: "discovery of Brazil". However, he would not be a mere "statistic", taken from the available sources, but a character to be built in the grand narrative regarding Brazil:

Amerigo Vespucci, de simples socio de uma casa de commercio que era, chegou, por sua habilidade e applicação, a cosmographo ou a engenheiro cosmographo, como hoje diriamos; o, no sentir do grande Colombo, que se mostra seu amigo, era homem honrado. Não vemos, pois, justas razões para nos conspirarmos tanto contra o nome que o uso adoptou, no intento de designar a companheira da bella Europa, da Asia opulenta, e da adusta Africa. Os que se rebellam, clamando contra a injustiça deste nome, e accusando a memoria do homem intelligente e activo, que prestou importantes serviços á civilisação, commettem nesse mesmo acto de rebeldia outra injustiça; e quando querem que os contemporaneos conquistem o nome de *Colombia* para a quarta parte da terra, propõem, não diremos com alguns que uma utopia, mas quem sabe se uma nova injustiça. Sabemos que o nome dado áquellas terras pelo ousado Genovez foi de *Indias*, ao qual Castella accrescentou depois a qualificação de *occidentales*. E a designação de Indias Occidentales nos perpetuaria melhor a obra de Colombo, e o seu genio perseverante numa grande idéa, e lembraria continuamente á humanidade como deve ella respeitar o engenho, ainda em seus grandes erros; porquanto destes se pode tanto chegar á verdade, como ao conhecimento della se chega, nas sciencias exactas, partindo ás vezes de hypotheses gratuitas (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 27-28).

Honored Man! At first glance, a simple moral evaluation of the subject of the biography; then the historian explains the reason for this detailed explanation concerning his personal traits and merits of office. More than a brief portrait or chronicle of an existence, the biography of Vespucci was part of a historiographical question. In the final analysis, it was a narrative account of a chronological correction; an attempt to search for the "truth" and to give limits to historical "injustice". Reconstructing the history of the character was a way of not restricting their presence to the temporal framework of *HGB*. In this regard, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that studies on Christopher Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci constituted a particular field of interest for Varnhagen, which took the form of essays published in the 1850s - period in which he acted as a diplomat in Madrid, and which were multiplied in other publications in the two decades that followed (VARNHAGEN, 1961, p. 84).

Arno Wehling, before proposing a systematic classification of the vast work of Varnhagen, quotes Sílvio Romero who, in turn, incorporates the works regarding the voyages of discovery into the field of research on the "Geographical History of America". Wehling suggests another system, which he believes is more comprehensive than that created by the critic from Sergipe, in which Varnhagen's historical works were seen as contents for sections of "works with a political and geopolitical approach" and "critical editions of historical documents", which would certainly include the Vespucci's analyses (WEHLING, 1999, p. 44. 50). From this perspective, investigating the relationship between history and geography in Brazil in the 19th century, we see that the problem that was imposed on geographic knowledge of the time was one of its sources. "Just as for

the historiographical and literary production, geography cannot fail to consider the accounts of journey as sources. It finds in them the first outlines, routes, designs, morphological, and climatic indications of the surface of Brazil, marks - real or natural, supposed or simply invented – of frontier divisions".⁵ According to these observations, it is no exaggeration to emphasize that mastery of the spaces was related to evident political interests, and "if we think that, at a time of constitution of the Nation, the definition of its physical and geographical identity, which was also part of the greater plan, we can understand why the Institute dedicated [so much] space to address the subject" (GUIMARÃES, 1988, p. 23).

Returning to Vespucci, it is undeniable that his admiration regarding Varnhagen weighed in into his incorporation into Brazilian history; however, we believe it is appropriate to variegate, for example, the idea that this was merely an exception for the foreigner concerning the work as a whole, in the "long line of Portuguese heroes", as interpreted by Jose Carlos Reis:

Varnhagen, Cabral em terra, põe então, retoricamente, a questão de sua propriedade: pertencia aos portugueses? E responde: pertencia, sim, desde 1494, isto é, antes de ter sido descoberta, pelo Tratado de Tordesilhas, assinado por portugueses e espanhóis diante do papa. Varnhagen até reconhece que não foi Cabral o primeiro a ter chegado ao Brasil. Ele foi precedido por alguns navegantes espanhóis: Américo Vespúcio, Vicente Pinzon, Diogo de Lepe. Entretanto, a vinda desses não tivera consequências (REIS, 1999, p. 38-39).

