Chapter 3

CHANGING HANDS

ON THE USES, MEANING, AND CIRCULATION OF RINGS AMONGST THE IBERIAN NOBILITY FROM THE ELEVENTH TO THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

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RINGS ARE SMALL objects used for personal adornment, typically made from valuable materials such as gold, silver, and precious stones. During the Middle Ages, the elite used part of their wealth to acquire distinct types of jewels and other luxury items. As Laurent Feller has discussed, their ownership and display provided an indispensable means of demonstrating and underscoring their rank and power.[1] The intrinsic value of a ring's metals and precious stones, their colour, exoticism, beauty, and healing properties, served as a symbol of status for its wearer.[2] Thus, they provided a mark of distinction capable of underscoring a hierarchical relationship between individuals.[3] The wearing of rings as a means of highlighting social distinction was reinforced from the thirteenth century onwards when the Iberian monarchs drew up a succession of sumptuary laws restricting the wearing of adornments made from gold, silver, and precious stones to the monarchs, their families, and the nobility.[4]

1 Feller, "Formes et fonctions," 5.

2 González Arce, *Apariencia y poder*, 66–69.

3 Renou, "Rings of Power," 22.

4 González Arce, *Apariencia y poder*, 79–84.

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From the eleventh century onwards, the nobility had begun to extend their kinship networks across the various Iberian kingdoms. They also contributed to the expansion of the military campaign against Islamic forces, which culminated in the major advances made in the second half of the thirteenth century.[5] This process of expansion permitted noblemen and women to acquire greater wealth, which they used to form collections of possessions intended for public display. The latter went on to form part of their respective family treasuries, and subsequently circulated generation after generation amongst the extended family, moving beyond kingdoms' frontiers. But these objects could also easily be used as a financial resource in times of need.[6]

Some of these valuable objects had a sentimental value because they had been owned by specific ancestors, or else as a result of how they were acquired—aspects that are also studied by Mariah Proctor-Tiffany in her analysis of late medieval royal French documents in Chapter 1 of this volume. These precious items played a role in constructing a family's identity and collective memory as well.[7] With regard to rings, some possessed a major symbolic value for the nobility because they represented and publicly displayed the powerful alliances and family ties established between different kinship networks through the ritual of canonical marriage, which at that time was both the monarch's and nobility's principal means of establishing kinship ties and securing a dominant social position.

Rings could also attain a further special relevance for the nobility because they were ascribed an almost sacred or magical value because they once belonged to a saint or were adorned with stones renowned for their curative properties. These rings could be used for healing in the event of illness. Others were used to guarantee the salvation of kinsmen and kins-

5 Calderón Medina, "Extensión de las redes," 11–17; Calderón Medina, *Los Soverosa*, 24–249.

6 Garcia Marsilia, "Vestit i aparença," 643. There are numerous testimonies of orders being issued to sell, pawn, or melt down metal rings in order to obtain instant liquidity. In 1296, the Leonese pawnbroker, Fernan Iohanes, held two rings as a deposit guaranteeing loans he had provided. Casado Lobato, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Carrizo*, doc. 566.

7 Queen Isabella of Portugal, wife of King Denis, wrote a letter to her brother Jaime II of Aragon between 1302 and 1313 in which she thanked him for having sent a very fine precious stone that had belonged to their mother, Constance of Sicily, because although she had many stones: "deseiava aaver muyto algua cousa das que minha madre tragia" (she greatly longed to have something that their mother had worn). Antunes Rodrigues, *Rainha Santa*, doc. 35.

women's souls, and they also provided a means of commemorating the lives of family members; they were often bequeathed or donated to ecclesiastical institutions where family members were buried and where their souls were prayed for.[8]

In this chapter, I seek to analyze the significance rings embodied for the Iberian aristocracy, as well as the various ways in which they were used. To this end, I adopt a cross-border perspective, as these jewels circulated widely amongst family members—both consanguineous and affinal, and men and women—as well as members of the laity and clergy across all the Iberian kingdoms. To obtain a multifaceted socio-historical understanding of rings, it is essential to draw upon a range of legal, artistic, and literary sources, as well as chronicles, from across the Iberian kingdoms during the period spanning the eleventh to the thirteenth century.

Rings in Iberian Sources

A considerable number of the documents concerning the nobility in the Iberian kingdoms are conserved in cathedral and monastic archives. Here, I will use charter editions that have been published for the kingdoms of Portugal, León, Galicia, Castile, Aragon, Mallorca, and the Catalan counties, which cover the period from the eleventh to the thirteenth century. Despite the immense number of documents covering an extensive region and lengthy period, we find few references to rings, and the majority of items made from precious metals that are referred to were liturgical objects.[9]

Ana Rodríguez has detected an uneven trend in citing valuable objects in charters, one that varied depending on the context, date, and value attrib-

8 Documents record numerous donations of rings, *pro remedio anima*, to institutions chosen as a personal or family burial place. Between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, the Traba were the most powerful family in Galicia. Pedro Froilaz de Traba (1086–1126), who was buried in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, served as *ayo* (tutor) to the future Alfonso VII, and then his son Fernando Pérez de Traba, Count of Galicia, took over this role from 1121 onwards, and went on to serve as *ayo* to the future Fernando II of León. Fernando Pérez de Traba died circa 1160 and like his father he was buried in the Cathedral. López San Gil, *La nobleza altomedieval gallega*, 76–100. In 1169 his daughter, María Fernández de Traba, requested to be buried with her father, as did her sister Urraca in 1199, and they each donated a gold ring to the archbishop for the salvation of their souls. Souto Cabo, *Os cavaleiros que fizeram*, docs. 7, 24.

9 Duran-Porta, "L'anell com a signe," 252; Rodríguez, "À propos des objets nécesaires," 63–75.

uted to the chattel in question.[10] She has stated that during the second half of the tenth century there are an increasing number of references to precious objects due to their arrival from the Islamic south following the fall of the Caliphate of Cordoba, the payment of *parias* (tributes paid by Muslims), and an increased circulation of precious metals. Then, over the course of the eleventh century, there is a gradual fall in the number of references made to valuable objects, and they are almost absent from twelfth-century documents. Rodríguez has linked this change to a conceptual shift regarding the value ascribed to objects, whereby they ceased to be referred to in dower letters.[11] From the thirteenth century onwards, however, there is a renewed and significant rise in the number of references made to precious objects in documents, and Rodríguez has argued that this was due to the economic growth witnessed during this period and the arrival of precious metals and artifacts from the recently conquered southern Iberian regions, on occasions in the form of booty.[12]

Major challenges beset any enquiry into the quantity and quality of objects owned by the nobility, because we do not know whether certain types of documents, such as dower letters or major betrothal contracts, registered all the chattels exchanged between spouses. Neither is it clear from wills if they list all the objects owned by the testator,[13] nor whether rings formed part of the testator's obviated property. Notwithstanding these circumstances, an analysis of individual documents does shed some light onto the importance attached to rings.

The documents from the Galician monastery of Montederramo reveal that at least one ring formed part of the property that the Galician noblewoman, María Méndez, presented to the monastery's abbot in October 1281, and the documents concerning her donation state that it included "que todas llas outras cousas que eu, así mobli como raýx, que eu non posesse en este testamento" (all the other things, both chattels and real estate, that I did not include in this will).[14] Some months later, in July 1282, her servant Teresa Martins, declared to the abbot, María's *manumisor*,[15] that he possessed a gold ring with the inscription AVE MARIA that had been delivered

10 Rodríguez, "À propos des objets nécesaires," 78–88.

11 Rodríguez, "Objets sous contrainte," 88–89.

12 Rodríguez, "Narrating the Treasury," 61–80.

13 Rodríguez, "Endettement et circulation des richesses," 3.

14 Lorenzo, *Mosteiro de Montederramo*, doc. 413.

15 The individual(s) who the deceased chose to carry out the terms of their will.

to him, but which María Méndez had ordered to be given to her following her death.[16] Aside from being made of gold, the ring is important because its inscription gave it an apotropaic power with which María Méndez wanted to protect her servant Teresa.[17] For a reason that remains unclear María Méndez made no mention of the ring in her will, although seemingly she spoke to the abbot about her wishes that it be left to Teresa, for whom she felt great affection; she was one of three servants to whom she left a number of personal items.

