Overpaints with cultural significance. How to define authenticity?

The case of Afonso de Albuquerque's portrait

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Abstract

Removal or not removal of repaints and overpaints is always complex and the justification for it isn't always objective. This type of operation can sometimes result in a worn out surface with several losses of painting which normally are supposed to be restored and integrated. Justified by the search or by the reposition of authenticity, both these operations (restoration and integration) will change the values formerly attributed to the object. When one is dealing with works of art which are generally recognized as being cultural significant, different values should be interpreted and discussed between stakeholders and specialists from different areas of expertise in a multidisciplinary platform before carrying out any intervention. This isn't always easy to achieve and the conservator usually has the difficult task of transforming subjective concepts into an objective solution. In this paper we present a case-study, the panel portrait of *Afonso de Albuquerque*, currently exhibited in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (Lisboa), which the current investigation process as proven to be the portrait of another governor, but repainted to resemble the viceroy of Portuguese India during a restoration process in the 1960s regarded has "technically difficult". Several episodes throughout the history of the Viceroy and Governors portrait Gallery and this specific panel gave the repaint historic, documental and iconographic values. Investigation is still ongoing and new facts may alter the definition of values attributed to this portrait and its *authentic state* in a process conservators should be ever more concerned with during restoration interventions, namely chromatic integration.

Keywords: Overpaints; Cultural significance; Values; Authenticity; Chromatic integration.

Historical background

The portrait gallery of the Viceroy and governors of Portuguese India

The portrait gallery of the Viceroy and governors of Portuguese India is currently located in the exhibit halls of *Archaeological Survey of India Museum,* in Old Goa (Goa, India), except for three portraits that are incorporated in the collection of the *Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga* (MNAA), in Lisboa (Portugal)[1]. Composed by 105 portraits, this gallery was first commended by the Viceroy D. João de Castro, in 1547, to honor the military and diplomatic achievements of his predecessors. Authorship is still unknown, but most investigators[2] agree that the Portuguese chronicler Gaspar Correia (?-1560) gave instructions to a local painter regarding the first portraits of the 12 rulers before that Viceroy[3].

The paintings that are exhibited in Goa are in a very poor state of conservation, especially to what concerns the surface layers (paint flakes, paint losses and several layers of overpaints). This situation is the result of numerous factors, namely the several transfers of the collection during its existence, the uncontrolled exposure to a sub-tropical climate throughout 500 years and the result of various renovation/restoration interventions which altered (in a great extent) the primitive compositions.

Seven of these paintings were restored in the *Instituto para o Exame e Restauro de Obras de Arte* (Institute for the Examination and Restoration of Works of Art), in Lisboa, between 1954 and 1961[4] but only the ones that remained in MNAA are in a good state of conservation. Important values associated with this Gallery are not being conveniently identified and interpreted due to the portraits current state of conservation. In fact, this is a very important collection to indo-portuguese history and art-history which deserved several reproductions and quotations throughout the centuries by historians, travelers, chroniclers and investigators.

Recently, through the initiative of Miguel Mateus (conservator-restorer) and António Candeias (heritage chemical)[5], a project is being developed to examine all the paintings of this collection with portable scientific equipment also successfully used in other projects, like the Retable of Funchal's See Cathedral, in Island of Madeira, Portugal. Teresa Reis (conservator-restorer) joined the investigation process in the context of her master thesis in conservation and restoration of paintings.

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[1] The portraits of D. Francisco de Almeida, Afonso de Albuquerque and D. Francisco Mascarenhas.

[2] Authors like José Ferreira Martins, Alves Azevedo, Carlos Azevedo e António Vasconcelos de Saldanha.

[3] In his work, "Lendas da India", Gaspar Correa (which is deceased in 1560) illustrates some volumes with drawings of the earliest Viceroys and governors.

[4] Between 1954 and 1961, seven portraits of this gallery were restored in the *Instituto para o Exame e Restauro de Obras de Arte* (Institute for the Exam and Restoration of Works of Art), in Lisboa, namely D. Francisco de Almeida, Diogo Lopes de Sequeira, D. Vasco da Gama, D. João de Castro, D. Miguel de Noronha, Afonso de Albuquerque and D. Francisco Mascarenhas

[5] Miguel Mateus coordinated several conservation-restoration interventions in ancient churches of portuguese india, such as the Chapel of Our Lady of the Mount, in Old Goa, the Curch of Vypeen, in Kochi and currently the Church of Santa Monica's Convent, in Old Goa. António Candeias is a chemical, with a phD in chemistry applied to heritage. Currently is the Director of HERCULES Laboratory (Évora University) and the scientific coordinator of José de Figueiredo Laboratory (General Directory of Cultural Heritage).