It seems correct to affirm that Varnhagen sought to link a supposedly Brazilian past to Portuguese history; however, without disregarding other profiles or candidates for historical characters. Therefore, from the historical period point of view, what was involved in studying and making known the voyage that preceded the territorial measurement performed by the Portuguese? Would there not be evidence here, despite the political games involved, of an enlargement of the spatial-temporal concept of the field of historical research emerging in Brazil and its exchanges with other disciplines that were still being formed? On another hand, for Varnhagen, knowing Vespucci was a means of empowering himself to give a historical-geographical description, which certainly was not as obvious as hindsight would suggest, since he was involved in an area of investigation that sometimes did not conform to the restrictions of a vague idea of nation and national history.

In effect, Vespucci is not casually incorporated into *HGB*. Narrating his life and his travels, as well as giving a critical analysis of their letters and defending its pioneering spirit, meant to simultaneously circumscribe and occupy a historical period and a circle of erudite discussions on the subject of the voyages. Thus, "to describe is to quickly see and define the description's consideration as a taxonomic presence in the narrative, which leads us to understand that to describe is also to know and make known - or even to make knowledge known. However, within a particular História (São Paulo) v.32, n.1, p. 144-161, Jan/Jun 2013 ISSN 1980-4369

narrative, description has yet another function. This knowledge it puts forward cannot be found juxtaposed with the narration of the events because the effectiveness of the description lies in the narrative itself" (HARTOG, 1999, p. 270).⁶

After the navigator came another important biographical episode: one that involves the brothers Martim Afonso and Pero Lopes de Sousa. The proposal is to see where these lives expanded in the *HGB*:

Para commandar esta fôra escolhido Martim Affonso de Sousa, que ao depois se fez celebre na Asia, obrando prodigios de valor. Contava então apenas trinta annos; mas ja por seu juizo havia merecido a honra de fazer parte dos conselhos do rei. A amizade e o parentesco que com elle tinha o vedor da Fazenda D. Antonio de Attaide, depois conde da Castanheira, deviam contribuir muito para a escolha; mas quem como nós teve a occasião de conhecer tão cabalmente o dito Castanheira, por toda a sua correspondencia privada e de officio, incluindo a que ao depois por annos entreteve com o mesmo Martim Affonso em serviço na Asia, não pôde, por um só instante, suspeitar que, no animo do conde, a amizade preponderasse ao zelo pelo Estado, tratando-se de um empregado deste. Além de quê, não era o conde da Castanheira exclusivo no conselho; – e não se atreveria a fazer ao Soberano qualquer recommendação, quando não tivesse o apoio de Antonio Carneiro, e de Pedro d'Alcaçova Carneiro, que eram tambem ministros mui influentes no Estado (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 44).

In the beginning, the character is built through the letters of Castanheira, in contrast to what was known about the professional history of the biographee. The documentary limitation, while on one hand inhibiting a more extensive presentation of the life of Martim Afonso, on the other, is sufficient to reveal the maneuver that led him to command the fleet, in addition to serving as context for opening the way for his brother, a contemporary writer in regards to the events that took place:

Com Martim Affonso vinha tambem nesta armada seu irmão Pero Lopes de Sousa, moço honrado e de grandes brios e valor, e igualmente muito bem conceituado perante o mesmo conde de Castanheira. Á penna de Pero Lopes devemos hoje tudo quanto de mais averiguado sabemos dessa expedição, que se apresentou diante do Cabo de Santo Agostinho no ultimo Janeiro de 1531, depois de haver tido alguns dias de demora, para se refazer de mais mantimentos, na Ribeira grande, porto da cidade capital do archipelago de Cabo Verde (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 45).

The navigation diary of Pero Lopes was found and edited by Varnhagen (SOUZA, 1839). It includes biographical information of the brothers with details of their respective personalities. They were first used to improve the demonstration of the source. Also, a quotation from one of the letters

exchanged between Castanheira and Martim Affonso, which can be found in a footnote within the work, indicates:

A Martim Affonso escrevia de Pero Lopes o C. da Castanheira, em 1538: “Pero Lopes, vosso irmão, está feito um homem muito honrado, e outra vez vos affirmo muito honrado. E digo vo-lo assim porque pôde ser que por sua pouca idade vos pareça que terá bons principios, mas que não sera ainda de todo bem assentado nisso, como vo-lo eu aqui digo que é ainda menos do que o que delle cuido (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 45, nota 2).

It could be said that to emphasize the virtues of Pero Lopes is to give value, once again, to the precious source published, the main resource for the study of the first great Portuguese expedition during the 16th century in its colony. As a result, another biographical pertinence is announced, as the exploration of the document projects the biographees to what can be considered as the limit between personal remissions and the thematic cluster of a particular section of the work:

Para não deixarmos de aproveitar a minima eventualidade no pouco que sabemos do que então se passou nesta paragem, cujas menores circunstancias hoje interessam a todo o Imperio, transcreveremos fielmente quanto nos transmittiu um dos nautas, que logo veremos donatario de Itamaracá, Santo Amaro e Santa Catharina. É Pero Lopes quem prosegue, em seu estylo, tão ingenuo como pittoresco: ‘Como fomos dentro (da bahia de Janeiro) mandou o capitão (Martim Affonso) fazer uma casa forte com cerca por derredor; e mandou sair a gente em terra e por em ordem a ferraria, para fazermos cousas de que tinhamos necessidade [...]’ (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 49).

