Publicación: **European Journal of Archaeology**
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Fecha aparición: **vol. VIII, núm. 3, 2005**

Arqueología española
de José Ramón Mélida, edición de Margarita Díaz-Andreu, Urgoiti Editores, Pamplona, 2004, CXCIX + 319 páginas

This study published by Urgoiti Editores in their series on the leading figures in the history of science in Spain is the third to deal with the archaeologists and pre-historians of the first half of the twentieth century. Following Jordi Cortadella's appraisal of Pere Bosch Gimpera (1981-1974) and Fernando Wulff's study of Adolf Schulten (1870-1960), and as we await Gloria Mora's forthcoming assessment of Hugo Obermaier (1877-1946), this study by Margarita Díaz Andreu centres on José Ramón Mélida y Alinari (1856-1933), one of the most frequently mentioned names in Spanish archaeology, but also one of the least known.

Margarita Díaz Andreu is admirably qualified to carry out an appraisal of this kind. She is one of the leading specialists in Spanish archaeological historiography, and was probably the first scholar to go beyond anecdote and hagiography and to focus directly on the characters and the issues under study. In a country in which academic schools have kept close control over research throughout the twentieth century, this fresh approach is particularly commendable. Among Díaz Andreu's other recent publications we should mention her *Historia de la arqueología. Estudios* (2002): *Arqueología y dictaduras: Italia, Alemania y España* (2003) and *Excavating Women. A History of Women in European Archaeology* (1998).

Díaz Andreu has used the documents held at the Archivo General de la Administración (in Alcalá de Henares), the Archivo de Clases Pasivas, and the archive at the National Museum of Archaeology (MAN) in Madrid lo reconstruct Mélida's arduous career in public service. She meticulously records the positions that he held, from bis beginnings in 1872 as assistant at the MAN and librarian at the Casa de Villahermosa, to his appointment as professor of Archaeology at the Central University in 1911 and as director of the MAN the following year. His career unfolded against a background of power struggles; the event that perhaps best illustrates this climate is his appointment to the chair in Archaeology at the Central University which fell vacant after the death of Juan Catalina García (1845-1911). The decision to create two chairs in place of one, in order to please the protectors of Mélida and Antonio Vives Escudero (1859-1925), was met by pressure from the supporters of Manuel Gómez Moreno (1870-1970) who secured the creation of a third post, and the typical struggles of warring factions intent on increasing their share of power ensued. In time, the influence of the Centre For Historical Studies, under the leadership of Gómez Moreno, did a great deal to undermine the prestige of the MAN, whose director was Mélida, during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

Like many other scholars, Mélida was a product of his time, but in contrast to others, he does not seem to have left an enduring legacy. He held influential posts such as professor of Archaeology at the Central University, director of the National Museum of Archaeology in Madrid, director of the Museum of Casts, director of the excavations at Mérida and president of the committee for the excavations at Numancia, and he was a member of the Academy of History, and the Academy of Fine Arts, and of innumerable institutions in Spain and abroad. The question that Díaz-Andreu poses at the start of her study is intriguing: how could a researcher of his ability fail to create a permanent school of archaeology with students who left their mark on teaching and research in pre-and post-Civil War Spain? The answer to this question is not easy to find, and it cannot be attributed merely to Mélida's introvert. In the Spain of the Bourbon restoration, the organization of archaeological and prehistoric research was in the hands of what Bosch Gimpera aptly termed the *kábilas*, in reference to the bloody colonial war waged by the King of Spain Alfonso XIII (1886-1941) governments in the Moroccan protectorate. Scholars, for the most part members of the landed nobility and the army, were self appointed experts who monopolized many of the key posts in fue nascent field of

Spanish archaeology. The Count of Vega de Sella and the Duke of Alba protected Hugo Obermaier, and helped to create the chair in the Primitive History of Man at Madrid's Central University which Obermaier held until the Civil War, and the Marquis of Cerralbo who financed his protégé Juan Cabré's extensive digs in necropolises in the plateau of Castile, and created the museum that today bears his name. This system was implanted even more firmly in the provinces, where, together with the lack of academic centres, the economic dependence on the gentry created an idiosyncratic network of amateur archaeologists and historians.

In Madrid, the landed nobility and financial barons controlled the system. The situation was much the same in Barcelona. Since its foundation, the history and archaeology section of the Institute of the Catalan Studies had been under the leadership of intellectuals from the nationalist bourgeoisie who, especially under Josep Puig i Cadafalch, carried out research until the 1930s, frequently basing their interventions and their decisions regarding ihe dissemination of research on political considerations and even on questions of social class. Their long-standing neglect of Pere Bosch Gimpera, founder of the Catalan School of Archaeology and a figure of international prestige is an example of their *modus operandi.*

Two events should have helped to improve the climate in which scientific research was conducted: the creation of the Junta de Ampliación de Estudios (the Board for Advanced Studies) in 1907 and the new Excavations Act, passed in 1911 and implemented soon afterwards. Nonetheless, the system of personal contacts so dear to Spanish society, in which university and institutional posts were assigned at society evenings and cafe meetings and personal interests vied with requests from relatives and dependents, meant that the possibility of travelling abroad lo complement the training acquired at Spanish schools was only open to a very few people, and that the assessment of archaeological interventions depended on the reports of the Committee for Palaeontological and Prehistoric Investigations, which granted many of the permits during the 1910s and 1920s to its members and friends.

Mélida was basically an indoor archaeologist: a man of the museum, suited more to the study of art histoty than lo archaeological fieldwork. His main achievements were in the field of heritage protection, through the declaration of national and architectural monuments, and his participation in the proposal for the defence of Spain's monumental and artistic patrimony, presented in 1926. His more general works were also published appeared towards the end of his career: *Arqueología Clásica* (1933), and *Arqueología Española* (1929), the latter reprinted in the present edition, so they did not serve as a reference for Spanish universities or acquire any renown abroad —in contrast, for instance, to Bosch Gimpera's *Etnologia de la Península Ibèrica* (1932), though the contents of the two works partially coincided. Mélida's network had a sympathy for French archaeology that would be later substituted by those closer to German archaeology, the dominant paradigm from the 1920s.

It is understandable that in the social climate of the times Mélida failed to create a lasting structure of teaching and research, in spite of his prestige and influence and the apparent availability of resources. His death in 1933 and the Civil War (1936-1939) meant that few of the archaeologists who were active under Franco's regime openly declared themselves to be his disciples. Neither Blas Taracena (1895-1951) director of the MAN after the war (1939-1951), nor Antonio García Bellido (1903-1972), Mélida's successor to the Madrid chair, can be thought of as such the farmer due to his area of research, and the latter because, as an old protégé of Obermaier's, he himself headed a particular school from 1939 onwards, breaking his ties with the past.

In summary, Díaz-Andreu's study is a brilliant, critical and absolutely necessary analysis of a key figure in the history of Spanish archaeology, and also of the social system which so conditioned the research of his time. This is not only a valid study to deepen into the History o Spanish archaeology. It is an example of how the analysis of academic networks have a key impact on the processes of knowledge formation in our discipline and even in its practice in issues such as management and legislation. As such many historiographers from elsewhere in the world would benefit from reading it and promised publication of a summary in English will be welcome.