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In eo tempore: The Circulation of News and Reputation in the Charters of Fernando III

Edward L. Holt

It is a well-known fact that the kings of medieval Iberia travelled throughout their realm in order to assert their power and perform justice.¹ However, a reality of the king's presence in one area meant that he could not be present anywhere else. One means to combat this absence of authority was the promulgation of charters, which beyond their juridical or administrative contents manifested the power of the king in his realm.² Charters were infused with the signs and symbols of royal power and as the *Siete Partidas*, the thirteenth-century law code, states "writing is something which brings all acts to remembrance."³

This article will examine one particular facet of memory located in charters: the presence of contemporary events in the dating clause. The phrases, variously referred to as "*sincronismos históricos*," "*formulismos contemporáneos*," or "*microrelatos diplomáticos*," were more than passive markers of biographical data, they underscored what the chancellery considered the most salient facets of the monarch's rulership.⁴ In an era when Castilian

¹ See Fernando Arias Guillén, "A kingdom without a capital? Itineration and spaces of royal power in Castile (c. 1252-1350)," *Journal of Medieval History* 39, no. 4 (2013): 456-476; Teófilo Ruiz, *A King Travels: Festive Traditions in Late Medieval and Early Modern Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

² Hélène Sirantoine, "La cancellería regia en época de Fernando III: ideología, discurso, y práctica," in *Fernando III en la Tiempo de Cruzada*, ed. Carlos de Ayala Martínez and Martín Ríos Saloma (Madrid: Silex, 2012), 175; Pablo Martín Prieto, "Invención y tradición en la cancellería real de Alfonso VIII de Castilla (1158-1214)," *Espacio, Tiempo, y Forma, Serie III, H. Medieval* 26 (2013), 216. It should also be noted that kings had intermediaries such as *adelantados* and *merinos* that served as a more local face of the authority of the king. See Cristina Jular Pérez-Alfaro, "King's Face on the Territory: Royal Officers, Discourse and Legitimizing practices in thirteenth- and fourteenth- century Castile," in *Building Legitimacy: Political Discourses and Forms of Legitimation in Medieval Societies*, ed. Isabel Alfonso, Hugh Kennedy, and Julio Escalona (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 107-139.

³ *Siete Partidas* II.IX.VIII. For a Spanish edition, see RAH, *Siete Partidas*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1807), 65. For an English translation, see Robert Burns, ed. *Las Siete Partidas*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 316. See also E. Ruiz García, "El poder de la escritura y la escritura de poder," in *Orígenes de la Monarquía Hispánica: propaganda y legitimación (1400-1520)*, ed. José Manuel Nieto Soria (Madrid: Dykinson, 1999), 275-281.

⁴ Julio González, *Reinado y diplomas de Fernando III*, vol. 1 (Córdoba: Monte de Piedad y Caja de Ahorros de Córdoba, 1980), 526; Maurilio Pérez González. "El latín vivo de los escribas medievales según el "Formulismo contemporáneo" en la documentación castellana de 1158 a 1214," *Estudios Humanísticos Filología* 9 (1987): 133-154; Amaia Arizaleta, *Les Clercs au palais: Chancellerie et écriture du pouvoir royal (Castile, 1157-1230)* (Paris: SEMH- Sorbonne, 2010), 81. See also, Manuel Lucas Álvarez, *El reino de León en la alta edad media: las cancellerías reales (1109-1230)*, vol. 5 (León: CECEL, 1993), 204; Inés Calderón Medina, "La

monarchs were itinerant, the inclusion of such information enabled audiences to see a physical manifestation of kingship and the king who guaranteed the charter. His image became more ubiquitous, even if he was not always physically present. Beyond this, the subsequent preservation of the charters within institutions such as cathedrals, monasteries, and town councils, provided sites of memory for the monarch and his accomplishments. It is clear that these charters were not just distributed and forgotten about. Subsequent reigns would issue confirmations of the rights from previous charters and there is evidence that people used these documents to contest their rights. In a famous example, Archbishop Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada notes that the accession of Fernando III to the Castilian throne in part “was proved by a charter of [Alfonso VIII’s], which was kept in a chest in the cathedral of Burgos.”⁵

This article will argue that these markers of dating clauses, while not unique to Castilian-Leonese charters, underpinned an articulation of kingship built upon socio-political and religious actions. The resulting circulation of such news of dynastic marriages, feudal ceremonies of knighting and homage, and territorial conquests in turn bolstered the authority, reputation, and stability of the crown. Focusing on the charters of Fernando III, king of Castile-León (r. 1217-1252), the article will trace the identity construction of a pious and martial monarch, and the subsequent dissemination of this reputation to an audience that increasingly did not come in contact with the physical presence of the king.

The image of Fernando III, and more generally, that of kings, has largely been shaped by the image constructed by chronicles.⁶ This is especially true for Fernando III whose legacy has been appropriated by several “distinct moments in

memoria de los reyes de León,” in *La construcción medieval de la memoria regia*, eds. Pascual Martínez Sopena and Ana Rodríguez (Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, 2011), 174; Carlos Estepa, “Memoria y poder real bajo Alfonso VIII,” in *La construcción medieval de la memoria regia*, eds. Pascual Martínez Sopena, and Ana Rodríguez (Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, 2011), 204.

⁵ Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de rebus Hispanie*, ed. Juan Fernández Valverde (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), 285: “*et hoc ipsum patris privilegio probabatur, quod in armario Burgensis ecclesie servabatur.*” The manuscript in question is still preserved in *Archivo de la Catedral de Burgos*, vol. 17, f. 434 (1188 Apr. 23).