This excerpt is followed by the long quotation and passages of the diary that, although criticized by its style, is transformed into a visibility resource regarding the movements that occurred in the mid-16th century:

Foi a aldeia de Piratininga que Martim Affonso escolheu para fundar a colonia ou a villa sertaneja, cujo governo militar confiou a João Ramalho, com o pomposo titulo de guarda-mór do campo. Eis a origem europea da actual cidade de São Paulo. Ouçamos agora o que nos diz Pero Lopes de Sousa, testemunha de vista durante os primeiros quatro mezes de vida das ditas duas colonias: ‘Repartiu o capitão mór a gente nestas duas villas, e fez nellas officiaes; e poz tudo em boa ordem e justiça; do que a gente toda tomou muita consolação, com verem povoar villas, e ter leis e sacrificios, celebrar matrimonios e viver em communicação das artes; a ser cada um senhor do seu; e investir as injurias particulares; e ter todos os outros bens da vida segura e conversavel’. Nestas poucas palavras se encerram os pontos capitaes respectivos a qualquer sociedade constituida. Vemos as colonias e as suas competentes autoridades; vemos o reñhecimento das leis; vemos as praticas, assim do que respeita ás consciencias, pelas ceremonias dos sacrificios religiosos, como ao estado social pela celebração dos matrimonios; vemos garantida a segurança individual e a propriedade, e sem valhacouto as tropelias e injurias. Para nada faltar, como bem essencial na vida ‘segura e conversavel’, diz-nos Pero Lopes que ja viviam os colonos em ‘communicação das artes’ (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 56).

There are vestiges of the chronicle that permeate the *Historia Geral* and perform a twofold role: attributing *local color* to the narrative and, in particular, authenticating the documentary research, which favored the compilation of work.⁷ Therefore, the local color would, through the narrative, be a means of "traveling back in time", taking the reader to the period designed in the writing, in its particular properties. This is an important notion when thinking about the biographical genre in the writing of eighteenth century history, given that many narrative historians reflected on the idea of the great man and his role in historical representation. A. Thierry, for example, sympathized with the victims of history; V. Cousin, in turn, stated that the defeated has always been wrong; and authors such as F. Guizot and P. de Barante defended the freedom of the individual in the face of absolute fatalism. In other words, changes in the way of writing history brought up debates about the place of the great man and his forms of description and participation (GÉRARD, 1998-2, q. 31-48).⁸

Therefore, "to reproduce the color, the historian must submit himself to another requirement (which becomes a characteristic of modern scientific narrative): he must agree to efface himself as an author" (CEZAR, 2004, p. 21). This is not, however, a prevalent characteristic of the narrative of *HGB*. Varnhagen did not efface himself as a narrator, even amidst the mixture of genres that is perceived throughout the text. Traces of the chronicle from previous centuries are not capable of causing their authorship to "disappear" in the passage through the various periods in which it appears to search for the local color. How can this impasse be resolved? A probable answer can be considered from the biographical episode presented. The intention to transpose the barrier of time, in order to clearly take a glimpse of the incipient Portuguese colony in the first half of the 16th century, is mediated by Varnhagen's vision, or, in other words, it is through him that we have access to the "voices" of the witnesses. It was he who *saw* the diary of Pero Lopes and who produced the *telling*. In this case, the biography is necessary, as there is a game of reciprocal exchanges between what the document allows to be narrated and what only the historian can consider true.⁹ Narrating a life is relevant, not only from the local color point of view, but also in regards to the effort to authorize the character as a witness. Thus, the reflection that is added to the text, motivated by the way in which the death of Pero Lopes is described, is emblematic of the biographical space guaranteed to it:

Lá se foi com uma armada; e, quando ja de volta, encontrou nas ondas a sepultura, perto da ilha de Madagascar, segundo se crê. Faltou pois Pero Lopes do mundo desgraçadamente para a sua glória e para o bem da sua familia, no momento em que sua perda era a todos mais sensível. Depois de haver elle lobrigado a trilha que o devia conduzir ao templo da glória, depois que a esposa cedendo a seu carinho, havia nelle, e, só nelle, posto toda a sua esperança de gozosa felicidade e o de um

bello renome para seus filhos, depois que as esperanças da patria começavam a desabrochar em favor deste jovem pundonoroso... Tudo illusão! Em verdade nada pode haver de mais triste, de mais cruel do que uma prematura morte. – Quão differente se nos apresenta o fim do ancião illustre, cuja falta successiva de forças físicas o tem ido pouco a pouco desprendendo do mundo, onde havendo sempre cuidado de robustecer com o estudo, cada dia mais, sua razão, vê na morte o sello da immortalidade de seu nome no porvir, ganha pelos serviços que teve tempo de legar aos seus semelhantes – á humanidade. A desventurada viuva (e bem desventurada que não foi esta a única perda que soffreu) de Pero Lopes ainda a chorava vinte e tantos annos depois, e quase não podia acreditar que seu marido se houvesse deste mundo ido de todo, sem lhe haver dito o ultimo adeus (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 143).

