A PALEOGRAPHIC GUIDE TO SPANISH ABBREVIATIONS
1500 - 1700
UNA GUÍA PALEOGRÁFICA DE ABREVIATURAS ESPAÑOLAS

BY A. ROBERTA CARLIN

FOREWORD BY MEREDITH D. DODGE
DEDICATION

To my husband, Jim.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank the following persons and organizations for their contributions of time and resources.

Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, UPR, Río Piedras, Puerto Rico
Archivo General de Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Dr. Joseph P Sánchez, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Dr. Robert Himmerich y Valencia, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Dr. Meredith D. Dodge, Fitchburg, Massachusetts
Dr. Pelayo H. Fernández, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Mr. James H. Ausem II, Vail, Colorado
Mr. Larry Miller, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Ms. Ivana Starcevic, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Dr. Anthony J. Cárdenas, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Mrs. Carole Grey, Santa Fe, New Mexico
Dr. Rick Hendricks, Las Cruces, New Mexico
Ms. María Luisa Chacón, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Dr. Felicia Guerra, Miami, Florida
Mrs. Eileen Selleck, Las Vegas, Nevada
Mrs. Athena H. Saunders, Denver, Colorado
Mrs. Berenice Espinosa
Dr. Nancy Morrison, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Ms. Lynn Brady, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Mrs. Nivea Urdaneta, Jacksonville, Florida
Vargas Project, UNM, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Dr. John J. Bergen, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Center for Southwest Research, UNM, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Dr. Rowena Rivera, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Dr. David Schlafman, Long Island, New York
Dr. John L. Kessell, Albuquerque, New Mexico
Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain
Mr. Robert Espinosa
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### PRELIMINARY

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### ALPHABETICAL WORD AND ABBREVIATION LIST

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After they had restrained their tears somewhat, those chiefs replied that they held him as their lord and had sworn to do all he commanded, and that for this reason and on account of what he had said they were very pleased to obey, and from then on they submitted themselves as Your Highness's vassals. Then all together and each one by himself they promised to obey and comply with all that was demanded of them in the name of Your Majesty, as true and loyal vassals must do, and to provide all the tributes and services which formerly they paid to Montezuma and whatever else might be required of them in Your Highness's name. All of this was said before a notary public, who set it down in a formal document, which I asked for, attested by the presence of many Spaniards who served as witnesses.

Hernán Cortés receiving the vassalage of Montezuma in the name of Charles V, 1519

Every student of Latin American history has at least a passing familiarity with Cortés as the conqueror of Mexico. Unknown to many, though, is that he began his career in the Indies rather humbly, serving as a municipal notary in Hispaniola, in 1504. Historians seeking to reconstruct the history of Latin America through its documentary sources might be hard pressed to decide for which role he should be best remembered.

The importance of the conquest as historical fact is beyond dispute, though whether it was an event to be praised or vilified remains a matter of opinion. What continues to be of interest to historians is not so much the event itself, but what came in its wake. Everyday life and the stories of those who lived it, history writ small as it were, are the real grit of the historian's mill, and this is where the lowly scribe and his archive of documents assume their true significance. If the recoverable past can be found anywhere, it is in the cumulative record of individual actions noted in the scribe's hand.

Language aside, what is most daunting for the beginning historian and paleographer is the document itself. Every researcher who has entered an archive with the highest hopes has felt them evaporate when faced with a document that will not yield to the most determined efforts to unlock it. Whether in relatively clear chancillería real or recalcitrant procesal encadenada, a document that cannot be read is scarcely worth the paper it is written on.

Of everything at hand to frustrate the aspiring paleographer--lack of punctuation, syntactical complexity, and orthographic chaos--the most maddening is the widespread use of abbreviations. The logic of abbreviations is straightforward. Since words used most frequently are those most often abbreviated, the superfluous elements, such as vowels, are the first to be suppressed. Although the necessary components of a word, such as the initial and terminal letters are usually present, because
the beginning of a word has a higher recognition value, the end can be
dispensed with, since it is easily inferred from context.\(^3\)

However useful theory may be, however, it is no substitute for
experience. That is why the present volume, \textit{A Paleographic Guide to
Spanish Abbreviations, 1500-1700}, is so timely. As a \textit{vade mecum}, it is a
gift to the researcher of what is most needed at the critical moment: a
way into the documentary record. While it is true that real paleographic ability
only develops over time and with exposure to many kinds of documents,
Carlin has provided a powerful tool for correctly identifying hundreds of
abbreviations, thus saving hours of effort that would have been expended
on reinventing the linguistic wheel.