⁶ Estrella Ruiz-Gálvez Priego, “De reyes y de santos: San Fernando, de las crónicas de la edad media a las hagiografías del siglo XVII: permanencia y adaptación de una imagen.” *Homenaje a Henri Guerreiro* (Madrid: Vervuert, 2005), 1015. See also Ana Rodríguez López, “Fernando III el Santo (1217-1252). Evolución historiográfica, canonización, y utilización política.” In *Miscelánea en homenaje al padre Agustí Altisent*, ed. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de Barcelona (Tarragona: Diputació de Tarragona, 1991), 573-588; Carlos de Ayala Martínez, “La realeza en la crónica castellano-leonesa del siglo XIII: La imagen de Fernando III,” in *Monarquía, crónicas, archivos y cancellerías en los reinos hispano-cristianos*, ed. Esteban Sarasa Sánchez (Zaragoza: Zaragoza Institución “Fernando el Católico”, 2014), 247-276; Michael Metzeltin, “Fernando III: la imagen crónica de un rey,” in *Antes se agotan la mano y la pluma que su historia: Homenaje a Carlos Alvar I*, eds. Constance Carta et. al. (San Millán de la Cogolla: Cilengua, 2016), 251-268.

the history of Spain” who “all participated in the same desire to utilize the figure of the king in the function of the political worries of the moment.”⁷ In the process of relying on chronicle evidence, other types of sources capable of defining the rhetoric of rulership for the reign of Fernando III and thirteenth-century Iberia have been ascribed a more marginal status. The use of charter evidence provides insight into how the individuals who operated closest to the king represented and disseminated an image of monarchical power.⁸ As such, charters engage in a debate about the history of power, especially as it concerns the articulation and negotiation of leadership. Liam Moore argues that the process of issuing a charter was a performance whereby the words of the king are reflected through the lens of the chancery and subject to the assent of those present as witnesses.⁹ Thus an audience existed at the moment of issuance that could hear the faithful deeds of the submission of Muslim rulers and the pious recovery of territory. Moreover, Sirantoine suggests that these documents could constitute a “support for the diffusion of ideas created in other places as a type of experimental laboratory for advancing and developing ideologies that spread to other sources.”¹⁰ This migration of ideas thus allows a dialectical relationship in the construction of kingship, not simply an imposition from above or through later chronicles authored with competing agendas and historical reflection.

Thanks to the efforts of Julio González, 852 charters of Fernando III’s reign have been edited from either the original text or from a later confirmation, providing a corpus of material for systematic study. These charters can be further categorized based upon their two principal forms: *privilegio rodado* and letters. The *privilegio rodado* was the most formal and solemn document available to the court. A highly formulaic and stylized document, these are identified by the presence of solemn formulas and initial protocols, a *rueda* at the base of the document, and columns of confirmation from bishops and nobles.¹¹ Also issued

⁷ Priego, *op. cit.*, 1015.

⁸ For an earlier Iberian example of these processes, see Jeffery Bowman “From Written Record to Historical Memory: Narrating the Past in Iberian Charters,” in *Representing history, 900-1300: art, music history*, ed. Robert Maxwell (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2010), 173-180.

⁹ See Liam Moore, “By hand and by voice: performance of royal charters in eleventh- and twelfth-century León,” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 5, no. 1 (2013): 18-32.

¹⁰ Hélène Sirantoine, “La guerra contra los musulmanes en los diplomas castellanoleonese (siglo xi-1126),” in *Orígenes y desarrollo de la Guerra Santa en la península Ibérica: palabras e imágenes para una legitimación (siglos x-xiv)*, ed. Carlos de Ayala Martínez, Patrick Henriot y J. Santiago Palacios Ontalva (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2016), 51: *soprote para la difusión de ideas creadas en otros lugares como, a veces también, una especie de laboratorio experimental para fomentar y desarrollar ideologías que a la larga se propaguen a otras fuentes.*

¹¹ María Luisa Pardo Pilar Ostos and María Josefa Sanz-Fuentes “Corona de Castilla-León. Documentos Reales. Tipología (775-1250),” *Typologie der Königsurkunden*, ed. Jan Bistricky (1998), 165-166.

by the court, but of a slightly less formal nature are the letters.¹² This category has a further subdivision, based upon content, of concessions and mandates. These documents contain neither the witness lists nor the *rueda*.¹³

One of the concluding formulaic elements of both types of charters is the dating clause.¹⁴ In the most basic sense, the dating clause provides an indication of when and where the document was created. For the reign of Fernando III, the typical formula was *Facta carta apud* (location) + (date). The dating system employed the *Era* dating system and marked days according to the Roman division of the month; prior to the merging of the crowns of Castile and León in 1230, it also indicated the regnal year. Due to their more highly formalized nature, the *privilegio rodados* also occasionally include contemporary events. Beginning with the reign of Alfonso VII (r. 1126-1157), these markers highlighted major achievements in the reign of the monarch.¹⁵ For Alfonso VII, this space became a place to highlight his imperial status, both through the use of *imperator* and notices of vassalage, military conquest, marriage and other socio-political achievements.¹⁶ Even after the kingdom was divided, this tradition continued in both León and Castile.¹⁷ The dating clauses of the charters of Alfonso VIII of Castile can also be divided into several distinct highlights of his power: the conquest of Cuenca in 1177, the knighting of Alfonso IX of León and Conrad, Duke of Rothenburg (d. 1196) in 1188, and the victory at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212.¹⁸ Moreover the inclusion of the adverb “*videlicet*,” added during the reign of Alfonso VIII of Castile (r. 1158-1214), places an emphasis on the role of the clause in disseminating information about the reign of the king. Having a root in the verb *videre*, to see, the phrase indicates the importance of the document as a witness to the actions of kingship. While it is true that the use of contemporary events is not unique to the Castilian-Leonese monarchy, with instances found in the charters of other European polities, an interesting facet of these clauses is the increased frequency of use for the clause after the date.¹⁹ Particularly within the context of military conquest, the record no longer becomes a contemporary event

¹² *ibid.*, 167-168.

¹³ Pilar Ostos Salcedo, “La cancillería de Fernando III, rey de Castilla (1217-1230): una aproximación,” *Archivo hispalense* 77, no. 234-6 (1994): 69.

¹⁴ Arthur Giry, *Manuel de diplomatique* (New York: G. Olm, 2003), 577-589; Milagros Cárcel Ortí, ed. *Vocabulaire international de la diplomatique* (Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, 1997), 132; Olivier Guyotjeannin, ed. *Diplomatique Médiévale* 3rd ed. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).

¹⁵ Sirantoine, “La cancillería,” *op. cit.*, 183.

¹⁶ Lucas Álvarez, *op. cit.*, 200-204.

¹⁷ *ibid.*, 374; Calderón Medina, *op. cit.*, 178-179. It should be noted that Alfonso IX of León seems to have not employed this rhetorical device (Lucas Álvarez, *op. cit.*, 546).

¹⁸ Estepa, “Memoria,” *op. cit.*, 190; Julio González, *El reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII* (Madrid: CSIC, 1960).

