

AN INHERENT RIVALRY BETWEEN  
*LETRADOS* AND *CABALLEROS*?  
ALONSO DE CARTAGENA, THE KNIGHTLY  
ESTATE, AND AN HISTORICAL PROBLEM<sup>1</sup>

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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*.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Earlier 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.

<sup>2</sup>Luis 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.

<sup>3</sup>Such 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 vassalry 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*.<sup>4</sup> 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*.<sup>5</sup> 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).<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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 nuncio 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 Seville, Jaén, and Córdoba.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup>

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 saboteur of the *caballero* estate. Perhaps most problematic is the

<sup>6</sup>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 “de Cartagena” because of ties to the city. In ecclesiastical circles, Pablo was most often referred to as Paulus Burgensis. As converted Jews, or *conversos*, many members of the Santa María family obtained positions within the royal court and within the Church.

<sup>7</sup>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 acceded as Bishop of Burgos in 1435 (I have been unable to determine when Cartagena was ordained).

<sup>8</sup>The last three are sees of Castile only in a special sense, being at the very southern extreme of what was then kingdom of Castile, near the Muslim kingdom of Granada.

<sup>9</sup>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 Questión* “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.

<sup>4</sup>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.

<sup>5</sup>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*.<sup>10</sup> 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 preeminencia*, *Allegationes*, and *Duodenarium*.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> The *Duodenarium* was redacted when Juan II of Navarre and his entourage of nobles took Medina del Campo.<sup>13</sup> The *Defensorium* was written as a response to a particular circle of rebels and heretics in Toledo under the leadership of Pedro Sarmiento. *De preementia* 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*.<sup>14</sup>

#### 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

<sup>12</sup>Fernández Gallardo, *Alonso de Cartagena*, 327.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>We 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 teóricos,” in *Miscelánea-homenaje a Pedro Sáinz Rodríguez* (Madrid, 1986), v. 2, 311–40. For the opposite opinion see Isabel Beceiro Pita, “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.

<sup>10</sup>For 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 Marquis of Santillana.

<sup>11</sup>By 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, these were his political and theological treatises in Latin. Cartagena and his writings have received substantial attention over the last twenty years, so modern editions exist for most of his texts.

were the leading patrons of translated classical works; and they tended to use humanistic rhetoric as opposed to scholastic logic.<sup>15</sup> In opposition to the *caballeros*, Nader places the *letrados*, crediting them with undoing the Renaissance achievements of the Mendozas.<sup>16</sup> 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.”<sup>17</sup>

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.<sup>18</sup> 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

<sup>15</sup>Nader, *The Mendoza Family*, 8.

<sup>16</sup>Interestingly, Nader considers “the picture we are usually given of class conflict between monarchy and nobility” a cliché, *The Mendoza Family*, 46.

<sup>17</sup>Related 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 Aretino,” *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 circulated 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.

<sup>18</sup>Nader, *The Mendoza Family*, 13. Jeremy Lawrence argues that humanism in Spain, unlike Italy, did not focus on philology nor did it strive towards the purification of the Latin in use. In Lawrence’s model, Spain experienced a “vernacular humanism.” See Lawrence, “Humanism in the Iberian Peninsula,” in *The Impact of Humanism on Western Europe*, ed. Anthony Goodman and Angus MacKay (London, 1990), 220–58.

experienced a one-hundred-year lull, but he also promoted the refinement of the vernacular language, that is to say, Castilian.<sup>19</sup> 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*—impoverishing 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.<sup>20</sup> Whereas in 1400 the Castilian aristocracy “owned very few books,” by 1500 the nobility “collected them with eagerness.”<sup>21</sup>

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

coyuntura crítica en la historia cultural, cuando la lectura—ya mucho más difundida entre los estamentos legos de la sociedad, a raíz de los progresos económicos, tecnológicos y pedagógicos—se ponía al alcance de una aristocracia culta, arrebatando la literatura del dominio exclusivo de los letrados profesionales y cambiando, así y para siempre, las orientaciones de la cultura.

