

Anthropology of *Convivencia*. Américo Castro: Method and Genuineness

José Antonio González Alcantud
(Universidad de Granada)

Social and/or cultural anthropology, after more than a century of establishing itself as one of the most solid references in the social and cultural sciences, has constructed a consolidated narrative of the discipline, especially with regard to its own trends and personalities.¹ For example, the history coordinated by George W. Stocking, Jr. is one of the most solid references (Stocking, 1968). Methodologically, paradigms or “-isms” have occupied almost all of the interpretive space in its development. This space is marked by epistemic evolutionism, adopted to narrate and give coherence to the discipline. Thus, the historical narrative of anthropology would be an orderly succession of paradigms and figures, advancing with internal harmony.

However, it is necessary to review many obscure points, interstices, marginalities, and failed experiences that have pushed some anthropologists to the margins and made them invisible. In the history of anthropology promoted by Stocking, already well advanced in its 11th volume, an attempt was made to modify the official course, investigating interstitial aspects such as the role of Alfred L. Kroeber in the defense of Indian rights (Ray, 2006), or the place of Franz Boas in the Harlem Renaissance (Evans, 2006). But the matter did not go much further. Cases such as that of the anthropologist turned Indian Frank H. Cushing (Saumade & Pérez, 2022) or that of the Cuban Fernando Ortiz (Guanche & Matos, 2016) continued to be overlooked, and issues such as that concerning Alfred Kroeber himself and his relationship with the Indian Ishi, the last Yaki, and the ethical responsibilities of the anthropologist (Orin, 2004).

Today, following the global dissemination of anthropological thought and methods, it is also necessary to incorporate indigenous thinking close to anthropology in order to rethink new epistemic paths, different from those taken so far.

Precisely, the relationship between anthropological discourse and the complex of indigeneity or authenticity should lead to a revision of certain figures in the social and historical sciences. The Spanish-American Américo Castro is a unique case that deserves to be revisited from the anthropologist's perspective. The spontaneous problem suggested by his name relates him to *convivencia*, a word and concept linked to the late medieval Iberian Peninsula, whose scope extends to the present day, where *convivencia* is a model in epistemological dispute with multiculturalism, cultural plurality, coexistence, conviviality or diversity, respect and tolerance, terms more commonly used in English- and French-speaking media.

The *Convivencia*: The Cultural Anthropology on the Horizon of Américo Castro

In short, Américo Castro (1885-1972) seems to be linked more to the Hispanic category of “pensadores” (thinkers) than the category of social scientist. The thinker has largely renounced to the cultivation of science, with opinions of literary or journalism origin. Many examples of these thinkers are: Miguel de Unamuno, who began in his youth approaching marxism as a method; Azorín, who did the same with anarchism; and Ramiro de Maeztu, who began attached to the most revolutionary theories of his time. Driven by historical circumstances, they all became conservative writers. Thus, Américo Castro cannot be described as a “thinker”, even though he maintains some of its characteristics,

¹ I am very grateful for the readings and comments on previous versions of this article to Charles Hirschkind and Stephania Pandolfo, from UC Berkeley, and Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, from UC Santa Barbara.

although, unlike those mentioned above, he remained steadfast in his ideological and scientific beliefs throughout his life.

Spain at the end of the 19th century had an interpretative problem regarding its national narrative. In addition to the colonial crisis, with the loss of the last colonies, in 1898, Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, inside the country, the Spanish problem in the social structure was the clientelism (*caciquismo*). Spain was also seen as a decadent and backward country, anchored in the Old Regime, trailing behind in its attempt to enter into modernity. A transformation was necessary to accomplish this.

To interpret this “finisecular” crisis, Américo Castro adopted the concept of “historiology”, which transcended the traditional historiography, and even that of history as such. His inspiration comes from another thinker and friend, José Ortega y Gasset. In the 1920s, Ortega y Gasset even created a collection of books entitled “Historiology”: “This *Biblioteca de Historiología* (Collection of Historiology) –Ortega wrote– has been inspired by the dissatisfaction felt when reading history books” (Ortega, 1928:16). The first thing Ortega pointed was that to demonstrate empirically with data was not enough: “History is very different from documentation and philology”, Ortega says (1928:21). “From the first lessons –he continues arguing more particularly– [...] Hegel attacks the philologists, considering them, with surprising clairvoyance, as enemies of history”. And he adds: “It is unacceptable in present-day history and philology, the existing gap between the precision used in obtaining or handling data, and, even more, the imprecision and the intellectual misery in the use of constructive ideas (Ortega, 1928:22).

According to Ortega y Gasset, historiology unites the most radical community: “Together around the problems”. It is a dissatisfaction, Ortega clarifies, which includes an aspiration to a “possible perfection” of interpretation. This is the way of the “historiological” method. This conception must also have been influenced by the cultural history of Johan Huizinga, the African ethnology of Leo Frobenius, and the phenomenological sociology of Georges Simmel, which Ortega helped to disseminate in Spain. To these must be added the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, which Ortega also introduced and wrote the prologue for his works. This thinker is aware that Spain's backwardness is also related to its lack of method when addressing the country's secular problems.