¹⁹ See Arthur Giry, *op. cit.*, 577-589.

but evolves into a marker of reputation, a way to recall events that occurred two, three, or even four years prior. In so doing, the dating clauses exemplify the active kingship described as characteristic of the Castilian monarchy and not based primarily on a sacral political theology. While the inclusion of such information in the performance of a charter could be considered in itself a ritual, it is one that is rooted in a notion of power via actions instead dogmas.

This use of the dating clause as a record of active deeds of kingship meant that other more ideological means to describe the king were not as necessary. For the reign of Fernando III, the increased use of royal deeds in the dating clause coincides with a decrease in the use of preambles. Within the context of a charter, the preamble or *arenga* emphasize the solemnity of the document and these introductory flourishes are a prominent characteristic of the “letters of ecclesiastical and secular rulers and often betray the preoccupations, and perhaps the pretensions of the ruler whose chancery employs them.”²⁰ Of the 852 known documents, Julio González counts 92, or approximately eleven percent, as having contained them.²¹ However, the overall low proportion masks the clustered distribution of implementation. The majority of the preambles occur within the initial years of Fernando’s reign, and taper off after 1224. While they still remain in use, after this point they appear to follow the custom of reserving them for the most important privileges, such as the issuance of *fueros*. Sirantoine argues that following the merging of the two crowns, the increased documentary production and consequently more juridical nature of the diploma left little room for literary flourishes, resulting in the disappearance of the preamble in the majority of instances.²²

However, since the decline predated the merging of the crowns, the shift perhaps has additional contingent circumstances. In the early years of Fernando’s reign, the preambles underpinned his rule through displaying the virtues of good kingship that emphasize the subsequent actions of the charter.²³ Preambles served

²⁰ Leonard Boyle, “Diplomatics,” in *Medieval Studies: an introduction*, ed. James Powell 2nd ed. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 90. For more on preambles in Iberia, see Luisa Laffon Alvarez, “Arenga Hispana: una aproximación a los preámbulos documentales de la edad media,” *Historia, Instituciones Documentos* 16 (1989):133-232; María Josefa Sanz Fuentes, “Cancillería y cultura: los preámbulos en la documentación de Alfonso VIII,” in *Alfonso VIII y su época* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios del Roma, 1992), 387-391.

²¹ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., I: 519.

²² Sirantoine, “La cancillería,” op. cit., 191.

²³ It should be noted that preambles were not necessarily created *ex nihilo*, as many of these phrases have been adapted from books of *dictamen*, biblical quotations, or even other chanceries (Boyle, *op. cit.*, 91). Nevertheless, Ostos Salcedo and Pardo Rodríguez argue that they serve as a useful rhetorical vehicle to display the ideology of the court in the period (Pilar Ostos Salcedo and María Luisa Pardo Rodríguez, “Signo y símbolo en privilegio rodado,” in *Sevilla, ciudad de privilegios: escritura y poder a través del privilegio rodado*, ed. Mercedes Borrero Fernández, et al. (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1995), 30).

to extol and reinforce the tenets of authority of the royal office against the predatory attempts of Alfonso IX of León (r. 1188-1230) and the noble rebellions led by the Lara counts. The transitional point of 1224 does not coincide with any substantial changes in the chancery of Fernando III.²⁴ The chancellor, Juan of Osma, having been in the position since at least 6 September 1217 would remain in that office until his death in 1246.²⁵ Instead the year 1224 coincides with the year in which Fernando III initiated his military campaigns, thus focusing the foundation of his royal authority on military might.²⁶ Having stabilized the crown against threats to royal power, the authority of the document was increasingly underpinned by the successes of the sword rather than ideologies of kingship circulating in thirteenth-century Europe. Likewise the use of the preamble, which contained ethical maxims for ideal kingship, declined in favor of historical records of subduing religious enemies and the pious restoration of territory.

In many ways the preference of Fernando's chancellery to extol deeds in the dating clause at the expense of the preamble provides a further point of reference to the dynamics of the historiographical debate on nature of kingship in Spain. Historians have traditionally discussed the issue of medieval kingship under the lens of "sacral monarchy." Following in the footsteps of Marc Bloch and Ernst Kantorowicz, scholars have grounded much of their research on this political theology as manifested in England and France.²⁷ According to contemporary theorists, monarchs in these countries through the grace of God were given the divine right to rule. A ruler's sacrality was evident through various symbolic actions such as being anointed with oil at coronation and being able to heal certain diseases with their royal touch. Moreover, while the king had a natural body, he also embodied the corporate, mystical and enduring essence of the nation, denoted as the body politic. This juxtaposition of temporal and eternal was best encompassed in the commonly used phrase at the passing of a monarch: "The king is dead. Long live the king." While some historians have argued that a

²⁴ For more on the chancellery of Fernando III, see González, *Reinado*, op. cit., 504-532; Sirantoine, "La cancellería," op. cit.; Ostos Salcedo, "La cancellería," op. cit.; López Gutiérrez, "La cancellería de Fernando III, rey de Castilla y León (1230-1253): notas para su estudio," *Archivo Hispalense* 77, no. 234-236 (1994), 71-81; Agustín Millares Carlo, "La cancellería real en León y Castilla hasta fines del reinado de Fernando III," *Anuario de historia del derecho español* 3 (1926): 227-306.

²⁵ Ostos Salcedo, "La cancellería," op. cit., 61. For more on the life of Juan of Osma, see Luciano Serrano, "El Canciller de Fernando III de Castilla" *Hispania* 1 (1941): 3-40; Peter Linehan, "Don Juan de Soria: unas apostillas," in *Fernando III y su tiempo* (1201-1252) (León: Fundación Sánchez Albornoz, 2003): 375-394.

²⁶ For more on the basis of royal authority, see below fn. 27.

