AN INHERENT RIVALRY BETWEEN
LETRADOS AND CABALLEROS?
ALONSO DE CARTAGENA, THE KNIGHTLY
ESTATE, AND AN HISTORICAL PROBLEM

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SINCE THE PUBLICATION of Luis Suárez Fernández’s monumental work, *Nobleza y Monarquía* (1959), Spanish historians have generally accepted the notion that the monarchs of fifteenth-century Castile were perpetually at odds with the nobility, and that to secure their positions they replaced all the nobles, or caballeros, in political offices with university-educated letrados. These letrados, according to the model, recognized that they owed their positions to the monarchy, and therefore defended royal interests against the caballeros by developing over the course of the fifteenth century an increasingly sophisticated theory of regalism based on divine-right rhetoric.

1Earlier versions of this essay were presented as a conference paper at the 7th Annual International Congress of the Mediterranean Studies Association, Universitat de Barcelona, May 26–29, 2004, and earlier still as a master’s thesis for the Department of History at the University of Texas at Austin, May 2003.

2Luis Suárez Fernández, *Nobleza y Monarquía* (Valladolid, 1959; repr. Valladolid, 1975). Following the usage of the times, throughout this essay I will treat caballeros (knights) and nobles as virtually synonymous, since by the fifteenth century, most every noble male not within the Church sought to be knighted. Letrados, strictly speaking, were those men who had graduated with advanced degrees in canon or civil law.

3Such developments were not unique to Castile or even to Spain. In Castile, such rhetoric was not fully formulated until after Juan II had his privado (favorite), Alvaro de Luna, executed in 1453. After Luna’s execution, Juan II found himself in the peculiar legal and constitutional situation of having to void a profusion of vassalary oaths that people had made to Luna, as well as several edicts that Luna had promulgated on Juan II’s orders. Thus, on one hand, Juan II had to reassure all the people who had sworn fealty to Luna that they were free from all such obligations, and that the king could release them from their obligations by his potestas absoluta. On the other hand, Juan II had to find a way to countermand his own laws, some of which had presumably been laid down in perpetuity. For an excellent in-depth discussion of Juan II’s difficulties and his use of divine-right theory, see Nicholas Round, “Dependence, Derogation and Divine Right,” in *The Greatest Man Uncrowned: A Study of the Fall of Don Alvaro de Luna* (London, 1986), 87–130.
While the *letrado* versus *caballero* paradigm seems to work well for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, *letrado-caballero* relations appear to present different, more complicated, patterns until the mid fifteenth century. This is because fifteenth-century Castile witnessed a unique set of political and cultural developments, which created important client-patron relationships between the two groups. Many of the leading *caballeros*, for various reasons, came to commission translations, histories, and chivalric and educational treatises from the up-and-coming university-educated *letrados*. Within this cultural arena, divisions between *letrados* and *caballeros* broke down and it seems that any professional rivalry that there may have been between the two groups did not become truly divisive until the very end of the fifteenth century.

The paradigm of *letrados* versus *caballeros* seen in Suárez Fernández’s *Nobleza y Monarquía* has persisted virtually unchallenged, being employed in Helen Nader’s influential work, *The Mendoza Family in the Spanish Renaissance, 1350–1550*, and once again in Luis Fernández Gallardo’s recent work, *Alonso de Cartagena (1385–1456): Una biografía política en la Castilla del siglo XV*. The persistence of the paradigm is due in large part to source selection, with emphasis being placed on political tracts and theological treatises written by *letrados*, rather than the translations, histories, and chivalric literature for which they were commissioned.

Traditional considerations of *letrado-caballero* relations have focused most often on Alonso de Cartagena (ca. 1385–1456), who has come to be regarded—problematically, I would suggest—as the “typical” *letrado*. This colorful figure’s frequent presence in the chronicles of fifteenth-century Castile attests to his prominence in both secular and ecclesiastical circles. Cartagena was the son of Selomó ha-Levi (1353–1435), a rabbi from the city of Burgos who converted to Christianity in 1390, took the name Pablo de Santa María, and in relatively short order, ascended to the position of bishop in Burgos. Alonso de Cartagena shared the fortunes of the Santa María family and, having obtained a degree in Law at the University of Salamanca, saw a splendid career both within the administration of the royal court, as well as within the hierarchy of the Church (where he eventually succeed his father as bishop of Burgos). In the service of both king and Pope, Alonso de Cartagena was involved in almost every diplomatic mission of his times, with his frequent travels taking him from Portugal to Poland. In December 1416, Pope Martin V installed Cartagena as a revenue collector in various dioceses—including those of Toledo, Seville, and Compostela—a position that brought with it political and diplomatic responsibilities. In fact, it was this promotion that would eventually move Cartagena into the service of the King of Castile. One year later, Cartagena was named papal muncio and general collector for Martin V. All of the major sees of Castile came to be under Cartagena’s jurisdiction, including: Toledo, Badajoz, Plasencia, Cádiz, Cuenca, Cartagena, Sigüenza, Coria, Segovia, and even Segovia, Jaén, and Córdoba. It is perhaps Cartagena’s prominence and meteoric promotion within both royal and ecclesiastical administration that has caused him to be singled out as the archetypical *letrado* so frequently. Alonso de Cartagena and his students have been credited with providing the theological and political arguments that would be used to displace *caballeros* from their social and political positions and bend the *caballero* estate to the will of the monarchy.

There are a few problems, however, with both the centrality Cartagena has been given in debates of *letrado-caballero* relations, and with his depiction as the primary sibyte of the *caballero* estate. Perhaps most problematic is the

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4 Interestingly, one of the main city gates into Burgos, the upper floor of which served as the most popular place for reunions of the municipal government, is across the main courtyard from the cathedral, and bears the name Puerta (or Torre) de Santa María. The family had the alternate name “Torre de Cartagena” because of ties to the city. In ecclesiastical circles, Pablo was most often referred to as Paulus Burgesensis. As converted Jews, or conversos, many members of the Santa María family obtained positions within the royal court and within the Church.

5 Cartagena would hold his position of collector until 1427. There is no documentation after this date of his role as collector until 1437, when he was reappointed. His ecclesiastical career is obscure between these dates. It is also interesting that after his 1427 promotion, Cartagena received no new promotions within the Church until he assisted as Bishop of Burgos in 1435 (I have been unable to determine when Cartagena was ordained).

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7 See especially Nader’s comments about what she sees as the “bitter professional rivalry between *caballeros* and *letrados*,” *The Mendoza Family*, 12, 21–2, 133, and Fernández Gallardo’s comments on how, from Cartagena’s works, “De un modo tácito, se sugeriría la limitación de la nobleza, del estamento caballeresco, a la función defensiva, quedando excluida su participación en el funcionamiento de las instituciones políticas o, al menos, propiamente administrativas” (would arise, tacitly, the limitation of the nobility, of the chivalric estate, to a defensive function, excluding its participation from the operation of political institutions or, at least, properly administrative [institutions]), *Alonso de Cartagena, 367*. See also Fernández Gallardo’s conclusions that La Qüestión “constituye un paso más en la estatalización de la caballería,” while still demonstrating “una actitud comprensiva hacia los valores caballerescos” (represents one more step toward *caballería* serving the state [while still demonstrating] a sympathetic attitude towards the chivalric values), *Alonso de Cartagena, 372*. 

