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ADDITIONAL MS. 25690 is a copy of the Cronica del Cid, incomplete at the end and with some dislocation in the sequence of the text. This chronicle circulated in printed editions from 1512. The MS. is briefly described by Gayangos, who assigns it to the fifteenth century and is of the opinion that its text predates the printed tradition; but one interesting feature apparently not noticed is that among the later marginalia are several sketches. Although most of these are crude outlines, on one folio several phases can be distinguished in the drawings (fig. 1), the earliest of which are more finely executed. The latter are also closely related to the text of the chronicle in such a way as to suggest that the artist involved was aware of an alternative version of the events described at that point, possibly through a ballad.

As is well known, the legend of the animosity between King Alfonso VI of Castile and León and Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, El Cid, traces the origins of this conflict between king and hero to the assassination of the former’s brother and predecessor Sancho II of Castile at the siege of Zamora. Castilian sentiment suspected Alfonso (who at the time of the murder was himself in exile at the Muslim court of Toledo) of complicity in or ultimate responsibility for the assassination, and the legend relates how Sancho’s lieutenant El Cid obliged Alfonso to swear his innocence of any such involvement before he would accept him as his sovereign. The traditional location for the oath-taking was the church of Santa Gadea (Agatha) at Burgos. The details of the ceremony differ in the prose chronicle tradition and in various ballads on the theme. Typical of the chronicle tradition, in which the King swears on the Gospels, is the account preserved in Add. MS. 25690 (old foliation xxiii-ra-b, modern 29ra-b)

Cuenta la estoria que después de esto caugal el Rey con todas sus gentes & fue para burgos a fazer la salua. E el día que la fue fazer estando en la yglesia de santa gadea tomo el libro el cid de los santos euangelios en las manos & pusolo sobre el altar. E el Rey puso en el las manos E el cid tomole el juramento desta guisa. Rey don alonso vos venides a jurar por la muerte del Rey
...
don Sancho vuestro hermano que vos non lo matastes nun fuystes ende consejador 

dezid si 
si non 

tal muerte morades como el morio E villano vos mate & non fidalgo. de otra tierra 
venga & non sea castellano. E el Rey & los hijos dalgo Respondieron amen E dixole Otra 

tegada vos Rey don alonso venjdes a jurar por la muerte del Rey 29rb/ don Sancho mj señor 
que vos non lo matastes nun fuestes ende Consejador. Respondio el Rey con todos los doze 
caualleros Si juramos E dixo el cd si non tal murades como el morio. villano vos mate & non 
sea del Reyno de leon E Respondio el Rey amen & mudose le la color E Otra vez le conjuro 
el cd al Rey & alos fijos de algo & Respondieron Amen. E el Rey fue muy sanudo & dixo contra 
el cd varon Rudiaz por que me afincades tanto que oy me conjurades & cras me vesaredes la 
mano.

There is no reference here to the oath’s being taken upon anything other than the 
Gospels. Robert Southey’s classic translation is a reasonable rendering of the relevant 
passage:  

and my Cid took the book of the Gospels and opened it, and laid it upon the altar, and the King 
laid his hands upon it, and the Cid said unto him, King Don Alfonso, you come here to swear 
concerning the death of King Don Sancho your brother, that you neither slew him nor took 
counsel for his death; say you now and these hidalgos, if ye swear this. And the King and the 
hidalgos answered and said, Yea, we swear it.

This incident was much elaborated in ballad versions. In one romance, ‘En Santa Gadea 
de Burgos’, taken by Smith from the mid-sixteenth-century Cancionero de romances sin 
año, there is no mention of the Gospels and the oath is taken instead on an iron lock or 
bolt (cerrojo), and a wooden crossbow:  

En Santa Gadea de Burgos  
do juran los hijosdalgo,  
allí le toma la jura  
el Cid al rey castellano:  
las juras eran tan fuertes  
que al buen rey ponen espanto,  
sobre un cerrojo de hierro  
y una ballesta de palo.  

