

Una cum uxore mea: Alfonso VIII, Leonor Plantagenet, and marriage alliances at the court of Castile

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Resumen

Una cum uxore mea: Alfonso VIII, Leonor Plantagenet, y las alianzas matrimoniales en la corte de Castilla

Esta investigación es un estudio de los matrimonios castellanos reales durante el reino de Alfonso VIII de Castilla y su reina Leonor. Cuando se casaron en 1169, el rey joven Alfonso obtuvo una victoria sobre la nobleza castellana con su matrimonio, y él pudo proteger su posición como monarca con este matrimonio. Por esta razón, cuando organizaron los matrimonios y esponsales de sus hijos e hijas, el rey Alfonso y reina Leonor se encargaron de encontrar esposas de un potencial similar como el rey había encontrado con su reina. Las alianzas matrimoniales, que fueron posible en las esposas de sus hijos, fueron influenciados por el éxito del matrimonio real de Alfonso y Leonor, y de este modo las alianzas de sus hijos son un reflejo de la importancia de su matrimonio al reino de Alfonso como un rey. Un estudio, por consiguiente, de las alianzas matrimoniales de sus hijos permite a los historiadores entender mejor la magnitud del matrimonio del rey Alfonso y la reina Leonor.

Palabras Claves

Alfonso VIII de Castilla - Leonor Plantagenet - alianzas matrimoniales - Reino de Castilla

Abstract

This investigation is a study of the marriages of the Castilian royal family during the reign of King Alfonso VIII and Queen Leonor. When they were married in 1169, the young king Alfonso obtained a victory over the Castilian nobility with his marriage, and he was able to protect his position as king with that marriage. For this reason, when they went to organize the marriages and betrothals of their sons and daughters, Alfonso and Leonor took care to find spouses of a similar matrimonial potential as the king had found with his marriage to Leonor. The marriage alliances, which were the potential of their children's spouses, were influenced by the positive result of the marriage of Alfonso and Leonor, and for this reason the marriages of their children is reflective of the importance of his marriage to Alfonso as a king. A study, therefore, of

the marriage alliances of their children allows historians to better understand the political magnitude of the marriage of Alfonso and Leonor to the royal couple themselves.

Keywords

Alfonso VIII of Castile - Leonor Plantagenet - marriage alliances - Kingdom of Castile

It comes as no surprise to specialists of medieval Iberia that Alfonso VIII of Castile presents scholars with numerous historical points of inquiry. As any sensible medieval monarch would, Alfonso VIII arranged the marriages of his children to ensure the wider hegemony of Castile. This study demonstrates that the marriage of Alfonso VIII and Leonor Plantagenet influenced the approach that, as reigning monarchs, these two rulers adopted for the conduct of their children's marriages. Further still, it will demonstrate that the vitality of the marriage of Alfonso and Leonor was of considerable moment in the history of the kingdom of Castile; it not only secured the place of one of the greatest of medieval Iberian kings, but also ensured that the hegemony of Castile, cultivated during the earlier reign of Alfonso VII of León-Castile, was cemented in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. While broader studies have connected the marriage of Leonor and Alfonso to other currents of medieval scholarship, this essay will demonstrate its political importance on the wide scale, with an aim toward spurring further inquiry into the lives of these two pivotal rulers.

It is appropriate to begin with the origin of the royal household in question, its parents. Alfonso VIII and Leonor Plantagenet had at least ten children¹. On the one hand, the birth of the young Alfonso, the perinatal death of his mother, the death of his grandfather, and the death of his father all occurred within the span of three years, the young king was an orphan². On the other hand, Queen Leonor was the second daughter of Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine, and appears to have been born in 1161³. Eight of Alfonso and Leonor's children survived to adulthood. Berenguela was born in 1180 and was married twice. Urraca was born in 1187 and married once. Blanca (Blanche) was born in 1188 and was married once. Fernando was born in 1189 and was betrothed once. Mafalda was born in 1191 and was married once. Constance was born in 1195 and became the abbess of Las Huelgas in 1212. Leonor was born in 1202 and was married once. Enrique was born in 1204 and was married once. Additionally, two of Alfonso and Leonor's children died in infancy, Sancho in 1181 and Sancha in 1185. It is best to treat each of these children's activities in chronological order to better examine the development of Alfonso's marriage alliances and policies.

¹ The details and references for each of these children will be provided in their respective selections below.

² The *Anales Toledanos* put Alfonso VIII's birthday on 11 November 1155, 12 August 1156 as the death of Queen Blanca of Navarra, Alfonso VII's death on 21 August 1157, and Sancho III's death on 31 August 1158, Flórez, ed. *España Sagrada. Teatro geográfico-histórico de la Iglesia de España*, 23, 390-1.

³ J. González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 1,187; G. Martínez Díez, *Alfonso VIII, rey de Castilla y Toledo*, 41.