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6 These circumstances are treated below, but briefly stated, they were the political uncertainty in which *caballeros* found themselves, their relatively poor Latinity, and a political culture where their success depended in large measure on oratorical skills and the acquisition of specific types of rhetoric.

7 Helen Nader, *The Mendoza Family in the Spanish Renaissance, 1350–1550* (New Brunswick, 1979); Luis Fernández Gallardo, *Alonso de Cartagena (1385–1456): Una biografía política en la Castilla del siglo XV* (Valladolid, 2002). One could include here any number of works, both in Spanish and in English, but I limit myself to these two works for specific reasons: Nader’s book has been highly influential and has served as a frequent entry point for English speakers to arguments about *letrado* and *caballero* relations, and Fernández Gallardo’s book is recent and the most thorough work on Cartagena, representing the current state of the question.
notion that Cartagena represents the “typical” letrado. As will be considered below, Cartagena was in many ways an atypical letrado. He spent most of his time outside of Spain, traveled most often in the company of caballeros, and became something of a celebrity with an international circle of admirers and detractors. Moreover, if one looks outside the political and professional sphere, one sees that Cartagena actually frequently collaborated with caballeros, contributing in multiple and significant ways to their general intellectual development and to chivalric thought—contrary to the saboteur role often ascribed him. Specifically, he saw intense interactions with three of the most prominent caballeros of the times—the Marqués of Santillana, the Count of Castro, and the Count of Haro—providing at their request translations of classical works, treatises on chivalric topics, help with the organization of a specialized caballero library, and advice concerning the proper edification of the caballeros. While such interactions may not demonstrate congenial relations between letrados and caballeros through the mid fifteenth century, they do complicate substantially the picture of an inherent rivalry.

**CARTAGENA’S POLITICAL AND THEOLOGICAL TEXTS**

While the paper trail between Cartagena and the Marqués of Santillana, the Count of Castro, and the Count of Haro suggests that letrado-caballero relations were, if not congenial, then at least ambiguous and complicated through the mid fifteenth century, most attention has been given to Cartagena’s high-profile political and theological texts, such as his De providentia, Memoriale virtutum, De preeminentia, Allegationes, and Duodenarium. All of these works contain rhetoric highly favorable to the King of Castile, putting him, in no uncertain terms, above all other kings, princes, and noble blood-lines. One should not conclude solely on the basis of these pro-monarchy tracts, however, that Cartagena was necessarily anti-caballero. One must consider that all of these texts were written under very specific circumstances. De providentia was composed for the king to address abuses by specific nobles perpetrated against councils, and was not aimed at the nobility in general. The Duodenarium was redacted when Juan II of Navarre and his entourage of nobles took Medina del Campo. The Defensorium was written as a response to a particular circle of rebels and heretics in Toledo under the leadership of Pedro Sarmiento. De preeminentia was delivered before the Council of Basil, and the Allegationes was argued in turn before the Holy See. In every case, Cartagena was acting in his official capacity as a functionary of the royal court, and he composed each of these texts for an immediate purpose. Therefore, the degree to which any of them contain his “true opinions” regarding the caballero estate is dubious.

Also, alongside this handful of Cartagena’s high-profile political and theological texts, one can place other evidence that complicates the picture substantially. This opposing evidence, including his prominent role as a translator and historiographer, his contributions to chivalric discourse and debates, and his organization of a caballero library, suggests, not a rivalry, but rather intense and multi-faceted interactions between Cartagena and various caballeros.

**CARTAGENA’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHIVALRIC DISCOURSE AND TO CABALLERO INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT**

Let us turn to how Cartagena fits into chivalric thought and the general intellectual development of fifteenth-century Castile. To begin, Cartagena and his students are credited frequently not only with providing the theological and political arguments that would be used to displace caballeros from political offices, but also with undermining the caballero estate culturally. Nader, for example, uses the letrados vs. caballeros paradigm in her explication of Spain’s intellectual climate. She places all members of the Mendoza family into the category of caballeros and credits them with bringing the “values of the Renaissance” to Spain; meaning: they wrote in Castilian, never in Latin; they

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10For the sake of simplicity, I will use only the most commonly used titles that each of these caballeros came to hold. For clarity, the name of the Marqués of Santillana was Íñigo López de Mendoza (1398–1458); that of the Count of Castro was Diego Gómez de Sandoval (1386–1455); and that the first Count of Haro was Pedro Fernández de Velasco (ca. 1400–70)—he was the son-in-law of the Marqués of Santillana.
11By high-profile, I mean those texts for which Cartagena became most famous, especially on an international scale (see Fernández Gallardo’s subheading “Prestigio internacional de Alonso de Cartagena,” Alonso de Cartagena, 158). Invariably, those where his political and theological treaties in Latin. Cartagena and his writings have received substantial attention over the last twenty years, so modern editions exist for most of his texts.
12Fernández Gallardo, Alonso de Cartagena, 327.
13Ibid.
14We must place the discourses in Castile about chivalry within a wider European context. Unlike the rest of Europe, Castilian chivalry was debated primarily in treatises and not through chivalric romances (although there are instances of this, such as the popular work Amadis de Gaula). These treatises were not so much concerned with courtly love, as they were with defining the specific relationship between vassals (the caballeros) and lords (the king). Gómez Moreno argues that chivalry was one of the liveliest debates and largest preoccupations of fifteenth-century Castilian authors. See Angel Gómez Moreno, “La caballería como tema en la literatura medieval española: Tratados tóricos,” in Miscelánea-homenaje a Pedro Sáinz Rodríguez (Madrid, 1986), v. 2, 311–40. For the opposite opinion see Isabel Beceiro Piña, “La Biblioteca del conde de Benavente a mediados del siglo XV y su relación con las mentalidades y usos nobiliarios de la época.” En la España Medieval. Estudios en memoria del Profesor D. Salvador de Moxó (Madrid, 1982), v. 1, 135–46.
were the leading patrons of translated classical works; and they tended to use humanistic rhetoric as opposed to scholastic logic. In opposition to the caballeros, Nader places the letrados, crediting them with undoing the Renaissance achievements of the Mendozas. More specifically, she suggests that Alonso de Cartagena was the primary force behind such cultural sabotage, among many reasons, because his histories written in Latin initiated “the process by which Spanish society rejected humanist historiography.”

This depiction of Cartagena is, however, problematic. First, while Cartagena did often write in Latin, he also composed several treatises in Castilian and was one of the main translators of classical works from Latin to Castilian. Moreover, one may argue that recuperation of high quality Latin is as much a characteristic of “Renaissance attitudes” as the promotion of vernacular language. What is noteworthy is that Alonso de Cartagena promoted both. He not only initiated a “renaissance” (always a relative term) of Latin historiography, which had experienced a one-hundred-year lull, but he also promoted the refinement of the vernacular language, that is to say, Castilian. Second, all of Cartagena’s most important Castilian tracts were solicited by Mendoza family members and their political allies (all caballeros), so clearly they did not feel that he would undermine their achievements. Third, Cartagena maintained correspondence with several caballeros and worked directly with members of the Mendoza family and their allies on a variety of chivalric and didactic issues.

While Nader credits Cartagena and his fellow letrados with undoing all the Renaissance achievements of the caballeros—poorly eroding the cultural landscape—more recently Jeremy Lawrence has provided a new interpretation, taking into account the importance of caballero patronage patterns in fifteenth-century Castile. Essentially, Lawrence has reversed the model, arguing that the century saw among aristocrats an immense expansion of literacy, literary composition, and especially patronage. Whereas in 1400 the Castilian aristocracy “owned very few books,” by 1500 the nobility “collected them with eagerness.”