At some point Américo Castro explicitly realizes that all knowledge ranging from Philology to Philosophy must necessarily go through the inevitable History. But he goes beyond historiology, which Ortega promotes: he aspires to construct a *Cultural Anthropology* from Spain. At this point two of his major concepts are inferred from Dilthey's philosophy: *morada vital* (vital dwelling) and *vividura* (vividness). Nevertheless, Dilthey wasn't a well-known Professor in Germany. When Ortega knew his work, he remarked that it was a pity that he had not discovered Dilthey earlier, and that this forced him to follow Kant. Ortega also chose an interpretive phenomenology that demands vital experience in addition to empirical data. The *vital* is present in the philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset and his school. We are, therefore, dealing with a phenomenologically-based cultural anthropology.

The question of methodology is very important. At this point it is interesting to note that the sociology of Émile Durkheim and Max Weber do not find an echo in Américo Castro. Nevertheless, the rationalist Castro doesn't accept the idealistic currents ranging from Alfred Fouillée's *Psychologie des peuples* to his contemporary historian Rafael Altamira, who wrote *Psicología del pueblo español*. On the other hand, Castro didn't follow the criminalistic anthropology current in his day, which, when applied to the Baroque and contemporary ages, was represented by Cuban Fernando Ortiz, and Luis Ardila and Constancio Bernaldo de Quirós in Spain.

We can mention another more contextual issue. The greatest representative of American anthropology of Germanic origin, Franz Boas, died in 1942, and left behind him a foundational school in the USA. His research focused primarily on indigenous peoples and appeared in his *Cultural Patterns*. From the Museum of Natural History in New York and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, the Boasian school advanced in America two hypotheses based on the study of the native Indians: the concept of cultural patterns and the anti-evolutionism.

The second debate, on the evolutionism and its opposites, may have been strange to Américo Castro, but the first, *cultural patterns* was related directly to his cultural theory on Spain. For Castro, *cultural patterns*, as posited by the Boasian school, were related directly to his cultural theory on Spain. Ruth Benedict, a distinguished Boas disciple, applied this cultural pattern to the distinction between the Apollonian and Dionysian in Pueblo and Zuñi Indian cultures. The cultural patterns in Boasian school (Margaret Mead and his team) were applied after II Word War to some European cultures following the method of studies *from a distance* (without fieldwork), such as the French or Russian cultures.

However, when the *Castrí* (neologism for a follower of Américo Castro) Francisco Márquez Villanueva took the concepts (*cultural patterns*) of the Boasian school as an interpretative possibility, Don Américo accepted them. Castro felt that some of the concepts he had developed, and even invented, could serve to clear up *epistemic obstacles*. Indeed, they were successful in Spain although they did not enter into dialogue with the social science of the time in America, the Boasian school in particular.

One example that shows this problematic relationship of Américo Castro with the social science was the treatment that Castro gave to myth. He deals with the myth connected to the cult of Santiago Apostle, the patron of Spain. He was unaware of the advances made by the Bolandist school, since the 16th century, which had greatly rationalized the corpus of the Christian's saints. The same happened with the French folklorist school of the late 19th century. Pierre Saintyves saw a close relationship between the pagan cult and the Christian cult. Castro sees a hypothetical transmission between the ancient Dioscuri and the figure of Santiago. Américo Castro couldn't interpret the fact of the myth itself, because he didn't know the Durkhemian theory of representations, for example. He got entangled, due to this, only in philological discussions instead tackling the fact itself.

For similar reasons, Castro rejected the *Annales*, the scientific journal interested in the dialogue between history and social sciences, founded by Marc Bloch, who studied the medieval French Thaumaturg Kings. On the contrary, his studies on the concept of honor in Spanish Golden Age theatre were very anthropological and actual, as were those on the *casta* (caste) problem.

However, Castro offers a very relevant link with anthropology, since he did his fieldwork among living people thanks to his concept of *vividura* (*intimacy* and *vital experience*). In order to express all of the above, Castro needed to “display” new terms. Thus, in 1950 he wrote:

Although the Hispanic-Christian and the Muslim coincided in maintaining in compact union the consciousness of his person and of the world around him, there was on the other hand a decisive difference; the direction of his vital interest incited the Arab to pour himself into the object outside him [...]. As for Spaniards, the direction of vital dynamism moved from the object to the person, because that is the reality of his structure, of that *quid* which makes history intelligible, and which I call *vividura*. (Castro, 1950:44)

Taking this *sui generis* methodology as his starting point, Américo Castro addresses what we consider to be the “anthropology of convivencia”. The three castes (Muslims, Christians and Jews) generated *convivencia* (a Spanish word very popular among the social scientists) as a system of sociability and hierarchy, different from the historic status of the traditional *dhimmis* (or ‘protected’ under Islam law). The three castes in the Iberian Peninsula possessed a singularity, according to Américo Castro in his greatest and most ambitious work *España en su historia. Cristianos, Moros y Judíos* (Buenos Aires, 1948), later republished, with a complete revision, a few years later (México, 1954) under the title *La realidad histórica de España*. The Mozarabic Christians (Christians living in Islamic lands), Muladies (Iberian natives who converted to Islam), Mudejar (Muslims living in Christian lands) and other minorities had also incorporated the art of coexistence and the “living alone together” (Todorov, 1996). *Convivencia* is not an “absolute” but a model of existence and cultural “presence” of diversity.

