The Textual Significance of Spanish Polyglot Bibles *

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It is generally accepted that the royal decision to achieve religious and political unity among Spanish Kingdoms was a traumatic experience for the society of the late years of the 15th century. Two important circumstances contributed to make it more difficult: on the one hand the end of the Muslim official presence in the Peninsula and the expulsion of the Jews, that generated a considerable number of conversos who did not wholly abandon their religious traditions; and on the other hand the deficient intellectual and theological preparation of the clergy, otherwise morally depraved, that was gradually declining. Cardinal Cisneros took both issues to heart and worked with his resources, energy and perseverance for the sake of the changes he thought imperative. The Inquisition was the instrument to deal with the conversos, and a vast program of reformation was planned for the clergy. Devoted to the administrative duties and political activities, he wisely drew the core of his plans of renewal: the University of Alcalá and the edition of the Polyglot Bible. Only at the end of his life could he contemplate the stimulating success of his twofold enterprise.

In the Middle Ages the Bible had been gradually substituted by compilations of holy stories and scholastic accounts of the Old and

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New Testaments. These pseudo-texts were usually introduced by Jerome's Prologues to the Sacred Books, disguised with a Biblical appearance, but they were not the Bible. The Bible was read with the aid of manuals, glossaries and studies such as those of Nicolas de Lyra or Hugues de Saint Victor, which were meant to guide the faithful reader to the correct interpretation of the Scriptures in their four dimensions: literal or historical (Jerome), allegoric (Ambrosius), moral (Gregorius) and analogic or transcendent (Augustin). Among medieval authors Nicolas de Lyra was closer to the spirit of the Renaissance in his attempt to recover the sense of the true Hebraica veritas — referred to the Hebrew text and not to Jerome's Vulgata as it was understood at that time.

The editorial work carried out through the Middle Ages produced thousands of manuscript copies all over the Eastern and Western countries. The Jewish communities of Sefarat developed important schools of that industry outstanding in beauty and accuracy. When the printing press appeared in the 15th century, manuscripts were progressively replaced by copies made with the new invention.

Hebrew printing began in Italy (Bologna, Ferrara, Rome, Mantua, Naples), and followed very soon in Spain and Portugal, where books of great quality were edited. The Book of Psalms was the first Biblical print in 1477, probably in Bologna, and the Pentateuch became the most frequent print. The first edition of the whole Hebrew Bible was published by Soncino in 1488, and the two Great Rabbinic Bibles were printed in Venice by Daniel Bomberg, in 1517-1518 Felix Pratensis', and in 1525 Jacob ben Hayyim's. The production of Hebrew printings at that time was generous: about five hundred works were published between 1500 and 1540.

The Greek Bible did not have such great protagonism. The editio princeps of the Greek Old Testament was that of the Complutensian Polyglot (1517). Other printings took place around those years: André Asolatus also published the whole Septuaginta in Venice, called the Aldine Bible, as it was composed at Aldo Manucio's press in 1518-1519, a year after the Complutensian was printed, but before it was published. His text was based on a few Venetian manuscripts. Previous to these editions, the Greek Old Testament had been edited only partially. It was at the end of the century (1587) when the Sixtine Bible (the Greek Old Testament, published under Pope Sixtus V) became the text of the Septuagint.

The Complutensian also was the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament. The work of the group of Helenists that prepared the text — Hernán Núñez de Guzmán (also called «el Pinciano» or «el Comendador»), Demetrio Ducis («el Cretese»), Diego López de Zuñiga, and Juan de Voggar — has been praised by critics of all times. The volume was issued from the print house of Guillelmuus Brocarius in Alcalá de Henares on January 10th, 1514.

