The Paso de Jaén (Paso of Jaén), 1461

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Source 10

The *Paso de Jaén* (*Paso* of Jaén), 1461

This source consists of a translation of a narrative account of this event.

Author: Pedro de Escavias?

Language: Medieval Castilian

Manuscript source: Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, 2092 (*Relación de los fechos del muy magnifico e mas virtuoso Señor … don Miguel Lucas muy digno Condestable de Castilla*), fols 66v–67v

Edition used: Juan de Mata Carriazo y Arroquia, ed., *Hechos del Condestable don Miguel Lucas de Iranzo (crónica del siglo XV)* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1940), pp. 58–9 (= HCMLI)

Select bibliography:

Barber, Richard, and Juliet Barker, *Tournaments: Jousts, Chivalry and Pageants in the Middle Ages* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), pp. 102, 164

Clare, Lucien, 'Fêtes, jeux et divertissements à la cour du connétable de Castille, Miguel Lucas de Iranzo (1460–1470)', in *La fête et l'écriture: Théâtre de cour, cour-théâtre en Espagne et en Italie, 1450–1530* (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 1987), pp. 5–32

Devaney, Thomas, *Enemies in the Plaza: Urban Spectacle and the End of Spanish Frontier Culture, 1460–1492* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), pp. 75–6, 92

Nadot, Sébastien, *Le Spectacle des joutes: Sport et courtoisie à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012), pp. 89, 115, 150, 155, 172, 246

Introduction

The *Paso de Jaén* took place on 15 February 1461 on the Plaza del Arrabal (now known as the Plaza de la Constitución), which is the main market square of Jaén, a frontier town in Andalucía, some 100 km to the north of Granada. The *entrepreneur** of the *Paso* was Fernán Mexía (1424–*c.*1500),[1] a nobleman from Jaén. Although he was not the author of the narrative account of this *paso*, he was a prolific writer of poetry and prose: around 1477–78, he wrote his best-known work, *Nobiliario Vero*, a treatise on nobility and heraldry.[2] He was in the service of Miguel Lucas de Iranzo, a man of humble Basque

[1] Sébastien Nadot, *Le Spectacle des joutes: Sport et courtoisie à la fin du Moyen Âge* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012), p. 246, erroneously states that the *entrepreneur* was Miguel Lucas de Iranzo, but this person was in fact Fernán Mexía's patron.

[2] DBE, lemma 'Fernán Mexía'.

origin who became a powerful local nobleman in the 1450s. Iranzo belonged to the same group of young noblemen as Beltrán de la Cueva, the *entrepreneur* of the *Paso de El Pardo* (1459),[3] both of whom were in the service of Enrique IV of Castile when he was still a crown prince. In 1455, a year after Enrique had succeeded his father Juan II (1405–54) as king, he made Iranzo a knight and appointed him as *condestable* (constable, a military title) of Castile in 1458, as a successor to Álvaro de Luna, a favourite of Juan II.[4] In the 1460s, however, Iranzo retired from the royal court and established himself in Jaén, from where he led several military expeditions into the kingdom of Granada in the 1460s, at that time the last Muslim-ruled territory of the Iberian Peninsula. At the same time, he became embroiled in noble factional rivalries and was eventually killed when attending Mass on 21 March 1473.[5]