This is just one example of the many rings that were not mentioned in the documents analyzed over the course of this study. These sources may well adhere to the model identified by Ana Rodríguez, yet they may also offer us a biased image of how rings were used, because only the gold and silver ones are mentioned by members of the upper social strata, and no mention is made of the copper or bronze rings found in archaeological excavations, which were more accessible to the lower social strata.[18]

The rings encountered in eleventh-century documents issued in the western kingdoms belonged to bishops and abbots. By contrast, rings were not objects that typically formed part of the recorded property owned by the lay nobility during the eleventh century, at least in the western kingdoms, where no records for noble ownership have been found. The Catalan sources are more eloquent, although far fewer rings were owned by the Catalan counts than those used by members of the clergy.[19] The treasury that may have contained the highest number of rings was that owned by the frontier

16 In 1282 Teresa Martiz declared that she had received a gold ring from the Abbot of Montederramo: "a qual sortella mandou a min dona María Meéndiz, moller que ffoy d'Airas Pérez Farpas de Burel, a tenpo de seu pasamento" (this ring was ordered to be given to me by Dona Maria Meéndiz at the time of her passing, who was the wife of Airas Pérez Farpas de Burel). Lorenzo, *Mosteiro de Montederramo*, doc. 426.

17 Gilchrist, *Sacred Heritage*, 116–21.

18 Labarta, *Anillos de la península ibérica*, 51–52. For the non-elite, see Chapter 2 in this volume.

19 Duran-Porta, "L'anell com a signe," 253. Records for the presence of sixty-five rings in Catalonia have been traced, two thirds of which were owned by ecclesiastics and only three were owned by counts. A further three rings owned by counts have been identified: Count Armengol of Urgell gave two rings to the bishops of Barcelona and Girona respectively prior to 1041, Rodríguez Bernal, *Col.lecció diplomàtica del Archivo Ducal de Cardona*, doc. 133; and a further ring was owned by Bernat Joan, lord of Ogassa and Clusa. Baiges et al., *Els pergamins de l'Arxiu comtal de Barcelona*, doc. 245. See also Sanjosé i Llongueras, *Esments d'orfebreria*, table 8 with 128 rings, of which fifty-six were without specification, two were made of silver, twenty-six of gold, and forty-four were of gold set with gems.

magnate Arnau Mir de Tost. Its inventory lists *multos anulos ex auro* (many gold rings), but their number is not given.[20] Scarcer still are records of rings owned or worn by women during the eleventh century, although Arsenda d'Àger, Arnau's wife, owned a number of gold rings, which she listed in the will she drew up in 1068.[21] Furthermore, Ermesenda de Carcasona (992–1057) may have used her chalcedony signet ring to seal documents.[22]

During the twelfth century, only a small number of rings appear in charters. The Leonese nobility used gold rings to purchase immovable property. In 1112 Pedro Negro presented an *anillo de oro preciosisimo* (a most precious gold ring) to Queen Urraca, as a formal acknowledgment, *in roboratorio*, to consolidate the queen's donation of the Monastery of San Juan de Baños.[23] The ring permitted the queen to replenish her coffers in the midst of the war she was fighting against her husband Alfonso I of Aragon.[24] Even though mentions of rings are rare, it is apparent that by the end of the twelfth century some women from the upper tier of the nobility possessed an important number of rings, for example Urraca Fernández de Traba owned a jewellery collection that included at least five valuable rings.[25]

Over the course of the thirteenth century, an increasing number of references to rings are recorded in the sources. Wills, dowry contracts or dower letters, inventories of chattels, lawsuits, and donations refer to or describe a range of types of rings in greater detail. In addition, there is a noticeable increase in the number of rings that formed part of the royal treasury,[26] as well in the personal treasuries kept by noblemen and women, such as the Byzantine princess, Vataça Láscaris, who had five impressive rings, some of which were decorated with diamonds.[27] During this period of territorial

20 Chesé Lapeña, *Col.lecció diplomàtica de Sant Pere d'Àger*, doc. 89. The document is dated to after 1068.

21 Chesé Lapeña, *Col.lecció diplomàtica de Sant Pere d'Àger*, doc. 87.

22 Duran-Porta, "L'anell com a signe," 255; Martin, "Glimpses of Gold," 201–14.

23 A gift made *in roboratorio* to a donor was used to symbolically acknowledge and consolidate a donation, in this case of land and property.

24 Ruiz Albi, *La reina doña Urraca (1109–1126): Cancillería y documentación diplomática*, doc. 65; Martínez Sopena, "La circulation," 262–66.

25 Souto Cabo, *Os cavaleiros que fizeram*, doc. 24. She was married to Juan Arias, *ayo* to Alfonso IX de León, and she drew up her will in 1199.

26 On the creation of the Portuguese royal treasury and the rings that formed part of it, see Rodrigues, "Monedas, armas y objetos suntuarios," 439–60.

27 Vataça Làscaris, daughter of Eulogia Láscaris, arrived in Portugal in 1285 as part of the entourage of Queen Isabella of Portugal, wife of Denis I. She married Martín Gil

expansion and increasing wealth, the lower tier of the nobility, represented by the *milites*, began to imitate the upper elite's ways of life and appearance by acquiring clothes, rings, and other jewels as symbols of their status.[28] Likewise, the urban burghers who profited from urban growth did the same.[29]

Not only are rings mentioned more frequently in the written sources from this period, the thirteenth century also heralded the first artistic depictions of them, for example in sculptures and lyric texts, which indicates that these items of personal adornment were becoming more widely used in society. Two sociocultural factors would have contributed to this change: firstly, the increasing circulation of precious metals and stones, which occurred in line with the Christians' advance against Islam in Iberia, and, secondly, the consolidation of canonical marriage established by the Fourth Lateran Council.

The summary descriptions of rings shed light on the materials they were made of, their form, decoration, weight, value, and on occasions their provenance through references to their origin, changes in ownership, or use. Sporadic references are also made to the rings' disappearance, having been melted down and converted into liturgical objects.[30] But, as Julie Renou

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de Soverosa and having been left a widow, she moved to Castile as *aya* (governess) to Constance of Portugal, Ferdinand IV's wife. She formed a rich jewellery collection, whose most noteworthy objects were a crown and five rings: a silver ring with a cornelian, a gold ring with a diamond, a gold ring decorated with an emerald and a small ruby, a silver ring set with jasper, and another gold ring with a cornelian. Coelho and Ventura, "Os bens da Vataça" 68–69. On her life, see, Cruz Coelho and Ventura, "Vataça: Uma dona," 159–93; Duran Duelt, "Sobre la demanda"; Calderón Medina, *Los Soverosa*, 174–79.

28 Rodríguez, "Endettement et circulation des richesses," 5–6, where the concern about appearance is linked to the circulation of ideals of chivalry. González Arce, *Apariencia y poder*, 142–52.

29 García Marsilla, "Vestit i aparença," 622; González Arce, *Apariencia y poder*, 79–84. In addition to the rings that Fernan Iohanes received as a guarantee for the loans he provided, he owned two gold rings for personal use, and he bequeathed them to his children in the will he drew up in 1296. Casado Lobato, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Carrizo*, doc. 566.