Américo Castro confronts this *Andalusí* model with the Spanish Counterreformation. The Council of Trent did away with all kinds of dissidence and heterodoxy in the Catholic *ecumene*. It is the “conflictive age”, the seventeenth century, in which a new reality was created with the expulsions of Sephardim and *Moriscos* (the last Moors), between 1492 and 1609. In this new reality, the resilient Erasmism, or Christian tolerance, survived. The work of Erasmus of Rotterdam, influenced by Marranism and Protestantism, had many followers among the Spanish clergy and elites. Castro had a friendly polemic with the French Hispanist Marcel Bataillon, author of *Erasmus y España (Erasmus and Spain)* (1930), on the meaning of this heterodoxy. Tolerance in the Iberian Moors is clear. The Sephardic Jews were the most empowered to purity, says Castro. With their incorporation as converts into the fold of the Counter-Reformist Catholic Spain, and their complicity with the Inquisition, that identification with purity is verified, regardless of the religion practiced, according to Castro.

The debate acquires other connotations with two disciples, professors at New York and Harvard. Francisco Márquez Villanueva affirmed in the prologue of the book of the also *Castrí* Soledad Carrasco Urgotí *Moro retador, moro amigo* (based on the comedies and festivities of Moors and Christians in Spain): “We have here without a doubt one of the best studies of cultural anthropology so far carried out in the Hispanic field”. He was this specific in his words. Soledad Carrasco affirmed that Julio Caro Baroja, an anthropologist and social historian, had recommended her to follow that interpretive “anthropological” path. The Anthropological Way became something natural, that is Philosophical vitalism with the addition field work.

As mentioned above, in North America the word “convivencia”, pivotal in Castro's work, emerged as a horizon of empathic and coexistence “multiculturalism”, and was exhibited against national catholic Spain, including Franco's dictatorship. Américo Castro experienced these and other polemics with a certain bitterness, later continued by some of his Hispanic disciples, for example, Francisco Márquez Villanueva and Juan Goytisolo, who embodied a more pluralistic “narrative” about Spanish culture.

This historiological experience helped Castro understand that the Spanish problem couldn't be reduced to the idea of “two Spains”. For Castro, contrary to this theory, the complexity of the “Spanish problem” started with the rupture of the three castes with the advent of the Modern Age (early modern period). *Caste* was a matter of concern to some Spanish intellectuals. They had arrived before to the concept of *casticismo*. Miguel de Unamuno in 1902 had published his *Ensayo sobre el casticismo*. There he placed *casticismo* at the center of “being Spanish”. Spain, according to Unamuno, could be a caste system. Caste, unlike social class, assumes a sense of “natural” belonging without

the possibility of leaving the pre-established hierarchy. The word "caste" had been expanded by the Iberian peoples after the contact with India. The notion of caste would allude to a sort of "cultural race" that does not avoid biological miscegenation. In his reflection from the United States, Américo Castro's ideas were a notorious advance in relation to Unamuno's impressionistic appreciations. But Castro continued to elude contacts with the Durkheimian sociological studies, in particular the works of Celestin Bouglé's on the Hindu caste system (Bouglé, 1908). Castro takes the idea of the "three castes" from Georges Dumézil: "G. Dumézil emphasizes the antiquity of the social organization founded on the system of the three castes. This serves very well my purpose of showing how any historical common denominator has to be presented and understood within the particular situation in which it appears. The three castes offer a very different human reality in Rome, in India, in Scandinavia or in Spain" (Castro, 2021:354).

The most influential work which has shaped the North American view of Iberian history is María Rosa de Menocal's *The Ornament of the World*, published at the same time as the attacks of September 11, 2001. The author draws on Américo Castro to find and expand on the arguments for *convivencia* as a cultural model (Menocal, 2002).

The Context of Américo Castro's Pluricultural Activism

At this point, it is necessary to frame the figure of Américo Castro in order to understand his particular "anthropology of *convivencia*". Some of the following data are redundant and incidental to well-known aspects of his work and personality. To a certain extent, his biography has become stereotyped. But we must continue to insist on it. We have adopted the "anthropological" approach, so we are going to contextualize it in the sense given by his teacher José Ortega y Gasset when he spoke of "the self and its circumstances".