The investigation process

The investigation started in December 2011 with the survey of all the portraits in exhibition. We registered the state of conservation of the paintings[6] and the textures of the underpaintings that were visible in regular light conditions[7]. During the next two years, we researched several archives looking for information and records regarding the history of the Viceroys and Governors gallery. Also, during that time, we had the opportunity of analyzing the portraits of the MNAA with the same equipment[8] to be used in a future prospect in Old Goa, thus testing the possible outcomes of the exam process.

More recently, while crossing all sources of information, we realized that all the portraits have been profoundly altered during its existence (at least six different interventions can be identified by comparing old reproductions). Besides, we also realized that the portraits restored in Lisboa between 1954 and 1961, presumably all restored to their primitive composition, had some facts concealed under their "chromatic integration process", namely the panel of Afonso de Albuquerque[9]. We discovered that the figure originally portrayed in this painting belongs, in fact, to the governor Lopo Soares de Albergaria (successor of Albuquerque), but "repainted" to resemble that viceroy through the addition of long beards and wrinkles, coat of arms and a new inscription.

Criteria and technics of chromatic integration has evolved since that time and it's not our purpose in this article to analyze the decisions taken then, but their effect in the painting's values and authenticity at present time. How to interpret and manage an iconic image with general recognition that turns out to be a fake?

The panel portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque – a mystery still to be solved

The primitive portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque was included in the first series of 13 portraits commisssioned by Viceroy D. João de Castro in 1547. According to our research, the general appearance of the governor should have been with long beards, turned to his right side and with his right forefinger pointing upwards. This composition is reproduced in "Lendas da India", by Gaspar Correia (who was his secretary), in "Livro de Lizuarte de Abreu", by Lizuarte de Abreu (c. 1560) and in "Livro do Estado da India Oriental", by Pedro Barreto de Resende (1646).

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[6] It was not possible to remove the portraits from the walls, neither to touch the surface during the survey. The conservation state of the support could be not taken in account with accuracy.
[7] We were allowed to photograph the paintings, but without the use of any artificial light, what limited in some way the use of lighting techniques to enhance some of these textures. All the photographic records were made by David Teves Reis
[8] Photographic exams: Direct light, UV fluorescence; IV reflectography and radiographic exams.
[9] Afonso de Albuquerque (1453-1515) was the second ruler of portuguese India between 1509 and 1515.

Figure 1. Drawing of Afonso de Albuquerque by Gaspar Correia *in Lendas da Índia* (15--).
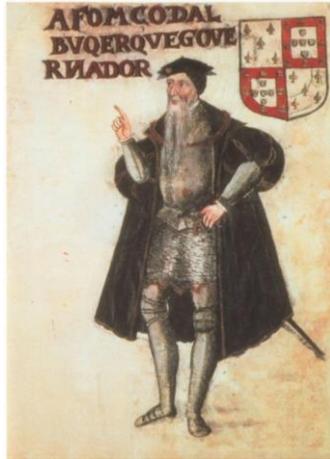

Figure 2. Reproduction of Afonso de Albuquerque's portrait by Lizuarte de Abreu *in Livro de Lizuarte de Abreu (*1558-1564).

Figure 3. Reproduction of Afonso de Albuquerque's portrait by Pedro Barreto de Resende *in Livro do Estado da India Oriental* (1646).

In the mid XVIIth century, took place a renovation intervention in most panels. In the reproductions of 49 rulers by Manuel Faria de Sousa in "*Asia Portuguesa*" (1665), Afonso de Albuquerque is represented with both hands in his waist and turned to his left side. Different kind of modifications will occur with other portraits, like D. Vasco da Gama, Francisco da Gama and Duarte Menezes, among others. Around 1695 an epidemic will lead to the abandon of the city of Goa, remaining the portraits in the courtroom of "Palácio da Fortaleza" until the building's demolition in 1820 (CARITA, 2012).

