

Rectors, nations, and student graffiti in the Universities of Bologna and Salamanca during the 16th century. Origins and influences of a common symbolic culture

Rectores, naciones y grafitis estudiantiles
en las Universidades de Bolonia y Salamanca durante
el siglo XVI. Orígenes e influencias de una cultura
simbólica común

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Recibido: 12/12/2025
Aceptado: 20/05/2026

DOI: 10.20318/cian.2026.10558

Abstract: In university cities such as Bologna and Salamanca, a symbolic culture linked to the student world emerged, transcending the limits of the academic realm and colonizing urban areas not directly associated

Resumen: En ciudades universitarias como Bolonia y Salamanca se generó una cultura simbólica ligada al mundo estudiantil que traspasó los límites de lo académico, colonizando áreas urbanas que no estaban directamente

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with teaching. This research focuses on some of these manifestations that overcame political borders, giving rise to exchanges and similar cultural practices in distant spaces. The starting point is a comparative framework between both universities, which shared, since the Middle Ages, a model in which students held great power and autonomy both inside and outside the *Studium*. Grouped into nations (*nationes*), they annually elected the rectors, who possessed important attributes within the university sphere. The evolution of this model is addressed in the second part, focusing on the transformations that took place at the Universities of Bologna and Salamanca during the 16th century. Particular attention will be paid to the Spanish influence of the College of San Clemente on the rectorate of the Bolognese *Studium*, participating in a student idiosyncrasy centred on the *natio* that was reflected in non-academic spaces through its own symbolism. Some of these manifestations are presented in the final part of the article: these are the acclamatory graffiti called «viva» in the Italian case, which were inscribed in public and private places to honour specific individuals as well as student nations. An analysis will be carried out based on their identification, dating, and influences with other similar symbols existing in the Salamanca area, the «vítor», seeking to establish the origin of a common practice that extended to other environments and territories.

Keywords: University, Bologna, Salamanca, 16th century, symbolic culture, student, nation, graffiti, vítor, viva.

vinculadas a la enseñanza. Esta investigación se centra en algunas de estas manifestaciones que superaron las fronteras políticas dando lugar a intercambios y prácticas culturales similares en espacios distantes. Se parte de un marco comparativo entre ambas universidades, las cuales compartieron, desde la edad Media, un modelo en el que los estudiantes ostentaron gran poder y autonomía tanto dentro como fuera del *Studium*. Agrupados en naciones, elegían anualmente a los rectores, con importantes atribuciones en el ámbito universitario. La evolución de este modelo es abordada en la segunda parte, poniendo el foco en las transformaciones que tuvieron lugar en las Universidades de Bolonia y Salamanca durante el siglo XVI. Particularmente se atenderá a la influencia hispana del Colegio de San Clemente en el rectorado del Estudio boloñés, participando de una idiosincrasia estudiantil en torno a la *natio* que se vio reflejada en espacios no académicos a través de una simbología propia. Algunas de estas manifestaciones son dadas a conocer en la última parte del artículo; son los grafitis de aclamación denominados “VIVA” en el caso italiano que se plasmaron en lugares públicos y privados para homenajear tanto a individuos concretos como a naciones de estudiantes. Se realizará un análisis a partir de su identificación, datación e influencias con otros símbolos similares existentes en el espacio salmantino, el “VITOR”, tratando de establecer el origen de una práctica común que se extendió a otros ámbitos y territorios.

Palabras clave: Universidad, Bolonia, Salamanca, siglo XVI, cultura simbólica, estudiante, nación, grafiti, vítor, viva.

1. Bologna and Salamanca: Universities of Students, Nations, and Rectors

The identification between city and university in the cases of Bologna and Salamanca is a feature that has marked their urban evolution and remains to this day. Both emerged in the medieval period, from pre-existing centres of study, in line with the urban and cultural development experienced by Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries. Originally, the spaces they occupied

were poorly defined, and only with the passage of time did they consolidate in the immediate vicinity of the centres of political and economic power of their cities.

1.1. *The universitas scholarium: student prominence*

The University of Bologna, founded in 1088, is the *alma mater* of the higher education centres that subsequently emerged in Europe. The term «university» did not indicate, in its beginnings, universal studies, but rather a corporation of students, the *universitas scholarium*, which would be determinant in the evolution of the *Studium*. The Bologna model began as a guild of foreign students who possessed organizational and jurisdictional autonomy parallel to the faculty; in fact, originally, the students hired their professors. Later, at the end of the 12th century, the students formed themselves into nations – that is, groups based on geographical origin with bonds of solidarity among their members¹.

In the sphere of the Iberian Peninsula, one would have to wait until the 13th century to witness the birth of the *Studia Generalia*, among them that of Salamanca. Founded by King Alfonso IX of León in 1218, the *Studium Salamanticensis* was partially inspired by the model of the *universitas scholarium* of Bologna. Therefore, both shared the importance of the student collective in institutional evolution from their beginnings in the medieval period. However, there were also notable differences, as Salamanca originated as a royal foundation in the cathedral environment, enjoying the influence and protection of the Pope and with the figure of the *maestrescuela* (scholasticus) as the depositary of the jurisdictional function and the conferring of degrees. This allowed, among other factors, for the development of a certain balance of power between students and the faculty, an issue that has led the Salamanca case to be considered a «model of its own»².

¹ Javier García, “El modelo ‘boloñés’ de Universidad. Imagen jurídica e historiográfica”, in *Universidades clásicas de la Europa Mediterránea: Bolonia, Coimbra y Alcalá. Miscelánea Alfonso IX*, ed. Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro and Juan L. Polo (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2006) 19 and 21; David A. Lines, “The University and the City: Cultural Interactions”, in *A Companion to Medieval and Renaissance Bologna*, ed. Sarah Rubin (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 439.

² José M. Monsalvo, “El Estudio y la ciudad en el período medieval”, in *Historia de la Universidad de Salamanca*, coord. Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2002), vol. 1, 447-448; Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro, “La Universidad de Salamanca, evolución y declive de un modelo clásico”, *Studia Historica: Historia Moderna* 9 (1991): 9-21.

In any case, student power became omnipresent in both university cities, with the structure of nations or territorial student confraternities as a common element³. In the university model of Bologna, nations were based on territorial compatriotism, corporatism, and welfare purposes. Furthermore, they possessed a crucial role in the decision-making of the *Studium*: they participated in the governance of the university and annually elected one of their members as rector⁴. The first nations constituted in the University of Bologna for law students were the Germanic, the English, that of the Provençals, and that of the Spaniards, from the end of the 12th century, although it was not until the second half of the 13th century that a more precise definition of the legist nations appeared, grouped into the *universitas ultramontanorum* (for those from beyond the Alps) and *cismontanorum* (for students from the Italian peninsula); each with its own rector. At that time, the ultramontanes numbered thirteen: Germans, English, Normans, French, Picards, Burgundians, Poitevins, Turonenses and Cenomani, Provençals, Spaniards, Catalans, Hungarians, and Poles; and the cismontanes totalled three more: Lombards, Tuscans, and Romans. To these must be added, from the 14th century onwards, the nations of students who were not legists –the artists– with their own rector at the head of four nations: three Italian (Lombards, Tuscans, and Romans) and one foreign (*ultramontanorum*)⁵.

On the other hand, the universalist character acquired by some *Studia Generalia* through the papal concession of the *licencia ubique docendi* fostered the foundation of «national» colleges that orbited the universities⁶. These institutions, originally charitable, were constituted as spaces of confluence

³ The classic study on student nations is that of Pearl Kibre, *The Nations in the Mediaeval Universities* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1948). A later analysis of European nations and university colleges is that of Aleksander Gieysztor, "Management and Resources", in *A History of the University in Europe*, eds. Walter Rüegg and Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 110 and 114-118.

⁴ Albano Sorbelli, "La «nazione» nelle antiche università italiana e straniera", *Studi e memorie per la storia dell'università di Bologna* 16 (1943): 92-232; Roberto Greci, "L'associazionismo degli studenti dalle origini alla fine del XIV secolo", in *Studenti e università degli studenti dal XII al XIX secolo*, ed. Gian P. Brizzi and Antonio I. Pini (Bologna: Istituto per la storia dell'Università, 1988) 13-44.

⁵ Antonio I. Pini, "Le 'naciones' studentesche nel modello universitario bolognese del medioevo", in *Studenti e dottori nelle università italiane: origini – XX secolo*, ed. Gian P. Brizzi and Andrea Romano (Bologna: Clueb, 2000) 21-29, especially 27.

⁶ Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, "Mobility". In *A History of the University in Europe*, eds. Walter Rüegg and Hilde de Ridder-Symoens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 282-284; Dámaso de Lario, *Escuelas de imperio. La formación de una élite en los Colegios Mayores (siglos XVI-XVII)* (Madrid: Dykinson, 2019).

for students of the same origin, who, through a scholarship for residence at the college, came to be trained in the classrooms of Bologna. In the long run, they would end up becoming elitist centres that admitted students based on a specific provenance, usually coinciding with that of their founder. This was the case of the Royal College of San Clemente in Bologna, founded by Cardinal Gil de Albornoz in 1364 to host Spanish students⁷.

Following the Bolognese example, student nations also existed in the University of Salamanca, which congregated mainly students, but also professors, of common geographical origin. In the manner of a confraternity, they had bonds of solidarity and elements that distinguished them from other nations: meeting places, worship, registries, etc. These nations were eight in number and came mainly from the territories that were being added to the Spanish Monarchy: Campos (including Old Castile and León); Vizcaya (including the Basque Country, Navarre, and La Rioja); Galicia; Portugal; Extremadura; La Mancha (New Castile and Murcia); Andalusia; and the Crown of Aragon (Aragon, Catalonia, Valencia, Mallorca, Sardinia, Sicily, and Italian territories)⁸. As occurred in the Bolognese space, the nations played an important role in the distribution of power in the *Studium*, establishing themselves as pressure groups and articulating the vote corporately in rectoral elections, in councillorships (*consiliaturas*), and, particularly for Salamanca, in the oppositions for professorial chairs⁹.

