



CLAVIJO, RUY GONZÁLEZ DE

CLAVIJO, RUY GONZÁLEZ DE (d. 2 April 1412), ambassador from King Henry III of Castile and Leon (r. 1390-1406) to Tīmūr (Tamerlane; 771-807/1370-1405) in the years 805-08/1403-06 and author of an important travel account.

Clavijo came from a prominent family, but his birth date is unknown and his life poorly documented. He was famous for his oratorical skill and served as chamberlain to Henry and later to Henry's successor, John II (r. 1406-54). He built a sumptuous compound in the parish of San Andrés, Madrid, and was one of the witnesses to the king's will in 1406. Some time after Henry's death in December of that year Clavijo retired and built for himself and his descendants an elaborate sepulcher in the convent of San Francisco in Madrid, where he was eventually buried. The tomb was later replaced by that of Queen Juana, wife of Henry IV (r. 1454-74); the chapel was destroyed in 1784, its records burned in 1936 (Antonio, II, pp. 195-96; Álvarez de Baena, IV, p. 302; Clavijo, ed. López Estrada, p. lxxx).

Tīmūr, seeking to make common cause with European rulers against the Ottoman sultan Bayazid, also exchanged emissaries with the Paleologan rulers of Constantinople, Henry IV of England, the Venetians, the Genoese of Galata, the emperor of Trebizond, Charles VI of France, and Martin I of Aragon and Catalonia (Alexandrescu-Dersca, pp. 19-29, 92; Delaville Le Roulx, pp. 389-91). At Easter in 1402 Henry III sent two envoys, Payo Gómez de Sotomayor and Hernán Sánchez de Palazuelos. In return Tīmūr sent one Moḥammad Qāzī (or



possibly Ḥājī Moḥammad) with gifts that included two women captured from Bayazid's harem. Henry responded by sending a second embassy, which included Clavijo; Friar Alonso Páez de Santa María, a teacher of theology; the royal guard Gómez de Salazar; Alfonso Fernández de Mesa; and others (Clavijo, ed. López Estrada, pp. lvii-lxv).

The embassy set out from the port of Santa Maria near Cádiz on 22 May 1403, hoping to join Tīmūr in Georgia. On 24 October the Spaniards arrived in Constantinople, where they were well received by Emperor Manuel. They remained until 20 March 1404, then set sail for Trebizond, where they arrived on 11 April (Clavijo, ed. López Estrada, p. 74). As Tīmūr had by then left Georgia, the emissaries followed him to Samarqand via Erzincan (Arzenjān), Erzurum, K̄oy, Tabrīz, Solṭānīya, Ray/Tehran, Beṣṭām, Nīšāpūr, Ṭūs/Mašhad, Andkūy, Balk, Termed, and Keš. They rarely stopped for more than one or two nights and were everywhere provisioned, guided, and sent on without delay by Tīmūr's officials. They arrived on the outskirts of Samarqand on 27 Ṣafar 804/4 September 1404 and on 2 Rabī' I/8 September presented their letters (Clavijo, ed. López Estrada, pp. 155-56). Their stay coincided with Tīmūr's great convocation or *qūriltāy* on the eve of his campaign to China. According to Clavijo, the embassy's departure was delayed because Tīmūr was suffering from an illness. Then, on 14 Jomādā I/18 November, his officials announced that the Spaniards were to leave immediately, without a final audience; the Persian sources, on the other hand, suggest that Tīmūr received and dispatched them. They departed on 17 Jomādā I/21 November, six days before Tīmūr's departure for China (Clavijo, ed. López Estrada, pp. 203-05; Yazdī, II, p. 449).

The ambassadors returned via Bukhara to Qarābāg, in order to pay their respects to Tīmūr's grandson 'Omar Mirzā. Their arrival coincided with an uprising by 'Omar's most powerful follower, Jahānšāh Barlās, following Tīmūr's death; Clavijo and his companions were therefore sent on to Tabrīz, where their goods were impounded and they were forced to wait until mid-August. At that time they met 'Omar, and most of their belongings were returned to them, with gifts in addition. On 25 Ṣafar 808/22 August 1405 the Spaniards departed from Tabrīz, arriving in Trebizond on 17 September and in Constantinople on 22 October; they embarked for Genoa on 4 November and reached Henry's court on 24 March 1406 (Clavijo, ed. López Estrada, pp. 238-46).



