



## Chronicles of the New World: primary sources for the study of the history of the spanish America (1492-1898)

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# Chronicles of the New World: primary sources for the study of the history of the spanish America (1492-1898)

CRÓNICAS DE INDIAS: FUENTES PRIMARIAS  
PARA EL ESTUDIO DE LA HISTORIA DE AMÉRICA  
(1492-1898)

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**Abstract:** The study of the History of Spanish America owes much to the western written culture, also today the legacy of the Amerindian oral tradition is recovered. The primary sources offer a spontaneous panorama in the testimonial, rich, diverse and abundant, not exempt from a necessary criticism and crossing of testimonies. The notorious american chronicles obey a specific time and place, and manifest an explicit interest in the knowledge and possession of the New World, its nature and its people. At the same time that the associated alterity and identity are analyzed, the alien gaze and the connection of cultures turned into biological miscegenation and cultural syncretism are not ignored.

**Keywords:** Spanish America, Chronicles of the New World, Historical Sources, Otherness, Identity, Cultural History.

**Resumen:** El estudio de la Historia de América debe mucho a la cultura escrita occidental, igualmente hoy se recupera el legado de la tradición oral amerindia. Las fuentes primarias ofrecen un panorama espontáneo en lo testimonial, rico, diverso y abundante, no exento de una necesaria crítica y cruce de testimonios. Las notorias crónicas de Indias obedecen a un tiempo y lugar concretos, y manifiestan un interés explícito por el conocimiento y tenencia del Nuevo Mundo, de su naturaleza y sus gentes. Al mismo tiempo que se analizan la alteridad y la identidad asociadas, no se obvia la mirada ajena y el entronque de culturas devenido en mestizaje biológico y sincretismo cultural.

**Palabras clave:** América española, Crónicas de Indias, Fuentes históricas, alteridad, identidad, Historia cultural.

## 1. introduction and state of the question

The analysis of the chronicle, as a historical source subject to textual and hypertextual criticism, is classic in Americanist studies. And yet, new documentary corpus with the relationships of the conquerors, evangelizers or administrators of such extensive territories in a multi-century chain are constantly being edited. It is worth wondering up

to what point we can call the document resulting from the observer a chronicle of the Indies and whether this nature depends on the actor or another added factor that singles it out or places it in the extensive Indian bibliography. The edition of sources from Spanish and American repositories, among others, has relaunched a genre that seemed forgotten: the compilation, selective as it all is and subject to a particular criterion. But to the outdated, and no less praiseworthy, compilations with dual purposes –divulgative and representative–, they have currently followed approaches of great scientific and academic rigor.

Critical studies of these edited primary sources are of great significance to the social scientist, and not just the historian. Anthropologists, sociologists or art historians, for example, abound in their use, almost abuse. We refer to the necessary complementarity between archival and published sources, and in an extensive casuistry of documentary types. Certainly, together with the descriptive and often evaluative account, it is essential to consult official and private documentation whose recipients determine the information.

In this sense, our contribution lies in providing a synthesis of Indian chronicles that we consider relevant, even though the absences are also relevant. It would be a colossal task or to be naive, to aspire to an exhaustive compilation. Those presented here are representative and although they are not all that are, they are all that are and are also easy to consult in modern editions. Above the imperatives of extension, opening a trail to the interested party or researcher is the purpose of the text, which is no small thing. And do it from the criticism of this source, recurrently revalued and never forgotten. Consequently, from the previous confession of limits set to the repertoire, the Lusitanian sphere and the renewed account of its overseas experience (Ramada, 2019), as well as Hispanic Asia and the oceanic space, would deserve greater future attention. We focus, this time, on Spanish America.