⁷ Candido Mesini, "Gli spagnoli a Bologna prima della fondazione del Collegio di Egidio di Albornoz (1364-1369), in *Studia Albornotiana, XII, El cardenal Albornoz y el Colegio de España*, ed. Evelio Verdura y Tuells (Bologna: Publicaciones del Real Colegio de España, 1972) vol. 2, 41-71. A bibliographical compilation in Baltasar Cuart, "El Colegio de San Clemente de los españoles de Bolonia en la Edad Moderna", in *Universidades clásicas de la Europa Mediterránea: Bolonia, Coimbra y Alcalá*, eds. Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro and Juan L. Polo (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2006), 67-92. More recently, Manuel Parada, coord., *Domus Hispanica. El Real Colegio de España y el cardenal Gil de Albornoz en la historia del arte* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2018).

⁸ Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro, "La nación de Vizcaya en las Universidades de Castilla. Siglos XVI-XVIII", *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante* 20 (2002): 11-46; Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro, "La corona de Aragón en la Universidad de Salamanca: siglos XVII y XVIII", in *Aulas y saberes. VI Congreso Internacional de Historia de las Universidades Hispánicas* (Valencia, Universidad de Valencia, 2003) vol. 2, 399-417; Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro and Juan L. Polo, "Valencianos en Salamanca", in *Historia de la Universidad de Valencia*, coord. Mariano Paset (Valencia, Universidad de Valencia, 2000) vol. 2, 309-317; Ángel Marcos de Dios, "Estudiantes de Brasil en la Universidad de Salamanca durante los siglos XVI y XVII", *Revista de Historia* 105 (1976): 215-230; *Portugueses na Universidade de Salamanca (1550-1580)* (Salamanca: Luso-Española de Ediciones, 2005); Francisco J. Rubio Muñoz, "La nación de Extremadura en la Universidad de Salamanca durante su etapa clásica", *Norba: Revista de Historia* 24 (2014): 225-256.

⁹ Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro, "Cátedras, grupos de presión y naciones de estudiantes en

This corporate vote was also related to the existence of the major and minor colleges, which, imitating the College of San Clemente in Bologna, had emerged since the 15th century to host students with few resources, often of the same provenance as their founder. In the Salamanca sphere, there were four major colleges (San Bartolomé, Arzobispo, Oviedo, and Cuenca) and, over time, they also became factories for bureaucrats who later monopolized important positions in the Spanish Monarchy and the Catholic Church¹⁰.

1.2. A Student Rector as Head of the Studium in Bologna and Salamanca

The functioning of the universities of Bologna and Salamanca was marked by the annual election of rectors from among the students. In the case of Bologna, this was a practice that appeared as early as the 12th century, evolving in the following century towards the aforementioned system of universities of ultramontanes and cismontanes. The importance of legal studies in Bologna meant that the rectors of these two legist universities emerged prior to other groups, such as physicians and artists. Over time, a rotation system was established to serve as rector and councillors as the nations developed within these universities. They were elected annually, and only exceptionally could they repeat a mandate. From the end of the 15th century, rectors were recognized with the title of *Magnificus* and with the privilege of bearing arms and being accompanied by four pages. They were exempt from examination and graduation fees, in addition to holding an honorary chair associated with a salary. They held civil and criminal jurisdictional

la Salamanca del siglo XVII”, in *Colegios y universidades: del antiguo régimen al liberalismo*, coord. Enrique González and Leticia Pérez (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-CESU, 2001), 107-132.

¹⁰ Dámaso de Lario, *Escuelas de imperio. La formación de una elite en los Colegios Mayores (siglos XVI-XVII)* (Madrid: Dykinson-Universidad Carlos III, 2019); Dámaso de Lario, “Orígenes sociales de los colegiales mayores españoles (1590-1650)”, in *Doctores y escolares: II Congreso Internacional de Historia de las Universidades Hispánicas*, eds. Pedro Ruiz and Mariano Peset (Valencia: Servei de Publicacions Universitat de Valencia, 1998), vol 1.1, 319-344; for the Salamanca major colleges, Ana Carabias, *Colegios Mayores, centros de poder: los colegios mayores de Salamanca durante el siglo XVI* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1986); Ana Carabias, “Salamanca, “académica palanca” hacia el poder”, in *Letrados, juristas y burócratas en la España moderna*, coord. Francisco J. Aranda (Cuenca: Ediciones Universidad Castilla-La Mancha, 2005), 23-60.

functions over the scholars, in addition to establishing schedules, academic disputes, and faculty salaries¹¹.

However, the office of rector implied numerous expenses that required paying for various celebrations at their own cost, in addition to maintaining a retinue. For this reason, it became increasingly difficult to find students to accede to the rectorate, a fact that influenced the reduction, during the 16th century, to a single rector for the two legist universities (*rector utriusque universitatis*). Finally, the gradual loss of jurisdictional privileges of the students in favour of the pontifical legates contributed greatly to their disappearance, such that after 1580 no rector was elected again¹².

In the Salamanca sphere, the position of rector is cited in the 13th century in the *Partidas* of Alfonso X the Wise, although, unlike the Bolognese case, it fell upon a single student who did not have jurisdiction over the Study, which was exercised by the *maestrescuela*¹³. Power, therefore, was bi-cephalous and shared, with conflicts between both figures being frequent¹⁴. The rector was also a student, usually of noble origin, who received no salary other than certain income for presiding over acts at the university, and was obliged to reside in Salamanca. Excepting the areas of the exercise of university jurisdiction, the rector was the head of the same, with functions similar to those described in the case of Bologna: presiding over meetings and acts, study plans, assignment of lessons, in addition to others specifically in Salamanca, such as the provision of chairs, part of the economic management, and the maintenance of the library and the chapel. However, his power was

¹¹ The description of the office of rector in Carlo Malagola, *I rettori nell'antico Studio e nella moderna Università di Bologna* (Bologna: Stabilimento Tipografico Successori Monti, 1887), 4-12, where he points out that the distinctive title of *Magnificus* began in 1494.

¹² In the absence of the election of a rector, especially from 1580 onwards, the figure of the prior appears, who was to be elected by the university councillors. He was assisted by two presidents or councilors. Only in 1604 was there a new election of a rector, which fell to Spinola di Genova, being the last to hold the office before the Bolognese government assumed power for two centuries. Throughout the 16th century, the jurisdictional attributions of the rector would end up falling to the pontifical legates, assuming them under the denomination of Protectors of the *Studium*. Malagola, *I rettori...* 6-8.

¹³ Águeda Rodríguez, *El oficio de rector en la Universidad de Salamanca y en las Universidades hispanoamericanas* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1979), 37. This legal system dedicates Title XXXI of Partida II to the functioning of the *Studia*, mentioning in Law VI the position of rector and his student election.

¹⁴ The *maestrescuela* (scholasticus) also had the power to confer the degrees of licentiate and doctor or master. María P. Alonso, *Universidad y sociedad corporativa: historia del privilegio jurisdiccional del Estudio salmantino* (Madrid: Tecnos, 1997).

shared and mediated by other assembly powers, the cloisters, where students, professors, and doctors met to debate issues of all kinds¹⁵.

University regulations established the requirements to be rector: to be enrolled in the university, not to be re-elected in the following two years, not to have been born in Salamanca, and not to hold other offices such as professor, canon, or chaplain. The election of the rector, carried out annually by the rector and the cloister of councillors finishing their mandate, was a process supervised by the *maestrescuela* that concluded with a solemn ceremony attended by the entire university guild¹⁶. The acts for the new rector continued with a festive parade through the streets of Salamanca in which the students organized great celebrations that often ended in riots.

In short, the office of rector had a very established tradition in the universities of Bologna and Salamanca, something that was embodied in the regulations and that defined their attributions, rights, and obligations. Furthermore, in both universities, the students had the exclusivity to occupy this function of governing them, heading the scholars and representing the student power of the nations. Precisely rectors and nations would play a leading role in some of the changes in both *Studia* during the 16th century, as we will see below.

2. *The Arrival of Modernity: Evolution of a University Model*

At the beginning of the 16th century, the political panorama in Europe became more complex. A large part of the monarchies experienced a concentration of power in the figure of princes and kings, a trend that, in the Spanish case, was already visible at the end of the previous century, although it became more palpable as the century advanced. This strengthening of the monarchs also had its correlate in the Papal States, where the power of the Pope ended up imposing itself in some cities that had enjoyed autonomy, as was the case of Bologna, governed until the beginning of the *Cinquecento* by various factions of the aristocracy.

¹⁵ There was a cloister of consiglieres, composed of students who assisted the rector in teaching matters, in addition to the cloister of deputies, for economic matters, formed by students and professors, and the full cloister, for the most important matters.

¹⁶ Rodríguez, *El oficio de rector*, 38.

2.1. University Transformations in Bologna during the Cinquecento

Historiography has traditionally pointed out that in the trajectory of the University of Bologna, a stage of expansion and internationalization is observed until the beginning of the 16th century, after which a phase of contraction and regionalization would open. Generally, Bologna's return to the Papal States in 1506 has been considered a period of progressive decline that had its correlate in the *Studium*. However, in recent decades, this idea of university decline has been nuanced by the phenomenon of *peregrinatio academica*, the examination of which has advanced to estimate the temporary presence of foreign students in academic poles like Bologna. This, added to the absence of statistical sources for the period, makes it difficult to determine the total number and provenance of the students. While it is true that, contrary to what had occurred in previous eras, students of Italian origin were the majority from that moment on, it is also true that Bologna continued to attract numerous foreign students¹⁷.

