

# The ‘Discovery’ of the Parchment of the Turpiana Tower, the Plates and the First Seven Lead Books (1588–1596)

## 1 The ‘Discoveries’

On 19 March 1588 a discovery was made in the ancient tower in the city center of Granada, which had been a part of the Great Mosque complex and had to make room for the new cathedral. During the demolition a small lead box was found, which was sealed with lead and bitumen. It contained a parchment with texts in Latin, Spanish and Arabic, a piece of linen, a small bone, and ashes.<sup>1</sup> That the box would also include an image of the Virgin Mary seems a later addition to the reports about the discovery, and not found in the earliest versions. The then archbishop of Granada, Juan Méndez de Salvatierra (c. 1530–1588), gave orders to determine the authenticity of the discovery including the relics, and to interpret the parchment.<sup>2</sup>

1 In his *Información*, published in 1632, the Marquis of Estepa describes the discovery as follows: “hallò una caxa pequena de plomo, larga de un xeme, alta de dos, ancha algo mas de quatro, quadrangular. Estava betunada por dentro, y por de fuera con cierto betun grueso negro, para mayor conseruacion de lo que contenia, y el plomo rayado, para que el betun asiesse mexor en el. Dentro tenia en una tablica pintada vna Imagen de Nuestra Señora, y un lienço casero basto, a medida dela caxa, que cubria lo demas; luego un pergamino arrollado, y doblado, y dentro del un lienço, que parecia ser la mitad de vno quadrangular de poco mas de media vara de ancho, y casi vna de largo, cortado de esquina a esquina, y assi triangular. Avia debaxo vn hueso de vn coto de largo, ancho como vn dedo pulgar. El demas vazio de la caxa llenavan ciertas arenas, ò poluos como limaduras de color entre azul y nagor, que se ignora que fuessen [...]” Estepa, *Información*, fols. 5<sup>a</sup>–6<sup>b</sup>. It is highly unlikely that the image of the Virgin Mary was among the findings. According to Estepa, it had been hidden by one of the discoverers, Francisco Cano, immediately after the discovery (*Información*, fol. 5<sup>b</sup>). No reason is mentioned. However, no image is mentioned in the Parchment itself, which offers only a list of saintly remains, nor does it appear in the original report, or on the commemorative plaque in the Cathedral (reproduced in Martínez Medina, “La Abadía y su legado artístico cultural,” fig. 20, 294 [the photo is also found in Medínez Medina, *Cristianos y Musulmanes*, 185]). In the evaluation report preserved in the Archive of the Sacromonte (ASMG C 49, *Calificación*, fol. 641), Paz Maldonado offered a copy of the report describing the discovery in 1588 (copy dated 1595). This report did not mention an image either.

2 He had been archbishop since 11 September 1577. See on his life: Antolínez de Burgos, *Historia Eclesiástica de Granada*, 365–370.

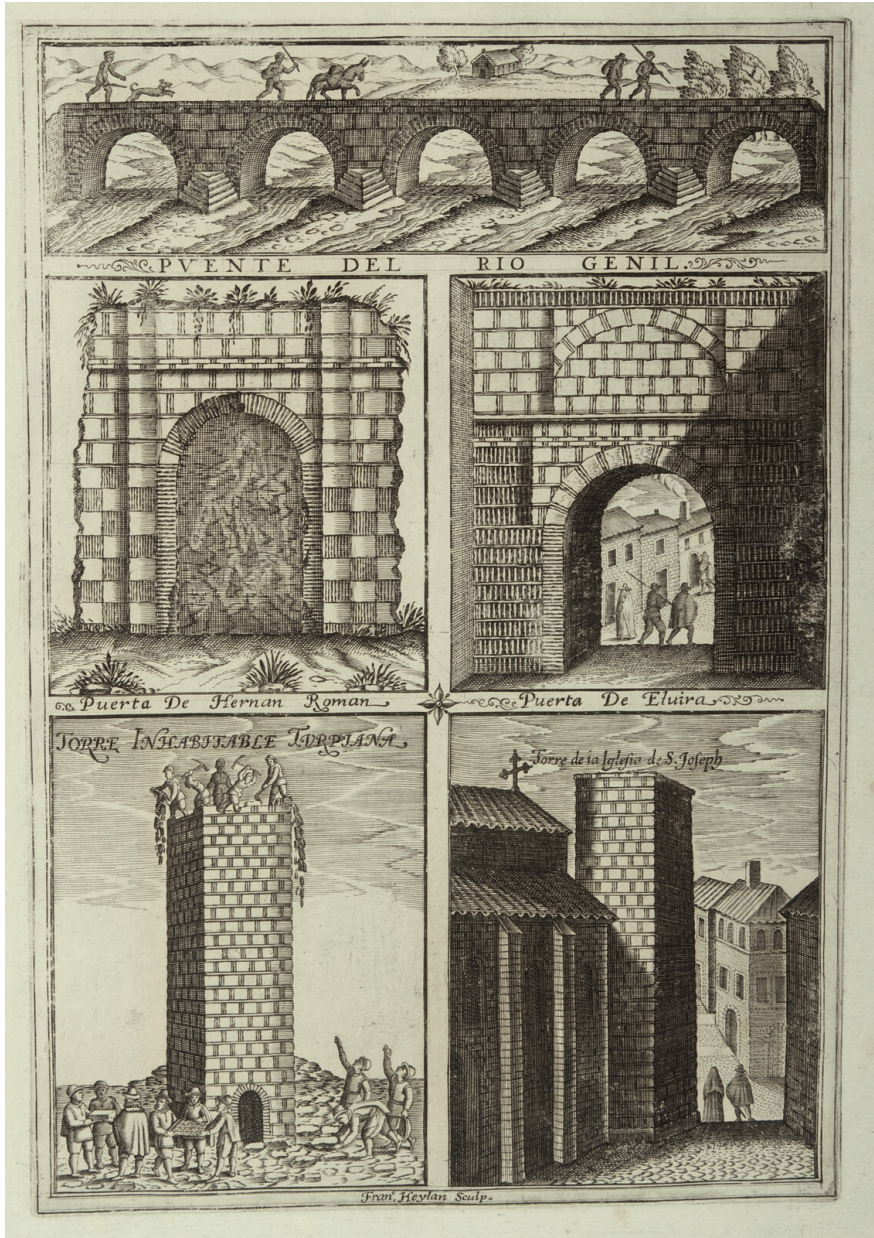


FIGURE 4 *Los cinco monumentos antiguos de Granada* ("the five ancient monuments of Granada"), left below the Turpiana Tower. Engraving by Francisco Heylan REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF THE SACROMONTE ABBEY

The first person whom we could identify as interpreter of the Arabic passages was the Granadan Morisco translator Miguel de Luna.<sup>3</sup> Luna (and the translators that would follow him) allegedly did their work independently of each other. Luna worked in his own house between 26 and 30 March.<sup>4</sup> We publish his report here as P1. In this transcription and literal translation, Luna did not translate the square below the prophecy (*çifra de la profhecia*), which “needs more study.”<sup>5</sup> He signed the document as “medical doctor, inhabitant of Granada, interpreter of the Arabic language” (*medico vezino de Granada, intérprete de lengua araviga*) and declared that he worked in the service of Archbishop Juan Méndez de Salvatierra, and in the presence of the licenciante José Fajardo, a former professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Salamanca, who had himself declined to do the interpretation but had recommended Luna.<sup>6</sup> Also involved, but at a later stage, around June 1588, was the licenciante Francisco López Tamarid, first prebendary of the Cathedral, royal interpreter and interpreter for the Inquisition.<sup>7</sup>

A second interpretation was done by Alonso del Castillo between 2 and 5 April 1588.<sup>8</sup> Both men had been active as Arabic interpreters for some years. Let us briefly introduce them.

Miguel de Luna was born in Granada in 1552.<sup>9</sup> His family originated in the city of Baeza and they considered themselves descendants of Mudejars who

3 The result is found in our document P1. This document is in fact the earliest we are aware of in which a partial transcription of the Arabic passages of the parchment is offered. It is not clear what was the role of Francisco López Tamarid, a familiar and interpreter for the Inquisition in the Kingdom of Granada, probably himself a Morisco. See on him Wieggers, “The ‘Old’ or ‘Turpiana’ Tower in Granada and its Relics according to Aḥmad b. Qāsim al-Ḥajārī,” Harris, *From Muslim to Christian Granada*, 152–157. Harris argues that Tamarid may well have been one of the forgers, see also García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, 124–130, and Caro Baroja, *Las falsificaciones*, 119.

4 Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 24. According to Boyano Guerra, “En busca del original,” 126 n. 16, the text is also preserved in ASMG, Leg III (caja) s.f.

5 P1, fol. 407<sup>b</sup>.

6 P1, fol. 407<sup>a</sup>. See on Fajardo and the Parchment: García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, 171.

7 ASMG, Leg. v, fol. 24 ff., translation of parts of the Parchment by López Tamarid, dated 25 June 1588; García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, 171; Harris, *From Muslim to Christian Granada*, 154.

8 Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 26; Boyano, “En busca del original,” 126 n. 15, mentions a copy signed by both Luna and Castillo in ASMG, Leg. 244. In addition we find a translation by Luna and Castillo in MS 5785, BNE, fols. 156<sup>b</sup>–162<sup>b</sup> (see on this manuscript Wieggers, “The ‘Old’ or ‘Turpiana’ Tower in Granada”).

9 ARCG, leg. 2432-14, fol. 296<sup>a</sup>, which includes a translation of LP4. On 18 February 1596, he tells the notary that he is 43 years old.

had converted out of free will, i.e., they were so-called Old Moriscos (*moriscos antiguos*). For this reason, they were probably exempted from being expelled to Castile along with many other Granadan Moriscos after the uprising in the Alpujarras between 1568 and 1571. Be that as it may, Luna read medicine at the University of Granada and lived in that city as a practicing doctor. He belonged to the parish of San Miguel and possessed a garden at the foot of the Valparaíso hillock for more than 25 years, i.e., from 1570 onwards.<sup>10</sup> Luna married an Old Christian woman, Maria de Veráztegui. They had at least two sons, Alonso and Juanico. We do not know much about Miguel de Luna's life before the discovery of the Parchment and the Lead Books.<sup>11</sup> We have seen that he owned the said carmen. He is also known to have been active in translating documents related to the revolt of the Moriscos (he suggests that his work in this respect had been useful to the king) and had done the same with regard to letters of the Moroccan king.<sup>12</sup> In this letter to the king, dated 1584, he offered his services. The response was negative, perhaps also as a result of negative advice by his coreligionist and Granadan Morisco translator Alonso del Castillo, who wrote the king saying that since Luna belonged to those of the *contrabando* (i.e., Luna's political and religious loyalties were not to be relied upon), it could be hazardous to allow him to travel to Morocco. Castillo and Luna do not seem to have been on a very friendly footing.<sup>13</sup>

The first datum we have about Luna's involvement in the Lead Books is that he worked on the translation of Arabic passages of the Parchment of the Torre Turpiana in March 1588, as can be seen from the autograph document, P1. In search for tools he asked the king in these years to be able to consult al-Jawharī's dictionary extant in the Library of El Escorial.<sup>14</sup>

He translated several medical treatises and in 1592 sent a letter to the king about the hygienic advantages of the use of baths, the *Tratado de los baños* (Treatise about Baths). In it he mentioned the Prophecy of John and the commentary on it in the Parchment as a text which was meant to come to light in this period because it alludes to the French disease and to a divine intervention which would remedy it in this time and age.<sup>15</sup> Thus, he presented it as completely authentic.

