

The testaments of Luis Simarro Lacabra (1851-1921)

F. Vera-Sempere

Emeritus professor of pathological anatomy, Department of Pathology, School of Medicine and Odontology, Universitat de València, Valencia, Spain.

ABSTRACT

The year 2021 marked the centenary of the death of the Valencian scientist Luis Simarro Lacabra (1851-1921), a pioneering figure in Spanish neurohistology, who had a great influence on Spanish neuroscience throughout the last third of the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century.

One hundred years after his death, several circumstances surrounding Simarro's life remain unclear, as do many of his scientific interests. This is probably due to Simarro's limited output of published works, among other causes.

In this study, we review the three wills that Simarro made throughout his life and analyse the content of the documents and the changes he made in the different versions. We contextualise these testaments using the available biographical data, which have been contrasted with previously published biographies.

Our analysis sheds new light on the figure of Simarro as well as the institutions and persons linked to him throughout his life. This has provided us with less known data regarding his relationship with the city of Valencia, where he was born, as well as his links with educational and modernising projects conceived within the Institución de Libre Enseñanza. Lastly, and based on his third and final will, we review the different difficulties faced by the Simarro Foundation and the experimental psychology laboratory, whose creation he desired but which never came to pass.

KEYWORDS

Luis Simarro Lacabra, last will and testament, biography, Simarro Foundation

Introduction

The year 2021 marked the centenary of the death of the Valencian scientist Luis Simarro Lacabra, a pioneering figure in Spanish neurohistology, who had a great influence on the development of neuroscience in Spain over the last third of the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century.

Despite this fact, the figure of Luis Simarro has frequently been underestimated and even forgotten in the Spanish

scientific and cultural spheres. This situation, resulting from several circumstances, has taken place not only in Madrid, where Simarro obtained the first chair of experimental psychology, but also in his home town of Valencia, to which Simarro always felt close. However, over the past few years and particularly on the occasion of his centenary, several commemorative acts, publications, and exhibitions have laudably attempted to revive his memory and to highlight the importance of his scientific figure.

Currently, analysing the scientific and human features of Luis Simarro is not a simple task for several reasons. Despite Simarro's unquestionable influence during his time,¹ the varied activities he performed and especially the limited amount of written scientific works make it difficult to study his personality as a man of science.

Furthermore, his biography has often been analysed only superficially, and many of the circumstances are reported in hagiographic accounts, generally written at the time of his death and frequently providing unverified data.

One additional factor that contributed to Simarro's figure being forgotten is his ideological profile and his great involvement in the Spanish Grand Orient masonic body. After the Spanish Civil War, the Spanish neurohistological school was fully dissolved, with many of its members, who knew Simarro's work well, being exiled.^{2,3} At the same time, public institutions clearly obscured the scientific figure of Simarro, who was frequently only remembered as a significant freemason.⁴ Both circumstances distorted the role of Simarro, as well as his work as an importer and communicator of knowledge, as he tried to disseminate European science in Spain.¹

Several publications on Simarro have been published over the last two decades, which have rescued some of his lesser known works,⁵⁻⁸ and gathered his microscopy contributions,⁹ which are frequently underestimated. In addition to these studies, a monograph was published that explored his biography in the context of his time.¹⁰ However, and despite the achievements of these contributions, many circumstances surrounding the life of Luis Simarro remain unknown, as do many of his specific scientific interests.

In this work, we performed an analysis of Simarro's wills, manifested on three different occasions that today, one hundred years after his death, are accessible and publicly available through the registry of last wills and testaments and the historical archive of notarial records.¹¹

The contents of the three testaments are contextualised against Simarro's personal relationships and the circumstances of his life, obtained from the references published on Simarro. This analysis sheds new light on his figure as well as the institutions and persons linked to Simarro throughout his life.

Development

Simarro's wills

According to his death certificate, Luis Simarro Lacabra died in Madrid on 19 June 1921 due to cirrhosis secondary to gallstones. Twenty days earlier, Simarro had dictated his last testament, which years later would serve as the basis for the creation of the Simarro Foundation, an institution that experienced several vicissitudes.

This testament, however, was not the only one that Simarro dictated. We know that, over his life, Simarro wrote three testaments, whose contents we will review in order.

The first will is dated 26 January 1895 (Figure 1). At that time, Simarro was 42 years old. In the document, he states his residence as number 41, calle del Arco de Santa María (today, calle de Augusto Figueroa), which was his first stable home in Madrid. The dwelling had two storeys, with the lower storey being his microscopy laboratory and the upper storey his flat.¹² He had returned from Paris 10 years earlier. He also declared that he was married to Mercedes Roca Cabezas, his first wife, whom he had married in Valencia eight years before and with whom he had no children.

This first will was signed before the notary Joaquín Costa Martínez of number 5, calle Barquillo, in Madrid. The witnesses were José de Castro y Blanco (chair and professor at the Institución Libre de Enseñanza [ILE]), Rafael Torres Campos (a geographer of Krausist and institutionalist thought), and Laureano Ducay y Estada (a military commander and close friend of the notary) (Figure 2).

The notary acting in this testament is an especially relevant figure, who is worth mentioning: Joaquín Costa Martínez (1846-1911). He was the key figure in Spanish regenerationism and a pioneer in the development of social sciences in Spain. He was linked to the creation of the ILE, as well as to the implementation of the pedagogical reform, both of which were very much in line with Simarro's thinking.

