

Internationalization of Portuguese Historiography: An Opportunity Stemming from a Challenge

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One of the most important objectives of this journal is the greater popularization of contemporary Portuguese historiography, as well as the related goal of a deeper understanding on the part of the international academic community of research being done in Portuguese history in all its varied fields and many methodological traditions. In this sense, the increase in internationally-oriented work on the part of Portuguese historical researchers – which expands the audience for this research – presents itself as the logical corollary to this journal's aforementioned objective. For this reason it should be understood that this subject appears straightaway in the first issue of the journal, included in the section devoted to topics for discussion. This has from the start looked to be one of the most dynamic aspects of this publication.

The journal's aforementioned objective of popularizing contemporary Portuguese historiography raises various questions: What does the desire to internationalize a historiographical tradition mean in practice? And, more specifically, what exactly does the adjective "Portuguese" refer to when applied to this same historiography?

Let us for now leave aside the first of these questions and begin by considering the second. In reality, the word "Portuguese" is by no means necessarily limited to a purely national context. Though the national context is certainly important, the term points towards much broader horizons, corresponding to the different geographical areas with which Portuguese history has been related in the past. This journal thus serves a great variety of interests and concerns and is accordingly open to a similarly diverse range of writers and contributors. As such, it should not be seen as simply an "international" opening for one specific group of historians, but above all as a welcome forum for research and intellectual discussion. The term "internationalization" should thus be regarded as a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

Then again, it is important to bear in mind that when we talk about the internationalization of "Portuguese" history, we may often describe realities that do not always coincide. What kind of internationalization are we dealing with here - internationalization of a research theme, or internationalization of those people who tackle it in their work? In fact, looking at the biographies of those from the previous generation of historians who were internationally-oriented, we may well ask if these possibilities can be separated. Moreover, considering the current demands on universities and contemporary research, should they not be of secondary concern?

That is, should the aim of an academic study be to open up the topic of research to an international audience if, at the same time, this may cut it off from the concrete experience of those who wish to play a central part in this same initiative? Indeed, seeing as there is ultimately no such thing as historiography without the names and faces that lend it personality, is effective internationalization at all possible if it is not based on a strong sense of continuity, which, beyond individual researchers, promotes research groups and teams?

In this sense the purpose of internationalization can be seen as a means of taking stock of that which, with varying levels of success, has already been done. However, it is vital to develop a clear idea of what our prospective intentions are and how to promote and pursue them. Ultimately, we will have to follow this route, even though it is evident that it implies questions that are not always easy to resolve. Let us look at some of these implications.

What exactly is the historiographical 'world' that the journal is intended to promote? We thus return to the question of just what is meant by "Portuguese" in terms of Portuguese historiography.

What kind of structural 'network' needs to be set up for such a 'world' to operate effectively? This is not easy to answer because of the need to provide the appropriate support mechanism (or mechanisms) to whoever assumes the responsibility of promoting the 'network' in question.

Since it is not possible to cover all the 'bases' in every single 'game', what is the best means of encouraging the internationalization that is sought for? The question is problematic since scholars of "Portuguese" history - in its widest sense and encompassing Europe, America, Africa, and Asia - live in places that differ considerably in social and cultural terms.

Finally, it is important to observe that even in this broadened field of investigation, 'globalization' - likewise historiographical - involves strategies that are both affirmative and sustainable, and which, in order to be effective, demand that priorities be determined. And yet who is to define them, and how?

In short, these are some of the many questions raised by a simple theme - the internationalization of Portuguese historiography. The editors of the *E-Journal of Portuguese History* are the first to realize that it is not easy to find solutions that are to everyone's satisfaction. But this should not deter us from pursuing this theme. Essentially, this is a path that we must stick to, even if at first it may be hard to catch sight of the finish line.

The advantages of having research teams have already been referred to, but what is the best group profile, small homogeneous groups or larger teams with more of an inter-disciplinary character? And what about the cultural make-up of these groups - should they primarily be composed of members of a single nationality? And, incidentally, to what extent will it be necessary to form cross-cultural teams made up of different Portuguese-speaking historians? Would it be sensible to privilege a few who, in certain fields, may serve as pivotal points in the 'network'?

The need to forge personal contacts between Portuguese historians and colleagues of different nationalities has also been mentioned. However, it is very easy for this issue to break the consensus and lead to all manner of problems and uncertainties. Here are a few examples.

What is the most appropriate kind of international presence? To some extent, this is a question of what is the most effective means of achieving this presence (publications? books and/or journals? congresses and scientific conferences? research teams?), but above all it is a question of what is the preferred language (Portuguese? English? flexibility in choosing how to reach the intended cultural areas?). That is to say, in this supposedly intentional effort, are certain cultural areas to be given priority status, or will all be treated alike?

There is one final question that refers primarily to Portuguese historians. Namely, is the aim of internationalization independent from the areas of their research? That is, does it matter or not if practising historians of so-called "Portuguese history", in its widest sense, also participate in other, non-Portuguese fields of research?

Indeed, are there any specific areas of study that favor this approach? Is it desirable in this cross-border initiative to list the positives and negatives? For example, as far as Europe is concerned, what are the advantages and drawbacks of broadening the scale of the Iberian Peninsula and of meridional (or Mediterranean) Europe by extending historians' horizons so as to be able to contemplate progressively wider contexts? And the same can be said about America, or at least South America, as well as Africa and Asia, where it is possible to draw up similar lists. In this context, will such specialized geographical terms still be applicable to "Portuguese history"?

I wish to conclude by returning to a question raised earlier. Because history clearly demonstrates the importance of sociological conditions that have across the ages affected each generation of historians in approaching the issue of internationalization, an international orientation on the part of historians, especially of the generation who are now embarking on their journey, appears increasingly to be an essential requisite of the desired internationalization of historiography. In fact, in a relatively small space like Portugal, it is a truly vital demand because it is only through such global cross-fertilization of historians that a credible basis for the opening up of the frontiers of historiography can be achieved.

Therefore, in accordance with the aforementioned concerns, the editors of the journal have decided to subject this controversial issue to the careful scrutiny of three historians, whose personal and

professional experiences may be different, but who all have an unswerving interest in the question at hand. Each of them has responded differently, highlighting opinions that do not always coincide, yet are all undeniably interesting. Following these contributions, we have decided to keep the discussion open beyond this issue of the journal. We hope that it may provide a stimulus and starting point for others, who may or may not share the same views as those expressed here. In future issues, we will thus print these points of view in the belief that thereby everyone will benefit.