Américo Castro Quesada was a Spanish historian and philologist, naturalized American in the 1950s. He was born in the Brazilian town of Cantagalo, near Rio de Janeiro, in 1885, and died in Spanish Catalonia, in 1972. His parents were born in the province of Granada (Andalusia, Spain), in two small agro-towns, and they emigrated to Brazil after a great famine in the Andalusian countryside. Castro returned to Granada when he was four years old, and there he did his early studies. Later he studied Humanities and Law at the University of Granada (1900-1905). His childhood and teenage impressions were therefore marked by the social and cultural environment of Granada. We can say that his personality was characterized by a "complex of autochthony" stemming from his youthful experiences in Granada. In other words, Castro had a lasting memory of a very strong identity. In Andalusia, the region to which Granada belongs, the sense of autochthony is very strong, as anthropology has detected since its inception in the region (Pitt-Rivers, 1954).

Castro was known as "Spanish" in the United States, while in Spain he was considered to be a native from Granada and Andalusia. In the USA, his thought is interpreted as an extension of the idea of multiculturalism (Menocal, 2002); in Spain, it is interpreted as a reflection on the problem related to Spanish identity (González Alcantud, 2024a). Otherness and identity are interpreted according to the place from which they are envisioned, whether from the United States, where multiculturalism prevails, or from Spain, where the problem of identity is most acute.

In line with the issue of identity, young Américo Castro had the impression that education in Spain was in great need of a reform. Granada appeared to him as the *Black Spain*. *Black Spain* would be the backward country, the rural world and decayed cities immersed in a circle of poverty. *Black Spain* is a concept very popular in artists and

writers. Two books, by Émile Verhaeren & Darío de Regoyos's in 1899, and José Gutiérrez Solana in 1920 (Verhaeren & Regoyos, 2000; Gutiérrez Solana, 1989) marked the debate on the extent of Spanish backwardness. The paintings of Darío de Regoyos, Ignacio Zuloaga, López Mezquita and Gutiérrez Solana marked this trend. Archer Milton Huntington, founder of Hispanic Society of America, promoted in a certain way that way of seeing Spain, from New York.

As a culmination of this so-called Crisis of 1898, generated by the loss of the last Spanish colonies, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, and the particular look of *Black Spain*, we have the paradigmatic figure of Ángel Ganivet (1865-1898), also born in Granada. However, Américo Castro appreciated this local thinker, who committed suicide in Riga when Castro was a student in Granada. Ganivet was an analyst of the Finnish people and also reflected on Spanish colonialism, which he vindicated against the Anglo-Saxon one. Above all, he thought of Spain's decadence in his book *Idearium español* (1897). Castro spoke of him in Buenos Aires in 1922 and in Madrid, at the time of the transfer of his mortal remains to Spain, in 1925. That is to say, Castro, like Ganivet had done before, becomes integrated in a certain way into the so-called "Spanish problem".

After a period in Madrid, Castro went to Paris in 1905. There he worked as a private Spanish teacher for three years in Paris, where he was in contact with the Hispanist circles of Sorbonne. He also had a close relationship in there Paris with the neo-Kantian philosopher Manuel García Morente. He learned to speak French fluently, but he does not seem to have been influenced by the intellectual currents of the Parisian world. For example, he is not influenced by the teachings of Émile Durkheim during his stay at the Sorbonne.

When he returned to Spain in 1908, the new *Junta de Ampliación de Estudios*, the institution for the scientific renovation inspired by the philosophy of the minor German thinker Karl C. F. Krause, was active. This liberal institution was related to the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, which sent young university students to Europe. His relationship with Francisco Giner de los Ríos, Ramón Menéndez Pidal and Manuel Bartolomé Cossío was very close. At the time, the pedagogue Giner de los Ríos, one of the fathers of the reformist movement, had been expelled from his *cátedra* (Full Professorship) in Madrid. Menéndez Pidal was a philologist who was renewing Spanish history by studying the *romancero* (medieval balladry) with empirical rigor. Cossío was a promoter of the study of art in a lively manner and promoted the intellectual discovery of El Greco.

Américo Castro, after his staying in Paris in 1905 and 1908, approached German thought through the ideas of the *Krausists* and the *Institutionists*². He had a close relationship with the reformist projects of teaching and researching in Spain. In this liberal atmosphere, Castro was sent by Pidal to Buenos Aires in 1922, where he defended the linguistic purity of Spanish, in line with the later pan-Hispanist movement, which was criticized by Jorge Luis Borges. Following the *Institutionist* ideas, he began to carry out fieldwork in Morocco and Castile. In particular, those in the Maghreb were very important for him.

In 1922 he did fieldwork among the Hebrew communities in northern Morocco, in Xauen. The political atmosphere was very favorable in Spain to Sephardic communities, thanks to the senator Ángel Pulido, who had developed a work of reconciliation, recognition and protection of the Sephardic communities in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey since 1906. These communities were considered part of the "lost Spain", after the diaspora of the Spanish Jews in 1492. According to Samuel

² *Krausistas*: followers of K.C.F. Krause, a German educator introduced to Spain by Julián Sanz del Río. *Institucionistas*: members of the Institución libre de Enseñanza, a Free Institution of Education, liberal intellectuals who followed Krause's ideas.