Alfonso's own minority is an excellent entry point into the importance of marriage for the affairs of the kingdom. During his youth, Alfonso's tutelage and regency were pawns shuffled between different high-ranking noble families—most infamously, the Lara clan— vying to assert the claims to being the second most powerful family in Castile⁴. The importance of his marriage was called by Simon Barton 'a notable diplomatic coup', and, following Evelyn Procter's reasonable reconstruction, seems to have been discussed in Alfonso's first major court at Burgos in November of 1169⁵. Although it has been observed that the two seem to have really loved one another, one additional point needs to be made regarding the importance of the match, Alfonso VIII was the first Iberian king to marry the daughter of a reigning king from beyond the Pyrenees, marrying Henry II Plantagenet's daughter Leonor in 1169/70⁶. At that time, Leonor was the only royal consort from beyond the Pyrenees, and as José Manuel Cerda has noted, it was one of the first major diplomatic arrangements between the English and Iberians⁷. The political capital that Alfonso gained from the marriage allowed, as has been often noted, Alfonso to emerge from his minority with a powerful ally, and the unprecedented nature of the match likely also demonstrated the young king's political savvy to the high nobility of Castile.⁸ The match conferred further benefit when Alfonso plead suit against Sancho VI, the king of Navarre, to the court of Henry II, and won his case in 1177.⁹ The betrothal and marriage to Leonor Plantagenet

⁴ S. Doubleday, *The Lara Family*, 35-8; S. Barton, *The aristocracy in twelfth-century León and Castile*, 19; González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 1, 179-81, 186-90; Martínez Díez, *Alfonso VIII, rey de Castilla y Toledo*, 25-39; Linehan, *History and the historians of medieval Spain*, 279-80.

⁵ S. Barton, *The aristocracy in twelfth-century León and Castile*, 19; E. Procter, *Curia and Cortes in León and Castile, 1072-1295*, 74.

⁶ Only the marriage of Alfonso VII to the Polish noblewoman Rica/Richeza is a possible precursor but is one which is fraught with comparative problems, not least of which being the uncertainty of her position. Her father was a prince of Poland, but would not gain the royal title for a considerable period. On the marriage, see, Reilly, *The Kingdom of León-Castilla under King Alfonso VII, 1126-1157*, 115. For the status of Rica/Richeza of Poland, see, Dembinska, "A Polish Princess-Empress of Spain and Countess of Provence in the 12th Century", 283-90. I defer to J. O'Callaghan's estimation of Alfonso and Leonor's affection for one another, which likely contributed to the vigor of their court, J. O'Callaghan, "The Many Roles of the Medieval Queen, Some Examples from Castile", 32.

⁷ J. M. Cerda, "The marriage of Alfonso VIII of Castile and Leonor Plantagenet, the first bond between Spain and England in the Middle Ages", 143.

⁸ González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 1, 179-81; Barton, *The aristocracy in twelfth-century León and Castile*, 19.

⁹ González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 2, 459-61. On this arbitration, see, F. Corral, "Alfonso VIII of Castile's Judicial Process at the Court of Henry II of England, an effective and valid arbitration?", 22-42.

was one that generated enough momentum that its success influenced many of the marriage matches of her children, which will be discussed below, but was so beneficial that it seems that the young king realized the political victory he had won by his marriage to his new Queen Leonor.

Of the first three children born to King Alfonso VIII and Queen Leonor, only one, Berenguela, survived to adulthood. While medievals were certainly more used to a lost pregnancy than are modern parents, the shock of two failures would have shaken the nerve of even the most stubborn of royal families¹⁰. The short lifespans of prince Sancho and princess Sancha were proof of the fragility of a dynasty. Sancho appears to have died only three months after his birth in 1184. Sancha was only three when fate stole her from Alfonso and Leonor in 1185¹¹. The importance for this study of these short-lived *infantes* is rather obvious but necessary, the chances of children surviving to adulthood, even within the royal family, were not good; Alfonso and Leonor needed to make the most of their children's marriage alliances if they would reap rewards similar to their own nuptials. The alliances lost especially by the death of a son, in Sancho, were particularly painful, given that Alfonso himself had been the victim of the problems of a minority fraught with the infighting of the nobility, and only a strong succession could provide a reasonably sure check against such an outcome.

Berenguela of Castile's life was dynamic, to say the least, and her importance as a magnate in her own right has recently been the subject of three scholarly

¹⁰ It is perhaps all too coincidental that the foundation of Las Huelgas, circa 1184, dates to exactly the period when Berenguela became the longest-lived of any of Alfonso and Leonor's children. It stands to reason that, having lost two children already, the young king and queen would experience some sense of gratitude for Berenguela's survival and express it, with typical medieval piety, through the endowment of Santa María la Real at Las Huelgas. This is made even further likely when one observes the number of children in the household of Henry II and the foundation of Fontevault, which scholars have already noted to have been the likely model for the foundation at Las Huelgas, Walker, "Leonor of England, Plantagenet queen of King Alfonso VIII of Castile, and her foundation of the Cistercian abbey of Las Huelgas. In Imitation of Fontevault?" 346-68.

¹¹ One other short-lived child has been proposed to date to this period, named Enrique, although this first prince Enrique is otherwise unattested to by narrative sources. There is only one document which attests of his *infante* Enrique's brief life and González left any mention of this Enrique out of his thorough treatment of the *infantes*, Berganza y Arce, *Antigüedades de España, propugnadas en las noticias de sus reyes en la coronica del Real Monasterio de San Pedro de Cardena en Historias, cronicones, y otros instrumentos manuscritos, que hasta ahora no han vista la luz publica*, 2,648. As for me, I believe that the document was a case of a copyist's mistake, rather than evidence of a lost son which neither Don Rodrigo nor the *Anales Toledanos* mention, but the persistence of any latent idea of this first *Infante* Enrique requires some comment. González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 1,200-3.

monographs¹². Both of her two marriages expose the extent to which Alfonso VIII had understood the power of the marriage match for his kingdom. The first, to Duke Conrad II of Swabia, would have been a great windfall for Castile, had it not been dissolved before it was consummated. The second and better-known marriage to Alfonso IX of Leon was highly controversial, but presented the Castilian king with great gains. In the case of both marriages, it is clear that Alfonso VIII was using Berenguela's person to further the cause of Castile, just as he had used his own marriage to Leonor Plantagenet to ensure his own hegemony.

