
In 1076 Alfonso VI, King of Castile and Leon introduced the Roman rite into his kingdoms to replace the Mozarabic rite that had continued to be observed in some places from the time of the Visigoths throughout the Arabic occupation of Spain from 711. This act of homage to the Roman church was, according to the early chronicles, met with fierce opposition and resulted in an ordeal by fire: a liturgical book from each rite was thrown into the flames; while the Roman book leapt clear of the fire, the Mozarabic one remained within the conflagration but did not burn. Whether or not this anecdote was true, it clearly symbolised resistance on the part of the Christian inhabitants of Castile and Leon to the introduction of the Gregorian liturgy and the endurance of the independent Mozarabic rite. Susan Boynton’s elegantly written book tells the tale of these two rites and makes for fascinating reading. The author, having come across an uncatalogued manuscript in the Hispanic Society of America, realized that it was, in fact, the lost original of an eleventh-century liturgical codex from Toledo Cathedral, a book that had been missing from the Biblioteca Capitular since the nineteenth century. The book, which contains musical notation, had been known to experts in Old Hispanic chant through an eighteenth-century copy that had in turn been painstakingly reproduced by hand in a dissertation by Clyde Brockett published in1968. For Boynton, the location of the original codex opened up a number of questions, some relating to the nature of the book and its notation of Old Hispanic chant, but others to the impetus behind the copying of it in the eighteenth century.

Why would anyone at that time have gone to the immense trouble of copying such a manuscript, including the punctilious drawing of the
complicated system of neumes it contained? The motive was clearly not one of realizing the chant in performance given that the notation was, and still is, largely indecipherable. Thus, this music was silent, and would probably remain so forever; and thus, reasoned Boynton, the appeal of the neumes must have stemmed from a different cultural discourse. Her subsequent investigation into the copying of the manuscript, and the historical context in which that copy was made, makes for an absorbing and thought-provoking narrative that not only sheds new light on the Old Hispanic chant tradition but also on the development of Spanish music historiography in the latter part of the eighteenth century. Above all, it illustrates the importance of understanding the fascination with and recuperation of the musical past at a given time and in the particular political, religious and cultural context in which the recuperative act took place.

The historiography of music in Spain — or more accurately, given the date of this manuscript, the Spanish kingdoms — has begun to gather momentum of late. Recent studies by Juan José Carreras, Xoan Carreira, Pilar Ramos, Emilio Ros-Fàbregas and others have started to explore and unpick the narrative thread of Spanish music history, focusing primarily on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century music historians and writers in a reassessment of the intellectual drive and the social tensions that informed and influenced their work. One strand in particular is relevant to Boynton’s study: the revisiting of the musical past to forge a sense of cultural identity. As Carreras has shown, much of the research undertaken by Higinio Anglés (1888–1969) — who can perhaps be considered to be the first professionally trained Spanish musicologist, and certainly the first to be taken seriously at an international level — was propelled by the desire to discover and communicate to the musicological world at large the glories of Spain’s musical heritage.
Musicology as a discipline did not exist in the eighteenth century, although antiquarian interests were beginning to sow the seeds of interest in ‘old’ music manuscripts, and Spanish collectors were as fascinated as others elsewhere in Europe by those liturgical books that contained musical notation, however indecipherable. The case of those codices that contained chants pertaining to what is now generally termed the Old Hispanic rite afforded an opportunity for much more than mere antiquarian interest, however. As Boynton shows, with considerable investigative skill and an impressive depth of erudition, the eighteenth-century scholars who discovered and worked with manuscripts such as the one from Toledo now in the Hispanic Society of America realized their potential for forming an integral part of the more general discourse of the Enlightenment relating to the forging of a modern nation through its medieval past. Because of Spain’s history of conquest by the Moslem peoples of North Africa in 711 and the subsequent centuries of ‘reconquest’, the narrative of the Old Hispanic rite, as a rite observed by the Mozarabics, or Christians living under Moslem rule, held a particular potency, representing religious continuity and cultural identity in a period when both were constantly fragile and intermittently fractured.

This seems to have been the fate of the Old Hispanic rite itself: another of the important strands (a more specifically musicological one) running through Boynton’s study is the notion of fragility and fracture in the transmission of this rite and its chant tradition. When in the early sixteenth century Cardinal Cisneros, Archbishop of Toledo and royal confessor to the Catholic Monarchs Isabel and Ferdinand, decided to prepare printed editions of the so-called Mozarabic rite, his motive was ostensibly to preserve the tradition. Yet that tradition had been largely lost and his printed missal, breviary and intonarium are essentially constructs, an amalgam of some of the texts and liturgical ceremonial drawn from earlier manuscripts and chants that represent local variants
of Roman melodies, rather than have any clear relationship to those preserved in the manuscripts surviving from the eleventh and twelfth centuries (85–6). These melodies were, after all, as indecipherable to the compilers of Cisneros’s books c. 1500 as they were to the liturgists and palaeographers of the middle of the eighteenth century and as they are now to musicologists and chant specialists. This makes it all the more curious that the mere existence of a discernibly different musicoliturgical tradition has been taken, at least thrice over the course of history, as a symbol of ‘national’ identity.

