

LORENZO RAMÍREZ DE PRADO – LITERARY AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SIDELIGHTS

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There is a passage in Sir John Elliott's biography of Olivares, that reads as follows: "As an additional precaution he [the Count-Duke] sent Lorenzo Ramírez de Prado on a special mission to Paris in February 1628 in order to keep alive the plans for the invasion of England, and above all to deepen the rift between the English and the French".¹ Who was this man, not mentioned elsewhere in the volume, entrusted with such a delicate and important mission? He was born in Zafra, in the diocese of Badajoz, on 9 August, 1583, so he was a little senior to Olivares in age; he died in 1658, so he outlived him by a matter of thirteen years. The study of his family, by Entrambasaguas in 1943, reveals that he had all the trappings of being an enlightened child of his age.² He studied in Salamanca University, where one of his teachers was Francisco Sánchez el Brocense, and as a scholar was the presumed author of twelve books, including one, in 1607, on Martial. He became a *licenciado* in law in 1608, and maintained his affinity for the humanities. On the civil and administrative front, amongst the offices he held, according to those listed by Rodríguez-Moñino,

1. Elliott 1986: 346.

2. Entrambasaguas 1943: 40-126.

were “Consejero de Castilla, de Indias [from 1626 onwards], de Hacienda, de Nápoles [1617] y Santa Cruzada, Comisario de Millones, Caballero Veinticuatro de Jaén, de la Orden de Santiago, Alcalde de la Hermandad del Estado de Nobles de Llerena, Presidente del Honrado Concejo de la Mesta, Miembro de la Junta de Obras y Bosques y Embajador a Francia por Su Majestad el Rey D. Felipe IV”.³ He was also *familiar de la Inquisición*, admitted in 1626.⁴ None of these high-sounding posts are relevant to what I have to say, but they collectively indicate both his culture and his standing. He also had literary connections and was friends with, amongst others, Lope de Vega who praised him for his linguistic erudition, Juan de Jáuregui who also painted his portrait, Góngora and Cervantes, where he is mentioned in verse in the *Viaje del Parnaso*. In Madrid, in the first decade of the seventeenth century, he was patron of the poet Esteban Manuel de Villegas who dedicated his *Elegía Sexta* to him. In his dedication to part of his *Coronas del Parnaso y Platos de las Musas* [1635], Salas Barbadillo referred to Ramírez de Prado as “tan generalmente docto, y curioso, que no solo tiene en su copiosa libreria todo lo mejor y mas escogido de lo mucho que anda impresso en todas lenguas, sino que aun de lo manuscrito en la nuestra ha juntado un gran tesoro”.⁵

During the second half of the 1620s, Ramírez de Prado and his brother Alonso, largely through personal animosity had had to defend themselves from charges relating to their *limpieza de sangre*. This had begun when Lorenzo had petitioned to become a member of the *Santo Oficio* in 1624. A series of charges were made until, in 1631, the documentation concerning his ancestors was presented to the *Consejo Supremo* demonstrated the entire falsity of the charges. A curiosity is that, in 1638, further investigations were made. Sixteen witnesses testified to the fact that he was *cristiano viejo*, and the case against him was dismissed.⁶ In 1639, he married into wealth in the person of Doña Lorenza de

3. Rodríguez-Moñino 1966: 13.

4. Sánchez Mariana 1993: 50.

5. Entrambasaguas 1943: 102-3.

6. Entrambasaguas 1943: 49-59; 69.

Cárdenas, sister of the deceased Conde de la Puebla del Maestre, one of the most aristocratic families of Castilla. Her half-brothers had been prominent in the Court of Philip III. Amongst the dowry were the family jewels, valued at 30 mil ducados.⁷

This affluence no doubt assisted him in assembling an extraordinarily large library. Sánchez Mariana, in his catalogue to the *Bibliófilos españoles* exhibition of 1993 wrote that “no había en Madrid una biblioteca más rica y famosa, con excepción de la del Conde-Duque de Olivares, que la de Don Lorenzo Ramírez”.⁸ According to Rodríguez-Moñino, the catalogue of his library “comprende la mayor parte y la más selecta, de las obras impresas en España y fuera de España durante la primera mitad del siglo XVII, amén de muchísimas otras del anterior, varios manuscritos y incunables”.⁹ He may have inherited some of the books from his father, Alonso Ramírez, but he would have greatly enriched and expanded this collection. In comparison to nineteenth-century collectors he resembled Pascual de Gayangos in his munificence, rather than Sir Thomas Phillipps, in the latter’s hoarding mentality. By this I mean that he lent out valuable manuscripts, for example, the hand-written account by Bernal Díaz del Castillo, on his true history of Mexico. A version of this was discovered in the records of the Council of the Indies by Ramírez de Prado, in his capacity of Consejero, perhaps, and made available to Fray Alonso de Remón who published the text in 1632.¹⁰ A note by León Pinelo made in 1629 corroborates this: “Bernal Diaz del Castillo, *Historia de la Conquista de Nueva-España*, Mss [...] que se halla en esta corte, donde el M. R. Fr. Alonso Remón la tiene corregida para imprimir, i es de 300 pliegos, sacada de la original, que vi en poder de D. Lorenzo Ramirez de Prado, del Real Consejo de Indias”.¹¹ Rodríguez-Moñino provides other examples of Ramírez de Prado’s patronage.