Simarro's relationship with the notary Joaquín Costa is also significant. Both were very close in ideological terms. They also had a personal friendship, as can be observed in their correspondence (Figure 3).¹³ These letters show how Joaquín Costa gave Simarro legal

advice on a regular basis. The correspondence also refers to a medical intervention and advice from Simarro regarding the notary's disease; this situation was little known and was revealed in a recent publication.¹⁴

From a young age, Joaquín Costa had a significant physical disability. The disability, initially affecting the right arm, progressively worsened and extended. It is currently hypothesised that Joaquín Costa had progressive muscular dystrophy, probably limb-girdle dystrophy.¹⁴ This disease led Costa to visit many physicians throughout his life. Already in 1877, Simarro examined Joaquín Costa in Madrid due to frequent bronchial infections.^{13,14} Years later, in July 1882, on the advice of Simarro, who was living in Paris at the time, Joaquín Costa travelled to the French capital to be assessed by the famous neurologist Jean Martin Charcot, whose clinical sessions Simarro frequently attended.^{16,17} Costa was examined at the Hospice de la Vieillesse-Hommes (later Hôpital Bicetre). Charcot diagnosed muscular dystrophy and prescribed electrotherapy. One year later, Costa returned to Paris. Following Simarro's advice once more, Costa was assessed by doctor Romain Vigouroux, a collaborator of Charcot and specialist in electrotherapy; however, this treatment seemed to have no effect on Costa's disease.

In 1903, Simarro again gave medical advice and intervened in the notary's disease. Simarro attended the 14th International Medical Congress in Madrid, where he presented his microscopy technique for staining with silver salts, published in Cajal's journal.¹⁸ At the congress, Simarro listened to and met the Swiss neurologist Heinrich Frenkel, a pioneer in neurorehabilitation.¹⁹ Simarro asked Frenkel to treat his notary and friend at the Swiss health resort where Frenkel worked. According to his correspondence with Simarro,¹³ we know that Joaquín Costa travelled to Heiden (Switzerland) in 1903 to be treated by Frenkel, although he ultimately did not accept the orthopaedic solution proposed.¹⁴ Costa's progressive physical disability worsened, leading him to seclude himself in Graus (Huesca, Spain), his home town.²⁰

On 7 January 1904, Simarro dictated his second testament (Figure 4). The notary Joaquín Costa, increasingly disabled, was no longer in Madrid. The testament was drafted at the office of the notary

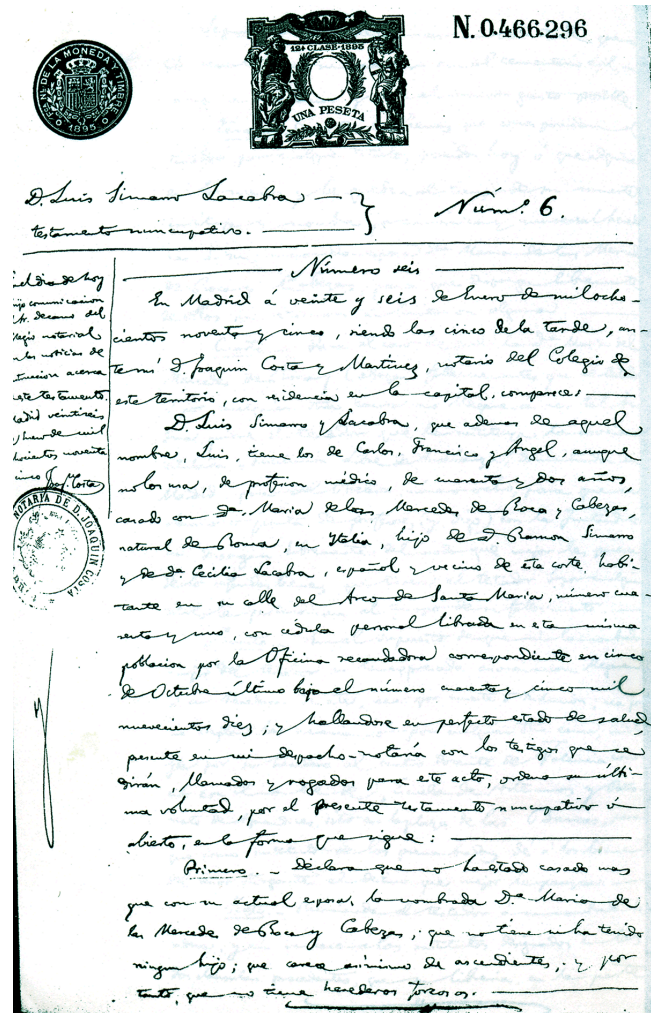


Figure 1. First testament of Luis Simarro Lacabra, dictated on 26 January 1895 before the notary Joaquín Costa Martínez.

José María Martín y Martín. Simarro was 52 years old. His personal circumstances had also changed. He had already obtained the chair of experimental psychology at the School of Sciences of Universidad Central; the discipline was included as a subject in the doctorate studies of students of sciences, medicine, and philosophy and arts.²¹ He had just been widowed, as his wife Mercedes Roca died two months before due to liver cancer. Simarro was now living at number 1, calle Conde de Aranda, his second house in Madrid. There, he had a new histological laboratory, in which he was

ceros, capítulo primero, sección quinta del libro tercero
 son aplicables a este testamento, yo el Notario doy fe.

Luis Simarro
 José de Castro
 Laureano Ducay
 Rafael Torres
 Joaquín Costa

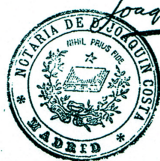


Figure 2. Signatures on Simarro's first testament. We can see the signatures of Simarro, the notary Joaquín Costa Martínez, and those of the three witnesses (José de Castro y Blanco, Rafael Torres Campos, and Laureano Ducay y Estada).

portrayed in 1897 by his friend Joaquín Sorolla in the famous painting *Dr Simarro in the laboratory*.²²

In this second will, Simarro designated three executors, who were key figures in the ILE: Ricardo Rubio Álvarez de Linera (1856-1935), secretary of the National Pedagogical Museum, Manuel Bartolomé Cossío (1857-1935), director of the museum, and Francisco Giner de los Ríos (1839-1915), founder and father of the ILE (Figure 5).