In 1189, Berenguela was betrothed to Conrad II of Swabia, the second surviving son of Frederick I Barbarossa and younger brother of the (future) Emperor Henry VI¹³. The match, although never consummated, was a diplomatic power-play for Alfonso VIII. Before the match was dissolved by Cardinal Gregory in 1192, Alfonso VIII was allied with the Emperor, and thereby would have been more prestigious among the peninsular monarchs because of his newly-begotten ally, even if the alliance presented little real potential military or political power¹⁴. The treaty itself was a complex document, providing for a number of unforeseeable outcomes and carefully delineating the rights of Conrad as Berenguela's husband¹⁵. Given the recent dynasticism of the Emperors and the precarious nature of their position, it was even possible that Conrad himself may have become the Emperor and predated Charles V's own trans-European influence. Even if such a chance did not befall Conrad, the Dukes of Swabia were still powerful Imperial Princes within the bounds of the Empire¹⁶. It seems most likely that the annulment of the marriage was

¹² M. Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile (1180-1246) and political women in the High Middle Ages*; H. Salvador Martínez, *Berenguela la Grande y su época (1180-1246)*; J. Bianchini, *The Queen's hand, power and authority in the reign of Berenguela of Castile*.

¹³ The marriage was sealed by contract with the Treaty of Selingstadt, González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 2,857-63.

¹⁴ Don Rodrigo is the only narrator of the dissolution of the marriage, Jiménez de Rada, *De Rebus Hispaniae*, 246. For the details of that legation, S. Weiss, *Die Urkunden der päpstlichen Legaten von Leo IX. bis Coelestin III. (1049-1198)*, 300-5. In a forthcoming study, I have reproduced the details of Gregory's legation, see: K. Lincoln, "Holding the Place of the Lord Pope Celestine: The Legations of Gregory, Cardinal-Deacon of Sant'Angelo, 1192-4 & 1196-7", Forthcoming.

¹⁵ The intricacies of the treaty (an edition of which is cited above, n.13) have been given a recent and thorough treatment by C. Estepa, Estepa Díez, "Consejos y monarquía en el reinado de Alfonso VIII, el pacto matrimonial de 1187-1188", 68-75. While Estepa's larger argument concerns the role played by civic officials in the treaty as guarantors of royal power, his analysis of the facts and conditions treaty is first rate.

¹⁶ No wonder, then, that Alfonso VIII had him (prematurely) proclaimed his successor in 1188 after Conrad had been knighted by Alfonso VIII at Carrión, Anonymous [Juan of Osma],

arranged by Alfonso's party because of the birth of the young prince Fernando; that is, with an heir of his own flesh and blood, there was no need for the marriage that had already linked the inheritance of the kingdom to a foreigner.

Berenguela's second marriage in 1198 to her cousin Alfonso IX of León was contentious, to say the least. Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada reported that the marriage was the brainchild of her mother Queen Leonor, and was undertaken in order to assure peace between Castile and León¹⁷. Although Rodrigo's account is by far the most likely, Roger of Howden went so far as to claim that the match took place with the consent of Pope Celestine III—the match seemed that remarkable to contemporaries¹⁸. Despite the fact that Roger's version is almost certainly incorrect, both Roger and Rodrigo agree on the cause of the marriage, peace between Castile and León¹⁹. This notation, coupled with the philandering of Alfonso IX, suggests that a legitimate and royal-blooded heir may also have been sought by the young Leonese king to supplement his own son Fernando from his previous wife Theresa of Portugal—one could never have too secure a succession²⁰. Nevertheless, the marriage was condemned by Pope Innocent III on an average of every nine months—too clever a pope for the timing to be accidental— and was the beginning of a series of interdicts handed down against León²¹. The security provided on Castile's western border was certainly one of the most pressing needs for the match, but it also represented an act of submission by Alfonso IX to his uncle. Alfonso IX had already been humiliated by his Castilian rival when, in 1188, he had been forced to kneel while being knighted by Alfonso VIII²². Added to that, Alfonso IX had invaded the lands of Castile after Alfonso VIII's defeat at Alarcos, an action which had resulted in a crusade indulgence being granted for those fighting against Alfonso IX in 1196/7²³. If León was to avoid the

“Chronica Latina Regum Castellae”, 44; González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 1,197-8; Procter, *Curia and Cortes in León and Castile, 1072-1295*, 75.

¹⁷ Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, *De Rebus Hispaniae*, 253.

¹⁸ Roger of Hoveden, *Chronica Magistri Rogeri Houedene*, 3,90.

¹⁹ Peace was enough of a problem for the kingdoms that a major treaty, negotiated under the supervision of a Cardinal, was signed at Tordehumos in 1194, González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 3,105-08.

²⁰ Alfonso IX was a known womanizer, who seems to have left at least a dozen illegitimate children is noted throughout González' volume on Alfonso IX. *Alfonso IX* (Madrid, CSIC, 1944), 810, passim. This same Leonese *Infante* Fernando would later be engaged to Alfonso VIII's daughter Mafalda, see below, n. 39.

²¹ D. Mansilla, *La documentación pontificia hasta Inocencio III (965-1216)*, passim.

²² Martínez Díez, *Alfonso VIII, rey de Castilla y Toledo*, 66; Jiménez de Rada, *De Rebus Hispaniae*, 246.