30 Certain rings were donated to be melted down in order to create new liturgical objects. The conversion of rings into liturgical objects bestowed a new significance on these objects through their new use, as it brought them into contact with divinity, and this also provided spiritual benefits for their original owner. See Buc, "Conversion of Objects," 99–143. This practice increased from the thirteenth century onwards, and on occasions members of the laity handed over their jewels to provide their religious foundations with liturgical objects. In 1307, Teresa Gil de Riba de Vizela founded Sancti Spiritus de Toro (kingdom of León). Her will stipulated that a

has discussed, there are major gaps in our knowledge about certain aspects of the use of rings, such as how many of them there were exactly, whether certain rings were used for specific occasions or ceremonies, and whether others were used on a daily basis.[31] A deeper understanding of the use and significance of the rings worn by women and men during the central centuries of the Iberian Middle Ages may be gained by drawing on the information provided by artistic and literary representations in conjunction with the data recorded in chronicles.

Rings as Symbols of Matrimony

Amongst the recently restored polychrome sculptures in the cloister of Burgos Cathedral, the statue of a king holding a small ring stands out (Figure 3.1). The ring is the key protagonist of the scene. Clearly visible between the thumb and index finger, the gold item is presented to a queen who elegantly holds the tassel of her mantle in her left hand. This gold painted ring was imbued with an immensely powerful symbolic and political value, because it was part of a consciously designed sculptural programme at the cloister of Burgos Cathedral. Alfonso X designed this propagandistic programme for the wedding of his son and heir to the throne—the Infante Ferdinand—and Blanche, daughter of Louis of France, which was held in the cathedral on November 30, 1269.[32]

The male figure represents Alfonso's father Ferdinand III (1217–1230), who hands a ring, perhaps adorned with a large diamond, to his wife Beatrice of Swabia (also known as Elisabeth, 1205–1235). The latter king and his wife were married in the same cathedral, also on the Feast of St. Andrew, fifty years before his grandson's wedding. It was not by chance that the date and place chosen by Alfonso X for the marriage of his heir were the same, nor that he should decide to decorate the cloister with sculptures depicting the symbolic moment of Ferdinand III's marriage to his wife. The heir to Castile would have to pass in front of these sculptures on his way to the altar for his own wedding. The ring played a crucial role in the parallel that Alfonso X sought to establish between the Infante Ferdinand and Blanche and the sculptures of Ferdinand III and Queen Beatrice: the new spouses

cross be made for the church using her gold rings and precious stones. Rouquoi, "Le testament de doña Teresa Gil," 316.

31 Renou, "Rings of Power," 18

32 Hernández, "Two Weddings," 417.

Figure 3.1. Sculptures representing Ferdinand III and Beatrice of Swabia, second half of the thirteenth century. Burgos Cathedral. Photo by the Cabildo de la Catedral de Burgos. Used with permission.

represented the continuity of the marriage that had founded the Christian monarchy, which had managed to unify the kingdoms of León and Castile in 1230 and had also forged a consanguineous tie to the imperial dynasty.[33] Furthermore, both marriages extolled the values of canonical marriage that was then being implemented in Castile.

The Church had begun to define and regulate sacramental marriage in the eleventh century, but the Fourth Lateran Council held in 1215 played a fundamental role in this process. The council stipulated how the canonical marriage ceremony should be performed, including the exchange of rings between the spouses.[34] It is unclear where or when rings first began to be used in the different types of marriage rituals.[35] A number of European testimonies have been traced for the blessing of the ring at the spouses' house during the eleventh century, and these are complemented by a number of thirteenth-century mentions of this blessing being held in front of the church where the wedding was due to take place.[36] Some references to marriage from the Iberian kingdoms are presented here.[37] The *Chronica Adephonsi imperatoris* describes the wedding of Alfonso VII of León's daughter and García of Navarra, held in León in 1144, in some detail. Yet the chronicle remains silent on any church celebration that may have included the exchange of rings, nor makes any mention of a ring amongst the property received by the bride.[38] Over a century later, when the Lateran Council's instructions were being implemented, Alfonso X's fourth *Partida* ruled that a ring could be given during the betrothal ceremony as a symbol of the promise of a future marriage.[39] And in the third *Partida* he stipulated that following the words of consent, "it is customary in some countries for the husband to take his wife by the hand, and place rings upon her fingers, as a token that the marriage ceremony is finished and complete."[40]

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33 Hernández, "Two Weddings," 417.

34 Gaudemet, *Le mariage en Occident*, 139–49

35 Labarta, *Anillos de la península ibérica*, 38–39

36 Gaudemet, *Le mariage en Occident*, 227.

37 A detailed discussion of regional marriage practices is beyond the scope of this article.

38 Maya Sánchez, "Chronica Adephonsi imperatoris," LI, 91–98, 191–94.

39 *Las siete partidas del rey Alfonso X el Sabio*, IV Partida, Título I, ley II. "Es quandol mete algunt aniello en el dedo diciendo así: yo te do este aniello en señal que casaré contigo" ("When he puts a ring on her finger, saying: 'I give you this ring as a token that I will marry you'"). For the English translation, see *Las siete partidas*, trans. Parson Scott and ed. Burns, 4:879.

40 *Las siete partidas del rey Alfonso X el Sabio*, III Partida, Ley LXXXV. "Acostumbran

Despite the symbolism of the nuptial ring, there are very few testimonies to its use by the nobility as part of their marriage celebrations. But some evidence is provided by twelfth-century Catalan betrothal contracts, which often included eloquent preambles on the tradition of presenting rings as part of marriage celebrations, both as an element of betrothal rituals,[41] and for the exchange of rings during the marriage ceremony. In 1111 Berenguer Guadall, who belonged to the mid-ranking frontier nobility, recounts in his betrothal contracts how having agreed to marry his future spouse, Elvira—the daughter of a merchant from Barcelona, Ricard Guillem[42]—they exchanged rings as a sign of the legitimate marriage between them.[43] He also gave her the tenth part of his property. Although the document narrates the exchange of rings in the ceremony, the ring involved was not listed in the inventory of chattels he presented to his wife. Nor was this done for other Catalan betrothal or dowry contracts during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, although these documents listed the real estate given to the wife in addition to various domestic and luxury items.[44]

The documentary evidence concerning the exchange of marriage goods from the western kingdoms is still less eloquent. The extant dowry contracts or dower letters along with the betrothal contracts from the tenth to the

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en algunas tierras de tomar al marido por la mano a su muger y meterle en los dedos los anillos en señal que es hecho y consumado el matrimonio" ("it is customary in some countries for the husband to take his wife by the hand, and place rings upon her fingers, as a token that the marriage ceremony is finished and complete"). *Las siete partidas*, trans. Parson Scott and ed. Burns, 3:738.

41 In 1104 Guillem gave the tenth part of his estates in the counties of Roselló, Perelada, and Ampúrias to Beatriz as a betrothal gift. The letter's preamble reads: "Prischa legum iura et universa ordo doxorum sancti auctoritas ut in celebrandis nuptiis arrarum anuli de sponsalicii et ad ultimum quod necminus est libellum dotis a viri celebriter sociandis tradutur coniugius ut iuxta divinum eloquium." Baiges et al., *Els pergamins de l'Arxiu comtal de Barcelona*, doc. 348

42 Son of Guadal II, who belonged to the Centelles family, who had resided in the castle of San Esteve de Centellas since the time of Carlos Martel. See Ruiz Doménec, *Ricar Guillem*, 119–20.

43 The document is dated January 25, 1111: "Inter nos annulus arrarum tradidimus." Baiges et al., *Els pergamins de l'Arxiu comtal de Barcelona*, doc. 407.