The *place of the dead* would be the same among who describes and witnesses: "substitute of the absent being, prison of the evil genius, the historical text plays a performative role. The language enables a practice to be situated in relation to its *other*, the past. In effect, it is a practice in itself. Historiography uses death to articulate a law (of the present). It does not describe the silent practices that built it, but performs a new distribution of practices already semanticized" (CERTEAU, 2006, p. 108).¹⁰ Certainly, Pero Lopes de Sousa is more than a proper name in *HGB*; his death is not anonymous, but a "death that creates the event" (RICOEUR, 2007, p. 379). The perception of death as a practice that occurs between the present and the past, in this case, corresponds to the system of time not simply through the narration of life and death, but through the "biographical attestation" of a witness (RICOEUR, 2007, p. 175).¹¹

For this reason, the witness needed to be criticized from end to end; from the documentary examination to the narrative: "When history finally managed, in the 19th century, to be defined as a science, the science of the past, it knew no more than 'documents'. The 'voices' had become 'sources' and, at the end of this transformation, the 'witnesses' even came to believe that they should be like historians" (HARTOG, 2005, p. 191). In Varnhagen, as the terms were more linked to the early efforts of disciplining, the attempt to contain the witnesses was ambiguous. Documents, yes, but that still supported their voices that had to be known and coordinated. Although it was safer to deal with the witnesses of the past (the posthumous *História da Independência do Brasil* and the comments of Varnhagen previously quoted that indicate something along these lines), they posed several problems. In fact, a bibliographical attestation was not always autobiographical, as in the case of Pero Lopes.

A prominent figure in *HGB*, placed as an important counterpoint to the previous examples, is that of Diogo Álvares, the Caramuru:

Favorecendo os Padres foi que Diogo Alvares prestou serviços pelos quaes merece que neste logar lhe dediquemos algumas linhas. Morador na Bahia desde o anno de 1510, ahi resistira a todas as inconstancias dos gentios; porque tendo-se criado entre elles desde moço, talvez fôra já outro gentio em tudo, menos na côr da pelle e no pouco que ainda se lembraria da sua lingua. Tinha muitos filhos, e estava assim aparentado por afinidade, ao modo da terra, com muitos da cabilda a que se agregára. A tradição, em harmonia com alguns documentos, faz-nos crer que, em certa conjunctura, vendo-se em grande aperto e ameaçado do gentio, usou de um ardil que o salvou, e foi causa de receber dos indios a alcunha de *Caramurú*, por que ficou sendo conhecido. Vejamos qual foi este ardil, e deixemos de parte a questão secundaria de averiguar se teve logar por occasião do primeiro desembarque do colono e quando elle ainda seria muito moço, ou se depois, como imaginamos nós, quando foi arrojado com o donatario Coutinho na costa da ilha de Itaparica. Diz a tradição que, achando-se Diogo Alvares na praia, armado de uma espingarda, e vendo-se cercado de muitos gentios, julgou que os amedrontava disparando um tiro, e que tão bom effeito surtiu, que o julgaram munido de um poder sobre-humano, e estiveram logo por tudo quanto quiz. O nome *Caramurú* é o de certa enguia eletrica, isto é, o de um peixe comprido e fino como uma espingarda, que pelas suas virtudes de fazer estremecer, e pelo attributo de damnar e ferir, poderia ser applicado ao tremendo instrumento (oriundo tambem agora do mar) e por uma facil e insensivel ampliação ao seu portador. Delle *Caramurú* se valeram muito os primeiros missionarios e o mesmo Thomé de Sousa, para angariar a si os Barbaros visinhos, com ajuda do temor que se lhes chegou a inspirar (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 202-203).

Diogo Alvares is a name whose proof comes mainly from tradition.¹² This is the person who describes the scene that attempts to explain character's autochthonous alias, philologically analyzed in *HGB*. The character, immortalized by the poet José de Santa Rita Durão, loses its more literary nature and goes down, through the biographical record, in the history of sixteenth century Brazil. Varnhagen emphasizes that there were documents, but that it is the voice of tradition that will be the key to his argument. One might think that in this case, the local color would have been given precedence alongside to the wise voice of the historian. However, it seems it was not that simple, since Manoel Salgado Guimarães observed, "the national antiquities, valued from the beginning of the 19th century, always existed in their materiality in the places where they would supposedly be 'discoveries' throughout the 19th century. However, they were not seen as antiquities except when a modern look could incorporate them as part of tradition and past of those national societies" (GUIMARÃES, 2000, p. 116).