²³ C. Erdmann, *Papsturkunden in Portugal*, 2,376; González, *Alfonso IX*, 87; D. Smith, “The Ibe-

kind of devastation which Alfonso VIII may have rallied against him with papal support, the marriage to Berenguela was a political necessity. The marriage to Berenguela, then, was a victory for Alfonso VIII both because of the tacit submission of Alfonso IX, and because it relieved him of the burdens of actively defending his western border²⁴. It is too bad that Alfonso VIII lacked the clairvoyance to discover that the eldest son of Berenguela and Alfonso IX would be the great conqueror Fernando III, although we can be assured that he would have been pleasantly surprised that the kingdom of León was subjugated by the Castilian monarch.

In 1206, Berenguela's younger sister Urraca was married to Prince Afonso of Portugal, oldest son of Sancho I of Portugal²⁵. The very recent recognition of Portugal's elevation from the status of a duchy to a kingdom under Afonso I Henriques had raised the profile of that kingdom, thanks to the influence of Alfonso VII of Castile-León²⁶. Papal recognition, in 1179, of the rights of the Portuguese leaders as kings brought further attention to the kingdom and made the leaders of Portugal legally on par with the other four kings reigning in the peninsula²⁷. The reputation of the kings of Portugal would grow in subsequent years, enough to merit the attention of the Castilian king via his marriage offers. The 1206 marriage between Urraca and Sancho I's heir may well have been designed to secure the prince's future assistance in campaigns against both the Leonese and the Almohads²⁸. Moreover, it is not improbable that, by marrying his daughter to the future king of Portugal, Alfonso VIII was attempting to reassert Castilian claims to the title last used by his Alfonso VII of León-Castile, "Emperor of All the Spains"²⁹. The hegemony granted by

rian Legations of Cardinal Hyacinth Bobone", 111-5; F. Ruiz Gómez, "La guerra y los pactos a propósito de la Batalla de Alarcos", 147-167.

²⁴ In the background for much of the negotiations surrounding Berenguela and Alfonso IX's marriage, Queen Leonor appears to have played a major role, as M. Shadis and C. Berman have outlined. Shadis and Hoffman Berman, "A Taste of the Feast, Reconsidering Eleanor of Aquitaine's Female Descendants", 185-7.

²⁵ L. Tudensis, *Chronicon Mundi*, 321.

²⁶ Afonso Henriques had been styling himself as king of Portugal since at least 1138, and since the Council of Valladolid in 1144 Alfonso VII had recognized him as such, B. Reilly, *The Kingdom of León-Castilla under King Alfonso VII, 1126-1157*, 70, 80-1.

²⁷ *Patrologia Latina*, vol. CLXXIX, cols.1237A-1238D.

²⁸ A state of war between the peninsular powers was not unlikely. The numerous treaties and peaces signed between the kingdoms demonstrates how often they were at war. Mansilla's important catalogue, relegated to a footnote, is illustrative of how often the kingdoms were at each other's throats. Mansilla, "Inocencio III y los reinos hispanos", 13, n. 16.

²⁹ The only study in English which treats this title with any detail is, as yet, unpublished, M. Cullinan, "Imperator Hispaniae, The Genesis of "Spain". The question of whether Afonso I Henriques had

claiming another of Spain's kings as a son-in-law would certainly increase the potency of such a claim, and given that it was not so long ago that Portugal broke away from Castile-León, it seems likely that this was a thought on his mind. That Urraca's marriage was undertaken only two years after Berenguela of Castile and Alfonso IX were separated further suggests the importance of the marriage as a geopolitical check against further Leonese expansionism.

It is because of the marriage of Urraca's younger sister, Blanca, that we can begin to see something of a wider agenda being firmly established under Alfonso's watchful gaze. Certainly, a wide net had been cast for Berenguela's first marriage, but the match failed to materialize. The marriage for Blanca, better known by her later French appellation as Blanche of Castile, was Alfonso's great diplomatic step-up. In 1200, Blanca married the dauphin, Louis VIII of France³⁰. That Berenguela of Castile, a dozen years later, supposedly sent to Blanca a letter describing the victory of Alfonso VIII and the Christian forces at Las Navas suggests that ties were close between the two sisters, and that their familial network still held some importance for the sisters later in their respective lives³¹. Although Louis VIII was himself still quite young at the time of their betrothal, his position as the dauphin was relatively secure as the only surviving child of Phillip II Augustus and Isabelle of Hainaut³². By 1200, Philip himself was still embroiled with the fallout from his disastrous marriage to Ingeborg of Denmark, and needed a strong match for his son³³. The timing of the marriage is even more significant when viewed at a wider angle, in 1200, Alfonso VIII could count John of England as his brother-in-law, while Louis VIII of France, Afonso II of Portugal, and Alfonso IX of León were all his sons-in-law. The Franco-Castilian alliance may also have fit into Alfonso's larger strategy of

done homage to Alfonso VII for the Leonese recognition of the Portuguese claims to kingship is treated by Reilly, Reilly, *The Kingdom of León-Castilla under King Alfonso VII, 1126-1157*, 81.

³⁰ L. Tudensis, *Chronicon Mundi*, 321.

³¹ For the letter, see, González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 3,572-4. T. Vann has also recently argued convincingly that the letter may well have been written at the French chancery. T. Vann, "Our Father Has Won a Great Victory", the authorship of Berenguela's account of the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, 1212", 79-92. I myself remain open, if skeptical, about the authorship question. Regardless of whether it was at Blanca's insistence or Berenguela's, a good lie must still maintain a certain element of the truth, and it seems likely that one of the sisters was behind its composition. As such, the point remains the same regarding their bond as sisters, even if significant private correspondence does not survive.