(critical juncture in cultural history, when reading—already more [readily] diffused among the lay estates of society, [and] at the root of the economic, technological and pedagogical changes—was put at the

<sup>19</sup>Cartagena 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.

<sup>20</sup>Jeremy Lawrence, “The Spread of Lay Literacy in Late Medieval Castile,” *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* LXII (1985), 79–93.

<sup>21</sup>Jeremy Lawrence, “Nuevos lectores y nuevos géneros. Apuntes y observaciones sobre la epistolografía 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.)<sup>22</sup>

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 “*epistolas literarias*” (“literary epistles”), which contemporaries knew as *cartas mensajeras*.<sup>23</sup> 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 new 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.<sup>24</sup>

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

<sup>22</sup>Jeremy Lawrence, “Nueva luz sobre la biblioteca del conde de Haro: Inventario de 1455,” *El Crotalón: Revista de filología española* 1 (1984), 1074.

<sup>23</sup>Lawrence, “Nuevos lectores,” 86.

<sup>24</sup>Lawrence’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 Deyermond and Jeremy Lawrence (Llangrannog, 1993).

composition.<sup>25</sup> Many nobles of Spain acknowledged that their Latin was poor, and the Marquis 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).<sup>26</sup>

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.<sup>27</sup>

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,<sup>28</sup> and works by Quintus Curtius (which he entitled *Dichos morales, o sentencias de Quinto Curcio*).<sup>29</sup>

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

<sup>25</sup>Fernández Gallardo, *Alonso de Cartagena*, 53.

<sup>26</sup>Isabel Beceiro Pita, “Educación y cultura en la nobleza (siglos XII–XV),” *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 21 (1991), 575.

<sup>27</sup>Nader, *The Mendoza Family*, 138.

<sup>28</sup>Cartagena’s translations were highly prized, and when Pero López de Ayala translated the first eight books of *De casibus 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 Cárdenas, et al., *Bibliography of Old Spanish Texts* (Madison, 1977), 47–51.

<sup>29</sup>Schiff, *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 *enxemplos antiguos* (ancient examples), and learn from both the accomplishments and the *failures* of the past.<sup>30</sup>

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.<sup>31</sup> 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.<sup>32</sup> Had Cartagena been able to complete it, its significance probably would have rivaled that of the two most important medieval Castilian historiographical works, Ximenez de Rada's *Historia Gothica*, and Alfonso X's *Crónica General*.<sup>33</sup> 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).<sup>34</sup> 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.<sup>35</sup>

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

<sup>30</sup>Ángel Gómez Moreno, "La Qüestión del Marqués de Santillana a Don Alfonso de Cartagena," *El Crotalón. Revista de filología española* 2 (1985), 349. It was a standard tenet of humanism (*studia humanitatis*), that history was a form of moral philosophy, teaching by example. For the uses of history among humanists, see Albert Rabil, *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy* (Philadelphia, 1988), v. 3, 249–50.

<sup>31</sup>Nader acknowledges that "the importance of their [Cartagena and his students] innovations to historical writing is incalculable," *The Mendoza Family*, 132.

<sup>32</sup>Robert Brian Tate, "La *Anacephaleosis* de Alfonso García de Santa María, Obispo de Burgos, 1435–1456," in *Ensayos sobre la historiografía peninsular del siglo XV* (Madrid, 1970), 56.

<sup>33</sup>Both of these works are from the thirteenth century. The first was written in Latin, the second in Castilian.

<sup>34</sup>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.

<sup>35</sup>Nader, *The Mendoza Family*, 26.

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.<sup>36</sup>

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.<sup>37</sup> 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).<sup>38</sup> 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 Qüestión del Marqués de Santillana a Don Alfonso de Cartagena*.<sup>39</sup>

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

<sup>36</sup>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.