²⁷ Ernst Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae: A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1946); idem, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France* (London: Routledge, 1973).

sacral monarchy can be found within the Iberian context, the more dominant trends understand Castilian monarchy as antithetical to French and English notions of sacral kingship and thus are decidedly non-sacral, or even non-European.²⁸ Instead, Teófilo Ruiz argues that the exercise of power instead resided in martial prowess. Since their lands were conquered from Muslim enemies, there was no need to create sacral trappings such the twin rites of coronation and sacring to justify rule; it was justified on the battlefield.²⁹

However, this does not mean that ritual was completely absent, as political and theological ideas circulated in the interconnected European monarchies. While Castilian kingship was not sacral, neither was it completely secular, as nonetheless ceremonies and rituals that have been identified with the Iberian monarchies continued to be developed.³⁰ As Liam Moore suggests, one of those rituals was the performance of the royal charter, whereby the paraliturgical framework of the text places the reading of the text firmly within the sphere of political theology.³¹ Within this ideological realm falls the use of the dating clause. The details of marriage, vassalage, or conquest encapsulate the fundamental tenets of good Iberian kingship. While having a secular and administrative purpose, the charters also underscores the religious nature of the king, who the audience hears serves by the grace of God, and thus conducts these affairs in the name of God. Furthermore, the placement of this information within

²⁸ During the period of debate, the main proponent of the former was José Manuel Nieto Soria. See José Manuel Nieto Soria, *Fundamentos ideológicos del poder real en Castilla (siglos XIII-XVI)* (Madrid: EUDEMA, 1988); José Manuel Nieto Soria and Ana Arranz, *La monarquía como conflicto en la corona Castellano-Leonesa, C.1230-1504* (Madrid: Sílex, 2006); José Antonio Maravall, *Estudios de historia del pensamiento Español* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1967). On the other side, and the person whom the debate was largely decided in favor of, was Teófilo Ruiz. See Teófilo F. Ruiz, "Unsacred Monarchy: The Kings of Castile in the late Middle Ages," in *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics since the Middle Ages*, ed. Sean Wilentz (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 429-453; Teófilo F. Ruiz, *From Heaven to Earth: The Reordering of Castilian Society, 1150-1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Peter Linehan, "Frontier Kingship: Castile, 1250-1350," in *La Royauté Sacrée Dans Le Monde Chrétien Colloque De Royaumont, Mars 1989*, ed. Alain Boureau and Claudio Sergio Ingerflom (Paris: Éd. de l'École des Hautes études en sciences sociales, 1992), 71-79.

²⁹ Ruiz, "Unsacred Monarchy," *op. cit.*, 127-132. The lack of a church sanctioned coronation was also a feature in the Crown of Aragon. For instance, Bonifacio Palacios argued that James I invoked the right of conquest as justification for sovereignty over the newly conquered lands. Bonifacio Palacios, "Los símbolos de la soberanía en la Edad Media. El simbolismo de la espada," in *VII Centenario del Infante Don Fernando de la Cerda. Jornadas de Estudio, Ciudad Real, abril 1975. Ponencias y comunicaciones* (Madrid, 1976): 273-296. See also Bonifacio Palacios, *La coronación de los reyes de Aragon, 1204-1410* (Valencia: Anubar 1975); Marta Serrano Coll, "Art as a Means of Legitimization in the Kingdom of Aragon: Coronation Problems and Their Artistic Echos During the Reigns of James I and Peter IV," *IKON* 5 (2012): 161-172.

³⁰ Ruiz, "Unsacred Monarchy," *op. cit.*, 133.

³¹ Moore, *op. cit.*, 29.

a charter ensures a wider circulation of this ideology as even an itinerant king was unable to always display his majesty in all corners of the realm.

Turning more specifically to the charters of Fernando III, there exist 90 unique instances of dating clauses in charters. Issued to a variety of places (cathedrals, monasteries, and town councils) as well as persons (bishops and nobles), charters include such things as confirmation of past privileges, grants of territory, and relief of financial burdens. As such, the content is neither particularly pertinent to the dating clause. It serves as a vehicle through which to promulgate important moments in the reign of the monarch. As seen by the table below, these events can be classified by ceremonies such as marriage, knighting, or homage as well as announcing and remembering the recovery of territory.

Table 1. Analysis of dating clauses contained in the charters of Fernando III.

Event mentioned in dating clause (date)	Number of charters which contain mention	Dates of issuance for charters
Knighting of Fernando III (11/27/1219) and marriage to Beatriz of Swabia (11/30/1219)	27	12/12/1219-9/6/1220
Marriage of James I to Eleanor (2/6/1219)	1	2/9/1221
Homage to the future Alfonso X (3/21/1222)	1	3/22/1222
“Vassalage” of Abū Zayd (1224)	2	3/27/1225-5/26/1225
“Vassalage” of al-Bayāsī (1225)	6	9/5/1225-2/22/1226
“Vassalage” of al-Bayāsī, including the pact at Las Navas de Tolosa (1225)	3	4/27/1226-5/2/1226
“Vassalage” of Ibn al-Aḥmar (1246)	1	4/13/1246
Conquest of Salvatierra and Borialmar (1225)	4	4/27/1226-1/16/1227
Conquest of Martos and Andujar (1225)	1	1/16/1227
Conquest of Capellam (1226)	2	9/20/1226-1/16/1227
Conquest of Baeza (1226)	1	1/16/1227
Conquest of Ubeda (1233)	2	10/19/1233

Table 1. continued

Event mentioned in dating clause (date)	Number of charters which contain mention	Dates of issuance for charters
Conquest of Medellin (1234)	2	7/8/1234-8/18/1234
Conquest of Magazela (1234)	2	4/12/1235-5/1/1235
Conquest of Heznatoras (1235)	1	1/3/1236
Conquest of Cordoba (6/1236)	25	9/9/1236-7/23/1238
Conquest of Jaen (2/1246)	1	8/28/1236
Conquest of Seville (12/1248)	13	7/4/1250-5/8/1252

While most events are only remembered in the year in which they occurred, the recovery of important territories such as Cordoba or Seville merited a remembrance of up to four years after the fact (and in the latter case perhaps only curtailed by the death of Fernando in 1252).