These nuances have recently been expanded, arguing more in favour of a stage of changes based on the analysis of the supposed symptoms of decline¹⁸. For example, the disappearance of the office of rector at the end of the 16th century has been linked to the contraction of the institution and student prominence, especially of foreigners. However, it was an office that implied enormous expenses that were increasingly difficult for students to assume. To this could be added the desire to confront a student power that often escaped the control of the authorities. On the other hand, the decrease in student enrolments was not a direct indicator of the decline in the quality of its studies. Bologna had to share space with other universities and centres of knowledge that emerged and grew in the Early Modern Age. Furthermore,

¹⁷ Gian Paolo Brizzi, "Per una geografia umana delle università italiane: studenti e laureati in età moderna", in *Lauree. Università e gradi accademici in Italia nel medioevo e nella prima età moderna*, eds. Anna Esposito and Umberto Longo (Bologna: Clueb, 2013) 113-142; Gian Paolo Brizzi, "La mobilità studentesca" in *Atlante delle professioni*, ed. María Malatesta (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2009) 10-17; Gian Paolo Brizzi, "Matricole ed effettivi. Aspetti della presenza studentesca a Bologna fra Cinque e Seicento", in *Studenti e università degli studenti dal XII al XIX secolo*, ed. Gian P. Brizzi and Antonio I. Pini (Bologna: Istituto per la storia dell'Università, 1988) 227-259. Currently, the ASFE project led by Gian Paolo Brizzi provides an account, through a complete academic database, of the phenomenon of *peregrinatio academica* at the University of Bologna during the Modern Age.

¹⁸ The changes indicated have been widely addressed by David A. Lines, *The dynamics of learning in early modern Italy: arts and medicine at the University of Bologna* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2023) 13-19.

the stagnation and conservative character of the curriculum did not prevent intellectual development, while Bologna's classic orientation towards legal studies was shifting towards arts and theology.

Mention should also be made of the political and religious relations with Rome, such that the theoretical centralization imposed from the capital of the Papal States would have influenced university autonomy and, with it, cultural impoverishment. The reality, however, was that of negotiation and consensus with the urban oligarchies that did not prevent the opposition of its members to quite a few measures, although the tendency, in the long run, was that of greater control by the Pope over the university. And finally, the action of the Inquisition or the attempt at control by the Jesuits influenced in a variable way the access to European knowledge despite censorship. The truth is that since 1550, successive reforms are symptomatic of a moment of changes and instability, although this context did not prevent intellectual and scientific development¹⁹.

Thus, academic dynamism and mobility in the Bolognese sphere continued to be an important characteristic in the 16th century, even after the Protestant rupture. The Reformation broke Christian unity, and with it, traditional communication and university solidarity at the European level, becoming more confessional and national²⁰. However, some institutions benefited from this change, as was the case of the College of San Clemente in Bologna. Despite the measures that, from the Spanish Monarchy, attempted to prevent student mobility in its territories to avoid the entry of Protestantism, the truth is that the 16th century coincided, paradoxically, with the moment of splendour of this institution. The legislation of Philip II, in fact, favoured the arrival of Spanish students to the University of Bologna through said college, since the pragmatic of 1559 excepted it from the prohibitions on leaving to study abroad²¹.

Consequently, throughout the 16th century, relations with the Spanish sphere continued to be fluid, with a constant presence of Spanish students

¹⁹ Lines, *The dynamics of learning*, 19.

²⁰ Rafael Gibert, "Las Universidades en tiempos de Carlos V", in *Carlos V (1550-1558)*, eds. Manuel Fernández and Antonio Gallego (Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada, 2001), 479.

²¹ This exception responds to the Monarchy's need to maintain the flow of bureaucrats and loyal servants who were trained in Bologna through the college, as demonstrated by Dámaso de Lario, *Sobre los orígenes del burócrata moderno. El Colegio de San Clemente de Bolognia durante la impermeabilización habsbúrgica (1568-1659)* (Madrid: Dykinson-Universidad Carlos III, 2023), 98.

in the city seeking opportunities to achieve legal degrees²². The data confirm this: 576 Spaniards graduated in law during the 16th century at the University of Bologna, compared to 205 in the previous century and 127 in the 17th century²³. Likewise, the College of San Clemente maintained a significant number of collegians (424) between 1501 and 1600, more than double that in the 17th century (192) and with figures quite like those of the 15th century (461)²⁴.

On the other hand, the Spanish kings took an interest in controlling and protecting the College, especially after the personal visit of Emperor Charles V in 1530. Both this monarch and his successors granted various privileges to the collegians, similar to those held by universities like Salamanca, Alcalá, or Valladolid. This implied a higher level of interference and control to the detriment of the influence of the papacy. And in the same line acted the urban and pontifical authorities and some families of the Bolognese oligarchies, who showed a growing interest in benefiting the college and its members²⁵.

The presence of Spaniards in Bologna at this time was not only reflected in the student contingent, with students even coming from the New World²⁶, but also in the representativeness they had in the organs of university power. The rector of the College of San Clemente, since its foundation, had the privilege of sitting next to the rector of the University of Bologna in

²² On the general framework of relations between Salamanca and the Italian sphere, Antonio Pérez, "Salamanca y las Italías, etapas medieval y renacentista", in *Historia de la Universidad de Salamanca*, dir. Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2006), vol. 3.2, 1163-1173; Dámaso de Lario, "Salamanca y las Italías, etapa Moderna", in *Historia de la Universidad de Salamanca*, dir. Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2006): vol 3.2, 1175-1191.

²³ Antonio Pérez, "Españoles doctorados en Bolonia en derecho civil y/o canónico (1369-1788) in *Las Universidades hispánicas. De la Monarquía de los Austrias al centralismo liberal*, ed. Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2000), vol. 1, 373-386.

²⁴ Antonio Pérez, *Proles Aegidiana*, (Bologna: Studia Albornotiana-Publicaciones del Real Colegio de España, 1979) vol. 1, 21-22.

²⁵ Pérez, *Proles Aegidiana*, 22; Baltasar Cuart, "Colegiales y burócratas. El caso del Colegio de San Clemente de los españoles de Bolonia en la primera mitad del S. XVI", *Studia Historica: Historia Moderna* 1 (1983): 65-93; Dámaso de Lario, "Conflictos y reformas del Colegio de España en Bolonia durante la impermeabilización hasburguesa (1568-1659)", in *Studia Albornotiana*, ed. Evelio Verdera (Bologna: Publicaciones del Real Colegio de España, 1979), 500-503; Miguel J. López-Guadalupe, *Redes y estrategias de ascenso en la Monarquía Hispánica. La familia Malvezzi y el Colegio de España en Bolonia (siglos XV-XVI)* (Madrid: Dykinson, 2023).

²⁶ Pascual Tamburri, "La nación de las Indias en la Universidad de Bolonia (siglos XVI-XIX). Raíces medievales de la cultura hispano-americana", *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie IV, Hª Moderna* 13 (2000): 339-364.

the cloister, an issue that often caused conflicts of precedence²⁷. However, the most paradigmatic fact was the frequent presence, during the 16th century, of a Spanish rector as head of the University of Bologna. Although Bolognese university regulations did not allow collegians to exercise the office of rector from the end of the 14th century, the truth is that from the 16th century onwards it became increasingly frequent for the rectoral vacancy to fall upon an *albornozi* collegian²⁸.

Consequently, of the 100 students who occupied the position of rector between 1501 and 1580, 25 came from the college (25%). Of them, 19 were rectors of the legist universities (of a total of 60 for that period, 31%) and 5 were artists (of 39, 12.8%)²⁹. During the first fifty years of the 16th century, a total of 12 Spanish collegians held the position, while in the period 1551-1580 the concentration was greater, with 13 rectors in thirty years. From the academic year 1552-1553 until the disappearance of the office in 1580, there was always a rector of Spanish origin except in four academic years. Furthermore, there were two students who extended their mandate for more than one year, Pedro Martínez de Villaescusa (legist rector from 1509 to 1511) and Pedro Martínez de Membrilla (artist rector from 1555 to 1557), while the last rector, Lope de Barahona, assumed the rectorate of the legist and artist universities in the academic year 1579-1580. From that moment until 1604 the position was not filled, being substituted by figures such as that of the prior³⁰. Thus, the *Domus Hispanica* acquired great prominence in the academic dynamics of Bologna, consolidating a presence in the university and in the city whose visual embodiment will be addressed in the third part.

2.2. Rise and Expansion of the University of Salamanca in the 16th Century

In contrast to the trends indicated for the University of Bologna, the case of Salamanca is quite different, as historiography is unanimous in pointing

²⁷ Some of these conflicts are collected in Antonio Pérez "La precedencia del Rector del Colegio de España. Su defensa frente a la Universidad de Bolonia en 1565", in *Studia Albornozi*, ed. Emilio Verdera (Bologna: Publicaciones del Real Colegio de España, 1979), 699-731.

²⁸ Celestino Piana, *Nuovi documenti sull'Università di Bologna e sul Collegio di Spagna* (Bologna: Publicaciones del Real Colegio de España, 1976), vol 1., 95-96; Pérez, *Proles Aegidiana*, 22; this custom was sanctioned by Pope Paul III in 1539.

²⁹ Of a total of 100 rectors (60 legists, 39 artists, and 1 of both).

³⁰ Malagola, *I rettori...* 6; Lines, *The Dynamics of Learning*, 39.

to the beginning of the Modern Age, and especially the 16th century, as the moment of greatest splendour and institutional consolidation of the Salamanca *Studium*³¹. The prominence of Salamanca and, to a lesser extent, other universities such as Valladolid or Alcalá, is better understood if one attends to the process of formation of the modern State in the Spanish sphere. At the end of the Middle Ages, the budding Spanish Monarchy began to structure itself upon a complex bureaucratic and administrative framework responsible for executing royal authority. The Catholic Monarchs initiated a process of consolidation of royal power through the incorporation into their service not only of the traditional nobility but also of a growing contingent of *letrados* (jurists), whose university training allowed them to assume key functions in political decision-making.