In view of this inaccurate aspect, how did Varnhagen deal with the supposed truth of tradition? By proposing a genealogy of the presence of Diogo Álvares situated between the tradition and the documents. Not a genealogy to look for "a thousand events now lost", but one that would bring the authority of the historian into agreement with the voices of the traces of the past (FOUCAULT, 2004, p. 20). In *O Caramurú perante a Historia*, published in 1848 in the journal *Revista do IHGB*, the historian affirms: "by forming a *heroic myth*, the same is propagated taking

shape from generation to generation, and often the notable cases that occurred with different people have even merged into just one individual. People are not expecting for the appearance of chroniclers and historians in this category to publish a fact that attracts their curiosity" (VARNHAGEN, 1848, p. 129-130). Varnhagen covers the written references on the individual that would have synthesized the so-called "heroic myth". Among others, he returns to the diary of Pero Lopes, to Gabriel Soares de Sousa, passing through Rocha Pita, being the last register to be placed partly in suspension, given the "galas of invention" that existed in it (VARNHAGEN, 1848, p. 146). According to Maria da Gloria de Oliveira: "Varnhagen did not contradict the tradition surrounding the existence of Diogo Álvares, on which he affirms he did not have any doubt". In other words: "To assign different degrees of accuracy in the establishment of historical facts, he obtains the truth and falsehood by means of the absolute *power of veto* granted to the sources" (OLIVEIRA, 2012, p. 92).

Thus, it is interesting to observe how the notions of myth and tradition are brought together in the historiographical construction of the biographee, both in the work published in the *Revista do IHGB* and in *HGB*. For us, as far as myth and tradition are concerned, it is difficult to distance ourselves from the general discussion that, in fact, is the starting point from which we see the reading of the present biography conducted in the work of the historian, i.e. invention of the authority in Varnhagen's identity as a historian. Despite the decrease of the dividing margin regarding the echoes of tradition, it was not simply a glorification of tradition - idea that is often associated with a certain romanticism.¹³ Through this dialog, the factual and epistemological parameters were reaffirmed and ratification guarantees concerning the critical resources used by the author of *HGB* in his previous publications (remember that both Gabriel Soares and Pero Lopes had had their writings published by Varnhagen). History as a practice and the relationships of historians with time are seen in the redefinitions relating to the standards of the historical text and its statute, which could only be verified in the dialog with the various forms of representation of the past and their differences. "Without a doubt - explains Michel de Certeau - this is the reason why history substituted 'primitive' myths, or the ancient theologies from the time western civilization was no longer religious and that, politically, socially or scientifically, it was defined by a praxis that also involves its relationship with itself and with other societies" (CERTEAU, 2006, p. 55).

This biographical episode in the work of Varnhagen prompts careful reflection on the means by which the text of history acquires legitimacy in the 19th century. This requires working not only with the narrative resources of historians, but also with the temporal nuances incorporated into his writing of history, which after all, gave him credibility. Based on his practices, the historian borrows and creates the orders of time aligned in their texts in many different ways.¹⁴ As Hayden White suggests: "It is only a hypothesis, but it seems possible that the historian's conviction that he

has 'found' the form of his narrative in the actual events, instead of imposing it on them, as the poet does, is a consequence of a certain lack of linguistic awareness that obscures the extent to which the descriptions of events *already* constitute interpretations of their nature" (WHITE, 1994, p. 112). Sabina Loriga, in turn, emphasizes that this theoretical and methodological attitude prompted the historians to move away from literature and from those who devoted themselves to examining the narrative dimension of history (which would be, for her, one of the limits of working with the biographical genre in the field of historical knowledge) (LORIGA, 2006).

Taking into account the analyzed examples before proposing answers to the questions presented here, or returning to their effects, it is important that we return to the debates on the authority of historical discourse. Amerigo Vespucci, Martim Afonso, and Pero Lopes de Sousa, as well as Diogo Álvares, are characters incorporated into Varnhagen's historical narrative based on questions that, in one way or another, affect discussions regarding the ability of the historian to produce a representation of the past. Through Varnhagen's text, it is possible to ascertain how the intellectual effort to make this representation was given in the mid-19th century in order to establish beliefs. When investigating the letters of Vespucci and focusing on him as a character, providing details of the life and death of Pero Lopes or demystifying the existence of Caramuru, the author of *HGB* was articulating *evidence* and situating *authorities* in time and space, whether through the insertion in attacks made by precursors in the discovery of the Country, or in the lengthy quotes from a coeval source, or even in the cross dialog between the documents and the tradition, what was involved was a particular concept of time.

