

# The 450-year life of the *Nobiliario genealógico de varias casas de España*: a brief biography of a manuscript



EvaAnne D. Johnson, Graduate student

School of Information Science (iSchool), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

## Quick Biography

- Name: *Nobiliario genealógico de varias casas de España*
- Born: late 16<sup>th</sup> century in Spain
- Language: Spanish (castellano)
- Genre: genealogy, peerage, armorial, family saga, & history
- Size: 30 cm, 157 pages, 231 illustrations of coats of arms
- Binding: Leather and marbled paper, circa 1905
- Script: primarily Cortesana-Humanistica script
- Currently resides in: Ayer manuscript collection, Newberry Library, Chicago, IL
- Previously lived with: Edward E. Ayer of Chicago, IL; and don Antonio Cánovas del Castillo of Madrid, Spain.
- Potential relatives: *Linajes de España* and *Libro de los linajes, armas y descendencia de caballeros*, both by Diego Hernández de Mendoza

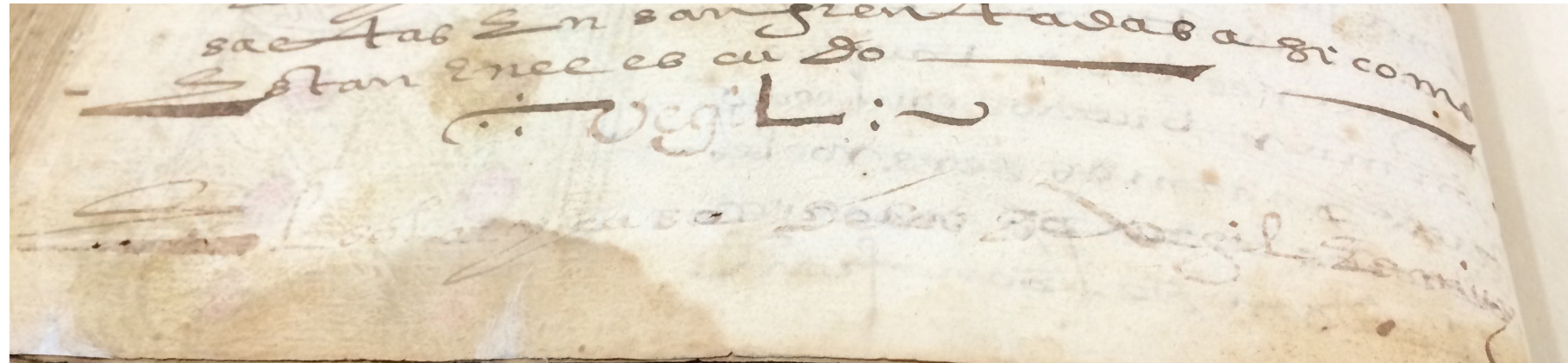
## Potential source text

The *Nobiliario genealógico* provides the heraldry for over 200 noble families from the Iberian Peninsula, some of which also include genealogical sketches and family stories. This book lacks a colophon or original title page, so the date, author and original title are unknown. The current title was likely added in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

I compared select passages with various contemporary genealogical manuscripts, and I found remarkable similarities with one particular work. I believe that this manuscript is a derivative of a very influential heraldic work written in 1497 by Diego Hernández de Mendoza, commonly known as *Linajes de España* or *Libro de linages de España*. The *Nobiliario genealógico* shares its structure and large portions of text with this earlier work. The original work included over 280 coats of arms and their descriptions (Valverde Ogallar 533). I have found at least 20 existing versions of this work, some of which also include an index of surnames, an additional introduction, and may or may not include the illustrations.

I identified a particularly close relative to the *Nobiliario genealógico*, which is titled “Libro de los linajes, armas y descendencia de caballeros” by Hernández de Mendoza (bound with another text to form the volume titled *Mendoza linages*, MS. 2432 at the University of Salamanca). This text was completed in 1525 in Madrid, predating the *Nobiliario genealógico* by at least 25 years. Besides sharing the same general text of the *Linajes de España*, these two manuscripts share an identical prologue that alludes to the Mendoza family (shown in image above), which is not found in other versions of this work. However, the Mendoza text is almost double the length of the *Nobiliario genealógico*, and lacks the illustrations of the coats of arms. These two manuscripts may have had a very similar source text and the illustrations may have been sourced elsewhere.