Instead of a century where caballero cultural achievements are slowly eroded by a letrado onslaught, Lawrence portrays the fifteenth century as a time when caballeros were gaining ground on the cultural front. He sees it as a critical juncture in cultural history, when reading—already more diffused among the lay estates of society, [and] at the root of the economic, technological and pedagogical changes—was put at the

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1Nader, The Mendoza Family, 8.
2Interestingly, Nader considers “the picture we are usually given of class conflict between monarchy and nobility” a cliché, The Mendoza Family, 46.
3Related to this sentiment, she claims “In this sense, don Alfonso was the head of an anti-Renaissance movement” (here, Nader is specifically referring to what she sees as Cartagena’s introduction of divine-right regalism into the Iberian Peninsula), The Mendoza Family, 21; see also 133. In singling out Cartagena as an anti-Renaissance figure, Nader follows a long-standing argument that Cartagena was a defender of scholasticism, and an opponent of humanism. This argument is derived from the polemic that occurred between Cartagena and Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444). Around 1417, Bruni made a new translation of Aristotle’s Ethics, in which he sought to embellish the style of previous medieval translations. Between 1436 and 1439 there arose a debate between Cartagena and Bruni regarding the proper goals of translation. Whereas Bruni stressed style, Cartagena stressed comprehension and vocabulary that conveyed the author’s original ideas, especially in technical subjects such as philosophy and natural science. From this debate, Birkenmajer argued that Cartagena was a resolved scholastic who opposed humanism, an argument that has swayed many since the 1920s. See A. Birkenmajer, “Der Streit des Alonso von Cartagena mit Leonardo Bruni Aretilo,” Vermischte Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Philosophie. Texte und Untersuchungen 20 (1922), 128–211. Another school of thought has Alonso de Cartagena as the harbinger of Spanish humanism. See especially Ottavio Di Camillo, El humanismo castellano del siglo XV (Valencia, 1976) which is a translation of his Yale dissertation, “Spanish Humanism in the Fifteenth Century” (1972). María Morrás provides a new interpretation of the debate between Cartagena and Bruni. She points out that the debate between the two was much more complex than a fight between scholasticism and humanism. She stresses the influence of national pride, professional rivalry, and the fact that Cartagena was not the only person who defended the use of technical language in the editions of the Ethics that circulating prior to Bruni’s translation. See María Morrás, “El debate entre Leonardo Bruni y Alonso de Cartagena. Las razones de una polémica,” Quaderns. Revista de traducció 7 (2002), 33–57.
5Cartagena was very conscious of his readership and chose his language very carefully. As Cartagena corresponded with the Mendozas, and as he composed works for them, he always took the opportunity where appropriate to improve and clarify the language used by the knightly class. While he strove to make use of common language and metaphors that his knightly readership could understand, Cartagena also went to great lengths to refine the usage of Castilian words, especially those that deceptively seemed to be synonyms, or which he thought were used improperly or haphazardly.
7Jeremy Lawrence, “Nuevos lectores y nuevos géneros. Apuntes y observaciones sobre la epistemología en el primer renacimiento español,” in Literatura en la época del Emperador (Salamanca, 1984), 81.
hands of a cultured aristocracy, snatching away literature from the exclusive domain of the professional letrados, thus changing forever the direction of the culture.22

According to Lawrence, it was the newly literate caballeros, not the old letrados, who came to shape the literary output of the fifteenth century, doing so in important ways: by becoming respected authors in their own right, by pioneering new literary genres, and by shaping and transforming the production of literature by the very power of their patronage.

Some of the most prominent examples of such caballero authors were members of the extended Mendoza family, including the Marqués of Santillana, the Count of Haro, and Fernán Pérez de Guzmán (ca. 1378–1460). The literature that these newly literate caballeros created reflected their tastes and interests. They gave emphasis to producing chivalric poetry, chronicles, biographies, and what Jeremy Lawrence has called “epistololas literarias” (“literary epistles”), which contemporaries knew as cartas mensajeras.23 Lawrence has argued that these literary epistles should be regarded as their own genre, reasoning that the quantities alone in which such epistles are found would merit calling them a genre. Moreover, every new literary development corresponds to every literary habits and a different circle of readers. For Lawrence, of the genres that developed in fifteenth-century Castile, the cartas mensajeras are the most distinctive and best indicate the cultural changes wherein the caballeros took the leading role in the composition and production of literature.24

However, the most important realm where caballeros influenced fifteenth-century cultural production, for the purposes of determining class relations, was their power of patronage. For, they determined what texts were composed, copied, and translated, relying almost exclusively on letrados. Probably the most prominent product of fifteenth-century caballero patronage was the massive campaign of translating classical works from Latin (and sometimes Greek) into the vernacular. To understand this campaign of translation, one must set it within the context of a newly expanded readership that was largely ignorant of Latin. The Latinity of Spanish nobles, especially when compared to that of Italian nobles of the Quattrocento, was rather poor. Latin was one of the last subjects presented in primary schools and the selection of authors used seems to have been not only restricted, but also mediocre with regard to style and composition.25 Many nobles of Spain acknowledged that their Latin was poor, and the Marqués of Santillana, for example, frequently bemoaned the fact he was not more proficient in it and considered his education incomplete on this account (although he knew much more Latin than was typical for nobles of his time).26

It is within such a context that the significance of caballero sponsorship of translations becomes clear. In an age when political power still hinged in large measure on one’s skills as an orator, caballeros sought to imitate the “models of political thought and persuasion” found in the classics, but without a good grasp of Latin … [they] found it difficult to understand the very works they were trying to imitate, much less to appreciate their syntax… [therefore, they] commissioned translations they could use as supplements—cribs—in reading the Latin originals.27

Thus, while the promotion of classical translations doubtless corresponded to a general curiosity and appreciation of the classics, it also served very practical ends, and went hand in hand with the cultural and political developments of the times.

In pursuit of these rhetorical skills the caballeros commissioned translations, relying frequently on the expertise of the letrados. Alonso de Cartagena was in fact one of the most prominent and prolific translators of the fifteenth century, translating into Castilian the Ethics of Aristotle, De Senectute, De Officiis, De Rhetorica, and other treatises by Cicero, various treatises by Seneca,28 and works by Quintus Curtius (which he entitled Dichos morales, o sentencias de Quinto Curcio).29

In addition to producing classical translations for consumption by the nobility, Cartagena catered to caballero demands for translations and composition of works on moral philosophy, or works that could be interpreted as such by medieval readers. Chief among these were works of history, which were

23Lawrence, “Nuevos lectores,” 86.
24Lawrence’s work has gained general acceptance among historians. For the influence he has had on the field, see the many essays in the Festschrift, Letters and Society in Fifteenth-Century Spain: Studies Presented to P. E. Russell on his Eightieth Birthday, ed. Alan Deyerman and Jeremy Lawrence (Llangrannog, 1993).
28Cartagena’s translations were highly prized, and when Pero López de Ayala translated the first eight books of De caestibus virorum illustrium, but later discontinued the project, Juan Alfonso de Zamora (secretary of Juan II) entreated the bishop to finish the translation of the work, even agreeing to serve as scribe while Cartagena dictated. See Mario Schiff, La bibliothèque du Marquis (Paris, 1970), 345-6. Cartagena’s translation of Seneca’s De Providentia was, according to Jeremy Lawrence, “one of the most widely-read and influential works of the age, surviving in at least thirty MSS and numerous printed editions” (Jeremy Lawrence, “Humanism in the Iberian Peninsula,” 226). For an alphabetical listing of Alonso’s most prominent works, see Anthony Clavell, et al., Bibliography of Old Spanish Texts (Madison, 1977), 47-51.
29Schiff, La bibliothèque du Marquis, 149.
thought to provide moral maxims and examples that could repair the social and political instability plaguing fifteenth-century Castile. It was believed that one could recover civilizing wisdom from *exenplos antiguos* (ancient examples), and learn from both the accomplishments and the failures of the past.\(^{30}\)