The universities thus became decisive spaces for the training of cadres destined to integrate the increasingly complex bureaucratic and administrative apparatus of the Crown and the Catholic Church. It is not coincidental, therefore, that as late as 1606 it was stated regarding the recognition of the University of Salamanca in all Spanish territories, that «to it alone one goes to ask for laws, advice, and rights for good living and governing, drawing from here men for the government of its Kingdoms and Monarchy»³². This centrality is understood in the context of the wide proliferation of higher education institutions in the Spanish world during the 16th century, a growth that surpassed its medieval precedents.

However, to understand this expansion, it is convenient to go back to the sociocultural context generated since the end of the Middle Ages. During this period, a progressive process of transformation in the mechanisms of social ascent developed, increasingly associated with the obtaining of intellectual merits, whose valuation intensified notably. The university *cursus honorum* came to be equated, at least in symbolic terms, with the prestige derived from military merits. In this cultural and ideological scenario, universities acquired a relevance that would end up projecting itself both on the structure of the State and on its intellectual life³³.

³¹ Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro, *La Universidad de Salamanca del Medievo al Renacimiento (1218-1516/29). Aspectos históricos, poderes y saberes* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2013).

³² Gil González Dávila, *Historia de las antigüedades de la ciudad de Salamanca* (Salamanca: Imprenta de Artus Taberniel, 1606), 182-183.

³³ The celebrated controversy between letters and arms—so present as a literary trope, and expressed paradigmatically by Cervantes through the mouth of Don Quixote—constitutes a clear reflection of the ubiquity of this debate in modern culture.

Specifically, the *Studium Salmanticensis* reached its stage of greatest expansion during the reigns of Philip II (1556-1598) and Philip III (1598-1621). This rise was reflected in two main phenomena: on the one hand, the notable increase in the number of students in the last quarter of the 16th century, which situated Salamanca as the most populous university of its time in both Europe and America³⁴; and on the other, the relevance of its teachings –legal and theological, above all– which simultaneously fostered the creation of a body of bureaucrats in the service of the Crown and the Church, as well as the convergence of prominent intellectuals such as Francisco de Vitoria, Domingo de Soto and the so-called School of Salamanca, and others such as Fray Luis de León or El Brocense. The Salamanca primacy was due, moreover, to its condition as *alma mater* of the Spanish university system, radiating its influence towards newly created universities in the New World such as Lima or Mexico.

The progressive affirmation of the Spanish Monarchy was accompanied by a continued process of strengthening and expansion of the university system. In this context of growing institutionalization of power and its administrative structures, the University of Salamanca stood out for the solidity and recognition of its teachings, especially legal ones, which contributed to consolidating its preeminent position in the Spanish sphere and to maintaining its academic dynamism during a good part of the Modern Age. However, the process also resulted in greater control of the university by the monarchs, who subjected the institution to their power, guaranteeing its fidelity and legitimation in exchange for privileges for its members³⁵.

Just as occurred in Bologna with respect to pontifical power, in the case of Salamanca, royal interventionism was a constant element during the 16th century³⁶. Some specialists maintain that it was the university itself that was forced to request the mediation of the Crown to put an end to frequent internal disputes, particularly between the *maestrescuela* and the rector. According to this reading, the Study would have been unable to preserve a stable order by itself and would have resorted to the king out of necessity,

³⁴ In figures, enrolled students ranged between 5,000 and 7,000 in the second half of the 16th century. Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro, “La Universidad de Salamanca, evolución y declive de un modelo clásico”. *Studia Historica: Historia Moderna* 9 (1991): 17.

³⁵ Francisco J. Rubio, “Monarquía, universidad y élites académicas: dinámicas legitimadoras en la Salamanca del Siglo de Oro (1556-1621)”, in *Universidades, Colegios, Poderes*, coord. Jorge Correa Ballester (Valencia: Servei de publicacions de la Universidad de Valencia, 2021) 187-206.

³⁶ For example, the aforementioned prohibition by Philip II on going abroad to study. Dámaso de Lario and Javier García, “La “impermeabilización ideológica” de Felipe II: cronología de una coyuntura (1558-1571)”, *Estudis: revista de historia moderna* 40 (2014): 31-70.

which did not imply the automatic acceptance of reforms, offering resistance on multiple occasions³⁷. Against this vision, another interpretation links the loss of university autonomy to the general transformation of the political structures of the monarchy during the Modern Age. What might appear from the outside as an endemic incapacity of the institution to maintain internal peace would be, rather, the manifestation of a process of reconfiguration of power in which different sectors –with opposing interests– competed to conserve or expand their spaces of influence. Thus, the passage from a corporate and horizontal university, the medieval one, towards a hierarchical institution, the modern one, was certified³⁸.

In this long struggle for authority, it is evident that the Crown ended up imposing itself, tipping the pulse for university autonomy in its favour. In sum, the centralizing processes introduced by modernity affected the universities of Bologna and Salamanca unequally, although both had in common the subjection of the guild of scholars by extra-university powers as the 16th century advanced. Nevertheless, student representativeness continued to be a trait peculiar to these cities, manifesting itself through practices that speak to us of a common identity.

3. A Common University Tradition: Student Symbolic Culture Through Graffiti

University culture shared practices and knowledge in the academic sphere, forming one of the main links between the different centres of higher education in Europe. However, this culture transcends the university walls proper to impregnate other urban spaces not only in cities that have universities but even in places without a university tradition. As we shall see, distance was no obstacle to the transfer of symbols, among other elements, as is the case of student graffiti in Bologna and Salamanca³⁹.

³⁷ María P. Alonso, “Notas sobre las relaciones de la Universidad de Salamanca con el papado y la monarquía entre 1480 y 1561”, in *Universidades, Colegios, Poderes*, coord. Jorge Correa (Valencia: Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad de Valencia, 2021), 43-64.

³⁸ Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro, “El corpus normativo, siglos XV-XVIII”. In *Historia de la Universidad de Salamanca*, dir. Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2004) vol. 2, 109-130; Francisco J. Rubio, “The University of Salamanca and the Hispanic Monarchy during the Early Modern Age: reforms, changes, and continuity” in *Globalizing the University in Early Modern Europe: Reforming Education between the 16th and 19th Centuries*, eds. Carlos F. Teixeira, Rui M. Rocha and Jose L. Barbosa (London: Routledge (forthcoming)).

³⁹ The conservation status of the graffiti identified in this article varies. In the case of Bologna, certain graphic markings have emerged during contemporary restorations and appear

3.1. The «Viva» Type Graffiti in Bologna: Identification and Dating

The student symbolic manifestations par excellence, in the case of the University of Bologna, are the *stemma* or heraldic shields present mainly in the Archiginnasio, as shown by the studies of Brizzi and Daltri⁴⁰. In them appear representatives of the various nations of students; also, the Spanish one, given, as has been seen, the presence and strong ties forged through the College of San Clemente. However, other university symbols with functions similar to the *stemmi* remain unknown, although probably, due to their configuration, they have gone unnoticed or have simply not survived to our day. These are the graffiti called «viva», which would respond to a practice born around the student celebrations of the rectorate within the Bolognese urban framework.

These manifestations can be framed within the category of exposed writings and its associated practices during the Early Modern Period⁴¹. As will be discussed further on, the Bolognese university graffiti exerted a direct influence on similar inscriptions recorded within the urban and university landscape of Salamanca. These practices were, in turn, exported to other enclaves of the Hispanic Monarchy, ultimately transcending strictly academic frameworks⁴². The origin of the cultural transfer from Bologna is

to have been consolidated in the process—a significant factor given that they are executed directly onto the brick wall surface and constitute outdoor paintings. Furthermore, their location within arcaded areas has also facilitated their preservation. Conversely, in the case of Salamanca, the conservation status of the *vítores* is generally poor, a situation exacerbated by the absence of heritage policies specifically tailored to this type of legacy, beyond the general protection that the host building may possess. At present, there is no record of active conservation plans for these inscriptions; consequently, it is hoped that this research will raise awareness regarding the value and fragility of this historical and cultural element.

⁴⁰ Gian P. Brizzi and Andrea Daltri, *Imago universitatis. Celebrazioni e autorappresentazioni di maestri e studenti nella decorazione parietale dell'Archiginnasio* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2011-2012).

⁴¹ The research of Antonio Castillo serves as a benchmark in this context of public writing, notably *Entre la pluma y la pared: una historia social de la escritura en los Siglos de Oro* (Madrid: Akal, 2006); “Efímeros murales en la Edad Moderna: materialidad, recepción y conservación”, in *Libros y papeles de todo género y facultad: estudios sobre tipología y géneros editoriales (siglos XIV-XIX)*, coords. Manuel J. Pedraza y Sofía Martínez, (Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2024), 185-210; “Comunicación escrita y espacio público en la temprana Edad Moderna hispana”, in *La corte y la sociedad cortesana en el mundo hispánico (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, eds. Marcelo Luzzi, M., Iván Escamilla, I. y José A. Guillén (La Plata: Universidad Nacional de La Plata, 2022) 361-386; “Scrittura e immagine in alcuni testi urbani effimeri nella Spagna della prima età moderna” en *Imago Librorum; mille anni di forme del libro in Europa*, ed. Edoardo Barbieri (Milán: Leo S. Olschki, 2021), 329-359.