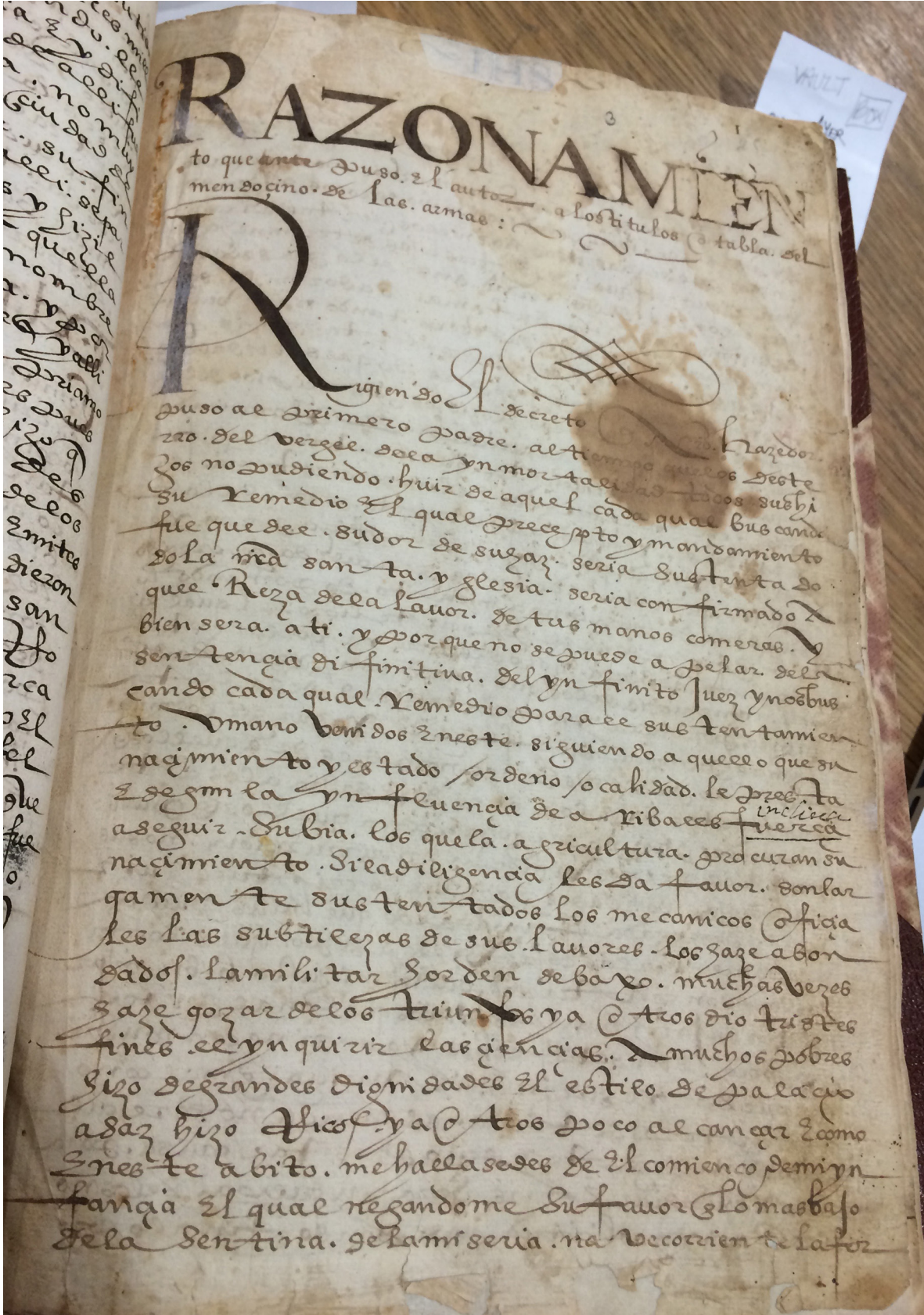
Whatever its source, the text of the *Nobiliario genealógico* is obviously incomplete. There is at least one quire missing from the beginning of the book, including the rest of the introduction. At least a couple pages are missing from the middle of the book, and an unknown number of folios missing from the end of the text. Someone has tried to disguise that the book is cut short by attempting to erase the last few lines of the last page, which begin to describe a new coat of arms of the Vegil family.