 In 1840, the portraits are transferred to the renewed Governor's Palace in Pangim, the new capital. The desertion of the palace during all those years probably originated a process of degradation in most paintings which justified another restoration intervention (apparently of very poor quality in relation to the previous ones) that most likely took place during 1820 and 1840[10]. In fact, just the following year José Maria Delorme Colaço publishes the work "*Galleria dos vice-reis e governadores da India Portuguesa*" with the reproduction of the first 18 portraits, revealing profound modifications and errors, which the own author will advert that are real and not his work (COLAÇO, 1841). The testimony of British explorer and writer Richard Burton in his book *"Goa and the blue mountains. Or, six months of sick leave"* (1842-49) illustrates the general appearance of the gallery after this intervention:

> "*Arrived at the palace (…). There was not much to be seen in it, except a tolerably exten-*
> *sive library, a private chapel, and a suite of lofty and spacious saloons, with enormous*
> *windows, and without furniture; containing the portraits of all the Governors and Viceroys*
> *of Portuguese India. The collection is, or rather has been, a valuable one; unfortunately*
> *some Goth, by the order of some worse than Goth, has renewed and revived many of the*

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[10] Authors like Teixeira de Aragão (1874) believe that this intervention took place earlier, in the end of the XVIIth century.

best and oldest pictures, till they have assumed a most ludicrous appearance. The hand-some and chivalrous-looking nights have been taught to resemble the Saracen's Heads, the Marquis of Granby, and other sign-post celebrities in England. An artist is, however, it is said, coming from Portugal, and much scraping and varnishing may do something for the De Gamas and the Castros at present so miserably disfigured." (BURTON, 2003; pp. 28 e 29)

In the reproductions of Colaço, Afonso de Albuquerque is represented turning to his right side, with his left hand holding a sword and the right hand holding a staff. The portrait identified as Lopo Soares de Albergaria also appears different from the previous reproductions and we believe that it was during this last intervention that the primitive portrait of Albergaria was reused to "host" his predecessor (and curiously his personal enemy[11]), Albuquerque.

| **Figure 4.** Drawing of Afonso de Albuquerque by Manuel Faria e Sousa *in Asia Portuguesa* (1665). | **Figure 5.** Drawing of Afonso de Albuquerque by José Delorme Colaço *in Galleria dos vice-reis e governadores da India Portuguesa* (1841). | **Figure 6.** Drawing of Afonso de Albuquerque by Roncón *in Álbum dos vice-reis e governadores da India Portuguesa* (1890). |

Until 1894, the collection will not suffer any major interventions, attested by the drawings made by local painter Roncón, compiled in three postcards albums by the local photographic studio *Sousa & Paul* in 1890[12]. In 1893, the military and amateur aquarellist Manuel Gomes da Costa is invited by the General-Governor Rafael de Andrade to serve as his field assistant. According to his words, this post didn't give him much work, so he had a lot of free time in his hands (COSTA, 1930). After the governor's request,
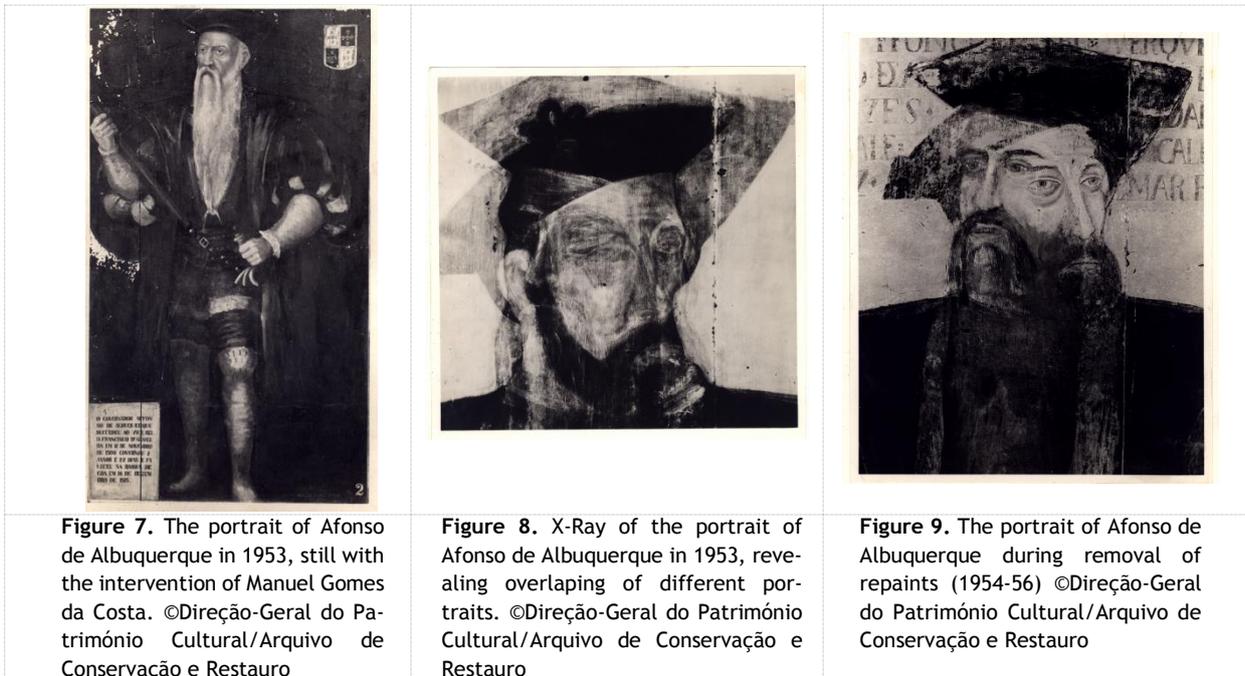
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[11] The conquest of the strategic ports of Goa, Malaca and Ormuz and his genius vision and actions concerning the portuguese expansion and settlement in the Orient turned Afonso de Albuquerque in a very respected and feared ruler, which caused some discomfort in the portuguese court. Some groups accused him of seeking independence and convinced the King Manuel I to replace Albuquerque with the leader of one of these groups Lopo Soares de Albergaria. According to legend, Albuquerque acknowledging the order of replacement, deceases of discontent in the sea while sighting the Goa coast.
[12] This studio can still be found in Pangim