10 ASMG, C 49, fol. 31aff.

11 García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, 166 ff.

12 García-Arenal, "Miguel de Luna y los Moriscos de Toledo: 'No ay mejor moro,'" 253–262, esp. 256.

13 Boyano, "En busca del original," 140.

14 Archivo y Biblioteca de Zabálburu, Altamira, Carpeta 161, GD 5, D 125.

15 See our P5, beyt 5, in Luna's interpretation. See the edition of this treatise in García-Arenal

In the same year Luna published the first part of his soon very successful and popular pseudo-historical work *Historia Verdadera del Rey don Rodrigo* (The True History of King Don Rodrigo). We do not know when he began this work, but he completed writing it in 1589, one year after the Parchment had been found. A second part would follow later.

The *Verdadera Historia* was allegedly a faithful translation of an Arabic manuscript extant in the library of El Escorial, and according to Luna, the Arabic original was a history written by the wise (*sabio*) alcaide Abulcasim Tarif Abentarique, “of the Arab nation” (*de nación árabe*). Luna presented Abulcasim Tarif Abentarique as an eyewitness to the conquest of Iberia by the Arabs and to the establishment of Muslim rule. Unlike the received historical records of these events known in Spain at the time, in this chronicle the Arab rulers are presented as evenhanded and mild towards all their subjects, Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Modern historians have argued that Luna’s aim was to show that Muslim rulers had presented no threat to Christian minorities and that the contemporary Moriscos had always been loyal subjects of the Spanish king and therefore deserved to be treated by the Spanish authorities on an equal basis with Old Christian subjects, in spite of their different cultural habits and their spoken and written use of the Arabic language.<sup>16</sup>

Even though Luna presented himself as the reliable translator of this eyewitness report, he was already under suspicion of having forged it in the 1590s by such contemporaries as the Arabist Diego de Urrea. Others, however, defended him.<sup>17</sup> From 1595 onwards, the year in which the first Lead Books were discovered, until his death in 1615, Luna was involved in the translation and interpretation of Lead Books and expressed again and again his opinion that they represented authentic early Christian lore.<sup>18</sup>

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and Rodríguez Mediano, “Miguel de Luna,” 226–230, the citation of the prophecy on 229. See on his medical background and medical works, Bernabé Pons, *Estudio preliminar*, x–xii.

16 See on this: Bernabé Pons, “Estudio preliminar,” xlvff., and the sources referred to by him. See on Cervantes’s playful reference to Luna in the *Quijote*, for example: Harvey, *The Moriscos and Cervantes*; García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *the Orient in Spain*, 191–193; Wieggers, “The Granada Lead Book translator.”

17 It should be noted, however, that others, such as the Granadan licenciante and attorney Joan de Faría, extolled Luna, and argued that the *Verdadera Historia* confirmed Luna’s capacities as a translator of the Parchment, see García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, 90–91; Caro Baroja, *Las falsificaciones*, 125.

18 See Luna’s authenticated official statements accompanying his translation of LP1 and LP2 in ARCG 2432-14, fols. 73<sup>a</sup>–82<sup>b</sup> from July 1595, his testimony as witness 23 in ASMG, C 49, fol. 31, and even as a witness to one of the discoveries of the Lead Books, *ibid.*, fol. 8<sup>a</sup>–8<sup>b</sup>.

The process went along with his evolving career as an Arabic interpreter. In 1588 he signed documents as “physician, inhabitant of this city [Granada] and Arabic interpreter,” which he continued to do until at least February 1596 when he signed his Spanish translation of LP4.<sup>19</sup> But in a document dated 8 July 1596 he is called “interpreter to his Majesty for the Arabic language” (*interprete de su Magestad en la lengua árabe*).<sup>20</sup> It seems very likely that he earned this well-paid position as a result of his “successful” efforts to interpret the Parchment and the Lead Books, and maybe in particular the Parchment, about which he gave a magisterial lecture in August 1595.

His ambitions to earn the position are also clear in the foreword to the king in his *Verdadera Historia*.<sup>21</sup> Already in 1588, after having done a first translation of the Parchment, he voiced ambitions in correspondence with the king.<sup>22</sup> Juan Vázquez del Mármol (d. 1615), a Latinist, paleographer and book corrector at the court, tells us that Luna, after completing his first translations in March 1588, had written to the king that he had made the best translation of the Prophecy, but that in view of the threat of excommunication by Castro he was only willing to speak personally with the king himself about it. Castillo, he said, had merely based himself on his (Luna’s) work. For that reason he, Luna, deserved at least the same salary as Castillo. Moreover, he asked the king for favors in the form of possible positions at court.

It seems very likely that Alonso del Castillo would have experienced Luna’s career and success as an interpreter as a threat to his own position. In any event, Castillo died in 1607 and in about 1610 Luna also attempted to achieve recognition as a noble (*hidalgo*), something that, if successful, would certainly have helped to save him and his family from being expelled from Spain.<sup>23</sup> But even without achieving this he seems to have succeeded in this: he, his wife (who was an Old Christian) and his sons remained in Spain after the expulsion of the Moriscos. One of these sons, Alonso, practiced medicine in Italy and lived for some time in Rome.<sup>24</sup> In 1609, Alonso was a connection between the Vatican and those in Spain who were seeking qualified translators of the Lead Books in Rome. It was in this context, as we will see below, that Marcos Dobelio came to

19 See P1 and LP4.

20 See P5, fol. 142<sup>a</sup>.

21 See Gilbert, *In Good Faith*, 203.

22 Juan Vázquez del Mármol to Archbishop Pedro de Castro, 17 June 1588, ASMG, Leg. V, fols. 24<sup>a</sup>–26<sup>b</sup>.

23 See Cabanelas Rodríguez, “Cartas del morisco Miguel de Luna,” 31–47.

24 *Ibid.* 38, Letter written by Miguel de Luna to Pedro de Castro, 4 November 1609.

Spain.<sup>25</sup> Luna died in Granada in 1615 and was buried in that city as a “good and faithful Christian.”<sup>26</sup>

But while Luna was seen by the outside world as an Arab Christian, somewhere between 1600 and 1603 he was mentioned in the Inquisition trial of Jerónimo de Rojas, a Morisco from Toledo. He is said to have told a Morisco friend from Hornachos shortly before Rojas was arrested that in the “lead leaves” found on the Sacromonte in Granada it was written in the hand of Jesus Christ that he himself said that he was not God, nor the son of God, and that God does not have a son; and that no one should be deceived, and that on the Day of Judgement these miserable Christians would be nastily surprised and when they would find that they were condemned, they would turn to Jesus Christ and ask: “Why did you deceive us”? Jesus would deny this, replying that at no moment had he said that he was God, but that they, with their Latin and their councils, had started this; and he admonished them to return to the Prophet Muhammad, and he told them that Jesus Christ had never said that he was God, but rather that he was a Prophet.<sup>27</sup> According to the witnesses, there lived no better Muslim than Luna (*no había mejor moro que él*). Luna was therefore said to have been a Muslim who, according to these witnesses, expressed his faith in the Islamic victory of the Lead Books. However, we have to bear in mind that these were witnesses who testified before the Inquisition. No other evidence of such suspicions were voiced during Luna’s life, and he was buried

25 See also the list of possible translators in ASMG, Leg. VI, fols. 373–425, in which Dobelio is mentioned.

26 ASMG, Leg. V, fol. 737, a letter from Alonso Nuñez de Valdivia y Mendoza to Archbishop Pedro de Castro discussing the “Christian” death of Miguel de Luna, 10 December 1615. The letter is followed on fol. 738 by an undated letter to Castro by doña María de Veráztegui, his widow, confirming this information. It is not said exactly where he was buried.

27 “Como en las hojas de plomo que se han hallado en el Monte Santo de Granada está scripto de mano de Jesuchristo como el mismo dixo que ni era Dios, ni hijo de Dios, ni Dios tenía hijo, que no se engañasse nadie, y que en el día del juiçio los miserables christianos engañados, quando se vean condenar yran a Jesuchristo a deçir ‘¿por que nos engañaste?’ Y el se descanter con decir que no se hallara scripto que él es Dios que el dixesse que era hijo de Dios sino que ellos con su latin y con sus conçilios lo han venido a deçir y le dirá al nabi (ques Mahoma), ‘nabi, volved por mí y deçidles a estos lo que supistes en el mundo’ y el nabi dirá como supe de la gente de verdad //41a// que Jesuchristo no dijo tal y Dios dirá que es verdad que Jesuchristo nunca dixo sino que era propheta.” (AHN Inquisición, Toledo, exp. 197-5, fols. 40<sup>b</sup>–41<sup>a</sup>). Our transcript is based on the document itself. It is also transcribed in García-Arenal, “Miguel de Luna y los Moriscos de Toledo,” 258, and García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, 187–188. See for a detailed study of the trial: García-Arenal and Benítez Sánchez-Blanco, *The Inquisition Trial of Jerónimo de Rojas, a Morisco of Toledo (1601–1603)*.

in Granada as a Christian. Four years after Miguel de Luna's death, however, a man called Alonso de Luna, claiming to be the son of Dr. Luna, was tried before the Inquisition of Granada and Murcia for Islamic heresies. During his trial he also discussed the Lead Books, and showed that he had intimate knowledge about them. We will return to this trial below.