The document was witnessed by three doctors, who were very good friends of Simarro: Juan Madinaveitia y Ortiz de Zárate (1861-1938), Luis Francisco Rodríguez Sandoval, and Miguel Gayarre y Espinal (1866-1936). All three had jointly participated in the drafting of the *Vademecum clínico-terapéutico* (Clinical and therapeutic handbook) six years earlier, in 1898; Simarro contributed the chapter on the diseases of the nervous system.²³ These witnesses are also very likely to be the figures portrayed in the famous painting by Sorolla, mentioned above.²²

Juan Madinaveitia was the chief physician of a ward at Hospital Provincial, as well as associate professor of general pathology at Universidad Central, where Amalio Gimeno, a former colleague of Simarro's at Universidad de Valencia,⁹ was the chair of the subject. Madinaveitia had a clear flair for clinical anatomy and pathophysiology. He and Simarro were always good friends. They shared the laboratory that was installed years later in the basements of their adjoining homes on calle General Oráa. In this laboratory, Simarro focused (among other things) on histological analysis of the necropsy samples obtained from patients treated by Madinaveitia.

The neuropsychiatrist Rodríguez Sandoval was a fellow student of Achúcarro, as well as a good friend and collaborator of Simarro. Through Simarro, Sandoval had treated Juan Ramón Jiménez,¹⁰ as well as Sorolla and his family when the Valencian painter presented an attack of hemiplegia, a condition he suffered throughout his life.

The third witness at the notary's office was Miguel Gayarre y Espinal, a neurohistologist and disciple of Simarro who also worked as neuropsychiatrist, first at Hospital Provincial and later at the Ciempozuelos psychiatric hospital, where he was director. In neurohistology, Gayarre worked with Achúcarro and later joined the group of disciples of Cajal, thereby influencing the training of Gonzalo Rodríguez Lafora and the Madrid school of neuropsychiatry.²⁴

Lastly, we should mention the third testament that Simarro dictated on 30 May 1921, 20 days before his death, at the office of the notary Vicente Colomer y Sanz (Figure 6). The testament was dictated at Simarro's house at the time, at number 5, calle General Oráa, where he had once more installed a microscopy laboratory in the basement of the house. As we mentioned above, he shared this laboratory with his neighbour and close friend Dr Madinaveitia, who lived next door at number 3 of the same street.

In this will, Simarro declared being married to Amparo Nieto Araque, his former housekeeper, whom he had married eight months earlier, on 8 September 1920.¹⁰ It is clear that Simarro was certain that he had little time left when he dictated this testament.

The witnesses of this third will were Francisco Alvarado Albo, Ramón Martínez Sol, and Juan Botella Asensi. They were close friends of Simarro and, like him, were also freemasons (Iberian lodge no. 7 and Spanish American lodge of Madrid).²⁵

In this third and last testament, Simarro designated as executors “three good friends, whose noble enthusiasm for scientific progress was known to me”: the physician Juan Madinaveitia y Ortiz de Zárate, mentioned above, the secretary of the National Pedagogical Museum, Domingo Barnés Salinas (1879-1940), who years later would become Minister of Education, and the assistant professor at the School of Science, Cipriano Rodrigo Lavín (1882-1972). Simarro commissioned the three executors to create an experimental psychology laboratory in Madrid but, as we shall see, it was never established.¹⁰

Dispositions of Simarro’s testaments

The only common disposition in the three wills was his desire to be buried in a civil cemetery. He expressed his wishes to be “buried unpretentiously, without any ceremony, delivering no invitations or publishing any advertisement in the newspapers, at the lowest possible cost, only for the transport and burial of the corpse.”

There are, however, other dispositions that are very different between wills, which are unquestionably of great interest and are therefore analysed below.

1. The first testament

In the first testament (1895), dictated at the age of 45 years, before Joaquín Costa, Simarro named his first wife, María de las Mercedes Roca Cabezas, as sole beneficiary. Secondly, he stated that “should his wife die before him or ultimately not inherit for any reason,” the sole beneficiary would be the ILE, which was located at number 8, paseo del Obelisco, in Madrid. In the event that “this institution, whether by dissolution, non-acceptance of the heritage, or any other cause, would finally not inherit,” he designated as the third sole beneficiary the Escuela de Artesanos y Patronato de Aprendices de Valencia (school of artisans and trust of apprentices of Valencia), located on calle de las Barcas, for it to allocate the assets as it saw fit.

He also mentioned to all three potential beneficiaries, in the order mentioned, his desire that “the content of the section of his library on medicine, surgery, and physico-chemical and natural sciences not be scattered but rather kept together and put at the disposal of the School of Medicine of Valencia.”

Thus, the city of Valencia is mentioned twice in this first testament; let us attempt to clarify the reason for these two dispositions. Simarro designated as a possible sole beneficiary, as his third preference, the Escuela de Artesanos de Valencia (EAV). Furthermore, he donated his library to the School of Medicine where he studied.

The EAV was a well-known institution for which Simarro felt a strong affinity. His friend Joaquín Sorolla had attended night classes at the EAV for the first three years of his studies as a painter (1876-1879)²⁶; his first four paintings were made there, and are currently preserved at the EAV.²⁷

Simarro identified with Krausist ideals and agreed with the educational proposals that inspired the EAV, which suggested “the suppression of examinations, coeducation, differentiated instruction, academic freedom, autonomy, and secular schooling,” with the aim of “instructing the working class and the less privileged social groups.”²⁷

The EAV had been created in October 1868,²⁸ in the context of the Glorious Revolution, by decree of the revolutionary junta led by José Peris y Valero in Valencia. In its beginnings, the EAV had the determined support of the chair of law and Krausist thinker Eduardo Pérez Pujol (1830-1894), who also acted as benefactor of Simarro.

