



## Universalitas & Pervasivitas

*il costituirsi e diffondersi della S.J. e suoi echi (1540 - 1773)*  
di A. Pisani

Schede autori Atti costitutivi, ordinamenti, agiografie, etc.

### Pedro De Ribadeneira

Was born at Toledo, of a noble Castilian family, 1 Nov., 1526 (Astrain, I, 206); died 22 Sept., 1611. His father Alvaro Ortiz de Cisneros, was the son of Pedro Gonzales Cedillo and grandson of Hernando Ortiz de Cisneros whom Ferdinand IV had honoured with the governorship of Toledo and important missions. His mother, of the illustrious house of Villalobos, was still more distinguished for her virtue than for her birth. Already the mother of three daughters, she promised to consecrate her fourth child to the Blessed Virgin if it should be a son. Thus vowed to Mary before his birth, Ribadeneira received in baptism the name of Pedro which had been borne by his paternal grandfather and that of Ribadeneira in memory of his maternal grandmother, of one of the first families of Galicia. In the capacity of page he followed Cardinal Alexander Farnese to Italy, and at Rome entered the Society of Jesus at the age of fourteen, on 18 Sept., 1540, eight days before the approval of the order by [Paul III](#).



After having attended the Universities of Paris, Louvain, and Padua, where, besides the moral crises which assailed him, he often had to encounter great hardships and habitually confined himself to very meagre fare [he wrote to [S. Ignatius](#) (Epp. mixtæ, V, 649): "Quanto al nostro magnare ordinariamente é, a disnare un poco de menestra et un poco de carne, et con questo è finito"]. He was ordered in November, 1549, to go to Palermo, to profess rhetoric at the new college which the Society had just opened in that city. He filled this chair for two years and a half, devoting his leisure time to visiting and consoling the sick in the hospitals. Meanwhile St. Ignatius was negotiating the creation of the German College which was to give Germany a chosen clergy as remarkable for virtue and orthodoxy as for learning: his efforts were soon successful, and during the autumn of 1552 he called on the talent and eloquence of the young professor of rhetoric at Palermo. Ribadeneira amply fulfilled the expectations of his master and delivered the inaugural address amid the applause of an august assembly of prelates and Roman nobles. He was ordained priest 8 December, 1553 (Epp. mixtæ, III, 179); during the twenty-one years which followed he constantly filled the most important posts in the government of his order. From 1556 to 1560 he devoted his activity to securing the official recognition of the Society of Jesus in the Low Countries. At the same time he was charged by his general with the duty of promulgating and causing to be accepted in the Belgian houses the [Constitutions](#), which St. Ignatius had just completed at the cost of much labour.

But these diplomatic and administrative missions did not exhaust Ribadeneira's zeal. He still applied himself ardently to preaching. In December, 1555 he preached at Louvain with wonderful



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success, and likewise in January, 1556, at Brussels. On 25 November of the same year he left Belgium and reached Rome 3 February, 1557, setting out again, 17 October for Flanders. His sojourn in the Low Countries was interrupted for five months (November, 1558 to March, 1559); this period he spent in London, having been summoned thither on account of the sickness of Mary Tudor, Queen of England, which ended in her death. In the summer of 1559 he was once more with his general, Lainez, whose right hand he truly was. On 3 November, 1560, he made his solemn profession, and from then until the death of [St. Francis Borgia](#) (1572) he continued to reside in Italy, filling in turn the posts of provincial of Tuscany, of commissary-general of the Society in Sicily, visitor of Lombardy, and assistant for Spain and Portugal. The accession of Father [Everard Mercurian](#) as general of the order brought a great change to Ribadeneira. His health being much impaired, he was ordered to Spain, preferably to Toledo, his native town, to recuperate. This was a dreadful blow to the poor invalid, a remedy worse than the disease. He obeyed, but had been scarcely a year in his native land when he began to importune his general by letter to permit him to return to Italy. These solicitations continued for several years. At the same time his superiors saw that he was as sick in mind as in body, and that his religious spirit was somewhat shaken. Not only was he lax in his religious observances, but he did not hesitate to criticize the persons and affairs of the Society, so much so that he was strongly suspected of being the author of the memoirs then circulated through Spain against the Jesuits (Astrain, III, 106-10). This, however, was a mistake, and his innocence was recognized in 1578. He it was who took upon himself the task of refuting the calumnies which mischief-makers, apparently Jesuits, went about disseminating against the *Constitutions* of the Society, nor did he show less ardour and filial piety in making known the life of St. Ignatius Loyola and promoting his canonization.