Armistead, this was the moment in which Castro discovered the importance of the Semitic horizon in the constitution of the Iberian singularity (González Alcantud, 2024b). The idea of “lost Spain” and the Spanish Pan-Semitism was intended to compensate for the *geo-cultural* loss of the colonies.

With the arrival of the Second Spanish Republic in 1931, he was appointed ambassador to Germany. There he was able to see the effects of Nazism. He continued being part of the “organic intellectuals” (Gramsci *dixit*) of the new Republic, speaking clearly of rationalism and secularism. When the Civil War broke out in 1936, he was in San Sebastian, his wife’s hometown, Carmen Madinaveitia, the daughter of a famous doctor with revolutionary ideas, Juan de Madinaveitia. Castro went into exile in Argentina. From Argentina, where he was not well received by the politicians of the time, he emigrated to several American countries, among them Chile, Venezuela and Mexico. Finally, in 1937, he arrived in the United States, at the University of Madison, Wisconsin.

The history of Hispanism in the United States is important to contextualize Américo Castro at the time of his arrival. There was an important circle of Hispanists in the United States, both from the US and Spain. On the American side it begun with the historian Georges Ticknor, author of a popular *History of Spanish Literature, 1863*, and the writer Washington Irving. In particular, Irving, in the Romantic era, traveled to Spain and carried out a real ethnographic fieldwork, in the Alhambra palace, in Granada. He wrote *The Alhambra* (1832), based on oral sources. It was translated into Spanish under the title *Cuentos de la Alhambra*.

At the end of the 19th century, and coinciding with the Spanish-American war in Cuba in 1898, the businessmen William R. Hearst, in California, and Archer M. Huntington, in New York, played an ambiguous game. In 1898, the magnate William Hearst, enemy of Spain, had aroused anti-Spanish feelings, but then in his castle, on the Californian coast, he had numerous antiques of Spanish origin (Merino, 2013:111-122). On the other hand, Archer Huntington, one of New York's greatest businessmen, founded the Hispanic Society of America, which became the most important American cultural center on Spain and its culture in the world.

It was also the time of the Pan-American Exhibition in San Diego in 1915 and the study trip of the poet Federico García Lorca in 1929 to New York. It is the time of the “Spanish Craze” (Spanish fashion). In short, there was a wave of Hispanophilia among certain American intellectual sectors, who saw Spain as a redeemable backward country, and the possibility to end the misunderstandings between the two countries.

In this favorable context, Castro had previously been invited in 1924 to Columbia University, whose Spanish department was headed by two illustrious *Institutionist*, Federico de Onís and Ángel del Río. It was reinforced by the presence of Fernando de los Ríos, the former minister of the Republic, exiled in New York after the Spanish Civil War. Finally, Don Américo's assistant in Madrid, Manuel Fernández Montesinos, came here too.

In 1947, Américo Castro was offered a position as Professor at Princeton University, from where he retired in 1957. Nevertheless, later he had other contracts in Houston and San Diego universities, which he combined with his trips to Spain in the summer. During his decade at Princeton, he was appreciated among his students, some of them exiles from Spain, as well as several American Jews. They studied Spanish literature, especially from the Medieval –Arcipreste de Hita– and Golden Age (Baroque) –Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Fernando de Rojas, etc.– Castro, meanwhile, following in a certain way the academic model established by Max Weber established in his book *The Politician and the Scientist*, moved away from the most radical currents of Spanish republicanism and anti-Francoism. However, the American followers of Castro detected

his cultural "activism", although it did not contradict his aspiration to science. In the meantime, began to have relationships with some intellectuals from the Francoism regime, notably with the future Nobel Prize Camilo José Cela.

Due to his wife's illness, and determined not to have her hospitalized in a center far from her native country, he began to return discreetly to Spain. There he traveled to places such as Santiago de Compostela, the object of his studies, and above all to Andalusia, mainly to Granada. At the University of Granada, he met a group of professors who were expanding his ideas, half a century after he studied there. They were carrying out a monumental *Linguistic and Ethnographic Atlas of Andalusia*, following the German model of dialectology. It was the work that in a certain way he had projected in the 1900s. Cultural anthropology did not exist at the University of Granada at that time, only the Philology and the History.

In spite of it, in the final years of his life, professor Castro was more honored in the United States than in Spain. The difference is that in the first country the tributes in his honor were related to Sephardic Judaism and *converso* topics, while in the second they paid more attention to the problematic of the generation of 1898 on the "essence of Spain". In America, Samuel Armistead and Joseph Silverman, following their interest in Semitism in the Spanish culture, carried out fieldwork in California among the Hebrew immigrant communities from Rhodes and Salonica, collecting their romances from Spanish origin (Armistead & Silverman, 1981). They also collected them in Morocco.