Alonso del Castillo was born in Granada in about 1525,<sup>28</sup> and died in the same city in 1607, at the *colación* de San Miguel, at about 82 years old.<sup>29</sup> He was also buried in the parish church.<sup>30</sup> Like Miguel de Luna, Castillo had read medicine in Granada, and became involved in the translation of Arabic documents. Castillo had also studied classical Arabic with the Flemish student of Arabic Nicolas Cleynaerts when the latter stayed in Granada.<sup>31</sup> Castillo was the first to make an inventory of the Arabic manuscripts in the Escorial library and searched for manuscripts to be included in its collections in the archives of the Granadan Inquisition.<sup>32</sup> In 1566 he was appointed municipal *romanceador* (Arabic translator) as successor to Juan Rodríguez.<sup>33</sup>

Since the uprising, Castillo, who in the Arabic report of another Morisco is called Al-Ukayḥil, lived in the Albaicín, in a house that he had received from the king because of his services as an Arabic interpreter during the rebellion. Because of the good services he and his family had rendered to the king they were also exempted from the expulsion of the Moriscos from Granada to Castile in 1571. In 1582 he was appointed *romanceador de la lengua árabe* to the king. He had a brother, García, who exercised the same profession and whose work Castillo protected.<sup>34</sup> As brothers and translators they were no exception: the office of translator was often transmitted within families and across generations. Translators were active in various positions, for example in the chapter (*cabildo*), the chancellery and the Inquisition. Castillo, and also Luna, were active as translators in the service of the Inquisition.<sup>35</sup> In his last will, which he had drawn up in 1607, Castillo appointed his grandson as his sole heir and owner of the house in the Albaicín.<sup>36</sup> This grandson still lived there in 1614,

28 ACRG, leg. 2432 14, fol. 106<sup>a</sup>. In the said document, dated 23 June 1595, he states his age to be more or less seventy years old.

29 ASMG, Leg. 14E, testament drawn up in the presence of Juan Calvo Navarro.

30 García Pedraza, *Actitudes ante la Muerte*, II, 1010.

31 Van Koningsveld, "Mon Kharuf."

32 Daniel Hershenson, "Doing Things with Arabic in the Seventeenth-Century Escorial," 162, n. 7.

33 See Gilbert, *In Good Faith*, 45.

34 See Collado Ruiz, "El médico romanceador Alonso del Castillo," 476-479.

35 Gilbert, *In Good Faith*, 46.

36 ASMG, Leg. 14E.

and he in his turn was apparently excluded from the general expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain. In short, Castillo had acquired a great deal of symbolic and social capital that he was eager to protect. In his public testimonies Alonso del Castillo stated that he believed in the authenticity of the Parchment and Lead Books, as we will show below.<sup>37</sup>

Even though we will deal in detail with the contents of the Parchment below and in our critical edition, a brief explanation must be given here, restricting our discussion to the way in which the early interpreters, primarily Luna and Castillo, constructed their interpretations, based upon their own study of the sources. In very broad lines, and focusing on the commonalities between their interpretations, the picture which arises from their work is that of a Granadan bishop who transmitted a prophecy by John about the end of time. Allegedly written originally in Hebrew, it was then translated into Greek and also, for later generations, into Spanish, together with a commentary in Arabic; that commentary paraphrased the prophecy and added that its esoteric, hidden meaning would be explained by a servant of God at the end of time, when a city of the sea would possess that of the East. The said documents were to be hidden from the infidels, that is, the Moors (*mauri*)!

The first lines, written in Arabic, were interpreted as follows. Cecilio, bishop of Granada, writes in Arabic about his discovery of a prophecy, whose Hebrew original had been translated into Greek and encrypted by Dionysius the Areopagite.<sup>38</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite had added a commentary to the encrypted prophecy, which, if interpreted in the correct way, would explain the hidden/esoteric meaning of the prophecy. Caecilio had translated the prophecy into Spanish, and the commentary into Arabic, for use of the Spanish Arabic-speaking Christians.

The text of the Spanish Prophecy can be summarized as follows: The author of the fourth Gospel announces the imminent End of the World. When six centuries will have passed, the text says, because of grave sins that will be committed in the world, dark shadows will arise in the Eastern parts and will be spread to the Western parts of the world by furious ministers, by which the light of the sun will be eclipsed and the temple of his master and his faith will suffer heavy persecution.<sup>39</sup> When fifteen centuries will have passed a second set

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37 Van Koningsveld and Wieggers, "Five Documents," 217–218; ASMG C 49, fols. 431–439 (about the ancient, Christian nature of the Parchment, on 20 September 1595).

38 The author stipulates that the prophecy had originally been written in another language, and from that language translated into Greek.

39 Perhaps the perils of the temple and the maestro are references to al-Mansur's campaign against Santiago de Compostela (= the temple of the master). In the poem *In Sancti Jacobi*

of shadows will appear in the lands of “Aquilon,” and out of them will emerge a dragon whose mouth will spew forth seed that, once planted, will divide the faith into sects; and once joined with each other they will conquer the world together. From Western lands will come forth the “three enemies”<sup>40</sup> increasing their malice, and through their master they will bring sensuality, and a plague theretofore unseen will infect the world. In a tiny corner of the world the light will retreat to where it will be sheltered by the column of its stone with these miraculous signs and another that the veil will reveal; humankind and particularly the priesthood will be threatened and the Antichrist will announce his imminent coming, with which the prophecy will be fulfilled and the Last Judgment will approach when the complete truth will be announced to the world; and from the South will come forth the judge of the truth. We will return to this part of the text below, and deal in greater detail with the textual problems not addressed by either Luna or any of the other contemporary translators.<sup>41</sup>

Then follows a commentary—which basically follows the text of the prophecy and explains it to the Arabic readership—and some closing words. Then follow verses 1–14 of the Gospel of John in Arabic. In the subscript in Latin, Patricio tells us that Cecilio (*sic*), bishop of Granada, had, when his end was near, asked him to hide his treasure of relics from the Moors in a sacred place: those relics being the prophecy of John the evangelist about the end of the world, the bone (*os*) of Saint Stephen protomartyr, and the veil of Saint Mary (Latin subscription: *pannus*). There God would make them manifest. According to the Latin text, the cloth had been used by Mary to wipe her tears during the passion of her son. These words refer back to the text at the top of the Parchment.<sup>42</sup>

In order to understand the impact which the discovery made on the population, we have to turn to the traditions which circulated in Granada about its early Christian history. Caecilius was well known in Granada before 1588 as one the seven apostolic men (*los siete varones apostólicos*) who had allegedly come to Granada to spread the faith. A Caecilius cult had been instituted in Granada around 1501, the same year in which one of the parishes in the city was dedi-

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James is referred to as “Clari magistri lateri” (line 6), see Márquez Villanueva, *Santiago*, 420–421.

40 Here we make use of and follow to a great extent the wordings of the translation by Consuelo López-Morillas in: García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, 17–18.

41 We dealt with these problems in Van Koningsveld and Wiegers, “The Parchment,” *passim*.

42 The subscript by “Patricius” does not say anything about the image of the Virgin Mary, which according to Estepa had been found in the lead box as well (see above).

cated to him.<sup>43</sup> In 1584 Canon Pedro Guerra de Lorca of the Granadan Cathedral wrote his *La historia de la vida y martirio de San Çecilio y sus seis compañeros llamados los apóstoles de Nuestra Hespaña* (History of the life and martyrdom of St. Caecilius and his six companions called the Apostles of our Spain).<sup>44</sup> The protomartyr Stephen, a very important saint, was the object of veneration in the cathedral as well.<sup>45</sup> The Parchment presented itself as a historical source for the early history of Christianity in Spain and aimed to authenticate the discourse that circulated in Granada. In sections 6, 7 and 8 we will discuss in more detail the form and nature of the original text and its relationship to the Lead Book texts.

For the early interpreters of the Parchment, then, the Parchment, the relics and the ashes seemed to situate themselves firmly within the local and universal history of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>46</sup> The prophetic text was seen by the chronicler Juan Mármol y Carvajal (1524–1600) as referring to the prophet Muhammad and the Christian heretics in his day, and to Luther and other heretics in his day, and in this respect this interpretation would fit into a sixteenth-century discursive tradition which stipulated a dangerous alliance between Muslims and Reformers.<sup>47</sup> However, as would become clear much later, there were references to a built-in code in the square in Arabic. This magic square (*çifra*) resisted interpretation and raised many doubts. More-

43 Martínez Medina, *La Abadía*, 267.

44 On Lorca: García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, “Luna,” 100; Barrios Aguilera, *Fraude*, 225; García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *Orient in Spain*, 16. Manuscript BNE MS 1499, a treatise by Lorca on Granada’s ecclesiastical history, is also to be found in ASMG MS C 48 (see Alonso, *Los apócrifos del Sacromonte*, 54 n. 42). Martínez Medina, *Cristianos y Musulmanes*, publishes excerpts from his work (apéndice I, 467–470).

45 It is interesting to note the existence of a connection between Arabic and Stephen before the sixteenth century. The medieval Iberian iconography of Saint Stephen depicts him in relation to Hebrew and Arabic, as can be seen from Jaume Serra’s Retablo of St. Stephen (ca. 1385, Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya), which depicts him buried in a tomb with a pseudo-Arabic inscription on it, but also shows him in a debate with Jews holding pseudo-Hebrew books in their hands and with Muslims, who hold pseudo-Arabic books. See Glazer-Eytan, “*The Spirit of The Letters*. The Hebrew Inscription in Bermejo’s Pietat Revisited.”

46 ADCF, R7C parte 1, fol. 278<sup>a</sup> ff. discusses the entire process of evaluation through the eyes of the Sacromonte authorities.

47 On Mármol’s identification: see Castillo Fernández, *Entre Granada y el Maghreb*, 511; Tinsley, *History and Polemics in the French Reformation*; Geddes, *Miscellaneous tracts*, vol. 1, London, 1730, 345–383, esp. 352, explains that the “‘three enemies in the West’ in the Prophecy are Dr Egidio, Dr. Constantino, Dr. Cazala, all burnt in Spain for being Protestants, in the beginning of Philip II.” Indeed, these three prominent figures were burnt at the stake in 1559/1560 in Spain for being heretics.

over, according to the critics, the conceptual framework of the commentary in Arabic betrayed Islamic notions which seemed to indicate that the document could not be ancient nor Christian. It speaks about the esteemed Gospel (Arabic: *al-injil al-'azīz*), an expression strongly reminiscent of the Quranic term *al-qur'ān al-'azīz*. Another interesting element is the use of the name 'Īsā b. Maryam, the Quranic name of Jesus, while the common name of Jesus among Arabic-speaking Christians was Yasū'. If we assume that the anonymous author wished to convince his readers that Cecilio was a Catholic Christian, he had made a few mistakes and had to do some explaining. Two other important elements which drew attention were, as we will see, the use of Spanish and Arabic, in addition to Latin, which resulted in severe criticism from many scholars, since neither Spanish nor Arabic was known to have existed in the first century CE.