⁴² The resignification of student graffiti and its export to other non-university cities is

grounded, *a priori*, on a chronological criterion, given that the graffiti of Bologna are the oldest surviving examples. The origin of these symbols can be remotely linked to classical antiquity, specifically to the propagandistic vestiges preserved in Pompeii and other sites. In this regard, the Renaissance revived the concept of the Roman triumph, updating it within the framework of papal and imperial courts, as evidenced by the pageantry surrounding the coronation of Charles V in Bologna in 1530⁴³. The influx of Spaniards into the Bolognese university and the frequent cultural exchanges likely facilitated the export of these practices to other territories of the Hispanic Monarchy.

The «viva» are graphisms whose morphologies have common characteristics: two intertwined Vs (W) appear abbreviating the word «VIVA», followed by the name of the place of origin or the *natio*. Following this, the two Vs may appear again followed by the name of the person honoured. And in the case of holding an important position such as that of rector, the abbreviation of the title *Rector Magnificus* is also depicted, an important issue for its possible dating. In the case of Bologna, they appear written in the Italian language and not in Latin, which was the vehicular language of university teaching, which indicates that this type of symbol would belong to a less formal and academic register than, for example, the *stemmi*. Furthermore, they are located on elevated sections of the walls, accessible only by means of a ladder propped against the structure, and are executed with dark pigments, possibly painted in tempera over a brick or rendered substrate. Given its exposure to the elements, this technique has significantly hindered their preservation. To date, five sets of this type have been found (three referring to non-Spanish rectors) which we proceed to describe following a chronological order.

The portico of the basilica of Santa Maria dei Servi, on Strada Maggiore, 43, in Bologna, probably concentrated a large number of this type of graphism, of which barely a few remains are currently preserved (fig. 1)⁴⁴.

addressed in Francisco J. Rubio, "Ecos universitarios de devoción mariana en la periferia de la Monarquía Hispánica durante la Edad Moderna", *Cauriensia* 15 (2020): 579-618.

⁴³ Regarding the transfer hypothesis, see Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro y Ángel Weruaga, *Elogios triunfales: origen y significado de los vítores universitarios salmantinos (ss. XV-XVIII)* (Salamanca: Publicaciones Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 2011), 7 y 23; Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro y Ángel Weruaga, "Glorias académicas. Los vítores clásicos de Salamanca, siglos XV-XVIII", en *De vítores y letras*, eds. Eduardo Azofra y Emiliano Gil (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2017), 22.

⁴⁴ The church dates from 1346, although numerous renovations would be carried out in successive centuries. The portico was built in 1392 by Andrea Manfredi and decorated shortly after with frescoes of a religious nature, remains of which are still preserved. Guido Zucchini,



Fig. 1. Portico of the basilica of Santa Maria dei Servi, Bologna, where some remains of student graffiti are preserved.

Photograph by the author.



Fig. 2. Graffiti of the «viva» type dedicated to a rector from Faenza. Strada Maggiore, portico of the basilica of Santa Maria dei Servi, Bologna.

Photograph by the author.

The first graffiti appears on the exterior zone of one of the external canvases of the portico. The symbols, in reddish colour on the ochre rendering, follow the indicated structure: double intertwined V (for «viva») followed by the word FAENZA, which tells us of the honouree's provenance (fig. 2). In this case, no remains of the person's name have survived, although there are some letters, R^{RE} M^{CO}, which would abbreviate RETTORE MAGNIFICO. Furthermore, above the letters, there is a heraldic symbol, a rampant lion looking to the left, alluding to the coat of arms of the city of Faenza⁴⁵.

"La chiesa e il portico di S. Maria dei Servi di Bologna", *L'Archiginnasio* 8 (1913): 6-20; Luigi Nobili, *Il convento di Santa Maria dei Servi in Bologna*, (Bologna: Nuova Alfa, 1992).

⁴⁵ Due to the technique and execution, with noticeable gaps between the strokes in the rampant lion, the hypothesis that a prefabricated stencil was used over which the pigment was applied can be considered.



Fig. 3. Unidentified graphisms. Strada Maggiore, portico of the basilica of Santa Maria dei Servi, Bologna.

Photograph
by the author.

By analogy with other symbols found, it was painted in the 16th century, throughout which only two students from Faenza became rector: Astorgius de Brusantis (rector of the legist universities in 1520-1521) and Jacobus de Bosijs (legist rector between 1527-1528)⁴⁶; therefore, the possible dating would be around said dates.

On the other hand, there are other graphisms that have not been able to be identified because a large part of the support has been lost, although the letters ARM can be seen (fig. 3).

Not far away, in Piazza Santo Stefano, stands the Palazzo Bianchini, located at number 20 of said square⁴⁷. The graffito is situated to the left of the palace's main portal, in the upper third, occupying the space between the window and the springing of the vault's corbel (fig. 4). Although the graffito remains fragmentary due to the subsequent placement of a commemorative plaque over it, both its layout and the identity of the individual honored have been successfully established. Thus, in the first line, the double V ("viva") can be partially read⁴⁸, followed by M[ODENA]. On the lower line, [VV V]IGNOLA is visible, followed by [GI]OVA^N[I] ANDREA SEGN^A. In this instance, despite the absence of the abbreviation for *Rector Magnifico*, it is known to have belonged to one of them – specifically to Ioannes Andreas de Segna, a native of Vignola (Modena), who served as rector of both legal universities during

⁴⁶ Malagola, *I rettori*, 44-45.

⁴⁷ It belonged to the Bianchini family, who maintained a significant presence in the Bolognese senate. Luigi Brevetani, *Supplemento alle Cose notabili della città di Bologna e alla Miscellanea Storico-Patria di Giuseppe Guidicini* (Bologna: Tipografia A. Garagnani, 1908), p. 53.

⁴⁸ Brackets indicate the author's own reconstruction, following the pattern of similar graffiti.



Fig. 4. Graffiti of the «viva» type dedicated to the rector Ioannes Andreas de Segna. Palazzo Bianchini, Bologna.

Photograph by the author.

the 1540-1541 academic year⁴⁹. The dating of the graffito, therefore, corresponds to that period. At Strada Maggiore, number 61, on one of the canvases of the Palazzo Zoppi⁵⁰ appears another set of student symbols. It is in the upper area to the right of the main access door. The scheme is the same: double V abbreviating “viva”, followed by the name of the honouree’s place of origin, ANVERSA (Antwerp). In the line immediately below, the word IVNIO and then the abbreviation R^E M^{CO} for RECTOR MAGNIFICO (fig. 5). In this case, the identification is clear: it is Ioannes Iunius, rector of the legist universities in the academic year 1551-1552⁵¹. Consequently, they were quite probably painted at the beginning or during his mandate.

⁴⁹ Malagola, *I rettori*, 47.

⁵⁰ The construction of this building began in 1545. The palace was linked to Melchiorre di Girolamo Zoppi, one of the founders of the *Accademia dei Gelati* in 1588, which was headquartered in this same house. Clizia Gurreri, “Dentro l’*Accademia dei Gelati*. Simboli, imprese ed emblemi a Palazzo Zoppio”, in *I cantieri dell’italianistica. Ricerca, didattica e organizzazione agli inizi del XXI secolo*, Atti del XVII congresso dell’ADI – Associazione degli Italianisti (Roma Sapienza, 18-21 settembre 2013), eds. Beatrice Alfonzetti, Guido Baldassarri and Franco Tomasi (Roma: Adi editore, 2014) 1-6.

⁵¹ Malagola, *Il rettore*, 48.



Fig. 5. Graffiti of the «viva» type dedicated to the rector Ioannes Iunius. Palazzo Zoppi, Bologna.

Photograph
by the author.

Continuing with the chronological order, the following sets refer to two rectors of Spanish origin. As already noted, Spaniards participated actively in Bolognese university life, occupying the position of rector on multiple occasions during the 16th century. And as expected, the *natio hispanica* left, like other members of the academy, its mark on the city through two acclamatory graffiti or «viva»⁵².

The first of these is situated on Via Santo Stefano, 43, in Bologna, on the façade of the Palazzo Vizzani⁵³. Located at the upper extreme, between two windows, and directly on the brick, in this inscription the elements described previously appear again: two intertwined Vs («viva») followed by the name of the *natio*, SPAGNA, a distinguishing feature from the other sets described where the place of origin was given. In the line immediately below, again the double V (W) followed by the individual's name, IOSEPHO, and in the following line, the surname GONZALEZ. Finally, in the line below, the abbreviation R^{OR} M^{CO}, for RECTOR MAGNÍFICO (fig. 6). Note that in this case several languages alternate: the nation in Italian, the rector's name in Hispanicized Latin, the surname and the title of rector in Spanish; this leads us to think that the material author was of Spanish origin.

⁵² We thank the team of Gian Paolo Brizzi, Andrea Daltri, Pier Paolo Zannoni, Maria Teresa Guerrini, and Illaria Maggiulli, researchers from the CISUI of the University of Bologna, for the information provided regarding the existence of the two graffiti dedicated to the Spanish rectors.

⁵³ This building was built between 1559 and 1566 by Bartolomeo Triacchini and was later owned by Cardinal Lambertini. Luigi Bortolotti, *Bologna dentro le mura. Nella storia e nell'arte*, (Bologna: La grafica emiliana, 1977) 121.



Fig. 6. Graffiti of the «viva» type dedicated to the rector Iosepho González. Palazzo Vizzani, Bologna.

Photograph
by the author.

