



# Towards a History of Assyriology

Workshop Organized at the 64<sup>th</sup>  
Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale,  
Innsbruck 2018

Edited by Sebastian Fink  
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# Investigatio Orientis

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## Strengthening Ties

### Assessing the Presence of Spanish Scholars at International Conferences devoted to Ancient Near Eastern Studies (1948–1983)

Agnès Garcia-Ventura / Jordi Vidal<sup>1</sup>

The end of World War II in Europe in May 1945 was a turning point for Spanish foreign policy. Indeed, despite the fact that Franco's Spain had cultivated international relations mainly with Italy and Germany, in the 1940's Spain was trying hard to improve its relations with the Allied nations by stressing its neutrality during the war. Within this context, academia was regarded as a useful tool to enhance international ties with the Allied nations as proof the increase, albeit discreet in the post-war period, of funding available for Spanish researchers for stays abroad, an issue we have already discussed and proven in our previous research.<sup>2</sup>

In this essay, we want to discuss what may have been another strategy used to enhance Spain's international relations with the Allied nations: encouraging the participation of Spanish scholars at international conferences, leading thus to a potential increase in their presence at these academic venues. To do so, we will focus on the situation of Ancient Near Eastern Studies at that time, paying special attention to Spanish scholars' participation in selected editions of two meetings: the *Congrès Internationale des Orientalistes* and the *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*.

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<sup>1</sup> The text as published here follows the main arguments defended during the RAI held in Innsbruck in July 2018, with some additions during Spring 2019, when preparing the article for publication. Only few bibliographical references have been added, to provide the reader recent secondary literature considered essential, and links to websites have been checked and updated, when necessary.

Garcia-Ventura worked on the topic of this paper during a postdoctoral contract 'Juan de la Cierva-Incorporación' (held at the IPOA – Universitat de Barcelona), awarded by the Ministry of Economy, Industry, and Competitiveness of the Government of Spain, and also during a "Ramón y Cajal" contract (RYC2019-027460-I, held at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) awarded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation. Vidal worked on this paper during the research project HAR2017-82593-P (Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness). Both authors closed this research during the research project PID2020-114676GB-I00 (Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation).

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, the case study of the Spanish Assyriologist Joaquín Peñuela (1902–1969), as discussed in Garcia-Ventura and Vidal, 2014.

### 1. The chronological framework (1948–1983)

Even though, as pointed out above, we are considering the end of the World War II as a turning point for Spanish foreign policy, here we are taking 1948, rather than 1945, as the initial year for our scrutiny because 1948 was the year in which the *Congrès Internationale des Orientalistes* was resumed after a hiatus between 1938 and 1948 due to World War II. At that time, in the 1940's, the *Congrès Internationale des Orientalistes* (henceforth *Orientalistes*) was a large, prestigious meeting with a long history, as it had been the reference gathering held in Europe for more than 70 years for everyone dealing with Oriental studies in a broad sense.<sup>3</sup> Held every three years since 1873, with some exceptions, such as the period mentioned above, it embraced a wide array of scholars, mainly philologists, dealing with ancient and modern cultures and languages as diverse one from another as ancient Egyptian and modern Chinese.

We see then that this conference included everything considered “Oriental” when the event was launched in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and at that time Assyriology, a young discipline, was one of the many specialties included in the conference from its very beginning.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that despite profound changes in academia and a gradual atomization of meetings and conferences, which mirrored the atomization of academic disciplines, the broad scope of the *Orientalistes* meeting survived for many years, as proven by Ralph Lilley Turner's (1888–1983) description of the scope of the congress in the opening session of the 23<sup>rd</sup> *Orientalistes* meeting held in 1954: “Our field of study extends from the very beginnings of civilization in the river valleys of the Euphrates and the Nile down to systems under which half mankind lives at the present day.”<sup>5</sup>

Moving back again to the starting date of our survey, we decided to take 1948, the date of the 21<sup>st</sup> *Orientalistes* meeting held in Paris, not only because it signaled the revival of this reference congress immediately after World War II, but also because it was especially meaningful from the standpoint of Assyriology and its further development as a discipline. Indeed, it was at this meeting that the Belgian scholar Georges Dossin (1896–1983)<sup>6</sup> and the French scholar Jean Nougayrol (1900–1975)<sup>7</sup> launched the proposal to create a new international conference, one solely devoted to Assyriology, created in partnership with scholars and institutions

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<sup>3</sup> Regarding the genesis of the meetings as well as insights into its first decades of history, see Rabault-Feuerhahn 2010. Regarding its uniqueness due to the diversity of disciplines included, see especially pages 51–53.

<sup>4</sup> For a list of sections and disciplines included in these meetings from 1873 until 1912, see Rabault-Feuerhahn 2010, 65–67.

<sup>5</sup> Sinor 1956, 29.

<sup>6</sup> About Dossin, see Birot 1984.