The \textit{Guide}, based on years of extensive, comparative work in the
documents and in archives, represents the most readily accessible
handbook available in English for those researching the Hispanic legacy in
the Americas.\(^4\) The abbreviations have been compiled from a wide
variety of sources and reflect the myriad variations likely to be
encountered. For ease of use, they appear alphabetically in modern
Spanish, accompanied by their abbreviated forms and scribal renderings.
The comprehensive index further facilitates consultation.

If documents never lie, and historians sometimes do, it may be said
in their defense that it is rarely a sin of commission. Paleographic
ignorance and sheer lack of experience can waylay any historian, the
integrity of intentions notwithstanding. Carlin's \textit{Guide} thus comes as a
welcome and necessary aid to those who have undertaken the most
formidable of human tasks: to disseminate the truth preserved in the
written record.

Meredith D. Dodge

Notes

Anthony Padgen, trans, and ed., \textit{Hernán Cortés: Letters from Mexico},
with an introduction by J.H. Elliott (New Haven and London: Yale

Padgen, \textit{Hernán Cortés}, xlix.

For a discussion of the historical, linguistic, and psychological aspects of
abbreviation, see Archivo General de la Nación. \textit{Introducción a la
paleografía}, Serie de Información de Archivos 12 (Mexico City: Archivo

Although several paleographic manuals exist for speakers of Spanish, they
are not widely available in the United States, largely because of very
limited press runs and concomitant high prices. Aside from the
\textit{Introducción a la paleografía}, mentioned above, is Agustín Millares
Carlo's \textit{Álbum de paleografía hispanoamericana de los siglos xvi y xvii}, 2
vols. (Barcelona: El Albir, 1975), the standard against which any paleographic guide, English or Spanish, must be judged. In *La escritura y lo escrito: Paleografía y diplomática de España y América en los siglos xvi y xvii* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica; Instituto de Cooperación Iberoamericana, 1986), Vicenta Cortés Alonso provides both an analysis of documentary types and an invaluable discussion of diplomatics.
How does one learn to read and transcribe the original handwritten documents of the Spanish colonial period? I used to ask myself this question and now answer it for others. The answer is simple but it is not easy; Read thousands of pages of manuscript. Study the various handwriting styles of the time. Make friends with Spanish dictionaries, Latin dictionaries and Native American dictionaries. Study Spanish colonial history. Acquire a working knowledge of the developmental history of the Spanish language. Learn from Spanish and Latin paleographic texts to understand both traditional and innovative uses of abbreviations. Finally, approach each manuscript page as if it were a letter from your mother, a lover or spouse, a son or daughter, a page on which you are desperate to understand everything that has been written.

This book was not available when I needed it most but it can now help others transcribe Spanish colonial abbreviations. To all of the possessors of unread Spanish colonial documents, be they national archives, universities, old Spanish families or Pueblo tribal councils and to all those determined to read them, be they historians, genealogists or curious intellectuals this book is fondly presented.

Roberta Carlin
INTRODUCTION

As every Spanish paleographer and Spanish linguist knows, documents from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries present a series of special problems. The Spanish writers of this time not constrained by modern rules of grammar or orthography wrote with great syntactic and orthographic latitude. As a result, spelling was inconsistent and variable to the point of individuality. Punctuation did not exist in any useful form. Several very different handwriting styles added to the confusion. At this same time when Latin terms were being retained and used both correctly and incorrectly, exploration in the New World was introducing a multitude of new words from the indigenous tongues and from Africa. In addition, the scribes made extensive use of original, creative and curious abbreviations.

This book deals with the perplexing problem of these abbreviations. All of the abbreviations appearing here were scanned from photocopies of extant Spanish documents written between the years 1500 and 1700. There are over one thousand abbreviations from a wide variety of sources exemplifying the most common as well as some rarely seen.