Ramírez de Prado also possessed the illuminated manuscript of Martín de Murúa’s *Historia general del Pirú*, begun in

7. Entrambasaguas 1943: 70-74.

8. Sánchez Mariana 1993: 50.

9. Rodríguez-Moñino 1966: 13.

10. Baker 1996: 20.

11. Rodríguez-Moñino 1966: 14.

1590, revised and completed in 1613, the licence to publish being granted in 1616, although it remained in manuscript form until the twentieth century. It would seem to us to be a great hyperbole, Ramírez de Prado is described as having “virtually everything published in the New World”.¹²

His library, which was kept with his collection of paintings in his house in the Calle de Arenal no. 20, Madrid, was assembled in four categories, according to the inventory made posthumously. These were theology, including Bibles and devotional literature; civil and canon law including *libros políticos*; the liberal arts comprising literature, philosophy, pure and applied sciences and including *poetas de lenguas vulgares* [by which was meant any language other than Latin]; and history or *Historia sacra y profana* including genealogy. Of these, the law category predominated, followed by the broad swathe of liberal arts.

He went on adding to his library throughout his life, notably with the acquisition of the Conde de Guimerá's manuscripts, from Zaragoza, in 1642. These were received as a gift from his widow.¹³ An interesting indication of the importance of the library is supplied in the person of Francisco de Araoz. In 1631, Araoz published his *De bene disponenda bibliotheca*, intended as a model for the classification of books. It is dedicated to Ramírez de Prado *bonarum litterarum peritissimo*, but not only this. Araoz had seen Ramírez's library and, from the effusive manner in which he praised it, it is evident that he used it as an ideal for his own classification system. In effect, therefore, this early guide as to how to organize a library is based on a known actual model, the library of Ramírez de Prado.

The inventory of the library was compiled after Ramírez de Prado's death, in 1658, at the instigation of his much younger widow [d. 1681]. There were prohibited books in the collection, and that attracted Inquisitorial attention. The scrutiny lasted several years and, as a consequence, a number of items were removed and deposited with the Inquisition.¹⁴ The printing of

12. See Anderson 2004.

13. Sánchez Mariana 1993: 50.

14. Entrambasaguas 1943: 117.

the catalogue of the library was thereby delayed until 1662. [I cannot at present reconcile Ramírez's possession of prohibited books with his role as 'familiar' of the Inquisition; but the indexes varied with each issue, perhaps explaining what appears to be an anomaly. Bernardo de Sandoval had been responsible for the Geneva edition of 1619¹⁵]. Some found their way, perhaps as a donation, before the main dispersal, to the Colegio Mayor de Cuenca in Salamanca. One can deduce this, as there is a note in the inventory to the effect that "esta librería se vende entera y por classes, y no por otra manera, que toda está apreciada en veinte mil ducados".¹⁶ Rodríguez-Moñino enthused over the contents, and one may observe, even at this juncture, that there were fifty or so incunables, "en su inmensa mayoría españoles".

Despite Ramírez de Prado's patent renown as a bibliophile, my knowledge of him arose from a different area of interest. Whilst acting as Olivares' ambassador in Paris, he published in 1628, the text of Julián Pérez's Chronicle from a manuscript "ex bibliotheca Olivarensi". It was dedicated effusively to "Excellentissimo [sic] Domino Don Gaspari de Guzman Comiti de Olivares Ducis de Sanlucar Equitii Regii summo Praefecto Philippo IV", acknowledging that he, Olivares, also was *res Hispanas amanti*, and that it was he, Olivares to whom he owed everything, "cui omnia mea debeo". So widely known did this book become that there was a second edition published in Antwerp in 1640.¹⁷ Now Julián Pérez was unheard of, and his chronicle unknown until the seventeenth century, when it was discovered by a Jesuit, Padre Tomás Torralba in the Benedictine monastery of Fulda currently in the district of Hesse, previously in Bavaria. Yet this chronicle, together with those of Dexter [published in Lyons [Lugduni] in 1627], Máximo, bishop of Zaragoza, and Luitprand, were all part of a gigantic and elaborate fraud perpetrated by the Jesuit Father Jerónimo Román de la Higuera, known as Higuera (1538-1611).¹⁸ Higuera was on the teaching staff of the College of San Eugenio in Toledo as "lector en

15. *Index librorum prohibitorum et expurgatorum*, Geneva: 1619.