<sup>7</sup> About Nougayrol, see Garelli 1975. For an overview of French Assyriology during these years, see Charpin 2022, 387–424.

from the two French-speaking countries in Europe.<sup>8</sup> The new meeting they envisioned was to be held every year, not every three years as the *Orientalistes*, to facilitate contact among scholars and cooperation to launch international research projects, something especially praised and needed in the post-war years.<sup>9</sup>

After launching this proposal at the 1948 *Orientalistes* meeting, the first specific gathering to plan the new conference was scheduled for 1949 in Paris at the Louvre museum.<sup>10</sup> Afterwards, to facilitate the management of the new event, the *Groupe François Thureau-Dangin* was created in January 1950. This group, chaired by Edouard Dhorme (1881–1966),<sup>11</sup> was in charge of organizing the first editions of the new conference, called *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (henceforth RAI), which was held for first time in Paris in June 1950.<sup>12</sup> At this point, it is interesting to note that in the 1948 *Orientalistes* meeting, Dhorme was the chair and Nougayrol the secretary of the Assyriology section of this large conference; thus, it is not coincidental that they were also key figures in this new stage in the conferences specifically devoted to Assyriology.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, it should be noted that the prime aim of Dhorme, Dossin and Nougayrol was not actually to offer an alternative to the *Orientalistes* meeting but to complement it, as proven by the fact that they decided not to organize a RAI in the years when an *Orientalistes* meeting was being held in Europe. Indeed, this circumstance explains why there was no RAI in 1954 and in 1957, years when the *Orientalistes* meetings were held in Cambridge and in Munich, respectively.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> It seems that 1948 was also when the worries about the difficulty of combining the debates of the different disciplines coexisting in the same context became more vivid. See Sinor 1956, 30–31.

<sup>9</sup> Needless to say, there were other meetings, like the *Deutscher Orientalistentag*, launched at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and coexisting with the *Orientalistes*, but their aims and audience were more national than international, which explains the need felt at that time to launch a new venue. These circumstances, in turn, explain our decision to concentrate on only two meetings in the survey we are presenting here.

<sup>10</sup> This first meeting was attended by 31 participants. For their names and affiliations, see the detailed list as published in Spycket 1983, 56–57.

<sup>11</sup> About Dhorme, see Parrot 1966.

<sup>12</sup> For more details about the preparation of the new conference and its first editions, see Homès-Fredericq 1983, Spycket 1983 and Spycket 2004, 75–81. See also Charpin 2022, 387–391. For a record of all RAI meetings held since 1950, see <https://iaassyriology.com/rencontre/> [retrieved October 2024].

<sup>13</sup> André Parrot (1901–1980) was also secretary of the section together with Nougayrol, and he was associated with the Louvre museum from 1946 to 1976, first as curator and afterwards as director. For the names and job titles of the participants in each section of the *Orientalistes* meeting held in 1948, see the proceedings published in 1949, page 7. For a report of the speakers and topics discussed in the Assyriology section, see pages 131–149 of the same proceedings.

<sup>14</sup> In this regard, see Wiseman 1967, 14, where he also acknowledges that: “There is thus no policy of a breakaway from the larger International Congress, although in practice, its

After this brief survey of the genesis of the RAI meetings and their immediate predecessor, which coexisted with them in the 1950s, i.e., the *Orientalistes* meeting, it is clear then that 1948 is a suitable year to begin our scrutiny for several reasons. On the one hand, from the standpoint of political history, they were still the early years of the Franco dictatorship in Spain and the first few years after the end of World War II, a clear turning point for international relations and foreign policy. On the other hand, from the standpoint of meetings devoted totally or partially to Assyriology, this starting point allows us to examine the participants of the last *Orientalistes* meeting before the first RAI, and then to check all RAIs from their very beginning until 1983, the last year covered in our survey.

In 1983, the first issue of the journal *Aula Orientalis* was published, an event that we believe signals a shifting trend in the history of Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Spain. In the words of its founder and director, Gregorio del Olmo Lete,<sup>15</sup> *Aula Orientalis* was created as an essentially Spanish journal, or perhaps more accurately, Hispano-American. The new publication was supposed to act as a catalyst for the contributions to Ancient Near Eastern Studies from Spain and Latin America, which until then had clearly been marginal in this field.<sup>16</sup> This is why at first Del Olmo gathered a group of contributors around *Aula Orientalis*, all of whom were from Spain and Latin America. Of course, the journal was open to publishing any contribution from outside Spain and Latin America, but its specificity was precisely that: not being yet another scholarly journal on Ancient Near Eastern Studies but the mouthpiece to disseminate them from a specific cultural sphere. Thus, *Aula Orientalis* sought to found a new tradition in the field of Ancient Near Eastern Studies.

Likewise, the journal also proclaimed itself to be the mouthpiece of the Instituto de Estudios Orientales (Institute of Oriental Studies, henceforth IEO) of the Universitat de Barcelona. This institute was created by Fernando Díaz Esteban<sup>17</sup> in 1971 with a truly ambitious work program. In Díaz Esteban's opinion, the main problem with Spanish Near Eastern Studies, both ancient and modern, was their inability to access primary sources in their original languages to study them. Hence one of the IEO's main objectives was to equip a new generation of experts with sufficient philological knowledge to be able to study these sources:

To prepare Spanish experts in the Near Eastern languages and cultures so that within a few years we have the ideal university faculty who can not only teach their students the necessary grammatical knowledge but also bring to Spanish culture a direct interpretation of those languages and cultures, freeing us from re-translations from other more accessible languages

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international impact on Assyriology is of a different nature”.

<sup>15</sup> About Del Olmo, see Vidal 2013, 45–47.

<sup>16</sup> Del Olmo 1983.

