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ELENA RODRÍGUEZ-BOLÍVAR. The Hidden Discoverer.



Born in Granada in 1874, a cultured woman and pianist, although not an academically trained archaeologist. When she married the archaeologist and historian Manuel Gómez-Moreno in 1903, "*she learned by working with the best teacher*" (Lorenzo Arribas & Pérez Martín, 2022, p. 50).

Already during their courtship - since at that time they could not travel together before getting married - Elena supported Manuel from afar, when he was working on the *Monumental Catalogue of Spain: province of Avila* (Gómez-Moreno Martínez, 1900-1901) and the *Monumental Catalogue of Spain: province of Salamanca* (Gómez-Moreno Martínez, 1901-1903). During this period, she was in charge of specific tasks in the background, such as locating many of the materials from among the documentation that he required, or matters related to the administration of Manuel Gómez-Moreno on these trips (Lorenzo Arribas & Pérez Martín, 2022), such as sending clothes, sweets to give away at his destinations or even the transmission of family news and news about Granada, the city where he lived at that time.

But it was a few months after their wedding when Elena would board a train to Zamora to accompany Manuel in 1903, repeating the journey in 1904 and again in 1906 to Leon. On these trips, Elena Rodríguez-Bolívar gave her unconditional support to Manuel Gómez-Moreno, taking on certain "auxiliary" activities that would undoubtedly facilitate the archaeologist's work: questions of administration and infrastructure for accommodation in the different localities, accompaniment to facilitate the taking of inventory data to continue with the preparation of the *Monumental Catalogue of Spain*, as well as perfecting the technique of developing photographs, as Elena took care of her husband's printing plates (Lorenzo Arribas & Pérez Martín, 2022).

In addition to these functions, Elena Rodríguez-Bolívar was also responsible for the handwritten transcription of the *Monumental Catalogue of Spain: province of Zamora* (Gómez-Moreno Martínez, 1903-1905) and the *Monumental Catalogue of Spain: province of Leon* (Gómez-Moreno Martínez, 1906-1908).

It was the same transcription function that Manuel's sister, Sacramento Gómez-Moreno Martínez, had previously assumed (Liceras Garrido; Comino & Murrieta Flores, 2022) in the case of the originals of *the Monumental Catalogue of Spain: province of Avila* (Gómez-Moreno Martínez, 1900-1901) and *Monumental Catalogue of Spain: province of Salamanca* (Gómez-Moreno Martínez, 1901-1903).

But of all these "hidden" functions that Elena Rodríguez-Bolívar undertook in support of Manuel Gómez-Moreno, perhaps the most important was the discovery of what she herself would call "my Pyxis", that is, the Pyxis of Zamora.

Recognition of the role played by Elena Rodríguez-Bolívar in the discovery of the Pyxis of Zamora is primarily due to her daughter, María Elena Gómez-Moreno Rodríguez-Bolívar (1907-1991), who went on to become a Professor of the Institute of Geography and History and Director of the Museum of Romanticism of Madrid (*Ministerio de Cultura. Pares. Portal de Archivos Españoles*, undated). Thanks to her contribution, we know that on 3 August 1904 (Gómez-Moreno Rodríguez-Bolívar, 1995), her mother, Elena, on a ladder, handed her father, Manuel, various pieces from the reliquary of Zamora Cathedral (Lorenzo Arribas & Pérez Martín, 2022), "*painted, carved and chiselled ivory and enamel chests, large and small, among which was a marvellous carved ivory pyxis, which she gave to Manuel as the most valuable piece in the reliquary*" (Gómez-Moreno Rodríguez-Bolívar 1995, p. 183). It was what would later be known as the Pyxis of Zamora.

She cried out in amazement when she found that cylindrical ivory pyxis, beautifully carved with leafage and animals: it was, without a doubt, the jewel of the reliquary, unknown for centuries in its beauty by the clergy themselves and which, from then on, was for Elena "my pyxis" (Gómez-Moreno Rodríguez-Bolívar, 1995, p. 241). And so it would be until this pianist, who played until the end of her life, died in Madrid on 25 February 1972.

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