<sup>37</sup>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).

<sup>38</sup>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 caualleros* (which I discuss below).

<sup>39</sup>*La Qüestión* is reproduced in three modern editions: Amador de Ríos (1852), Penna (1959), and the critical edition that I prefer, Ángel Gómez Moreno, "La Qüestión 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. está asimesmo una respuesta que dió el Señor Marqués de Santillana a qué jur. 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 *caballeria* (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 mudança de las palabras que en muchas cosas fallaredes 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).<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup>

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 caualleros* (ca. 1444), a systematic compilation of laws with introductions and commentaries.<sup>42</sup> 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.

<sup>40</sup>Gómez Moreno, “La Qüestión,” 355.

<sup>41</sup>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.

<sup>42</sup>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 caualleros* 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 caualleros*, 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 caualleros* (Newark, 1995).

There are several indications that the *Doctrinal* is an elaboration of the topics presented in the *Qüestión*. 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 *miles*. 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 *privillejos militares* (military privileges) if he is not a knight.<sup>43</sup> Cartagena concludes, as he did in *La Qüestión*, 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.<sup>44</sup> It is noteworthy that the *Doctrinal* not only develops the same topics as *La Qüestión*, 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 Qüestión* suggesting that he perhaps foresaw his elaboration and expansion of the topics presented in the *Qüestión* 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, “Dexemos esto, 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).<sup>45</sup> 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 Qüestión*, and that it is—in addition to being a compilation of laws—in many ways an elaboration of the discussion presented in *La Qüestión*.

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*.<sup>46</sup> Cartagena responded with his *Epistula ad Petrum*

<sup>43</sup>Unfortunately, neither the *Doctrinal* nor the *La Qüestión* provides a definition or explanation for what Cartagena might have meant by “military privileges.”

<sup>44</sup>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 Qüestión*, see Gómez Moreno, *La Qüestión*, 362.

<sup>45</sup>Gómez Moreno, *La Qüestión*, 356.

<sup>46</sup>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.

*Fernandi de Velasco, comitem 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.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> 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 Alonso 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.<sup>49</sup>

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.<sup>50</sup> First, Lawrence argues that the inventories represent the holdings of the Order's

<sup>47</sup>Lawrence, "Nueva luz," 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, "Nueva luz," 1076.

<sup>48</sup>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: "Nueva luz," 1078. The *catálogo* of 1553 lists the foundation of the library as August 14, 1455: Lawrence, "Nueva luz," 1083. One can only speculate as to what Cartagena's duties were as administrator (*provisor*) and dean (*déan*), since the documents do not specify. Presumably, given etymology of the words 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 *déan* (a shortened version of the Latin *decanus*) 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.

<sup>49</sup>Lawrence, "Nueva luz," 1075–6.

<sup>50</sup>The holdings of the library doubled between these two dates, going from 79 to 160 books. Lawrence, "Nueva luz," 1079.

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.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> 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);<sup>53</sup> 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, comitem de Haro*.<sup>54</sup>

#### 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.<sup>55</sup> 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

<sup>51</sup>These 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.

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

<sup>53</sup>Lawrence, "Nueva luz," 1094.

<sup>54</sup>Lawrence, "Nueva luz," 1105. Other works by Cartagena in the library include: item 32, a copy of Augustine of Hippo's *Soliloquia*, with comments on the fly leaves in Alfonso of Cartagena's hand; item 48, Cartagena's own *Memoriale virtutum*; item 66, his *Oraçional* (concerned with "the theological, intellectual and moral virtues, and of prayer and its effects;"); item 86, his translation of Seneca's *De la vida bienaventurada* (which, Lawrence has pointed out, contains *De vita beata*, and not *De providentia* as many previously believed); and item 157, Cartagena's *Tratado de las sesiones*. See Lawrence, "Nueva luz," 1090–1106.

<sup>55</sup>Two 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.