The generation of chronicles is so overwhelming and early, that it is necessary to point out some guidelines about the genre. Here is the relevance of the contribution that, for reasons of agility, we divided between the North and South America, set the idea of organization in kingdoms of the Spanish Indies and the vice-royal structure in sequence. To fill a gap in the recapitulation of the scope of the chronicle is our objective, and to do so from its contribution to the construction of otherness and identity. A gap that is widened by the prolific literature on the matter. Secondly, to disseminate a synthesis of required reading. The starting questions are directed to questioning the use of edited primary sources from a recovery perspective. Rescue regarding the understanding of Latin America as a region whose identity is the product of the confluence of multiple identities. The miscegenations were companions of the clash of the Hispanic conquest, with a double cultural and political link (Gruzinski, 2007: 75). A laboratory of globalization, with an Atlantic axis of great importance for the historical future of Spain (Jiménez, 2017: 82).

Two worthy contributions on the subject are required reading among the most recent historical literature. The first studies the Andean sources in long historical duration with interesting comments attached (Pillsbury, 2016), while the second offers an overview of the chronicles and the Spanish thought of the moment together with a valuable dictionary of chroniclers (Denisova, 2017). Walter Mignolo was the most prominent pioneer in his formal classification due to the elaborate systematization (1982: 57-116). A textual classification must take into account that many of them are written in prose, but that others are epic poems (González Boixo, 1999: 234). The study and its debate are complex, since they are debated between literature and history (Fariñas Maciel, 2019). It's a space of confluence between genders (Leonetti, 2013).

### *1.1. Theoretical framework: Chronicles and mixed-race identities*

The Chronicles of the Indies penetrate into otherness. It is true that by recounting his own sufferings it is extolling the protagonist with the aim of seeking fame or merit and social advancement. A few examples place us in this line of research. Cieza de León confessed in the proem of his Chronicle of Peru that after leaving Spain as a teenager, he was forged in the Indies for years “muchos de ellos en conquistas y descubrimientos, y otros en nuevas poblaciones y en andar por unas y otras partes” [many of them in conquests and discoveries, and others in new populations and in walking through one and other parts]. And as an avid and amazed observer, he had a desire to write “lo que yo por mis propios ojos había visto, y también de lo que había oído a personas de gran crédito” [what I had seen with my own eyes, and also what I had heard from people of great credit] (1984: 3). Delights eyes at the new reality and his youth, as well as the decoys upon the American imaginary. Gerónimo de Bibar, who participated in the Chilean venture as a soldier-chronicler, also confessed his early age in moving to the Indies (Orellana, 1988: 31). Circumstance that favored the spontaneity of the story, his early Indian experience and direct participation in the events narrated.

Díaz del Castillo proudly confirms this presence: “cosas muy notables y dignas de saber (...) que como testigo de vista me hallé en todas las batallas y reencuentros de guerra” [very remarkable things and worth knowing (...) that as an eyewitness I found myself in all the battles and war reunions]. In addition, he offers the value of proximity in time established yet in space: “ayer pasó lo que verán en mi historia, y cómo y cuándo, y de qué manera” [what you will see in my story happened yesterday, and how and when, and in what way] (1989: 1). The consequence of all the above is the naked veracity of his writing in the face of official rhetoric (Gálvez, 1997: 141). Of course, the experience of his American chronicle also made him redound to the invocations of his realism (Añón, 2013: 213-245), a quality that he wields in front of others and in front of the myth. In short, he enjoyed authority among his contemporaries “por su condición de testigo” [due to his witness status] (Martínez, 2018: 425).

From Mesoamerica to the Andes. In the Peru of the conquest, Francisco de Xerez wielded “la prudencia y esfuerzo y militar disciplina y trabajosas y peligrosas navegaciones y batallas de los españoles” [prudence and effort and military discipline and laborious and dangerous navigations and battles of the Spaniards] (1992: 59). The value of the group by a chronicler who, unlike the majority, did not provide much information about himself. An emotional history opens up before the investigation, accompanied by social mobility in class structures varnished by the Indian caste society. Vehement gestation of an empire inclusive of its variegated differences as a virtue, which had as its starting point the projection of an imaginary of the fabulous as unsuspected (Llarena, 1994: 117).

