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PEDRO de GRACIA DEI, *Blasón General y Nobleza del Universo* (*General Blazon and Nobility of the Universe*)

In Spanish, illustrated manuscript on paper
Spain, between 1489 and 1500

33 folios on paper, one watermark, embedded in gutter at ff. 4-5, 10, 15-17, 19, 22, 24, 27-30: partially obscured but a hand, perhaps with a cross or flower extending from the middle finger, (eludes identification in Briquet and in Piccard), early foliation in light brown ink in Arabic numerals [cited in this description], upper fore-edge recto, 1-8 and 10-34, signatures at ff. 8v, 24v, 32v, (collation i⁸ ii⁸ [-1, f. 9, with loss of text] iii-iv⁸ v²), no ruling, (justification 130-145 × 90-95 mm), written in a Gothic semi-textualis close to hybrida in 31-36 long lines in brown ink, rubrics and paragraphs in red, enlarged majuscules in red ink, SIX FULL-PAGE MINIATURES (ff. 11v, 13v, 15, 29v, 30v, 31v), SEVEN THREE-QUARTER PAGE MINIATURES (ff. 3v, 4v, 5v, 6v, 7v, 8v, 10v), SIXTEEN HALF PAGE MINIATURES (ff. 15v, 16, 16v, 17, 17v, 18, 18v, 19, 19v, 20, 20v, 21, 21v, 22, 22v, 23), and TWELVE SMALLER ILLUSTRATIONS (ff. 23v, 24, 24v, 25, 25v, 26, 26v, 27, 27v, 28, 28v, 29), all in red, blue, green, black, brown, and yellow inks (discussed below) with contemporary marginal annotations in Spanish in lighter brown ink in a smaller hand at ff. 12, 14, 14v, 18, 24, and 27, that at f. 18 consisting of a single 5-line stave bearing MUSICAL NOTATION (some annotation text lost through trimming), heavy soiling mostly at lower fore-edge recto of each page, plus occasional minor stains throughout. Bound in early vellum over thin boards, with indentations from now-missing hardware at fore-edge of both boards, the text-block partially detached from the spine, a few modern repairs to stabilize the binding in the gutter at ff. 15-17, in very good condition. Dimensions c.180-185 x 135-140 mm.

A meticulously transcribed manuscript copy of the 1489 Coria imprint of Pedro de Gracia Dei's *Blasón General y Nobleza del Universo*, Spain's first printed heraldic text, and one of Spain's earliest illustrated books. Exceptionally rare on the market, with no other manuscript copies listed for sale in Schoenberg Database, the work was produced by an author closely associated with the Castilian royal court and dedicated to King João II of Portugal. This copy – preserved in an early binding, with painted illustrations, and contemporary marginal annotations – will be of value to scholars researching heraldry, late medieval Iberian culture and politics, and the relationship between manuscript production and early printing.

PROVENANCE

1. Manuscript copied in Spanish, in Spain, between 1489 and 1500 (based on textual and paleographical evidence), in a somewhat conservative hand by a scribe perhaps commissioned to create a handsomely ornamented copy of key sections of this new heraldic work.
2. 19th or 20th century inscription, in black ink, "Pertenece a Francisco Gomes Pereira" (f. 2).
3. Inserted single leaf of folded paper bearing notes about the manuscript in modern Spanish in black ink in a 20th or early 21st century hand.

4. Private Collection.

TEXT

[ff. 1-2, blank], ff. 2v-3, [Table of contents], incipit, "La tabla presente se contiene en la hoia. Los siete çielos con sus planetas y colores en la ... las grandes ynsinias del serenísimo Rey de portugal por donde se pueden blasonar todas las ynsignias del vniuerso";

ff. 3v-34, *Quantos son y donde los colores fundamento de las ynsignias proceden*, incipit, "Todo principio vale mas dela mitad por que sin el ninguna cosa buena puede ser hedificada. y como los colores sean fundamento de las armas ... Este blason general de las ynsignas del vniuerso dedicado al serenísimo príncipe alto y muy poderoso Rey de portugal fue [inpresso] y en tallado en la ciudad de [coria] por maestro bartolome de [lila fiamenco] ano de millesimo cccc lxxxix"; [f. 34v, blank].

Manuscript copy of ff. 27-58 of Pedro de Gracia Dei's *Blasón General*, transcribed before 1500 from the 1489 printed edition; facsimile edition, edited by de Gayangos, issued 1882 and 1993.

ILLUSTRATIONS

One of the most exceptional features of this manuscript is its copious decoration. Nearly every double-page opening boasts a large miniature or smaller illustration, all copied by hand directly and carefully, with occasional slight modifications, from the woodcuts in the 1489 Coria incunabula, and colored with red, blue, yellow, green, brown, and black pigments. In the incunable each woodcut occupies a page with the corresponding text on the facing page; in the manuscript, the copies of the woodcuts are typically squeezed onto a page with the corresponding text commencing on that page and spilling over onto the facing page (with some exceptions). Changes from the woodcuts include omission of the opening cut (depicting the Portuguese *Quinas*) from the edition; rotation of individual letters labelling planets, and addition of a symbol, in the diagram on f. 4v (f. 28v [sig. a3v] in the edition); counter-clockwise rotation (by one place) of the heraldic shields, and alteration of the central roundel's background to Argent, in the diagram on f. 5v (f. 29v [sig. a4v] in the edition); and so on.