44 No reference to rings has been found in the six charters of pledge conserved in Sant Joan de les Abadesses, which are dated to between 1182 and 1273; Ferrer i Godoy, *Diplomatari del Monestir de Sant Joan de les Abadesses*. Nor has any mention of rings been traced in the nuptial contracts conserved in the Monastery of Santa María de les Franqueses, dated between 1165 and 1271. Escuder, *Diplomatari de Santa Maria de les Franqueses*.

thirteenth century for the kingdom of León make no mention of any rings. Paternal dowries often refer to the real estate parents gave to their daughter, as well as textiles, tableware and on a very few occasions, a number of objects of personal adornment.[45] Likewise, dower letters tend to record the estates that the parents gave to their daughter when she married, and on occasions they refer to the luxury garments and domestic items the wife received, but they make no mention of any rings.[46]

From the thirteenth century onwards, there are an increasing number of artistic representations of betrothal and marriage ceremonies, both visual and textual,[47] that feature rings. Yet there is no corresponding refer-

45 In the late tenth century, Jimena, wife of Munio Fernández, gave his daughter, Urraca, a dowry including numerous estates, textiles, and some items of personal adornment, including five brooches and some gold pendants. Fernández Flórez and Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección documental del monasterio de Otero de las Dueñas*, doc. 50. In 1156, Jimena's kinswoman, Maria Froilaz, provided her daughters with numerous estates, luxury textiles, silver tableware, and five gold brooches for their dowry, but no ring. Fernández Flórez and Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección documental del monasterio de Otero de las Dueñas*, doc. 352. These women belonged to the Flaínez family, who originally, in the tenth century, lived in the mountain regions of León. The family's power grew during the eleventh century. They were made the Counts of León and were appointed to the principal court posts up until the first half of the thirteenth century. The kinswomen of the Flaínez family founded the Cistercian Monasteries of Sandoval, Santa María de Carrizo, and Otero de las Dueñas. See Martínez Sopena, "Prolis Flainiz," 69–102.

46 No reference to any rings has been found in the fifteen charters of pledge dated between 1114 and 1127 conserved in the female monastery of Gradefes (Burón Castro, *Colección documental del monasterio de Gradefes*), nor in the twenty-two charters dated between 1191 and 1262 for the female monastery of Carrizo, see Casado Lobato, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Carrizo*. Likewise, no references to rings are to be found in the twelve diplomas dated to between 1129 and 1260, which are conserved in the archive of the female Monastery of Otero de las Dueñas (see Fernández Flórez and Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección documental del monasterio de Otero de las Dueñas*), nor in a charter from the Monastery of Trianos dated 1130 (Fuente Crespo, *Colección documental del monasterio de Trianos*. There are no charters of pledge, nor dowries amongst the archival documents conserved for the Cistercian Monasteries of Sandoval, San Esteban de Nogales, and Santa María de Moreruela. Herrero Jiménez, *Colección documental del monasterio de Villaverde de Sandoval*; Cavero Domínguez, *Colección Documental del Monasterio de San Esteban de Nogales*; Alfonso Antón, *La colonización*.

47 The forty-second *Cantiga de Santa María* depicts the presentation of the spouses' rings and signals their value as a symbol of the indissolubility of marriage. The scene recounted took place in Germany. The youthful protagonist receives a ring from his spouse during the betrothal ceremony: "andava í namorado i e tragía séu anél/ que sa amiga lle déra i que end'e éra natural" (He wore a ring which his beloved, a native

ence to these items in the extant dowry contracts, dower letters and nuptial contracts drawn up for the Iberian nobility, even though—as the case of Berenguer Guadall suggests—they were used in ceremonies. The evidence assessed here allows us to conclude that nuptial rings were linked to marriage rituals, and that their value was principally symbolic, signifying a contract, sacrament, affection, or a combination of these aspects. The economic value of these rings was a secondary factor, which explains why they were not listed in the documents that record the property exchanged between the spouses. But there can be no doubt that the value and quality of the materials used to make these rings converted them into a highly significant element of public display that demonstrated both spouses' social and economic status, and thereby evoked the prosperity of their future marriage.

Teneatis vobis hunc anulum: Rings as Gifts Outside of Marriage?

In theory, marriage was indissoluble, a characteristic that was not attributed to any other type of secular union between men and women, such as concubinage. My analysis of the extant concubinage contracts has revealed no references to any rings. Yet, there is evidence for a number of highly significant lawsuits for the legitimation of individuals claiming to be the sons of the kings of Aragon, and these documents state that following sporadic sexual relationships with certain women the king gave them a ring.

An enquiry was undertaken to annul the paternity claim made by Juan Benet de Daroca, who was born following a relationship between his mother Muñina and Pedro III of Aragon circa 1270. During this enquiry one of the witnesses, a presbyter from Daroca, stated that having spent the night with the woman, the king gave her a ring.[48] Later, in 1319 as part of the lawsuit to legitimize Napoleón, who was claimed to be the son of Jaime II, his mother Gerolda gave a detailed account of the night she spent with the monarch on May 15, 1287. Bidding farewell to her, the king gave her a gold ring decorated with gold stones, and she in turn asked him to remember her.[49] The two men, Juan and Napoleón, were acknowledged as the sons of Peter II

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of that town, had given him); see www.cantigasdesantamaria.com/csm/42 and *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X*, 55. See also Disalvo, "Esponsales drudaria y amor virginal," 161–78.

48 Cingolani, "Monarcas infieles," 281: "dederat eidem tunc unum anulum."

49 Cingolani, "Monarcas infieles," 286: "Ipseque dominus rex dixit eidem: 'Itote cum Deo,' deditque sibi anulum aureum cum lapide coloris viridis, dixitque sibi: 'Teneatis vobis hunc anulum.'"

and Jaime II respectively, because the women and witnesses' accounts were considered truthful. It is unknown how Muñina and Gerolda used the rings, although they could have worn them, as one witness stated they had seen Gerolda's ring; undoubtedly, a gold ring with precious stones on the hand of lower strata woman would have been striking.

It is challenging to interpret the precise significance of the rings these kings gave to these two women, both of whom were married, although their husbands had been absent for many years. The presentation of a ring could have been a gift, a display of *largitas regia*, but it could also be considered as a form of compensation for a carnal service. However, what is more probable is that the rings were invoked by the witness and notary, both of whom were clerics and defenders of canonical marriage, in order to construct a more acceptable account of the monarchs' behaviour by attributing to them a gesture linked to court culture, as analyzed by Stefano Cingolani in his study of the lawsuit.[50] Thus, in reality, there was no gifting of a ring. None of the women presented a ring as physical proof to verify their account, nor did they recount what happened to the rings after having bid farewell to the king. Furthermore, the mention of these rings should by no means be interpreted as referring to a symbol of a union between the kings and these women; both Muñina and Gerolda declared they never saw the monarchs again.

The Circulation of Rings Beyond Gender and Frontiers

Rings were both a form of wealth and emotional patrimony, and they went on to be circulated amongst relatives within a number of social contexts for generations, even travelling across the frontiers of the Iberian monarchies. They could also move beyond these kinship networks by being presented to ecclesiastical institutions, which as a rule were cathedrals and monasteries linked to the family in question. Through such donations the family maintained a degree of control over these items while also enriching the treasuries of the institutions they patronized.[51]

Rings that formed part of a personal or family treasury could be placed in circulation beyond the family for a number of motives.[52] On occasions they

50 Cingolani, "De la libertad," 55. This author argues that the narrative set out in this account and Gerolda's description corresponds to models of court literature.

51 Feller, "Formes et fonctions," 20; Rodriguez, "À propos des objets nécesaires," 63–89.

52 Feller, "Formes et fonctions," 12–14.

were used as diplomatic gifts,[53] but they could also be presented to relatives as a sign of distinction and affection, or as a display of gratitude for services rendered. *Cantiga* 376 from the *Cantigas de Santa María* recounts how Alfonso X was in Seville with his brother Manuel whose service he greatly esteemed, and the king showed his brother a gold ring decorated with jasper which he was wearing, and he told him he would give it to him. When the Infante Manuel withdrew after the conversation, Alfonso ordered a man from his household to bring his brother the ring he had promised him. The man lost the ring along the way and beseeched the Virgin for help in finding it. The Holy Mary of the Port interceded, and the royal servant was able to deliver the ring to Manuel.[54] The *cantiga* highlights the ring's importance and underscores the king's affection for his brother and recognition of his services. Thanks to the Virgin Mary's intervention the ring also acquired a great apotropaic value and became almost sacred for its new owner.