A little later —the 7th of April 1515— Beatius Rhenanus, in a letter written in the name of the printer Froben from Basel, required from Erasmus a text of the New Testament, and in February 1516 Erasmus' edition gained currency, while the Complutensian Polyglot was still waiting for the papal approval. Erasmus' haste, or his publisher's, succeeded in anticipating and outnumbering the Complutensian diffusion; however, the text of Erasmus was defeated by the Complutensian for its much greater excellence. Perhaps

2 As it was said in the popular verses: «Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoriam. Moralis, quid agas, quae remis anagogiam».
3 As a matter of fact, it was the edition of David Kimhi's Commentary on the Book of Psalms. The text of Psalms itself introduces the commentary.
4 The first one was the Bologna Pentateuch (1482), the second was printed in Paro (Portugal) in 1487, and the third in Hijar (Spain) in 1490. It is also worth mentioning the two editions of 1491, one at Naples, at Soncino's print, with vowels and accents, and the other at Lisbon, the most beautiful Hebrew print, edited by Joseph ibn Yahya and Joseph Calpnon, with Targum Okezio and Rashi's Commentary. Other parts of the Bible and Hebrew works, about a hundred titles in all, were printed before 1500 in South Europe.
5 With the material collected through seven penurious years, he drew a text that has become the standard Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible for four centuries.
6 Three editions of the Greek Psalmter were published, one in 1481 in Milan, and two in Venice before 1498 by Aldo Manucio.
7 Cf. A. Sáenz Badillos, La filología bíblica en los primeros helenistas de Alcalá (Madrid 1990).
the date of publication, or perhaps Erasmus’ character and relevance in his social and intellectual milieu made his New Testament prevail over the Complutensian, but the critical weakness of the text became evident when he had to make multiple corrections through the five editions he published. In the second one he corrected some of the innumerable errata of the first, and only in the fourth did he rely on the Complutensian to improve his own text, especially in the Apocalypse. The severe disputes with López de Zúñiga did not allow Erasmus to accept openly the Complutensian readings. The result of his contumacy is well summarized in F. Delitzsch’s words: “it would have been a great fortune if it had not become Erasmus’ text, but the Complutensian one, the basis of the later called textus receptus”.

There were a few Greek fragments antedating the print of the Complutensian New Testament: the two songs Magnificat and Benedictus annexed to the Greek Psalter (Milan 1481, Venice 1486, and Venice 1496/1497), the first six chapters of John’s Gospel, published in Venice by Aldo Manuco in 1504, and fourteen verses of chapter 6 of John, printed in Tübingen in 1514.

Concerning the Latin text, the editors accepted Jerome’s translation which had become the standard text of the Church. But this Vulgate had suffered considerable corruptions derived from the exhaustive use that the Western world had made of it. Cisneros observed in the Vulgata the same deficiencies as did Jerome in the Greek Septuagint and the Old Latin versions; both scholars verified the differences between the current text and the Hebrew, and in different ways they strove to give the community the original true text, although Jerome’s translation obviously was not the assumed original Bible.

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8 1516, 1518-1519, 1522, 1527, and 1535 reprinted in 1540.
9 M. REVILLA RICO, La Poliglota de Alcalá (Madrid 1917) p. 131. I add a meaningful datum in favour of this evaluation: Ph. W. COMPORT, in The Quest for the Original Text (Grand Rapids, Michigan 1992), suggests that Nestle-ALAND’s 26th edition of their Novum Testamentum Graece (Stuttgart 1979) should be revised in fifty-eight cases on the evidence of the earliest manuscripts; it is worthly valuable that in ten out of these cases the Complutensian readings coincide with the papyrus.

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THE COMPLUTENSIAN POLYGLOT

No expenses nor political abilities were spared by Cardinal Cisneros to achieve this enterprise. In spite of the difficulties, he remained on the idea that renewal should begin with instruction, and returning to Biblical sources would be the sturdiest foundations for theology, philosophy, and even physics, in the new times. Although the medieval religious climate was critically put in question, theocratic principles did not vanish from social and political life. Still, it was the Church who guided intellectual progress —and power. Cisneros was sensitive to the forthcoming Reformation and gave the society two weapons to preserve the Catholic truth: a University, to obtain a well prepared intellectual elite, and the original text of the Bible, to provide theologians with an authoritative instrument for their argumentations. He sought a Bible without secrets, a book in which the texts could be compared and their differences be considered. He surely understood Origen’s philological intention in his Hexapla, with all the texts simultaneously visible in parallel columns.