At that time, Simarro was a young man of radical ideas, clearly positioned in favour of Darwinism, who attended French lessons, and also taught courses on workplace hygiene at the Republican Centre for the Working Class in Valencia.¹⁶

At the inauguration of the EAV, Pérez Pujol delivered a moving speech presenting the school’s ethos for instructing the working class.²⁸ This chair of law soon became rector of the University of Valencia,²⁹ by appointment of the Provisional Government of 1869. At the same time, Simarro was named treasurer of the

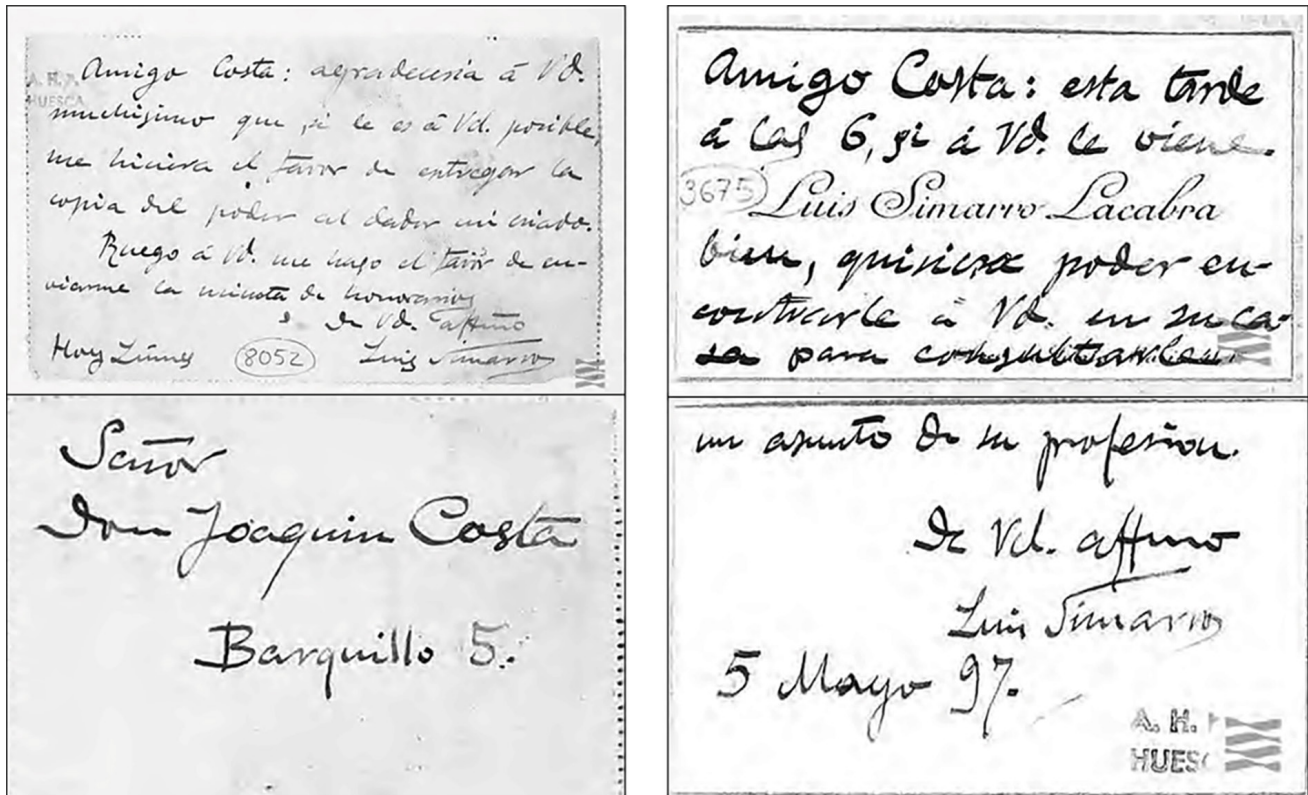


Figure 3. Handwritten letters from Simarro to the notary Joaquín Costa, which are preserved in digital format in the Historical Archive of Huesca (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

Republican junta in Valencia,^{10,16} with Amalio Gimeno, his classmate at the School of Medicine, as president.⁹

In the opinion of Vidal Parellada,¹⁰ Simarro was appointed treasurer, at the request and under the influence of Pérez Pujol. Years later, both Simarro and his classmate Gimeno had to take academic exile from Valencia due to their radical ideas, to finish their studies at the School in Madrid.⁹

During its development, the EAV was also strongly supported by the historian Vicente Boix y Ricarte (1813-1880), a figure of liberal Romanticism in Valencia who was also director of the Secondary School. Boix, like Pérez Pujol, would also act as protector and supporter of the young Simarro.^{10,16}

No further documented data are available on Simarro's possible subsequent relationship with the EAV after

he moved to Madrid. This relationship may have been maintained, either directly or through Beatriz Tortosa, his old friend and protector in Valencia, who was closely linked to the EAV as benefactor and was always close to Simarro.¹⁰ Beatriz Tortosa had a constant relationship of affection and protection towards Simarro, as can be observed in her own testament. In this document, preserved in the historical archive of the EAV, Beatriz Tortosa granted Simarro the usufruct of all her significant income from rent and her properties in the province of Valencia, stipulating that upon Simarro's death, these funds should be allocated to the construction of a neighbourhood for the poor and needy of Valencia.³⁰

Furthermore, the historical archive of the EAV³¹ also contains the testament of Simarro's wife, Mercedes Roca, who died in 1903 and, like Beatriz Tortosa,

stipulated that the rent from their properties be made available to the EAV in Valencia.

There are also other data suggesting that Simarro visited the EAV on some occasion, either alone or with Nicolás Salmerón. For instance, a photograph shows Simarro visiting the headstones he commissioned from Benlliure for the graves of his parents in the cemetery of Xàtiva.³² Nicolás Salmerón, former president of the First Spanish Republic and founder of the party Unión Republicana, accompanied Simarro on this trip. Before arriving in Xàtiva, the pair probably went to Valencia. This hypothesis is supported by a note in the guest book of the EAV,³³ with the signature of Nicolás Salmerón below a small text that reads: “Joining culture with manual work means preparing men to embody the idea in nature. This is the purpose of the Escuela de Artesanos, which represents a great honour for the cultured city of Valencia.”