³² G. Sivéry narrates these early years from Louis' perspective and emphasizes the importance of the timing of the match to Philip II Augustus' foreign affairs against the newly-regnant John of England, G. Sivéry, *Louis VIII le Lion*, 53-60.

³³ J. Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus, Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages*, 82-87.

recapturing Gascony as part of a supposed dowry from his marriage to Queen Leonor, a campaign that occupied a significant portion of his attention in the first decades of the thirteenth century³⁴. The network of alliances was already in place to secure considerable hegemony for the King of Castile in any of his international dealings, even before the marriage between Blanca and Louis added a further weight to Alfonso VIII's influence.

In the early 1230's, a series of early hagiographical texts were produced by members of the Order of Preachers to set down those items of memory important to the Order's earliest days.³⁵ The first of these sources was that penned by Jordan of Saxony, St. Dominic's successor as Master-General, and Jordan tells a fascinating story about Alfonso VIII's royal ambition, a story which was preserved by later iterations. Jordan relates that 'it happened that at that time Alfonso, king of Castile, desired a marriage between his son Fernando and a certain noble girl from the Marches. For which cause he approached the bishop of Osma, [Diego] seeking that he be made procurator of this work'³⁶. Only later Dominican accounts specify which "Marches" the clerics travelled to, but these clarifications make Denmark the clear endpoint of their journey³⁷. Taken together, Dominican sources narrate that early in the first decade of the 1200's, Diego de Acebes, bishop of Osma, and his canon (the future Saint) Dominic journeyed north in search of a bride for the (as yet) only surviving son of Alfonso and Leonor³⁸. The journey itself seems to have intended to propose a marriage alliance between the kingdoms of Denmark and Castile, by virtue of Prince Fernando marrying a granddaughter of the reigning king and niece of the heir presumptive³⁹. The girl's father, Siegfried von Orlamunde, was a Margrave of

³⁴ For a narrative of the military campaign, González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 1,864-75; Martínez Diez, *Alfonso VIII, rey de Castilla y Toledo*, 197-206. On the question of whether the lands of the Gascony belonged to Leonor's dowry, Cerda, "Le dot gasconne d'Aliénor d'Angleterre. Entre royaume de Castile, royaume de France et royaume d'Angleterre", 225-41; Cerda, "The marriage of Alfonso VIII of Castile and Leonor Plantagenet, the first bond between Spain and England in the Middle Ages", 145-6.

³⁵ On the dating of the text, see S. Tugwell's "Appendix A" to his first set of "Notes on the Life of Dominic", Tugwell, "Notes on the Life of Dominic, I-II", 146-9.

³⁶ *accidit itaque tunc temporis Alphonsum, regem Castelle, inter filium suum Ferdinandum et quondam nobilem de Marchiis desiderare connubium. Quam ob causam adiit presatum episcopum Oxomensem, postulans fieri eum huius procuratoruem negotii*. J. of Saxony, "Libellus de Principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum", 33.

³⁷ B. Gui, *Bernardi Guidonis scripta de Sancto Dominico*, 241; Anonymous, "Chronica Prima", 321.

³⁸ J. Gallén, "Les Voyages de S. Dominique au Danemark, Essai de Datation", 1,75-84.

³⁹ I have treated the importance of this match elsewhere, Lincoln, "The (Attempted) Alliance of Alfonso VIII of Castile and Valdemar II of Denmark, the *Infante* Fernando's Marriage Reconsidered".

Brandenburg, a powerful landholder, veteran crusader against the pagan tribes of the Baltics, and the reigning king's son-in-law—all factors which were in accord with the crusading culture vibrant at the Danish court at the time⁴⁰. Further still, Siegfried was related to numerous princes of the Empire, and his ancestors were of considerable crusading pedigrees, a fact which was certainly appreciated by a court so thoroughly imbued with crusading fervor⁴¹. Given Fernando's later behavior in the run-up to the Las Navas campaign, it seems likely that he was being groomed for a career as a holy warrior and conquering king, not unlike the later career of his nephew by the same name⁴². Although the identity of Fernando's potential bride is still something of a mystery, Siegfried's daughters—attested perhaps in a monastic charter from 1203⁴³— would have been of marriageable age roughly around the time of Fernando's majority, and it seems likely that the match would have produced an alliance between Valdemar II and Alfonso VIII. This alliance is more significant than it might appear to non-specialists, English and Flemish forces participated at the siege of Lisbon; Pisans aided the first Catalan attempts to take the Balearics; Genoese forces assisted Alfonso VII at Almeria; so, Danish assistance in theoretical or proposed campaigns was not an impossibility⁴⁴. Even Sigurd of Norway famously sailed to the aid of the Holy Land in the 1110, a distance far longer than any travelled by the Castilians to Denmark or vice versa⁴⁵. In any case, the match came to little effect, and, after falling ill during the Salvatierra campaigns of 1211, Fernando would die without ever marrying⁴⁶. The opportunity to gain for their son Fernando the kind of windfall match that was enjoyed by Alfonso VIII was lost to Alfonso and Leonor.

⁴⁰ On the crusade ideology of the Danish royal house in this period, see, M. Jensen, "Sclavorum expugnator, Conquest, Crusade and Danish Royal Ideology in the Twelfth Century", 55-81.

⁴¹ On Siegfried's lineage from Albert the Bear, see, G.H. Pertz, *Genealogiae Comitum et Marchionum saec. XII et XIII*, 78.