One must not lose sight of this testimonial intentionality and enhancement of what has been achieved with so many hardships, but neither should the relationship with the Other be lost in a contact without mediation. In the case of the American continent, otherness was of such prodigious dimensions in its diversity that it led to multiple responses depending on the encounter in its ethnic, spatial or temporal dimensions. The structuralist anthropologist Lévi-Strauss confessed at the beginning of one of his classic texts: “Odio los viajes y los exploradores” [I hate travel and explorers] (2002: 19). Of course, you have to exchange glances, testimonies that should not exclude any agent, on the contrary, increase their number. Each one will write a complementary facet in the historical reconstruction.

In addition, since the end of the 17th century, traveler's stories acquired increasing relevance as a source of informal knowledge (Cañizares, 2007: 53). John Locke considered travel the last part of education (2012: 271). The travel compilations established ideas already established since ancient times and widely disseminated in the illustrated universe, the case of the indomitable Araucanian: “Llenos de orgullo por su valor y su libertad ilimitada, se creen los únicos que merecen el nombre de hombres sobre la tierra” [Filled with pride for their courage and unlimited freedom, they believe they are the only ones who deserve the name of men on earth] (Estala, 1798: 5). Reginaldo de Lizárraga had already described them as “gente sin ley, sin rey, sin honra” [people without law, without king, without honor] (2002: 466). An image of the chronicle called to endure in the invention of alterity. An example is the value of nature in the American description, which together with the indigenous “deben verse en una relación dialéctica frente a los atónitos ojos del relator” [must be seen in a dialectical relationship in front of the astonished eyes of the narrator], in relation to the prodigious march of Cabeza de Vaca through North America, in the right words of the editor of his “Naufragios”, Trinidad Barrera (2007: 27). The wanderer from Jerez is seen immersed in a “confusión de identidad” [confusion of identity] (Todorov, 2007: 210).

Undoubtedly, one of the main themes to study thanks to the chronicles is native alterity. A pioneer researcher in this regard was Esteve Barba. A work deserves special attention regarding the subject at hand: chronicles of indigenous interest. A recovered vision, because as he himself notes in

the introductory study, from the beginning the Spaniards not only record their own events, but also the nature and inhabitants of the New World (1968: VII). Still in the 18th century, the enlightened Llano Zapata wrote from Peru about Indian nature in the eyes of a “viajero juicioso” [judicious traveller] who knew how to discern the recklessness of an interested party in the face of those who “en lugar de noticias derramaron libelos, que afrentosamente nos calumnian” [instead of news spilled libels, who outrageously They slander us] (2005: 147). But the refutation of the black legend escapes from the present text, and priority should be given to its protagonists and especially the eighteenth-century who fought it from the administration and literature. It is still a vision of how they saw us and how they defended themselves. The Peruvian historian, in the same work of 1759, denounced the Lascasian passion, sowing dissension when precisely he had to do the opposite (Las Casas, 2011: 49).

The chronicle extols conductive links and does so in two ways. Along with the merit acquired by winning the country, the ferocity of the enemy. Overcome this praise to him. On the Araucanian border, this theme is more than known and consolidated by many testimonies. But we want to focus on two. On the one hand, the mythical epic poem of “La Araucana” and “El Cautiverio Feliz”, as both praise the adversary as a form of self-praise for their winner. Indeed, Ercilla qualifies the Mapuche-Araucanians as “robustos, desbarbados, bien formados los cuerpos y crecidos, espaldas grandes, pechos levantados, recios miembros, de niervos (sic) bien fornidos” [robust, bearded, well-formed bodies and grown, large backs, raised breasts, strong limbs, well-built nerves] (1993: 93). The image could not be more impressive and admiring in tone. From then on, the brave legend was built. At the end of the following century, Núñez de Pineda y Bascuñán continued to associate past hardships in that remote frontier in the service of both majesties in the long war in Chile to the understanding of the Others as a cultural category. The grievances suffered were the origin of permanent instability and the source of an argument that he called “las razones del bárbaro” [the reasons of the barbarian] (2001: 311).

