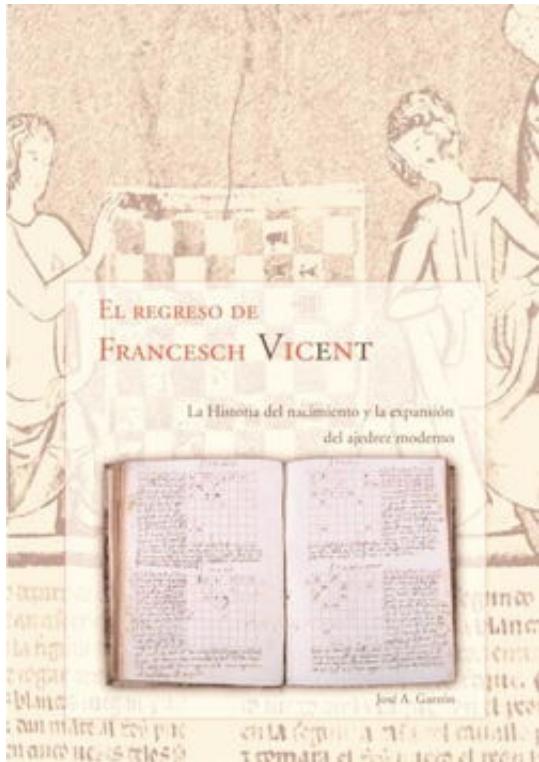


2025-10-08

The Book That Changed the History of Chess



In 2005, five centuries later, we published the 100 problems from Vicent's book, preserved in the Cesena manuscript.

This is the second article by José Garzón.

The full text, in Spanish, can be downloaded at the end of this summary.

Valencia, 1495 – When Francesch Vicent Brought the Game into the Modern Age

by José Garzón

In 1495, in a busy Valencian printing shop run by Lope de la Roca and Pere Trincher, a small book appeared that would forever transform the world of chess: the *Llibre dels jochs partits dels scachs en nombre de 100*, written by Francesch Vicent, born in Segorbe and living in Valencia.

This long-lost volume was **the first printed treatise on modern chess** — and arguably one of the most influential books in the history of the game.

From Poetry to Theory: The Birth of a New Game

Twenty years earlier, Valencian poets Fenollar, Vinyoles, and Castellví had already celebrated a revolutionary idea in their poem *Scachs d'amor* (c. 1475): the creation of the powerful **Queen** and the **modern Bishop**.

Vicent took this poetic vision and gave it structure and permanence, codifying the new rules that still govern the game today. His work marked the true beginning of the **modern era of chess**.

Rediscovering the “Lost Book”



The cover of the fourth edition of Damiano's book is rich in symbolism. The image of the two players evokes the inner story of the work. Courtesy of the private library of Miquel Artigas (Sabadell).

For centuries, the *Llibre dels jochs partits* was thought to be lost forever. But in 1995, a manuscript discovered in **Cesena** containing one hundred problems identical to those of Vicent's book revealed the truth.

Thanks to historian José A. Garzón, we now know that this manuscript preserves the content of Vicent's vanished masterpiece. Written in late-fifteenth-century Valencian, it proves that both Lucena's *Repetición de amores y arte de ajedrez* (Salamanca, 1497) and Damiano's *Questo libro e da imparare giocare a scachi* (Rome, 1512) were directly derived from Vicent's original.

Thus, **Spain — and specifically Valencia — stands as the true cradle of modern chess.**

A European Legacy

After Vicent's exile in Italy — perhaps as Lucrezia Borgia's chess tutor, according to research by Alessandro Sanvito — his ideas spread across Renaissance Europe.

Damiano's book, published in 1512 and reprinted eight times within fifty years, became an international bestseller, carrying the Valencian reform of chess to the world.

A Treasure Still Missing

One surviving copy of Vicent's book was reportedly sold by a Barcelona bookseller to an American collector around 1913, only to vanish without trace.

During the 2018–2019 exhibition *Ajedrez. Arte de Silencio* at Spain's National Library, an empty display case symbolically awaited its return.

More than five centuries later, the legacy of *Llibre dels jochs partits dels scachs* endures: **every game played today still follows the rules that Francesch Vicent printed in Valencia in 1495.**

Reference:

GARZÓN, José A. «*El libro que cambió la Historia del Ajedrez*». En: Peón de Rey. Barcelona: Chess Education and Technology, núm. 147, julio-agosto de 2020, pp. 33-39.

- [El libro que cambió la Historia del Ajedrez - José A. Garzón \(685.4 KiB\)](#)