The very last line of the text has been erased to try to disguise that the manuscript ends mid-sentence. The rest of the manuscript has been lost. (Ayer MS 1177, fol. 165v, Newberry Library.)

## Provenance of the book

- |                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| ca. 1550-1600     | <i>Nobiliario genealógico</i> copied from source text and illustrations added.  |
| between 1600-1800 | Used extensively for research. Marginalia and annotations added; text corrected and a few illustrations removed.  |
| between 1850-1897 | Acquired by don Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, who served as Prime Minister of Spain from 1874-1897. He likely gave it its current title and added a paper cover. He was assassinated in 1897, and his vast library was dismantled and sold. |
| ca. 1897-1910     | Acquired by Edward E. Ayer of Chicago. He rebound the book with a hard leather and paper cover.   |
| ca. 1911          | Bequested to the Newberry Library of Chicago as part of the Ayer Manuscript Collection.   |



This is likely the original first page of the manuscript, which was at one time separated from the rest of the text. It was rebound into the manuscript between the first and second quires. (Ayer MS 1177, fol. 25r, Newberry Library.)

## Codicological evidence

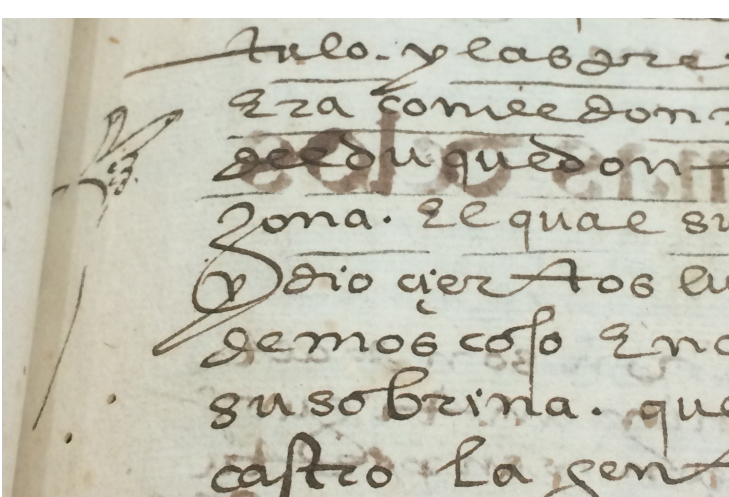
### Paper and watermarks

This manuscript uses rag paper of consistent weight and quality. I located two watermarks that are interspersed throughout the work. The cross watermark is a shield with a Latin cross and the initials F A. It appears 42 times in the manuscript. The other watermark is a circle with a walking pilgrim, who carries a staff on his shoulder. The letter A is attached below the circle (and possibly had another letter attached to it, or may be interpreted as LA). It appears 36 times in the manuscript. I have not been able to identify the exact sources of these watermarks, but they resemble watermarks on paper that was being used in Milan, Carcassonne, the Provence region in France, and Spain between 1550-1600. Historically, most paper used in Spain at that time was imported from Italy or France, so this paper was likely produced along the northern Mediterranean coast.

### Script

Most of the text is written in the same script, which I identified as a cortesana-humanistica script. This script was common for governmental and court documents in late 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spain. Nearly all the headings are written in a humanistic display script. Most of the additional writing, such as annotations and corrections, was written in a less formal humanistica script.

### Signs of use



Manicule drawn to point out a particular line in the text. (Ayer MS 1177, fol. 75r, Newberry Library.)