Given the distances that could separate members of the royal family or noble kinship networks, rings would have been imbued with a significant material, emotional, and symbolic value for relatives. Rings crossing frontiers helped to reinforce family ties. A clear demonstration of this is provided by the wills drawn up by the Infante Pedro de Portugal and his sister Mafalda, the only children of Sancho I of Portugal and Dulce of Aragon, who were still alive in 1256. In Pedro's will, drawn up in Mallorca in October 1255, he bequeathed his sister Mafalda—*señora* (lady) of the Monastery of Arouca (Portugal)—all his rings and precious stones, and he ordered her

53 Following the marriage of Eleanor of England to Alfonso VIII of Castile in 1170, Henry II of England gave his son-in-law a ring with a yellow agate to reinforce their family and political ties. Jasperse, "With This Ring," 79–81.

54 "El en Sevilla morando, aveo que séu irmão/ Don Manüel con él éra que o amava de chão ... Porend' el Rey o amava, e gran dereito fazia/ E u estaban falando el Rei e ele un día, /un anél lle mostrou lógo el Rei, que sigo tragía,/ que dun jaspís mui riqu'éra, pédra nóbre connosçuda, / e disse que lla daría. E pos foi en sa pausada / Don Manüel, el Rei lógo non quis mais fazer tardada,/ mais enviou-ll' a sortella, en ouro engastõada, per un hóme da sa casa e diz: 'Muito me saúda / Don Manüel e dá-ll' este anél que ll'hei prometudo.'" ("While he was dwelling in Seville, it chanced that his brother, don Manuel, who loved him dearly, was there with him ... Therefore, the king loved him, and he did right in this. One day while the king and his brother were talking, the king showed him a ring he was wearing, which was of very rich jasper, a most noble stone, and he said he would give it to him. Then don Manuel went to his lodgings, and the king did not want to delay any longer but sent him the ring, set in gold, by a man of his household and said: 'Extend my fond regards to don Manuel and give him this ring which I have promised him.'"). *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X*, 457–58. See also www.cantigasdesantamaria.com/csm/376.

to donate them to God for the redemption of his soul and also to pay off his outstanding debts.[55] Shortly afterwards, in her will, drawn up between January and May 1256, Mafalda bequeathed to her brother one sapphire ring and a large emerald ring, in addition to other objects with an apotropaic value which were deemed capable of protecting against illness.[56] Mafalda died on May 1 and Pedro June 10, 1256. Because their deaths occurred so soon after one another, it is not clear whether the *manumissores* carried out Mafalda's will, nor whether Pedro received the items his sister had bequeathed to him. Nonetheless, their wills clearly reveal the siblings' concern that the rings they owned should remain in their families.

The example of Mafalda and Pedro's wills reveals how, despite the frontiers that separated these testators, these small valuable objects circulated between members of the same family, both men and women, as well as lay individuals and those who had chosen a career in the church or had taken holy orders. There are numerous cases of rings circulating between lay and ecclesiastical kinsmen, such as the signet ring that had belonged to Count Bernat Tallaferro de Besalú and which, at his death, was inherited by his brother Abbot Oliba.[57] Likewise, Sancho Peres Froião, Bishop of Porto, owned ruby and emerald rings that had belonged to his father, Pedro Homen. And in 1298 he bequeathed rings to his brother, the troubadour Esteban Peres Froião.[58]

The lack of detail encountered in charters seems to suggest that rings circulated within the family milieu without any clear distinction of gender. Admittedly, some rings seem to have been exchanged within female spheres, but many others passed between both the men and women in a family. For example, in 1211 Sancho I of Portugal presented all his rings to his daughter, Infanta Sancha, except the two he had inherited from his father King Afonso Henriques, which were left to his heir Afonso II.[59] María Pérez, a woman

55 Calderón Medina, "El testamento," 275: "Item legamus regine domne Mafalde, dilectissime sorori nostre, omnis anulos et lapides nostros, excepto anulo quem dimitimus Maioricense episcopo predicto; sic quod ipsa accipiat et retineat de illis quos uoluerit, et alios det amore Dei pro anima mea vel in debitis nostris."

56 Cruz Coelho, *Arouca: Uma terra*, doc. 16: "Item infanti domno Petro, fratri meo, meum momum et lapidem sapirum et aliam sortellam magnam Zmagardam."

57 Graells i Fabregat, *Dactyliothecae cataloniae*, 114–17. The signet ring was made in the Carolingian era. It reused a carved Roman stone and around its edge an inscription read: BERNARDUS COMES.

58 Morujão, *Testamenta Ecclesiae*, doc. 7.9.

59 Azevedo, *Documentos D. Sancho I*, doc. 194: "Et mando ut post mortem meam

from the lower tier of the Galician nobility, owned some rings that had been bequeathed to her by her brother Juan Giraldi, and following her death she donated them to the Franciscans of Ourense for the purpose of making a chalice.[60]

Clearly, women played a key role in circulating these types of objects. Some rings belonging to noblewomen circulated within strictly female spheres, such as the "anulos de auro cum eorum iemas et gegoncis" (gold rings with gems and adornments) that Arsenda d'Àger bequeathed to her daughter in her will in 1068;[61] the gold ring that Gontrodo Cidi left to her daughter Mayor Rodríguez in 1143;[62] and the rings that María Pérez left to her daughter in 1252.[63] Through their successive marriages, these women were able to establish a number of ties with a series of family groups, which linked them to a diverse milieu in which jewels belonging to the family members of their different husbands, could be circulated. These women received, displayed, and passed on a variety of rings, ranging from the ring presented to them for their betrothal or else their wedding, to those they acquired for themselves or were gifted to them, as well as the rings they inherited from their own family.

Women not only displayed their rings in public, but some widows who took religious orders and went on to become abbesses of monasteries linked to their families, kept and continued to wear the rings they had owned prior to entering the monastery. In 1226, Urraca Gómez de Traba was serving as abbess of the monastery of San Pedro of Dozón, and in her will, drawn up that same year, she donated her smallest emerald ring to the male Monastery of Santa María of Osera. She had previously deposited four gold rings with the latter monastery, and her will also stipulated that these were to be used to pay her debts after her death.[64]

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habeat totam mea liteiram et meos anulos et sortilias, exceptis duobus anulis quos mando dari filio meo regni domno Alfonso."

60 Vaquero Díaz and Pérez Rodríguez, *Colección documental del Archivo de la Catedral de Ourense*, doc. 379. "Et anulos aureos qui fuerunt fratris mei domni Iohannis Giraldi ad opus unius calicis."

61 Chesé Lapeña, *Col.lecció diplomàtica de Sant Pere d'Àger*, doc. 87.

62 Fernández Catón, *Colección documental de la Catedral de León*, vol. 5, doc. 1438.

63 Vaquero Díaz and Pérez Rodríguez, *Colección documental del Archivo de la Catedral de Ourense*, doc. 379: "Mando filie mee tauoas meas et sortelias."

64 Urraca Gómez was the daughter of Count Gómez González de Traba and great-granddaughter of Count Fernando Pérez de Traba. She had married García Arias, before she served as abbess of San Pedro de Gozón from 1205, which was linked to

The Leonese noblewomen Teresa Morán, the daughter of Morán Pérez and Elvira Arias, took her jewel collection with her when she entered the female Monastery of Santa María of Carrizo.[65] Teresa belonged to a mid-ranking noble family that had accumulated considerable wealth while serving the Castilian monarchy during the major Andalusian conquests.[66] The family's wealth probably explains her lavish and exotic jewel collection, which most notably included eight highly valuable rings adorned with diamonds and turquoise, which, at that time, were rarely to be found in the possession of the middle-ranking nobility. Over the course of her life, Teresa Morán had two relationships, first with a man called Fernando, with whom she had her daughter Mayor Fernández. She later married the *milite* Nuño Pérez de Tiedra in accordance with the canonical rite; he was the son of Pedro Fernández de Tiedra,[67] who took part in the conquests of Jaén, Cordoba, Seville, and Niebla. Four children were born to the latter marriage: Juan, Fernando, Elvira and Mayor Núñez. Following the death of her second husband, Teresa entered the Monastery of Santa María of Carrizo.