he will restore practically all the paintings in the gallery that were to be incorporated in the *Real Museu da India Portuguesa* (Royal Museum of Portuguese India) (MENDIRATTA, SANTOS, 2011; MARIZ, 2013).

Obviously with any previous training in conservation, his intervention valued mostly stylistic and aesthetic criteria, ignoring the conservation of materials, as well as respect for the historicity of the paintings. We believe that, in a romantic perspective and through personal research of the ancient reproductions, he tried to return to the portrayed the poses and attributes that they originally held, creating, in other cases, characters that felt more appropriate to represent a specific ruler, as in the case of Vasco da Gama and D. João de Castro[13]. Regarding the portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque, he kept the former structure, repainting it in the damaged areas. However, analyzing his three albums with studies in watercolors of the gallery, one can find two representations of Albuquerque inspired in the reproduction of Gaspar Correia, proving that his interventions, despite the used criteria, wasn't random or unconscious has suggested by several authors trough history.

Around 50 years later, the *Brigada para o Estudo dos Monumentos da India Portuguesa* (Brigade for the study of Portuguese India Monuments)[14] arrives in Goa to inventory all the monuments and art objects found in the Portuguese territories of India. Realizing the poor state of conservation of the gallery, they requested some portraits to be send to Lisboa in order to be restored. In 1953, six paintings will arrive to the Institute for the Examination and Restoration of Works of Art, including Afonso de Albuquerque's portrait.

Figure 7. The portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque in 1953, still with the intervention of Manuel Gomes da Costa. ©Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Arquivo de Conservação e Restauro

Figure 8. X-Ray of the portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque in 1953, revealing overlaping of different portraits. ©Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Arquivo de Conservação e Restauro

Figure 9. The portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque during removal of repaints (1954-56) ©Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Arquivo de Conservação e Restauro

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[13] Gomes da Costa signed every painting with an inscription in red saying "Restored by Gomes da Costa in 1894"
[14] The entourage consisted of personalities as the art historian Mário Chicó , the investigator Carlos de Azevedo (at the time assistant of João Couto, MNAA Director), the President of the National Academy of Fine Arts, Reinaldo dos Santos, the photographer José Henriques de Carvalho and the Director of the General Directorate of the National Building and Monuments, architect Humberto Reis.