This copy has been heavily used, as found on the very dirty page edges and stains on the end pages. I observed that about 40% of the pages include some kind of annotation or marginalia. These include various symbols or manicules to point to various parts of the text, or underlining. Some of the notes indicate missing pages and passages. A few sections have been heavily annotated and corrected. These annotations were likely added in the first 50-100 years of its life, since the inks have faded at the same rate, and they had been trimmed when the book was rebound.

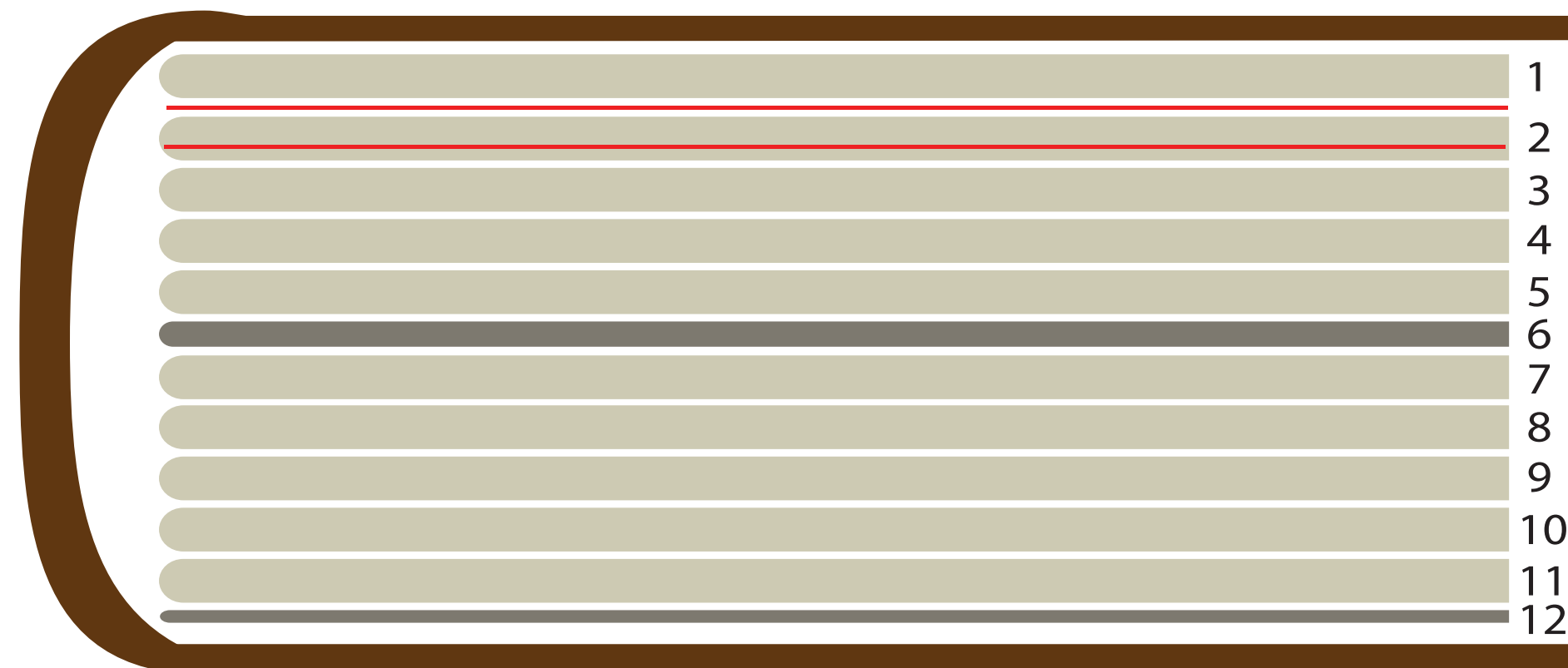
### Illustrations



From left to right: 1. The coat of arms for the Valdes family, in which a dragon was accidentally drawn in and erased. (fol. 92r) 2. A coat of arms for the Fazedo family, partially colored, with only quick brush-strokes to indicate the color required. (fol. 63r) 3. Instructions for coloring this coat of arms are written within the red diagonal band. (fol. 54r) 4. The coat of arms of the lineage of Frías, with an unusual purple border. (fol. 163r) (All from Ayer MS 1177, Newberry Library)

The *Nobiliario genealógico* contains 231 coats of arms, most of which have some color. When the arms are not fully colored, there is often a stroke of color to indicate which color should be added. In other cases, instructions for coloring the shield is written directly into the drawing. Incorrectly drawn arms were either erased and redrawn, or in one case, a new one was pasted on top. Two shields have been removed entirely from the volume. The outlines seem to have been drawn when the book was written, but I have not established when they may have been painted.