At the opposite end of the continent and in the third century we have another testimony of similar characteristics. Bernardo de Gálvez, from Malaga, called to be the hero of Pensacola, when he was Commander Inspector of the internal prisons of the northern part of New Spain, referred to the fearsome Apaches because of the harshness of their living conditions and without accusations, because: “Yo no sé que opinión tendrán ellos de nosotros. Quizá no será mejor, y sí más bien fundada” [I don't know What opinion will they have of us? Perhaps it will not be better, and it will be more well founded] (Olmedo, 2009: 5). The chronicle treasures testimonies that in many cases - especially after the time of the conquest - do not aspire more than to leave personal impressions for posterity or to influence the government of those latitudes, that is, of their peoples. A survival of Hispanic self-criticism from the School of Salamanca to the enlightened reformists.



But the vision of the vanquished given by themselves was collected and recovered thanks to the work of León-Portilla in several compilation texts of Mesoamerican and Andean indigenous testimonies. The Mexican historian was restrictive from the beginning: “En este libro hablarán los vencidos. Aquí están las palabras que dejaron dichas algunos de los supervivientes aztecas, mayas y quechuas acerca de la Conquista” [In this book the defeated will speak. Here are the words that some of the Aztec, Mayan and Quechua survivors said about the Conquest] (1964: 7). In his own words, sometimes collected by informants or authors of early chronicles. These printed relationships caused astonishment among Europeans at the time, but the reverse perception has recently aroused great interest (1992: IX-XI). Following in his trail, Wachtel approached the vision of the defeated Tahuantinsuyo equally from a complex and multiple center of reference (1976: 23). Regarding the informant, a key character in many chronicles, we can remember the right words: “habla más de lo que sabe o piensa del pasado que del pasado mismo” [he speaks more about what he knows or thinks about the past than about the past itself] (Augé, 2000: 17).

The autochthonous chronicler Huaman Poma de Ayala gave the image to the text, an indigenous vision so rich and diverse that it has become a classic of Peruvian research despite its long loss (2017). Writing and image had a great role in Hispanization (González, 2017: 255), since information was essential to the domain. The images are living memory that accompanies the chronicle and affects the Others (Peña, 2011). From the Baroque to the Enlightenment, the image played an important role in American representation. Suffice it to recall the results of the famous Malaspina expedition in this regard (Sotos Serrano, 2008). Mediation agents such as interpreters also left us relevant chronicles about the indigenous world in the face of culture clash (Betanzos, 2004).

The father of History had already begun his great founding work by appealing to immortality –inherited from Homer– and to empathy, in favor of “evitar que con el tiempo caiga en el olvido lo ocurrido entre los hombres y así las hazañas, grandes y admirables, realizadas en parte por los griegos y en parte por los bárbaros, se queden sin su fama” [preventing over time what happened among men from falling into oblivion and thus the exploits, great and admirable, carried out in part by the Greeks and in part by the barbarians, are left without their fame] (Heródoto, 2011: 69). Both key ideas run through the threads of History and came from the Old to the New World. The Inca Garcilaso, when witnessing his encounter with the mummy of the Inca Viracocha in Cuzco, manifested his literary intention. It was none other than preventing them from “muriesen y se enterrasen con ellos mismos las hazañas de hombres tan valerosos” [dying and burying themselves with the exploits of such brave men] (1985: 275). He thus established a link between fame and otherness, although he himself was of Inca royal blood, the text reflects thematic paths. Another mixed-race, perhaps not so famous for historiography, was Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl (1985). Both views complement each other not only geographically, but also jointly in parallel to the Castilian

vision. This declared perspective was projected to the Pacific Ocean when Fray Diego Aduarte warned the reader in the prologue of the objective of delivering to the press, not without much sacrifice, the Philippine account of him. The friar confessed it like this: “porque no pierda el mundo tan ricos tesoros, como están escondidos en los Reynos de las dos Castillas, y Andalucias” [because the world does not lose such rich treasures, as they are hidden in Castiles and Andalusias Kingdoms] (1693: no page).

## 2. Methodology

Authors such as Knopf (2006) and Paul and Criado (2020) highlight the importance of the study of information sources as the beginning of the methodological process based on a literature review.

