

Of Lands and Tongues: the *Linguistic Atlas of the Iberian Peninsula* through the 20th Century
A book proposal: David Heap, 2006

My plan is to complete the research for, and then to write, a book-length manuscript on one of the great scholarly adventures of the twentieth century: the story of the Linguistic Atlas of the Iberian Peninsula (in Spanish, the *Atlas Lingüístico de la Península Ibérica* or *ALPI*) and the people who took part in it. A vast scholarly project, the *ALPI* was deeply embroiled in Spanish intellectual and social history for much of the twentieth century, but remains almost completely ignored by contemporary scholarship after being effectively suppressed under the Franco regime. All but forgotten for decades, most of the *ALPI* field notebooks (the source materials for a projected multi-volume atlas) sat unused, largely unpublished and unstudied until the 1990s, when I began searching for dialect survey data covering the whole of the Iberian Peninsula for my linguistic research. I eventually found the original *ALPI* field notebooks in three different locations in Spain: a library in Barcelona, a regional language institute in Santiago de Compostela, and a private home in Oviedo. Since then I have been publishing the entire collection (over 36 000 pages of hand transcriptions) on the Internet (see www.alpi.ca) as a database of scanned facsimiles. The book I plan to complete is a history of this project, but also a history of linguistics and politics in twentieth century Spain.

In 1900 the eminent Hispanic philologist Ramón Menéndez Pidal, realising the importance of dialect data for language scholarship, proposed an atlas of Iberian Romance dialects, at a time when the announced publication of Gilliéron and Edmont's *Atlas Linguistique de la France* (1902-1910) was already inspiring similar dialect surveys of other European vernaculars. It would be decades before Menéndez Pidal's projected pan-Iberian dialect survey would become a reality, but in the meantime he made the crucial decision to send one of his most promising disciples, Navarro Tomás, to study dialectology and phonetics in France and Germany. By the early 1920s Menéndez Pidal and Navarro Tomás had carried out exploratory fieldwork in northern Spain, and the first published mention of the *ALPI* appeared in the *Revista de Filología Española*. In 1928 Navarro Tomás, by this time an internationally-known specialist in Spanish phonetics, spent a year as visiting professor in Puerto Rico, where he conducted dialect surveys using a protocol which was to become the basis for the *ALPI* questionnaire (these survey data later became Navarro Tomás' 1948 *El español en Puerto Rico*, the first published linguistic atlas of any Spanish-speaking area). Even while on vacation in Caracas, Navarro Tomás spent part of his trip completing a few dialect interviews; he was nearly caught in a round-up of demonstrators by Venezuelan police, but (as he wrote to Menéndez Pidal) this would not have been a problem since, if imprisoned, he could still interview guards or other prisoners (a remark which foreshadows the fate of some *ALPI* fieldworkers in Spain a decade later).

In 1929 Menéndez-Pidal obtained support from Huntington's Hispanic Institute in New York, and in 1930, with the backing of the Centro de Estudios Históricos in Madrid, the *ALPI* surveys finally got fully underway. Navarro Tomás trained a team of six fieldworkers in phonetic transcription and dialect survey techniques, and prepared a printed questionnaire with a total of 1256 individual questions (divided into sections on Phonetics, Grammar and Vocabulary) to be answered by over 1100 subjects (largely uneducated rural people) in 527 geographical locations throughout the Iberian Peninsula. These interviews, transcribed by the *ALPI* fieldworkers in 1054 pre-printed notebooks using a very detailed phonetic alphabet, constitute the most complete and detailed survey of Iberian Romance dialects ever conducted.

The *ALPI* fieldwork continued during the years 1931-1936, and the overwhelming majority of the locations had been surveyed by June 1936, when the project (like so much else in Spain) was interrupted by the military revolt against the Republican government, which was to become the Spanish Civil War. The Fascist uprising not only led to the suspension of fieldwork, it also caught some of the *ALPI* fieldworkers behind enemy lines. Some managed to leave the country or ride out the war safely, but the Galician fieldworker Aníbal Otero was less lucky. He was surveying dialect localities in northern Portugal when the war broke out and the Portuguese police turned him over to the Spanish military in his native Galicia. On

the strength of ‘evidence’ that he was a spy -- the fact that the *ALPI* fieldwork was funded by the Republican government in Madrid, and especially his suspicious notebooks full of incomprehensible ‘code’ -- a summary military tribunal convicted Otero of treason and sentenced him to death by firing squad. Menéndez Pidal (by then self-exiled in Havana) wrote an urgent message explaining that Otero’s work on the *ALPI* was of great scientific importance for the prestige of Spain, and other testimony established that his notebooks of ‘code’ in fact contained phonetic transcriptions. Otero’s appeal was partially successful: his initial death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He was eventually pardoned and released in 1941 (two years after the end of the Civil War), having spent more than five years in prison for the ‘crime’ of linguistic fieldwork. In addition to conducting literacy classes for other inmates, he continued his research during his years in various military prisons, surveying fellow prisoners’ speech while also collecting traditional oral literature (*romances*) which he transcribed from memory after his release and sent to Menéndez Pidal.

The rest of the *ALPI* team was dispersed as a result of the Civil War (1936-1939), and the nearly-complete *ALPI* field notebooks were evacuated from Madrid (along with other national treasures, including paintings from the Prado and Menéndez Pidal’s own research papers) to the successive seats of the Republican government in Valencia and Barcelona. Navarro Tomás was one of the thousands of Republican refugees who fled Franco’s military victory (he helped the ailing Antonio Machado cross the Pyrenees to Collioure in France, which was to be the great Spanish poet’s final resting place). His exile took him first to France and then to the U.S., where he taught at Syracuse and then later at Columbia University in New York. By the late 1940s Navarro Tomás, realising there was little hope of his returning to a free Spain to continue his work, began negotiating the return of the *ALPI* materials to Madrid, so that the project could be completed by members of the original fieldwork team whom he had trained. In 1947 they began the remaining fieldwork, and by 1954 the final surveys were completed.