## Construction of the book



Representation of the quires (sections of folded sheets of paper, which are sewn together to create the text block of a book) and inserted folios of the *Nobiliario genealógico*.

Analysis of the individual quires reveals how the book was made and how it’s been changed throughout the years. The book contains 12 quires, two of which are partial, and none that are exactly identical. Quires 3-5 and 9-10 are typical quires, with 14, 16, or 18 folios, and both watermarks interspersed within them. The other quires revealed interesting traits or confirmed missing pages:

- Quire 1:** 16 folios, with 8 cross watermarks. The first page is numbered folio 9.
- Between Quires 1 and 2:** Individual sheet placed between the quires. This page begins with “Razonamiento,” and is likely the original first page of the book.
- Quire 2:** 16 folios, with 8 cross watermarks. Also includes an individual folio inserted after folio 39 in this quire. The individual folio has pilgrim watermark and had been written in a different colored ink, suggesting that it was added later.
- Quire 6:** 6 folios, with 3 pilgrim watermarks.
- Quire 7:** 12 folios, with 6 pilgrim watermarks. Has note indicating missing page(s).
- Quire 8:** 13 folios, with 6 pilgrim watermarks. Has note indicating one missing page.
- Quire 11:** 12 folios, with 3 cross and 3 pilgrim watermarks.
- Quire 12:** Partial quire that contains 4 leaves with 3 pilgrim watermarks.

This data suggests that the paper with the two different watermarks were used interchangeably. Partial quires and missing pages are also confirmed by this analysis. Also, the three watermarks on the 4 folios in the last quire also confirm that the last part of the book was shortened and two pages or more were cut out of this quire.

## Conclusion

Like many genealogical texts of its time period, this manuscript was heavily used as a reference tool and was corrected and annotated over time. These kinds of texts changed over time due to changing social status and family dynamics. This potential for dynamic text and the number of images likely allowed these texts to persist in manuscript form, even after the establishment of printing in Spain.

Genealogies and related texts are often overlooked historical resources. Their value in the lives of many medieval and Early Modern Spaniards cannot be underestimated. Close study of their texts and their use can reveal how past historians constructed and viewed their familial and national history. The situations around this unique genre can also provide insight to book historians to understand how different kinds of texts were used throughout time. Manuscripts like the *Nobiliario genealógico de varias casas de España* are valuable windows into the past, both as texts and as cultural objects. Their unique stories can be told by examining the textual and codicological evidence through a historical context.

## References and Acknowledgments

- Nobiliario genealógico de varias casas de España*. Spain: 15–. Ayer ms. 1177, Newberry Library, Chicago. Manuscript.
- Quinn, Rebecca. “Santiago as Matamoros: Race, Class, and Limpieza de Sangre in a Sixteenth-Century Spanish Manuscript.” *The Larrie and Bobbi Weil Undergraduate Research Award Documents* Paper 1 (2011): 1-55. Web. 19 Apr. 2016.
- Soria Mesa, Enrique. *La nobleza en la España moderna: Cambio y continuidad*. Madrid: Marcial Pons Ediciones de Historia, S.A., 2007. Print.
- Valverde Ogallar, Pedro. “Manuscritos Y Heráldica En El Tránsito a La Modernidad: El Libro De Armería De Diego Hernández De Mendoza.” Thesis. Madrid, Spain: Universidad Complutense De Madrid, 2002. Print.

Special thanks to John Vinder of the Morgan Library, J. Stephen Downie of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the Newberry Library for assistance in conducting my research and creating this poster. Thanks also to Christine Hightower for assistance with graphics for this poster.