<sup>17</sup> About Díaz Esteban, see Vidal 2013, 48–49.

and third- and fourth-hand viewpoints (“Proyecto de creación en la Universidad de Barcelona de un INSTITUTO DE ESTUDIOS ORIENTALES”. Archive Folder, bundle 1. AHIPOA.).

However, despite those ambitious goals, between 1971 and 1986, the Instituto de Estudios Orientales engaged in hardly any noteworthy academic activity. In the words of its founder, the lack of financing was behind the fact that it was unable to bring its initial objectives to fruition.<sup>18</sup> In fact, over the course of those more than 15 years, the IEO’s main activity was annual informative, generalist lecture series on topics related to Near Eastern Studies delivered by the handful of Spanish experts around at that time.<sup>19</sup> The aspiration to create a new generation of expert researchers studying Near Eastern languages remained a distant dream.

Only in the 1980’s, did the IEO get the impetus it needed to finally consolidate and develop via Del Olmo. Thus, while Del Olmo founded the journal *Aula Orientalis* in 1983, in 1987 he replaced Díaz Esteban as the director of the IEO (which was renamed the Institut del Pròxim Orient Antic, or Institute of the Ancient Near East, or IPOA, in 1993) and wholly reconsidered the institution’s overarching principles. Even though it retained its essentially philological mission, it limited its sphere of action to Ancient Near Eastern Studies. Its action plan was based on three main strands: (1) turning the IEO into a true research institute, with a specialized library and a training program that would allow students to gain sufficient philological mastery to study the primary sources; (2) consolidating *Aula Orientalis* as the body representing the IEO; and (3) leading an archaeological excavation in the Near East that would allow students to engage in direct contact with the material culture of the region.<sup>20</sup>

Del Olmo’s plan was incredibly successful, as proven by the emergence of a young generation of Orientalists (especially Assyriologists). Nonetheless, the IEO-IPOA was not the only focal point of the development of Near Eastern Studies in Spain. After the 1980’s, other equally important contributions came from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Miquel Molist), the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (María Eugenia Aubet), the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) (Jesús-Luis Cunchillos, Manuel Molina), the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Joaquín Córdoba), the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Alberto Bernabé), the Universidad de Murcia (Antonino González), the Universidad de Salamanca (Ana Agud), and others. Therefore, the 1980’s was when the groundwork was laid for growing beyond the theretofore underdeveloped state of Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Spain, although even today this goal has only been partly reached.

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<sup>18</sup> Vidal 2016, 12ff.

<sup>19</sup> Vidal 2016, 14ff.

<sup>20</sup> Vidal 2016, 115.

## 2. The sources and its limitations

As noted above, to evaluate the Spanish presence at international conferences which were entirely or partly devoted to Ancient Near Eastern Studies, we have particularly focused on the participation of Spanish researchers in the *Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* between 1950 and 1983, making this the reference international conference at the core of our analysis. Furthermore, as also noted above, we have also focused on the *Congrès Internationale des Orientalistes*, more specifically on three of its editions: the 1948 one as the forerunner of the RAI, and the ones in 1954 and 1957, the years when the RAI was not held because the *Orientalistes* was. As is logical, for both we have examined reports and proceedings, but one of the limitations we came upon is that the sources are quite uneven, and in some cases they are grossly incomplete.

For the *Orientalistes* conference, we did have very comprehensive volumes of proceedings for all three editions in which we were interested.<sup>21</sup> They compile a vast trove of details, from the keynote speeches at the beginning and end to the lists of participants with and without papers, the titles of the papers presented and the summaries of the sessions held by each of the sections. For the RAI, however, despite the fact that reports of it were published in several journals since its first edition in 1950, primarily in *Orientalia* but also in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* and *Revue d'Assyriologie*,<sup>22</sup> we did not have the same data for several reasons. First of all, proceedings were not published systematically until the 1962 edition. Secondly, just like today, even when the proceedings were published, they did not always include all the talks presented at the conference. Thirdly, in the case of the RAI, there are no complete lists of participants (including those who did not present a paper) or detailed programs for all the years we are examining in either the reports or the proceedings. Therefore, we can see that in the case of the RAI, the information available to us is somewhat uneven for each of the editions, and at all times it is less exhaustive, especially for the earlier years of the RAI, if we compare it with what we have for the *Orientalistes* conference. In consequence, the data we present in the next section may be found to be incomplete in the future if more information, perhaps archival documentation, is found that would enable us to fill the gaps.

Bearing this possibility in mind, for our study we have considered not only reports and proceedings from the RAI, as mentioned above, but also documents related to the *Groupe François Thureau-Dangin*, which was created to launch the first RAI and which, in turn, became a platform that coordinated the organization of the event for years, thus playing a role similar to the *International Association for Assyriology* (henceforth IAA), founded in 2003.<sup>23</sup> In this direction, first we

<sup>21</sup> *Orientalistes* 1949; Sinor 1956; Franke 1959.

<sup>22</sup> For the exact references for each of these reports, see <https://iaassyriology.com/rencontre/> [retrieved October 2024].

<sup>23</sup> For an introduction to this association, see its website: <https://iaassyriology.com/> [as

checked the report entitled *European Research Resources: Assyriology*,<sup>24</sup> the outcome of a commission by the Council for Cultural Co-operation, a committee of the Council of Europe founded in 1962. This document is particularly interesting because not only does it offer a snapshot of the status of Assyriology in Europe in the 1960's, for the first time it lays out in print some information related to the genesis of the RAI and publishes the founding bylaws of the *Groupe François Thureau-Dangin*.