It seems that Teresa no longer resided in Carrizo when she drew up her will in 1269, yet she continued to keep jewels and other valuable items there.[68] She began her will by distributing her property,[69] and when it came to giving away her rings she identified three clearly distinct groups: the items she had acquired or inherited from her relatives, and those she had received respectively from her two husbands.[70] The latter two groups of

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the Monastery of Santa María of Osera. Fernández de Viana and Vieites, *Colección diplomática do Mosteiro de San Pedro de Vilanova de Dozón*, doc. 45: "Et de IIII^{or} anulis, qui sunt in Ursaria, solvant debita mea que inferius scripta sunt … Item mando predicto monasterio Ursarie minorum anulum meum smaragdinum."

65 The monastery was founded by her relative Estefanía Ramírez in 1176. Her aunt Teresa Ováriz served as abbess between 1203 and 1245. Casado Lobato, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Carrizo*, docs. 69–217. Her niece María González later served as abbess between 1286 and 1305, see Costa, "Los Morán: Un linaje nobiliario en León (s. XIII)," 52.

66 Costa, "Los Morán: Un linaje nobiliario en León (s. XII)," 65–142; Costa, "Los Morán: Un linaje nobiliario en León (s. XIII)," 11–63.

67 Reglero de la Fuente, *Señorío de los montes Torozos*, 127; Costa, "Un linaje nobiliario en León (s. XII)," 107.

68 Casado Lobato, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Carrizo*, doc. 428: "E tengo en Carrizo VIII. sortillas douro" (And I have in Carrizo eight gold rings).

69 Costa, "Los Morán: Un linaje nobiliario en León (s. XII)," 107.

70 Her mother made no reference to any objects in the will she drew up in 1252. Casado Lobato, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Carrizo*, doc. 285

items corresponded to the family networks for luxury items amongst her husbands' respective relatives, and they were thus left to their children.

Firstly, Teresa bequeathed to her daughter, Mayor Fernández, the chattels that her first husband Fernando, had left her and the largest *aljófar* (pearl) ring.[71] She left more luxurious rings to the sons who were born to Nuño. She bequeathed her most valuable rings to her son Juan, and these had belonged to the paternal side of the family: one ring with a large diamond and another gold ring that Nuño had given her, in addition to a gold ring with an emerald that had belonged to a certain Pedro de Tiedra, her husband's grandfather. Juan Núñez was the family's third successive male heir to own these rings, which had become imbued with the family's identity and also provided a way of commemorating the family's ancestors.

In her will, Teresa then proceeded to distribute the rings that formed part of her personal estate. Her daughter Mayor Fernández, who had been left a smaller inheritance by her father than her half-brothers, was compensated with three of her mother's rings: one that possibly had a moveable bezel, another that was adorned with a sapphire, and a third one set with a small turquoise. She left her son, Juan Núñez, another ring with a small turquoise. The three other rings, which she did not describe, were to be divided among Fernando, Elvira, and Mayor Núñez.[72] Each of her sons and daughters received at least one ring that had belonged to their mother, although Juan also obtained the rings that had belonged to his father's side of the family.

71 Casado Lobato, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Carrizo*, doc. 428: "E mando aquella sortella de aliofar mays ancha ... a mia filla Mayor Fernandez" (And I stipulate that the larger *aliofar* ring [be given] ... to my daughter Mayor Fernandez.) An *aljófar* is an irregular or baroque pearl.

72 Casado Lobato, *Colección diplomática del monasterio de Carrizo*, doc. 428: "A Iohan Nunez el mio diaman grande e outra sortella douro, que me dio don Nuno, e outra sortella esmeralla grossa de ouro, que fu de don Pedro. Mando a domna Mayor Fernandez, mia filla, duas sortellas, ella una que se corre, e la utra que dizen zaphyra e un diaman pequeno. A Iohan Nunez outra sortella torquesa pequena. A Mayor Fernandez outra sortella torquesa pequenna e elas otras que hy ficaren partanas per Fernan Nunez e per Eluira Nunez, e per Mayor Nunez." (To Iohan Nunez my larger diamond [ring] and another gold ring which don Nuno gave me, and another large gold ring with an emerald, which belonged to don Pedro. I order that *domna* Mayor Fernandez, my daughter, be given two rings, the one [whose bezel] moves, and the other that they say has a sapphire and a small diamond. To Iohan Nunez another ring [with] a small turquoise. To Mayor Fernandez another small turquoise ring, and the others that remain are to be shared amongst Fernan Nunez and Eluira Nunez, and Mayor Nunez).

Wearing One's Chattels

The intrinsic value of the precious materials used to make rings and other jewels created a reserve of wealth that the nobility exploited by selling and pawning rings to obtain an almost immediate liquidity that enabled them to confront any economic needs that arose, in addition to writing off any debts that were incurred.[73]

The Flaínez were one of the leading families of the kingdom of León, and for generations they used the rings that formed part of their family treasury as a guarantee for raising loans to meet their financial needs and resolve any lack of liquidity. In 1112, on one occasion of financial need, Count Fruela Díaz and Estefanía Sánchez handed over a ring to the Countess Teresa of Portugal to formally acknowledge and consolidate (*in roboratio*) her donation of a plot of land in Astorga.[74]

The family's wills also reveal how they used rings to settle outstanding debts at the time of their death.[75] In 1234, Countess Sancha Fernández—wife of Count Fruela Ramírez, great-grandson of Fruela Díaz y Estefanía[76]—drew up her will naming her sons, Ramiro Froilaz (II) and Rodrigo Froilaz, as her *manumissores*. Her last wishes indicate that Sancha owned an especially important ring that had probably been given to her by her husband, Fruela. The ring in question had been placed on deposit or in the custody of her grandson Sancho Ramírez, the abbot of the Monastery of Villaverde de Sandoval.[77] Sancha ordered her sons, Ramiro and Rodrigo

73 In 1290, the Byzantine princess, Eulogia Láscaris, had to pawn her jewels to two men in Valencia due to her lack of financial resources. It seems she had difficulties recovering them, as two years later, Jaime II of Aragon intervened to prevent them from being sold, and he helped ensure they were returned to their owner. Duran Duelt, "Sobre la demanda," 280–81.

74 Fernández Flórez and Herrero de la Fuente, *Colección documental del monasterio de Otero de las Dueñas*, doc. 324: "Ad roborandum kartula … a domina infans Taresia, unum anulum aureum." (*Ad roborandum kartula* … to her ladyship Count Taresia, one gold ring).

75 Men also used their rings to ensure their debts were settled following their death. In his will, drawn up in 1241, Nuno Sanç, Count of Roselló, instructed the bishop of Elna and Guillem de Torrella that after his death, they were to sell his silver drinking vessels, rings, and precious stones, amongst other properties, to pay off his debts and settle any offences he had committed. See Breton and Vinyas, "Le testament de Nunó Sanç."