Cartagena was not only one of the most prolific translators of histories, but also an important historiographer and chronicler in his own right. His influence on historiography was felt for decades after his death.\(^{31}\) Specifically, Tate has credited Cartagena’s *Anacephaleosis* (Greek for “recapitulation”) with initiating the revival of Latin historiography seen in the second half of the fifteenth century.\(^{32}\) Had Cartagena been able to complete it, its significance probably would have rivaled that of the two most important medieval Castilian historiographical works, Jiménez de Rada’s *Historia Gothica*, and Alfonso X’s *Crónica General*.\(^{33}\) In addition to his *Anacephaleosis*, Cartagena collaborated on a variety of chronicles with his father, Pablo de Santa María, and his uncle, Alvar García de Santa María (who at one point was the royal chronicler for Juan II of Castile).\(^{34}\) Even one of the Marquis of Santillana’s knights, Diego de Valera (1412-88), characterized by Nader as a “caballero chronicler,” used Alonso de Cartagena’s chronicles as one of the main sources for his own.\(^{35}\)

Cartagena’s roles as translator and historian assured him a broad contribution to caballero intellectual development, but there were more direct ways in which he contributed to fifteenth-century Castilian chivalric discourse. Such contributions have left their traces in a pair of library inventories and in the chivalric and didactic treatises Cartagena composed for the Marqués of Santillana, the Count of Castro, and the Count of Haro.

It should be noted that all three of our caballeros, that is, the Marqués of Santillana, the Count of Castro, and the Count of Haro, solicited Cartagena’s expertise on issues that had real-life political and legal consequences. The political uncertainty that plagued fifteenth-century Castile was punctuated periodically with incidents of discord involving Alvaro de Luna, the *Infantes* of Aragon, the Papacy, or some international power. These incidents—which sometimes forced caballeros to choose sides, often against one of their lords—created uncertainty regarding the privileges and obligations of different social groups, and as a result, called into question the proper relationship between caballeros and the king. It was to these questions that Santillana, Castro, and Haro sought answers.\(^{36}\)

Of these three caballeros, probably the first to seek Cartagena’s expertise on chivalric matters was the Marqués of Santillana. It seems that Santillana had read Leonardo Bruni’s *De militia* (1421), after which he had a series of questions concerning the oath(s) that knights were to take.\(^{37}\) It is clear from his letter that Santillana was fully confident in Cartagena’s *letrado* erudition, and that he expected the bishop to know the answer to his queries, whether he or not had ever seen the treatise (which Cartagena claimed to have not).\(^{38}\) Both the original letter by Santillana (dated 15 January 1444), and the reply by Cartagena (dated 17 March 1444), were brought together and distributed as a single didactic epistle, *La Questión del Marqués de Santillana a Don Alonso de Cartagena*.\(^{39}\)

The discussion of knightly oaths had political and legal ramifications, not only whether a caballero had the freedom to make political alliances according to his interests (or, if to the contrary, he had to stay loyal to a given party even if his interests were no longer served), but mainly questions about what circumstances could cause him to lose the king’s favor and or even his title. Because of what was at stake, Cartagena begins his response by moving away from the examples of milites provided by Cato the Elder and Cicero—the sources which the Marqués of Santillana had cited—to a discussion of medieval...

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\(^{31}\) Nader acknowledges that “the importance of their [Cartagena and his students] innovations to historical writing is incalculable,” *The Mendoza Family*, 132.

\(^{32}\) Robert Brian Tate, “*Anacephaleosis* de Alfonso García de Santa Maria, Obispo de Burgos, 1435-1456,” in *Ensayos sobre la historiografía peninsular del siglo XV* (Madrid, 1970), 56.

\(^{33}\) Both of these works are from the thirteenth century. The first was written in Latin, the second in Castilian.

\(^{34}\) For one example of such collaborative projects, see MS hII 22, Bib. del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, *"Suma de las Crónicas de España;* by Pablo de Santa María, Alonso García de Santa María, and Alonso de Cartagena, fols. 52r-98v.


\(^{36}\) An additional factor contributing to the social uncertainty was that many aristocratic families were from newly ennobled blood-lines as a result of the civil war of the fourteenth century, a factor seldom mentioned by Santillana, Castro, or Haro.

\(^{37}\) For the modern edition of this text, see Charles Calvert Bayley, *War and Society in Renaissance Florence: The De Militia of Leonardo Bruni* (Toronto, 1961).

\(^{38}\) When one reads Cartagena’s reply it becomes apparent that Santillana made a wise choice. Cartagena was a first-rate researcher, and he employed in his reply a variety of sources, including civil and canon law, common usage, philology, his personal experiences, and maybe most importantly, historiography. Cartagena used these same sources in his *Doctrinal de los caballeros* (which I discuss below).

\(^{39}\) *La Questión* is reproduced in three modern editions: Amador de Rios (1852), Penna (1959), and the critical edition that I prefer, Ángel Gómez Moreno, “La Questión del Marqués de Santillana a Don Alfonso de Cartagena,” *El Crotalón. Revista de filología española* 2 (1985), 335-63. Cartagena’s autograph copy was listed in the 1456 *Inventario de la Visitación* performed after his death. Item nine mentions the “Oraçional y otros tratados en q. esta asimismo una respuesta que dio el Señor Marqués de Santillana a qué juro. son obligados los caballeros.” See Francisco Cantera Burgos, *Alvar García de Santa María. Historia de la judería de Burgos y de sus conversos más egregios* (Madrid, 1952), 448-9.
caballeros. To clarify the debate, Cartagena provides an etymology of the words used to describe knights, attempting to dispel the ambiguities of chivalric terminology in both Castilian and Latin. Castilian is especially problematic, because the terms used to describe caballeros (knights) and caballería (knighthood) are simply derivations of the word caballo, or horse, saying nothing of the status of the person or institution at hand. Moreover, Cartagena reminds the reader that since Antiquity, “tanta es ya la mudanza de las palabras que en muchas cosas fallarides que se muda el tajo del fablar” (words have changed so much that you will notice that the precise meaning of words has been altered). Certain usages of words had fallen out of favor. For this reason, Cartagena thoroughly distinguishes between those warriors who merely happen to ride into battle atop a horse (whom he calls ginetes), and those who are legally defined as caballeros. Such a precise distinction between ginetes and caballeros was significant, because knighthood conferred a series of social and legal privileges, chief among them being the exemption from the most burdensome forms of taxation. On an institutional and customary level, Cartagena points out that the milites of Antiquity swore an oath to their individual captain or general, which was dissolved upon the completion of a given battle or campaign. Oaths were renewed upon the commencement of a new campaign or after assignment to a new captain. In contrast, he notes, caballeros in Santillana’s time were bound by the medieval vow of fealty between a liegeman and his lord, and ultimately his king, which in theory was life-long.