Therefore, we should point out that notion of evidence also has its history with variations going back to ancient times. Starting with evidence as vision (Thucydides), taking in the association between vision and hearing (Herodotus) and medieval *auctoritas*, and finally reaching the romantic historians and liberals and their searches for a genealogy of identity, where their narrative attempts to speak of historical evidence meant to make adjustments that ran through the texts that we still make use of today. For Michelet, for example, "the historian is not only this diver, visitor of the dead and of the archives, this traveler, as a gaze-participant, should still have ears, because history speaks". Another example from this period: "For men like Thierry, history also spoke, but the intervention had to restrict itself (particularly after 1830) to *letting* the documents speak" (HARTOG, 2005, p. 135-151). With Fustel de Coulanges, what was visible came to be considered an illusion: "As an observer, the historian only defines the position that he occupies negatively: he says where he should not be, not where he is. In spite of everything, at the time he writes *A cidade*

antiga, this methodological ascesis is then turned against the present. It is a condemnation of the malicious imitations of Antiquity to better defend modern freedom" (HARTOG, 2005, 149).

Considering the mappings of the historian's gaze proposed by Hartog, since the first choices through to the thinking of the 19th century, it is possible to relate the use of biography in Varnhagen's works to his work with the sources, since in the 19th century, a heuristic function was linked to the biographical genre (LORIGA, 1998, p. 228). Thus, the constitution of the archives and witnesses passed through research regarding this narrative form. Operating the evidence by reading Vespucci's letters, traveling with the writings of a lord of ingenuity (Gabriel Soares de Sousa) as one's guide, or opposing the voices of tradition and the written records about a particular name, are ways of ordering time and authorities. The authority of the archive, of a particular witness, or of this synonymous with authority itself, which is tradition, defines a time; one that Varnhagen did not tire of emphasizing in his work, and that was built in contraposition to the various temporalities.

Concerning the notion of authority, Hannah Arendt continues to be an essential reference. For the philosopher, there was a significant change in the forms of authority between the ancient and the modern world, which led to all kinds of misunderstandings. Arendt's theory is that there are no strong parallels between the ancient idea of authority and what is understood by the same word in modern times:

Visto que a autoridade sempre exige obediência, ela é comumente confundida com alguma forma de poder ou violência. Contudo, a autoridade exclui a utilização de meios externos de coerção; onde a força é usada, a autoridade em si mesmo fracassou. A autoridade, por outro lado, é incompatível com a persuasão, a qual pressupõe igualdade e opera mediante um processo de argumentação. Onde se utilizam argumentos, a autoridade é colocada em suspenso. Contra a ordem igualitária da persuasão ergue-se a ordem autoritária, que é sempre hierárquica. Se a autoridade deve ser definida de alguma forma, deve sê-lo, então, tanto em contraposição à coerção pela força como a persuasão através de argumentos (ARENDT, 2003, p. 129).

These semantic precisions make it easier to understand the idea that, in fact, questioning the notion of authority is an indication that its ancient understanding was in some way abandoned, or that it underwent subsequent adaptations. Arendt explains that the loss of authority was only the final moment in a process that also had a significant impact on tradition and religion (ARENDT, 2003, p. 130). Consequently, it is not by chance that the historical and historiographical experiences, about which historians like Reinhart Koselleck speak, which visibly changed in recent centuries, are the result of different statutes of these three elements: authority, tradition, and religion (KOSELLECK, 2001, p. 68-82).

Among these issues, Pascal Payen observes that because it is a political category, notion of authority needs to be contextualized (PAYEN, 2007, p. 8). The historian proposes an opportune

mapping of the notion, reconstituting ancient authority, as seen by Arendt, and then establishing its relationship with the arguments between ancient and modern, when its meaning shifts, and starts to move towards changes of an effectively temporal nature (in the sense of affecting the experiences and temporal systems) (PAYEN, 2007, p. 11-17). Investigating these uses concerning the idea of authority in different times, the author quotes the case of the antiquarians, who sought to give it legitimacy by relegating authority to the past (which they dominated). Finally, Payen highlights the convergence that exists between authority and the written text: "The written text is, over time, the second producer of authority" (PAYEN, 2007 p. 18-20).

Writing and time, as a principle of authority, is a perspective to be considered in the understanding the play of past and present in *HGB* and in the Varnhagen's works as a whole. The way in which the Indians, collective characters, are generally presented provides a strong indication in this sense:

Nos selvagens não existe o sublime desvelo, que chamamos patriotismo, que não é tanto o apego a um pedaço de terra, ou bairrismo (que nem sequer elles como nomades tinham bairro seu), como um sentimento elevado que nos impelle a sacrificar o bem estar e até a existencia pelos compatriotas, ou pela glória da patria, com a só idéa de que a posteridade será grata á nossa memória, e a ella adjudicará neste mundo a immortalidade, [...] (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 98).