Outside of the Society of Jesus, Ribadeneira is chiefly known for his literary works. From the day of his arrival in Spain to repair his failing health until the day of his death his career was that of a brilliant writer. His compatriots regard him as a master of Castilian and rank him among the classic authors of their tongue. All lines were familiar to him, but he preferred history and ascetical literature. His chief claim to glory is his *Life of St. Ignatius Loyola*, in which he speaks as an eye-witness, admirably supported by documents. Perhaps the work abounds too much in anecdotal details which tend to obscure the grand aspect of the saint's character and genius (*Analecta Bolland.*, XXIII, 513). It appeared for the first time in Latin at Naples in 1572 (*ibid.*, XXI, 230). The first Spanish edition, revised and considerably augmented by the author, dates from 1583. Other editions followed, all of them revised by the author; that of 1594 seems to contain the final text. It was soon translated into most of the European languages. Among his other works must be mentioned his "Historia eclesiástica del Cisma del reinode Inglaterra" and the "Flos sanctorum", which has been very popular in many countries. Some unpublished works of his deserve publication, notably his History of the persecution of the Society of Jesus and his History of the Spanish Assistancy.

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Pedro de Ribadeneira, S.J. (Tolède 1526-Tolède 1611). Auteur jésuite de la première génération, hagiographe et polémiste anti-machiavélien. Il reçut une formation humaniste à Tolède puis à Louvain et à Padoue, puis passe comme page du cardinal Farnèse à Rome. A l'âge de 14 ans, il entre dans le cercle spirituel d'Ignace de Loyola qui dirigea personnellement toute sa formation. Il étudia ensuite les arts et la théologie à Rome (1552-1555). Il devint ensuite professeur de rhétorique au collège romain et dans celui de Palerme, et un orateur fameux de la cour de [Philippe II](#). Pendant 20 ans (1555-1574), il passa par tous les postes de pouvoir au sein de la Compagnie de Jésus, partageant sa vie entre Rome, Paris, Bruxelles et Londres. Il retourna en Espagne en 1574, et composa ses principales œuvres à Tolède et à Madrid. Il passe souvent pour le créateur de l'hagiographie moderne grâce à sa *Vida de San Ignacio de Loyola*, un modèle de goût de la Renaissance, avec une grande documentation, une analyse psychologique et un style classique, qu'il compléta avec les biographies de [Laínez](#), de [Borja](#) et de [Salmerón](#). Il composa également un *Flos Sanctorum*, et des écrits ascétiques comme son *Tratado de la Tribulación* (où apparaissent aussi les problèmes publics de l'époque : désastre de l'Armada, alumbados, hérésies), au style inspiré de Sénèque, ainsi qu'un *Manual de Oraciones* et une traduction extraordinaire des *Confessiones* d'Augustin. Ribadeneira est également connu comme le premier auteur espagnol à avoir attaqué la double raison d'Etat de Machiavel, des « politiques » français ([Bodin](#), [La Noüe](#), [Duplessis](#)) ou des tacitistes, en leur opposant l'unique raison d'Etat chrétienne avec son *Tratado del príncipe cristiano*. Il inaugure ainsi une tradition antimachiavélienne espagnole sur le thème du « Prince chrétien ». Enfin, il composa également une *Historia del Cisma de Inglaterra* dans laquelle il étudia le problème politico-religieux. (apud E. Rey, in *Diccionario de Historia eclesiastica de España*, vol. III).

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**Cfr.:** Scholasticon by Jacon Schmutz -

[http://www.scholasticon.fr/Database/Scholastiques\\_fr.php?ID=1079](http://www.scholasticon.fr/Database/Scholastiques_fr.php?ID=1079)

Esponente, insieme a [Contzen](#), [Scribani](#) e [Mariana](#), della corrente gesuitica del "partito" antimachiavellico. Nel suo *Tratado de religión y virtudes que debe tener el príncipe cristiano para gobernar y conservar sus estados, contra lo que Nicolas Machiavelo y los políticos deste tiempo enseñan* (1ª ed. : Madrid, 1595, ebbe in seguito molte traduzioni ed edizioni) Ribadeneira rivela,



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come già aveva fatto [Giovanni Botero](#), il suo privilegio per la componente economica, in particolare agricoltura e commercio, al fine di garantire la stabilità e il successo di uno Stato. A livello politico, mostra di prediligere una scansione sociale in “stati” e, differentemente da Mariana, evita di affrontare lo spinoso argomento circa il comportamento che i sudditi devono tenere nei confronti del tiranno ingiusto.

Sempre con Mariana sorse un ideale dibattito “da cui emerge l’esistenza di due differenti concezioni su che cosa significasse essere gesuiti a fine Cinquecento - inizio Seicento. [...] Pedro de Ribadeneira, esponente di un’anima del corpo gesuitico forse più vicina [rispetto a quella di Mariana] allo spirito ignaziano, nel commentare le caratteristiche distintive della Compagnia, ne rilevava essenzialmente le comunanze con gli altri ordini, attenuava le diversità, e, laddove ciò non era possibile, difendeva le caratteristiche identitarie ricorrendo alla tradizione della Chiesa primitiva.”

Cfr.: Michela Catto *L’Ordine diviso. Il dissenso nell’ordine gesuitico tra ‘500 e ‘600* Brescia: Morcelliana, 2009.

**Vedi anche:** [Profilo biografico di Pedro Ribadeneira nel sito dell’Enciclopedia Treccani.](#)