This is José González de Flores y Velázquez, collegian of San Clemente and rector of the legist universities of Bologna in the academic year 1570-1571; the moment when the graffiti can be dated. Born in 1540, he studied Canons at the University of Salamanca, where he achieved the degree of bachelor. In 1567 he entered the Spanish college of Bologna in a prebend of Canons for which he is presented by the bishop and chapter of Ávila⁵⁴. In the Bolognese university, he was a professor of Decretals and Inforciato on the holidays of the academic year 1570-1571, while he was named rector. In 1571 he was a canonist councillor and obtained the doctorate *in utroque*. Shortly after, he would be rector of the college of San Clemente, in 1572. Af-

⁵⁴ Born in Flores de Ávila, diocese of Ávila. Son of Diego González and Catalina Velázquez, he belonged to a rural middle-class family. He held the positions of councillor (1569-1570, 1571-1572, and 1573-1574) and syndic syndicator (1569-1570) in the college. According to Pineda Hurtado de Mendoza (1624), "he published a book on varied questions, quite celebrated by the Doctors" (p. 26); he refers to *Variorum Iuris quaestionum, Bononiae*, apud Ioannem Rossium, 1571, in 4to. Biographical information in Antonio Pérez Martín, *Proles aegidiana*, II, 971-974; Dámaso de Lario. *Diccionario biográfico de colegiales mayores españoles (1560-1650)*, (Madrid: Universidad Carlos III, 2020). Available at [https://www.uc3m.es/ss/Satellite/Biblioteca/es/TextoMixta/1371237748991/Diccionario_Biografico_de_Colegiales_Mayores_Espanoles_\(1560-1650](https://www.uc3m.es/ss/Satellite/Biblioteca/es/TextoMixta/1371237748991/Diccionario_Biografico_de_Colegiales_Mayores_Espanoles_(1560-1650) [consulted on September 1, 2025].

ter leaving the college, he occupied the position of judge (*oidor*) in the Audience of Bari and Otranto, based in Trani, as well as Auditor General of the army in Naples.

The next graphism referring to a Spanish is located near the main entrance of a Palazzo on Via Galliera, 13, in Bologna⁵⁵. It is located to the right of the entrance, at the upper extreme in the space left by the start of the portico vault. The scheme is identical to the previous one: double V (W indicating «viva») followed by SPAGNA; in the next line again the double V and then ROD^{CO} DE PAZOS, abbreviating Roderico. In the third line R^{OR} M^{[C]O}, instead of RECTOR MAGNÍFICO⁵⁶ (fig. 7).

The honoured individual is Rodrigo Pazos Figueroa, collegian of San Clemente of the Spaniards of Bologna⁵⁷. He was born in Pontevedra (Galicia) in 1550, coming from a middle-class family of urban environment. Rodrigo

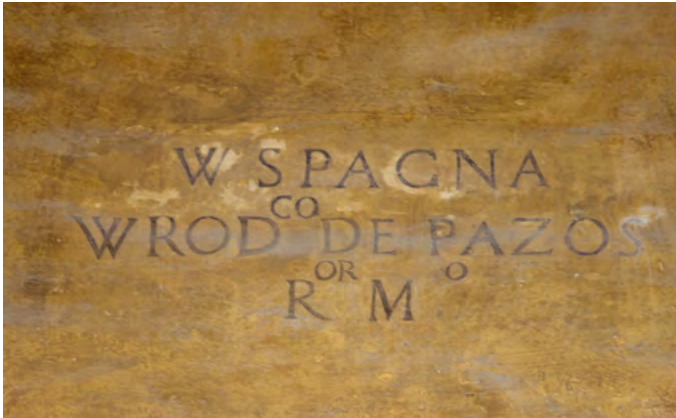


Fig. 7. Graffiti of the «viva» type dedicated to the rector Rodrigo de Pazos. Via Galliera, 13, Bologna.

Photograph by the author.

⁵⁵ Dated approximately between the 15th and 16th centuries, the building was linked to several Bolognese families such as the Cervi, Correggie, or Caccialupi. Giuseppe Giudicini, *Cose notabili della città di Bologna ossi storia cronológica de suoi stabili sacri, pubblici e privati* (Bologna: Società Tipografica Del Composito, 1869) vol. 2, 202.

⁵⁶ We understand that the superscript C of the abbreviation for *Magnífico* must have been lost in some restoration, as this graffiti follows an organization similar to [that of] Rector José González and, furthermore, there is a blank space before the superscript O.

⁵⁷ However, his uncle was Bishop Antonio Rodríguez de Pazos y Figueroa, who previously (1550) had also been a collegian of San Clemente. During his stay at the college, Rodrigo Pazos held the positions of consiliary (1572-1573 and 1573-1574), noting syndic (1574-1575 and 1576-1577), and syndic syndicator (1578-1579). Biographical information in Pérez Martín, *Proles aegidiana*, II, 996-998; de Lario. *Diccionario biográfico*. Available at [https://www.uc3m.es/ss/Satellite/Biblioteca/es/TextoMixta/1371237748991/Diccionario_Biografico_de_Colegiales_Mayores_Espanoles_\(1560-1650](https://www.uc3m.es/ss/Satellite/Biblioteca/es/TextoMixta/1371237748991/Diccionario_Biografico_de_Colegiales_Mayores_Espanoles_(1560-1650) [consulted on September 1, 2025].

Pazos entered said college in a prebend of Canons, for which he was presented by the bishop and chapter of León in 1571. He was rector of both legist universities in the academic year 1575-76, the moment when the painting of the graffiti is located, and during that same year he was a professor at the Bolognese University, specifically the lectures of Decretals and Inforciato for holidays. In 1576 he examined and obtained a doctorate *in utroque*. During his stay in Bologna, he was appointed canon of the cathedral of Tuy (1574), although he would remain in the college until 1578 to move on, two years later, to occupy the position of judge (*oidor*) in the Royal Chancery of Granada until 1591.

In sum, we see that preserved «viva» have a similar scheme in common regarding their technique, location, and referred individuals, in that all are linked to jurist rectors of the University of Bologna using their name and/or surname, in addition to the origin. In this last aspect, there are certain nuances: while in the case of Spanish rectors mention is made of the country of origin (Spagna), reinforcing the corporatism of the *natio*, in the other “viva” the city of provenance is pointed out (Faenza, Antwerp). In any case, this tradition was not exclusive to the Italian sphere, finding similar student graffiti in other university cities such as Salamanca.

3.2. Salamanca and Student Graffiti: The «Vitor»

Salamanca university environment also developed a symbolic repertoire of its own, characterized by notable formal variety. Among these manifestations stands out the well-known «vitor», an emblem configured by the superimposition of the letters that make up said word, arranged so that they conform a singular graphic unit. To this motif was frequently added an inverted crescent moon –with the points oriented downwards– an element that tradition has linked to the protection granted to the *Studium* by Pope Benedict XIII, Pedro Martínez de Luna, whose coat of arms is present in university heraldry (fig. 8)⁵⁸.

The «vitor» used to refer to an individual identified by his name and/or surnames, frequently recorded using abbreviations. These inscriptions

⁵⁸ Luis E. Rodríguez-San Pedro, “Los vítores triunfales en el ámbito hispánico. Anotaciones para su historia”, en *Lienzos del recuerdo. Estudios en homenaje a José M^a Martínez Frías*, ed. Lucía Lahoz y Manuel Pérez Hernández (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2015), 554.



Fig. 8. Emblem of a «vitor» in the courtyard of *Escuelas Mayores* of the University of Salamanca, with the superimposition of the letters VITOR and the inverted crescent moon.

Photograph by the author.

were generally located in prominent places and were accompanied by a varied repertoire of signs: heraldic blazons, quills, palms and swords, Marian anagrams, initial letters associated with different territories, and even compositions of a satirical nature, configuring a complex visual discourse. Regarding its material execution, a detailed study on the pigments employed is not yet available; however, the most recent investigations suggest the use of red ochre (*almagre*) together with other components⁵⁹.

Multiple student graffiti are still preserved, although their affiliation is complex due to the overlapping disposition of some with others and deterioration over time. However, of all those that have been identified, there is an abundance of those that recorded the achievement of a chair by some professors, in addition to those that reflected the election of positions such as those of rector or councillor (like a vice-rector) among other acts and academic posts⁶⁰. To them are added the emblems that symbolized with letters the initials of the honouree's *natio* in a climate of celebration not exempt from

⁵⁹ José A. Saavedra, "Aclaraciones al respecto de la técnica empleada en la rotulación de los vítores salmantinos", in *De vítores y letras*, eds. Eduardo Azofra and Emiliano Gil (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2017), 26-34.

⁶⁰ Rodríguez-San Pedro y Weruaga, *Glorias académicas*, 15-21. *Vitores* also appear in honor of people who achieved a position in the civil or ecclesiastical administration, which explains the appearance of *vitores* in urban centers that do not house universities, although, as a general rule, they mention individuals who had pursued higher studies.

episodes of conflict when diverse student nations confronted each other⁶¹. Regarding the distribution of *víttores* throughout the city of Salamanca, these were depicted on buildings both academic and foreign to the Study, although they were in the university quarter, an area that also concentrated the dwellings of professors and students, as well as colleges and convents linked to the university⁶².

Establishing the chronology of these graffiti is a complex matter. The link of these graphisms with the shield of Pope Luna has led to the consideration that the first student graffiti would have emerged in Salamanca starting from the 15th century, although currently no remains of this type of emblem remain for that era⁶³. The oldest *víttores* preserved in the city of Salamanca can be dated at the earliest to the second half of the 16th century, and correspond to tributes to professors at the University. Specifically, Doctor Cristóbal de Bernal preserves this emblem on the façade of the cathedral and on that of the convent of San Esteban and was a legit professor from 1568 until 1600 when he died⁶⁴. Also Doctor Diego Alderete de Haro, who was a collegian of the Major College of Cuenca and canonist professor between 1584 and 1592, has two *víttores*: one in the *Patio de Escuelas*, near the entrance to the *Escuelas Menores* building, with the representation of emblems of his

⁶¹ Luis E. Rodríguez San Pedro, "Movilidad estudiantil y víttores de naciones en la monarquía hispánica. La Salamanca clásica, siglos XVI-XVIII", in *La movilidad estudiantil en Europa y América (siglos XIII a XXI). De la "Peregrinatio académica" al Programa Erasmus*, eds. Camilo Fernández Cortizo and Domingo L. González Lopo (Santiago: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2020), 181-183.