Almost all the manuscript's illustrations consist of coats of arms, in various orientations, illustrating principles discussed in the text. Six of these illustrations are full-page miniatures (detailed description with blazons of the coat of arms in these miniatures available on request):

f. 11v: Full-page miniature of a tree or bush with three main branches springing upwards from a circular base labelled 'IACOB'. The left branch bears five labelled coats of arms; the center branch bears two labelled coats of arms; the right branch bears five labelled coats of arms.

f. 13v: Pen and ink drawing of the city of Rome captioned, bas de page, 'LAS INSIGNIAS DE LOS ROMANOS' below nine coats of arms arranged in three columns;

f. 15: Miniature of twenty-nine coats of arms arranged in five vertical columns;

f. 29v: Miniature of thirteen lances rising from a rolling green landscape. Each lance bears a heraldic flag or pennon;

f. 30v: Miniature of five blank coats of arms, in saltire, each shield bearing a crest;

f. 31v: Miniature, in colors, of the Portuguese coat of arms, dubbed the *Quinas*. Argent, five Escutcheons in cross Azure each charged with as many Plates in saltire, all within a bordure Gules charged with seven triple-towered Castles Or, surrounded by five golden crowns and surmounted by a curved branch upon which stands the Lamb of God.

In addition, our manuscript features seven three-quarter page miniatures (ff. 3v, 4v, 5v, 6v, 7v, 8v, 10v), 16 half-page miniatures (ff. 15v, 16, 16v, 17, 17v, 18, 18v, 19, 19v, 20, 20v, 21, 21v, 22, 22v, 23), and 12 smaller illustrations (ff. 23v, 24, 24v, 25, 25v, 26, 26v, 27, 27v, 28, 28v, 29), all copied directly from the woodcuts in the 1489 Coria impression, and tinted with red, blue, green, black, brown, and yellow inks.

The *Blasón General y Nobleza del Universo*, a title assigned by a modern publisher, was initially printed at Coria by Bartholomaeus de Lila in 1489 (ISTC no. ig00355000; USTC no. 333179). Spain's first printed work on heraldry, and one of Iberia's earliest illustrated books, the original incunabula survives in only four copies (Wilkinson, 2010, p. 389, no. 9798). Expressly dedicated to King João II of Portugal (1455-1495), this work was probably designed as a heraldic reference for the Infante Don Alfonso of Portugal (Mangas Navarro, 2020, p. 306) who, the year after its publication, would wed the Catholic Monarchs' eldest daughter, the Infanta Isabel (Rodrigues Oliveira, 2010, pp. 534-535). Gracia Dei's *Blasón General* thus constituted part of a broader project of strengthening political and cultural connections between the Castilian and Portuguese courts in the wake of the peninsular war (Mangas Navarro, 2020, p. 306).

Our manuscript copy corresponds to leaves 27-58 of the printed text of the incunable – dealing with basic elements and rules of heraldry; describing the (spurious) arms of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, of Rome, and of the King of Portugal; and so on – omitting the introductory section of the original (which comprises a general discussion of nobility and related topics). Intriguingly, albeit not unusually (see Lutz, 1975, pp. 263-264), our copyist included the printed edition's colophon – “Este blason general de las ynsignas del vniuerso dedicado al serenissimo príncipe alto y muy poderoso Rey de portugal fue [inpresso] y en tallado en la cividad de [coria] por maestro bartolome de [lila fiamenco] ano de millesimo cccc lxxxix” (f. 34) – elements of which (bracketed above) were subsequently effaced by the scribe or a third party. Transcription of manuscripts from printed materials was a not uncommon practice in the late medieval and Early Modern periods (Blair, 2015; Lutz, 1975). The act of copying print by hand – sometimes, as here, even reproducing woodcuts (Lutz, 1975, p. 267; see also: Blair, 2015, p. 14) – enabled a scribe to obtain difficult-to-acquire works, whether for personal reference or to create deluxe versions, and was also regarded as possessing “devotional and/or pedagogical value” in itself (Blair, 2015, p. 7).

Aside from a few statements slipped into his writings, little is known of the life of Gracia Dei, including whether the moniker ‘Gracia Dei’ was his true name (Mangas Navarro, 2020, p. 299). Perhaps born between 1465 and 1470, our author identified himself as a Galician linked to the Castilian court, and claimed an association with Salamanca, possibly studying at the university there, though the likely course of any such studies remains unknown (Mangas Navarro, 2020, p. 302). During the reign of “the Catholic Monarchs” – King Ferdinand II of Aragon (1452-1516) and Queen Isabella I of Castile (1451-1504) – Salamanca was a cultural and intellectual capital of the region, largely due to the university and its connections with the monarchs and their reforms (Mangas Navarro, 2020, pp. 300-302). Although often described as Chronicler

and Herald and King of Arms to the royal court, Gracia Dei's precise position within the royal circle remains a matter of debate; yet the relationship was a close one (Mangas Navarro, 2020, pp. 306-310). Nonetheless, he seems to have left the court upon the death of King Ferdinand in 1508, passing into the service of Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba until the latter's death in 1515, then dying either later that year or in 1530, when in the service of the Count of Feria (Mangas Navarro, 2020, pp. 313-314). Numerous texts – including works of history, genealogy, and heraldry, as well as poetry – have survived under Gracia Dei's name. Though some of this œuvre may be falsely attributed, his authorship of the poetic, genealogical, and heraldic material, including the text in our manuscript, is secure (Infantes, 2018).

There is only one record of a manuscript of this text in the Schoenberg Database, and that pertains to a sale of the manuscript described here. Our codex is thus an exceptionally rare prize for historians of heraldry, late medieval Iberian culture and politics, and the production of manuscripts from early printed materials.

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