Later, Varnhagen continues:

De taes povos na infancia não ha historia: ha só ethnographia. Nem a chronica do seu passado, se houvesse meio de nos ser transmittida, mereceria nossa attenção. Mais do que tratando-se da biographia de qualquer varão, ao depois afamado por seus feitos, os contos da meninice e primitiva ignorancia do ao depois heroe ou sabio. A infancia da humanidade na ordem moral, como a do individuo na ordem physica, é sempre acompanhada de pequenez e de miserias. – E sirva esta prevenção para qualquer leitor estrangeiro que por si, ou pela infancia de sua nação, pense de ensoberbecer-se, ao ler as pouco lisongeiras paginas que vão seguir-se (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 108).

In spite of his supposed anti-romantic and anti-indianist position – which has led to various polemics - Varnhagen studied and defended ethnographic research for practically his entire career. His goal was to deconstruct the indianist argument and the theory of the right of ownership to the territory. "Varnhagen's attitude in relation to the Indians can, without doubt, be understood based on its insertion in an argument that was not assumed and not declared in the heart of historical culture of Brazil in the 19th century, but which nevertheless existed, between the Ancients, Modern man, and the Savages". In that debate, a particularity of the New World, the Indians would gradually be relegated to a "supposedly historical distant past", becoming, based on arguments of authority of "historical science", a complex political issue of the time (CEZAR, 2008, p. 43-65).

All the biographical incorporations addressed in this analysis corroborate, ultimately, to a concept of history that seeks to build its authority by expanding, describing, comparing and even suppressing temporalities. Varnhagen's historiographical narrative does not work, definitively, with what it "found" in the past. It articulates itself and, from the present, demarcates its distances, insinuating proximities and above all, seeking to impose itself through dialog with active forms of time. Hence, we can deduce that the paths of history are not so evident. Between *seeing* and *saying* and *making knowledge* seen, history as disciplined knowledge took imprecise and precarious routes. Perhaps the epistemological and political aspects involved in the biographical cases presented here can explain the reasons why these characters were described in their peculiarities, while more well known names are described in *HGB* in a more subtle way. Could the brief passage below be enough to demonstrate the importance of the "distinct" Tome de Souza as an "evident" representative of the nation?

Para governador geral foi escolhido Thomé de Souza, filho natural d'uma das primeiras casas do reino, distinto por seus grandes dotes governativos, e pelo valor e prudencia que provára em muitas occasiões difficeis na Africa e na Asia. Quatorze annos antes ja este capitão merecia grande conceito ao Conde da Castanheira, quando (escrevendo a Martim Affonso) dizia delle que partia para a India que 'cada vez lhe ia achando mais qualidades boas, tendo sobre todas a de ser sisudo'. – Para a colonia que ia fundar possuía ainda a de saber fazer-se querer: – a de ser superior sem deixar de ser companheiro (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 193).

Moreover, we see the same principle in relation to the "corageous" Estacio de Sá, founder of the current city of Rio de Janeiro who lost his life in a fight against the French invaders, and whose death was reconstructed as follows:

Infelizmente recebeu na refrega uma frechada o bravo Estacio de Sá, e da ferida veiu a morrer um mez depois. Assim perdeu a vida assenteado como o padroeiro (cujo dia era em que foi ferido) da cidade que fundára, e a que dera nome, e da qual os symbolos do martyrio do mesmo padroeiro vieram a ser insignias ou armas. Escriptores pagãos considerariam a Estacio de Sá como a victima innocente votada em holocausto aos deuses infernaes, para aplacar suas iras contra os novos colonos. A resignação manda-nos curvar a cabeça ante os decretos do Altíssimo, e a justiça com que escrevemos obriga-nos a declarar que á sollicitude deste primeiro capitão e ao seu esforço, prudencia e animo religioso deve a cidade o contar a fundação do primeiro quartel de 1565, sem que nenhum revez interrompesse seu progressivo desenvolvimento neste seculo e no seguinte (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 254).

It appears that various active forms of time emerge from the pages of Varnhagen's *HGB*: sometimes they appear in the mixture of genres (history, chronicle, biography, etc.), sometimes they are revealed in the erudite attacks (as in the studies on Vespucci), and some of these time strata are ordered and characterized by the critical models that were strengthened in the 19th century (verifications of traces, like the diary of Pero Lopes, exchanges with tradition, or defense of the indigenous ethnography).¹⁵ However, the questions in the present brought epistemological doubts and political representations, traditions of the past and contemporary context, authority and time, which became confused; therefore, reconfiguring lives of the past in the present.