Literature reviews are scientific approach methodologies that are directly linked to the ordering and structuring of academic information (Randolph, 2009). In this way, as indicated by Gallo Marin et al. (2021), systematic reviews are used by researchers to identify the main academic contributions in relation to a specific topic.

Based on these characteristics, the systematic literature review should contribute and create knowledge with the results that are revealed after the development of the process. In this way, this research, as indicated above, has the objective of identifying primary sources for the study of the history of America in relation to the Chronicles of the Indies. This topic has been previously studied in the scientific literature (Agudelo, Jóhannsdóttir & Davídsdóttir, 2019), however, there is no academic contribution that reveals a historical compilation of the main works that have focused their analysis on understanding the study of History of America, from the perspective focused on bibliographic approaches on the Chronicles of the Indies, thus covering a gap in research.

In this way, this study contributes with its development, supporting in the application of a review, the identification of knowledge for the creation of a practical and bibliographic guide on the main contributions made to date in relation to the study of the objects indicated.

Although it is true, authors such as Karantonis and Sireci (2006) highlight that systematic literature reviews are indicated for the study of emerging issues. However, various authors (Marttunen, Lienert & Belton, 2017) also indicate in their results that systematic literature reviews are linked to bibliographic studies in which the content of the contributions identified highlights the importance of the study objectives and the future of the subject analyzed.

In this way, following the considerations Marttunen and others authors (2017) this study develops the methodology of systematic literature review in the following steps. In the first place, the objective of the research is highlighted and its importance as a study in the literature is justified (Ramalho, Adams, Huggard & Hoare, 2015). Second, the keywords that are entered in academic databases are selected to identify the correct contributions and that are linked to the subject under study.



Once the academic databases are selected, as well as the search terms, the total of identified results are analyzed and then each of the contributions is studied based on their titles, abstracts and keywords. These steps have the objective of identifying the most relevant contributions to the proposed study (Jasti & Kodali, 2014). Finally, the selected investigations are studied in depth and their importance is justified in relation to the existing theory in the literature.

Consequently, this study uses Google Scholar as its main database. The choice of Google Scholar as a database is linked to the following criteria. First, in studies related to the history of America and the Chronicles of the Indies, academic contributions are not always published in scientific journals that are indexed in rankings such as Web of Sciences, Scopus or Emerging Sources Citation Index.

As Korobkin (1999) indicates, Google Scholar can be taken as a reference since it encompasses not only articles indexed in scientific journals but also books, book chapters and monographs published in prestigious publishers. These publications can be used as a valid source of information for the research objectives (Mikki, 2009).

Thus, the next step in the process is to search Google Scholar with the following filters. In the first place, any time range is selected since its indexation in this database and in the second place, ordering by relevance based on the study of the citations that each article receives. Those books, articles, book chapters and monographs that have citations indexed in this database are included in the results.

The search terms used are the following under logical and systematic criteria linked to the creation of knowledge in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1997): “Crónicas de Indias and Historia de América” (Chronicles of the Indies and History of America), “Crónicas de Indias or Historia de América” (Chronicles of the Indies or History of America), “America” and “Indias”, “historia cultural” (cultural history) and “Crónicas de Indias” (Chronicles of the Indies).

Likewise, the Google Scholar database identifies in the titles and abstracts of the main indexed contributions, whether these terms appear or not, and based on this examination, they identify the results. Therefore, based on the results present in Google Scholar, the main contributions related to the study are selected. For the selection of the contributions, different approaches are taken into account in which the indications of the Prima method are followed (Selçuk, 2009).

In this way, the total sample of articles is selected that, in principle, are inclusive for the study of the proposed objectives. In the next step, the title and abstract of these articles are studied to find inappropriate or non-inclusive terms for the research objectives.

It is in this phase that the articles are categorized as potentially acts of being included in the study. In the next step, the articles are excluded from the sample based on the following criteria: there is no quality in the evaluation of the methodological process; there is no description and specification of terms related to the objectives of the study; the research objectives are not consistent with the study presented; or there

is no relationship with the study topic. Once these filters have been applied, following the PRISMA Flow Diagram indications, the rest of the scientific contributions are categorized as inclusive articles.