This approach provided A stronger vision of Spanish identity, less Catholic and closer to the culture represented by coexistence. Even within Christianity, Erasmist³ humanism was privileged. The so-called Generation of '98 had prioritized the ontological study of the "essence of Spain". In this way, the 'problem of Spain' that had provoked the Civil War of 1936-39 takes him further away from the equally ontological idea of the "two Spains" (liberal and conservative). For Castro, the issue became the "Spain of the three cultures". In the Hispanic sphere, however, he came into conflict with Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, the former Minister of the Republic, a very nationalist intellectual. From his exile in Buenos Aires, he had a bitter controversy about Spanish identity with Américo Castro. While Albornoz thought that Spanish identity came from immemorial times, Castro considered that it only arose from the arrival of the Muslims to the Iberian Peninsula. In the former's vision, Spain was "eternal", including Hispano-Romans and the Visigoths; for the latter, Spain was circumstantial: even the word "Spain" had a foreign origin, Provençal.

Genuineness

For *vital reasons*, Castro infers, the problem of Spain is not transferable to foreign scholars; the *owners of the problem* have the last word, those who experience it intimately. In short, it is an ontological problem. Genuineness could also be associated with the autochthony complex, given the supremacy of practical reason over theoretical reason in anthropology. And if such supremacy exists, we could only respond to it through the ultimate dictate of the owners of the problem or in collaboration with them (Greenwood, 2005). For Américo Castro, authenticity takes two paths that may affect the type of anthropological thinking about coexistence that he promotes: Orientalism at home and the status of Baroque culture.

³ By Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536), humanist who preached an open and non-repressive Christianity.

Orientalism *At Home* as an Original Spanish Discourse

The work of Américo Castro, who taught at Princeton until the arrival of Edward Said as a student, had no influence on Said's later work, especially on his *Orientalism*, published in 1978. James T. Monroe, one of Castro's disciples, who worked on Spanish Arabism, didn't have any influence in Said's work. This disagreement led Said not to deal with the problem of "cultural frontiers", among them al-Andalus. Years later, when Said received the Prince of Asturias Concord Award in Spain, together *ex aequo* with the musician Daniel Barenboim, he felt obliged to write a new prologue of his book for the Spanish readers, justifying this absence. But the reality is that Said's point of view on the period of al-Andalus abounds in Orientalist stereotypes, as it was demonstrated by the article he wrote in tourism magazines after visiting the region.

Said's lack of knowledge about Américo Castro extended to the disciples of Castro, and more particularly to the work of Francisco Márquez Villanueva, Professor at Harvard University. In fact, the latter had adopted ways close to the idea of "cultural frontier", such as the "*Alfonsí* cultural concept" (Márquez, 2004). Américo Castro and his school thus became part of the Orientalist debate, all of them defending the idea of an Iberian singularity. This *Castrí* position lacked Oriental exoticism. Contrary to this, in the French case, the Other was placed at a distance thanks to an exotism, "la sensation d'Exotisme: qui n'est autre que la notion du différent; la perception du Divers; la connaissance que quelque chose n'est pas soi-même, qui n'est que le pouvoir de concevoir autre" (Segalen, 1986:36). However, another follower of Castro, the writer Juan Goytisolo, did give Said full credit for anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist reasons (Goytisolo, 1989).

Of course, Américo Castro, as a result of his use of the Semitic argument, offers a position that could be catalogued as "Orientalist" (Castien, 2006; González Alcantud, 2021), or by using an oxymoron could be termed "the Occident of Orient". In fact, Castro moves in the interface "between East and West" or "neither Orient nor Occident", as did an ideologist of his time, Rodolfo Gil Benumeya, around 1929, at the time of the Spanish Moroccan Protectorate and the Ibero-American Exposition of Seville. For Américo Castro the Moors of al-Andalus possessed a singularity that distinguished them from the rest of the Moors of the Maghreb. The same line of thought was pursued by Emilio García Gómez, who made explicit the opposition and rivalry between the Andalusian Muslims and those of the Maghreb (García Gómez, 1976). In a certain way, the exiles in the Moroccan Maghreb, al-Mutamid ibn Abbas, the last Abbasid king of Seville, and Muhammad ibn Abdallah, the last Nasrid king of Granada, in Fez, should also be interpreted in this way.

In this way, the familiarity with the Arabs creates an internal problem on the singularity of the Spanish historical narration. The cultural and scientific debate had to tackle the issue of the interpretation of the role that Muslims and Jews had played in Spanish history. On the other hand, both Moors and Jews had to develop a concealment system after the expulsion, an Islamic *taqiyya* (concealment) or a Christian Erasmist conscience, in order to integrate themselves into Catholic society. Cervantes and Saint Teresa thus become the center of Américo Castro's investigation, trying to find in both of them a background of dissimulation in order to transmit their complex personality. Thus, Castro moves from literary and artistic Mudejarism to the Baroque as an aesthetic of disillusionment and veiling.

Spanish domestic Orientalism, based on eight centuries of Islamic and many more of Jewish presence on the Peninsula, would thus be much more intimate and unique in its

approach to the East, particularly through al-Andalus. Therefore, Edward Said's method of clearly separating Europe, the active subject of colonialism, from the East, the passive subject of colonialism, would not be valid when applied to the Iberian Peninsula. In a way, Castro is the negation of Said's anti-Orientalist thinking.