The first accomplishment noted in the dating clauses is the dual announcement of the knighting of Fernando III and marriage to Beatriz of Swabia (d. 1235) in 1219:

One may see on this day that I, King Fernando, having girded myself as a new knight with my own hand in the aforementioned monastery of the Holy Virgin Mary [of Las Huelgas], and three days after solemnly married the illustrious Queen Beatriz, the daughter of the king of the Romans, in the Cathedral of Burgos.³²

Occurring twenty-seven times in various forms until the following fall, the notice is replete with the signs and symbols of kingship. Foremost, the use of place, beyond the practical logistics of stating where it happened, imbue the authority of the king granting the charter with dynastic legitimacy. By indicating his knighting at the Abbey of Santa María la Real de las Huelgas, the chancellery announces the connection to Alfonso VIII and Queen Leonor, who were not only

³² González, *Reinado*, op. cit., no. 93: *Hiis videlicet diebus quibus ego idem rex F. in dicto monasterio Sancte Marie Regalis manu propria in nouum militem me accinxi, et sequenti die tertia illustrum Beatricem reginam, regis Romanorum filiam, in cathedrali ecclesia Burgensi duxi sollempniter in uxorem.* This formula is repeated with minor variations in nos. 94, 95, 98, 99, 100-103, 106-122, 849.

the founders of the site but also were buried there.³³ While it is true that there exists no one necropolis for Spanish kings, the two immediate royal predecessors of Fernando III, along with other members of the royal family were laid to rest here.³⁴ Furthermore, since Alfonso VIII was renowned for his victory at Las Navas de Tolosa against the Almohads, the linking of the knighthood of Fernando III to this place provides the individual as no regular knight, but rather a piously inspired knight of the Virgin Mary, from whose altar he removed his sword and with whom he, and the Castilian monarchy, held a special connection.³⁵

Moreover, the assertion that the knighting occurred “*manu propria*” solidified Fernando’s position as not only a warrior but also sovereign ruler, only beholden to God. For this phrase highlights that Fernando III positioned himself at the apex of society through self-knighting.³⁶ As opposed to other monarchs, for example Edward I of England (r. 1272-1307) who was knighted at the hands of Alfonso X of Castile (r. 1252-1284), the Castilians were insistent that no one could knight them.³⁷ For to do so would provide a claim of subjection, as Alfonso VIII’s knighting Alfonso IX of León, in 1188 symbolized the king of Castile’s

³³ For more on Las Huelgas, see Amancio Rodríguez López, *El Real Monasterio de Las Huelgas de Burgos y el Hospital del Rey* (Burgos: Centro Católica, 1907); Eileen McKiernan González, “Monastery and Monarchy: The Foundation and Patronage of Santa María la Real de las Huelgas and Santa María la Real de Sigüenza” (PhD Dissertation UT Austin, 2005); *Vestidura Ricas: el Monasterio de las Huelgas y su época, 1170-1340* (Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 2005).

³⁴ For a list of royal burials at Las Huelgas, see Ricardo del Arco y Garay, *Sepulcros de la casa real de Castilla* (Madrid: CSIC, 1954), 95-96; María Jesús Gómez Bárcena, “El Panteón Real de las Huelgas de Burgos,” in *Vestiduras Ricas: el Monasterio de las Huelgas y su época, 1170-1340* (Madrid: Patrimonio Nacional, 2005), 51-72.

³⁵ Luis Charles Brea, et. al., *Chronica Hispana saeculi XIII* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 83; Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de rebus Hispanie, sive, Historia Gothica*, ed. Juan Fernandez Valverde (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), 291; Ramón Menéndez Pidal, ed., *Primera crónica general de España que mandó componer Alfonso el Sabio y se continuaba bajo Sancho IV*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1955), 719; Bonifacio Palacios Martín, “Investidura de armas de los reyes españoles en los siglos XII y XIII investidura de armas,” *Gladius* 18 (1988):153-192, 187-188. For the Marian connection, see Amy Remensnyder, “Marian Monarchy in Thirteenth-Century Castile,” in *The Experience of Power in Medieval Europe : 950-1350: essays in honor of Thomas N. Bisson*, eds. Robert Berkhofer, Alan Cooper and Adam Kosto (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 247-264; idem, *La Conquistadora: the Virgin Mary at War and Peace in the Old and New Worlds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Antonella Liuzzo Scorpo, “Spiritual Friendship in the Works of Alfonso X of Castile: Images of Interaction Between the Sacred and Spiritual Worlds of Thirteenth-Century,” in *Friendship in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Explorations of a Fundamental Ethical Discourse*, eds. Albrecht Classen and Marilyn Sandidge (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 445-475.

³⁶ Palacios Martín, *op. cit.*, 187-188. Palacios Martín also notes that this practice was an innovation of Fernando III.

³⁷ For the knighting of Edward I, see Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 9-11; Antonio Ballesteros Beretta. *San Fernando y el Almirante Bonifaz* (Sevilla: Impr. de la Escuela provincial de artes gráficas, 1948), 101.

lordship over his younger cousin, a point of pride recorded in the dating clauses of Alfonso VIII.³⁸ Ruiz argues that self-knighting and the royal arms were “in a sense, magical symbols of their promise as warriors, of their right to be kings.”³⁹ To receive knighthood at the hand of another would disrupt the hierarchy of society as the knighted would have implied obligations and services to the person who granted it.

While notice of self-knighting ascribed martial and sovereign status to the monarch, the notice of marriage to Beatriz of Swabia should be considered the announcement’s most important feature. Once again, the record of place bolstered legitimacy through the indication of marriage at the cathedral of Burgos, connecting the king to the support of Castilian ecclesiastical power, and in particular that of the important bishop Mauricio of Burgos (d. 1238).⁴⁰ The extra-peninsular implications of the marriage were even more powerful as the marriage of Fernando and Beatriz was the culmination of a series of attempts to create a political alliance between the Castilian crown and the Hohenstaufen dynasty.⁴¹ As a ward of Frederick II (d. 1250), Beatriz brought with her powerful connections that enabled Fernando to further secure his throne and allow Castile to participate much more fully on an international stage. As Jonathan Lyon has recently argued, the Hohenstaufen lineage thrived between the twelfth and thirteenth century in part due to their loyal sibling networks. Due to their connections, relationships had the potential to span entire lifetimes.⁴² However, by the mid-thirteenth century, while sibling relationships “remained a significant feature of family politics,” some lineages had died out and others “teetered on the brink of extinction.”⁴³ Thus the marriage of Fernando III to Beatriz in 1219 capitalized on this moment, hoping to add to his royal image by placing himself within the orbit

³⁸ Estepa, “Memoria,” op. cit., 192-193.

³⁹ Ruiz, “Unsacred monarchy,” op. cit., 124.

⁴⁰ Mauricio is discussed at greater length by Teresa Witcombe in her article for this volume.