### 3. Analysis of results

As a result of the systematic literature review, a total of 139 valid contributions have been identified for the study of the history of America and the Chronicles of the Indies. It should be noted that as Mikki (2009) indicates, the results of systematic literature reviews can be classified and categorized in different research areas that later facilitate their scientific use. This fact may allow future researchers to optimize information resources to focus their attention on those issues that are most relevant.

Therefore, the results of the methodological process of systematic literature review, supported by grounded theory and PRISMA Flow Diagram as indicated, have been the following. Of the total of 375 scientific contributions eligible for the study, 78 were excluded after the analysis of the titles, abstracts and keywords based on the identification of inappropriate and non-inclusive terms. A total of 236 scientific contributions are also excluded from the study, understanding that 158 of them do not meet the proposed research objectives, are not related to the specific topic of analysis, or criteria linked to the quality of the study. Therefore, the final sample, result of the systematic literature review, is 139 contributions (Saura, 2021: 98).

Likewise, the 139 scientific contributions have been subdivided and classified into 10 categories framed within the objective at hand, taking into account the considerations proposed by Ramalho and others authors (2015). These areas are the following: general investigations on the Spanish Indies (51 investigations), Viceroyalty of New Spain (42), Viceroyalty of Peru (24) Viceroyalty of New Granada (9), Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata and Kingdom of Chile (8), Pacific Ocean (2), Philippines (1), Tahiti (1) and Brazil (1).

The justification for the classification in these categories is based on the historical chronology linked to the history of America and the Chronicles of the Indies, which has been identified as relevant in the bibliographic study carried out.

It should also be noted that in Annex is the numerical list of the main contributions identified by author, title and subject.

### 4. Discussion and conclusions

The Chroniclers of the Indies were precise in their spontaneity. And this despite the collapse of lived fantasies that transmitted and aroused a long-standing Indian imagination. They encountered heterogeneous human groups of varied cultural developments, displaying a great capacity for adaptation. Their knowledge was basic for the subsequent Hispanization and evangelization, and for this they did not forget to “recoger sus

gestas” [collect their past deeds] (Esteve, 1992: 7). As Andrés García de Céspedes wrote in 1599 in the censorship of the Herrerian Decades: “se puede muy bien imprimir y que de la impresión resultará mucha utilidad y honra a la nación Castellana” [it is possible to print very well and that printing will be very useful and honor the Castilian nation] (Herrera, 1991, p. 122). Not in vain, the entry for “corónica”(chronicle) in the Covarrubias dictionary reads like this: “Los reyes y príncipes deben leer o escuchar las corónicas donde están las hazañas de sus pasados, y lo que deben imitar y huir” [Kings and princes must read or listen to the chronicles where the exploits of their past are, and what they must imitate and flee] (2006: 616). A mirror of princes from the times of Philip III, but with a long history and rich tradition.

The compilations of chroniclers are abundant, not so those endowed with a critical study according to their relevance. Meritorious quantitatively and qualitatively is the work of Natalia K. Denisova, who establishes some basic guidelines when it comes to its classification and nature. Historians do not seek a definitive definition, but rather to group the writings and highlight the common as a historical source (2017, 1: 35). In this sense, Professor Morales Padrón offered a documentary corpus called for later imitation in the editing of sources that escape the present purposes. Although they were not in strict sense chronicles, it is worth remembering his contribution focused on official documentation (2008).

Identity and alterity feed off each other as much as reality and fantasy. His search in the Indian chronicles is put beyond doubt by the researchers, but we do not consider this relationship in an exclusive way, but reciprocal. The words turned into letters of the chroniclers help us to understand diversity and its complementarity, not the grievances alone, but the encounters and borrowings of a world built by all the vassals of the distant king. A dialectic of reciprocity, with resistance and accommodation, but isn't conflict part of coexistence? (Chauca, 2009: 328). From this point on, the gaze on the text differs when the object of study is faced from a conciliatory and contextualized perspective.

