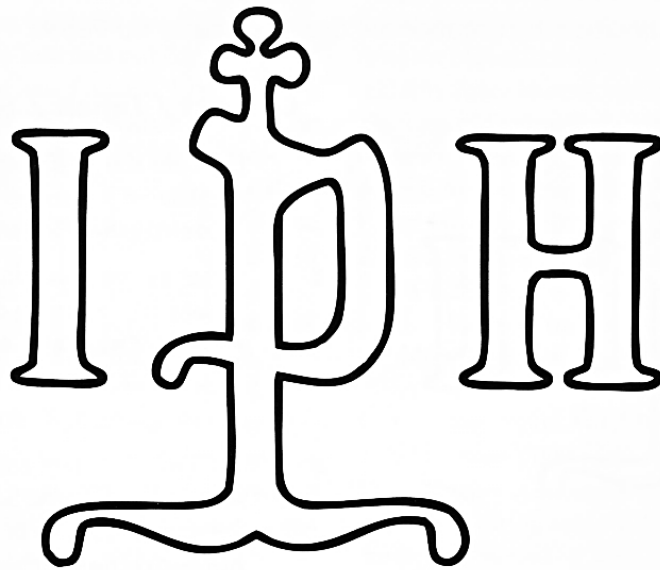


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EUROPEAN WATERMARKS IN HISPANIC AMERICA

José Carlos Balmaceda, *La Marca invisible, Filigranas papeleras Europeas en Hispanoamérica*, Buenos Aires, CAHIP, 2016, 703 p.

Marta Soliva Sánchez, restorer-conservator

Jose Carlos Balmaceda (born in Cordoba, Argentina) currently lives in Malaga, Spain. He is one of the founders of the National Congresses of paper history in Spain, since 1995. Balmaceda has been developing his work on watermarks in Hispanic America for more than two decades. He has published numerous contributions in the *Actas de Congreso Nacional de la Historial del Papel en España* on Spanish watermarks, papermakers and papers trade in America. In particular, his study on the Magnani, his indispensable work on Genoese papermakers in Spain in the 17th and 18th centuries and his published conference on the use of paper in America are worth noting [1].

In one of his publications, José Carlos Balmaceda acknowledged that he had been led to study watermarks by María del Carmen Hidalgo Brinquis, a leading expert on the subject [2]. It is therefore nothing but logical that the book should be accompanied by a prologue by María del Carmen Hidalgo Brinquis, who recalls the importance of José Carlos Balmaceda's intellectual contribution to the study of watermarks. It is also logical that the publication of the book arrived some two years before the opening of the *Corpus de Filigranas Hispánicas*, website presented in June 2018 in Madrid. The history of watermarks in America is, as we know, closely linked to the history of paper in Spain but also in the rest of Europe, particularly in Holland, France, England and Italy, as *La marca invisible* highlights.

The *Conservación, Análisis e Historia del Papel* (CAHIP) centre is the publisher of this book. Since 2004, this Centre based in Buenos Aires has been in charge of promoting the study of watermarks in Argentinean archives and libraries. This large-scale project involves many paper repositories, as it includes all the archives, libraries and museums of the former territory of the Rio de la Plata (Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and the Alto Peru) [3]. Complementing a publication of watermarks from four Argentinean archives in 2007 [4], *La marca invisible* also lists watermarks found in the archives of notaries in Malaga, Spain. In total, 2,009 watermarks are presented and gathered into two groups: 909 Spanish watermarks and 1100 European watermarks. It is hence a publication that was quite awaited by researchers interested in the history of paper in the Spanish-American world because it brings together many European watermarks found in America.

This vast historiographical enterprise covers several research fields. In addition to the manufacture of paper, it includes the history of trade and the history of paper consumption in the territories of the New World where the presence of paper mills was prohibited. Hence, José Carlos Balmaceda addresses the issue of paper trade in Europe and claimed that a significant proportion of paper entered American territories through illicit routes. In Spanish America, the way has been paved by Hans Lenz, María Cristina Sánchez de Bonfil, Suzanne Ackerson-Addor and José Luis Nuevo Ábalos, among others [5]. For the stamped paper, María Luisa Martínez de Salas's study for the whole of America through Spanish archives and Luz Peralta Apaza, in Peru and mainly through local archives, provide essential reference points [6]. These works had pointed out that the task is difficult because the archives are so varied and the territories concerned are extended. The study of the places of manufacture of the papers present on Spanish-American soil as well as their transport therefore remains to be done. As for uses, this question also remains open because the diversity of American societies makes it difficult to consider as a homogenous entity, starting with conservation conditions that are not the same because of the different climates. For its part, the study of smuggling poses many methodological challenges because, apart from the papers officially imported into overseas territories such as stamped paper, there are no registers of illegal entries, apart from cases that are the subject of legal proceedings. The study of the papers of the Rio de la Plata is very promising in this respect, as should be one day the study of the papers that passed through the intermediate ports of the Pacific coasts of Spanish America and in the Philippines.