It is surprising that the Greek Introduction, in the New Testament volume —the first printed, hence the most genuine expression of the spirit of the whole edition—, goes very straight in explaining how the text has been edited in order to preserve its purity, why such printing types have been chosen, and what mechanisms of control have been adopted to keep the versions in correspondence with the original text, etc. Only at the end the reader is drawn to religious considerations. That very first Introduction was developed throughout the several chapters of the main Prologue in the first volume.

The editorial conception and performance of the texts reveal that they were ruled by the Humanistic trend of returning to

10 Manuscripts, workers, typographer, vitellum, paper, binding, etc. were paid by Cisneros, fifty-thousand ducats odd, in opinion of his biographer Alvar GOMEZ (De rebus gestis a Francisco Ximeno Cisnero, archiepiscopo toltesano, 1569). Dr. HEPFEL in Der Cardinal Ximenes und die kirchlichen Zustände Spaniens am Ende des 15 und Anfange des 16 Jahrhunderts... (Tübingen 1844), says that those amounts could only be spent by a man that had the income of a king and the needs of a monk (cf. REVILLA RICO, La Poliglota de Alcalá, pp. 47-48).
11 As General Inquisitor, he could keep the works of the Bible free from domestic controversial attacks.
sources, based on philological practices. A didactic intention inspired the methodology in most of the techniques applied in the edition. The Polyglot was specifically intended for teaching, namely to make the Bible accessible to those men of letters who had overcome the intellectual decay of the preceding century.

Description

The text of the Hebrew Testament is placed in the outer part of every page. Before every word, a small superscript letter indicates the correspondence with a word or group of words of the Latin Vulgate. In the Targum and the Greek Septuagint such correspondence is not marked, since they have their own Latin translation. The Latin translation of the Targum is placed aside, and that of the Septuagint is interlinear. The roots of some Hebrew words—mainly verbs—are presented in a Masora Parva style in the margins, bearing their referential small letter.

The functions of accents in Biblical Hebrew (stress on words and phrases, identifying syntactical periods in order to set up the sense), have not been considered by the Complutensians. Probably because of the difficulties in printing, they restricted their use only to the two principal disjunctive accents: the sōf patah at the end of each verse, and the ‘āynah in the meaningful pauses. To indicate

13 See the Greek Introduction to the New Testament, volume V of the Polyglot: "... this work has been intended to help not only the very cultivated people, but all those who are dedicated to the Sacred Scripture...", and the final paragraph: "May you, lovers of instruction, receive with enthusiasm this divine and sacred work recently printed. And if you exert yourselves to be considered imitators of Christ and God of ours, and you get it, you must know that there is no pretext left to prevent you from entering the divine scripture."

14 Nebrija describes the uncultured preaching of some priests in his letter to Cisneros, "Epistula del Maestro de Lebría al Cardenal cuando avisó, que en la interpretación de las Diccionario de la Biblia no mandase seguir al Recogió sin que primero viessen su Obras," translated by R. Charías, Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos VIII (1903) pp. 493-496 (cf. Revilla Rico, La Políglosia de Alcalá, p. XVIII, note 4).

15 Sometimes these marginal notes are superfluous or erroneous. Such as in Exodus 16:21, where the word יָנָה 'like a burn' is appointed to the root פָּה פָּה פָּה 'vase' (otherwise vocalised with פָּדָה פָּדָה), while the root should be a hypothetical פָּה, or the proper word פָּה פָּה פָּה, as it is written in the text. This annotation is also superfluous because the angle above the y already indicates that this particle does not belong to the root.

the stress on particular words, they put a roman grave accent on the emphasised syllable of the paroxytone words only (אָנה for example), excluding that mark from the oxitone words, most frequent in Hebrew.