⁴¹ See Daniel Colmenero Lopez, “La boda entre Fernando III el Santo y Beatriz de Suabia: motivos y perspectivas de una alianza matrimonial entre la Corona de Castilla y los Staufer.” *Miscelania medieval murciana* 34 (2010); Ana Rodriguez Lopez, “El reino de Castilla y el imperio germánico en la primera mitad del siglo XIII: Fernando III y Federico II.” In *Historia social, pensamiento historiográfico y Edad Media: homenaje Abilio Barbero de Aguilera*. ed. Maria Isabel Loring Garcia, 613-630, (Madrid: Ediciones del Orto, 1997); Janna Bianchini, *The Queen’s hand: power and authority in the reign of Berenguela of Castile* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2012), 146-149; Miriam Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile and political women in the High Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), 105-108, 116-120; Demetrio Mansilla, *Iglesia castellano-leonesa y Curia romana en los tiempos del Rey San Fernando; estudio documental sacado de los registros vaticanos* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1945), 27.

⁴² Jonathan Lyon, *Princely brothers and sisters: the sibling bond in German politics, 1100-1250* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 233.

⁴³ *ibid.*, 234.

of Hohenstaufen alliances. More than an image, this action created a tangible relationship between the two empires, as Beatriz was to introduce the Teutonic Order to the Iberian Peninsula, Frederick II was to play upon his new familial connection, asking for his relatives assistance in the wake of his 1245 deposition, and Alfonso X was to use his familial connection/inheritance, as a basis for his imperial claim on the Holy Roman Empire.⁴⁴

The importance of the alliance was emphasized through the dating clauses detailing of the royal ancestry of Beatriz. Benito-Vessels argues that her lineage provided the Castilian crown with enormous political capital, as Beatriz was inextricably linked to her father's status.⁴⁵ Referred to as "daughter of the king of the Romans" or "daughter of Philip, certain king of the Romans," Beatriz provides the Castilian crown a claim at the title of King of the Romans, and the more prestigious title of Holy Roman Emperor through her father, Philip of Swabia (d. 1208). Moreover, it is a claim that stands apart from that of the current ruler, Frederick II. If Beatriz was listed as his niece, then there is an argument for the Castilian king to be subordinate to that of the Hohenstaufen; however, this issue is circumvented through providing a means through which Fernando (and eventually his son Alfonso X) could make a claim to the imperial crown. Consequently, through the marriage announcement, the court of Fernando III heralded its elevated status as an international power with descent from multiple imperial dynasties.

However, such a dynastic move is irrelevant without the dissemination of the information. Below is a map charting the circulation of the news and reputation of Fernando III's knighting and marriage. The orange dots represent the places of issue for the charters containing news of the marriage. The corresponding orange lines indicate the circular itineration of the court in corresponding period between 12 December 1219 and 6 September 1220. The blue dots correspond to the places to which the charter was dispatched upon promulgation.

⁴⁴ For the introduction of the Teutonic Order, see Ferreriro Alemparte, "Asentamiento y extinción de la Orden Teutónica en España," *BRAH* 168 (1971): 227-274. For Alfonso and his attempt to secure the Crown of the Holy Roman Empire, see Carlos Estepa Díez, "El 'fecho del Imperio' y la política internacional en la época de Alfonso X," *Estudios alfonsíes*, ed. José Mondéjar and Jesús Montoya Martínez (Granada: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Instituto de Ciencias de la Educación, 1985), 189-205.

⁴⁵ Carmen Benito-Vessels, *Lenguaje y valor en la literatura medieval española* (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 2014), 155-191.



Figure 1. Diffusion of charter with dating clause concerning Fernando III's marriage and knighthood

In addition to places made aware of the development, the news circulated to the Order of Calatrava and Fernando Ibáñez de Alarilla.⁴⁶ As is visually demonstrated, this news was circulated to all corners of the kingdom, making wider audiences aware of the developments happening at court and with their king. Moreover, it acted as a coda on the lingering turmoil of succession prompted by the sudden death of Enrique I and the encroaching threat of Alfonso IX. In the circulation of the announcement of knighting and marriage, the court of Fernando III provides a stable king, who is performing the actions expected of good governance as evidenced by personal achievement.

Beyond the marriage of Fernando III, the datum clauses include one other instance of recording of dynastic alliances. In a 1221 confirmation of privileges granted by Sancho III, the datum clause records “one may see on the third day after Jaime, the illustrious king of Aragon, count of Barcelona, lord of

⁴⁶ Order of Calatrava: González, *Reinado*, op. cit., nos. 113, 115; Ibáñez: González, *Reinado*, op. cit., no.109.

Montpellier, solemnly married my aunt, lady Eleanor.”⁴⁷ Here through the arranged marriage of his aunt to James I, a political alliance secured the eastern border of Castile from neighborly aggression. While the content of the charter is not particularly relevant to the dating clause, the place of issuance is, as the charter is issued in Ágreda, the place in which the marriage took place. The fact that this is the only other marriage mentioned in the datum clause is particularly interesting, as this means that there is no corresponding announcement of Fernando’s second marriage to Juana of Ponthieu in 1237. While her marriage was advantageous for the relationship between France and Castile-León, as it chained the county of Ponthieu to a more distant Iberian ruler rather than the English king Henry III, her non-royal status did not add the same level of prestige to an already rich imperial heritage. Thus while the dating clause recorded contemporary events, the selective implementation indicates thought put into the value of events recorded. For the two instances of marriage, the dating clause was not simply a contemporary record, but rather a means through which to declare dynastic alliances and legitimize Fernando’s royal status at a point of insecurity on the part of the crown.

The second type of event recorded was the performance of feudal obligations. On 22 March 1222, the dating clause publicized the taking of the feudal oath of homage towards Fernando’s firstborn and presumptive heir, the future Alfonso X. It reads “one may see on the day after the men of the realm solemnly made don Alfonso *infante* near Burgos.”⁴⁸ In this fashion, the news of homage paid by the kingdom was recalled to the court who had taken the oath the day before and was circulated out as a witness to the newly made allegiance.