Thus, in *La marca invisible*, Balmaceda continues his work on European papermakers' relations with Spanish America by making watermarks its main object. However, unlike recent scholar works such as that of Celine Gendron or Valeriya Esipova or, in the field of literature, Bahiyyih Nakhjavani's magnificent book on the Western paper in 19th century Iran [7], *La marca invisible* essentially offers the reader a catalogue where watermarks are reproduced and referenced. There are more than 650 pages dedicated to the reproduction and classification of watermarks, out of the 703 pages of in the book.

Preceded by a brief introduction recalling the origins and distribution of paper, the proposed study of watermarks is not limited to the centuries of Spanish domination but also includes watermarks found in independent republics. In the first decades of the very young Argentine Republic, the Treaty of *Amistad, Navegación y comercio* in 1825 strengthened trade relations with England. It explains why many papers with English watermarks are found among Argentinean papers, especially since it had many competitive advantages. However, the liberalization of trade in the late 1770s and smuggling had already allowed the earlier presence of French and English paper in the American territories. Despite this, most of the work paying attention to the history of paper in the Americas has generally given more attention to the study of papers after the emergence of printing in the respective countries. The merit of this work is therefore to overcome the historiographical barrier of Independence and to allow researchers to identify watermarks dating from the 15th to the 20th century (1496-1945), with a concentration between 1745 and 1890. A large part of the watermarks are classified as “Spanish” (45%) or “Italian” (30%). For the 17th century, the identification of paper mills remains difficult. Most of them

would come from the Genoa area. In addition to this difficulty, lies the complexity of imitations, in particular due to French manufacturers who adopted watermarks identical to those of the Spanish or Dutch to enter the American markets. Therefore, in each of the two groups, a significant number of watermarks are located in a subgroup, the “unidentified” ones (13%). As regard to classification, as well indicated in the book, it is difficult to unify the coding criteria for watermarks. This is why José Carlos Balmaceda it has opted for identification by families.

Like any editorial project on watermarks, it requires a methodology that includes the reproduction and classification of watermarks, as well as the data from the documents from which they are taken. The technique used is that of manual layers and photography enhanced by digital retouching. The watermarks are classified by geographical origin and then by theme and, as the author indicates, many sheets are complete, so that it is possible to find the complete diagram of the paper frame. In this sense, this book is destined to become a reference, both for paper historians of America and for filigranologists who wish to identify imitations.

Notes

- [1] José Carlos Balmaceda, “Los Magnani: papeles y filigranas hispanoamericanas”, *Actas del VIII Congreso Nacional de Historia del Papel en España*, Burgos, Asociación Hispánica de Historiadores del Papel, 2009, pp. 51-70 ; La contribución genovesa al desarrollo de la manufactura papelera española, Málaga, Cahip, 2005; “El uso del papel en América: papel autóctono y papel importado”, *Actas del XI Congreso Nacional de Historia del Papel en España*, Sevilla, Instituto de la Cultura y las Artes de Sevilla, 2015, pp. 33-48.
- [2] José Carlos Balmaceda, *Los batanes papeleros de Málaga y su provincia*, Málaga, Servicio de Publicaciones, 1998, p. 7.
- [3] See José Carlos Balmaceda, “El papel inglés en la documentación argentina el siglo XIX”, *Actas VI Congreso nacional de historia del papel en España*, Buñol. Ed. Comunidad Valenciana, 2005, pp.123-174.
- [4] *Las rutas del papel en el Río de la Plata. Primeras Jornadas Internacionales CAHIP. 12-13 abril 2007*, Buenos Aires, Centro Americano de Historiadores del Papel, 2007.
- [5] Hans Lenz, *Historia del papel en México y cosas relacionadas (1525-1950)*, Mexico, Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 1990; María Cristina Sánchez de Bonfil, *El papel del papel en la Nueva España, 1740-1812*, Mexico, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1993; Suzanne Ackerson-Addor, *Le papier en Amérique latine*, Historiens Suisses du Papier, Genève, 1976, pp. 5-35; “El papel de los conquistadores en América del Sur”, *Revista Investigación y Técnica del papel*, n°94, 1987; “Paper at the Jesuit Missions of South America”, *IPH* n°17 2009, pp 12-18; José Luis Nuevo Ábalos, “Legislación y progreso papeleros en España y en Indias durante los siglos XVII y XVIII”, *Actas del VI Congreso Nacional de Historia del Papel en España*, Valencia, 2005, pp. 177-81.
- [6] María Luisa Martínez de Salas, *La implantación del papel sellado en Indias*, Caracas, Academia Nacional de Historia, 1986; Luz Peralta Apaza, *El papel sellado en el Perú colonial (1640-1824)*, Lima, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 2007. For colonial Chile, see the recent work of Aude Argouse, “Procedimientos a distancia. El Papel sellado en Chile, 1739-1786 : contingencias, tensiones y ajustes”, *Les Cahiers de Framespa*, 30, 2019, URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/framespa/5565>.
- [7] Céline Gendron, *Le papier voyageur: provenance, circulation et utilisation en Nouvelle-France au XVIIe siècle*, Ph.D, Quebec University of Montréal, 2017; Valériya Esipova, “French paper in Siberian Manuscripts from the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries (from the Tomsk State University Research Library Collection)”, *IPH*, n°18, 2010, pp. 251-254; Bahiyyih Nakhjavani, *Paper: The Dreams of A Scribe*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004.