⁴² By most modern accounts, Prince Fernando was either the major motivator or the chief lieutenant in the campaigns leading up to Las Navas, and the pope was reportedly responding to Fernando's zeal, rather than Alfonso VIII's, F. García Fitz, *Castilla y León Frente al Islam, Estrategias de Expansión y Tácticas Militares (Siglos XI-XIII)*, 335-6; M. Dolan Gomez, "The battle of Las Navas de Tolosa the culture and practice of crusading in medieval Iberia", 48-9; J. O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*, 66-7.

⁴³ F. von Reizenstei, *Regesten der Grafen von Orlamuende aus Babenberger und Ascanischem Stamm mit Stammtafeln, Siegelbildern, Monumenten und Wappen*, 68-9.

⁴⁴ O'Callaghan, *Reconquest and Crusade in Medieval Spain*; J. Phillips, *The Second Crusade, extending the frontiers of Christendom*, 136-67, 244-68.

⁴⁵ M. Barber, *The Crusader States*, 93; J. Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, a short history*, 90.

⁴⁶ Jiménez de Rada, *De Rebus Hispaniae*, 257-8; Anonymous [Juan of Osma], "Chronica Latina Regum Castellae", 55-6.

After the dissolution of the marriage between Berenguela and Alfonso IX of León, the peace which their marriage ensured was on a much more tenuous ground. To resecure the non-aggression of both parties, a further marriage was arranged between the Leónese and Castilian royal houses. Prince Fernando of León was to be betrothed to Princess Mafalda of Castile. This Fernando was the son of Alfonso IX by Teresa of Portugal, his first wife, and was, at the time, the heir presumptive of León⁴⁷. Mafalda's marriage was thus an attempt to ensure the same kind of stability which, though it incurred the fury of Innocent III, was present during her sister's marriage to the King of León. Unfortunately for both, their marriage was unconsummated by the time of Mafalda's early death in 1211⁴⁸. The gap left by the deaths of the young, which could have secured peace on the Western front for Alfonso's young heir, the future Enrique I, and solidified Castile's place of dominance.

At the time of their deaths in 1214, Alfonso and Leonor had three young children who were still unmarried. Their daughter Constanza became a nun at the royal monastery of Las Huelgas, sometime in 1217, and was thereafter one of many of the "Ladies of Las Huelgas," a role reserved for unmarried royal daughters within the consecrated life⁴⁹. The new king of Castile, Enrique I was betrothed to Mafalda of Portugal, daughter of Sancho I of Portugal and Dulce de Aragon, but died before the match was consummated⁵⁰. Their youngest daughter Leonor was briefly married in 1221 to James I of Aragón, before the marriage was dissolved in divorce.⁵¹ Although these matches are largely obscured by the propaganda and chaos inherent in the civil war that followed Alfonso VIII and Leonor's deaths in 1214, it seems likely that Berenguela played some role in maneuvering her kin, even if she was less capable than one might imagine⁵².

⁴⁷ L. Tudensis, *Chronicon Mundi*, 320; Jiménez de Rada, *De Rebus Hispaniae*, 246.

⁴⁸ Mafalda's early death effectively ended Fernando's hopes of marriage, as he died three years later. González, *El Reino de Castilla en la época de Alfonso VIII*, 1,210 n. 45.

⁴⁹ Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile (1180-1246) and political women in the High Middle Ages*, 4-5; Cerda, "Leonor Plantagenet y la Consolidación Castellana en el reinado de Alfonso VIII", 638.

⁵⁰ Anonymous [Juan of Osma], "Chronica Latina Regum Castellae", 73; Martínez, *Berenguela la Grande y su época (1180-1246)*, 477-82; Jiménez de Rada, *De Rebus Hispaniae*, 282-5.

⁵¹ J. of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon, A Translation of the Medieval Catalan Llibre dels Fets*, 33.

⁵² Shadis, Bianchini, and Martínez provide narrative of Berenguela's time as head of the family, Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile (1180-1246) and political women in the High Middle Ages*, 86-110; J. Bianchini, *The Queen's Hand*, 104-39; S. Martínez, *Berenguela la Grande y su época (1180-1246)*, 439-560. It is worth noting that the marriage between Henrique and Mafalda appears to have been arranged by Count Alvaro de Lara, but this may part of Don Rodrigo's larger scheme to paint the count as a villain extraordinaire.

What, then, can all of the matches made for Alfonso and Leonor's children tell us about the history of the Castilian monarchy? For starters, the marriage of Alfonso and Leonor ushered in a new era in the dynastic alliances crafted by the crown of Castile. Before their marriage, only Alfonso VII's short-lived marriage with a Polish noblewoman had broken the Pyrenean seal; after it, the kings of Castile sought marriages with prominent daughters of reigning dynasties. Their grandson, Fernando III, married a Hohenstaufen princess and a reigning countess in his two marriages⁵³. Alfonso married Violant of Aragón, who was herself the daughter of James I of Aragón and the Hungarian Princess Violant⁵⁴. After the tumultuous ending of the reign of Alfonso X, however, the interest in foreign matchmaking died off into the turbulence of resurgent infra-peninsular war. What these matches, as a whole, really describe is the ambition of the court of Alfonso VIII and Leonor and its long afterlife. It is best to look at broad, generational comparisons with the household of Alfonso and Leonor to see this impact.