Other than the oath of homage, the charters proclaim what from their perspective was the creation of Muslim vassalage. Within the dating clauses, three different instances are recorded:

One may see in same year that the king of Valencia, came to me at Moya with all his very powerful men of the Moorish territory, became my vassal and kissed my hands.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., no. 128: *tercia videlicet die postquam I. illustris rex Aragonum, comes Barchinone, dominus Montis Pesolani, materteram meam dominam Alionorem duxit sollempniter in uxorem.*

⁴⁸ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., no. 159: *sequenti die videlicet postquam hominum de regno factum fuit infanti domno A. sollempniter apud Burgis.*

⁴⁹ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., nos. 203, 205: *eo videlicet anno que rex Valencie, veniens ad me ad Moyam cum aliis prepotentibus terre sue mauris, devenit vassallus meus et osculatus est manus meas.*

And one may see in the year that Muhammad, king of Baeza, became my vassal and kissed my hands.⁵⁰

And one may see in the same year the king of Baeza, near Las Navas de Tolosa became my vassal and kissed my hands and Salvatierra and Borialmer were freed from the hands of the Saracens and returned to the cult of Christianity.⁵¹

And one may in the same year that the king of Granada was made the vassal of the King of Castile and kissed his hands and gave to him the seal of the lord of Jaen.⁵²

The first three instances come from Fernando's initial military campaigns. At odds with al-ʿĀdil, the Almohad governor in al-Andalus and later caliph, his cousins Abū Zayd and al-Bayāsī, instead sought alliance with Fernando III following his successful conquest of Quesada in 1224.⁵³ Interestingly a strong political statement is made through the alliance with al-Bayāsī sealed on the field of Las Navas de Tolosa, a place of pride and victory against the Almohads, now serving in the charter as a reminder of that past and the additional current Almohad submission.⁵⁴ The fourth notice of alliance is with Ibn al-Aḥmar, the future Muḥammad I of Granada, one of the key allies in the conquests of Jaen and Seville.⁵⁵

In all three instances, the dating clause details the same process whereby the Muslim leader approached Fernando III, became his vassal and demonstrated fealty through kissing his hands. Each individual is also characterized as a king; while anachronistic (and in some cases optimistic!) to ascribe such feudo-vassalic language to the leaders of Muslim polities, doing so provides an extra air of legitimacy to the power of Fernando III. For he was not simply the king of Castile-Leon, but rather approached imperial status having accumulated various "kings" under his rule. In so doing, the dating clauses emulated Alfonso VII, the Christian writings of whom placed Zafadola (d. 1146) as one of the vassal kings

⁵⁰ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., nos. 206-211: *et videlicet anno quo Ceyd Auen Mahomet, rex Baecie, devenit vasallus meus et osculatus est manus meas.*

⁵¹ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., nos. 213, 215-16 *Eo videlicet anno quo rex Baecie apud Las Navas de Tolosa devenit vassalus meus et osculatus est manus meas, et Salvaterram et Borialamer de manibus sarracenorū liberata cultui reddidi christiano.*

⁵² González, *Reinado*, op. cit., no.739: *eo videlicet anno quo rex Granate factus est vasallus regis Castelle et osculatus est manus eius et in signum domini Jahennum tradidit illi.*

⁵³ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., I: 295-301. See also Brea, *op. cit.*, 84.

⁵⁴ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., I: 296.

⁵⁵ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., I: 354-355; Bárbara Boloix Gallardo, "Muhammad I y el Nacimiento del Al-Andalus Nazarí (1232-1273). Primera estructura del reino de Granada" (PhD diss., Universidad de Granada, 2007), esp. 183-221.

of the emperor of all Spains.⁵⁶ Beyond literary emulation, recording their status as Muslims was important, for as Hussein Fancy has recently argued that their inclusion in the political and military actions is crucial because they maintain their difference. In maintaining their religious difference, they bolster the sovereignty of the ruler, who is able to claim a more imperial and universal form of leadership.⁵⁷ Finally, it constructs his reign as one that is successful in the goal of submitting the Muslim “other” to Christian Castile. However, this is an imagined reality, as socio-religious differences means that both sides do not follow the same mechanisms of alliance and this vision of Iberia never came to fruition.⁵⁸ Instead, there was more often a pragmatism that overrode conceptions of religious solidarity and “Christian” and “Islamic” traditions of institutional arrangement.⁵⁹

Finally, the dating clause contained records of conquest, which beyond an announcement of fact encoded the authority of the documents as guaranteed by a warrior king. Starting with the capture of *castrum Capellam*, the charters make explicit the role of the king as a successful warrior, through the liberation of territories from the “hands of the Saracens.”⁶⁰ And in doing so, the chancellery also ascribes a piety to these actions, as the territory was not mentioned as a benefit to the monarchy; it was accomplished so that these areas could be “restored the cult of Christianity.”⁶¹ Following the conquest of Cordoba, the notices take an even more magisterial tone. Each subsequent place captured becomes the “most noble” or “most famous city.” And so too does the descriptive language surrounding Fernando III. Whereas it is simply the “Lord King” who captures Cordoba and Jaen, the capture of Seville was effected by alternately the “most glorious,” “most victorious,” or “always lucky and victorious” king. Moreover, these deeds have spiritual approval, occurring through the grace of the Holy Spirit or the clemency of God.⁶² Finally, the importance of the capture of the city extends beyond the notice simply being of current events, they instead define

⁵⁶ See the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* (Emma Falque, ed. *Chronica Hispania saeculi XII* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1990), 181.

⁵⁷ Hussein Fancy, *The Mercenary Mediterranean: Sovereignty, Religion, and Violence in the medieval Crown of Aragon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 12.

⁵⁸ Francisco García Fitz, “¿Una España musulmana, sometida y tributaria? La España que no fue,” *HID* 31 (2004): 227-248.

⁵⁹ Brian Catlos, *The Victors and the Vanquished: Christians and Muslims of Catalonia and Aragon, 1050-1300*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 84-86.

⁶⁰ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., nos. 213, 215-6 (Salvaterram and Borialmar); 218 (Capture of Capellam); 222 (Baeza, Capellam, Salvaterram, Martos, Andujar et Borialmar); 503, 513 (Ubeda); 527, 532 (Medellin); 551, 554 (Magazela); 567 (Heznatoras); 575-6, 578, 581-85, 588, 593, 603-605, 609-612, 614-616, 620, 624-7 (Cordoba); 742 (Jaen); 794-795, 797-798, 804-805, 812, 815, 820, 839, 841, 843, 847 (Seville).