The Baroque Concept as an Ibero-American Anthropological Way?

The Baroque period is established in the last phase of Castro's life and work as a particular feature of the past and present historical moment of Spanish culture. Although the Mudejar consciousness and aesthetic⁴ would be the expression of the Spain that could have been and was not, motivated by the expulsion of Muslims and Jews that arose from the Counter-Reformation, they contain some keys to cultural plurality.

For a long time, the Baroque was rejected as a valid language of artistic form, always opposing it to the classicism associated with rationality. Although it was basically an artistic style, the very comprehension of what "the baroque" means was subject to other philosophical or literary parameters. To make his understanding transcendent, Eugenio D'Ors took the concept of *aeon*, which he took from Neoplatonism: "An *aeon* for the Alexandrians means a category that, in spite of its metaphysical character [...], had a development inscribed in time, had a form in history" (D'Ors, 1993:63). The Baroque is an *aeon* or a style.

However, in the 1920s the idea of the Baroque was still regarded with apprehension, equated to an undervalued artistic style and associated with a symbolic machinery of domination such as the Counter-Reformation. Américo Castro, following this fashion, abominated this artistic style in an article published in the 1920s in the magazine *Tierra Firme*. However, at the end of his life, according to all the testimonies, including that of James T. Monroe, he was very concerned about the Baroque, and more particularly about Góngora⁵ and his conception of reality and appearance. This is further demonstrated by the interest Castro had in connecting with the Spanish professors who were devoted to the study of the Baroque, such as Emilio Orozco in Andalusia⁶, and also he received a grant to study the Baroque in Italy in his later years. Thus, not only Américo Castro but a large number of authors began to conceive the Baroque as a language of resistance to power, whether through mysticism (Saint Teresa, Saint John of the Cross), literature (Cervantes), or festive culture, where the desires of the powerful and those of the people mixed (Maravall, 1975).

The Baroque was seen as a language between Psychoanalysis and Anthropology, rooted in Latin America. It is the imagery language of miscegenation, as Serge Gruzinski analyzed the specific case of La Puebla de los Ángeles, in Mexico (Gruzinski, 2012), or Octavio Paz in the case of Sor Inés de la Cruz, the Mexican nun and poet (Paz, 1982). The Baroque is an imaginative universe that is more closely related to Mannerism and its fantastic forms.

It was Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (2004), and Christine Buci-Glucksmann (1996) who pointed out that there is a relation between "Baroque" and "Postmodernity". The Baroque is even conceived as an alternative to the dominance of Cartesian reason that has led society towards an ultra-capitalist horizon. Deleuze and Guattari propose in *Mille Plateaux. Capitalisme et esquizofrenie*, the Latin American Baroque as an alternative

⁴ *Mudejar*: an architectural and literary style created by the *mudejares*, or Christians under Spanish Islam, which is a mixture of elements from their ancient tradition and others, Gothic and Renaissance, from the dominant culture.

⁵ Interview with James T. Monroe on April 12, 2024, Berkeley.

⁶ Interview with Ana Orozco Pardo on January 16, 2024. Granada.

anti-capitalist horizon or paradigm. This discourse was assimilated by a large part of Latin American intellectuals, and its relevance continues to this day as opposed to the rationalism attributed to capitalist societies (Echevarría, 1998; Barboza, 2025).

Perhaps, in my opinion, this is the point at which it is possible to contemplate the encyclopedic work of Américo Castro Quesada the *historiologist*, a man between two worlds, America and Europe, as a possible *cultural* anthropologist, who explored the singularity of his Spanish culture with an original method. In it, he came close to Cultural Anthropology, and to the Baroque (“conflictive age”) as a specific way.

Américo Castro's historiological work on cultural *convivencia* in the Iberian Peninsula throughout history, on Iberian domestic Orientalism, and on the American Baroque as a form of cultural fusion, allows us to reconstruct a complex methodological tool for approaching the historical and anthropological realities of complex societies. Genuineness, methodologically repeated as intimacy with history, compels us to re-represent and include figures such as Américo Castro in the history of anthropology. Otherwise, the problem of “coexistence” in a multicultural world will remain misunderstood in all its epistemic depth.