As we have seen above, we are not certain whether the earliest independent translation attributed to Alonso del Castillo was really done by him, but fortunately we possess a transcription by Castillo which is dated only slightly later, i.e., 22 June 1588, a few weeks after the unexpected death of the archbishop of Granada, Juan Méndez de Salvatierra, on 24 May 1588. We are dealing in fact with a faithful copy of the Turpiana Parchment, which was sent to Philip II and is still preserved in the library of El Escorial today. The Escorial version of the parchment is one of at least two faithful copies of the Parchment which were apparently drawn up for such official use.<sup>48</sup> In our edition of the Escorial manuscript (P2), we have inserted in the footnotes references to Luna's version of March 1588 (P1).<sup>49</sup>

After the death of Méndez de Salvatierra in 1588 the process of evaluation came to a halt and was resumed only when the new archbishop of Granada took up his duties on 6 May 1590.<sup>50</sup> The name of the new archbishop, who would play a crucial role in the defense of the Parchment, the Lead Books, and the relics as authentic Christian lore, was Pedro de Castro Vaca y Quiñones (1543–1623). Pedro de Castro was president of the Real Chancillería de Valladolid at the time of his appointment, but before that had served in various functions in Granada. In 1562 Castro had been appointed custodian of the Royal Chapel and the chapel of the Holy Martyrs.<sup>51</sup> He was well known, therefore, among the Granadan population and he knew the city well.

48 The other is kept in the ARCG, Caja 2432 pieza 4. The parchment is heavily damaged and lacunar.

49 See also Van Koningsveld and Wiegers, "The Parchment of the 'Torre Turpiana.'"

50 Alonso, *Los apócrifos del Sacromonte*, 43.

51 Visitador de la Capilla Real, con la de los Santos Mártires.



FIGURE 5  
Portrait of Archbishop Pedro de Castro Vaca y Quiñones, one of the lead tablets in his hands. Oil painting in the Sacromonte Abbey  
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF THE SACROMONTE ABBEY

Between 1588 and 1595 the work on the Parchment and the relics continued at a slow pace. In agreement with the rules established at the Council of Trent, the authentication of relics was a matter for local churches, whereas documents had to be submitted to Rome for evaluation. One of the signs that the work continued is a study by Alonso del Castillo and Miguel de Luna preserved in MS B 2 of the Archive of the Sacromonte de Granada, a detailed study which included the commentary in Arabic of the Parchment and which is dated 5 April 1592 (see P3).

In 1595 the scenery changed completely when another series of discoveries, this time not in the center of the city but on a hill at the outskirts, began to occur. On 21 February 1595 a treasure hunter, Sebastián López, a native of Jaén, discovered a lead plaque in Latin in one of the caves of Mount Valparaíso. According to some sources, Sebastián López had hoped to find a lost treasure of the Visigothic King Roderic, hidden before the invasion of the Arabs in 711. He had allegedly learned about this lost treasure through a Morisco book writ-

ten in Arabic that had come into his possession after the death of an infantry captain from Seville, who had acquired it when he had served in Granada as a soldier during the revolt of the Alpujarras.<sup>52</sup> The lead plaque he discovered (our document L1) appeared to commemorate the martyr's death of Saint Mesiton, one of the apostolic men.

On 21 March 1595 a lead plaque commemorating the death of another apostolic man, Hiscius, i.e. Hesy chius, was found (L2). In it the said Hiscius was described as a disciple (*discipulus*) of Saint James, who had suffered martyrdom in the second year of the reign of Nero together with a number of his disciples. On Monday 10 April 1595 the *Lamina of Saint Thesiphon* (L3) was found, again made of lead, and dedicated to another Apostolic man, who in the inscription is described as a disciple of Saint James who, before his conversion, had been called Abenathar, referring to his Arab name in the Lead Books, Tis'un ibn 'Atṭār.<sup>53</sup>

Then two Lead Books were discovered. On 22 April 1595 a book with a title in Latin and Arabic, *Liber Fundamenti Ecclesie* (The Book of the Fundament of the Church)/ *Kitāb Qawā'id al-Dīn* (The Book of the Fundamentals of Religion), was found (LP1).<sup>54</sup> It was allegedly written by the aforesaid Tis'un ibn 'Atṭār, the disciple of James, whose death had been mentioned in L3. James had ordered him to write down (fol. 5<sup>a</sup>) this treatise about God, the creation of Angels, and of Adam and Eve. The text refers to a "promised one" (Ar. *al-man'ūm*) without making the identity of this promised messianic figure clear. The treatise discusses sin, then Jesus and then Mary, who is described as a mirror.<sup>55</sup> Mary, the treatise explains, is untouched by sin. It furthermore discusses how Jesus went into Limbo and then rose again and is now seated on the right hand of the father in Heaven. He is to judge mankind on the Day of Resurrection. The treatise discusses Heaven and Hell as well. Sin, we are told, is atoned for in the mass. Jesus is said to have fulfilled the grace of God prefigured by the Law. Jesus's main maxim, with which the treatise ends, is: Love God and your brother, wishing for him what you wish for yourself.<sup>56</sup>

52 See for treasure hunting, Coleman, *Creating Christian Granada*, 29, 190, and the sources referred to by him. We will see below that the Morisco Aḥmad b. Qāsim al-Ḥajarī tells a similar story. See on the hunting of treasures also Richardson, *Roma in the Medieval Islamic World*, 159–161.

53 "[...] dictus priusquam converteretur Abenathar."

54 Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 62. Estepa, *Información*, fol. 30<sup>b</sup>: "debaxo de una piedra un plomo doblado, y plegado [...] y estaban dentro cinco laminas, o hojas de plomo redondas."

55 Affifi, *Mystical Philosophy*, 16, on mirrors in the works of Ibn al-'Arabī.

56 Tradition from the Prophet Muhammad, see also Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-Bārī*, quoted in Neuser and Chilton (eds.), *Golden Rule*, 103, see Mark 12:30.



FIGURE 6 The discovery of the relics on the Valparaíso Hilllock. Engraving by Francisco Heylan

REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF THE SACROMONTE ABBEY

On 25 April 1595, three days later, a book entitled *Liber de Essentia Dei* (The Book of the Essence of God), and (in Arabic) *Kitāb li-Tis‘ūn ibn ‘Atṭār fī al-Dhāt al-Karīma* (The Book of Tis‘ūn ibn ‘Atṭār on the Venerable Essence), was found (LP2). This was, again, a lead book with both a Latin and an Arabic title. The Latin title is found on the cover plate; the book was found *doblado en forma triangular* (folded into a triangular shape). Also written by Tis‘ūn, disciple of James, it deals with God’s essence (*dhāt*) in Unity (without any deficiency), or, at the end, Trinity in Unity. At the very end the creed “M is the R of God” is found (not yet the standard creed of the Lead Books, see the note at our translation).

On 30 April, a plaque dedicated to the martyrdom of Saint Caecilius (L4) was found.<sup>57</sup> It commemorates the martyrdom of Caecilius, who is described as a disciple (*discipulus*) of Saint James, and two of his disciples, Setentrius and Patricius, who had been martyred together with him. The inscription on L4 also mentions that Caecilius was the author of a commentary on the prophecy of John that “is put with other relics in the highest part of the uninhabited “Tur-

57 Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 63.

ris Turpiane,” connecting the Parchment and the relics that accompanied it to these new discoveries.

In May, 1595, near to the plaque earthly remains of the martyr Caecilius, i.e., ashes and bones were found.<sup>58</sup> These discoveries were the cause of enormous joy in the city: the earthly remains of its most important apostolic man and first bishop of the city had been found, and the story about his mission and that of James to Iberia confirmed. While here Caecilius is mentioned in Latin, the author of the Parchment, as we have seen, spelled his name as Cecilio. In the Lead Books he appears first as Ibn al-Riḏā (in LP7) and in LP8 as “Says al-Aya,” a pseudo-Arabic form for Cecilio rather than Caecilius. We will therefore henceforward refer to him as Cecilio.

On 20 September 1595 another Lead Book was found, entitled *Du‘ā’ wa-ḥirz li-Ya‘qūb ibn Shamīkh al-Zabadī al-Ḥawārī* (Prayer and amulet against all evils by James, the son of Shamīkh al-Zabadī, the Apostle, LP3).<sup>59</sup> Recorded, again, by Tis‘ūn ibn ‘Aṭṭār, on the authority of James, on the authority of Jesus, this amulet tells about Jesus’s words on the cross, his descent into Limbo and his ascent into Heaven where he is now seated at the right hand of God. The resurrection is discussed together with the expectation that justice will be done. At the end we find a discussion of the seal between the shoulders of Jesus, reading: “No God but God, Jesus spirit of God, manifest truth and sincere trustworthiness.”

On 1 October 1595 *Kitāb šifat al-qurbān* (The Book of the Form of the Mass, LP4) was found.<sup>60</sup> This is a treatise about the “best work,” i.e., the mass, written by James and recorded by Tis‘ūn ibn ‘Aṭṭār. It describes and prescribes the ritual of the mass and discusses the places where it may and may not be celebrated (for example, not in the “Land of Fear”). The priest prepares bread and water, mixed with wine. The text discusses the words spoken at the consecration of both and the transubstantiation. The believers eat the bread, but do not drink the water (mixed with wine).

*Kitāb qawā'id al-nadhra li al-Ḥawāriyūn* (“The Book of the fundamentals of the admonition to the Apostles,” in contemporary Spanish *El Libro del Catecismo mayor*, LP5) was found on 16 October 1595.<sup>61</sup> This admonition by James

58 Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 64.

59 This book has not been preserved among the originals of the Vatican and, as we will see below, we had to reconstruct the text based on, among others, the documents included in the Vatican process. Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 106, who says that it was found “en una cajita oval,” calls this discovery the first of a second series of discoveries of Lead Books. According to him, Castro first asked Luna and Castillo to translate this book.

60 Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 106.

61 The title is found on fol. o<sup>b</sup>.



FIGURE 7 The martyrdom of Cecilio and his disciples Patricio and Septentrion at the Sacromonte. Engraving by Francisco Heylan  
REPRODUCED WITH PERMISSION OF THE SACROMONTE ABBEY

to the Apostles in the land of Spain is recorded by order of his disciple Tis'ūn ibn 'Aṭṭār. It discusses the “three most important matters”: faith, baptism and good deeds. In it we find a baptismal formula by “our brother John the Apostle” (a reference to the brother of James) and the Vicar Peter (fol. 7<sup>b</sup>). The last lines of LP5 discuss martyrdom, which is “the best addition to pious works.” Martyrs are in Paradise. This passage is lacking in LP 9. The book ends with the creed: M R Allāh (as LP2 does).