The x-rays exams reveals several layers of overpaints and the existence of other figures underneath, more correspondent with the age of the paintings. Albuquerque's x-rays was more confusing, with a superposition of more than two faces, each turning to a different side. All the overpaints are removed and the paintings restored, revealing very interesting portraits with a clear influence of indo-portuguese art. All the process is documented and the paintings are exhibited in 1956, before their return to Goa[15], except for the portraits of D. Francisco de Almeida (which is sent to the overseas ministry) and of Afonso de Albuquerque.

Indeed, after the restoration process, the figure of Albuquerque revealed was turned to his left side, had short dark bears and a young completion. According to personal correspondence of João Couto (Director of the National Museum of Ancient Art), the minister of National Education at the time didn't accept a portrait of the "*Terribil*" without his long white beards and suggested the addition of new ones. This situation is aggravated by the fact that during the removal of the overpaints, the restorers found another coat of arms, which belonged to the family of Soares de Albergaria.

Figure 10. The portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque during removal of repaints (1954-56), revealing underneath the coat of arms of Lopo Soares de Albergaria. ©Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Arquivo de Conservação e Restauro	**Figure 11.** The portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque after the removal of repaints (1956). The coat of arms was covered and the lower inscription added. ©Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Arquivo de Conservação e Restauro	**Figure 12.** The portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque at presente time (2013) ©LABORATÓRIO HÉRCULES/Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Laboratório José de Figueiredo

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[15] In this year, the painter Costa Pinto makes four replicas of the portraits of D. Francisco de Almeida, D. João de Castro; D. Vasco da Gama and Afonso de Albuquerque which are still in display in the *Museu da Marinha* (Navy Museum), in Belém, Lisboa.

João Couto writes a statement to the minister assuming the complexity of this case in the context of the history of the collection (namely the renovation interventions) and that the whole gallery should be examined before any more interventions (COUTO, 1957). He condemns the addition of beards, considering it to be a "criminal misrepresentation that anything could justify as a proper rectification". For that reason, he stated that until the first series of 13 paintings wasn't properly examined, the portrait of Albuquerque should remain in Lisboa due to "technical difficulties of the restoration" process. This statement convinced the minister to order, in 1961, the shipping of only one of the portraits, the panel identified as Lopo Soares de Albergaria, the one to whom belonged the hidden coat of arms. Surprisingly, the removal of the overpaint, instead of providing the needed answers, it brought another problem, for the character underneath didn't belong to Albuquerque nor to Albergaria. It belonged to the 13th Viceroy, D. Francisco de Mascarenhas.

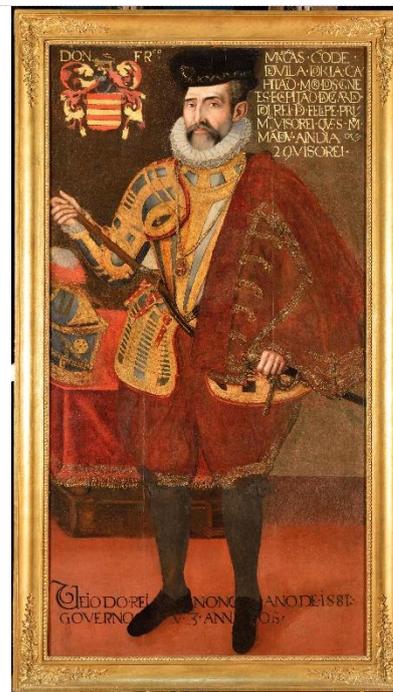| **Figure 13.** The portrait of Lopo Soares de Albergaria shipped from Goa to the IEROA in 1957 ©Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Arquivo de Conservação e Restauro | **Figure 14.** The portrait of D. Francisco Mascarenhas that was found underneath the portrait of Albergaria. ©LABORATÓRIO HÉRCULES/ Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Laboratório José de Figueiredo |

In the end, the superior order prevails (albeit the ethical opposition of the Institute) and to the face of Albergaria are added white long beards and wrinkles, assuming the portrait as belonging to Afonso de Albuquerque. This painting is shipped back to Goa in 1960, and is later authenticated by Indian archaeological services in 1962[16]. In the meantime, in December 1961, the Portuguese administration over Goa, Daman and Diu comes to an end, so the portrait of D. Francisco Mascarenhas will

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[16] In the back of the panel, there is a typed and sealed paper testifying the certification of the panel by indian services:

remain in Lisboa, as well as the portrait of D. Francisco de Almeida. The portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque will soon meet them through the espionage skills of Jorge Jardim (a secret agent of the Portuguese Government), while in diplomatic mission for the minister of Overseas, Adriano Moreira, who will ask him, in jest, to bring back the portrait as a souvenir (MOREIRA, 2013).