Secondly, we have examined several archives in an attempt to find documents related to the creation and management of that group and the people associated with it.<sup>25</sup> Among them we should stress the archive of the Pontificio Istituto Biblico in Rome, where we found a document which has given us the key to better understanding some issues, to which we shall devote part of our analysis in section 4, so we shall more thoroughly discuss it below.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. Spanish scholars at international conferences devoted to Ancient Near Eastern studies: An overview (1948–1983)

In this section, we will compile and analyze Spanish researchers' participation in the *Orientalistes* meetings of 1948, 1954, and 1957 and in the RAI from its first edition in 1950 until 1983. As seen in the table below, their presence was quite scarce, limited to a total of nine researchers who participated in these events in some capacity during this period:

21 <sup>st</sup> <i>Orientalistes</i> meeting – Paris, 1948	Francisco Cantera (1901–1978)	“Présentation de publications”
21 <sup>st</sup> <i>Orientalistes</i> meeting – Paris, 1948	Josep M. Millàs i Vallicrosa (1897–1970)	“L’oeuvre astronomique d’Azarquel”
21 <sup>st</sup> <i>Orientalistes</i> meeting – Paris, 1948	Emilio García Gómez (1905–1995)	“La poésie politique sous le califat de Cordoue”

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retrieved in October 2024].

<sup>24</sup> Wiseman 1967.

<sup>25</sup> We wish to thank the people who have so kindly helped us with our searches in the following archives in Paris (by alphabetic order of their surnames): Christophe Labaune (Collège de France), Isabelle Sérurier (Bibliothèque du Saulchoir), and Ariane Thomas (Musée du Louvre). We also wish to particularly thank Agnès Spycket for her dedication and assistance in consulting the archives of Édouard Dhorme in the Bibliothèque du Saulchoir. Regarding the organisation and classification of this collection, which Spycket herself did, see Spycket 1997.

<sup>26</sup> We wish to express our gratitude to the Pontificio Istituto Biblico, and particularly to Carlo Valentino, its secretary-general, for giving us access to the archive documents and allowing us to publish one of these documents in this study.

23 <sup>rd</sup> <i>Orientalistes</i> meeting – Cambridge, 1954	Josep M. Millàs i Vallicrosa (1897–1970)	“El glosario hebraico del ms. no. 74 del Mon- asterio de Ripoll”
23 <sup>rd</sup> <i>Orientalistes</i> meeting – Cambridge, 1954	Emilio García Gómez (1905–1995)	“La cronique anonyme Fath al-Andalus”
24 <sup>th</sup> <i>Orientalistes</i> meeting – Munich, 1957	Félix María Pareja (1890–1983)	“The kitāb aš-Šaṭraṅṅ, n. 2234 of the Atif Efendi Kitaphane, Istanbul”
24 <sup>th</sup> <i>Orientalistes</i> meeting – Munich, 1957	Sebastià Bartina Gassiot (1917–1992)	Attendant (no paper)
21 <sup>st</sup> RAI – Roma, 1974	José Luis Zubizarreta (1938–)	“The text reconstruction of Lugal-e; Myth and History”
25 <sup>th</sup> RAI – Berlin, 1978	Anna Maria Rauret Dalmau	Attendant (no paper)
27 <sup>th</sup> RAI – Paris, 1980	Jesús Luis Cunchillos (1936–2006)	“Une lettre ougaritique”
27 <sup>th</sup> RAI – Paris, 1980	Gregorio del Olmo Lete (1935–)	“Une nouvelle interpré- tation de CTA/KTU 13”

Table 1: Participation of Spanish reserachers in the *Orientalistes* meetings  
and the RAI 1948–1983

As we shall see below, the nine names cited are a very heterogeneous group of scholars who perfectly exemplify the precariousness of Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Spain during that period.

In fact, none of the three researchers who participated in the 21<sup>st</sup> *Orientalistes* meeting in Paris in 1948 (two of whom also participated in the 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting held in Cambridge in 1954) were devoted to Ancient Near Eastern Studies, and they presented their papers not in the Assyriology section but in the “Études Sémitiques” section. Indeed, we believe that their presence at these meetings should be interpreted, at least partly, within the framework of a longstanding tradition of experts in Arabic and Hebraic studies in Spanish institutions who attended this congress ever since it was founded. One good example of this is that Spain was represented at the *Orientalistes* conference since its first edition in 1873, with the presence of Pascual de Gayangos y Arce (1809–1897) as a representative of the Royal History Academy.<sup>27</sup> Below is a brief presentation on each of the participants in the 1948 edition.

