



Crónica de Alfonso X

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Crónica de Alfonso X según el Ms. II/2777 de la Biblioteca del Palacio Real (Madrid). Edición, transcripción y notas por Manuel GONZÁLEZ JIMÉNEZ. Murcia: Real Academia Alfonso X el Sabio, 2000. Pp. lxiii + 292 + 4 láminas.

With its combination of documentary probity and journalistic extravagance, the *Crónica de Alfonso X* might be likened to the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* hybridised with *¡Hola!* Certainly, ever since the age of the Marqués de Mondéjar students of the subject have regularly been puzzled and repeatedly misled by it. Driven to distraction by its chronological ineptitude, they have long been awaiting a serviceable text worthy of one of the medieval West's most remarkable monarchs. And now they have it, courtesy of the scholar of the present generation best qualified to satisfy their requirements.

In the best of all possible worlds, they would have had at their disposal a synoptic edition based on the collective witness of the 34 manuscripts of *CAX* so ably analysed by Dr P. K. Rodgers in her pioneering doctoral dissertation (*Prolegomena to a critical edition of the Crónica de Alfonso X*; University of California, Davis, 1984). The best being the enemy of good, however, what they have been managing with for the last century and a half (if not rendered blind by) has been the typographically wretched as well as textually indefensible version published in vol. 66 of the *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles* (1875). What an enormous relief it is therefore, that Prof. González Jiménez has come to the rescue and that now at last we have a text of the work with which it is possible actually to engage

And not just that. Also the raw material for a new history of the reign of *el Rey Sabio*. For in that monument to thirteenth-century methodology in which his

account of it is enshrined, D. Antonio Ballesteros was wholly uninterested in the codicological implications of the chronicle of his hero's reign. While noting its chronological blunders as he went, the author of *Alfonso X el Sabio* (1963) was content to use Rosell's *BAE* edition (so-called), and his successors in title (O' Callaghan most recently) have followed in Ballesteros' footsteps. There will be no excuse in future for this comfortable procedure. There will be no justification for referring to Rosell, a man whose qualifications for directing the studies of medievalists were as little apparent as those of his near contemporary and co-entrepreneur, the Abbé Migne.

Scion of an altogether more respectable tradition, González Jiménez has made a sensible choice in the manuscript of *CAX* which he edits here (filling its lacunae from its close relations [p. xv-xvii]). He tends to concur with the traditional attribution of the creation of the *Crónica* to Fernán Sánchez de Valladolid in the 1340s (time will tell!). His account of the four sections which *CAX* comprises is on the whole judicious, distinguishing the more fanciful sections covering the years 1252-72 and 1274-5 from those devoted to the remainder of the reign. As to the first twenty years, he is surely correct in following Diego Catalán in his identification of the *Historia hasta 1288 dialogada* as influential.

As to his observations on the second section of *CAX* (by far the most circumstantial), however, I am less persuaded. Chapters 20-58, covering the years 1272-3, occupy as much space as the same number of chapters do for the other thirty-one years of the reign added together. Here the chronicler quotes first-hand reports from the royal chancery, letters received and sent during the revolt of the nobility at that time: the sort of material that the compiler in the 1340s will have been only too happy to have discovered had already been prepared for him. 'That's 1272-3 done', we may well imagine him reflecting with satisfaction on coming across this cache of material. Did he not inspect it though? Did he not take account of its underlying message? For, by any reckoning, the correspondence of 1272-3 reveals Alfonso X in a favourable light, as a generous lord played false by a self-seeking brother and thankless vassals: the very reverse indeed of the tyrannical figure who haunts the *Crónica's* account of the final years of his reign, an account justly described by its editor as 'una pieza maestra de propaganda' (p. xl).

Moreover, why maintain that the section of *CAX* covering the years 1272-3 'se redactó, probablemente, durante la sublevación del infante don Sancho (1282-1284) ... con la intención de facilitar a Alfonso X un relato de otra revuelta en la que participaron muchos de los que ahora apoyaban al infante' (p. xxxii)? After all, Alfonso's principal *bête noire* in 1282-4 was not the nobility, it was the infante. The assembling within the royal chancery of materials damaging to his adversaries at that earlier date would seem much more naturally to belong to the years 1272-3 themselves, when Alfonso had not only time on his side and a propaganda purpose to serve (namely, that of persuading the pontiff of his imperial *bona fides*), but also an agent in the chancery to superintend the process in the person of his notary for Castile Gonzalo Pérez (the case for whose 'authorship' of this section of *CAX* will be argued elsewhere). In 1282-4, by contrast, the king's chancery was in collapse and his European audience was fast evaporating.

In short, the beneficiary of chapters 20-58 was the very king whose reputation the compiler of chapters 65-78 was so intent on blackening. The *Crónica de Alfonso X* is a work pervaded by ideological schizophrenia – as A. Iglesias Ferreirós has observed (*Historia. Instituciones. Documentos* 9 [1982] 41ff), and for reasons adumbrated by J. R. Craddock (*Viator* 17 [1986]), both of whose works deserve consideration in this context. Intriguing questions remain regarding the compiler's ideological agenda and, indeed, the very process of compilation. For example, what was the status of the materials to which he had access, and in particular of that 'escripto' to which he refers at one point? Are those various silences of his, eloquent as they appear to a modern reader, invariably, or even necessarily, to be ascribed to a programmatic desire to misrepresent the historical record?

Questions, questions therefore, many of them no doubt ultimately insoluble. But with González Jiménez's edition on our desks, at least and at last it is practicable to begin to look for answers. Here we have a precious work of scholarship whose footnotes alone provide the material for the re-writing of the history of the reign of that mysterious monarch who is its subject¹, further and splendidly enhanced by an index of names and places from the distinguished pen of M^a Antonia Carmona Ruiz, providing yet further cause to reflect that we are at last emerging from the suffocating shadow of D. Antonio Ballesteros.

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¹ In which connexion I make two small points. The 'arcediano don Juan Alfonso, electo de la yglesia de Santiago' (cap. 21) was not the bishop of Palencia of the same name who exerted himself to remain loyal to Alfonso X in 1282 (cf. p. 68, n. 113). To describe what the Infante Sancho did at Valladolid in April 1282 as the 'deposición' or 'deposicion técnica' of his father (pp. xlii, 68, 223-4) is to use a term which the Infante himself scrupulously refrained from using. Though *de facto* that was what it amounted to of course (and the *Anales Toledanos III* actually used the word 'priuaron'), *de iure* Alfonso remained king. It was the administration of the kingdom of which his son claimed to have deprived him: an act for which there was peninsular precedent in the case of Innocent IV's treatment of Sancho II of Portugal in 1245 (cf. E. Peters, *The Shadow King. 'Rex inutilis' in medieval law and literature, 751-1327* [1970]). As Infante, Alfonso X had been involved in the defence of the Portuguese king's interests. In 1282 the precedent can hardly have been far from his mind – or from that of his rebel son indeed.