Like the Hebrew column, the text of the Targum also bears marginal notes with the roots of ambiguous words. The reason why the Complutensians restricted the Targum to the Pentateuch is that in other books of the Bible, according to Cisneros, the Targumim are corrupted, «sprinkled with Talmudic bagatelles», and do not deserve to be printed together with sacred codices.

The Septuagint column has no specific signs. The reason is explained in the Introduction to the V volume:

"But in the Greek edition of the Old Testament, because it is a translation and not an original text, it did not seem convenient to take off or to change anything from the common use of writing."

The intention of the editors to make it comprehensible to the reader is still visible in the Latin supralinear translation of the Greek column, different and apart from the Latin Vulgate.

The Greek types used by the printer were the cursive characters created by Aldo Manucio (1449-1515), not easily readable. They bear accents and breathings, and present the most common abbreviations, as the Latin also does.

In the New Testament volume the printing types were created by Brocarius himself, inspired in the handwriting of the 11th-12th
The Latin text was Jerome’s Vulgate. The former editors of this Vulgate had not done a good critical work; as Revilla Rico says “dieron muestras de ignorar la historia del texto y se preocuparon más de satisfacer la devoción de los fieles que de responder a las exigencias de la crítica que apenas conocían” 15. While the editions systematically reproduced the text printed in Paris in 1504, the Complutensians were working with ancient manuscripts. They used two manuscripts called by Pablo Cornejo «Biblia nostra antiqua», in Gothic characters, of the 7th(?)-9th centuries 21, and other later texts.

The dispute between Cisneros and Elío Antonio de Nebrija proves once more that the guide-lines of the work of the Polyglot implied a great respect towards the text. Nebrija, not far from Reuchlin and Erasmus’ opinion, thought that, being all Latin Bibles corrupted, it was necessary to correct them in accord with the Hebrew. Although he was right about the corruptions, the respect for the history and transmission of the originals won the quarrel, and Nebrija had to abandon his participation in the Polyglot. Even in our days the editions follow Cisneros’ criteria.

The question of whether the Complutensians had adjusted the Greek to the Latin in the New Testament motivated an ardent debate in the 18th century. J.J. Wetstein and J.S. Semler accused them of having modified the original Greek according to the Vulgate. Opposing that position, J.M. Goetz demonstrated that their accusation lacked thorough basis, arguing that if there are nearly nine hundred discrepancies between both texts, one can hardly say that the editors had made alterations to conform to each other. In the end Semler had to admit that he had adopted Wetstein’s opinion without even having seen a copy of the Polyglot 21. In our century, Revilla Rico adds another convincing proof. He revised an early 16th century manuscript 22 containing a New Testament Latin translation made from the Greek text of Alcalá,
or, more precisely, from the basic manuscripts of the Polyglot. Attached to this translation was another work, the Annotationes Complutenses Novi Testamenti, written most likely by Zúñiga, who annotated the discrepancies between the Vulgate and the Greek. These disagreements are found in the Complutian Bible, so we may accept that systematic corrections of the Greek according to the Vulgate were not made. Notwithstanding, the Greek New Testament could have been modified in very few passages; one of them, Mt 6:13, has been fully justified by the editors. In other cases, as 1 Jn 2:14, or Mt 10:25, and 2 Cor 6:15, the assumed modifications might have well been included in the manuscripts they handled. Thus, the alterations made by the Complutensian can be reduced to only one, the comma joanneum: «for there are three that bear witness on heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and the three are into one» 25. This probably was not in their copies, because there is no indication that they would have access to the few Greek manuscripts that contained these sentences. Another reason is that Zúñiga, when attacked by Erasmus about this point, relied upon Jerome’s Prologue to the Canonic Epistles, and not upon the manuscript evidence, to affirm that Greek manuscripts without those clauses are corrupt in this passage.