Francisco Cantera Burgos (1901–1978) was a chair in Hebrew at the universities of Salamanca (1927) and Madrid (1934). An expert in the history of the Jews

<sup>27</sup> *Orientalistes* 1874, 4.



in Spain and in Hebraic epigraphy, he was the author of an extensive body of publications primarily focusing on these topics.<sup>28</sup> Beyond his strictly scholarly activities, Cantera also contributed notably to the institutional and academic organization of Hebraic Philology studies in Spain during the Franco dictatorship as the director of the School of Hebraic Studies at the Instituto Benito Arias Montano of the CSIC and of the journal *Sefarad*.<sup>29</sup>

Josep Maria Millás i Vallicrosa (1897–1970) was a Chair in Hebrew at the universities of Madrid (1927) and Barcelona (1932). An Arabist, Hebraist and historian, he is particularly noted for his studies on the history of Arab science,<sup>30</sup> and he actually assembled a brilliant school on this subject, with such prominent disciples as David Romano and Joan Vernet. He also worked closely with Cantera to institutionalize Semitic studies through a partnership with the CSIC.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, Emilio García Gómez (1905–1995) was a chair in Arabic at the universities of Granada (1930) and Madrid (1936), and he particularly focused on studying Arabic-Andalusian poetry. Just like Cantera and Millás, García Gómez also played a prominent institutional role as the first director of the School of Arab Studies in Granada (1932) and as a prominent contributor to the Instituto Benito Arias Montano of the CSIC. He also combined his academic career with intense political and diplomatic work as the Spanish ambassador to Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey (1958–1969).<sup>32</sup>

The two Spanish participants in the 24<sup>th</sup> *Orientalistes* meeting in Munich in 1957 share profiles similar to their counterparts above.

Félix María Pareja (1890–1983) was a Jesuit and a professor of Islamology at St. Xavier's College in Bombay, the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome, Al-Hikma American University in Bagdad, Saint Joseph's University in Beirut and the University of Madrid, among others. Even though he was essentially an Arabist, Pareja also worked to promote Near Eastern Studies in Spain from his position as secretary of the Spanish Association of Orientalists.<sup>33</sup>

Sebastià Bartina (1917–1992), in turn, was a professor of Theology and Sacred Scripture in the faculties of Theology in Sant Cugat and Barcelona.<sup>34</sup> Even though Bartina was essentially a Bible scholar, he also made modest contributions related to Ancient Near Eastern Studies.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Lacave 1977.

<sup>29</sup> Peiró and Pasamar 2002, 160; González 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Romano, Vernet and Cantera 1970.

<sup>31</sup> Cantera 1970; Peiró and Pasamar 2002, 414ff.; Oliveras 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Lapesa 1996; Peiró and Pasamar 2002, 278f.; Pérez 2006; his corpus of publications is compiled in Beccaria 1999.

<sup>33</sup> De Espalza 1984; Valderrama 1989.

<sup>34</sup> Vidal 2013, 22f.

<sup>35</sup> Bartina 1967; translation of the work of Parrot (1962) into Spanish.

Despite everything, as can be seen in these brief biographical sketches, none of the five authors was directly involved in Ancient Near Eastern Studies, and therefore they in no way contributed to the development of these studies. We have to wait until 1974 to find an Ancient Near Eastern scholar participating in an international meeting on the subject. It was José Luis Zubizarreta Murga, who has the distinction of being the first Spaniard to present a paper at the RAI. This paper, entitled “The text reconstruction of Lugal-e; Myth and History,” was read at the 21<sup>st</sup> RAI held in Rome in 1974, which meant that 20 editions had to be published before a Spanish Assyriologist participated in the most important international conference on Assyriology. Unfortunately, Zubizarreta’s contribution, though notable for its pioneering nature, was just an isolated episode limited to that paper and to the publication of three reviews of Assyriological works.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, he had no continuity or repercussions of any kind in the subsequent development of Spanish Assyriology.

A student of the Pontificio Istituto Biblico (henceforth, PIB) in Rome between 1969 and 1974, Zubizarreta studied subjects such as the Akkadian language with Richard Caplice and the Sumerian language with his master, Johannes van Dijk. In the introduction to his edition of the poem Lugal-e, Van Dijk himself explicitly recognized Zubizarreta as his disciple and described him as a particularly talented student (“élève doué”) and a valuable partner in the preparation of the composite text, the critical aspects of the work and the vocabulary list.<sup>37</sup> The paper presented at the 1974 RAI is framed precisely within this context of close collaboration with van Dijk. However, shortly thereafter, Zubizarreta abandoned the study of Assyriology and never earned his degree from the PIB. From then on, he worked solely in journalist and in the political activities of the Basque autonomous government, so his contribution to Assyriology was brief and circumstantial.

The next milestone within our survey of the presence of Spaniards at international conferences on Assyriology dates from 1978, with the attendance (albeit not participation) of Anna Maria Rauret Dalmau at the 25<sup>th</sup> RAI in Berlin. Under normal conditions, Rauret’s attendance at that conference would be no more than an anecdote with irrelevant historiographic meaning. However, we decided to include her in our study because of her value in once more attesting to the underdevelopment of Near Eastern Studies in Spain. An expert in the study of recent Catalan prehistory,<sup>38</sup> Rauret was one of the first disciples in Barcelona of the prestigious Catalan prehistorian Joan Maluquer de Motes.<sup>39</sup> Despite her training, and the fact that she never published any study related to the Ancient Near East, Rauret spent more than 30 years teaching the course on “Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology” at the Universitat de Barcelona. In this sense, it is quite telling that the

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<sup>36</sup> Zubizarreta 1974a, 1974b and 1974c.

<sup>37</sup> Van Dijk 1983, viii.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Rauret 1973.

<sup>39</sup> Maluquer de Motes 2016.

ideologues behind the university curriculum believed it was worthwhile to include that course, yet that they were forced to assign it to an expert in Catalan prehistory.