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Notes

¹ This Article examines the use of narrative incorporation with biographical features in the first volume of the *Historia geral do Brazil* [*General History of Brazil*, published in 1854. The first edition of the work - used here - is composed of two volumes (the second volume was edited in 1857 and will be reviewed on another occasion).

² In the citations of sources we have kept the original spelling.

³ Em *post editum*, published at the end of the first volume of *HGB*, Varnhagen writes: “Uma coisa é a História Geral (ainda quando não resumida) de um Estado, e outra são as actas das suas cidades e villas; os annaes e fastos das suas provincias; as chronicas dos seus governantes; as vidas e biographias de seus cidadãos benemeritos. Aquella não impede que nestas se trabalhe, e em cada qual tem a narração proporções convenientes” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 478).

⁴ On Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, see: *Amerigo Vespucci. Son caractère, ses écrits (même les moins authentiques), sa vie et ses navigations, avec une carte indiquant les routes*. Lima: Imprimerie du Mercurio, 1865; *Le premier voyage de Amerigo Vespucci définitivement expliqué dans ses détails, par F. A. de Varnhagen*. Vienne: chez les Fils de Carl Gerold, 1869; *Nouvelles recherches sur les derniers voyages du navigateur florentin et le reste des documents et éclaircissements sur lui. (Avec les textes dans les mêmes langues qu'ils ont été écrits par FAV)*, 1869; *Ainda Amerigo Vespucci: novos estudos e achegas, especialmente em favor da interpretação dada a sua primeira viagem em 1497-98, as costas do Yucatan e Golfo Mexicano*. Vienna, Imprensa di filho de Carlos Gerold. Editing by account of A. 1874.

⁵ It is worth remembering that Varnhagen “before becoming a professional historian [hesitated] between history and geography” (CEZAR, 2005, p. 89).

⁶ Specifically on the description see CIORANESCU (1962, p. 161-168) and DOIRON (1984, p. 20-21).

⁷ “Derived from the pictorial technique of the 17th century, associated in one way or another the metaphors from the fields of painting, drawing, landscape, the *local color* is a narrative feature that finds its first theorizations in the context of romanticism and the historical novel. Walter Scott (1771-1832), René Chateaubriand (1768-1848), Augustin Thierry (1795-1856), Prosper Barante (1782-1866) and Victor Cousin (1792-1867) are important references of this movement” (CEZAR, 2004, p. 20). For a more detailed and sophisticated analysis, see CARDOSO (2012).

⁸ We emphasize that the relationships established in this paragraph concern only the authors cited by Cezar and Gérard. As stated previously, there is, in Varnhagen, no accurate description of what would become the great man, and it is not even the case with the biography subjects dealt with here; Martim Afonso and Pero Lopes de Sousa. In addition, the French narrativists were important, particularly for the first generation of the IHGB.

⁹ “Thinking of the theme of local color as a narrative resource for history takes in the question of the statute of truth of the historical text” (CEZAR, 2004, p. 20).

¹⁰ See also CERTEAU (1994, p. 293-303); on the lack of dead to revere in Brazil in the nineteenth century, see GUIMARÃES (1995, p. 542).

¹¹ Paul Ricoeur, on mapping the concepts that configure the witness, investigates its characteristics, raising the general notion of seeing it as an autobiographical narrative. The testimonial experience, and its reliability in view of the factuality of the past reality in question, are elements that “connect the witness from one point in time to the whole history of a life” (RICOEUR, 2007, p. 173).

¹² Janaina Amado proposes an interpretation of the various facets of this character since the first descriptions, between the chroniclers of the 16th century, through to his incorporation into seventeenth century poetry and the work of Santa Rita Durão, in the 18th century, and the incorporations into the work of Rocha Pita, *História da América Portuguesa* (1730) – which would be the target of Varnhagen’s harsh criticism in the 19th century (AMADO, 2000).

¹³ It is important to mention the correction that Hannah Arendt makes of the commonplace relationship: Today, tradition is sometimes regarded as an essentially romantic concept, but Romanticism no longer places discussion of tradition on the agenda of the 19th century; its glorification of the past only served to signal the moment in which the modern era was ready to transform our world and the circumstances in general to the point that an unquestioning faith in tradition was no longer possible” (ARENDT, 2003, p. 53).

¹⁴ For other cases in which this idea is developed from the text of *HGB*, see SANTOS (2009).

¹⁵ See the study by Iris Kantor on the historical production of the 18th century academies. In addition to demonstrating that historiographical research was already carried out at that time, this work provides clues as to the mixture of genres perceived, even though this was denied in Varnhagen’s text (KANTOR, 2004).

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