According to Rolena Adorno, there is a “relación paradójica” [paradoxical relationship] between the two (Carneiro, 2008: 32). The more real knowledge increases, it does so to the detriment of the imagination; while the identity is forged by opposition to the Other, which does not mean exclusion but on the contrary. Both are intrinsically and necessarily complementary. All these key concepts –identity/alterity binomial– are recognizable in the Chronicles of the Indies and constitute a preferred line of research both for understanding the past and for improving the present. Alejo Carpentier, in the prologue of *El reino de este mundo* [The kingdom of this world], presents a History of America as a chronicle of the marvelous real (López-Baralt, 1988: 19). The colossal in the distances, the beautiful in nature, the diversity everywhere. Everything is reflected in the Indian chronicles. It is a world in the making, heroic but violent on both sides (Chauca, 2012: 975). Columbus left settled from the beginning the impression of abundance destined to endure in

the European imagination until the myth of the good Roussonian savage: “andavan desnudos como sus madres los parieron, y así las mujeres sin algún empacho (...) Era cosa de maravilla ver aquellos valles y los ríos y buenas aguas y las tierras” [they walk naked as their mothers gave birth to them, and thus the women without any embarrassment (...)] It was a wonderful thing to see those valleys and rivers and good waters and lands] (1982: 83).

In the fight against the myth, knowledge was imposed, work in which the chronicles had their share of merit. From the anthropological approach that Bernardino de Sahagún formulated, it was considered that knowing the pre-Hispanic past was key to acting in the present, because –as he affirms in the prologue to his *New Spanish History*– a doctor “no puede acertadamente aplicar las medicinas al enfermo (sin) que primero conozca de que humor o de que causa procede la enfermedad; de manera que el buen médico conviene sea docto en el conocimiento” [cannot correctly apply medicines to the patient (without) that first he knows from what humour or from what cause the disease comes; so that the good doctor should be a scholar in knowledge] (1938: 5). Indeed, the testimonies of the chronicles offer first of all “un reflejo de la época” [a reflection of the time] of their writing (Gruzinski, 1991: 10).

It will become one of the common claims illustrated in their dispute against the ignorance of the natural, human or political reality of the Indies, in the case of the expelled Jesuits. The Chilean Juan Ignacio Molina, filtered by criollismo, warned that “Europa vuelve al presente toda su atención hácia la América” [Europe returns to the present all its attention to America] (1788: III). While from Mexico, Francisco Javier Clavigero, precursor of indigenism, declared that “reponer en su esplendor á la verdad ofuscada por una turba increíble de escritores modernos sobre América” [to restore in its splendor the truth obscured by an incredible mob of modern writers about America] was among his purposes (1868: VII). Criticism of ignorance and, even worse, of the misrepresentation of its history and reality.

The battle against the legend was painful and was nourished by numerous Indian stories on both sides of the Atlantic in a centuries-old chain. At the end of the 1700s, the meritorious work of the missionary in the Orinoco José Gumilla was rhetorically questioned in the prologue about the alterity defended from the periphery: “Es cierto que en las Misiones de la América cada día descubrimos hombres, que parecen fieras” [It is true that in the Missions of America every day we discover men, who look like beasts]. But, he continued, in antiquity there were Scythians, among other peoples of the Mediterranean environment, or people of Africa or Asia of equal fierceness in barbarism (1791: X-XI). Similar terms are found in various regions of the Indies, especially on the border. One might wonder in the present iconoclastic struggle of the past, if memory or history can be the object of legislation (Lamo de Espinosa, 2021: 12). Everything is change and space-time coordinates are essential in historical analysis if we want to talk about history. The Franciscan Friar Félix Minaya synthesized it in his account of his desired

arrival in Manila from the site of Baler: “¡Cuántas mudanzas!” [How many changes!] (2016: 452).