Beyond her presence at the 25<sup>th</sup> RAI in Berlin, thereafter Rauret also regularly attended other RAIs, and even though she made no contributions to the literature on Ancient Near Eastern studies, she was in charge of overseeing several studies on the subject, all of which were read at the Universitat de Barcelona during the last third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>40</sup> And indeed, there is no doubt that despite everything, Rauret was the only referent on Near Eastern archaeology for numerous generations of students at the Universitat de Barcelona.

We shall conclude our survey with two figures who, unlike the others, need no presentation in the field of Near Eastern Studies: Jesús Luis Cunchillos and Gregorio del Olmo.<sup>41</sup> Unlike Zubizarreta and Rauret, their participation in the 27<sup>th</sup> RAI held in Paris in 1980 did indeed signal the start of a new era in the development of Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Spain. Del Olmo's and Cunchillos's participation in that congress devoted to the "Cinquantenaire d'Ougarit – Ras Shamra" was logical, bearing in mind that both were already particularly prominent figures in the field of Ugaritic studies. Del Olmo had been a disciple of another great Ugaritic scholar, Mitchell Dahood, at the PIB from 1968 to 1973. Shortly after the 1980 RAI, he published one of his greatest works, the Spanish translation and study of Ugaritic epic literature and mythology,<sup>42</sup> which was followed by other studies on Ugaritic cultural texts,<sup>43</sup> as well as a dictionary of the Ugaritic language.<sup>44</sup> Cunchillos, in turn, was trained at the Institut Catholique and the Sorbonne University in Paris, among other places, under the stewardship of Ugaritic scholars like André Caquot, and he specialized in the fields of Ugaritic epistolography and epigraphy, fields in which he also made notable contributions to the literature.<sup>45</sup>

However, beyond the quantity and quality of their studies, Del Olmo's and Cunchillos's efforts were significant primarily because of the impetus that both of them gave from Barcelona (IPOA – Universitat de Barcelona, in conjunction with Joaquín Sanmartín) and Madrid (CSIC) to the institutional consolidation and development of Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Spain. Indeed, many of the Assyriologists and Semitic scholars that are working in different Spanish academic institutions today are the disciples, either direct or indirect, of Del Olmo and Cunchillos. Their research projects, their efforts to create specialized libraries and

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<sup>40</sup> Cabellos 1978; Riera 1985; Serra 1987; Ferrer 2000.

<sup>41</sup> Vidal 2013, 40ff. and 45ff.

<sup>42</sup> Del Olmo 1981; see also 1984 and 1998.

<sup>43</sup> Del Olmo 1992, 1999 and 2014.

<sup>44</sup> Del Olmo and Sanmartín 1996–2000, 2003 and 2015. For a recent compilation of his works in Ugaritic studies, see Del Olmo 2016a and 2016b.

<sup>45</sup> Cunchillos 1989, 1990, 1992, 1994; Caquot, de Tarragon and Cunchillos 1989; Cunchillos and Zamora 1995; Cunchillos, Vita and Zamora 2003.

scholarly publications, and their drive to ensure that Orientalist disciplines could gain ground within university and scholarly milieus in Spain helped to launch the development of Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Spain, although even today they are somewhat precarious and incomplete.

This brief survey reveals several meaningful pieces of information. First, what primarily stands out is the scant presence of Spanish scholars at the leading international forums related to Ancient Near Eastern studies. Eleven participations by nine scholars over the course of 38 years is very little, and it is a faithful reflection of the precarious status of these studies in Spain. Likewise, four of these eleven were concentrated in the last decade of the period studied (1974–1983) and serve to attest to Spanish academia's growing – albeit weak – interest in ANE studies, given that, as noted above, the participation of scholars at the *Orientalistes* conferences was never in the section devoted to Assyriology.

As mentioned in the previous section, the burgeoning interest was consolidated after the 1980's with the philological projects of Del Olmo, Cunchillos, Alberto Bernabé, Sanmartín, and Manuel Molina, and with the archaeological work carried out by Spanish teams in Syria (Joaquín Córdoba, Miquel Molist, Gregorio del Olmo, Antonino González) and Jordan (Juan Antonio Fernández-Tresguerres). Without a doubt, the development of those programs signaled the introduction of Ancient Near Eastern studies into the Spanish university scene, an introduction which even today must be consolidated by the new generations of scholars who emerged from that first impetus.

#### **4. Benito Celada and Joaquín Peñuela: Two oases in the international arena before 1974?**

In the previous section, we showed that before 1974 there were no scholars devoted to Assyriology participating in the international meetings examined here. In fact, those attested before that year, such as the five scholars attending the *Orientalistes* meetings in 1948–1957, were all devoted to Arab and Hebraic studies and not to Ancient Near Eastern studies per se. At this point, then, we may wonder if there was a complete absence of Spanish scholars with this profile at these conferences until 1974 and if so, whether they were not personally attending because they were completely alien to the events or whether they were at least in touch with the organizers and informed about the initiatives.

Even if we have to recognize that the evidence so far is scarce, some sources fortunately allow us to state that at least two scholars, namely Benito Celada and Joaquín Peñuela, were in touch with the organizers of the RAI in its early years. With the two brief case studies presented below, we aim to show that they tried to be as involved as possible in this international context, even though we have no direct evidence of their presence at any of the meetings. In this sense, we should always keep in mind the limitations of our sources, as pointed out in section 2

above, most notably the lack of complete lists of participants and programs that can be consulted for the RAIs held in the 1950s and 1960s.