The reason why the *Paso de Jaén* was organised by Fernán de Mexía in the first place was the marriage of his patron Iranzo to Teresa de Torres, who belonged to an influential Andalucian family. In honour of this occasion, which was celebrated on Sunday 25 January 1461, a series of chivalric festivities was organised in the town of Jaén over a period of three weeks, the *Paso* being the concluding event on 15 February. According to the sole narrative account of this event (see below), these festivities started on Monday 26 January on the Plaza de Santa María with a bull run* and a cane game*. The next day, they were followed by a bull run at the Plaza de la Magdalena.[6] On Thursday 29 January, another cane game was held on the Plaza del Arrabal in the presence of Iranzo at which many knights were wounded.[7] Two days later, another bull run was organised, this time on the Plaza San Juan.[8] On Sunday 1 February, a joust with lances and swords featuring twenty pairs of knights pitted against each other was staged on the Plaza del Arrabal, the square where the *Paso* would later be held. This joust was witnessed by the bishop of Salamanca,[9] many noble lords and ladies, the administrators of the town and foreigners[10] who were all seated in the stands that the town administration had constructed in the square and which were decorated with French cloth and tapestries. In front of the stands, the judges were seated on a high wooden platform also covered with cloth.[11] Other people watched from the windows or the roofs of the surrounding houses. In the evening, the tourneyers continued their fight, this time on foot with pollaxes on the patio of the newly built Iranzo Palace in

[3] See Source 8.

[4] On this figure, see Essay 1 and Sources 2 and 3.

[5] DBE, lemma, 'Miguel Lucas de Iranzo'. Interestingly, in 1468, when Iranzo had fallen out of favour with King Enrique IV, Mexía plotted with some other noblemen to kill his patron. This plan was foiled and Mexía was imprisoned for years in the Alcázar, the royal palace, of Jaén.

[6] HCMLI, pp. 49–50.

[7] *Ibid*., p. 53.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 54.

[9] Gonzalo López de Vivero (*c*.1418–80), bishop of Salamanca (1446–80), conducted the marriage ceremony of Iranzo and Teresa de Torres. DBE, lemma 'Gonzalo López de Vivero'.

[10] It is not clear who these 'estrangeros' were and if they really came from outside Castile or were simply from outside Jaén. They are mentioned in the context of the retinue of the bishop of Salamanca when they were given leaving presents after the festivities had finished. HCMLI, pp. 42, 59–60.

[11] As Thomas Devaney, *Enemies in the Plaza: Urban Spectacle and the End of Spanish Frontier Culture, 1460–1492* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), p. 76, puts it, these arrangements 'ensured that the *grandes* were comfortable and that they were part of the spectacle, as much on stage as the participants'.

the Calle Maestra; again, many participants were wounded in this event.[12] On Monday 2 February, there was another bull run in the Plaza del Arrabal, whereas in the evening Iranzo's brother[13] ordered an event involving 'correr la sortija' (running at the ring*) to take place in front of the bridegroom's residence.

Given that the *Paso* itself was held in the same space as the joust on 1 February, it is highly likely that it used the same stands and platforms as those that had been constructed for the earlier event. It was not uncommon for *pas d'armes* to repurpose an existing infrastructure, as can be seen at the Burgundian *Pas du Perron Fée* held in Bruges in 1463, which reused the lists and stands that had been set up for some earlier jousts organised by the urban authorities.[14] All the necessary elements required for classifying this particular festivity at Jaén as a *paso*[15] are present in the narrative account devoted to it: the *entrepreneur* is depicted as an enslaved knight, a common literary trope in chivalric literature and *pas d'armes*[16] with which Fernán Mexía, being a writer himself, may well have been acquainted; he defends a *paso*, a wooden bridge in this case — which may be an allusion to the *Paso Honroso* of 1434 when the 'real' Órbigo Bridge near León served as the eponymous 'passage'[17] — and invites challengers to compete under a set of rules that are explained in a letter, albeit this letter has not come down to us, unlike other Iberian letters of challenge.[18] Moreover, the whole event took place in a publicly accessible urban setting that attracted a high-ranking audience and made use of ephemeral architecture.

The actual account of the *Paso de Jaén* comes from a chivalric biography of Iranzo that was probably written around 1472–73. Works in this literary genre record the life of an important knight, in which his feats of arms and knightly virtues demonstrated on both the tournament field and in battle generally play an important role; the usual impetus to write such a biography comes from either the nobleman himself or one of his family members.[19] This form of historiographical text was popular amongst the late medieval nobility of England, France and the Burgundian lands, and the authors of Castilian chivalric biographies, such as those of Alonso Pérez de Guzmán (1265–1309), Pero Niño (1378–1453) and Rodrigo Ponce de León (1444–92), a contemporary of Iranzo who played an important military role in the conquest of Granada in 1492, may well have drawn on these earlier French and Burgundian examples.[20] The biography of Iranzo is preserved in

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[12] HCMLI, pp. 54–6.