Simarro’s first will included another reference to the city of Valencia: he stipulated that his library should be donated to the School of Medicine. Simarro’s memories of the school of Valencia where he studied were probably conflicted. Simarro did not forget the teachings in Valencia of such professors as Rafael Cisternas, a progressive chair of natural history, or Serrano Cañete, professor of medical pathology,¹⁷ as they both contributed to reinforce his ideas and adhesion to Darwinism and evolutionist theories.³⁴

Simarro is also known to have received his first microscopy lessons at the school of Valencia.⁹ The anatomy course of José María Gómez Alamá included compulsory practical lessons on the use of the microscope. Furthermore, Elías Martínez Gil, corresponding member of the Spanish Society of Histology, was conducting histopathological studies on tumours resected by Enrique Ferrer Viñerta, the chair of surgery whose confrontation with Simarro led to the latter’s move to Madrid.⁹ These studies were well-known to Simarro, as he was the student responsible for preparing notes on the subject taught by Ferrer Viñerta, which were published annually and show a clear talent for clinical anatomy.^{9,35}

There are also lesser known data suggesting possible connections between Simarro and the School of Medicine in Valencia after his move to Madrid. Thus, in

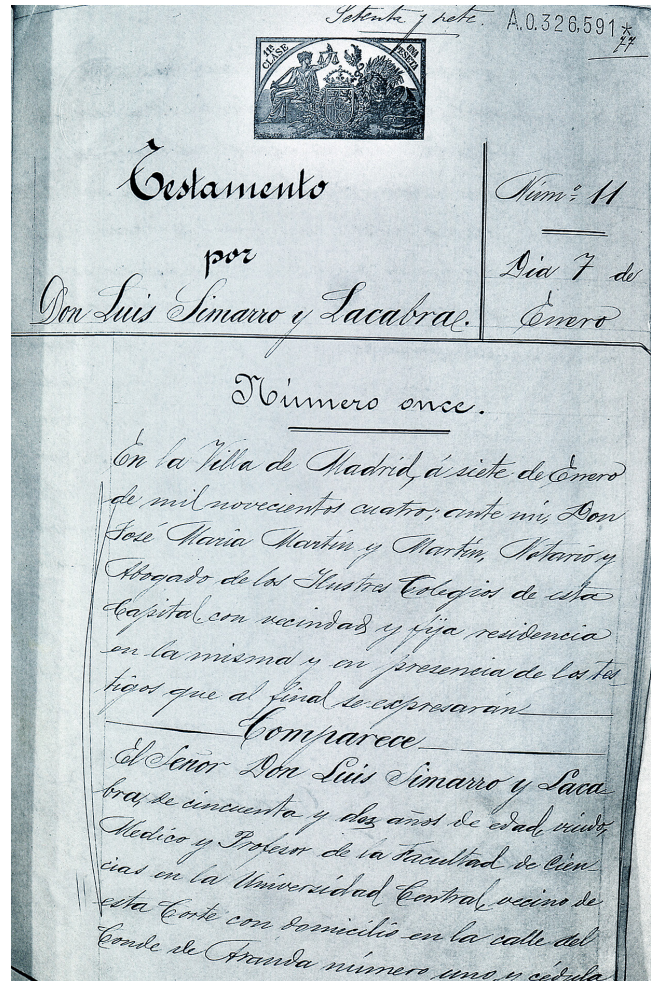


Figure 4. Second testament of Luis Simarro Lacabra, dictated on 7 January 1904 before the notary José María Martín y Martín.

1888 and 1889, Simarro and Cajal sat on two examining boards to select chairs of histology. Simarro did not belong to the group of university chairs, and on both occasions, he was designated a member of the board due to his famous career in the field of histology, as there were not enough chairs to cover all seven places in the board, in accordance with the applicable regulations.³⁶ As a result of these competitive examinations, Juan Bartual, Cajal’s first student from Valencia, obtained the chair in Valencia,^{9,36} with Simarro voting in favour.

The following information comes from a letter dated in 1919 by the master of the Federación Valencina masonic