Like Santillana, the Count of Castro sought Cartagena’s legal expertise. He asked for a compilation of all the laws that bore on caballeros of Castile. Cartagena responded with the Doctrinal de los caballeros (ca. 1444), a systematic compilation of laws with introductions and commentaries. The date of its composition seems to have been just prior to the battle of Olmedo and the resultant losses of titles and lands by the Count of Castro. Perhaps the Count was trying to clarify his rights and obligations to his vassals and to his lord, Juan II of Aragon.

41 Cartagena suggested that even if no formal ceremony had taken place, an implied oath existed. On a certain level, an implied oath would restrict a caballero’s course of action in a given political scenario.
42 There are three modern editions of this text: Skadden (1984), Viña Liste (1995), and Fallows (1995). Noel Fallows has contributed greatly to our understanding of the Doctrinal de los caballeros with his study and edition of the work, synthesizing many of the bibliographical descriptions, and identifying the amanuensis, date (approximate), and ownership for each codex of the Doctrinal de los caballeros, wherever possible. In addition, Fallows provides a new analysis using contemporary library inventories and watermarks. Because of the completeness of his analysis, his edition is to be preferred: The Chivalric Vision of Alfonso de Cartagena: Study and Edition of the Doctrinal de los caballeros (Newark, 1995).

There are several indications that the Doctrinal is an elaboration of the topics presented in the LaQiiestión. Cartagena begins the first book of his Doctrinal with an anti-Muslim overtone and an injunction against any knight who does not strictly adhere to, and fight for, the Catholic faith. Then, in Book I, Title iii, he proceeds immediately to a discussion of the historical and etymological origins of knighthood and the term milites. Later in Book I, Title ix, Cartagena discusses the loyalty that the knight must maintain in defense of his captain, military host, and especially in defense of the king. In Book II, he discusses the privileges and responsibilities of knights, and in Book IV, specifically whether a vasallo del rey (direct vassal of the king) should have privilejos militares (military privileges) if he is not a knight. Cartagena concludes, as he did in La Qiiestión, that a vassal should not enjoy military privileges if he is not a knight, because such privileges result directly from the services he provides his lord. It is noteworthy that the Doctrinal not only develops the same topics as La Qiiestión, but even discusses them in the same order, making apparent the strong relation between the two texts.

Moreover, there is a cryptic remark by Cartagena in La Qiiestión suggesting that he perhaps foresaw his elaboration and expansion of the topics presented in the Qiiestión into book form. The passage occurs at the end of a paragraph where Cartagena is pondering the onerous responsibilities of a knight, who, in his view, is always in harm’s way and close to death. He closes the paragraph saying, “Dexemosesto, que non epistola mas libro require, e aquello solo nos baste tomar que a vuestra pregunta responda” (Let us leave this, for not an epistle, but rather a book is required, and it is enough to take into account that which responds to your question). Cartagena would most likely have mentioned that he had written such a book, or even that he was in the process of writing one. I would like to suggest, therefore, that the Doctrinal was probably written after La Qiiestión, and that it is—in addition to being a compilation of laws—in many ways an elaboration of the discussion presented in La Qiiestión.

Like Santillana and the Count of Castro, the Count of Haro sought Cartagena’s expertise on chivalric matters, although his concerns were of a more general nature. Instead of asking primarily questions about legal obligations and institutional perquisites, he solicited Cartagena’s advice regarding the proper edification of caballeros. Cartagena responded with his Epístula ad Petrum

43 Unfortunately, neither the Doctrinal nor the La Qiiestión provides a definition or explanation for what Cartagena might have meant by “military privileges.”
44 The reader will note that its commentary and progression of topics make the Doctrinal more than a mere compilation of laws. For the question of “military privileges” in La Qiiestión, see Gómez Moreno, La Qiiestión, 362.
45 Gómez Moreno, La Qiiestión, 356.
46 I use the word edification here, instead of education, since it is clear that the Count of Haro was interested in caballeros building their moral character, and not simply acquiring knowledge.
Fernando de Velasco, comité de Haro, in which he proposed a course of study that focused on the works of classical authors, such as Aristotle, Cicero, and Seneca, as well as the chronicles and law codes of the realm.

Much of the Count of Haro’s purpose seems to have been tied to the Order of the Hospital of Vera Cruz (known today as La Cartuja), which he initially established in his village of Medina de Pomar to house twelve elderly caballeros (hidalgos), but then appears to have had a wider, more encompassing vision for the Order, which he joined in 1459.47 It seems that the Count of Haro was very concerned with devising a program of study that would best edify the monk-knights that were to be housed in his Order, and therefore sought the didactic Epistula from Cartagena. In addition to the Epistula, however, it appears that Cartagena had a direct role in the organization and administration of the Hospital’s library, serving as the administrator of the Hospital from 1455-6—immediately following the foundation of the library in 1455—and as dean at some point, although the exact dates for this are not certain.48 It also seems that Cartagena wrote the Constituciones, or the Rule, to be followed by the knight-monks at the Hospital of Vera Cruz. These Constituciones are found on folios 167-9 of an illuminated Castilian translation of Seneca by Alfonso de Cartagena, which formed part of the Hospital’s library. The Rule of the Order of Vera Cruz is based on the Franciscan Rule and shows the sensibilities that one would expect Cartagena to impart on the nobles of the fifteenth century—a combination of religious piety and chivalric ideals.49

In addition, Jeremy Lawrence’s study of the two inventories extant for the library (for 1455 and 1553) provides strong evidence for Cartagena’s direct participation in the organization of this specialized caballero library.50 First, Lawrence argues that the inventories represent the holdings of the Order’s

AN INHERENT RIVALRY BETWEEN LEYRADOES AND CABALLEROS?

The important contributions of Cartagena to chivalric discourse and intellectual development discussed in the preceding pages, both indirect (his translations of classical works and his histories) and direct (his contributions to the organization of the hospitaler library, and his didactic and chivalric treatises), have received only the slightest attention.55 Studies of Cartagena most often focus on his high-profile theological and political treatises, while downplaying his chivalric and didactic treatises like La Questión, the Doctrinal, and the Epistula. When such

Lawrence, “Nuevazuz,” 1075. This Hospital, much like the Military Orders, was to be an organized community that combined religious devotion and martial practice. Such communities were most often manned by secular monks, and governed by a monastic-like rule. For the martial obligations of the Order of Vera Cruz, see Lawrence, “Nuevazuz,” 1076.

Lawrence states that Cartagena’s tenure as provisor was from 1455-8, although if the bishop died in 1456, clearly an error has occurred somewhere: “Nuevazuz,” 1078. The catálogo of 1553 lists the foundation of the library as August 14, 1455: Lawrence, “Nuevazuz,” 1083. One can only speculate as to what Cartagena’s duties were as administrator (provisor) and dean (deán), since the documents do not specify. Presumably, given etymology of the word and common practice within the Catholic Church and monasteries, as provisor Cartagena would have been the head administrator, approving (i.e. “providing for”) all decisions. As deán (a shortened version of the Latin decemter) he presumably would have been in charge of a group of ten men, in this context probably members of the Chapter. It is probably the case that Cartagena started as head administrator, and then after having organized the Order to his vision, stepped down to a more subsidiary role.

Lawrence, “Nuevazuz,” 1075-6.