After many years of preparations, editing and cartography, the first and only volume of the *ALPI* was published in 1962, and although work had begun on a second volume, by 1965 the government body which controlled all scholarship in Spain (the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas or CSIC) halted the project, for reasons which have never been made entirely clear. There are a few scattered reviews and scholars such as Diego Catalán used the first volume of *ALPI* data in a couple of studies in the 1960s and 1970s. Near the end of his life, Navarro Tomás published a *Noticia histórica del ALPI* (Bogotá, 1975) in which he notes that the publication had been suspended for lack of funds, and makes a plea for the preservation of the ‘now historical’ *ALPI* materials by the CSIC until such a time as they could be properly published. In 2002, just over a century after the project was originally conceived, more than 70 years after the fieldwork was begun, and almost 40 years after the publication of the first and only printed volume of the *ALPI*, I published a *Segunda Noticia Histórica del ALPI a los cuarenta años de su primer tomo* (in the *Revista de Filología Española*) explaining what had happened to the materials, how I had found them and how these data are now becoming available via Internet (www.alpi.ca averages over 1000 visits per month).

In addition to managing and publishing the only complete collection of these unique linguistic field data, I have also amassed a wealth of fascinating unpublished information on the individuals involved in the *ALPI* project and their lives, both scholarly and private. These include letters between Menéndez Pidal, Navarro Tomás and various *ALPI* fieldworkers, as well as official correspondence with bodies such as the *Centro de Estudios Históricos* and the CSIC, along with other records of the project at different stages and hundreds of documentary photographs. This unpublished collection is the fruit of more than five years of research on this subject, and now constitutes the most complete archive in existence anywhere of material related to the *ALPI* and the scholars who worked on it.

Nonetheless, much vital material for this project remains to be unearthed from archives and other sources: some of the relevant individuals’ papers have only recently been deposited in various archives and libraries across Spain. I will consult important archival material at the Residencia de Estudiantes (which

includes the historic holdings from the Centro de Estudios Históricos) and the Fundación Ramón Menéndez-Pidal (both in Madrid), as well as Navarro Tomás' papers at the Biblioteca Alonso Zamora Vicente in Cáceres. In order to gain a thorough documentary basis of all the relevant unpublished materials, I will spend approximately two weeks carrying out extensive research in each of the locations where significant holdings of material related to the *ALPI* exist (Oviedo, Valencia, Madrid, Palma de Majorca, Vigo, Santiago de Compostela, Cáceres and Lisbon). In addition to these archival sources, there are vital human testimonies to be gathered through interviews: though the original *ALPI* fieldworkers are no longer with us, I have made contact with their families and associates in various parts of Spain (Oviedo, Gijón, Valencia, Madrid, and Palma de Majorca) and will conduct lengthy interviews with them as well. In between all this documentary work (archival research, interviews), I will devote my time to intensive collating, organizing and synthesizing of the materials, and drafting the manuscript itself. I will spend the first eight months of 2007 working full-time on this project in Spain: January to May dedicated mostly to the primary documentary sources and synthesis indicated above (with considerable expenses for travel, temporary accommodations, copying, recording and other direct research costs), and May to August primarily to transcribing interviews, following up additional sources and writing the book chapters as indicated below. For the last four months of 2007 I will return to my teaching duties in Ontario, which will allow me to dedicate myself part-time to final editing of the complete manuscript.

The materials I have accessed to date allow me to outline the book manuscript in the following chapters

- One: The Origins: why a linguistic atlas of the Iberian Peninsula? (early 1900s)
- Two: Preparations: who, what, when and how? (up to the 1920s)
- Three: Trial fieldwork (1920s) and Fieldwork experiences (1930-36)
- Four: Revolt, War, Prison and Exile (1936-1939)
- Five: Post-War Spain: research under Franco (1939-1962)
- Six: The *ALPI* project buried: the lost years (1962-1990s)
- Seven: The *ALPI* data from bookshelf to Internet (1990s to the 21st Century)

The book will also include the first comprehensive bibliography of documents related to the *ALPI* project, many of which are currently either unpublished or widely dispersed in different sources.

On the one hand, this book will be a 'collective biography' or memoir of an extraordinary group of scholars who were active participants in some of the greatest heights of Spanish culture during the Republic and who also suffered some of the depths of the post-war Franco years. The book will also be a contribution to the intellectual history of Spain in the 20th century, with many of its social, political and literary movements, war and exile, Republic and dictatorship, as seen through the lens of linguistic scholarship. Although these *ALPI* researchers were so devoted to the project that they continued it in the face of great adversity, only a few of them have been the objects of individual biographies or other studies: their work on this project has been largely ignored in the historiography of modern Spanish linguistics, a fate similar to that of the *ALPI* project as a whole.

The *ALPI* story is in some ways comparable to the story of other great scholarly undertakings (comparisons can be made with works such as *Caught in the web of words: James A.H. Murray and the Oxford English dictionary*, 1977), and follows a recent work (*Lectures de l'Atlas Linguistique de la France*, Paris 2005) showing renewed interest in European dialect atlas projects. Although the *ALPI* scholars are among the forgotten figures in the intellectual history of Spain through the last century, they were nonetheless involved in many of the social movements, the cultural and political events that defined their times. *Of Lands and Tongues* will be among other things a contribution to the rehabilitation of part of this 'lost generation' of scholars who were victims of history and of Francoism.