The texts of the Complutensian Polyglot are still in the need of a deep and sound study within the scope of today’s textual advances 26. Some formal difficulties make scholars reluctant to face that work; perhaps the inconveniences of localization of passages (verses were not yet numbered), the size of volumes inadequate for convenient handling, too many letters per sq. cm., etc. In addition, we have but vague references about the manuscripts used in the edition 27, which constitutes a problem to evaluate what extent the printed text is an eclectic edition. But by no means should these considerations prevent us from approaching this enormous work «igual a milagro», as it was qualified by its contemporaries 28. Every meaningful contribution is a worthwhile step for the history of our texts.

CISNEROS AND ARIAS MONTANO

The air of the Renaissance, joined to Cisneros’ aptitudes for coordination, were propitious for the religious-scientific enterprise of the Polyglot. The Cardinal had the right perception to make it feasible. He also had the opportune situation of unifying his power as a Regent with the dignity of being Grand Inquisidor, a relevant and very useful charge for matters of religious character.

Cisneros accomplished his purpose step by step. The works of the Alcalá Polyglot began in 1502; the 10th of January 1514 the New Testament was printed; in May 1515 volume VI, containing dictionaries and the Apparatus, was finished 29; and the 10th of (London s.d. [1872]): «It will be no easy matter to find a second person who would occupy himself for twenty years, as I have done, with this abstruse task...».

25 One of the first Latin versions of the Renaissance, and of great excellence (cf. REVILLA RICO, La Poliglota de Alcalá, p. 168).

26 Although it was present in the Greek copies, they omit a sentence which they considered a corruption originated by liturgical use. It is explained in a marginal note *ad loc.:* «... quod in massa graecorum postquam dicit illa verba orationis dominice, sc. Sed libera nos a male, sacerdos respondent ista verba supra dicta, sc. quoniam tuus est regnum, etc.» (cf. REVILLA RICO, La Poliglota de Alcalá, pp. 120-121).

27 1 Jn 5:7 δὲ τρίς εστὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες εν τῷ μαρτυρίῳ, οἱ πατὴρ καὶ οἱ υἱοί καὶ οἱ ἀγίοι πνεύματα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ εὐαγγελία. In a marginal note they refer to doctrinal points supported by St. Thomas, against Abbot Joachim. Note that the Complutensian wording *καὶ οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εὐαγγελίῳ* ‘and the three are into one’ does not reproduce exactly the Latin sentence *et hi tres unus sunt*, that should be *καὶ εἰς τὸν κόσμον εἰσελθεῖσαν* ‘and these three are one’ of which there are some witnesses.

28 Since the work of F. DETHLEFSCH, at the end of the last century, only partial studies have been done. He was right when he said at the end of his English Preface to his work written in German, Studies on the Complutensian Polyglot
June 1517, a few months before the death of Cisneros, the four volumes of the Old Testament left the printing house. The six hundred copies in paper and some more in vellum were not distributed till 1521. The causes of that delay are not clarified: negligence, obscure manipulations? After three years it was Pope Leo X who initiated the process. He dictated a motu proprio on March the 22nd 1520 with his solemn approval and thence the Bible was distributed. Curiously, the expectation that such delay generated did not bring economic gains; the volumes were sold at a very low price, and a good number of copies were lost in a ship wreck on the way to Italy. Very soon a reprint was required, and the Spanish King Philip II regarded with favour Plantin’s proposal of reediting the Complutensian Polyglot. He entrusted the Extremilian Hebrew scholar Benito Arias Montano with the revision of the texts.

When Philip II sent Arias Montano to the Netherlands with an introductory letter to the Spanish Governor the Duke of Alba, his plans embraced a renewal of the Complutensian only, but in fact he was sowing the seed for the new edition, the Biblia Regia, which took center stage in the second half of the century. The new enterprise seemed to be greater than the preceding, and led the Spanish Biblical humanism to its highest step.

In contrast with Cardinal Cisneros, Montano was a scholar, an intellectual worker, not a states-man. Although he did not handle the power that Cisneros had assumed, he enjoyed the consideration and benefits that he personally had won by his qualities from King Philip II and his Secretary Gabriel de Zayas. He was followed by the lists of variant forms of some of them, indicating how they must be corrected, and 3) a Grammar of the Hebrew language, probably the work of Alfonso de Zamora. Cf. REVILLA RICO, La Poliglota de Alcalá, pp. 149-157.  