76 Martínez Sopena, "Prolis Flainiz," 69–102.

77 The monastery of Sandoval had been founded by Ponce de Minerva and Estefanía Ramírez, the aunt of Ramiro Froilaz (II), in 1167. Sancho was the son of Ramiro

Froilaz, to sell the ring in order to obtain sufficient money to carry out all the bequests of her will. It seems that disposing of the ring was considered to be a last resort, as the countess instructed that if there was sufficient money to cover the stipulations of her will with her other property, then ring was to be left to her firstborn son Ramiro Froilaz (II), who was to conserve it in the family treasury.[78] Some years later in 1277, her daughter-in-law, the Portuguese lady-in-waiting Châmoa Gomes de Tougues, widow of Rodrigo Froilaz, drew up her own will.[79] She named the archbishop of Braga as her *manumissor*, because much of the property she had inherited from her parents was located in his diocese. She bequeathed her rings, and ordered the archbishop to choose the two best ones for the Cathedral of Braga and sell the rest in order to carry out the instructions of her will and pay off her debts; she did not indicate the number nor origin of the remaining rings.[80] The rings must have been highly valuable given the scale of her outstanding debts, as she used all her rings for this purpose, except for the rings set with "gems of virtue" that had belonged to her father.

Thomas of Canterbury's Ring and Rings Set with Gems of Virtue

Kings and noblemen also possessed rings that had belonged to renowned bishops or saints, which rendered them almost sacred objects. These rings were highly esteemed and deemed to possess an incalculable value for their qualities, and they were ascribed healing and apotropaic

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Froilaz (II), who was the monastery's abbot between 1230 and 1236. Herrero Jiménez, *Colección documental del monasterio de Villaverde de Sandoval*, 64, 65, 69, 70, 72.

78 Martínez Martínez, *Cartulario de Santa María de Carracedo*, doc. 369: "Mando ut compleantur omnia per censum meum mobilem, et substantia meam; et si non abundaverint vendatur annulus meus quae tenet Abbas Saltusnovalis et compleantur. Quod si per censum, et substantiam mobilem omnia completa fuerint, annulus ipse detur domino Ramiro, filio meo."

79 Sottomayor Pizarro, "Pela morte," 219–33; Calderón Medina, "Rodrigo Froilaz," 131–52.

80 Sottomayor Pizarro, "Pela morte," 226: "Mando todas las otras sortelas ao arcebispo de Bragaa don Martim Giraldiz, que fille ende as duas melores e as otras venda pera comprar nas mandas e mas devidas." (I order that all the rings [be given] to the archbishop of Braga, don Martim Giraldiz, [and] that he choose the two best ones and sell the others to purchase [what is needed to fulfil] my instructions and [to pay my] other debts).

properties,[81] which seems to have been excluded from mundane transactions.[82]

When the Infante Pedro of Portugal, lord of the kingdom of Mallorca, died aged sixty-nine, he owned a gold ring adorned with a sapphire that had belonged to Thomas Becket, and which was claimed to have the capacity to heal those who suffered from paralysis.[83] It was possibly the most valuable object he owned and the one that was ascribed the most potent curative powers, but it is not clear how he used it. The ring may have formed part of a ritual involving it being placed upon an individual's paralysed limbs while a priest offered prayers to bring about the sought-after healing. A similar practice was seemingly used around this time in the Gallican Monastery of Celanova, which is discussed in more detail by Therese Martin in Chapter 7.[84] Alternatively, the infante's personal physician may have performed treatments with it, or else Pedro may have worn it as an adornment on a daily basis to ensure constant protection against illness.[85]

It is also unclear how Pedro came to own the ring, although it is possible that his sister, Infanta Mafalda, could have sent it to him along with other relics and objects with healing properties for paralysis.[86] The infante may also have acquired it at the Monastery of Santa Cruz in Coimbra, the

81 Labarta has analyzed the miraculous qualities attributed to rings that had belonged to bishops and saints and their cult. Labarta, *Anillos de la península ibérica*, 263–69.

82 Feller, "Formes et fonctions," 15.

83 Thomas Becket was attributed a thaumaturgic power and deemed capable of curing skin diseases and paralysis. Sánchez García, "Tomás Becket y la península," 14. It is likely that the infante suffered from familial amyloid polyneuropathy, also called Corino de Andrade's disease, which would have hindered mobility in the legs.

84 A number of hagiographic sources provide details on this type of ritual, for example the miracles worked by St. Rudesindus for those who used the ring that had been taken from his finger during the translation of his relics in 1172. The ring was kept at the Monastery of Celanova (Galicia). Miracle 37, written between 1200 and 1260, recounts how a priest from Limia was taken to the monastery because the fingers of his hands were contorted and atrophied. The monks took him to the saint's tomb and placed St. Rudesindus's ring and other relics on his hand. Having said a prayer, they withdrew and left the cleric alone there. Shortly afterwards, they returned and found the sick man's fingers were all straight. *Ordoño de Celanova*, ed. Díaz y Díaz et al, 50–52, 215–18.

85 The *maestre* Vicente served as his physician until his death. Calderón Medina, "El testamento," 271.

86 Villanueva, *Viage literario*, 263. In 1256 Mafalda left him a mirror that had the power to heal paralysis. Coelho, *Arouca: Uma terra*, doc. 16.

religious house where he had the relics of the Martyrs of Morocco translated to in 1220, and where there had been a cult of Thomas Becket from an early date.[87] Alternatively, he may have acquired the ring in the Monastery of San Isidoro in León, while the infante was serving in the household of Alfonso IX of León; a number of relics of the saint were venerated there.[88]

In his will, drawn up in 1256, Pedro left the ring to the bishop of Mallorca, and he ordered that a chapel be built in the Cathedral of Santa Maria in Palma, where he was to be buried.[89] After Pedro's death, no further trace of Thomas Becket's ring has been identified: there is no reference to it in the relics conserved in the cathedral, nor has any reference to a cult concerning the ring been traced to this cathedral.[90]

His sister Infanta Mafalda of Portugal, lady of Arouca, owned another type of ring, those referred to as rings *de virtud* (of virtue), which begin to appear in documents, above all Portuguese ones, from the second half of the thirteenth century onwards. In the medieval world, the gems that decorated rings were attributed virtues depending on the etymology of their names, colour, and brilliance. Through these virtues, which were delegated by God,[91] the precious stones were deemed to possess the capacity to perform a great range of actions,[92] such as provide eloquence, wisdom or protection to their wearer,[93]

87 Duggan, "Aspects of Anglo-Portuguese Relations," 1–19.

88 Calderón Medina and Martins Ferreira, "Beyond the Border," 23–29. The Monastery of San Isidoro had conserved garments that had belonged to Thomas Becket along with some of his bones, since the times of St. Martin of León (d. 1203). Domínguez Sánchez, *Patrimonio cultural*, doc. 90; Sánchez Márguez, "Tomás Becket y la península," 15.

89 Calderón Medina, "El testamento," 276: "Et legamus dicto domino Raimundus Maioricensi episcopo … et anulum auri cum lapide safireo, qui fuit sancti Thomasii de Conturberio."

90 The Cathedral of Palma conserves a number of relics that belonged to the infante, but no reference has been traced to the ring of Thomas Becket. Calderón Medina, "El testamento."

91 Pasero Díaz-Guerra, "La razón de ser," 344–47.

92 Beinert, *Windows on a Medieval World*, 68. Albertus Magnus, in his *De mineralibus*, explains how through contact with the stone the wearer benefits from its virtues. Bengtsson Melin, "For Love, Healing and Protection," 261–63. Sapphires were attributed faculties that contributed to intelligence and protected the chastity of whoever wore it, in addition to curing fevers, ulcers, and poisoning.