In the year of 1974, the end of the dictatorship regime in Portugal leads to the extinction of the Ministry of Overseas and the paintings are placed in a storehouse among dozens of other works of art. Only in the 80's, negotiations with the Ministry of Culture will lead to the incorporation of these portraits in the collection of the Ancient Art Museum. Since 1982, the portrait of Lopo Soares de Albergaria is exhibited and identified as Afonso de Albuquerque.

Current research

30 years as passed and a new investigation process is ongoing through the initiative of Heritage Laboratory HERCULES and José de Figueiredo Laboratory[17], coordinated by António Candeias and conservator Miguel Mateus. Latest scientific research was directed to MNAA paintings, including Afonso de Albuquerque, in an attempt to prepare and predict the results of *in situ* exams to be performed in Goa. The first phase was directed to photographic and radiographic exams[18] and the second phase will be directed to analytical exams. The crossing of these records with archival in-vestigation revealed surprising data, besides corroborating historic facts concerning the several res-toration interventions.

Infrared reflectography (IRR) revealed most additions like the beard (composed by layers of glazes), the lines of the wrinkles in the face and the outer limits of the hair and the hat. It also confirmed the overlap of the two coat of arms and revealed new information like the different position of the


Reference identity certificate nº 140/8-6-1962 issued by the Director of Goa Archives, Pangim, Goa, India. (Original painting of <u>Afonso de Albuquerque</u> *which was hanging in the "Galeria dos Vice-Reis"-- "Gallery of the Viceroys" -- in the Government Palace at Pangim)*
Pangim, Goa, 9th June, 1962.
Besides that document, there is an inscription in white paint stating the following: *This Portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque, handed over to Sri B. K. Sanyal. Chief Secretary to the Government of Goa, India. Director*

[17] Laboratory HERCULES is assigned to Évora University and Laboratory José de Figueiredo to Direção Geral do Património Cultural (General Directorate Of Cultural Heritage–Portuguese Secretariat of Culture)

[18] All exams were performed *in situ* by Sónia Costa, scholar from Laboratory Hércules and of Laboratory José de Figueiredo. The equipment used for general photographic records was a NIKON D3200 camera, equipped with an AF-S DX Nikkor 18-105mm, f/3.5-5.6 G ED VR lens. The lighting equipment used were two projectors with tungsten lamps of 1000W and colour temperature of 3200ºK. In high resolution Infrared Reflectography was used a OSIRIS camera, equipped with an INGaAs detector. To capture ultraviolet fluorescence was used a NIKON D2X camera. The X-ray radiography equipment used was a portable YXLON Smart 160E X-ray tube. The digital acquisition of the exam was possible with the use flexible image plates and digital processing with a SCANNA CR35 portable image plate scanner.