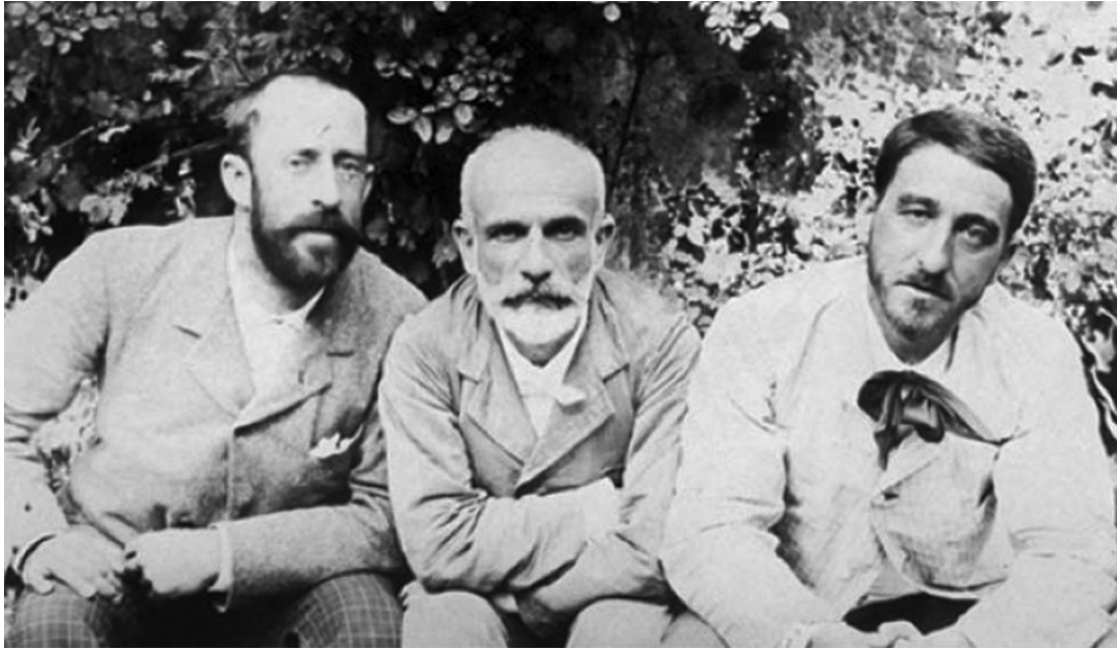


Figure 5. Executors of Simarro's second testament. Photograph taken in El Pardo in 1892. From left to right: Ricardo Rubio Álvarez de Linera (1856-1935), Francisco Giner de los Ríos (1839-1915), and Manuel Bartolomé Cossío (1857-1935). Image from Creative Commons 4.0 (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).

lodge no. 93, in which he requested that Simarro intercede before the School of Medicine in Valencia, given his “valuable influence and good relations” with the institution,⁴ for the hiring of an assistant anatomy lecturer in Valencia. We do not know whether Simarro took any action in this regard. It is also unclear why this testament disposition regarding his library, as well as the mention of the EAV as a possible sole beneficiary, does not appear in the following two testaments that Simarro dictated.

2. The second testament

The second testament by Simarro, dictated in 1904, effectively omits these two references to Valencia. Simarro had recently been widowed. He lived alone at his house on calle Conde de Aranda, although he took in Juan Ramón Jiménez, in a situation that has been classified as “of mutual care” and “shared loneliness.”¹⁰

In this second testament, the main beneficiary was the ILE, and two new dispositions of lesser importance and amount are also included, which are left to the judgement of the executors.

The first of these minor dispositions involved the nephews of his wife, who had died two months before. The second referred to his servants. Simarro left both dispositions in the hands of his three executors (Ricardo Rubio, Bartolomé Cossío, and Francisco Giner, key personalities in the ILE) (Figure 5), thereby showing his total trust in them.

Thus, Simarro established that the three executors must “help in the way and measure they deem prudent and necessary” and that his two nephews be helped “until they find a profession or are old enough to support themselves.” The second minor disposition establishes that the executors should gratify “as prudently and in

the amount they deem appropriate” the servants at the service of the testator.

The main disposition of this testament, referring to the overall total of his assets, establishes that they should be legated to the ILE, which is declared the sole and universal beneficiary, indicating that in the event of death of the executors, the ILE would be responsible for designating new executors.

3. The third testament

The third testament, dictated 20 days before his death, includes substantial changes (Figure 6). Firstly, the executors changed. The previous executors (Ricardo Rubio, Bartolomé Cossío, and Giner de los Ríos) were replaced by three new executors (Juan Madinaveitia, Domingo Barnés, and Cipriano Lavín), who were granted full powers.

The next significant change involved the beneficiaries of his assets; he established that the main content of his estate should be used for the foundation of an experimental psychology laboratory; no mention is made of the ILE, or the possibility of ascribing this laboratory to the Council for the Extension of Studies (JAE, for its Spanish initials), which, as we know, since 1907 had undertaken the task of institutionalising science through the creation of research institutes or laboratories.³⁷

The change of executors is worth discussing. Francisco Giner de los Ríos, father and founder of the ILE, who had been designated executor in the second testament, had died in February 1915, eliminating the possibility of his acting as such. This was not the case, however, for Manuel Bartolomé Cossío (who had replaced Giner as director of the ILE) or Ricardo Rubio (editor of the *Boletín* of the ILE), who died in 1936 and 1935, respectively.

The change of executors and the lack of any mention of the ILE in the third testament leads us to pose a question that has already been suggested and answered in a newspaper article by Carral,¹² citing the testimony of Domingo Barnés: why does Simarro’s third testament not mention the ILE at any time?

To answer this question, we must go back to 1909 and look into one of the most delicate and controversial

aspects of the ILE: the existing relationship between institutionalism, secular teaching, and freemasonry.^{38,39}

In 1909, Simarro was Grand Master of the Spanish Grand Orient masonic body. On an uncertain date in the autumn of that year, Simarro organised a meeting between himself, Giner, and Cossío (two of the executors of his will). In this meeting, Simarro asked that the ILE position itself and manifest in favour of the campaign organised by Spanish freemasonry after the execution of Ferrer Guardia, which was supported internationally by the Grand Orient of Belgium. Giner and Cossío were absolutely opposed to mixing the ILE and the campaign, which greatly displeased Simarro, who apparently mentioned the testament he had dictated four years earlier, in which the ILE was the sole beneficiary.

It seems that the conversation between these old institutionalist friends was somewhat tense, especially on the side of Giner, who wanted to keep a distance from freemasonry; therefore, the answer they gave to Simarro was unequivocally negative. This event led to a distancing between Giner and Simarro; some cite this as the reason why Simarro later resigned from his position in the JAE.¹⁰

In 1916, seven years later and with Giner now deceased, we find another reference to the mentioned event. Ricardo Rubio wrote a letter to Bartolomé Cossío (both named as executors in Simarro’s testament)⁴⁰ mentioning that he observed Simarro’s “move away from the environment of calle Daoíz, as the decision he made regarding the Ferrer campaign continued to have an impact in his environment.” Calle Daoíz was the street where the National Pedagogical Museum was located, and the decision mentioned, we may assume, refers to the initiative of changing the content of his last testament.

To complement the content of Simarro’s third and last testament, we may mention four minor dispositions regarding his second wife (Amparo Nieto Araque), whom he had married only eight months earlier; the child Marina Romero Serrano, his god-daughter, who was living at his house; his mother-in-law, Juana Araque Rodas; and his cousin Pilar Aparicio Simarro. We will briefly address these dispositions.

