

Some Treasures of Cotocollao  
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These seventy-one reels of microfilm held by the Vatican Library and by that of Vanderbilt University, called the "Biblioteca Ecuatoriana 'Aurelio Espinosa Polít,'" came into existence in late 1966. A happy coincidence of Vanderbilt Library money and interest, expertise from the Vatican Film Library at Saint Louis University and generous cooperation by its Ecuadorian custodians, all bore fruit in bringing to the United States a rich and varied collection of documents and some imprints from Ecuador.

Writer and professor Robert H. Davis, now of Luther College, spent several days in Quito during April 1966, ordering and selecting, from the enormous troves of MSS and imprints, a generous selection of late colonial and nineteenth-century holdings. These were filmed, some months later, by Father Laurie Daly, SJ, of Saint Louis University, assisted by the then-director of that university's program in Quito, Father Harold Bradley, SJ. Physically present, ever attentive, and ever generous was Padre Julián G. Bravo, SJ, the benign and erudite director of the Espinosa Polít Library at Cotocollao, near Quito. To Father Bravo must go the thanks of scholars who use the collection here, for he played a decisive role in suggesting and uncovering additional materials to be filmed—beyond those originally selected.

Time does not permit us here to more than a cursory glance at the contents of the seventy reels of microfilm. I propose, therefore to merely share a few samples drawn from only a handful of reels in the collection. What makes the Biblioteca Ecuatoriana formed by Padre Aurelio Espinosa Polít, SJ, (1894-1961) so uniquely important to students of the Ecuadorian past, as samples below will show, I believe, is the large quantity of official documentation it contains. This is a reflection of the tardy creation of Ecuador's National Archive which was not in existence until after 1943 and of the strong institutional role played by the Church—notably the Society of Jesus—in Ecuadorian cultural life. Thus, a multi-dimensional savant like Espinosa Polít, concerned with literature, political history, the expansion of education in the arts and natural sciences of Ecuador, and himself the heir to several previously assembled MS collections and libraries, collected. He did so, doubtlessly, to save many records from destruction. Posterity must judge his contribution, therefore, not only on his notable published opus, but, too, on his remarkable Biblioteca—especially its MSS and rare fugitive printed materials.

Thus, glancing at Reel 1, one finds papers relating to affairs in Cuenca, 1808 that contain correspondence from the bishop there to President Ruiz Castilla in Quito, concerning affairs; to President Toribio Montes (139 items) in 1812 to 1816; and to President Melchor Aymerich from Riobamba province and others in 1820. Included are copies of reports dealing with patriot activities in neighboring New Granada, especially Ayón and Santa Fe, as well as others relating to royalist measures taken in Peru. Further along, in the same reel, one comes across several detailed descriptions of the human and economic resources of various pueblos in the Quito jurisdiction assembled in 1808. So, too, are found reports on the donatives to the crown made in Cuenca province in 1809. This listing hardly does the first reel justice. There is much more documentation, from 1800 to 1820, on Catholic subjects.