16. Rodríguez-Moñino 1966: 18.

17. This copy was the one used by Julio Caro Baroja 1992: 180.

18. For Higuera, see José Godoy Alcántara 1868; T. D. Kendrick 1960: chap. VIII, 116-127; Richard Hitchcock (1994-95) 1996: 87-96.

latinidad”. Contemporary accounts of him are generally sympathetic, seeing him as a learned person, scrupulous in his attention to detail. Yet, he was responsible for rewriting or rather for filling in the gaps in much of Spain’s early history, and was certainly the most significant of all the falsifiers of Spain’s history. My own inclination is to put his forgeries on a par with the Leaden Books whose discovery created such a stir in Granada in the 1590s. Both were politically motivated. In Higuera’s case, his purpose was not only to show how predominant Toledo was in Spain’s early history, but to demonstrate the primacy of the Mozarabs of that city. I have argued that Toledo, as a city was in decline, notably in the second half of the sixteenth century, and that Higuera, as one of its passionate citizens, sought to demonstrate what a central role that city had in opposing the ‘moros’. Furthermore, the true nobles of the city were the Mozarabs who did not allow themselves to be coerced into Islam. Now the chronicle brought to light by Ramírez de Prado purported to have been written by “Iulianus Petri, Archiepresbyter Sanctae Iustae, e nobilium Equitum Barrosorum Muzarabum Toletanorumque familia oriundu; qui Domino Bernardo Archiepiscopo Toletano fuit a secretis, et floruit aetate Regis Adefonsi VI”.¹⁹ [“Julian Pérez, Archpriest of Santa Justa, a member of the family of the noble knights of Barroso, of Mozarabs and Toledans; and who was [what might say] in the inner circle of Archbishop Bernard of Toledo, and who lived in the times of Alfonso VI”]. In other words, the author of this chronicle was a contemporary of Alfonso VI in the eleventh century.

Julián writes of himself that, early in his life, he went to Rome, from whence he returned with a large quantity of books from Gaul and Italy, giving the impression that he was a man of scholarship, with a considerable library, to which he was always making additions. He wrote panegyrics, hymns and a poem on the capture of Almería in 1147, at which he was present; in his chronicle, he devoted particular attention to those episodes in Peninsular history when Christians were under threat, notably the adoptionist heresy of the late eighth century, and the martyrdoms in Córdoba in the 850s. He knew the Cid well, and the French Archbishop Bernard likewise. It is revealed elsewhere in

19. [Laurentius Ramires de Prado] 1628: 2-3.

the Chronicle that Julián lived to be a hundred, and did not die until the 1160s [his improbable dates are 1056-1163 AD]. Furthermore, Julián Pérez was a member of the Barrosos, one of the Mozarabic families of Toldeo so harassed and so beleaguered in the sixteenth century. When one adds to the equation the fact that Higuera also, claimed Mozarabic lineage, having composed, amongst other works a *Tratado de los Mozárabes*, which has not survived but which was probably seen in manuscript by Nicolás Antonio in the mid-seventeenth century, one begins, I think, to appreciate some of the motives for this extraordinary hoax.

If one takes a step back to reflect on Higuera's purpose, his focus on the prominence of Mozarabs in the history of Toledo is suggestive of a contemporary political agenda. His *modus operandi*, that of interweaving fiction with known historical details, and using short paragraphs reminiscent of authentic chronicles, leads one to conclude that his intention was to falsify the records.