Lawrence argues that the inventories represent the holdings of the Order’s library, and not the personal holdings of the Count as scholars have previously maintained. Second, he draws attention to the fact that the catálogo of 1553 includes all the previous books listed in the earlier inventario of 1455, plus works previously absent.51 The new items in the catálogo of 1553 show the important role Cartagena played in the specialization of the library between Order’s foundation, with its initial library, and his subsequent participation.52 The most important items showing Cartagena’s role are item 69, his translation of Seneca’s Sermones (the final pages of which contain the Constituciones, or the Rule of the Order of Vera Cruz);53 item 148, Cartagena’s Doctrinal de los caballeros; and item 149, the didactic treatise that had originally set out the parameters for such a library, the Epistula ad Petrum Fernandi de Velasco, comité de Haro.54

THE PORTRAYAL OF CARTAGENA AS ANTI-CHIVALRIC

The important contributions of Cartagena to chivalric discourse and intellectual development discussed in the preceding pages, both indirect (his translations of classical works and his histories) and direct (his contributions to the organization of the hospitaler library, and his didactic and chivalric treatises), have received only the slightest attention.55 Studies of Cartagena most often focus on his high-profile theological and political treatises, while downplaying his chivalric and didactic treatises like La Questión, the Doctrinal, and the Epistula. When such

51These two lists, then, offer us snapshots of the library’s holdings, one upon its foundation in 1455, and the second drawn up almost a century later by the Count’s executors. Since the Count of Haro died in 1470, one wonders why his executors waited until 1553 to catalogue the books of the Order he founded.

52By specialization, I mean the assemblage of a library that would best edify and foster moral probity in caballeros, as set forth in the Epistula.

53Lawrence, “Nuevazuz,” 1094.

54Lawrence, “Nuevazuz,” 1090–1094.

55Two important exceptions to this—mentioned above—are Jeremy Lawrence, who has studied Cartagena’s contributions to the hospitaler library, and Noel Fallows, who has studied Cartagena’s contributions to chivalric discourse. In addition to Noel Fallows’s edition of the Doctrinal, see his earlier article, “Chivalric Manuals in Medieval Spain: The Doctrinal de los Caballeros (ca. 1444) of Alfonso de Cartagena,” Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies 24 (1994), 53-87.
treatises are brought up, they tend to be interpreted as anti-chivalric. For example, in a brief assessment, Fernández Gallardo argues that these texts represent a “tacit refutation of chivalric values.” Specifically, Fernández Gallardo sees La Questión as a subversion of the chivalric cause. He interprets Cartagena’s etymological exposition as a furtive attempt to steer the discussion away from Santillana’s question on milites in order to stress that Santillana and caballeros like him are vasallos del rey, that is, direct vassals of the king. Thus, Fernández Gallardo sees La Questión as a tool to get caballeros to acknowledge that their social and legal status depends solely on the king, and that they owe life-long allegiance to him, even if no formal oath has been taken. And while this may true on a certain level, it is also true that Cartagena provides a necessary terminological specificity and historical context to the discussion. After all, what would Santillana have learned about knightly oaths as they applied to him, if Cartagena had only replied to the examples of Cato the Elder and Cicero cited by the Marqués? In a very real sense the milites of Ancient Rome and medieval caballeros were different, especially in the legal sense—which was Cartagena’s area of expertise.

Also, if one looks closely, one sees that Cartagena’s discussion of medieval caballería is not as underhanded as Fernández Gallardo would have one believe. In fact, Santillana directs Cartagena to clarify the new social role of caballeros, since military campaigns are on the wane, and the nobility is increasingly of urban residence. Santillana asks,

quál e quánta sea la dignidad deste oficio de cavallero e sus prehominencias e prerrogativas: e, venido de las huestes, qué oficio sea el suyo en la ciudat.

(What is the extent of the dignity, privileges, and prerogatives of the profession of the caballero? And, having come from military hosts, what is his profession in the city?)

The context, the verb tenses, and the fact that he specifically probes Cartagena regarding the dignities and responsibilities, all indicate that Santillana is concerned with what it means to be a caballero in the fifteenth century. Santillana was well aware that the societal role of the caballero was changing, since his original military function was on the wane, and he was increasingly an urban aristocrat. If the original service component justifying the caballero’s social position was slipping away, what was left? Was it tradition, blood-lines, oaths? Given that Santillana was newly ennobled, the question of whether such oaths needed to be explicit, or whether they could be merely implicit, had important ramifications on the freedom of action he could exercise vis-à-vis the king. Thus, Cartagena’s discussion of fifteenth-century caballería is not a sleight of hand, but rather a response to a question about contemporary concerns of the changing role of the nobility.

Like La Questión, Fernández Gallardo argues that the Doctrinal is anti-caballero. According to Fernández Gallardo, this text represents an attack on the spirit of individualism, la institución caballeresca (the institution of chivalry), and the very essence of caballería. He says this because it advocates discipline, loyalty to the king, a redirection of caballero energies out towards the “real enemies” (namely the Moors), and because it represents—according to Fernández Gallardo—“una refutación del deporte nobiliario por excelencia” (a refutation of the sport of nobles par excellence), that is to say, tournaments and jousts.

Yet one should hesitate before using these criteria to determine that Cartagena was critical of the caballero aesthetic. First, I think most readers will agree that a call to discipline is to be found in most any military treatise, and is therefore not so much an attack on individualism, as it is a call for prudence. Second, Cartagena’s pleas that caballeros exhibit loyalty to the king and redirect their energies outward toward the Moors do technically represent the suppression of individual interests—if indeed one cares to agree that individualism is the hallmark of chivalry—but the specific context of such comments makes interpreting them complicated.

Cartagena poses a model wherein nobles are inherently factious and need both a king and an external enemy to direct their energies. As evidence, he cites a convincing historical example of Pelayo, the fabled king of eighth-century Asturias (a mountainous region in Northwest Spain). Pelayo became a symbol of anti-Muslim success after the battle of Covadonga (28 May 722), where he was the first Christian king able to defeat Islamic forces after their invasion of the Iberian Peninsula in 711.

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89Such interpretations are understandable since it would seem very odd that a letrado cleric should be defining caballeros what it means to be a caballero.
90This particular comment comes from Fernández Gallardo’s estimation of Cartagena’s Memoriale virtutum: Alonso de Cartagena, 376; see his similar comments for La Questión, 371–2, and the Doctrinal, 375–6.
91Fernández Gallardo, Alonso de Cartagena, 377–9. Other interpretations of La Questión have mistaken it for a discussion limited to the oaths administered to knights in Antiquity, a cordial discussion between friends, or as a lofty, theoretical treatise propounded by Cartagena.
92Gómez Moreno, “La Questión,” 347.
93As mentioned above, Santillana’s questions about knightly oaths had been spurred by reading Leonardo Bruni’s De militia (1421).
95Fernández Gallardo, Alonso de Cartagena, 380; see also 372.
Cartagena tells Santillana to "remember ... that rustic [king] Pelayo, in whom the royal polity was started ... and you will see that peace did not last long [in his kingdom] once there was no war against [foreign] enemies." Cartagena argues that this is

porque tanta es la animosidad e brio de la nobleza d’España que si en guerra justa no exercita sus fuerzas, luego se convierte a las mouer en aquellas contiendas que los romanos cidadanas llamauan, porque sobre el estado del regimiento de su cibdat le mouian, aqve vuelta despues se estendian por diversas partes del mundo; e nos propiamente fablando podemos llamar cortesanas.