The next book, *Bukā Bidruḥ al-Ḥawārī al-Khalīfa* (The Weeping of Peter the Apostle, the Vicar, LP6) was found together with LP5.<sup>62</sup> No mention is made of an author, but the work was completed at the hands of the “Arab” Tis'ūn ibn 'Aṭṭār. The short text discusses the weeping of Peter, the Vicar, because of his denial of Jesus at the time of the crucifixion. The book extols martyrdom. The earliest interpreters saw LP6 as the final part of LP5, and hence LP5 as one lead book consisting of 12 folios. However, the foliation numbering and the Seal of Solomon heading LP6 strongly suggest that it is a separate booklet.

On 23 November 1595, LP7, *Kitāb Maḥāsīn Sayyidinā Yaṣū' wa-Ma'ājizihi wa-Ummihi Maryam al-Ṣāliḥa al-'Adhra* (The Book of the Outstanding Qualities and Miracles of Our Lord Jesus<sup>63</sup> and of His Mother the Holy Virgin Mary) was found. It deals with the lives, qualities and miracles of Jesus and Mary. Written by Tis'ūn ibn 'Aṭṭār, the narrative introduces his Arab father Ṣāliḥ, and his own brothers, among whom was also (Cecilio) Ibn al-Riḍā, and his sisters. It is a book of central significance in the Lead Book corpus, as it offers an Islamic representation of a gospel text, meant to serve as an Islamic alternative to the canonical gospels. It is said to have been written with the assistance of Cecilio, perhaps also serving to enhance its authority and authenticity as an eyewitness report about the lives of Jesus and Mary. We have discussed its contents elsewhere extensively.<sup>64</sup>

62 Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 109, following Estepa, *Información*, fol. 38<sup>a</sup>, does not consider this a separate lead book, as Godoy did. Godoy, however, followed the Vatican order of the books.

63 Always written in the original Arabic as *Yaṣū'*, with emphatic ṣ, in contradistinction to *Yasū'* (with *sūn*), as usually found in Christian Arabic sources, also from al-Andalus. Only in the Parchment is Jesus indicated by his Quranic name, 'Īsā. To disguise his all-too-obvious Islamic intentions, the author decided to change his strategy concerning this name in the Lead Books, adopting its Christian Arabic form, but with a pseudo-archaic spelling added to suggest that his name was more ancient and more original than the one found in more recent Christian Arabic sources. Dobelio, *Nuevo Descubrimiento*, fol. 6<sup>a</sup> ff., comments that “our lord Jesus” is not a Christian way to designate Jesus Christ. He adds, fol. 10<sup>b</sup>, that in the *Vita* there is no reference to Jesus as the Son of God, while in the *Fundamentum Ecclesie* and the *De Essentia Dei* this doctrine is referred to only between parentheses.

64 Van Koningsveld and Wiegers, “Marcos Dobelio's Polemics.”

On 2 January 1596 was found LP8, *Kitāb Muntahā ālāt al-Qudra wa-al-Ḥilm wa-al-Sharī'a fī al-Khalīqa*, the first part of “The Book of the Ultimate Instruments of Power, Clemency and Justice in Creation” by Cecilio ibn al-Riḍā.<sup>65</sup> It starts with God, repeating passages from LP1 and 2. Then the text turns to questions asked by James to Jesus on the “Mountain of Figs” about the “most excellent creature in grace.” Then there follows the creation story based on Genesis (i.e., on the *Tawrāt*, also mentioned in the “second part of the book,” i.e., LP10), continuing with Adam and Adam’s sin (referring, without mentioning it explicitly, to LP16 and explaining that sin occurred not out of necessity, but because of God’s will and justice), turning to Adam and Eve’s offspring, and the announcement of the coming of the Blessed One, calling Jesus the best of creation and his religion victorious over the old one. Then finally it turns to Mary, who is described as being untouched by the “first sin.” The book announces that the obligations of following the guidance and the evangelical faith will be described in part two (i.e., LP10).

On 24 April 1596 LP9 was found. It is entitled *Kitāb Nadhrat al-Ḥawāriyyīn* (The Book of the Admonition of the Apostles), called at the time “El Libro del Cathecismo menor” while it presented with some variant readings the same text as LP5 but lacks some parts, as we have seen above.<sup>66</sup> After the discovery of this book, almost exactly one year after the discovery of the first one, it would take until September 1597 for a new Lead Book to be found. Nine Lead Books had appeared and were submitted to an interpretation process in Granada.

## 2 Criticism, Public Discussion and Attempts at Translation

In this period a number of critical and highly polemical works about the Lead Books (continuing the earlier criticism about the Parchment) saw the light. We will not discuss these here in detail, because none of the authors of these works on the Lead Books studied the original Parchment or the Lead Books themselves. Let us briefly mention them. The first of these was the licenciado Gonzalo de Valcárcel, who on 18 May 1595 presented his critical *Discurso sobre las reliquias* to the Council of Castile.<sup>67</sup> He based his attack on the authenticity of

65 The second part of the book is included in LP10. We see here a shift in the Lead Book to a larger focus on the role of Cecilio.

66 According to Estepa, this is a copy of the same text as LP5, lacking the weeping of Pedro passage (LP6) and “something the other texts has on the first leave, while the number of folios is less” (nine instead of twelve), Estepa, *Información*, fol. 39<sup>b</sup>.

67 Benítez Sánchez-Blanco, “El Discurso del licenciado Gonzalo de Valcárcel”, 178. This article includes an edition of the *Discurso*.

the Parchment and the relics mainly on the contradictory evidence presented by the Latin plaques (our L1–4), and apparently also had some secondary information about the interpretation of some of the Arabic passages in the Parchment (for example the passage about the Mozarabs) to which he refers in a critical way.<sup>68</sup> The *Discurso* was also the first critical writing that raised another public reply, by Gregorio López Madera, who defended the authenticity of the Parchment, including the first-century dating of the Spanish language, and the Lead Books in his own *Discourse on the plates, relics and books in this year of 1595, and the relics and prophecy which had been found in the year 1588*.<sup>69</sup> Other critical works were written by, among others, Juan Bautista Pérez, bishop of Segorbe, and Canon Francisco Aguilar Terrones del Caño.<sup>70</sup> From these early criticisms we can see that it was primarily the information provided by the Latin texts that triggered the critical responses.

In 1595 and 1596 a number of Spanish (and, on that basis, Latin) translations were made at the order of Archbishop Pedro de Castro. We find such official translations with learned notes of LP1<sup>71</sup> and LP2 done by Miguel de Luna, dated 8 July 1595,<sup>72</sup> LP1<sup>73</sup> and LP2<sup>74</sup> by Alonso del Castillo, dated May–June 1595, LP4 by Miguel de Luna, dated February 1596,<sup>75</sup> and by Castillo,<sup>76</sup> LP5 by Miguel de Luna, dated 8–18 February 1596,<sup>77</sup> LP7 by Miguel de Luna, dated 11 March 1596,<sup>78</sup> and LP8 by Alonso del Castillo, dated 12 March 1596.<sup>79</sup> LP6 (The Weeping of

68 See Benítez Sánchez-Blanco, “El discurso,” esp. 189.

69 *Discurso sobre las láminas, reliquias y libros que se han descubierto en la ciudad de Granada este año de 1595. Y las reliquias y prophecía que avian hallado el ano pasado de 1588*.

70 On Juan Bautista Pérez see Benjamin Ehlers, “Juan Bautista Pérez y los Plomos de Granada: el humanismo español a finales del siglo XVI.” On Terrones, Heredia Barnuevo, *Místico Ramillete*, año 1597 (quoting Terrones’s *Parecer*).

71 ARCG, 2432-14, fols. 63<sup>a</sup>–67<sup>a</sup> (Spanish translation and notes).

72 ARCG, 2432-14, fols. 67<sup>a</sup>–69<sup>a</sup> (Spanish translation and notes), fols. 69<sup>a</sup>–72<sup>a</sup> declaration on the texts, fols. 72<sup>b</sup>–82<sup>a</sup> (Latin translation of the preceding Spanish translations, notes, and declaration).

73 ARCG, 2432-14, fols. 97<sup>a</sup>–101<sup>b</sup> (Spanish translation and notes, and declaration).

74 ARCG, 2432-14, fols. 101<sup>b</sup>–103<sup>a</sup> (Spanish translation, notes), fols. 103<sup>a</sup>–106<sup>a</sup> (declaration about the dating).

75 ARCG, 2432-14, fols. 107<sup>a</sup>–110<sup>b</sup> (Spanish translation and notes), fols. 111<sup>a</sup>–111<sup>b</sup> (declaration).

76 ARCG, 2432-14, fols. 113<sup>a</sup>–116<sup>b</sup> (Spanish translation and notes), fols. 113<sup>b</sup>–117<sup>b</sup> (declaration).

77 ARCG, 2432-14, fols. 119<sup>a</sup>–124<sup>a</sup> (Spanish translation, notes and declaration).

78 ARCG, 2432-14, fols. 135<sup>a</sup>–150<sup>b</sup>.

79 ARCG, 2432-14, fols. 125<sup>a</sup>–133<sup>a</sup> (Spanish translation, notes and declaration). In AHN, Universidades, L. 1179, fol. 23 ff., we also find several unidentified manuscript translations of the Lead Books. On fol. 23<sup>a</sup>: “Libro de los fundamentos de la ley” (translation of LP1), fol. 27<sup>a</sup>: “Essencia de Dios” (LP2), fol. 29<sup>b</sup>: “Libro de los fundamentos,” fol. 34<sup>a</sup> (LP1): “Libro del modo de celebrar la missa” (LP4), fol. 41<sup>a</sup> “Providencia de Dios” (LP8), fol. 61<sup>a</sup>: “Libro de

Peter) is seen by the Estepa as the concluding part of LP5, and not as a separate book, but it is not included by Luna in his translation of LP5. LP3, the *Prayer and Amulet against all Evils by James*, is also missing among these translations, and is missing in the Vatican collection as well. A transcript of LP3, dated 1 October 1596, is found in the Lázaro Galdiano manuscript 149, which we will discuss below. Hence we have to assume that it was still extant at that time.