Boynton traces the background for this phenomenon of the mid-eighteenth-century manifestation in the context of the Spanish Enlightenment. The protagonists of her ‘tale of two rites’ are the Jesuit church historian Andrés Marcos Burriel (1719–62) and the paleographer Francisco Xavier de Santiago y Palomares (1728–96); the setting is, for the most part, the archive of Toledo Cathedral where the Visigothic manuscripts were to be found. Their project to research and transcribe the ancient documents and manuscripts of the cathedral archive stemmed from political as well as scientific motives and had its roots in the Royal Commission on the Archives of 1749, one of a number of apparently ‘enlightened’ acts on the part of the Bourbon King Ferdinand VI (1746–59). Yet behind the ideal of researching medieval documentation lay the need to substantiate the longstanding prerogative of the Spanish monarchy to control over the presentation to ecclesiastical benefices, granted by the papacy to Ferdinand and Isabel in the later fifteenth century, but with its roots in the much more ancient system of royal *ius patronatus* on the part of the Castilian monarchy. This motive, to defend ancient ‘Spanish’ rights against the papacy, resulted indirectly in the work undertaken by Burriel and Palomares on the Visigothic liturgical manuscripts in Toledo. Interest in this area of investigation was further fomented by the claims of the Mozarabs still living in Toledo in
the eighteenth century who had appealed to Ferdinand’s predecessor, Philip V (1701–46), to preserve their privileges. The Mozarabic rite, they claimed, was ‘a national treasure’, a ‘glorious crest and shield’ in-the-making for Spain, and ‘the envy of foreign nations’ (91). Burriel would have concurred with this; as Boynton puts it: ‘Burriel’s fascination with the Old Hispanic rite shows an Enlightenment historian coming to terms with the rich symbolic capital of the invented neo-Mozarabic tradition, anchored as it was in a particular set of socio-political concerns’ (16).

These concerns embraced the idea of archival research being for the ‘public good’ (13) and a view of church history as essentially synonymous with national history (22). An emphasis on a sense of historical continuity that could legitimize the Bourbon dynasty by linking it, however spuriously, with the Visigothic past is clearly evinced from Burriel’s writings: ‘The collection of all these venerable monuments of our antiquity would be without doubt very glorious for our nation’, he wrote in a letter dated December 1754 — as well as his actions. By presenting King Ferdinand with a facsimile edition (painstakingly copied by Palomares) of one of the Visigothic liturgical manuscripts he had encountered in Toledo Cathedral he not only sought to justify the work of the Commission, but also ‘created a seductive fantasy of historical continuity’ (Boynton, 103). Palomares’s astoundingly accurate graphic representation of old Hispanic notation, while indecipherable, nevertheless created a mythographic link between the Bourbons and the Visigoths, enhancing precisely the kind of dynastic legitimization they sought. Burriel considered the manuscripts to be ‘symbolic vessels of a Toledan tradition going back to the Visigothic era and the ritual community of the Mozarabs in Toledo.’

Burriel’s methodology was advanced for his time: he posited comparison of the old Hispanic manuscripts with the neo-Mozarabic editions of Cisneros and saw the need to combine this with close reading
of the published scholarship. His work in the Toledo archive was
exhaustive and tireless, and, together with the accuracy of Palomares’s
copies, began to make the chapter of Toledo Cathedral anxious that the
whole of their archive would be reproduced in this way, and that the
copies would be indistinguishable from the originals.

Boynton charts Burriel’s progress in the face of such difficulties,
and compares Palomares’s work against the original manuscripts in an
act of painstaking comparative research of her own. She consistently
relates this part of the narrative to work done by other more recent
scholars, such as José Janini, and to the emerging disciplines of
palaeography and liturgiology. For the palaeographer Palomares, the
neumes were an extension of his work on, and copying of, different text-
hands, and he felt that they added aesthetic depth to his own major
work, the *Paleographia Gothico-Española* compiled in the early 1760s. ‘I
think’, he wrote, ‘the reader will not be displeased by the strange manner
in which they [the ‘musical points’ or neumes] are arranged over the
letters. Since none of the musicians of our time understand them,
perhaps in the future someone will strive to comprehend them…’ (154).
Aside from the irony that musicologists and chant specialists have still
failed to decipher the neumes, it is clear that the extracts copied by
Palomares from Visigothic liturgical books were crucial for the
historiography of the Old Spanish rite.

Of equal importance, perhaps, from this historiographical
viewpoint was Palomares’s facsimile copy of the Toledo manuscript of the
Cantigas of Santa María which he dedicated to the music-loving queen,
Barbara of Braganza (1711–58). This, like the copy of the Mozarabic book
presented to Ferdinand VI, served to underline Bourbon legitimacy; as
Boynton puts it, ‘In addition to representing exceptional artefacts of
eighteenth-century interest in the Middle Ages, these copies constitute
significant elements in the construction of the monarchs’ public
personae’ (114). Even though the original Toledo manuscript of the Cantigas is not, like other copies of the work, illuminated, Palomares included a depiction of King Alfonso X, singing from a notated song-sheet, that clearly makes allusion to his ‘successor’, Ferdinand VI. This is reproduced on p.119, and the book as a whole is generously illustrated with examples of the facsimiles created by Burriel and Palomares. As Boynton points out, the duo were original in many ways, as in the scientific methodology they adopted and their awareness of the broader significance of the work, but perhaps their most original contribution was the integration of liturgy and chant into the historical discourse of creating a nation’s identity.

This complex web of associations, involving royal image-making, political necessities, religious ideals, antiquarian interests and enlightenment scholarship, is dexterously woven by Boynton. Her book offers as much to the intellectual historian as to the musicologist, and should undoubtedly be read by anyone interested in the Spanish Enlightenment as well as in the historiography of the Spanish musical tradition. It strips away the myths and confusions that still seem at times to surround the old Hispanic chant tradition and its relationship to the endeavours of Cardinal Cisneros. Above all, it peels back layers of cultural history and shows how these at times build directly on one another, and at times develop in parallel, impinging on one another or merging according to political needs and concerns of a given age.

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