Works Cited

- Armistead, Samuel G., & Joseph H. Silverman, eds. *Judeo-Spanish Ballads from New Yor*. Recibidas por Maír José Bernardete. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
- Barboza Filho, Rubem. *Tradição e artifício. iberismo e barroco na formação americana*. Rio de Janeiro: Ateliê de Humanidades, 2025.
- Bouglé, Célestin. *Essai sur le régime des castes*. Paris: Felix Alcan, 1908.
- Buci-Glucksmann, Christine. *Baroque Reason. The Aesthetics of Modernity*. London: Sage, 1994.
- Buci-Glucksmann, Christine, ed. *Puissance du Baroque. Les forces, les formes, les rationalités*. Paris: Galilée, 1996.
- Castien Maestro, Ignacio (2006), "Américo Castro, una visión orientalista de la realidad histórica de España". In: Víctor Morales Lezcano (ed.). *Actas de la Jornada sobre Orientalismo, ayer y hoy (entrecruces y percepciones)*. Madrid, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, pp.49-72.
- Castro, Américo. *Ensayo de historiología. Analogías y diferencias entre españoles y musulmanes*. New York: Franz C. Feger, 1950.
- . *Hacia Cervantes*. Madrid: Taurus, 1967 [1957].
- . *España en su historia. Ensayos sobre Historia y Literatura. Obra reunida III*. Madrid: Trotta, 2004 1940.
- . Ed. José Miranda. *La realidad histórica de España y otros ensayos*. Madrid: Trotta, 2021 [1958].
- Deleuze, Gilles & Felix Guattari (2004), *Mil y una mesetas. Capitalismo y esquizofrenia*. Valencia, Pre-Textos.
- D'Ors, Eugenio. *Lo barroco*. Madrid: Tecnos, 1993.
- Echeverría, Bolívar. *La modernidad de lo barroco*. México: Era, 1998.
- Evans, Brad. "Where was boas during the Renaissance in Harlem? Diffusion, Race, and the Culture Paradigm in the History of Anthropology. Richard Handler ed. *Central Sites, Peripheral Visions: Cultural and Institutional Crossings in the History of Anthropology*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006. 69-99.
- García Gómez, Emilio. "Prólogo". In *Andalucía contra Berbería*. Barcelona: Publications of the Department of Arabic Language and Literature, 1976.
- González Alcantud, J.A. *Sísifo y la ciencia social. Variaciones críticas de la Antropología*. Barcelona: Anthropos, 2008.
- . *Qué es el orientalismo. El Oriente imaginado en la cultura global*. Córdoba: Almuzara, 2021
- . *Américo Castro y la historia de España*. Córdoba: Almuzara, 2024a.
- . "Américo Castro en el horizonte ibérico pansemita". En J.G.Alcantud ed. *Américo Castro y su tiempo*. Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2024b. 27-48.
- . "Américo Castro desde Norteamérica". In J.A. González Alcantud & Pablo González Velasco eds, *Américo Castro, pensador errante entre América y España*. Granada: EUG, 2025. 379-399.
- Goytisolo, Juan (1989), *Crónicas sarracinas*. Madrid: Alfaguara, 1989.
- Greenwood, Davydd J. *Antropología social, acción democrática*. Granada: EUG, 2025.
- Gruzinski, Serge, *La pensée métisse*. Paris: Pluriel, 2019.
- Guanche, Jesús & José Antonio Matos. *Fernando Ortiz, contra la raza y los racismos*. La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2016.
- Gutiérrez-Solana, José. Prólogo de Andrés Trapiello. *La España Negra*. Granada: Comares, 2000 [1920].

- Maravall, José Antonio. *La cultura del barroco. Análisis de una estructura histórica*. Madrid: Ariel, 1975.
- Márquez Villanueva, Francisco, *El concepto cultural alfonsí*. Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2004 [2017].
- Menocal, María Rosa de. *Ornament of the World. How Muslims, Jews, and Christians created a culture of tolerance in Medieval Spain*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2002.
- Merino de Cáceres, José María. “El coleccionismo y la expatriación del románico hispánico: portadas, claustros y ábsides”. In Pedro Luis Huerta Huerta ed. *La diáspora del románico hispano. De la protección al expolio*. Aguilar de Campoo: Fundación Santa María la Real, 2013. 94-131.
- Monroe, James T. Introduction by Michelle M. Hamilton & David A. Wacks *Islam and the Arabs in Spanish Scholarship: 16th Century to the Present*. Boston: Ilex Series, 2021 [1970].
- Orin, Starn. *Ishi's Brain. In Search of America's "Wild" Last Indian*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004.
- Ortega y Gasset, José. "La Filosofía de la historia de Hegel, y la historiología". In: *Revista de Occidente* 1928 (56): 145-176.
- Paz, Octavio. *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz o las Trampas de la Fe*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1982.
- Pitt-Rivers, Julian. *The People of the Sierra*. New York: Criterion Books, 1954.
- Ray, Arthur J. “Kroeber and the California claims. Historical Particularism and Cultural Ecology in Court”. In Richard Handler edc. *Central Sites, Peripheral Visions: Cultural and Institutional Crossings in the History of Anthropology*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2006. 248-274.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. *La vida en común. Ensayo de antropología general*. Madrid: Taurus, 1996.
- Saumade, Frédérick & Petrick Pérez, eds. *Tenatsali ou l'ethnologue qui fut transformé en indien*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2022
- Segalen, Victor. *Essai sur l'exotisme*. Paris, Fata Morgana, 1986.
- Stocking, George W. Jr. *Race, Culture and Evolution. Essays in the History of Anthropology*. Chicago: The University Chicago Press, 1968.
- Verhaeren, Émile & Darío de Regoyos. *España negra*. Palma de Mallorca, Olañeta, 1989 [1899].