left foot and the trace of an older inscription underneath the current one (added during the last intervention). Exposure to Ultraviolet radiation, clearly indicated that the face and beard area had a more recent intervention, not contemporary to the intervention of 1955/56. Finally, the x-rays allowed the clear perception of the character underneath, which, after comparing with the early reproductions of Albuquerque and Albergaria proved unequivocally to whom the portrait belonged to. The interventions made in this portrait of overpaints removal and subsequent chromatic interventions turned an authentic state into as "authentic fake", limiting an in-depth attribution of values or interpretation.
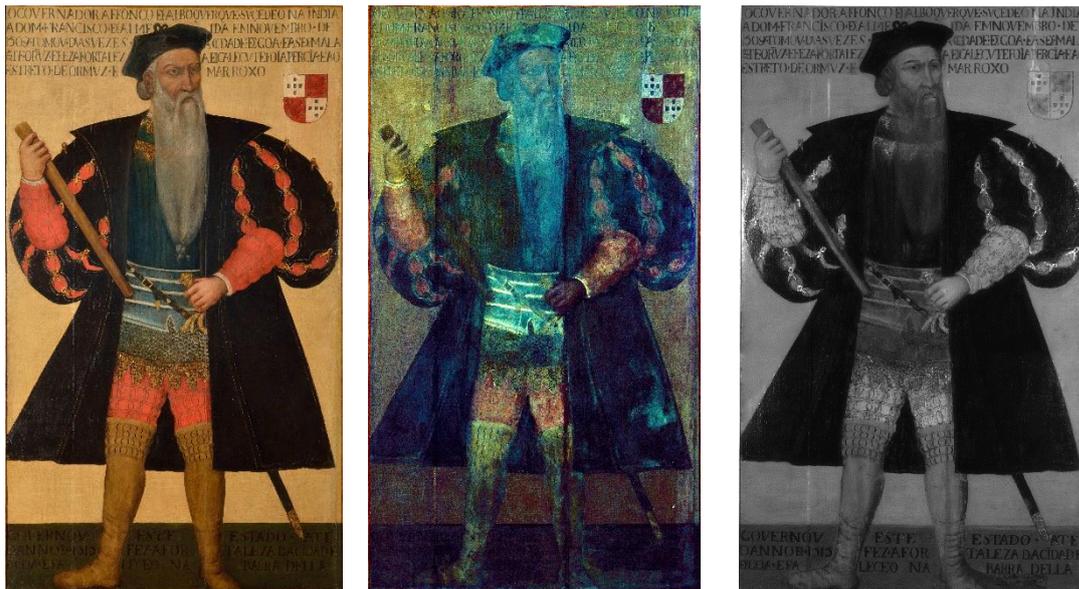
Figures 15-17. Photographic exams on the portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque (direct light, UV fluorescence, IR reflectography) ©LABORATÓRIO HÉRCULES/Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Laboratório José de Figueiredo

Figures 18-19. X-ray exams on the portrait of Afonso de Albuquerque (left) ©LABORATÓRIO HÉRCULES/Direção-Geral do Património Cultural/Laboratório José de Figueiredo; Drawing of Lopo Soares de Albergaria by Pedro Barreto de Resende (1646) (right) ©British Library. Notice the formal correspondence between the x-ray and the drawing.

Yet, this image has illustrated for the past 60 years all sort of publications, like school books and historic investigations as the icon of Portuguese presence in the Orient. More troubling is the fact that if this is Albergaria's portrait, where is the first version of Albuquerque? Disappeared? Destroyed? Hidden under another portrait in Goa?...

Conclusions

The need for thorough exams and investigation of the whole collection before any decision is clear. Again, new historic facts revealed are modifying values, a process that should be accepted and not forgotten. We believe that, until then, the general public should be informed about these facts with the placement of some sort of notice near the painting to ensure correct interpretation and an opportunity to reflection and dialogue.

Resuming, in an attempt to answer the question that led to this article, "How can we define an authentic or ideal state in a portrait with culturally significant overpaints? We come to the conclusion that this is a question that we conservators shouldn't have to respond on our own, especially when one is dealing with objects culturally significant to their stakeholders.

On one hand, the quality of authenticity is given by a set of different values inherent to the object. In the case of this overpaint, the historic facts behind it also give it an important historic and documental value. In addition, the previous overpaints were also historic documents, whether we appreciate them or not in our present time. So, the later restoration process of this painting, modified the previous set of "*layered authenticity*" adding a new one. On the other hand, stakeholders, integrated in a multidisciplinary team, are the ones responsible for the perpetuation of the material and immaterial aspects of the object, not the conservators alone. Our job in that team, in our opinion, is to achieve and develop methodology and practice that allows that perpetuation, according to our deontology and ethics.

We can hypothetically illustrate this aspect considering that a decision of removal of overpaints is taken. Then, the conservator must first survey (through thorough exams) the expected results and the different possibilities for chromatic integration, thus assisting the stakeholders on a more conscientious decision regarding the heritage they keep.

Authenticity in conservation has been acknowledged as a relative concept. It's culturally constructed in the object by its layers of history, making it difficult to define it in absolute terms. It's frequently confused with originality due to the association with genuine values. Sometimes, in our

current practice, the search for original intention, or "*protostate*" (as defined by Muñoz Viñas), may lead to interventions that alter or conceal other important values like historicity or collective memory.

Restoration criteria has evolved since the 60's, but still today we can witness interventions were the urge to find what's underneath can lead to unexpected interpretation problems that shouldn't be solved with chromatic integration solutions.
Ultimately, chromatic integration should be about helping interpretation and not to forge authenticity, as in the case of Afonso de Albuquerque.

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