Compared to his grandfather and father, Alfonso VIII had considerably more children. Alfonso's children all either married or were betrothed to royalty, Berenguela was betrothed to Conrad of Swabia and married to Alfonso IX of León; Fernando was betrothed to Valdemar II's niece; Urraca was married to Alfonso II of Portugal; Blanca was married to Louis VIII of France; Mafalda was betrothed to the *infante* Fernando of León; Leonor was married to James I of Aragón; Enrique was betrothed to Mafalda of Portugal. Further, it appears too coincidental that the matches made for their children incorporated significant crusading pedigree into the family. Conrad's father, Frederick Barbarossa, took the cross twice for the Second and Third Crusade⁵⁵. Louis VIII's father, Philip Augustus, participated in the Third Crusade, although with less than ideal distinction⁵⁶. The grandfather, uncle, and father of the *infante* Fernando's sought-for bride were all veterans of the crusades in the Baltic⁵⁷. The Leonese and the Portuguese kings, theoretically, were supposed

⁵³ Anonymous [Juan of Osma], "Chronica Latina Regum Castellae", 82-4; Jiménez de Rada, *De Rebus Hispaniae*, 290-1, 300-1; L. Tudensis, *Chronicon Mundi*, 340-2. O'Callaghan believed that there was great affection between Fernando III and his first wife, Beatriz of Swabia, although he does not comment on Fernando's second marriage, O'Callaghan, "The Many Roles of the Medieval Queen, Some Examples from Castile", 32.

⁵⁴ R.P. Kinkade, "Violante of Aragon (1236?-1300?), a historical overview", 1-37.

⁵⁵ Barber, *The Crusader States*, 324-55; Phillips, *The Second Crusade, extending the frontiers of Christendom*, 96, 180-1. It seems reasonable that, had he not joined his elder brother's crusading plans as a leader, Conrad, as Duke of Swabia, would have served as the young Emperor's regent.

⁵⁶ Barber, *The Crusader States*, 324-55.

⁵⁷ I. Fønnesberg-Schmidt, *The Popes and the Baltic Crusades 1147-1235*, 81-5.

to be frequently at war with the Islamic warlords to the south for the spiritual benefit of Christendom⁵⁸. Even the *infanta* Leonor's marriage to James was to the only son of one of the victors of Las Navas and a character of crusade ambition himself.⁵⁹ That the only one of the adult children not to be either married or betrothed took vows to Christ at the monarchy's favorite monastic house, whose establishment was designed not only to save the souls of her parents but to turn the tide through spiritual warfare as a "bride of Christ", suggests how energetic the court of Alfonso and Leonor had been for the prospect of marriage-alliance's larger benefits⁶⁰.

Extrapolating broadly, the study of the marriages of the children of Alfonso VIII and Leonor of Castile is indicative of the kind of ambition that must have pervaded the court of Castile at the end of the long twelfth century. Far from being exhaustive, this paper has attempted to demonstrate the lasting impact of Alfonso and Leonor's marriage. Already, it has been noted that scholars call Alfonso's marriage to his Plantagenet princess a 'diplomatic coup' and observed that it 'brought great prestige;' and, according to Linehan, the match 'brought about the transformation of the peninsula's diplomatic alignments'⁶¹. When taken in the long view, it seems clear that these were not facts lost on Alfonso and Leonor themselves. Their aggressive pursuit of suitable and potent matches for their children had the dual effect of rendering, by the time of Alfonso's death, the kingdom of Castile as the dominant kingdom in the peninsula⁶². Further still, it was Alfonso and Leonor's daughters who perpetuated the Capetian dynasty, brought forth new kings of Portugal and Aragón, and reunified the old kingdom of Alfonso VII.

⁵⁸ Purkis has rightly indicated that this is a later development, based on the convergence of multiple factors, which dates to the period of the Second Crusade and that the ideology of crusade was important for the understanding of war-fighting in the peninsula; the "best" wars were those fought against the Muslim south. W. J. Purkis, *Crusading Spirituality in the Holy Land and Iberia, c. 1095-c.1187*, 176-8.

⁵⁹ James I was the orphaned only son of Pedro II of Aragon, whose contributions at Las Navas are well known, and Maria of Montpellier. Both of his parents had died in 1213, while at war with each other, and embroiled in the politics of the Albigensian Crusade. For James' views on his parents, J. of Aragon, *The Book of Deeds of James I of Aragon*, 18-25.

⁶⁰ O'Callaghan, "The Many Roles of the Medieval Queen, Some Examples from Castile", 27-8; Shadis, "Piety, Politics, and Power, The Patronage of Leonor of England and Her Daughters Berenguela of León and Blanche of Castile", 207-9.

⁶¹ Barton, *The aristocracy in twelfth-century León and Castile*, 19; Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile (1180-1246) and political women in the High Middle Ages*, 25; P. Linehan, *Spain, 1157-1300, a partible inheritance*, 32.

⁶² Barton notes this as being the case already by the end of the 1190's and the victory at Las Navas certainly cemented such a reputation, Barton, *The aristocracy in twelfth-century León and Castile*, 20.

The pursuit of marriage patterns was a traditional means employed by Alfonso and Leonor to secure the very hegemony enjoyed by their grandson, Fernando III, and even Fernando himself followed suit with the marriages of his children. Alfonso X was married, as has been mentioned, to an Aragonese princess, likely in view of creating a lasting peace between the two now-dominant powers in the peninsula⁶³. Alfonso's brothers and sisters, however, had anything but peaceful intentions, and their marriages can be read as an extension and perversion of the same potential recognized by the marriage of Alfonso VIII and Leonor's marriage almost a century earlier. The examples of marital potency that they provide deserve some mention here. The *infante* Enrique attempted to marry one of James I's daughters in 1267, but was frustrated by the internal politics of the Iberian Peninsula, and eventually spent most of his time earning epithets as a partisan in the War of the Sicilian Vespers and the ensuing conflicts thereafter⁶⁴. Prince Fadrique (Frederick) was in prison for more than two decades, having been captured in the same war as his brother Enrique, and was eventually exiled from Castile-León for participating in Enrique's rebellion in the 1250's⁶⁵. The *infante* Felipe married Christina of Norway, daughter of Haakon IV of Norway, but was also exiled for causing too many problems for Alfonso X⁶⁶. Prince Manuel married twice, first to one of James I of Aragón's daughters (the same one sought by his brother Enrique), and second to a daughter of Amadeus IV of Savoy⁶⁷. The *infante* Fernando married Laura de Montfort, a granddaughter of the great Albigensian crusader Simon de Montfort, and lived out much of his days

⁶³ On Alfonso X's marriage to Violant of Aragon, see above, n.44.