⁶² Francisco J. Rubio and Cristo J. de León, "Más allá de las aulas: la configuración del espacio extrauniversitario de Salamanca durante la Edad Moderna", *Tiempos Modernos. Revista electrónica de Historia Moderna* 11, no. 43 (2022): 335-356. It is worth mentioning that in the case of the *víttores* that are still preserved, the praise to the *natio* appears symbolized with its initial, but this was not the only form. Rodríguez Martín has recently discovered how, at the time, there were *víttores* with the name of the *natio* written completely, located on the façades of the homes of the students belonging to said *natio*, for example, the case of Extremadura. Álvaro Rodríguez, "Víctor es Extremadura: una aproximación a la conflictividad estudiantil extremeña en la Universidad de Salamanca (1648-1654)", in *LII Coloquios Históricos de Extremadura* (Trujillo: AC Coloquios Históricos de Extremadura, 2024), 569-590.

⁶³ Luis E. Rodríguez San Pedro, "Víttores académicos en el mundo hispánico", in *Historia universitaria de España y América*, eds. José M. Calderón, Manuel Casado and Alejandro R. Díez (Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá, 2016), 661-674. The destruction of some buildings of Salamancan heritage may explain this fact, since, as Rodríguez-San Pedro points out, many *víttores* were concentrated on the disappeared church of San Adrián, as it was an important point in academic parades.

⁶⁴ Francisco J. Rubio, *La República de sabios. Profesores, cátedras y universidad en la Salamanca del siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Dykinson, 2020), 254.



Fig. 9. «Vítor» in honour of Doctor Diego Alderete de Haro. Patio de Escuelas, Salamanca.

Photograph by the author.

major college flanking the anagram VITOR (fig. 9), and another on the façade of the cathedral, close to that of Doctor Bernal⁶⁵.

On the other hand, the university festivity in which a «vítor» was performed, termed as «rotular» (to label/inscribe), must have been well consolidated before the beginning of the 17th century given that the term was included by Covarrubias in his *Tesoro* (1611), defining it as «a certain manner of triumph and victory in the universities where his passionate and devoted ones carrie[d] the professor on their shoulders»⁶⁶.

However, to find this type of emblem referring to rectors one must advance to the 17th century, which bears parallels with the «viva» dedicated to the rectors of the University of Bologna. Probably *víttores* of rectors existed before that moment, but they have not been preserved either due to their location predominantly outdoors or due to the very disappearance of some buildings of Salamanca heritage. In any case, we will point out four sets that allude to this position dated in the 17th and 18th centuries⁶⁷.

⁶⁵ Rubio, *La república*, 252. Diego Alderete was the son of Lorenzo de Alderete, who was a bachelor from Salamanca and later a collegian of San Clemente in Bologna and subsequently a professor of medicine at the Salamanca *Studium*.

⁶⁶ Sebastián de Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez printer, 1611), fol. 475 v.

⁶⁷ Collected in Rodríguez-San Pedro and Weruaga, *Elogios triunfales*, 41, 53, 78, 81, and 85.

Firstly, a rectoral «vítor» is in the Plaza de San Isidro in Salamanca, on the side façade of the Church of the *Clerecía* del Espíritu Santo, which was part of the old Jesuit college. Among all the overlapping graphisms appears one that begins with DON P^o SARMIENTOL^{EDo}, and in the line below the emblem of VITOR (fig. 10).

The honoured individual was Pedro Sarmiento de Toledo, rector of the University of Salamanca in 1659-1660 when he was 24 years old. He studied laws and soon initiated a *cursus honorum* in important institutions of the Monarchy, such as fiscal of the Chancery of Granada, judge of the Chancery of Valladolid, among other positions, becoming a councillor of Castile and chamberlain. Although he did not hold primogeniture in his family, some family events caused the titles of Count of Gondomar, Marquis of Montalvo, and Marquis of Mancera to fall upon his person, being a Grandee of Spain in 1716, five years before his death⁶⁸.

The next graffiti is found in the cloister of the *Escuelas Mayores* building of the University of Salamanca, on the external part of the west façade facing the courtyard. Situated above the first two arches on the left side, one can read: cross; next line D. GASPAR MARQUEZ DE BRACAMONTE, followed by the emblem VITOR, and in the line below, another emblem VITOR and, then, Y MONTALVO, ending with the letter C crowned and with an anthropomorphic figure decorating the interior of said letter (fig. 11).



Fig. 10. «Vítor» dedicated to Pedro Sarmiento de Toledo, rector of the University of Salamanca. Plaza de San Isidro, Salamanca.

Photograph by the author.

⁶⁸ Santiago Martínez Hernández, "Pedro Sarmiento de Toledo", in *Diccionario biográfico electrónico de la Real Academia de la Historia*. Available at <https://historia-hispanica.rah.es/biografias/40721-pedro-sarmiento-de-toledo> [Consulted on October 5, 2025].



Fig. 11. «Vitor» dedicated to Gaspar Márquez de Bracamonte, rector of the University of Salamanca. *Escuelas Mayores, University of Salamanca.*

Photograph by the author.

It is dedicated to Gaspar José Márquez de Prado Bracamonte y Montalvo (1652-1713), who was rector of the University of Salamanca in the academic year 1670-1671, at 18 years of age. His origins in the surroundings of Salamanca (Peñaranda) identify him with the *natio* of Campos (hence the emblem of the crowned C in the form of an anthropomorphic moon). He would become Marquis of Arco, knight of Calatrava (identified with the cross of said order above the rector's name), and judge of the Chancery of Valladolid⁶⁹.

The next rectoral graffiti is found in a privileged place, the entrance of the vestibule of the *Escuelas Mayores* building, between the ribbed vault and the access arch to the cloister that housed, among others, the faculties of civil and canon law, theology, the chapel, and the library (fig. 12). In the first line appears an emblem of a crescent moon enclosing a P and an S under an episcopal galero flanked by two corbels. Next, DN ANT⁰ GRANDE DE BARR R^{OR} DESTA UNIV^D AÑO DE 1697 COLLEG; next EN EL MAI^{OR} DE S. ILDEF^{SO} R^{OR} DE LA UNIV^D DE ALCALA PREDICAD^{OR} DE; next line S MAG^D Y CALIFICADOR DE LA SUPREMA Y DE SU JUNTA; and in the last line Y ABB^D DE AMPURIAS⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ He was the son of Alonso Márquez de Prado, who had been rector of the college of San Bartolomé in the academic year 1644-1645 and professor of law at the University in 1649-1650. His mother was Juana Clara de Bracamonte y Montalvo, natural daughter of Gaspar de Bracamonte y Guzmán, who became President of the Council of Orders and of Italy and Viceroy of Naples. Javier Barrientos Grandón, "Alonso Márquez de Prado", in *Diccionario biográfico electrónico de la Real Academia de la Historia*. Available at <https://historia-hispanica.rah.es/biografias/28004-alonso-marquez-de-prado>. [Consulted on October 5, 2025].

⁷⁰ Another line ends where a P and a D appear, but it has not been possible to identify them.

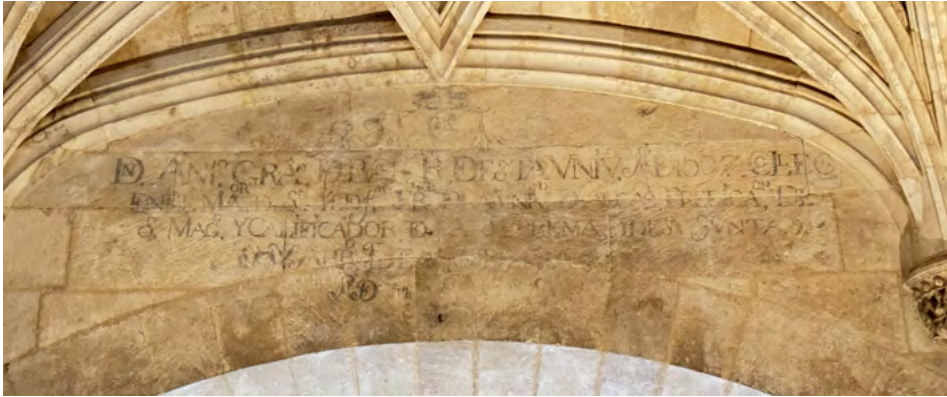


Fig. 12. «Vítor» dedicated to Antonio Grande de Barrientos, rector of the University of Salamanca. Escuelas Mayores, University of Salamanca.

Photograph by the author.

It refers to Antonio Grande de Barrientos, rector of the University in the academic year 1696-1697. He was born in Villarino de la Rivera (Salamanca), and therefore belonged to the nation of Campos; hence the representation of the *natio* with the C. This complete «vítor» honours the individual not only with his name but also with the positions he occupied in his *cursus honorum*, as a scholarship holder of the Major College of San Ildefonso, preacher at court, and qualifier of the Inquisition. In addition to Salamanca, he was also rector of the University of Alcalá in the academic year 1704-1705, and abbot of Ampurias in 1707⁷¹.

Following the chronological order, the last set referring to a rector is located in the small square of San Isidro, on the façade of the church of the *Clerecía*, formerly the Jesuit college. In the first line appears, on the far left, the anagram VITOR preceded by a quill or palm, and on the right the letters AR crowned and flanked by a quill and a sword. In the next line below DON JAZINTO; further down DE BLANCAS; in the line below RETOR DESTA UNI; and in the following line AÑO DE 1721 (fig. 13).

This set refers to Jacinto de Blancas, rector of the University of Salamanca in the academic year 1721-1722. The anagram VITOR has the particularity of being preceded by a palm, possibly in allusion to victory, in addition to other symbols that would allude to the controversy between the nobility of letters

⁷¹ [s.n.] *Breve Reseña histórica de la Universidad de Madrid*. Madrid: ESTADES Artes gráficas, 1945 <https://www.filosofia.org/aut/006/umbh1945.htm#p141>



Fig. 13. «Vítor» dedicated to Jacinto de Blancas, rector of the University of Salamanca. Plaza de San Isidro, Salamanca.