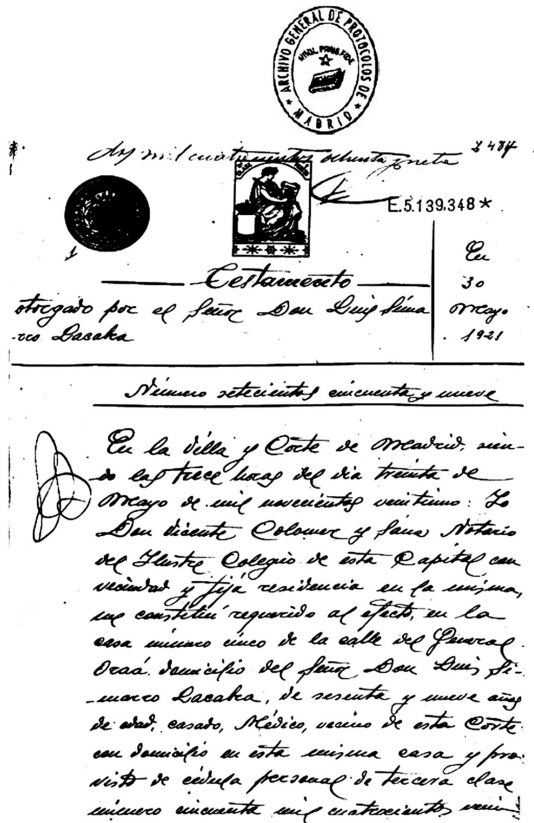


Figure 6. Third and final testament of Luis Simarro Lacabra dictated on 30 May 1921 before the notary Vicente Colomer y Sanz.

Regarding his second wife, and in accordance with the law, Amparo Nieto Araque was entitled to lifelong usufruct of 50% of his assets, “with freedom to choose the property where she wishes to live as well as the furniture and belongings she wishes to enjoy as usufruct, with the exception of the Library,” which was included in the main legacy, as well as any asset in usufruct once it extinguishes.

The second and third minor dispositions are connected. He established a lifelong pension of 200 pesetas per month to the child Marina Romero Serrano, for her to study in accordance with her intelligence. Also, he named as her caregivers his wife or her mother (Juana Araque Rodas), establishing a monthly pension of 50

pesetas for his mother-in-law for as long as she was in charge of the girl.

The fourth minor disposition established that his cousin Pilar Aparicio y Simarro should be repaid the 3000 pesetas she had lent him to invest in bonds of the Ciudad Lineal district.

Regarding the main beneficiary, he specified that the experimental psychology laboratory in Madrid “should be established alone or in association with the School of Science of the Universidad Central or another teaching institution wishing to participate in its foundation and with the means to improve it,” without mentioning the ILE or the JAE, or the possibility that the laboratory should be ascribed to either of them.

Furthermore, the document mentions that should any of the executors die, the remaining two should designate a new executor to comply with the testament; similarly, they are understood to be responsible for executing the above-mentioned dispositions and minor stipulations.

The future of the Simarro Foundation

To establish how the dispositions of Simarro’s will were executed, we reviewed a large file on the Simarro Foundation⁴¹ preserved at the Foundations Protectorate of the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports.

From the vast content of this file, we may conclude that Simarro’s disposition on the creation of an experimental psychology laboratory was never executed. This task was unfinished business for Simarro since his trips in 1907 to England and France to visit different laboratories, which undoubtedly also influenced his decision to send his student Cipriano Rodrigo Lavín to England with a scholarship from the JAE.⁴² However, as we shall see below, this never came to pass after Simarro’s death.

In December 1921, six months after Simarro’s death, the executors apparently filed a public deed to constitute the Foundation at the office of the same notary who had drafted Simarro’s testament. However, they did not immediately request the declaration of the non-profit and teaching character of the Foundation, which led to several problems, claims, and procedures with different administrations.

In 1922, a public auction of paintings was held in the “El saloncito” exhibition room of the Ateneo de Madrid.⁴³

The auctioned paintings had belonged to Simarro, who had been a member of the Ateneo de Madrid from 1875 (member no. 3644) until his death. The auction was held with the aim of “raising funds for the Foundation that will be established with his name.”

The auction included five paintings by Sorolla (two watercolours, two oil paintings, and one pastel painting), together with paintings by Beruete, Rivera, Madrazo, and Emilio Sala; the auction was not very successful.¹⁰ Only two watercolour paintings by Sorolla (*Boy eating grapes* and *The old man of the cigarette*)^A were acquired by Sorolla’s wife, Clotilde García, acting on behalf of her husband, for the amount of 10 000 pesetas. Both watercolour paintings are currently in the Sorolla Museum.

The Foundation drafted its statutes and the inventory in 1922,^{41,42} although a certified copy of all these actions had to be made public in 1927 by means of a new deed signed before the notary Fidel Perlado; this was very likely intended to enable the Foundation to obtain non-profit and teaching institution status. Two years later, in February 1929, the Foundation was still required to pay taxes due to the lack of justification of the legal requirements for being considered a non-profit and teaching institution.⁴⁵ This was not resolved until a Royal Order was issued the same year,⁴⁶ declaring the non-profit and teaching character of the Foundation, authorising the public auctioning of the goods, and resolving the matter of the outstanding taxes and tributes.⁴⁷ Despite this, the issue of taxes and duties gave rise to several claims and procedures that lasted long periods of time, even after the end of the Spanish Civil War, during the 1950s, when the University of Madrid had been already designated as patron of the Foundation. This may be due to the significant delay in the executors’ request for non-profit and teaching status.

In 1927, six years after the death of Simarro, a press release¹² written by Domingo Barnés (one of the

executors) stated that all the assets of the Simarro Legacy amounted to 600 000 pesetas, which would be sufficient to do only a few things. He also mentioned that the University of Madrid would probably allocate one of the new pavilions, still under construction, to the Simarro Foundation; however, this never took place.