#### 4.1. Benito Celada: An indirect presence at the first RAI

When the first RAI was held in Paris in 1950, Édouard Dhorme had the honor of delivering the keynote speech. Several paragraphs from this speech were reproduced in the conference proceedings published in 1951. After these paragraphs, the following note, which is highly significant for the issue discussed here, was added to summarize the last part of Dhorme's speech:

M.E. DHORME présente les excuses et les regrets des assyriologues qui n'ont pu se rendre à l'invitation du G.F.T.D. et il lit quelques extraits des lettres de MM. B. CELADA (Madrid) – sur les études assyriologiques en Espagne – et E.F. WEIDNER (Graz) – sur la publication prochaine de *AfO* XV et de *AOB* II –.<sup>46</sup>

Unfortunately, the excerpt of Celada's letter read by Dhorme is not reproduced in the proceedings. Consequently, the letter must be found in order to ascertain the update on Assyriology in Spain that was shared at this important event. So far, we have been unable to find a copy of the letter in the correspondence received by Dhorme and preserved at the Bibliothèque du Saulchoir (Paris), and our searches in other archives have also been unsuccessful.<sup>47</sup> However, we have not lost all hope and shall keep looking for the letter.

But in addition to the content of the letter, which is currently a mystery, there is another significant issue: Why was Celada invited to present and represent Spanish Assyriology at the RAI? To better understand this, we will first briefly present the scholar and then offer two complementary, tentative answers. Benito Celada (1904–1988) was a Dominican, and his area of expertise was essentially Egyptology, a subject in which he earned his PhD at the Pontificio Istituto Biblico in Rome. However, he also wrote syntheses and critical articles related to Ancient Near East. A member of the Instituto Arias Montano of the CSIC (Spanish National Research Council), he taught classes in History and Near Eastern Archaeology at the Universidad Complutense.<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, we see that Celada was mainly an Egyptologist, and the RAI never included Egyptology. In fact, Egyptology and Assyriology only shared space in international conferences with a broader scope, such as the *Orientalistes* meeting, and even then they were in separate sections. However, as mentioned above, Celada was a member of the Instituto Arias Montano of the CSIC, an institute

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<sup>46</sup> *RAI* 1951, 2.

<sup>47</sup> See footnote 25 for more details about the French archives consulted so far. Moreover, we also consulted the Archivo de la Provincia de España – Dominicos, where Lázaro Sastre kindly answered our requests.

<sup>48</sup> See Sen 1988, 1989 and 1991; Arangüena 1991; Vidal 2013, 35ff. on Celada.

devoted to Hebraic, Sephardic, and Ancient Near Eastern studies, and for this reason he was a suitable speaker. In other words, Celada's institutional affiliation is the first tentative answer we propose here.

The CSIC was the Spanish research agency founded in 1939, right at the end of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), and the Instituto Arias Montano was founded two years later, in 1941. As noted above in section 3, Cantera, Millàs i Vallicrosa and García Gómez were scholars with close ties to this research institute, and it is no coincidence that they were the ones attending the 1948 *Orientalistes* meeting (the last two attended the 1954 *Orientalistes* meeting as well). Given this background, Celada, who also focused on sharing generalist information the ancient Near East (though it was not actually his field of research), was closer to the interests of the RAI compared to the other scholars.

A second tentative answer, maybe a more prosaic one, is that both Celada and Dhorme, then president of the *Groupe François Thureau-Dangin* and in charge of the keynote speech, were Dominican monks. In consequence, it is not strange to think that they might have had more affinity or encountered each other in other contexts, outside of academia.

#### 4.2. Joaquín Peñuela, the only “official” Assyriologist in Spain in 1967

The report entitled *European Research Resources: Assyriology*, commissioned by a branch of the Council of Europe and published in 1967, summarized data collected through surveys sent to all the countries meeting the following requirements: first, they were members of the Council of Europe and, second, Assyriology was a specialty of its own in the country's universities or research institutions. After the entire report, in appendix G, a table entitled “List of teachers of Assyriology in European Universities and Scientific Institutions (1966)” includes “Dr. J.M. Peñuela (Assyriology)” as the only one teaching Assyriology in Spain. Considering the absence of Spanish scholars at the RAI until 1974 and the situation described above, which only changed in the 1980's, this information is quite surprising. To better understand the backdrop, below we briefly present Peñuela and then discuss an unpublished archival document which proves the difficulties this scholar faced in being active and recognized in the international arena.