(because such is the animosity and energy of the nobility of Spain that if it does not exercise its energies in just war, it begins to engage in those contests that the Romans called civil [wars], because they were referring to the state of government of their city, although later they extended themselves throughout the world; and we may [in our times] properly speaking call them courtly [wars].) 63

If there is any doubt to what Cartagena is referring, he makes it more explicit when he admits that he has "tibia esperança ... de ver en estas partidas sosiego en tanto que Guerra de moros abierta non fuere" (little hope of seeing peace in these parts as long as there is no open war against the Moors). 64

While it is true that Cartagena is arguing for a redirection of caballero energies, he does so on the grounds of establishing and maintaining peace and order. What he does not do is insinuate in any way that he is against caballeros as people, as practitioners of a profession, or even as an estate. (Indeed, as illustrated above, he promoted the profession in a variety of ways.) It was simply his conviction that un-channeled caballero energies were a major cause of the discords of his time, an opinion shared not only by most modern historians, including Luis Suárez Fernández, but many of Cartagena’s contemporaries. Indeed, Santillana, himself a caballero, was just as concerned with the strife and chaos of his day. Santillana speaks of “este tiempo así trabajoso, donde tantos escándalos, debates e bolligios son moidos, e todos dias por pecados nuestros crecen e se aumentan tanto que ya las soberbias flamas de la yra pareççe que llegan al cielo” (this arduous time [of ours], where such scandals, arguments and turbulences occur, and grow and augment every day on account of our sins to the point where the haughty flames of Ire seem to reach the Heavens). 65 While one

must acknowledge that Santillana clearly had a flair for melodrama, it is also apparent that he fully expected Cartagena to agree with his perspectives on their times. 66 All this is to say that Alonso de Cartagena, the "typical" letrado did at times share the same concerns as many caballeros. Moreover, Cartagena’s comments occur within a suggestion that caballeros aid the king against the Moors, so that they not only obtain fame and material benefits, but spiritual rewards as well. 67 Thus, Cartagena was actually advancing a form of meritorious battle (much like Urban II’s call to the First Crusade). While today few people would lend credence to such lines of argument, or find rewards in what he was suggesting, a great many people in fifteenth-century Spain would have.

Third, and most problematic, is Fernández Gallardo’s contention that Cartagena’s stance against jousts, tournaments and mock battles denotes an attack on the quintessential pastimes of caballeros. It is helpful to recall that it was the king, Juan II of Castile who was one of the largest patrons of such events. One chronicler even stated that it was Juan II’s “natural condición ... fazer justas y cosas en que reçibiiese synpre alegria” (natural state to engage in jousts and [other] things in which he always found joy). 68 Juan II was not the only royal enthusiast of jousts and tournaments; indeed, Alfonso X, Sancho IV, Alfonso XI, Enrique II, and Pedro I of Castile all partook of such events, as did Jaume I, Pedro III, and Infantes Juan and Enrique of Aragon. 69 With all this in mind, how can one possibly argue that Cartagena was against caballeros on one hand, while in favor of the monarchy on the other? Either his invectives against jousts and tournaments were an attack on both, or Cartagena was simply providing the typical curmudgeonly ecclesiastic opinion on entertainment that would have been expected of him. After all, would one really expect a bishop who was so prominent in the public eye, and from a family known to be only recent converted to Christianity to give a blood-sport his whole-hearted, public endorsement?

As with so many of Cartagena’s statements, his disapproval of jousts and tournaments and his prohibitions against the use of duels and asonadas (mock wars) to settle feuds or to decide legal disputes (he was, after all, a jurist) show

63 Gómez Moreno, “La Questión,” 351.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 348.
66 This instance would seem to complicate the notion that caballeros and letrados were widely "divergent [in] their most basic assumption, [including] the relationship between the past and the present." Nader, The Mendoza Family, 20.
67 In theory, all kings of Castile were to advance the Faith, and advance the Reconquista, as their oaths of proclamation stated.
68 Lope de Barrientos, Refundación de la Crónica del Halconero, ed. Juan de la Mata Carriazo (Madrid, 1946), cap. XIX, p. 46.
69 Infante is the Spanish term for what in English would be called a prince, or heir apparent. A term closer in semantic value would be dauphin in French.
great ambivalence. It seems that Cartagena was not against jousts and tournaments because they were unseemly, immoral, or because they embodied the "chivalric spirit"—all arguments that are conspicuously absent from his comments. Rather, he bases his stance on the notion that they create "discordias entre los que deuen ser amigos" (discords between those who should be friends) and because he finds them to be unproductive activities. It is noteworthy that Cartagena uses these same grounds to discourage the use of chivalric romances in the education of caballeros and instead advocates the use of historiography. Whereas adventures in romance fictions offer, in his view, nullius utilitis (nothing of use), chronicles offer lessons that are perutiles (enormously useful). Thus, it would seem that Cartagena was fully in favor of caballeros developing their craft, but in ways that were productive and that promoted peace and order.

Interestingly, despite his apparent disapproval of jousts and tournaments, Cartagena actually attended such events. He was part of the court that accompanied Infanta Doña Leonor of Aragon on her way toward Portugal where she was to marry Don Duarte, the heir to the throne. The occasion entitled jousts and tournaments at many points along the way, but Cartagena was certainly present at the jousting mêlée performed outside Briviesca, a town under the lordship of the Count of Haro. While there is no way to know if Cartagena cheered and became exhilarated at the display of a hundred knights jousting in their colorful garb, it is clear that he did not sit in a corner with his arms crossed in silent protest. One chronicler says in fact that Cartagena was a full participant in the festive activities. He states:

"El Obispo Don Alonso de Burgos él los Perlados y Clérigos que allí venian fueron servidos de tantos é tan diversos manjares como la Reyna é Princesa; y este servicio se les hizo todos los días que allí estuvieron; é á todas las otras gentes fué embiado de comer á sus posadas."

(Bishop don Alonso of Burgos and the prelates and clerics who were present were served as many and as varied foods as [were served] the Queen and Princess; and this service was done for them all the days they stayed there; and to everyone else food was sent to their lodgings.)

Passages in the chronicles such as these suggest that anti-joust rhetoric present in Cartagena's La Questión and Doctrina! may not be as anti-caballero as they might first appear. It is important to remember not only that Cartagena composed them at the insistence of his caballero patrons, but that his contemporaries regarded them as chivalric texts, not anti-chivalric texts. The Doctrina! quickly gained a reputation as a highly authoritative text, especially with regards to the Castilian laws that bore on caballeros. It saw broad dissemination, and in addition to the twenty-two extant manuscripts that Noel Fallows has indicated, the Doctrina! was printed twice: once in 1487 and again in 1497. Similarly, an analysis of the textual milieu of the codices containing La Questión, while not a perfect indicator of reception, suggests that the text appealed especially to readers interested in military and chivalric texts.

**CONCLUSION**

How are we to regard Cartagena? He was a slippery, ambiguous figure, and this was probably by his own design. As Fernández Gallardo points out—regarding Cartagena's Anacephaleosis, but his comment has wider applicability—"el
quehacer ... de Alonso de Cartagena no es producto de una vocación intelectual, sino del desempeño de sus funciones como diplomático y curial" (the ... endeavors of Alonso de Cartagena were not the product of an intellectual curiosity, but rather of the performance of his diplomatic and curial functions). Moreover, Cartagena wrote for two audiences, one international (high political and theological treatises, always in Latin, and favorable to the king), and one Spanish (more accessible didactic epistles and treatises on chivalry and education, usually in Castilian, and showing a sympathy toward the caballero aesthetic). He happily accepted commissions from both sets of patrons.