How did Luna and Castillo evaluate the Lead Books in this period? Fortunately, we are well informed. After taking an official oath of secrecy and truth in the presence of the archbishop, both Luna and Castillo declared that the Lead Books were authentic early-Christian documents. Luna stated on 8 July 1595 that the texts were old, and written in Solomonic characters that were known from other writings by Solomon among the Arabs, for example those on “natural magic” such as the *Clavicula* by Solomon and the *Ars magica*, copied by a “great scribe,” “who must have lived long before the time of the Quran.”<sup>80</sup> The script was very ancient, they both said; no one “in the last hundred years” (*sic!*, the reference is to the fall of Granada and the end of *dār al-islām*) would be so knowledgeable in theology, philosophy, and grammar that he would be capable of even forging (*fingir*) it. Castillo says that he has never seen texts similar to these Solomonic writings. He had seen texts meant for exorcism in the Library of El Escorial and in the Inquisition (he was also active as an interpreter in the service of the Santo Oficio), but they were very different. He had felt incapable of interpreting these texts when asked to. He had known others far more learned than he, mentioning among others Nicolas Cleynaerts and Alonso el Merini. The Lead Books, Castillo claims, contain words that are not be found in modern dictionaries. No “Moor” in Granada would have been able to write such texts, he added. He estimated that the texts were written between 1000 and 2000 years ago.<sup>81</sup>

The discovery of the Lead Books was the reason that the process of the evaluation of the Parchment, which had been suspended after the death of Archbishop Méndez de Salvatierra, was started again.<sup>82</sup> We have seen that L4

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las sentencias en la ley” (LP14). These translations were probably made by Luna, for the said manuscript also includes several writings by Benito Arias Montano about the Lead Books.

80 Thérèse Charmasson, “Divinatory Art,” in Hanegraaff, ed., *Dictionary*, 312–319, esp. 314; Gilles Le Pape, *Cryptography*, in Hanegraaff, ed. *Dictionary*, 287–291.

81 fol. 106<sup>a</sup>, June 1595.

82 Archivo y Biblioteca de Zabálburu, Altamira, Carpeta 161, GD 5, 110, fol. 1. This official report about the findings by Archbishop Pedro de Castro to the king, dated 14 June 1597, states, “hallado esta caxa y reliquias començaron luego á poner dificultades contra ellas. Y con la muerte del Reverendisimo Arçobispo don Juan Mendez y elección de prelado nuevo,

suggested a hitherto unknown connection between the Lead Books and the discoveries in the tower, to which L4 refers as *inhabitabilis turris turpiane*. In an address delivered on 4 August 1595 (P4) in the presence of Pedro de Castro, Miguel de Luna gave his interpretation of the contents of the Parchment and discussed its authenticity, defending its ancient Christian origins. P4 also shows that Luna, right from his involvement at the beginning of the interpretation process of the Parchment, must have been sharply aware of its orthographic, paleographic, grammatical, and lexical idiosyncrasies.<sup>83</sup> Luna was also aware of the fabricated nature of the text. That becomes clear when we see him in his lecture actually referring to his own, fabricated *Historia Verdadera del Rey Don Rodrigo* as evidence for the authenticity of the Parchment as an early Christian document. But there are other indications that Luna was aware at the time that he was not dealing with an authentic ancient document. He was also the only early translator of the Parchment who seems to have known the code of the square in which the Arabic commentary on the prophecy attributed to Saint John, contained in the Parchment, was written (see P4, P5, P6 and P7).<sup>84</sup> We will deal with this code below. His capacity to decipher the code must have given him an advantage, and may have helped him to advance his career as an interpreter, which, according to Mármol, he was zealously striving for, perhaps to the dismay of Alonso del Castillo. It is clear that his "private," "expert" views contributed to Castro's public defense of the authenticity of the Parchment and Lead Books, which only grew stronger in his later life.

Our documents P5 and P6 suggest that a collective effort to decipher the Parchment and the nine Lead Books was also undertaken by a committee of experts that had been installed by Pedro de Castro within the framework of the Brief of Pope Clement VIII *Ex prioribus fraternitatis tuae* from 15 January 1596 (P5). In that Brief, quoted in P5, the Pope recommended the evaluation of the (material) relics, but admonished the religious authorities in Spain not to evaluate the contents of the Parchment and Lead Books themselves; and he warned

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cesso y suspendio el tratar de la uerificacion dellas hasta que despues fue Dios seruido de descubrir las reliquias del monte de Valparayso."

83 Alonso del Castillo appears to have been unaware of these technical tricks and may have genuinely believed in the authenticity of the Parchment (as well as the Lead Books) as texts dating back to ancient Christianity. See especially P3 for his attempts to decipher the commentary, dated 5 April 1592.

84 Those who had no idea of this code, such as Alonso del Castillo, remained unable to understand the commentary, as appears from his interpretations from 1592 which are included in P2 and P3.

that no discussions about these books with outsiders ought to take place.<sup>85</sup> This message was in agreement with Tridentine rules: relics were a matter left to the local churches, while the assessment of sacred writings was to be dealt with exclusively by the Vatican. We will see that the prohibition against discussing the contents of the Lead Books publicly will remain a constant factor in the entire process of evaluation.

The committee was installed on 28 July 1596 and apparently completed its work on 1 October 1596.<sup>86</sup> The members mentioned in P5 are Miguel de Luna, Diego de Urrea, Lorenzo Hernández (el) Chapiz, and the licenciado (Jerónimo) Pinto. The work of this committee probably served to support a committee of theologians that was to evaluate the doctrinal side.<sup>87</sup> The work of that committee would serve to validate the recognition of the relics to be worthy of veneration, which would indeed follow in 1600. It is very likely that this committee made use of the translations by Luna and Castillo that we discussed above, made in 1595 and the first half of 1596. This would also explain why Castillo is also mentioned as a member of the committee in some documents.

Who were the members of the said committee, in addition to Luna? First of all, Diego de Urrea. Diego de Urrea was an intriguing figure, whose original name is unknown. He had been born in Italy in about 1559, and, taken captive by the Turks at the age of five, had been raised as a Muslim. He had learned Arabic at a madrasa in Tlemcen and became an important diplomat in the service of several North African rulers. After being captured by the Spanish, Urrea converted to Christianity again, and served as an interpreter in Spain after 1591. He was appointed to the chair of Arabic at the University of Alcalá in 1593. We know that he made at least two journeys to Granada, the first between 11 July and 2 October 1596, and the second from 5 May to 16 August 1597, to work on the Lead Books at the request of Pedro de Castro.<sup>88</sup> Later he seems to have become a critic of the Lead Books, but apparently never voiced his critical views in public.<sup>89</sup>

85 P 5, fol. 142<sup>a</sup>: “y por virtud del breue de su sanctidad de Clemente octavo.” See also Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 122 and 123.

86 The first date is found on fol. 142<sup>b</sup>. It seems that at some stage of the process part of the archival materials extant in the Sacromonte Abbey were transferred to the Real Chancillería de Granada, thus causing that some documents were not preserved as a unity. We have reconstructed this particular document.

87 Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 133.

88 See also the Diocesan Archive, Mesa arzobispal, diezmo 1597–1600, fol. 5<sup>a</sup>, where his payment for travels from Alcalá to Granada and his stay are mentioned.

89 In his letter to Estepa, dated 15 February 1633, Luis de Tribaldos discussed Urrea's true opinions about the Lead Books, which he had kept to himself at the time he had translated

Lorenzo Hernández El Chapiz was a Morisco merchant who was originally from Baeza. His Arabic name, the equivalent of El Chapiz, was al-Jabbis/Chávez. He owned a large house in the Albaicín and was related to the rich Granadan Hermes family, which had settled in Pastrana.<sup>90</sup> He had a grandson, Muḥammad ibn Abī l-ʿĀṣī, who lived with him for some time.<sup>91</sup> Both grandfather and grandson were engaged in translation activities, as we will see below. El Chapiz belonged to a network of Moriscos in Castilian cities and towns such as Granada, Pastrana, and Toledo, the members of which aimed to pursue by means of (fraudulent) litigation the status of Old Christians for the Morisco families involved.<sup>92</sup>

About Jerónimo Pinto we know almost nothing. The document merely describes him as a medical doctor from Valencia. The Morisco al-Ḥajarī may refer to him when he speaks about a medical doctor from Valencia with whom he had studied Arabic, but it is also possible that he refers to Alonso del Castillo, whom he does not want to get into trouble by saying that he had been studying Arabic with him.<sup>93</sup>

The work process of the committee seems to have consisted of individual contributions by two or more members on the one hand, and a collation of the individual interpretations on the other. According to Isabel Boyano, the model that the Sacromonte had in mind was the process of the work on the Septuagint.<sup>94</sup> In spite of the Papal Brief that we mentioned above, this commit-

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them in the presence of the archbishop, in particular that he had seen many indications of “bad Muhammedan doctrine.” However, instead of speaking frankly, Urrea had “dis-simulated” (Harvey and Wieggers, “The translation from Arabic,” 65). Estepa did not agree with Tribaldos, stating that such disagreements do not appear from Urrea’s translation of the *Fundamentum Ecclesiae* (= LP1), done by him with Miguel de Luna in the presence of the archbishop. Estepa does not agree that the Lead Books contain Islamic doctrine (Harvey and Wieggers, “The translation from Arabic,” 68–69), see also Rodríguez Mediano and García-Arenal, “De Diego de Urrea a Marcos Dobelio,” and García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, 233 ff., in which Urrea’s criticisms uttered in 1596 regarding the authenticity of Luna’s *Verdadera Historia* are discussed.

90 Our hypothesis that al-Jabbis should be identified as Alonso del Castillo and al-Ukayḥil as Miguel de Luna, which we proposed in our first edition of *Kitāb Nāṣir al-Dīn* (1997), and also in Van Koningsveld and Wieggers, “The Parchment” and in Wieggers, “Alonso de Luna,” should be corrected on the basis of convincing arguments by García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano in *Un Oriente Español*, 109 ff., and later also in *The Orient in Spain*, 98 ff.

91 Coullaut Cordero, “Vida y obra de un médico morisco en el exilio: Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Abī l-ʿĀṣī (ss. XVI–XVII).”

92 Childers, “An Extensive Network of Morisco Merchants,” 150–151.

93 *Nāṣir al-dīn* (ed. 2015), fol. 7<sup>b</sup>.

94 Boyano, “En busca del original a través de la traducción. De nuevo sobre el pergamino,” 134.

tee issued some learned comments about the nine Lead Books that had been found. Each of the five members first made a transcript of the Arabic parts of the Parchment in solitude and independently from the others, and a translation.<sup>95</sup> All transcripts and translations were collated by Luna and Urrea, and the result was compared and turned into a single version with which all are said to have agreed. Then all members were asked to come up with a translation. Luna and Urrea were apparently responsible for drawing up a set of learned notes (*escolios*) which have been recorded in P7 (1 October 1596). These commentaries are found in many of the extant translations as marginal notes with philological commentaries. That it reflects the work of all interpreters can be seen from remarks such as comment 27 about the beginning of the Parchment, where it is said “one interpreter translates ‘to whom God grants His benediction.’”<sup>96</sup>

Another product of the said committee is most probably a manuscript including transcriptions of Lead Books extant in the Museo Lázaro Galdiano in Madrid, shelfmark LG 149, consisting of 110 folia, which also tells about the official authentication before notary Miguel de Muru. Most transcripts are signed by Urrea and Luna, all of them on October 1, 1596.<sup>97</sup> This is the same date mentioned in P5 and 6 as the date on which the proceedings were concluded and the report was completed. The manuscript indeed appears to include the Arabic transcriptions of the first nine Lead Books, without any evidence, however, that authors other than Luna and Urrea were involved. We assume, therefore, that Luna and Urrea were the authors (and perhaps even predominantly Luna), and that the other members were of secondary importance.