Photograph by the author.

(quill) and arms (sword); they are the ones flanking the anagram of the Aragonese *natio* (AR with crown), since he was born in Zaragoza⁷². The appearance of these symbols is relatively frequent since university students, who had ascended through studies (of law, mainly), claimed their place in society against the traditional nobility whose merits were related to a military tradition⁷³.

4. Conclusions: A Shared Symbolic Legacy

The present research has allowed for the unveiling and systematization of the existence of a symbolic culture shared between the universities of Bologna and Salamanca during the Modern Age, articulated around the visual projection of student power in the urban space. Through the comparative analysis of institutional structures and, very especially, of the preserved epigraphic vestiges –the acclamatory graffiti– it has been possible to trace a

⁷² Mention must be made of the existence of other *víttores* dedicated to consiliaries, whose function was to assist the rector and represent the different nations; hence, they follow a scheme similar to those seen for rectors, including the representation of the initials of the *natio*. Its analysis exceeds the limits of this research focused on rectoral symbols.

⁷³ Jean-Marc Pelorson, *Los letrados juristas castellanos bajo Felipe III: investigaciones sobre su puesto en la sociedad, la cultura y el Estado* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2008).

genealogy of cultural practices that transcended political and geographical borders. This study confirms that the exchange of knowledge in modern Europe was not limited to the curricular contents taught in the classrooms but also encompassed rituals, corporate identities, and forms of appropriation of public space by scholars.

The starting point for understanding these phenomena is the medieval root shared by both Studies. Both Bologna, as *alma mater*, and Salamanca, partially inspired by it, were founded on the model of the *universitas scholarium*. This system granted the student collective a determinant institutional prominence, unprecedented in other European educational models. The organizational and jurisdictional autonomy of the students, grouped in nations, constituted the backbone of academic and social life. The nations were not mere administrative divisions; they functioned as territorial confraternities that wove networks of solidarity and compatriotism, fundamental for the survival and social ascent of the displaced student. This power structure crystallized in the figure of the student rector, elected annually by his peers to govern the *Studium*. Although with notable differences –the bicephalous power shared with the *maestrescuela* in Salamanca versus the broad initial jurisdiction in Bologna– both institutions consecrated the student as the visible head of the corporation. It is precisely this position of authority that sought to legitimize and celebrate itself through public manifestations that, over time, would colonize the walls of the city.

The analysis of the 16th century has revealed divergent but complementary dynamics. While Salamanca experienced its greatest rise and institutional expansion in the service of the bureaucratic construction of the Spanish Monarchy, Bologna went through a stage of readjustment under the pontifical orbit, which recent historiography has nuanced not as absolute decadence, but as transformation. In this context, student mobility remained a vector of cultural exchange of the first order, defying even confessional borders and royal prohibitions. The Royal College of San Clemente in Bologna emerges in this research as the fundamental catalyst of influences between both cities. The exception granted by Philip II to the collegians to study abroad guaranteed a constant flow of Spanish jurists towards Italy at a time when borders were beginning to close. The Spanish nation in Bologna not only maintained its vitality but reached unprecedented heights of power: the fact that 25% of the university rectors between 1501 and 1580 came from the College of San Clemente evidences the hegemony of this group.

This phenomenon underscores the capital importance of bonds of compatriotism. The identity of the student was defined by his geographical

origin (the *natio*), and this belonging was the engine of his social and political promotion. When these Spanish students, like José González de Flores or Rodrigo de Pazos Figueroa, reached the rectoral dignity in Bologna, they not only represented themselves but exalted their community of origin («SPAGNA») in the heart of the Italian city.

However, the most novel contribution of this research lies in the identification and correlation of acclamatory graffiti. We have demonstrated that the university overflowed its architectural enclosures to «conquer» the city, converting façades of palaces, churches, and porticos into supports for a corporate memory (figs. 14 y 15). In Bologna, the «viva» type graffiti (identified by the double intertwined V) constitute the direct antecedent of this practice. Dated to the 16th century thanks to the identification of specific rectors (such as the Faentine Astorgius de Brusantis or the Spaniards already cited), these symbols share a clear morphology: acclamation, place of origin (*natio*), and name of the dignitary with the title of *Rector Magnificus*. The location of these epigraphs in places of difficult access (heights of porticos) suggests a planned and festive execution, linked to the celebrations of taking office. It is crucial to note that Spanish students in Bologna adopted and perpetuated this local custom, leaving their mark on private buildings such as the Palazzo Vizzani.

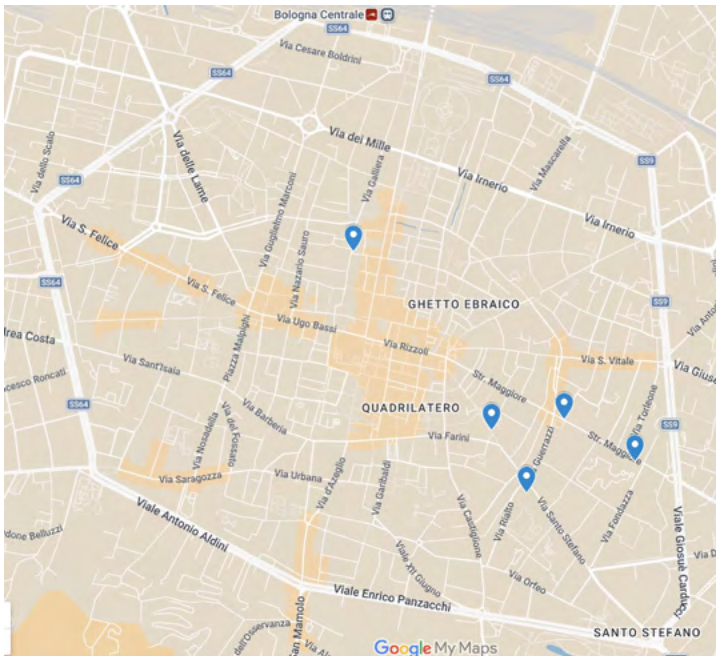


Fig. 14. Location of the graffiti in the city of Bologna.

Own elaboration.

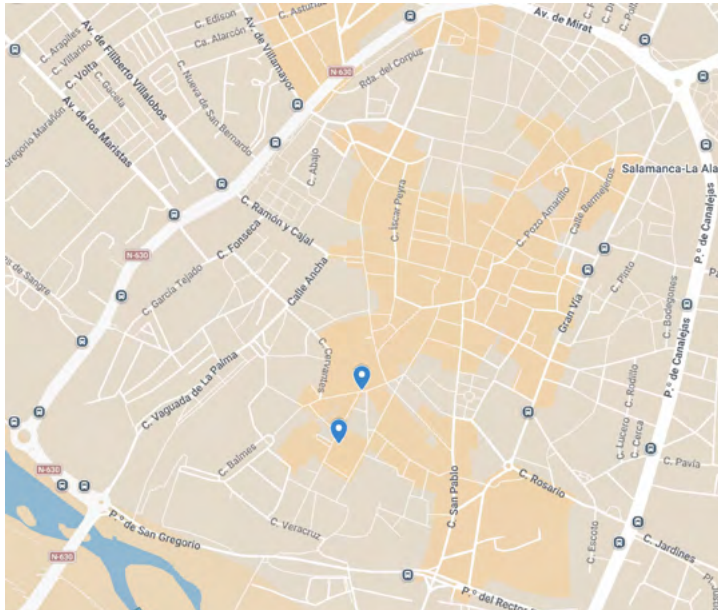


Fig. 15. Location of the graffiti in the city of Salamanca.

Own elaboration.

Shifting the gaze to Salamanca, we find the celebrated «vítor». Although its origin has traditionally been linked to Pope Luna (15th century), the preserved material evidence suggests a different chronology for rectoral «vítores». The analysed examples date from the second half of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th. This allows establishing a relationship of diachronic influence: the practice of acclaiming the rector through mural epigraphy with reddish pigments (*almagre*), consolidated in Bologna in the 16th century, seems to have been exported and adapted in Salamanca, where it evolved graphically towards the monogram of the «vítor» but maintained the function of exalting academic triumph and the link with the *natio* (visible in the crowned initials of regions such as Campos or Aragon). Given the intense transit of collegians who trained in Salamanca, passed through Bologna (like José González), and returned to occupy positions in the Spanish administration, it is plausible that they imported the ritual of «rotular» (labelling/inscribing) on the city walls.

Thus, university graffiti reveals itself not as vandalism, but as a mechanism of political and visual communication: students marked the urban territory to make visible their jurisdiction (*fuero*), their provenance, and their success in the *cursus honorum*. With this, they exercised symbolic territorial control over the *civitas* and affirmed the hegemony of the *universitas* over

the urban environment, a key sociological feature that defines university life in the Early Modern Age.

In sum, this research opens a range of new lines of work that would allow deepening the material and anthropological dimension of modern student culture. Thus, it would be advisable to carry out comparative physicochemical studies of the pigments used in the Bolognese «viva» and the Salamanca «vítor». Confirming whether the composition of the Bolognese red bears a technical relationship to the use of *almagre* in Salamanca would provide scientific data on the technological transfer of these practices. On the other hand, the precise geolocation of preserved graffiti (and documented vanished ones) using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) would allow reconstructing the «mental map» of students and nations in the city. It would also be necessary to delve into primary sources to search for references related to the celebrations of these university triumphs. And finally, to trace the presence of these symbols in other cities of the Spanish Monarchy and the European framework to calibrate the scope of these practices in which university students used the monumental landscape as a support to inscribe their hierarchy and their rituals of success.

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