Joaquín Peñuela (1902–1969) is considered as the only (or almost the only) Spanish Assyriologist in the early years of the Franco dictatorship. A Jesuit, he pursued Semitic studies at the PIB in Rome and went to Berlin to study “Oriental Philology” (1934–1940). There, he had the chance to get in touch with some of the leading German Assyriologists at that time, including Bruno Meissner, Erich Ebeling, and Wolfram von Soden. In 1944, he defended his PhD dissertation, directed by Ebeling and entitled *Las dos primeras expediciones bélicas de Salmanasar III de Asiria*. After a brief time teaching at the PIB in Rome, and later at the University of Granada, Spain, finally he settled at the CSIC in Madrid (first the Instituto Arias Montano, and later the Instituto Suárez), where he was working as

researcher. Starting in 1959, he combined research with teaching Akkadian language and literature in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at the Universidad Complutense, Madrid.<sup>49</sup>

Even if we have no confirmation (at least not yet) of his participation in the RAI, we do have archival materials which allow us to confirm that Peñuela made every effort to be present in the international arena. He did his best to travel abroad for research purposes, constantly lamenting the lack of specialized libraries in Spain and the dearth of resources.<sup>50</sup> However, doing this in the early years of the Franco regime in Spain was extremely difficult for several reasons. First, there was, of course, the shortage of economic resources. Secondly, even if Spain was trying to overcome its international isolation after the end of the World War II, it was extremely difficult. A good example of this situation, especially of the latter factor, is what happened while scholars from Europe were being chosen to go to Chicago to participate in the major international project to create the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, which was being relaunched and intensively developed in the early 1950s.<sup>51</sup>

Several scholars from several countries, including Ignace J. Gelb of the University of Chicago and Alfred Pohl from the PIB in Rome, were nominated as members of an international advisory committee of the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary project.<sup>52</sup> The members of this committee corresponded with each other to deal with several issues, such as the recruitment of young foreign (from the USA's perspective) scholars willing to move to Chicago for a certain period of time to work on the Dictionary. In one of these letters that Gelb sent to Pohl in February 1952, he mentions the Spanish scholar Joaquín Peñuela. Based on what is discussed, it is clear that Pohl, who was in touch with Peñuela for issues linked to the journal *Orientalia* as possible venue to publish Peñuela's research, proposed him as suitable candidate. Moreover, it is clear that Gelb also knew Peñuela and considered him a candidate. However, Peñuela's nationality was an impediment from the USA's point of view, as we can see in the following excerpt from Gelb's letter:<sup>53</sup>

Many thanks for your kind interest in our problems and for your suggestions concerning the possibilities for the Chicago Dictionary staff. Even before the receipt of your suggestion concerning P. Peñuela, I wrote to him on February 7, asking about his willingness and chances to come to Chi-

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<sup>49</sup> See Garrido 1970; Delgado 2001 and Garcia-Ventura and Vidal 2014 on Peñuela.

<sup>50</sup> For more details about this example and for a presentation and analysis of these archival materials, see Garcia-Ventura and Vidal 2014.

<sup>51</sup> On the genesis, launch, and history of the writing of the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, see Reiner 2002.

<sup>52</sup> About Gelb, see Whiting; About Pohl, see Gerlich 2001.

<sup>53</sup> The letter is preserved among Pohl's correspondence in the archives of the Pontificio Istituto Biblico and is used here by courtesy of this institute.

cago. I have not yet received an answer from him but I don't have much hope in his case since in the meantime, I have heard from Washington that there are no governmental provisions to cover financial support for citizens of Spanish extraction.

This letter reveals the paradox of Peñuela's good international connections and the difficulties he had taking advantage of these connections due to his nationality. Pohl, for instance, received letters from the *Groupe Thureau-Dangin* involving him in the organization of the first RAIs, and even though we have no direct evidence about this, we may speculate that Peñuela was aware of these meetings and interested in attending them; this issue may have also been discussed in their correspondence. However, so far we have no documents to prove that Peñuela attended a RAI or that he even attempted to. However, just as with the archival documents related to Celada, we have not lost hope and will continue to look for the documents.

At any rate, Peñuela's difficulties are evident and the previous letter should be understood within the context of the early years of the Franco dictatorship. Indeed, Spain was not allowed to be a United Nations member for some years; this did not change until Spain became a member of the UN in 1955. Perhaps this helps to explain why someone like Peñuela was absent from certain international events and projects, even if he had the help of colleagues like Pohl trying to intercede on his behalf. Finally, it might be coincidental, but it is worth noting that both Pohl and Peñuela were Jesuits, thus both shared a religious order, which mirrors Dhorme and Celada, both of whom were Dominican monks, as reported in the case study above.

## 5. Preliminary concluding remarks

In this article, we have examined the participation of Spanish scholars working in the field of Ancient Near Eastern Studies in international conferences between 1948 and 1983. The first conclusion we have reached after presenting a series of evidence and several proposed analyses and interpretations is that the presence of these scholars during this time interval was quite scarce, so it is probably more apt to talk about their absence than their presence. Having reached this point, we considered the factors which can explain this situation, including the following.

First of all, Assyriology was a practically non-existent discipline in Spain between 1948 and 1983, so the pool of scholars who could have travelled to the conferences was very small to begin with. Secondly, we have seen that even those who worked in Ancient Near Eastern Studies during this period did not attend these conferences, such as Celada and Peñuela, as discussed in section 4. This can be explained, as we have also discussed above, by political reasons, economic reasons, or a combination of the two. Thirdly, we have seen that despite the difficulties and their scant presence, there is evidence attesting to their individual (more than institutional) efforts to create international networks. Fourth, the pro-



files of the scholars presented in this article reveal that Assyriology in Spain was not secular until the 1980's, given that until then everyone involved was a member of a religious order or at least had been affiliated with religion at the start of their academic careers.

Lastly, we wanted to close with a note of optimism, in the hopes that the study of archival materials which we are currently undertaking, and hope to continue doing in the forthcoming years, will allow us to find documents that help us cover some of the gaps we have outlined in this study, which, like all studies of its kind, is a work in progress.

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