Here Smith (p. 99) sees a mixture of pagan and Christian cross-symbolism, adding that 
their significance is lost to us today. One wonders whether that significance may reside 
less in the artefacts as such than in the substances from which they are made, since the 
magical properties of iron are abundantly documented in pan-European folk tradition 
and a similar case can be made for wood. In another ballad, ‘En Toledo estaua Alfonso’ 
(Escobar, no. XXXV), the only symbolic object upon which the oath is taken is the lock, 
the material of which is not mentioned:  

en Sancta Gadea de Burgos  
allí el Rey se va a jurar,  
Rodrigo toma la jura  

i88
el la quiere razonar,  
en vn cerrojo sagrado  
le comienza a conjurar.

Guy Le Strange records that the church of Santa Gadea claimed among its treasures the *cerrojo.*

In the light of this ballad material, we can better appreciate the significance of the
drawing of an elegant cuffed hand pointing towards a lock (fig. 2), which was added to the inner margin of f. 29r (old xxiii") opposite the point in the text of column a where the oath-taking is described. The same artist seems finally to have added a sketch of a crowned head below the hand. This is, like the hand and lock, relatively well executed and uses hair lines for distinction of detail. A further, cruder, drawing of a lock higher in the same margin appears to be later: the execution of this drawing lacks the fine detail of the cuffed hand and lock, and while the latter are located precisely adjacent to the opening of the chapter which contains the textual description of the oath-taking, the other sketches in this margin lie above and below this point. Additional outline heads on this
folio and elsewhere in the manuscript appear to belong to a subsequent phase of imitative doodling. The cuffed hand seems similar in execution to that used on ff. 27vb (old xxii're), 28ra (old xxii're', where, again, later imitation can be seen in a second, outline hand), and 33rb (old xxvii're') to indicate correct textual sequence where dislocation has occurred during copying (figs. 3, 4, 5).

The absence of any depiction of a crossbow from the marginal sketches on f. 29r may suggest that the person responsible for what would have been the original form of the drawing, if my interpretation of the sequence of the sketches is correct, was familiar with a form of the story which mentioned only the cerrojo, as in the ballad 'En Toledo estaua Alfonso' rather than 'En Santa Gadea de Burgos'. It does not seem possible to date the original sketches except in as much as they must post-date the copying of the text and may be associated with the earliest subsequent textual corrector. Despite this, the drawings are of great interest for their demonstration of the creative interaction at this late date of different versions of the legend of the oath-taking at Santa Gadea, in that the prose text of the chronicle has stimulated the creation of a visual reference to another form of the story.9

1 Cronica del famoso cauallero Cid Ruy Diez campeador (Burgos: Fadrique Aleman de Basilea, 31 March 1512), BL, G.6254, di'reva (f. xxv); see F. J. Norton, A Descriptive Catalogue of Printing in Spain and Portugal 1501–1520 (Cambridge, 1978), no. 261. Among later editions is Cronica del famoso & invencible cauallero Cid Ruy Diaz campeador agora nueuamente corregida y
emendada (Medina del Campo: Francisco del Canto, 24 October 1552), BL, 593.f.2, D1r-vb (f. xxv). The text of Add. MS. 25690 is that of this chronicle tradition, but with numerous variants relative to the edition of 1512, in the form of both more and less ample readings.

2 Pascual de Gayangos, Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Spanish Language in the British Library, 4 vols. (London, 1976), vol. i, p. 587 (originally published 1875-1893 as Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Spanish Language in the British Museum). Gayangos describes it as ‘an imperfect copy of the Chronicle of the Cid, made previously to 1512, the date of the first edition’. The Latin and Spanish marginal annotations of the manuscript indicate that it has been collated with other chronicle texts; for instance, chronological discrepancies from ‘la General’ are noted.


4 The text is transcribed with regularization of word-division, & for the Tironian copulative sign, and contractions resolved in italics. The sigma-S is used on occasion for both s and z in the MS. and is transcribed by whichever is attested elsewhere in the same word. Redundant tildes and contraction signs are ignored. The Arabic chapter numbers are later additions to the chapter rubrics.


6 C. Colin Smith, Spanish Ballads (London, 1808), pp. 87–8 (Bk. iii, chs. x–xi).


8 C. Colin Smith, Spanish Ballads (London, 1808), pp. 87–8 (Bk. iii, chs. x–xi).

9 I am grateful to Dr Barry Taylor for a helpful reading of the draft of this note.