In essence, Cartagena was a rhetorical "hired gun," capable of writing on a variety of subjects from a variety of ideological stances, depending on the circumstances and desires of his patrons, who included both the nobility and the monarchy. This has enormous implications for how one must interpret his works. For, on the basis of his commissioned works it is all but impossible to ascertain what he really thought or felt. It is hard to say whether he genuinely sought to advance caballero learning, or if he had ulterior motives. The evidence I have presented here does, however, cast serious doubt on any argument that Cartagena intentionally put forth a stratagem intended to undermine caballeros.

Whether one chooses to see Cartagena as "guilty" of subverting the caballero estate, or "not guilty"—by way of reasonable doubt, there are deeper methodological issues at stake. At the root of Cartagena's "acccusations" may be the logical fallacy of post hoc ergo propter hoc, "after this, therefore because of this." The error is in using only the order of the events as the basis for explanation, and not taking into account any other factors. In essence, the letrado vs. caballero dichotomy has become the primary explicative tool for what happened between the two groups in professional spheres during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and has been read back a century earlier by positing the formation of these relationships in the fifteenth century. To put it differently, all decisions or actions of letrados and caballeros in the fifteenth century have come to be explained by professional rivalry between the two groups in the sixteenth and seventeenth. Thus, Cartagena, or any letrado of the fifteenth century, is assumed to have felt an innate rivalry toward caballeros, striving to eliminate them the political landscape, and subsume their interests to the needs of the "Modern State," as Fernández Gallardo insists.

As I have argued in the preceding pages, however, if one looks outside the political and professional spheres, and instead looks at cultural and literary developments, one sees what appear to be points of collaboration between Alonso de Cartagena, commonly considered the "typical" letrado, and three of his most prominent caballero contemporaries. Cartagena, far from undermining the achievements of the caballeros, seems to have joined them in important discourses aimed at solving the social, legal, and political dilemmas of the times. To clarify the terms and debates, Cartagena employed his knowledge of history, philology, and especially his expertise in law. His lucid discussions provided the means to better understand the perquisites, responsibilities, and burdens of the profession of caballería. All of these instances, when taken together, suggest that Cartagena was neither in opposition to nor in competition with the caballeros.

Far from the immense intellectual gulf and inherent rivalry proposed by Nader and Fernández Gallardo, the evidence suggests that letrados and caballeros shared interests in many cases, and were able to see eye to eye, at least through the mid fifteenth century.87 Such considerations should not be surprising, since surely some degree of mutual toleration between the two groups must have been imperative. Both letrados and caballeros were in the service of the king and both could promote his interests. While their approaches were different—the former developing and deploying legal arguments to press the king’s claims on various matters, and the latter providing military might and advice, to state it simply—both approaches and their practitioners were necessary and complemented each other. Although letrados and caballeros might very well have questioned the other group’s approach at times, maybe even writing an epistle or a treatise to express their views, one should view this as a conversation between the two groups, not as a rivalry. A conversation is not necessarily a clash.

The labels of caballeros and letrados were, and are, real categories (indeed, fifteenth-century Spaniards employed them often, but one must use them cautiously.88 If Cartagena and his knightly acquaintances do not fit our categories neatly, it is not that they were aberrant, but that our categories are too rigid. Such categories may be useful as social and professional markers, but we should not reify or essentialize them. Both letrados and caballeros were, after
all, people, and rarely do human subjects exhibit perfectly explainable or predictable behavior. Their beliefs and actions varied with their political circumstances, intellectual interests, common enemies, and even personality traits. Thus, friendships and animosities cut across these social and professional categories. Scholarship all too often leaves out this human component.

Beginning with this human component, and not a constrictive paradigm, has the potential to change how scholars view fifteenth-century Castile. Taking letrado-caballero relations on their own terms, studying the particularities of how these two groups interacted with each other during this century, and the reasons for why their relationships change over time, would perhaps allow for a new history of the century to be written, one that is richer and one where people, not constructs, are the actors.89

APPENDIX90

2. An exposition on the coronation of emperor Sigismund: Abbot of Cervatos (sent to Alonso de Cartagena), fols. 77r–78v.
3. Cartas: Fernando de la Torre, fols. 78v–87r.
4. La Questión: Alonso de Cartagena, fols. 87r–92r.
5. Aquí empieza una disputación que ovieron Abutalib moro e alfaqui e rabi Samuel judío...: Anonymous, fols. 92–101r.

1. Homero romanceado: Juan de Mena, fols. 1r–19v.
2. Comparación entre Alexandre, Aníbal y Scipión: Luciano de Samosata, fols. 20r–22v.
3. La Questión: Alonso de Cartagena, fols. 22v–30r.
4. Quadrilogo (transla. of Quadrilogue invectif): Alain Chartier, fols. 30r–47v.
5. Contra los hipócritas: Leonardo Bruni, fols. 48r–53r.

MS 4236 Bib. Nacional de Madrid (XV cen. Gothic cursive miniscule).
1. Conde Lucanor: Juan Manuel, fols. 1r–100v.

90Nader suggests that letrados and caballeros coexisted in a state of competition from the time of Enrique II (1334–79) through the reign of the Isabel I (1451–1504), with the balance tipping in favor for letrados in 1480 with the solidification of Isabel’s reign: The Mendoza Family, 24. Since Alonso de Cartagena died in 1456, however, one still wonders how accountable he was for any change that may or may not have occurred in letrado-caballero relations almost two and a half decades after his death.

91Data rearranged and simplified from the manuscript descriptions provided in Gómez Moreno, “La Questión,” 340–342, and Cárdenas, et al., Bibliography of Old Spanish Texts, 47–51. Emphasis is my own. Descriptions are not provided here for MS 13127 Bib. Nacional de Madrid, MS D-132 Real Academia de la Historia, or MS N-24 Real Academia de la Historia, since they are from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, telling us nothing about La Questión’s textual milieu in the fifteenth century.

MS 6609 Bib. Nacional de Madrid (XV cen. Gothic script).
1. *La Qüestión*: Alonso de Cartagena, fols. 1r–16r.
3. MS 7099 Bib. Nacional de Madrid (several fifteenth-century Gothic and Courtesan scripts).
5. *Tratado de las banderas y estandartes y pendones y de las armas* (a translation of the preceding): Anonymous, fols. 6r–9v.
6. *Tratado de las armas*: Diego de Valera (a rough contemporary of Cartagena who wrote prolifically on all matters chivalric and military), fols. 12r–36v.
11. *Preeminencias y cargos de los oficiales de las armas*: Diego de Valera, fols. 152v–154r.

MS hII 22 Bib. del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial (XV cen. Gothic script).
1. *Siete edades del mundo*: Pablo de Santa María, fols. 1r–46r.
3. *SUMA de las Crónicas de España*: Pablo de Santa María, Alonso García de Santa María, and Alonso de Cartagena, fols. 52r–98v.
4. *Batallas campales*: Diego Rodríguez de Almela, fols. 100r–107v.
8. *Apología sobre el salmo “Judicame Deus”*: Alonso de Cartagena, fols. 158r–166r.


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