34 This number was very small compared with the 3,300 of Erasmus first edition of the New Testament (cf. BERGER, La Bible au XVIe siècle, p. 57).

35 The text of the Bible was sold for six ducats, price much inferior to attain to the expenses. Cisneros was extremely generous with this enterprise.

36 Very few copies have been preserved (cf. REVILLA RICO, La Poliglota de Alcalá, pp. 43-44). This lack has been supplied some years ago with a facsimile edition prepared by the Biblical Spanish Foundation and the Complutense University of Madrid, and beautifully published in Valencia (1986). An interesting Anexo a la edición facsimilar de la Biblia Poliglota Complutense was published a year later (Valencia 1987) by several authors.

37 Threatened by the Inquisition, and strongly attacked by his adversaries, especially the Latin scholar and Greek Professor Léon de Castro. On the other hand he was highly admired and loved by his collaborators and disciples. His life was devoted to study and spiritual reflections. With an extremely delicate character, he cultivated deep friendship with Netherlanders and Spanish humanists, Catholic or Protestant, being fond of the Familia charitatis, the Family of love, a kind of sect that encouraged the practice of an inner anti-ceremonious religion. In his last years, in the solitude of his cottage in the Peña de Aracena (Huelva), he maintained a fluent correspondence with Plantin and his Antwerpian friends, which smoothed over the bitterness of the misunderstanding he had suffered from some Spanish fellows. Perhaps his intelligent and wise spirit was affected by the dark and gloomy atmosphere of some scholarly circles, and melancholia sprouted up several times from his youth. Although he appeared humble and pleasant, ambitious feelings led him during the first stage of his career.

The Polyglots were for Cisneros and Montano an endurance test and a demonstration of their intrepidity. They knew that the original text of the Bible would not perturb their faith, and they did not fear being accused of sharing activities with conversos, Jews, and reformists. Their work showed the broad face of religious Spain, otherwise specially strict and intolerant.

THE BIBLIA REGIA

Spanish Biblical development in the 16th century openly shows our Jewish heritage, first with the conversos Pablo Coronel and Alfonso de Zamora who were in charge of the Complutensian Old Testament, and then with Benito Arias Montano, significant scholar in Hebrew language. His human profile explains the contradictions in which the edition of the Biblia Regia was involved. Montano was defeated when he tried to widen the narrowness of some traditional minds that still...
did not accept the philological principles of the Complutensians, and also when in 1575 he went to Rome and attempted a more liberalized interpretation of the Tridentine decree about the Vulgate.

In spite of his failures he remained faithful to his conception of the Polyglot, and unified the efforts of the Antwerpian project, inspired by Andreas Masius and coordinated by Plantin in 1565. Guy and Nicolas Lefèvre de la Boderie and Raphelengius, Plantin’s son-in-law, disciples of the Parisian orientalist Guillaume Postel, collaborated in the enterprise, and when Montano arrived in 1568 they had the Syriac text of the New Testament already supervised by Postel. Plantin had obtained the Hebrew types from his friend Bomberg, who was then established in Cologne.

Although some authors disregard the Spanish contribution to this Polyglot, we must consider the reality as it was: from Spain came, on the one hand, the previous works of the Complutensians—in the Aramean Targum, for example—\(^{37}\), and the Polyglot itself with years of efforts; on the other hand, Montano’s own work on the Hebrew and the Latin Old and New Testament, plus the supervision of the whole, and the redaction of the treatises that constituted the volume of Apparatus full of critical and philological remarks. In addition, Philip II gave the royal support to commence the enterprise. Other collaborators assumed significant roles; these were the reports of the Spanish counsellors Pedro Serrano, Luis de Estrada and Ambrosio de Morales, who advised Montano of the dangers of some not very orthodox phrases and passages, on which León de Castro based his inquests; whatever the case Montano did not follow their words of warning.