Clavijo's work was based on his daily journal; it contains a full itinerary, with dates of arrival and departure, and detailed descriptions of most of the places he saw. He was most informative on architecture but also commented on population, agriculture, and political structure. The general accuracy of his account is confirmed by outside evidence, and his work is used as a source for the history of Timurid art (see Golombek and Wilber, pp. 174-76, 257, 272-74). Clavijo's account of Tīmūr's realm tallies with information in the Persian histories, while providing details on features considered too ordinary to be described by court historians. It contains a report of Tīmūr's *qūriltāy*, with particularly valuable descriptions of the physical layout, food, dress, and ceremonial connected with the feasts. The Persian sources confirm the presence of European ambassadors at this event (Clavijo, ed. López Estrada, pp. 156-205; Yazdī, II, p. 443). Clavijo also included accounts of historical events about which he learned by questioning the officials he dealt with. For example, he reported on the quarrels between the Byzantine emperor Manuel and his nephew John, as well as on Tīmūr's early career, his battle with Bayazid, and the early struggles after his death. In addition, he included information on the political status and recent history of border principalities tributary to Tīmūr. These accounts, though brief, preserve contemporary testimony by eyewitnesses, often censored in court histories, and agree closely with other contemporary sources originating outside the Timurid court (Manz, pp. 108-09, 116, 120-21).

Although in Renaissance Europe there was considerable interest in Tīmūr, the travel reports of Clavijo and others were little used in the popular historical and dramatic accounts of Tīmūr's life (Ellis-Fermor, p. 17). Juan de Mariana mentioned Clavijo's account in his *Historia general de España*, written between 1592 and 1601, but gave greater credence to other authorities. In the late 18th-19th centuries, however, scholars reevaluated Clavijo's accuracy, and his account came more fully into use (Mariana, XIX, pp. 11-12; Blanco-White, pp. 315-29).

Manuscripts of Clavijo's work are relatively rare. Two 15th-century examples remain: one in the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid (S. VX Bb. 72-9218), probably a copy of the manuscript used for the first publication of the work, and a second in the British Library (Add. 16613), which has not been used in any edition.



Gonzalo Argote de Molina published an edition, entitled *Historia del Gran Tamerlán e itinerario y enarración del viaje y relación de la embaxada que Ruy González de Clavijo le hizo*, in Seville in 1582. A second edition, by Antonio de Sancha, appeared in 1782 and a third in volume III of *Colección de crónicas de memorias de los reyes católicos*, published in Madrid in 1779 by Eugenio Llaguno y Amírola. De Sancha's edition was re-edited with modern orthography by Ramón Alba, under the title *Embajada a Tamorlán* (Madrid, 1984), as part of the series "Libros de los Malos Tiempos"; it is without annotation, and some of the original commentaries have been omitted. An English translation by Clements R. Markham, *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo to the Court of Timour at Samarcand A.D. 1403-6* (London, 1859), is based on de Sancha's edition, with variants from that of de Molina. An edition with Russian translation by I. I. Sreznevskii, *Ryui Gonzales de Klavikho. Dnevnik puteshestviya ko dvoru Timura v Samarkand v 1403-1406 gg.* (Sbornik otdeleniya russkago yazyka i slovestnosti Imperatorskoï Akademii Nauk 22, St. Petersburg, 1881), is also based on the editions of de Sancha and de Molina. Guy Le Strange, in the English translation *Narrative of the Spanish Embassy to the Court of Timur at Samarkand in the Years, 1403-1406* (New York, 1928), used the notes from the Russian edition. A Persian translation, by Mas'ud Rajabnīa (*Safar-nāma-ye Kelavīko*, Tehran, 1337 Š./1958), is based on Le Strange's translation. A Turkish translation, *Kadis'ten Semerkand'a Seyahet*, was published by Ömer Rıza Doğrul in Istanbul (n.d.). The standard edition is by Francisco López Estrada, *Embajada a Tamorlán* (Madrid, 1943), based on the de Molina edition and two manuscripts in the Biblioteca Nacional (nos. Bb. 72-9218 and 18050). The preface to this edition contains the most complete available description of extant manuscripts and of Clavijo's biography. A recent Russian translation by I. C. Mirokovoï, *Dnevnik puteshestviya v Samarkand ko dvoru Timura (1403-1406)* (Moscow, 1990), is based on the edition of de Molina and preserves variant spellings of names and titles. The text of the early manuscript in the Biblioteca Nacional (no. Bb. 72-9218) has been edited by Rodríguez Bravo and published on microfiche with the title *Historia del Gran Tamerlán* (Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, Madison, Wis., 1986); it includes concordances and a word-frequency list but no notes or introduction.



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