What is the relationship of this committee with the one we have discussed above, or are we in fact dealing with one and the same group? The last possibility seems the most likely. According to a document extant in the Archive of the Sacromonte, dated 22 November 1596, Castro had sent to Rome “[...] the slightly adapted versions of the first two books, signed by the five interpreters Urrea, Pinto, Hernández, Luna, and Castillo to Rome, with some notes [*escolios*] by each of them on the other seven, copies of all of them (probably the transcripts as included in draft in MS 149 Lázaro Galdiano), and the version by

95 P6, fol. 142<sup>a</sup>.

96 P7, fol. 420<sup>a</sup>.

97 According to the description quoted by Alonso (*Los apócrifos*, 129 n. 36), these transcripts are: the *Fundamentum Ecclesiae* (= LP1), *Essencia* (= LP2), *Cathecismo* (= LP5/LP9), *Vida de Christo* (LP7), *Misa* (LP4), *Oración de Santiago* (LP3) and *Libro de Providencia* (LP8). Missing from this list is the *Llanto de San Pedro* (LP6), but this due to the fact that this Lead Book was considered a part of LP5.

the same of the prose and Arabic verse of the Parchment.”<sup>98</sup> The document reveals the existence of Arabic transcriptions, learned notes (*escolios*: these are the discussions in the margins of the translations) about the first two books, and the other seven made in the context of a joint work, in which, it is clear Luna and Urrea played a major role. A full study of the activities of the committee remains outside the scope of the present study. Here it suffices to say that there exist a number of transcriptions that might be related to its activities and which need further study, but that the whereabouts of most of the actual notes which the committee is said to have prepared are unknown. In conclusion: we have been able to trace the activities of a committee which in the first phase of the discoveries occupied itself with the nine books discovered to that date and with the Parchment of the Turpiana Tower. The results of its activities were submitted to Castro and then, in November 1596, forwarded by him to the Vatican and to the Spanish Court. Further research should make clear whether these documents are still extant. There are a few exceptions. There is a mention of one draft “interpretation and glosses of the *Liber Fundamenti ecclesie* by Diego de Urrea, Miguel de Luna and Lorenço Hernandez (el) Chapiz,” but the said text itself has not been preserved.<sup>99</sup> All transcriptions in the Lázaro Galdiano manuscript and the relevant translations by Luna and Castillo have been collated in the footnotes of our edition.

98 ASMG, leg. II, no. 313, dated 22 November 1596, published in Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, 384 (1.15, commentary to 1.14) (*ibid.*, 381, “Carta de Arias Montano al S<sup>or</sup> D. Pedro de Castro, arzobispo de Granada, Campo de Flores cerca de Sevilla, 10 de noviembre de 1596”): “Esperando esta respuesta se detuvo el arzobispo sin cerrar los pliegos que tenía prevenidos para enviar al Rey, Consejo y Nuncio, y a la Corte de Roma. Viendo que no contenía cosa que embarazase su remisión, cerrólo en 24 de Nouiembre [de 1596], incluyendo en el de Roma dos libros, las versiones, algo reformadas de los dos primeros libros, firmadas por los cinco intérpretes Vrrea, Pinto, Hernández, Luna y Castillo. Con algunos escolios de cada vno sobre los otros siete, copias de todos ellos, y la versión conteste de la prosa y verso árabe del Pergamino, con Carta para su Santidad bien digna de leer y se remite al Apéndice. Y en los otros pliegos a la Corte de España, los escolios de los siete últimos libros, con la traducción concorde de los cinco intérpretes y las copias de las dos primeras Cartas, que le avía escrito el Jesuita Hierónimo Roman de la Higuera. Vna ofrezriendo hazer vna *Apología* y *Antiapología* en defensa de las reliquias. Su fecha en Toledo a 7 de diciembre de 1595; y la otra auisándole estar ya acabados los discursos ofrecidos y respondidas 55 dificultades. Su fecha de enero de 1596.” See on Jerónimo Román de la Higuera (d. 1611), García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, 195–224. This Jesuit pseudo-historian and defender of the Christian character of the Parchment and the Lead Books never studied the documents himself, however, and therefore he falls outside the scope of our study.

99 ASMG, Leg. III, fols. 487<sup>a</sup>–487<sup>b</sup> (a list of interpreters and their work on the Lead Books).

### 3 Benito Arias Montano (1527–1598)

In the period between 1592 and 1597 the Spanish scholar Benito Arias Montano (15 November 1527–6 July 1598) became involved in the Sacromonte Affair. As an authoritative biblical scholar with an outstanding international reputation, counselor to the Spanish king and his *sacerdos aulicus*, Benito Arias Montano was consulted about the Parchment in 1592 at the instigation of King Philip II himself, by Canon Francisco Aguilar Terrones del Caño.<sup>100</sup> At that time Montano saw a manuscript copy of the Parchment, very likely our document P2, the Escorial copy of the Parchment.<sup>101</sup> It had been brought to him personally by the aforesaid Granadan canon Pedro Guerra de Lorca. Montano also received the transcriptions and translations of the Parchment by Miguel de Luna, whose work he described as careful and punctual.<sup>102</sup> In a letter of 4 May 1593 to the deacon of the Granadan Cathedral, Juan de Fonseca, Montano mentions the fact that he had worked on the original document and some of the relics for some days. He did so with another person, perhaps his student, the humanist scholar Pedro de Valencia, to whom we will return below.<sup>103</sup> Montano judged the Parchment in clear words to be a fraud.<sup>104</sup> In his critical assessment, Arias Montano focuses on the historical and codicological aspects. His maxim was *no*

100 Pedro de Valencia, *Obras*, IV, 363 n. 21. On Montano see: Lazure, “Building Bridges Between Antwerp and Seville.”

101 See Cabanelas Rodríguez, *Alonso del Castillo*, 243; Alonso, *Los apócrifos*, 27, quoting Francisco Bermúdez de Pedraza’s *Historia eclesiástica de Granada*, fol. 260<sup>a</sup>.

102 “y ahora viendo el mismo pergamino original, que recibí de mano del señor Lorca, y juntamente las prefaciones, copias y traducciones del licenciado Luna, *hecha con diligencia y puntualidad*” [our italics, K-W], in: Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, 363, letter dated 4 May 1593. Montano had at his disposal also a study about the Parchment made by Lorca himself.

103 Cabanelas Rodríguez, *El Morisco*, 143, supposes that Arias Montano saw the (copy of the) Parchment and gave a first impression in 1588. See Morocho Gayo, *Estudio Introductorio*, 216, who also thinks that it is most likely that Arias Montano saw the Parchment for the first time in 1592 in Carabanchel. We will return to Pedro de Valencia below. Montano’s views were discussed by the Chapter of the Granadan Cathedral from February 1593 onwards (García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, 173, with references to the *Actas capitulares*). Lorca very interestingly quotes Luna’s views on the liberties Muslim rulers awarded to Christians (ibid., 73, and AHN, Universidades 1179, fol. 19<sup>b</sup>: “A me dicho el licenciado Luna que no solo ubo yglesia parrochial en Granada del tiempo de San Cecilio, sino tambien ubo heremita dedicada al .... sancto Anthon.” Christians prayed to the saint during a plague epidemic and the saint cured Christians and Muslims, and thenceforth the Muslim king “dexo libremente a los christianos vivir con mas libertad y ampliar su iglesia y hermitas”).

104 Morocho Gayo, *Estudio Introductorio*, 362–367.

*admitir las cosas inciertas por ciertas*, that is, to be very careful with admitting as religious doctrine writings other than Holy Scripture and opinions other than the established doctrine of the Church.<sup>105</sup> The Parchment, he says, is not truly old, and seems to be processed to make an impression of antiquity.<sup>106</sup> The Latin script is modern, and written in such a way that it looks ancient, written with a quill and not with a reed (the sort of instrument one would have expected, he says).<sup>107</sup> About the signature of Cecilio in Arabic he tells us that it is true that is written with another quill, and another letter, without *xuclas* (diacritics), so that its reading remains uncertain.<sup>108</sup> Without discussing the details of the contents of the Parchment, he situates its background in the myths of fortunetellers and those who tell fantastic stories or forgeries, such as *Testament of Christ*. He rejects the idea that the writing could in any way be connected to John.<sup>109</sup> But in addition to forgeries with a more or less “public” and clear message, there are esoteric and enigmatic ones (i.e. *disimulado estilo*), which are written in a way that he refers to as *cifra*.<sup>110</sup> Arias Montano discussed the

105 “Verdad es que la que pone por firma es de otra pluma, de otra letra y de otra forma de tinta, y el tercer vocablo de esta firma adrede puesto, no solo sin xuclas, sino sin notas que distingan las letras, por hacer la lectura dudosa y maravillosa,” in: Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, IV, 364.

106 “viejo, empero no antiguo; viejo digo usado y maltratado más que guardado y conservado, como suelen y saben hacer los que descubren cosas nuevas que nunca fueron antiguas.”

107 “empero no que imite a las que usaba quatrocientos años ha entre buenos y ruines escribientes, de que tenemos asaz muestras en nuestras libros escritos e instrumentos. La tinta negra y roja no es antigua, sino mala tinta y sin cuerpo para que parezca vieja. Escrito con pluma y no con caña, cosa que ha menos de quatrocientos años que se introdujo entre los latinos y griegos y aún estos no han dejado—digo los griegos—del todo; los árabes mucho menos.”

108 *Ibid.*, 364.

109 “Conforme a esto, estuvo aquí vn maestro de latín Mal Lara [Juan Mal Lara, a sixteenth-century Sevillian poet, K-W], que enloquecía los hombres hallando invenciones de enterar escritos que prometían tesoros escondidos. Y otro, pintor, que hinchó la tierra y los moldes de monstruos y apariencias y maravillas falsas, sin ningún provecho suyo, aunque lo daba a los impresores. El lenguaje o estilo, traducido, como se pretende, de hebraico en griego, de griego en árabigo y en español, con título de Profecía de san Juan apóstol, evangelista y profeta, que lo fue todo, no concierto en frases ni en las cosas ni en los vocablos de ellas con el decir de alguno de cuantos tenemos por verdaderos profetas, ni con el *Apocalipsis*, ni menos con el de las Epístolas y Evangelio de San Juan,” *ibid.*, 364–365.