⁶¹ *Restituit cultui christiano*. For example González, *Reinado*, op. cit., no. 812.

⁶² González, *Reinado*, op. cit., nos. 609-612, 614-616, 620, 624 (*Gratia Spiritus Sancti*); no. 742 (*Domini cooperante clementia*).

the king and the authority that underpins the grants. This practice also can be found in the charters of Alfonso VIII following the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. The datum clause reads in part:

One may see on the third year after I, the above mentioned king Alfonso conquered Miramolin, king of Morocco, in battle near the plains of Las Navas de Tolosa, not by my own merit, but through the mercy of God and the help of my vassals.⁶³

Charters circulated the martial and pious reputation of Fernando as each territorial gain was accomplished, and continued to do so for several years after the fact. For example, notices of the capture of Cordoba extend to the third year after its accomplishment.⁶⁴ The capture of Seville extends to the fourth year, and is perhaps is only curtailed by the fact of Fernando's death.⁶⁵ In the map below, the blue dots represent the places to which charters that contained the dating clause about the capture of Seville were sent.

⁶³ Variations of this phrase appear multiple times in the dating clauses of Alfonso VIII, here it is Julio González, *El reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII* (Madrid: CSIC, 1960) 3: no. 926: *tercio videlicet anno postquam ego predictus rex A., Almiramomelinum, regem de Marrochos apud Navas de Tolosa campestri prelio devici, no meis meritis, sed Dei misericordia et meorum auxilio vassallorum*. See also Carlos Estepa, "Memoria," op. cit., 205-206.

⁶⁴ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., nos. 625-627.

⁶⁵ González, *Reinado*, op. cit., nos. 841, 843, 847.

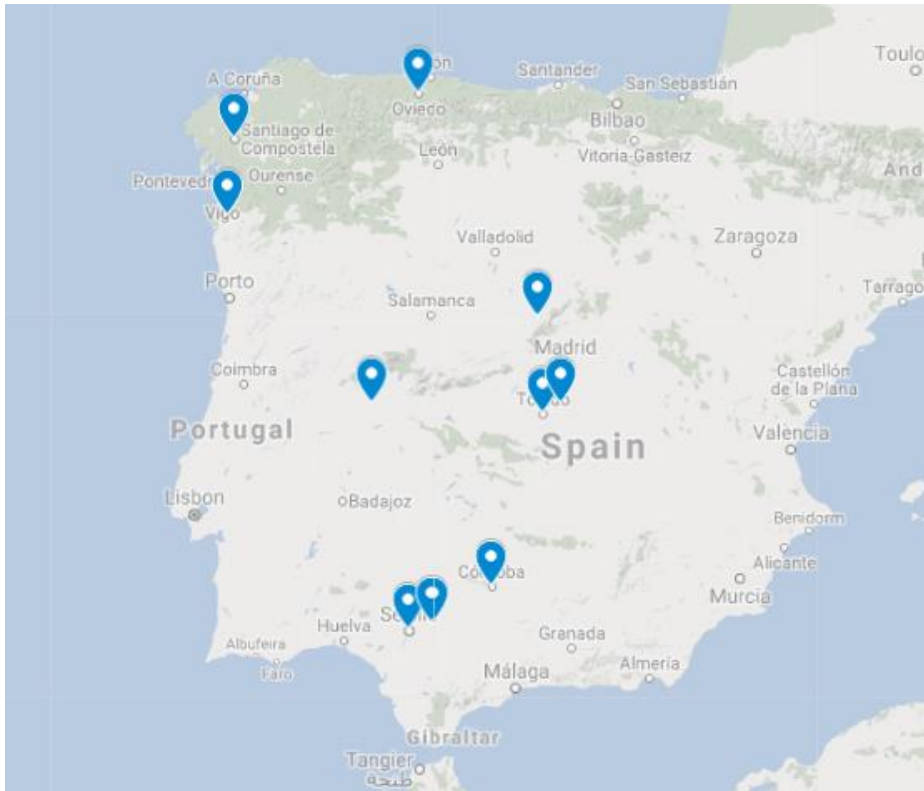


Figure 2. Diffusion of charters with a dating clause concerning the capture of Seville

The charters surrounding the city of Seville represent bequests made for those individuals loyal to Fernando during his conquest. More interesting are the charters which contain news of the conquest of Seville issued to more northern cities. As Arias Guillen notes, the fact that Castile-Leon was a “composite kingdom” meant that kingship was exercised differently in the regions.⁶⁶ Namely, the recovery of Al-Andalus stood as its own evidence of the power of the monarchs in the southern areas of Castile-Leon, whereas the more northern cities did not have the same visible symbols. As such the king was not able to stay away from these places for long, eventually having to return in order to display their authority and quell unrest.⁶⁷ Similarly, the charters sent northward, and especially toward Galicia, served a similar purpose through the inculcation of the power of the king and his pursuit of the pious task of the restoration of territory from Castilian foes. Consequently, even though Fernando spent the majority of his final

⁶⁶ Arias Guillen, *op. cit.*, 476.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

years in the city of Seville, his charters circulated the news, making both the reputation and presence of the king felt throughout the kingdom.

This article has underscored the importance of charters in the construction of the image of the king. While this was accomplished in a multitude of ways, it is the inclusion of the deeds within dating clauses that most consistently extols a vision of the king and kingship. For charters served as a vehicle to circulate news concerning socio-political achievements and disseminate the reputation of a king, even when he was not physically present in a location. Preserved within treasuries or enrolled in cartularies, charters had a secondary effect of providing an institutional memory of the king that would be preserved long after his reign. For Fernando III, following the union of the crowns in 1230, and in particular after the conquest of Cordoba in 1236, the dating clause served as a means to report the most recent progress of restoration and growing martial and pious reputation of the conqueror. As opposed to vagaries of political theology or ethical maxims, these deeds represented concrete accomplishments on which claims for rulership in the Iberian Peninsula were based. And while they underscore an approach to power that favored martial motifs over sacred justification, the dating clauses provide markers of religiosity as central motivation for the work of Fernando III and the Castilian monarchy. The subsequent dissemination of the documents through the performance at the place of composition as well as the destination enabled the construction of the king and kingship to find circulation throughout the entirety of his realm and ultimately placed the majesty of the king before a population who increasingly did not interface with its monarch.