[13] Nicolás Lucas de Iranzo, commander of Montizón, as he is referred later in the text. *Ibid*., pp. 57–8.

[14] For a discussion of this event, see Essay 3 and Sources 11a and 11b.

[15] For fuller discussion of these elements, see Essay 1.

[16] Nadot, *Le Spectacle*, pp. 170–2. For other examples of this literary trope, see Essay 6.

[17] PH, pp. 91, 400–20.

[18] Martín de Riquer, *Lletres de batalla: cartells de deseiximents i capítols de passos d'armes*, Els nostres clàssics, 3 vols (Barcelona: Barcino, 1963–68).

[19] William T. Cotton, 'Teaching the Motifs of Chivalric Biography', in *The Study of Chivalry: Resources and Approaches*, ed. by Howell D. Chickering and Thomas H. Seiler (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1988), pp. 583–609 (p. 589); see also CL, pp. 42–3.

[20] DBE, lemmata 'Alonso Pérez de Guzmán', 'Pero Niño Laso de la Vega' and 'Rodrigo Ponce de León'. For editions of their chivalric biographies that were written, respectively, in the 1430s, 1440s and 1490s, see Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, 'Una biografía caballeresca del siglo XV: *La Coronica del yllustre y muy magnifico cauallero don Alonso Perez de Guzman el Bueno*', *En la España Medieval*, 22 (1999), 247–83 (especially pp. 248–9, on the possible influence of 'Burgundian models' on the Castilian chivalric biography); Gutierre Díez de Games and Rafael Beltrán Llavador, eds, *El Victorial* (Salamanca:

four manuscripts, of which the oldest and most trustworthy dates from the late fifteenth century and is now kept in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid.

The account of Iranzo's life and deeds was probably compiled by Pedro de Escavias (*c.*1410–*c.*1485), a member of an eminent family from the town of Andújar, some 70 km to the north of Jaén. Escavias, who was a protégé of Iranzo's, not only supported his patron in his military campaigns against the Nazarí kingdom of Granada in the 1460s but also dedicated some *coplas* (poems of four stanzas of four lines) to him.[21] However, the attribution of this work to Escavias has not gone unchallenged in recent years. Although Juan de Mata Carriazo y Arroquia, who edited the biography in the 1940s, was firmly of the opinion that Escavias was the sole author, scholars nowadays believe that he is more likely to have been the overall compiler of the biography, which was based on various accounts of episodes from Iranzo's life that were probably composed by other writers linked to him.[22]

Somewhat frustratingly, Iranzo's biography goes into far less detail on the *Paso de Jaén* itself (two pages of the modern edition) than it does on the series of festivities celebrating his marriage that preceded it (ten pages). This relative brevity may well be explained by the fact that he was merely a spectator at this particular event that featured instead the deeds performed by his protégé, Fernán Mexía, whereas he did compete in the earlier ones.

In the translation of this account of the *Paso* that follows, page numbers in parentheses have been inserted for ease of reference to Carriazo y Arroquia's edition.

Translation

(58) Because so many different things happened during these festivities, it is not only very laborious but almost impossible for anyone to presume to put it all in writing, and [this] could cause anger and annoyance to readers and listeners. That is why I am refraining from explaining in detail all the other things that happened on all the other days until the festivities came to an end. Suffice it to say that they spent as much time as daylight permitted on many cane games and bull runs, one after the other.

When night fell, after everybody had received sufficient sustenance, there were many *momeries** featuring multiple characters brought to life in various inventive performances and stagings; so many different types of costume, adornments and harnesses were used in them that it was a wonder to behold. That is how they passed the time until Sunday 15 February of the said year,[23] three weeks after the wedding ceremony of the aforesaid lord constable[24] and the countess.[25]

Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1996); Juan Luis Carriazo Rubio, ed., *Historia de los hechos del marqués de Cádiz* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2003).