The Louvain censors, Harlenius, Hunnaeus and Reyneri Goudanus, having been good advisors and collaborators at work, were also strong defenders in Montano’s fight for the Papal approval.\(^{38}\) In September 1572 Pope Gregory XIII signed a Motu proprio with the ecclesiastical acceptance. However, the attacks did not stop and León de Castro submitted the Vulgate question to the Congregatio Concilii who pronounced against Montano. Finally the Pope, willing to maintain a good relationship with Spain, asked the Inquisition for a clear settlement. It was the Jesuit Luis de Mariana who reported a rather impartial evaluation of the Polyglot, concluding that nothing in it was against the doctrinal principles. But Mariana’s severe judgement, disliking the frequent references to Jewish commentaries in the treatises, or the careless haste reflected on numerous errors—in his opinion—deeply hurt Montano’s self dignity. Finally, the Apparatus and some of the works of Montano were placed in the Index of 1607, which is an expressive sign of who won the struggle between biblicists and theologians.\(^{39}\)

The Biblia Regia compared with the Complutensian introduced various innovations:

- The Hebrew text was revised and modified with the Rabbinic Bible of Jacob ben Hayyïm. The spirit that inspired the subsequent modifications is plausible, but it did not bring philological improvements.\(^{40}\) The text was printed with accents.
- The Vulgata also was the Latin text of this Polyglot. The version of Santes Paginno was printed instead of the Vulgate in the sample that Plantin sent to Philip II, who immediately ordered Montano to cancel this decision.\(^{41}\) He argued in favour of the authority of the Vulgate in the universal Church as the most important of all the versions, and asked him to tell Plantin that this text should keep the same place as in the Complutensian edition, i.e. between the original Hebrew and the Septuagint. Santes Paginno’s version was printed in the Apparatus volume with corrections made by Arias Montano in order to approach the original Hebrew.
- In the New Testament the Syriac version (the Peshitta) was included, with its Latin translation by Guy Lefèvre de la Boderie. The Old Testament references were added on the margins of the Vulgate.

\(^{37}\) REIKERS, Benito Arias Montano, p. 48 and p. 54 note 1.
\(^{38}\) REVILLA RICO, La Poliglota de Alcalá, p. 7 note 2.
\(^{39}\) REIKERS, Benito Arias Montano, pp. 55-57.
\(^{40}\) F. PÉREZ CASTRO and L. VOET, La Biblia Poliglota de Amberes (Madrid 1973) p. 20.
\(^{41}\) Letter of 25 March 1568; REIKERS, Benito Arias Montano, pp. 141-142.
- The Aramaic Targum was printed also in Prophets and Writings, using the Complutensian unpublished material.

- The treatises on philological Biblical matters were published in the Apparatus volume, most of them written by Arias Montano. Of special interest is De arcano sermonis, a hundred and twenty-two pages divided into ninety-eight items; this was supposed to be a great obstacle for the Papal approval of the Polyglot. Montano explains in it the secret meanings of Hebrew words with cabalistic trends and Rabbinic methods.

In my opinion, the aim of the Royal Polyglot was also didactic, following and improving the methods of the Complutensian. However, some scholars argue in favour of the liturgical purpose of this edition for economic reasons; they are based on the assumption that, if the Bible would have been printed to be used in liturgy, the deficit generated in Plantin’s accounts would have been easily overcome. Against this argumentation we have the evidence of the Introductions and the treatises collected in the volume of Apparatus, showing that the work was intended to illustrate all those who searched the right knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures. The style and the intention of two small treatises, ...de varia in Hebraicis libros lectione, ac de Mazzoreth ratione atque usu, and ...de Psalterii Anglicani exemplari animadversione may provide an example of how far Montano was from the liturgical use of his Bible and how interested he was in propagating the correct comprehension of the words and the history of the text.