110 It resembles “las recetas de los alquimistas y a [las] de algunos empíricos paracelsistas que, con poca ciencia, desatinan a los que siguen hasta entender sus misterios.” The Castilian language of the prophecy is modern (“el cual que se hable el día de hoy”), letter to Juan Fonseca, Deán de la Catedral de Granada. Full transcription in Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, IV, appendix 1.3, 365–366.

Parchment again in a letter dated 10 November 1596.<sup>111</sup> Because of the lack of diacritics, he tells us (basing himself on a faithful copy, probably that extant in the Escorial), the entire reading is uncertain.

With regard to Montano's involvement with the Lead Books, his first acquaintance with them was a printed report about the findings: *Relación impresa de las láminas*.<sup>112</sup> A long discussion followed in an ensuing correspondence between Montano and Castro, but nothing indicates that Montano ever set eyes on the original Lead Books.<sup>113</sup>

In a very critical and ironic letter to Castro, dated 10 November 1596, Montano argued that he was not versed enough in the Arabic language to be counted as an expert.<sup>114</sup> The letter is well known and needs no extensive comment. There is, however, one element which sheds new light on the identity of one of the persons who, as we will see, studied the Lead Books themselves. Montano mentions him in a discussion about the dearth of scholarly, grammatical knowledge of Arabic in Spain, even among the Granadan Moriscos who, he says, were mostly unaware of the grammar of classical Arabic. In this respect he mentions a certain Gonçalo de Ayala, a Granadan Morisco, who had studied medicine "according to the Latin tradition," and also spoke the Andalusian language, in which he was raised (i.e. Granadan Arabic).<sup>115</sup>

111 "El pergamino que acá tengo sacado del que se dize hauer sido hallado en las ruinas de la Torre, si es puntualmente sacado o copiado del original, no lo leerán quatro que entiendan la lengua sin variar en muy muchos lugares de grande manera, porque no solo carece de xuclas o haracas, que son las vocales (que esto no haze mucho negocio a quién está diestro en leer) sino lo que más importa: está falta de los puntos sustanciales de las letras consonantes, y por esto juzgo yo hará adivinar a los ingenios. Y viendo yo quatro interpretes, cada lo qual diría lo que le ocurría," Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, IV, 381–384 (14.4).

112 Letter of 3 May 1595 to Pedro de Castro, in: Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, IV, 370–373. The said report is found in BNE MSS 6437.

113 The cedula is published in Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, IV, 380–381. In a letter to Castro dated 5 March 1596 Montano relates that he had received a case in which "venía impromptada la lamina de figura oval, por ambas fazes." A letter by the Sacromonte canon Medina Conde, which speaks about an "Oración de Santiago." This suggests that we are dealing with the first folio of LP3, see Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, IV, 379, note 97.

114 Published in Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, IV, 381–384. He speaks about "tan qualificados qualificadores, quantos en esta corte se nombran, los quales refiere vs auer dado todos conformes a su Parecer o censura; diziendo parecerles dotrina reuelada y dittada por el Espíritu Santo, y que sería muy vtil a la Iglesia que su Santidad mandasse escribirla, y que estirpa todas las heregías de nuestros tiempos, y que otras cosas de mucha importancia," while in other letters he stated his conviction that the Lead Books were fabrications.

115 "Es verdad que yo tengo conocimiento con Gonçalo de Ayala, médico natural de ese reyno, que por via de comunicacion en la lengua con vn mi sobrino, accudió a mi casa algunas vezes. Y assi mesmo, Gerónimo d'Alaua, que tambien cura, según me dizen. Y el Geronymo

## 4 Gonçalo de Ayala (?–?)

Gonçalo de Ayala was a Granadan Morisco physician who is the author of a number of draft translations of Lead Books texts and of Arabic texts of the Parchment found among the many draft translations in the Archive of the Sacromonte.<sup>116</sup> Ayala signs many of them as “el licenciado Gonçalo de Ayala de Sevilla.” His draft transcriptions of LP22 (*Kitāb al-asrār al-‘aẓīma*) and of the Parchment cover some one hundred folios. Since this Lead Book came to light only in 1606, his involvement is spread over a number of years. Castro notes at the beginning of some of these drafts in his own handwriting: “nonsensical notes, I do not understand them” (*disparates, no lo entiendo*), but it is far more likely that Ayala was a critic of the Lead Books, and that Castro rejected his interpretations because he disagreed with them. The contents of the drafts confirm this assumption. Ayala saw very well, for example, that the Arabic text of LP22 mentions the names of two Meccan hills in the immediate surroundings of the Ka’ba, Şafā and Marwa, a reading that Castro would not have accepted.

On 9 August 1596 Philip II asked Arias Montano and Diego de Urrea to travel to Granada to prepare a full translation of the books, together with the chronicler Luis del Mármol y Carvajal (1524–1600).<sup>117</sup> This was an important moment, and it tells us something about the persons in whom Philip confided most. All three men involved were highly critical of the authenticity of the Lead Books. That the king wished Mármol to take part in this mission should not surprise us. Mármol had served as a soldier in Africa, been taken captive in Morocco and served in the army that had repressed the rebellion of the Moriscos in the Alpujarras. He was the author of a number of important chronicles, among them his *General Description of Africa* and the *History of the Rebellion and Punishment of the Moriscos of the Kingdom of Granada* (*Historia de la Rebelión y castigo de los moriscos del reino de Granada*).<sup>118</sup> Mármol had been consulted about the Parchment, which he studied only on the basis of a copy. No such translation as the one sought by Philip came into being.

What can we conclude about Montano’s contribution to the interpretation of the Parchment and the Lead Books? We have seen that he gained access

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d’Alaua entiende menos la lengua antigua que el Ayala, porque este se ayuda de su ingenio, y de que ha estudiado la medicina en latin y habla la lengua andaluza, en que se crió,” Pedro de Valencia, *Obras completas*, 383.

116 ASMG, Leg VII, 1a, dated 21 April 1608.

117 The letter was published in Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, IV, 380–381 (based on the original document in the ASMG, Leg. IV, parte 1, fol. 697<sup>a-b</sup>).

118 See on him García Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*, esp. 358ff.

to the original Parchment in 1593. He also knew and made use of Luna's transcription of the Arabic parts of the Parchment, dated 31 March 1588 (P<sub>1</sub> of our edition). With regard to the Lead Books, his knowledge was far more limited. In fact, in 1597 he wrote that he had not seen them himself.<sup>119</sup> On the basis of the evidence available to him, Montano reached the conclusion that their contents had an Islamic ring, referring for example to such expressions as Jesus as Rūḥ Allāh, one of the central dogmatic tenets of the Lead Books, as we will see below.

To what extent these insights were the result of his conversations with the Morisco Gonçalo de Ayala cannot be ascertained, but it seems likely to us that Ayala influenced him. It is furthermore interesting to observe that Montano judged Luna's work as precise and considered Castillo a reliable person.<sup>120</sup> Castillo himself apparently did not consider Luna to be reliable, either professionally or personally.<sup>121</sup> Did Montano know that Luna was mentioned in the Inquisition records as a crypto-Muslim, and that he had boasted to fellow Moriscos about his intimate knowledge of the Islamic contents of the Lead Books? It is possible, for, after all, Montano had been involved in activities of the Inquisition of Llerena and may well have had inside information. Comparing the letters, we think it is highly likely that he indeed realized that Luna not only managed to produce a coherent reading of a virtually indecipherable document, but also declared that the document was very old. This is also what Arias Montano suggests in his letter of 3 December 1597: "I assume that the person who was able to read it and deduce clear and meaningful equivalent words in translation must have been an able diviner."<sup>122</sup>

Be this as it may, Montano's own experience with the original sources remained limited to the Parchment. But his judgement about the Lead Books was the same as about the Parchment: he rejected them as authentic Christian documents. This must have been a tremendous blow to the defenders, most of all

119 Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, iv, 385.

120 In the context of his discussions on matters of Arabic grammar, Montano speaks in the following way about Alonso del Castillo: "Vna sola vez hable en corte al Licenciado Castillo, aunque brevemente, entendí que tenia noticia de la grammática. No sondè [*sic*] hasta dónde llegasse, más que en un verbo que acá en nuestras lenguas no admite pasiva voz, viniendo a propósito, dixo que en arábico la tenia, y lo prouó. *Y siempre he tenido al Castillo por hombre senzillo, y de buena voluntad, y no iattador de su habilidad*" (letter dated 10 November 1596, in Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, iv, 383 [emphasis ours]).

121 García-Arenal, "Miguel de Luna y los Moriscos de Toledo: 'No ay mejor moro.'"

122 "Y entiendo que quien las leyó y sacó de ellas equivalencia de vocablos bien scritos fue buen adiuino," in: Pedro de Valencia, *Obras Completas*, iv, 388–389, letter dated 3 December 1597.

to Pedro de Castro. Montano's views would prove to be of great weight in the struggle about the Lead Books, which continued up to their condemnation by the Vatican in 1682.

In June 1597 Archbishop Pedro de Castro drew up an official report about the evaluation process up to that date, and sent it to the king.<sup>123</sup> In it he described the relics and texts as authentic early Christian lore, and reports about the four *láminas*, the seven books known to him at that moment (the document mentions eight books, but as we have seen LP 5 and 6 were counted as one book) and, in addition, mentioned four other leaves (*láminas*). The first is described as made of bronze. It had been in the possession of Matheo López, a citizen of Granada, and of his father for the previous forty years (!). The other three were made of lead and, as a result of wear and tear, allegedly very difficult to read. All of them were written in Arabic in Solomonian script. The second leaf had belonged to a silversmith of Granada, Luys de Veas, who had received it from a youth who had found it in the river Darro, when during heavy rains floods had poured into the river from Mount Valparaíso in 1596. The third had been found in Cazorra (Jaén) "in a hoard with ancient coins" (*en una heredad con monedas antiguas*). The last one allegedly was from the Sierra of Elvira, where the city of "Illiberis" or "Eliueria" had been built. The last remark increases our suspicion that the report served to demonstrate that lead books had circulated more widely and much earlier outside Mount Valparaíso. The document, which we reproduce in an appendix, includes only the very brief Spanish translations done by Miguel de Luna, Alonso del Castillo, and Diego de Urrea, and while the alleged contents are similar to the known texts, not much can be said about them with any certainty.

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123 See the edition in the Appendix.