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The Fate of the Libraries of the Society of Jesus after their expulsion in 1767, and the Libraries of the Colleges of Córdoba and Montilla

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Introduction

During the Modern Age, the history of libraries in Spain was that of the libraries of religious orders. A good part of our bibliographic heritage from those centuries was either printed by or edited within ecclesiastical institutions: its authorship and/or its subject matter was either religious or belonged to ecclesiastical libraries. Within religious orders, the book responds to the need to spiritually form its members on the path to personal perfection, but also to the interest in providing prestige to their institution. In fact, the library is inherent to the establishment of a convent, and the development and increase of collections is closely linked to the fate of said institutions.

During this same period, the schools of the Society of Jesus experienced great developments which would only conclude with their expulsion in 1767. The founding of a school altered the social, economic, and power relations of the population where it was established. It caused changes in cultural life, since the convent generated a great demand for printed books, boosting trade and encouraging the establishment of bookstores and even local printing presses. Very few libraries of the time were able to house the bibliographic wealth of the

ecclesiastical orders, and specifically of the Jesuit colleges; not even the private libraries of large noble families or institutions dedicated to teaching and study, such as universities and academies. Furthermore, the community libraries were equipped with a much superior organisation and had library staff, and they served, in one way or another, a much larger percentage of the population than any other, performing in some ways similar functions to a public library.

The foundation of the Santa Catalina de Córdoba School began to take shape in 1553, officially taking place on 24th January of the following year. Its foundation is closely related to the profession in the Society of Jesus of Antonio de Córdoba (son of Lorenzo de Figueroa and Catalina Fernández de Córdoba, counts of Feria and marquises of Priego). Antonio de Córdoba convinced his mother and his cousin, Juan de Córdoba, Dean of the Cathedral and a rich and influential person in the city, for this foundation. He also received some financial help from the city council. With all this support – 5,182 ducats annually – the school grew rapidly and in 1561 it already had 400 students.

For its part, the Colegio de la Encarnación de Montilla was founded in 1555, although its activity began in 1558. As in the previous one, the influence of Antonio de Córdoba as well as that of San Juan de Ávila were of great importance for its creation. In this case, the main financial support came from Catalina Fernández de Córdoba, II Marchioness of Priego, who also donated the Hospital de la Encarnación from which the school would take its name.

The Libraries

We know the libraries of Córdoba and Montilla from the catalogues and inventories that were made as well as from the books that have been preserved. Most of the books identified from both libraries are currently preserved in the Diocesan Library of Córdoba (hereafter referred to as BDC).

For the Montilla Library we have a catalogue titled *Índice del Colegio de la Compañía de Jesús de Montilla* (BDC, ms. 35), completed on 20th July, 1749, just a few years before its expulsion, which gives us a faithful image of its content. The books are classified into nine subjects, each assigned a series of shelves within the library. Likewise, the entries are arranged alphabetically by the name of the book's author. Similarly, the Library of Córdoba was included in the *Índice de los Libros y Papeles que se contenían en la Bibliotheca del Colegio que fue de los Regulares de la Compañía de esta ciudad de Córdoba* (BDC, ms. 35). This is included in the inventory concluded and signed on the recto of the last folio on 18th January, 1773 by Pedro José González and Juan Moreno y Risques, commissioners of the bishop and the Royal Municipal Board in accordance with the Royal Decree of 6th May 1772 of Carlos III. It was this decree which ordered, alongside other measures related to the expulsion of the Jesuits from the kingdom, a detailed inventory of their papers and libraries. And finally, for both we have the *Índice de los libros de las casas de los jesuitas*, prepared in 1779 (BDC, ms. 109) which again includes their books arranged by the surnames of their authors.

The development of libraries, as seen in the following table, was intense during the 16th and 17th centuries, only to fall into deep decline in the 18th century. The fact that the Jesuits were expelled before the end of that century does not fully justify the decline in the acquisition of funds.

Century	Colegio de la Encarnación (Montilla)	Colegio de Santa Catalina (Córdoba)
XV	3 (0.06%)	38 (0.55%)
XVI	1,106 (23.42%)	2,674 (27.01%)
XVII	2,590 (54.85%)	2,785 (40.64%)
XVIII	464 (9.83%)	1,051 (15.34%)
Undetermined	559(11.84%)	306 (4.46%)
Total	4722	6854

[Table 1] Comparison of the number of works in the libraries of the Jesuit colleges of the Encarnación de Montilla and the Santa Catalina de Córdoba.

At dawn on 2nd April 1767, Antonio Serrano, mayor of Montilla, appeared at the College and communicated the expulsion order of Charles III to the twenty fathers and brothers of the community the Royal Pragmatics. They had to leave the building, which would be thoroughly searched. In addition to their clothes and personal objects, priests could carry breviaries, diurnals, and portable prayer books for devout acts. The procedures then began to determine the fate of the College and its assets.