One of the problems that the executors would soon face was the inability to access the deposits at the Banco de España, as the income from the funds was associated to the usufruct at a rate of 50%. Due to this situation and the delay in holding the public auction of the properties, the executors were not fully aware of the content of the legacy, as a result of which they received significant criticism.¹⁰

In 1932, Rodrigo Lavín requested that the Ministry of Education modify the statutes of the Foundation (articles 14 and 17) to avoid the requirement to submit accounts annually, and also to enable them immediately to proceed to the auctioning of the goods. Between 16 and 19 November 1933, the newspapers *El Sol*, *La Voz*, and *El Liberal* published advertisements for the public auction of three plots (one of which included a building) in Ciudad Lineal, measuring 1200, 2442, and 4693 m², respectively, which had been owned by Simarro. In the auction, bids were only submitted for the largest plot, which was sold for 21 148 pesetas. As a consequence, the law required that a new auction be conducted with reduced starting prices with respect to the initial valuation, but this never happened.

The lawsuits regarding the outstanding taxes and contributions on the Foundation’s assets dragged on over time. Even several months after the outbreak of the civil war, the town hall of Chamartín de la Rosa claimed again the taxes for Simarro’s properties. Years later, after the Spanish Civil War, the fire that occurred at the property register of Colmenar made it impossible to document the possible property records of Simarro in this town. The Spanish Civil War definitively changed the personal situations of the three executors. During the war, Dr Madinaveitia moved from Madrid to Barcelona, where he died in November 1938. Domingo Barnés had been appointed as ambassador to Mexico in 1934, and later, in 1936, to Cuba. Finally, he resigned from his position as ambassador to Cuba and took exile, first in Paris and later in Mexico, where he died soon after.

^ARed Digital de Colecciones de Museos de España [Internet]. Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte; [s.l.]. Inventory no. 00427 and 00464 [accessed 21 Jan 2022] Available from: <http://ceres.mcu.es/pages/Main>

This way, by the mid-1940s, Rodrigo Lavín was the only surviving executor of the heritage of the Foundation. Rodrigo Lavín lived in Madrid during the war, working as forensic physician until early 1938, when he also moved to Barcelona, given the adverse course of the war. In Barcelona, he worked as chief inspector of the medical services of the Ministry of Labour, but he finally took exile in France in 1939, returning in 1948. Upon his return, the academic and political purge had already taken place and his assets had been seized: he also lost all his positions. Furthermore, he had to remain under house arrest to serve the sentence of a default judgement, amounting to 12 years and one day.^{42,44}

In May 1940, with Rodrigo Lavín in exile, an order⁴⁸ signed by the minister Ibáñez Martín was dictated that dissolved the trust of the Simarro Foundation, as “it lacked a legal representative, and the dissolution could not be communicated to the patrons as they could not be located; the trust shall be entrusted to the Universidad Central de Madrid.”

From then, the assets of the Simarro Foundation began to change location, after having been stored and forgotten for several years in a flat in Madrid. Furthermore, the lands and properties of the estate, located in Chamartín, were finally acquired in a public auction in 1948 to be used for military housing.⁴⁹ In 1948, a new statute of the Simarro Foundation was dictated, constituting a new trust including the rector, the dean of the school of science, and a third member with experience in experimental psychology; however, this new regulation was not approved until 1954.

In May 1953, Rodrigo Lavín wrote a letter to the Minister of Education requesting that he be acknowledged as a trustee of the Simarro Foundation. The minister, Ruíz Giménez, responded one year later through a ministerial order, denying the request.⁵⁰

With regard to the content of the legacy, we will make a few comments on the paintings and the microscopy material. The vast art collection of the Simarro estate was one of the elements that attracted most attention, probably because it was thought, together with properties, to have the highest economic value. After the unsuccessful auction in 1922, these assets were inventoried for the first time 40 years after the death of Simarro⁵¹; 66 years later, the paintings were found

in different rooms, deans' offices, and administrative offices at the Universidad Complutense's School of Philosophy and Literature and School of Psychology.⁵² The art collection grew years later, in 1990, with the oil painting of Simarro by Luis Madrazo, which he bequeathed to his god-daughter Marina Romero Serrano. Furthermore, it was recently confirmed that the legacy includes a painting known as *Portrait of Spinoza*,⁵³ which was first considered to be painted by an anonymous author but has now been identified as Joaquín Sorolla's portrait of the Dutch philosopher Spinoza. The painting is currently preserved in the Marqués de Valdecilla historical library of the Universidad Complutense; according to the website of the university, it has been temporarily removed from the public exhibition.⁵⁴ In 2007, Vidal Parellada¹⁰ recounted that some of the paintings of the legacy were located at that time in the department of philology of the Universidad Complutense, confirming that the legacy “still contained some personal documents, although some have evidently been lost.” With regard to the microscopy materials, Mariano Yela reported that the legacy included several dozens (probably hundreds at the beginning) of “microtomic preparations still awaiting proper analysis.”

The life of the Simarro Foundation as a private, non-profit, teaching foundation ended in July 1980 with the creation of the General Foundation of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, which merged 18 existing foundations at the university. These foundations are described in a long list that starts with the Galerías Preciados Foundation and ends with the Simarro Foundation and the Rodríguez Cela Foundation. The circumstances or situations that took place later are clearly beyond the scope of the current analysis.

Conclusions

Despite the time that has elapsed since the death of Luis Simarro Lacabra, some very specific circumstances of his life are yet to be known, as are certain scientific interests, which were always marked by his role as an importer and communicator of science, attempting to disseminate European knowledge in Spain.

The analysis of Simarro's testaments, dictated at three different moments of his life, provides new insights to our understanding of the complex biography of Simarro

and the institutions and individuals linked to Simarro throughout his life.

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