45 Both translated into Spanish by Emilia Fernández Tejero, «Dos tratados de Benito Arias Montano»; cf. also her commentary «Benedicti Arii Montani... De Mazzoreth ratione atque usu», and «Benedicti Arii Montani... De Psalterii Anglicani exemplari animadversione»; all three articles in Biblia y Humanismo, pp. 169-176, 155-160, and 161-167.

In the following century the Biblia Regia was still the object of controversy, but soon after it was relegated to a minor position and considered, roughly, as the cultural work of Philip II, or simply as a typographic monument. In reality it deserves a higher place in the history of Biblical humanism.

There were four great Polyglots, and all of them were published in modern times. Spain was the pioneer and merits the honour of having edited the first two: the Complutensian (1514-1517) and the Biblia Regia (1569-1572). They were the basis for the other two, one published in Paris (1629-1645/1655) in nine volumes, a great and expensive project, coordinated by Guillaume Le Jay, that did not enjoy a satisfactory reward, perhaps because of the difficulties in using it, and soon was supplanted by the fourth Polyglot, published in London (1654-1657) by Brian Walton in six volumes, a beautiful printing with a positive influence on all times.

The progressive improvements in quality and quantity of these later Polyglots did not degrade the value of the first two, which have regained the critical significance of the versions in reference to the original, and have opened the way to modern philology.

48 Other secondary and partial Polyglots were also printed in the 16th century. The Psalter of Gloucesters published in Geneva, 1516, in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Arabic and Aramic, with notes, The Psalter of Poltken, published in Cologne in 1518, in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Ethiopic (called Chaldaic); this version was reproduced in Walton’s Polyglot. Two Pentateuch published in Constantinople in 1546 and 1547; the first one presents the Hebrew text with the Targum, and the Persian and Arabic in Hebrew characters with a Rabbinic commentary; in the second one the two versions are replaced by a neo-Greek and a Spanish versions, also in Hebrew characters. Several Bibles, as the one published in Heidelberg in 1587, reproduce the texts in some of the part of the main Polyglots. A peculiar case was Elijah Hutter, a printer in Nuremberg, who published several imperfect Polyglots, some of them in twelve languages, at the end of the century.
49 In order to have a simultaneous look at all the texts it is necessary to handle two volumes at a time.
50 Like the Paris Polyglot, it included at least five old versions: the Old Testament in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, and Arabic, plus Samaritan Hebrew in the Pentateuch, each one with its Latin translation; the New Testament in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Arabic, Persian and Ethiopic, also with Latin translation.
RESUMEN

Dentro de la historia del texto bíblico, las Biblias Políglotas españolas del siglo XVI son obras monumentales que no merecen quedar en el olvido. En este artículo se ponen de relieve los aspectos históricos y filológicos que mejor transmiten su significación en el mundo renacentista y su trascendencia indudable para la filología bíblica. El tesón y la generosidad del Cardenal Cisneros primero y la sabiduría de Benito Arias Montano después hicieron posible que estas dos Biblias Políglotas españolas, Complutense y Regia, se llegaran a publicar. Constituyen el punto de partida de la moderna crítica textual bíblica, cuyos principios mantienen vivo aquel espíritu inicial que conduce a un mayor conocimiento del texto.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Texto bíblico, Biblias Políglotas, Renacimiento español, Cardenal Cisneros, Arias Montano, siglo XVI.

SUMMARY

Within the history of the Biblical text, the 16th century Spanish Polyglot Bibles are monumental productions that do not deserve to fall into oblivion. This article points out the historical and philological aspects that better reveal their significance in the world of the Renaissance and their unquestionable transcendence in Biblical philology. Cardinal Cisneros’ tenacity and generosity first, and then Benito Arias Montano’s knowledge made possible the edition of these two Spanish Polyglot Bibles, the Complutensis and the Royal. They constitute the point of departure of modern Biblical textual criticism, whose principles keep alive that initial spirit that leads to a wider acquaintance with the text.

KEYWORDS: Biblical text, Polyglot Bibles, Spanish Renaissance, Cardinal Cisneros, Arias Montano, 16th Century.