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MANUEL GÓMEZ-MORENO.

The Discovery.



Manuel Gómez-Moreno Martínez (1870-1970) was a renowned Spanish archaeologist, art historian and academic, and a pivotal figure in the study of Hispanic art and archaeology. His life and work spanned multiple disciplines, leaving a significant legacy in the cultural and historical field of Spain. His professional and personal work was characterised by a continuous curiosity and defence of the national artistic heritage (Gómez Moreno, 2016).

Gómez-Moreno was a multifaceted figure, typical of his time, halfway between erudition, philology, collecting and the new trends based on scientific positivism as a basis on which to approach historical and archaeological research. It also represents "the end of an era, that of 19th-Century scholars and antiquarians who tackled any subject of their interest, and the start of another, that of researchers trained in universities and research centres, specialising in certain subjects" (Olmos Romera, 2010).

Gómez-Moreno was one of the great academics of the 20th Century, due to his enormous bibliographical production and its subsequent repercussions, as well as his institutional involvement, projects, academic posts and honorary positions. He held positions in the State administration and in different cultural property management bodies such as the Alhambra, in his native Granada, the National Archaeological Museum, the Prado Museum, the Royal Academies and many others, in addition to his role on the *Junta para Ampliación de Estudios* [Council for the Extension of Studies] through the *Centro de Estudios Históricos* [Centre for Historical Studies], and the Central University itself (Bellón Ruiz, 2022).

Even today, he is still regarded as one of the most important figures in the world of Art History in Spain. His merits were recognised on numerous occasions, including by the Royal Academy of History (1915), the Academy of Fine Arts (1931) and the Academy of Language (1942), as well as his appointment to the boards of trustees of the world's most important museums and his award of Doctor Honoris Causa by several universities. He was also awarded the *Gran Cruz de Alfonso X el Sabio* [Grand Cross of Alfonso X, the Wise] and the *Gran Cruz de Isabel la Católica* [Grand Cross of Isabella the Catholic], as well as the Gold Medal for Work (López-Yarto Elizalde, 2012).

Gómez-Moreno, together with his wife, Elena Rodríguez Bolívar, worked on the drafting of several volumes of the *Monumental Catalogue of Spain*, specifically those for the provinces of Avila, Salamanca, Zamora and Leon. This catalogue was an initiative linked to the regenerationist spirit following the disaster of 1898, contributing to the discovery, study, inventory, and cataloguing of artistic treasures from Romanesque, Hispano-Muslim and Mozarabic art (Serrano, 2023).

As part of their work on the volume on Zamora, they made several visits to the province between 1903 and 1904. On their second visit, between June and August 1904, when they were opening the reliquaries in Zamora Cathedral, Elena Rodríguez, standing on a ladder, handed down the pieces to her husband, which were to be photographed and described. Among them were painted, carved, chiselled, ivory and enamel chests, large and small (Gómez-Moreno, 1995). Among these objects was, to the couple's surprise, the splendid Pyxis of Zamora (Martín Benito & Regueras Grande, 2003).

As María Elena Gómez-Moreno (1995) stated, "*She would always remember the emotion with which she held in her hands a marvellous carved ivory pyxis, which she gave to Manuel as the most valuable item in the reliquary; it was the famous jewellery box that the Caliph al-Hakan II had instructed to be carved for the mother of his son and possible heir, Abderramán*".

But the relationship with the Caliphal pyxis and Gómez-Moreno does not end with its discovery in Zamora Cathedral. Years later, in 1911, it was the archaeologist himself, aware of the sale of the pyxis and other pieces by the Cathedral Chapter to the antique dealer Juan Lafora - and fearing that the pyxis was leaving Spain - who informed the MP Guillermo Joaquín de Osma of its sale. The MP announced the sale of this jewel of heritage in the press and in Parliament, generating considerable controversy and a public scandal.

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