By order of Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes, Minister of Finance, Municipal Boards were formed in all the towns where the Company had its headquarters. The purpose of these Boards was to understand the matter of the temporalities of the expelled Jesuits. The commissioned judge of each college, an alderman appointed by the city council, as well as the deputies and representative of the common, and an ecclesiastic appointed by the bishop or archbishop of the diocese, were to be part of this Commission. On 17th April 1769, the Council informed the Bishop of Córdoba, Martín de Barcia, that he must appoint an ecclesiastic of his confidence to be part of the Municipal Board of Montilla. On 20th April 1769, the bishop appointed the vicar of Montilla, Pedro Fernández del Villar, who, due to an accident, could not perform this function, and to replace him, the priest of the church of Montilla itself, José Pérez Cañasveras, was appointed. Martín de Barcia, despite having a Jesuit brother, was in favour of the extinction of the Company, when Charles III requested the opinion of the Spanish bishops in 1769.

To know the final destination of the books, we must wait until 1772. The libraries were ultimately sent to the public libraries of the episcopal palaces, themselves created just a year before by Royal Decree of Charles III. This 1771 decree established a series of exceptions:

- The books that had found another destination, before the publication of this Royal Decree.
- The libraries of the Colleges of Loyola and Villagarcía de Campos (Valladolid) would remain in these centres, which would become Missionary Seminaries.
- Libraries in cities with universities would receive Jesuit books.
- The library of the College of Toledo was to be used for the founding of a Seminary.

- All files and manuscripts were to be sent to the Archive of San Isidro el Real, in Madrid. Any temporary rights to such things would be classified according to the criteria of the Director of Royal Studies, the Librarians, and the Accounting Office.
- Before being sent to the episcopal libraries, a recognition should be made of those books that contain maxims and doctrines harmful to Dogma, Religion, good customs, and the regalia of His Majesty.

Furthermore, the Decree also declared restrictions, within the episcopal libraries themselves, to the access to books of Jesuit doctrine.

Regarding the library of the Jesuits of Córdoba, its transfer to the Episcopal Library was carried out immediately, along with some books from the College of Baena. However, moving the library involved more time and paperwork. First, before sending the books, some expurgation was considered necessary. But this plan for separating out the harmful books encountered obstacles in the Junta de Montilla, which, due to the opposition of the municipality, took a while to find a person capable of carrying out this task. In addition to the size of the library and the time required to review it, this task was complicated.

In October 1773, three lists of books that needed to be purged were sent from Madrid: books of rights, books prohibited by the Inquisition, and books on Jesuit matters. Finally, on 8th April 1774, Ignacio Crespo, an official of the Municipal Board, was appointed. He would, in addition to the selection, carry out the packaging and transportation of the books to Córdoba. The banned books found in the collection were delivered to Juan Moreno Ríquez, parish priest of San Nicolás de la Axerquía in Córdoba. Next, on 31st June of the same year, the shipment of the books was reported according to a document from the Diocesan Archive of Córdoba:

Monday, June 6, in the afternoon, the carts with the Bookstore and shelves will leave here; and the arrival will be Wednesday morning, because the first day will be mostly occupied with loading, according to the carter.

Upon arrival in Córdoba, it was necessary to temporarily collect the books at the city's old Jesuit College, as there was not enough space in the Episcopal Library to house the books, and work was required to expand its capacity. The Bishop ignored all the requests made from Montilla for the books to remain in the town, although in return he had to pay the costs of expurgating and moving the Library. The bill amounted to 2,063 reals and 18 maravedies.

Losses

The various vicissitudes that have surrounded libraries since the expulsion have caused numerous losses of books. We know that books did disappear from the Montilla Library. After studying the catalogue we quantified a loss of 1,862 works, 39.5% of the Library's total. We can group the losses into:

- Duplicates;
- Colourful books with numerous illustrations such as emblematic works or paintings, and books in Spanish, more affordable for the general public;
- Books of great bibliographical interest, which were probably stolen to be sold to booksellers (some have subsequently been found in national and university libraries).

Currently, the Jesuit books are preserved in the Diocesan Library of Córdoba where they can be consulted by the general public. They are described in its online catalogue, and in the Collective Catalogue of Spanish Bibliographic Heritage. They are also the subject of various investigations, and have been shown in numerous exhibitions such as *Amor a lo visible: tras las huellas de la Compañía de Jesús en Córdoba* in 2018, or *La Biblia y los humanistas: un viaje a la cultura del siglo XVI* in 2022.

What we see is that, despite the expulsion of the Order, its books live on. Whilst these books have been removed from their original home, they are able to continue providing a service to society, and facilitating reading for those who would otherwise be without access to such important books.

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