Each abbreviation presented appears within the context of a four line entry:

Line one: a complete word and or phrase presented in current Spanish spelling.
Line two: the abbreviation in the original handwriting of the scribe.
Line three: a printed display of the letters represented in the abbreviation.
Line four: a paleographic transcription of the scribal abbreviation using angle brackets < > to enclose those characters supplied by the transcriber.

There are three appendices:

Appendix A: presents ambiguous written forms of individual letters of the alphabet found in the manuscripts of the time.
Appendix B: references by page number the line one Spanish words or phrases with current Spanish spelling.
Appendix C: references by page number the line three printed display of the letters represented in the abbreviations.

This book will guide its users in deciphering and translating the abundance of abbreviations found in Spanish colonial texts. It also provides a word list of Spanish terms then in common use, the orthographic inconsistencies of the time and examples of handwriting styles of the period.
ALPHABETICAL WORD AND ABBREVIATION LIST

A

A Quien

A Quienes

A Quienes

A Su Santidad

A Vuestra Señoría
Abadesa

Abogado

Absolución

Abuelo

Abundantemente

Acaecimiento

Acordado

Acusación
Adelantado y Gobernador

Administración

Advertidamente

Agentes de Negocios

Agosto
Al Excelentísimo Señor Virrey

Alexmo Sr Virrey
Al ex<celentísi>mo S<eño>r Virrey

Al Señor
alsor
al s<eño>r

Al Señor
Als
Al s<eño>r

Al Señor Marqués Hermano de Vuestra Señoría

al SSor marq<z herm<o de VSSa
al SS<eño>r marq<ue>z herm<an>o de V<uestra> SS<eño>ria

Albuquerque
Alburquerq
Alburquerq<ue>

Alcalde
aled
alc<al>de

Alcalde
alcde
alc<al>de

Alcalde
Ald
Al<cal>de
Alcalde Ordinario

al<cal>de ord<inari>o

Alcalde Ordinario de Primer Voto

al<cal>de ordin<ari>o de prim<er>o boto

Alcaldes

allds

Alguna

alg<un>a

Alguna

alg<una

Alguino

alg<nd

Alguino

alg<un>o
Almirante

almyrate
almyrate

Almorjarifazgo

almoxō
almoxō

Almorjarifazgo

almoxā
almoxā

Alonso

alo
alo

Alonso

a\o
a\o

Alteza Muy Poderoso Señor

A M P S
A M P S

Alzamiento

Alzamiento

Ante

ante
ante
Ante el Presente Escribano

Año
año
año pasado
año próximo
Años
años
Años
as
años

Antonia Fernández

Antonio

Antonio Arquiepiscopal Granadino

Apercibimiento

Apelación
Aplicación

Apostólica

Aprobación

Aprovechar
Aquel
aq
aq<ue>l

Aquella
aqlla
aq<ue>lla

Aquí
aq
aq<uf>

Arcediano
Arcediano
Arcediano
Arcediano

Arcipreste
Arciprete
Arcip<re>ste

Arquiepiscopal
Arrendamiento
arrendamiento
arrendaminto
arrendamento

Arrepentimiento
aRepentimiento
aRepentimiento

Asesores
aSores
aSores

Asunto
assunto
assunto

Atención
atención
atención

Audiencia
abdiencia
abdiencia

Audiencia
abdencia
abdencia

Audiencia
audencia
audencia
Audiencia Real

Aumentos

Ausente

Averiguación
B

Bartolomé

Bartolomé González

Bastante

Bastantemente
Bastimento

Beatitud

Bendición

Bernardino

Bernardo

Besa La Mano

Besa La Mano de Vuestra Majestad
Besa La Mano de Vuestra Señoría

BLMo de VSa
B<esa> L<a> M<an>o de V<uestra> S<enoría>

Besa Los Pies

Blp
B<esa> l<os> p<ies>

Bienes

bè s
b<ien>es

Buen

bue
bue<n>

Buena

bn a
b<ue>na

Buenos

bò s
b<uen>os

Bustamante

Bustante
Busta<ma>nte