⁶⁴ On the proposal of Enrique to one of James I's daughters, S. Martínez, *Alfonso X, El Sabio, Una biografía*, 197, esp. n. 94, 327-30. The match between Enrique and Juana "la Palomilla" de Lara was short-lived enough and Juana young enough, that it was still feasible for Juana to marry Fernando II de la Cerda and for the two to have produced heirs, Doubleday, *The Lara Family*, 103, 88. On Enrique's role as a partisan of Charles of Anjou, S. Runciman, *The Sicilian Vespers, a history of the Mediterranean world in the later thirteenth*, 99.

⁶⁵ No reliable evidence survives to suggest that Fadrique was ever married to any person of note. On Fadrique's Manfredian partisanship, *The Sicilian Vespers*, 99. On his exile, J.N. Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms, 1250-1516*, 309.

⁶⁶ Felipe had originally been called to serve as an archbishop, but the complicated politics of marriage and divorce at the royal court resulted in his marrying Christina of Norway in order to prevent bigamy on the part of Alfonso X, González Jiménez, *Alfonso X, 1252-1284*, 84-6, 157-60. On Felipe's exile, Martínez, *Alfonso X, El Sabio*, 358.

⁶⁷ Manuel married Constanza, a daughter of James I of Aragón, in his first marriage and a daughter of Amadeus IV of Savoy for his second marriage. The marriage of Manuel to James' daughter was the conclusion to a dramatic series of episodes of infighting between the two brothers (Alfonso and Enrique) and two sisters (Violante and Constanza) involving what Martínez rightly described as "muy mal sangre", Martínez, *Alfonso X, El Sabio*, 327-30.

as the reigning lord of Ponthieu⁶⁸. Fernando III's daughter Leonor married Henry III of England, a match which her half-brother Alfonso X had great confidence would bring benefits to his kingdom.⁶⁹ Fernando III's daughter Berenguela was enrolled in Las Huelgas, joining the growing number of in positions of prominence there⁷⁰.

Even though this is but a brief survey of Fernando III's children's marriages, and despite the fact that Fernando himself supervised very few of these matches, the potential for these foreign alliances was significant. Even if his children did not always play well with one another, Fernando's descendants played roles in extra-peninsular events in ways of which even their accomplished ancestor, Alfonso VII "el Emperador", would have hardly dreamt⁷¹. The linking figure, of course, between the generation of Alfonso VIII of Castile and his grandson Fernando III was Berenguela, and recent monographs have rightly illustrated her role as a pivotal figure in the history of thirteenth century Spain⁷². The geo-political momentum generated by the marriage of Alfonso VIII and Leonor Plantagenet was significant enough that their great-grandchildren were married to partners as distantly extracted as had been that first royal couple.

Although only a survey of one of the many parts of monarchical rule at which Alfonso VIII and Leonor excelled, this study demonstrates how far the marriage between the orphan king and his Plantagenet princess went to ensuring the dominance of their kingdom and their progeny's success. Their own marriage provided a template on which future matches could be based. The marriages of the children of Alfonso and Leonor created a vast diplomatic network, and brought increased prestige to an already successful pair. Although many other factors were certainly at work to make the Castilians the preeminent power in the Iberian Peninsula in the thirteenth century, that they were able to call upon far-flung allies was certainly a card that they held for their favor. Even if

⁶⁸ L. Merlet and A. Mutié, *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de Notre-Dame des Vaux de Cernay*, 1,538-40.

⁶⁹ Leonor married Henry III of England and the marriage, via the production of the young prince Edward, was praised by Alfonso X in a diploma for Las Huelgas, Martínez, *Alfonso X, El Sabio*, 146.

⁷⁰ Jiménez de Rada, *De Rebus Hispaniae*, 292.

⁷¹ Felipe and Fadrique (while imprisoned, through partisans) rebelled in 1271 against their brother; Enrique had been engaged in various shenanigans since the 1250's, Kinkade, "Alfonso X, *Cantiga* 235, and the events of 1269-1278", 291, 92-3 n.29-30.

⁷² Three recent volumes (all cited here) demonstrate this up-swell in attention on Berenguela, Martínez, *Berenguela la Grande y su época (1180-1246)*; Shadis, *Berenguela of Castile (1180-1246) and political women in the High Middle Ages*; Bianchini, *The Queen's hand, power and authority in the reign of Berenguela of Castile*.

such allies were unwilling to take the field, the political jockeying and influence peddling that came with a successful marriage alliance was significant enough that the impact of their marriage was felt as far down as the marriages of their great-grandchildren. It may take significantly more scholarship to comprise a best-estimate of the impact of the 1169 that spawned the marriage of Alfonso and Leonor, but this study has at least sketched out the geo-political case for the importance of that moment in the old Castilian *urbs regis* of Burgos in the fall of Alfonso's fifteenth year, the importance of which is noticeable far later than even Alfonso and Leonor would likely have imagined.

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