[21] DBE, lemma 'Pedro de Escavias'.

[22] HCMLI, pp. xxv–xxxi; Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce, *El cronista Pedro de Escavias: una vida del siglo XV* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1972), pp. 107–36; Michel Garcia, 'A propos de la Chronique du Connétable Miguel Lucas de Iranzo', *Bulletin Hispanique*, 75 (1973), 5–39; DBE, lemma 'Pedro de Escavias'; Devaney, *Enemies in the Plaza*, p. 195.

[23] That is, 1461.

[24] Miguel Lucas de Iranzo: see above, p. 200.

[25] That is, Teresa de Torres, daughter of Pedro de Torres and Guiomar Carrillo, both of whom were from influential Andalucian families.

Fernán Mexía,[26] their servant and kinsman, in his desire to serve them and to bring these festivities to an honourable end, ordered closed lists[27] to be put up in the Plaza Mayor del Arrabal and a *paso* to be held on that Sunday or the following day. He had a bridge constructed that crossed the said square and issued a letter of challenge stipulating that all or any knights and noblemen who wanted to cross the said bridge could run a certain number of courses against him under certain conditions to be determined by the judges who were there to oversee [the event].

(59) He[28] then came out on a very gentle horse covered with a trapper* of fine blue cloth adorned with embroidered teardrops,[29] [and wearing] a jousting harness*. On the saddle, there was a kind of cage with an effigy of his person[30] with a sword impaling his breast and with his hands tied with a chain. Next, out rode twelve knights to challenge him, being equipped for war with various trappers and accoutrements. On the aforesaid Sunday and following Monday, they ran many skilful courses in which many lances were broken and many blows received. The lord constable, the lady countess, the ladies Doña Guiomar and Doña Juana,[31] the lord bishop of Salamanca, the archdeacon of Toledo,[32] and all the other knights, noblemen and noble ladies were present in the stands, all gathered to honour this wedding and the festivities that accompanied it.

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[26] [Fernánd Mexía]. Fernán Mexía (1424–*c.*1500), a nobleman from Jaén, was the son of Gonzalo Mexía de la Cerda and Isabel de Narváez. DBE, lemma 'Fernán Mexía'.

[27] The word *rencle*, which is used here in the original text to describe these lists, also recurs later in the biography where it recounts another joust organised on the same square on 15 January 1462; it seems to refer there to an enclosed area in which twenty knights jousted. HCMLI, p. 73.

[28] That is, Fernán Mexía.

[29] Teardrops were a popular decorative element or emblem in Burgundian *pas d'armes*, as for example at the *Pas de la Fontaine des Pleurs* (Chalon-sur-Saône, 1449–50) and the *Pas du Compagnon à la Larme Blanche* (Le Quesnoy, 1458): see Sources 7 and 9, respectively. On the translation of 'lagrimas de Moysen' (literally meaning 'teardrops of Moses') as embroidered teardrops, see the review by René Cortrait of Juan Ruiz, *Libro de Buen Amor*, ed. by Nicasio Salvador Miguel (Madrid: Magisterio Español, 1972) in *Bulletin Hispanique*, 75 (1973), 439–41.

[30] That is, Fernán Mexía. Although the exact meaning of this passage is somewhat obscure, the explanation of it given in Nadot, *Le Spectacle*, p. 172, namely that the *entrepreneur* himself is locked up in the cage, seems unlikely.

[31] Juana Alvárez de Iranzo was the constable's step-sister. Tess Knighton, 'Spaces and Contexts for Listening in 15th-Century Castile: The Case of the Constable's Palace in Jaén', *Early Music*, 25 (1997), 661–77 (p. 669).

[32] Alonso de Iranzo, brother of Miguel Lucas, was archdeacon of Toledo.

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