The discovery of alterity makes us question identity or, at least, observe it from empathy. One of the protagonists of Trafalgar, by Pérez Galdós, sums it up in his impressions when the English struggled to plant their flag on the colossal ship “Santísima Trinidad”: “aquellos me hizo pensar un poco. Siempre se me habían representado los ingleses como verdaderos piratas o salteadores de los mares” [that made me think a bit. The English had always represented me as true pirates or robbers of the seas]. The reverse of the identity in the Others: “Cuando vi el orgullo con que enarbolaron su pabellón, saludándole con vivas aclamaciones (...) pensé que también ellos tendrían su patria querida” [When I saw the pride with which they flew his flag, greeting him with lively acclamations (...) I thought that they too would have their beloved homeland] (1995: 96-97). It is not possible to better summarize this attitude sustained over time by the Spaniards in the face of the encounter with so many peoples and in so many different settings.

The reflection on Spanish America did not cease since its incorporation into the universal Hispanic monarchy. After the convulsive and expecting times of the Castilian conquest, passing through the creole trail of the seventeenth century and until the Indian Enlightenment, a meritorious arbitrium was practiced first and projectism later, currents of thought that meditated on the future of Hispano-America. The subsequent historiographic production was enormous in both hemispheres and in perfect communication despite the prohibitions on use. Books and booksellers toured the Atlantic world like pikes in the dissemination of ideas. A cultural history that generated a considerable historiography that emphasized the centuries-old debate of the Hispanic world from the discovery to the nineteenth-century regenerationism.

From the meetings between Cortés and Moctezuma in Tenochtitlan or Pizarro and Atahualpa in Cajamarca, to the interview of San Martín with Bolívar in Guayaquil or the one between the Rio de la Plata with the viceroy of Peru La Serna in Punchauca, a complex history is manifested far from the simplistic Manichean opposition (Almarza, 2007: 45). Among the objectives of the chroniclers, spontaneous or official, stood out together with the legitimate desire for personal promotion or the host, to influence domestic public opinion about the benefit of the reported conquest (Kagan, 2010: 350). While the missionaries developed a meritorious anthropological work and defense of the indigenous as their primary goal. With the passage of time, the importance given to courage, honor and glory gave way to good government and its pragmatic administration as a necessary object of analysis.

This research has developed a systematic literature review with the objective of identifying the main primary sources for the study of the History of America and the Chronicles of the Indies. With this objective, the development of the investigation has identified a total of 139 valid and relevant academic contributions according to the objective proposed for the study of the History of America.



This sequence of edited primary sources is key for the analysis of Spanish America in a range of centuries and for a continental space. Its continuities and its changes of perception and interpretation pass without a solution of continuity. In short, a historiography that reflects the constant social and political reflection on a world in the making. An intellectual controversy when writing the History of America from crossed interpretations and with a generous and scientific look, from invention or from moderation, from experience or from a distance. A dispute under construction. A challenge for the historian, who must be used to understanding and interpreting History, never judging it from a decontextualized present.

#### *4.1. Theoretical implications*

The theoretical contributions of the research are those related to the bibliographic analysis carried out. In this way, future researchers who have an interest in investigating and developing proposals and hypotheses related to the Chronicles of the Indies and the history of America, can use the contributions and primary sources identified as a result of the review in order to develop relevant literature reviews supported by the results presented. In addition, future researchers can use each of the 10 proposed classification areas for the 139 contributions, specific research subtopics linked to the history of the Americas and the Chronicles of the Indies. Likewise, future researchers can use the systematic review methodology developed to propose new forms of study and improvements in the scientific areas linked to the study of the history of America.

#### *4.2. Limitations and future research*

The limitations of the research are those related to the size of the sample identified in the form of academic contributions, the databases that are part of the study, as well as the descriptive and comparative selection criteria used by the researchers to select the final sample. Future researchers may propose this study as the basis for the development of systematic literature reviews focused on this research area. Likewise, it is necessary to link a bibliographic analysis and literature review exclusively in those scientific contributions linked to academic journals indexed in journals, leaving out books, book chapters and monographs, and subsequently, to compare the results of the research to identify the main problems between both conclusions. In the future, automatic data processing will open up many possibilities that are now sensed (Bowes, Hall & Beecham, 2012).

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*Viceroyalty of New Spain*

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