What is difficult to comprehend is how such an accomplished lawyer, statesman "y hombre tan docto" as Ramírez del Prado could have been party to all these shenanigans. One should say that Godoy Alcántara in his *Historia crítica de los falsos cronicones* [1868], is quite scathing, saying of him that "no carecía de instrucción, aunque sin gusto ni crítica".²⁰ Nicolás Antonio does not condemn him outright but describes him, intriguingly, as "consegero Real, cuya varia, i amena doctrina es bien conocida de los Filologos".²¹ Another curious sidelight here, is that Ramírez de Prado's godfather had been Pedro de Valencia, who was so devastatingly critical of the veracity of Lead Books of Granada. Ramírez is not known as a gullible person, yet he clearly thought the project of being responsible for the edition of Julián's chronicle worthwhile. He describes the chronicler lavishly, as follows: "auctor, certe non contemnendus, variarum linguarum notione instructus, multorum voluminorum antiqua lectione doctus, aetate proficiens & propectus chronicum composuit". Furthermore, not content with making Julián Pérez's chronicle available to the public, he later published, in 1640, the *Opera* of

20. Godoy Alcántara 1868: 219.

21. Mayáns i Siscar 1742: xiii.

Luitprand, permitting both his name and that of Higuera to figure on the ornate and allegorical title-page. The portrait of Olivares, engraved by Cornelio Galo, is also to be found in this edition. For the Julián chronicle, Ramírez made the edition from a manuscript that had come originally from Olivares's library, but there may have been a number of MS copies in circulation. Godoy suggests that Ramírez de Prado may have sanctioned changes to Higuera's original text, or been a party to them.²² This is an important charge, for it implicates Ramírez, to a certain extent, in the fraud. He certainly added copious notes. As for the source for the Luitprand chronicle, this is said to have come from a copy in Ramírez's own library. Ramírez also had a manuscript copy, "bellamente caligrafiada" of Higuera's *La Imperial historia de Toledo y su tierra* [the latter currently in the Archivo Universitario of Salamanca].²³

It would appear that Ramírez de Prado was not compromised by his association with the falsifications of Spain's past perpetrated by Higuera. There was no suggestion, to my knowledge, that his role in the perpetuation of these myths about Spain's past formed part of the charges made against him. Perhaps he was protected by Olivares? Caro Baroja wrote that he was "favorecido por el conde-duque".²⁴ Feelings ran high. Pellicer [José Pellicer de Tovar], a friend of Ramírez's, pronounced against them, although initially he had been an *aficionado*. Opprobrium rained down on him, and he became the butt of satires. There were other voices that stood out against them, the most significant amongst whom was Nicolás Antonio who pointed an authoritative finger en contra in his *Censura de historias fabulosas*. There were though many "defensores", and the chronicles fabricated by Higuera went on being used as the source for the history of Toledo well into the 1650s, when Pedro de Rojas, the Conde de Mora produced his *Historia de la Imperial, Nobilissima, Íncлита, y Esclarecida Ciudad de Toledo*.

22. Godoy Alcántara: 1868: 219.

23. Mss 1830-1837; see José Martínez de la Escalera, 'Jerónimo de la Higuera S. J.: Falsos cronicones, historia de Toledo, culto de San Tirso', in *Tolède et la expansion urbaine en Espagne 1450-1650*, Rencontres de la Casa Velázquez, Madrid, 2001

24. Caro Baroja 1992: 180.

The picture that emerges then, is not that of a retiring bibliophile, but of a tireless scholar/statesman, the culmination of whose career perhaps, was his ambassadorial appointment to Paris. His activities as a historian can be reconciled to those of a diplomat, but his involvement in the farrago initiated by Higuera seems less explicable. Perhaps, as Cervantes would have done, he saw the irony of it all. If this seems fanciful, then I would point to a curious feature of his edition of Julián Pérez's chronicle. On page 2 and prior to the effusive dedication to the Conde-Duque, Ramírez de Prado provides the heading "Anagramma", followed by his name in Latin: Laurentius Ramires de Prado, then "prae sole demiranda virtus", which may be rendered as "Virtue [or nobility] that should be admired before [in front of] the sun". Not content with this, he then composes a four-line verse in Latin in eulogy of Olivares, incorporating this phrase. This suggests a playful spirit, but the sharp-sighted will have spotted that the anagram is faulty, as it lacks an 'r'!

On the other hand, his later endorsement of Higuera in his edition of Luitprand, suggests that he had no intention of reneging on his earlier allegiance. There is more to said and discovered –it seems remarkable that there has been no study of this interesting personality since Entrambasaguas in the 1940s –, and no attempt to bring together the two aspects of his character that to date have been treated distinctly. Let the last words lie with Rodríguez-Moñino, after he had waxed lyrical over the contents on the Inventory: "Esperamos que algún bibliógrafo inteligente estudie como se merece el importante catálogo y lo reedite con el aparato crítico y erudito que tan valioso documento requiere".²⁵

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