93 Beinert, *Windows on a Medieval World*, 55–66. Some gems could exert an influence over natural phenomena or the animal world, Buettner, *The Mineral and the Visual*, 3.

as well as cure numerous illnesses, by touching them or else through the intervention of physicians.[94]

These rings were small but extraordinary items because of their incalculable value, and thus were restricted to the elite. They were an element of social hierarchization, whereby a special effort was made to always keep them within the family, so they would circulate amongst the family's members to bestow their beneficial virtues and provide protection at times of sickness. However, on occasions their owners also donated them to ecclesiastical institutions they had close connections with, thereby ensuring that future generations of their descendants would have easy access to and control over rings set with "gems of virtue" and thereby better guarantee their good health. In such cases, strict conditions were set to ensure that the rings were not removed from the treasuries of the religious institutions they were donated to. In the will drawn up by Infanta Mafalda of Portugal in 1256, she instructed that her two rings and three sapphires were to be kept in the treasury of the Monastery of Arouca, which she had founded and where she resided until her death, and she stipulated that by no means were they to be removed, except for tending to the sick.[95]

Egas Fafes, a member of a family that had settled in lands owned by the Lanhoso family since the eleventh century, served as Archdeacon of Braga, Bishop of Coimbra (1248–1267) and Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela and his personal treasury included eight virtue rings.[96] Days before his death, in 1268, he left instructions in his will that his rings were to be divided into three groups, according to their powers, and they were to be left to a number of ecclesiastical institutions and members of his family.

The six rings that were considered to be both the most valuable and virtuous were given to the monasteries linked to his family. The first of these was a large ring set with a sapphire which Egas had received from Pelayo Correia.[97]

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94 Pasero Díaz-Guerra, "La razón de ser," 347–52. *Fisicus* was the title used for those who practised medicine.

95 Cruz Coelho, *Arouca: Uma terra*, doc. 16

96 The Lanhoso family served in the Portuguese court from the time of Afonso Henriques, although in the second half of the thirteenth century their power declined. Following this decline, the family's policy was to control the principal ecclesiastical institutions such as the Cathedrals of Braga, Coimbra and Compostela, through Egas Fafes, and the Monastery of Refóios de Basto, through the latter's brother. Sottomayor Pizarro, *As linhagens*, 2:716.

97 This was possibly the brother-in-law of Paio Soares Correia, see Sottomayor Pizarro, *Linhagens medievais portuguesas*, 2:715.

Egas, in turn, donated it to the Monastery of Refóios in Basto, whose abbot was his brother, Hermigio Fafes, so that it would always form part of the monastery's treasury and never be removed from it, because it was believed to have powerful properties as a virtue ring. The second ring, one of the best, was donated to the Monastery of Paços in Sousa, and another was given to the Monastery of Fontarcarda, which had been linked to Lanhoso's family since 1067.[98] The fourth ring was given to the Monastery of Rendulfe, and the fifth ring was left to the Monastery of Santo Tirso. All these donations were accompanied by an overarching stipulation that they would remain permanently in the treasuries of the aforementioned monasteries.[99] Egas left the sixth ring to his kinswoman Alda Martins, which was a gold ring set with a sapphire, on the condition that it could be neither sold, nor donated, neither by her nor her husband, and that it would always remain in the possession of their legitimate heirs, ensuring that it would be preserved in the family sphere.[100]

The second group of rings were those that Egas Fafes donated to the Cathedral of Coimbra, the diocese of which he was bishop, and where he had given instructions he was to be buried. The first ring in this group was set with a large sapphire, which was attributed potent curative properties, and it was accompanied by another ring, that was also deemed wondrously potent for controlling haemorrhages. He stipulated that both rings must form part of the cathedral's treasury and that they were not to be disposed of, and that they had to be used by the chapter to cure the poor and sick; he declared that he had witnessed many people being healed with them through divine intervention.[101] He did not describe how the rings were

98 Sottomayor Pizarro, *Linhagens medievais portuguesas*, 2:715.

99 Morujão, *Testamenta Ecclesiae*, doc. 2.28.

100 "Item legamus anulum nostrum de zeneraudo magno quem nobis dedit domnus Pelagius Corrigia monasterio de Refoyos quod sit ibi semper in thesauro et nunquam inde alienetur cum credamus ipsum quam plurimum virtuosum. Item anulum de zaphiro que est incastonatus oncabis (?) in auro legamus Alde Martini tali videlicet condicione quod ipsam non possit vendere nec donare nec maritus suus similiter sed semper remaneat uni de legitimis suis successoribus. Item legamus unum alium anulum de melioribus monasterio de Palaciolo et alium monasterio de Fonte Arcato et alium monasterio de Randufy et alium monasterio Sancti Tirsy sub condicionibus de aliis ante dictis et itaquod se[m]per remaneant in tesauris monasteriorum predictorum. Omnes enim ipsos credimus esse magni precii et quam plurimum virtuosos." Morujão, *Testamenta Ecclesiae*, doc. 2.28.

101 "Item anulum nostrum magnum de zafiro qui est valde virtuosus cum alio anulo qui vali mirabiliter ad sanginem restringendum dimittimus ecclesie Colimbriensi

used, but it is possible that the cathedral chapter would offer prayers at the same time as the rings were laid upon the sick, as might have occurred at Celanova. However, it is more likely that he was referring to the practice of medicine at the cathedral itself; its canons included a number of physicians, including the bishop's personal *físico*, Maestre Durão.[102]

There is no documentary evidence for healing rituals involving the use of rings in Arouca, nor in any of the monasteries to which Egas donated his rings. Nevertheless, what seems most likely is that virtue rings were used in infirmaries by an *infirmarius*, or a physician to heal the sick.[103] By donating virtue rings their owners, besides doing a good deed and enriching a monastery's treasury, increased their prestige by converting monastic houses into places of healing. Successive generations of relatives in poor health made recourse to them to be cared for and healed, but it seems that other unwell people could also gain access to them. Only in certain cases, such as that of the Infanta Mafalda, was permission granted for gems of virtue to leave a monastery for the purpose of healing patients elsewhere. It is possible that she granted permission for them to leave Arouca so they could be used in the *domus infirmorum* of the Monastery of Santa Cruz of Coimbra, which was closely linked to the Portuguese monarchy, and where it is likely that medicine was both practised and taught.[104]

Besides the curative properties of these rings, royal families, the ecclesiastical hierarchy and noble magnates also acquired virtue rings for the moral virtues ascribed to those who wore them, as well as the political sig-

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itaquod sint semper in tesauro ipsius ecclesie et nullo modo alienentur nec aliquis habeat potestatem apropriandi sibi nec alienandi ipsos sed dentur per aliquam personam ab ipso capitulo deputatam pauperibus et aliis infirmitates pacientibus cum sufficienti et idonea captione. Multos enim per eosdem anulos a multis et variis langoribus operante Domino vidimus liberatos." Morujão, *Testamenta Ecclesiae*, doc. 2.28. Although Morujão does not indicate as such, it is possible that this ring was set with red coral, which was ascribed the power of stopping haemorrhages. Gilchrist, *Sacred Heritage*, 113.

102 Silva, *Físicos e cirurgiões*, 119. This canon of the cathedral served as physician to Egas Fafes until at least 1265.

103 Silva, *Físicos e cirurgiões*, 50–58. There are records for the *domus infirmorum* having existed in the Monasteries of Santo Tirso and Paços de Sousa, and likewise in Santa Cruz de Coimbra, from the second half of the twelfth century onwards.

104 The library of the Monastery of Santa Cruz had an extensive collection of books on medicine, and it has been argued that it could have been a centre for the practice and teaching of medicine in the second half of the thirteenth century. Silva, *Físicos e cirurgiões*, 84, 112.

nificance they bestowed when worn in public.[105] Gomes Soares de Tougues, magnate under Sancho I of Portugal, owned two virtue rings, one decorated with a ruby, whose brilliance and colour were considered to be the true light of Christ, and another ring decorated with an emerald that represented the true faith of Christians in the face of the infidel.[106] It is possible that Gomes used them to present himself as a faithful servant of the Christian faith during this period of Christian advances into Islamic territory.

At Gomes's death, circa 1217, his rings were inherited by his daughter Châmoa Gomes de Tougues, who possibly wore them throughout her life and used their healing properties, until she died an heirless widow in 1279. In her will she also used virtue rings to save her soul and that of her mother, by donating them *pro remedio anima* to the Dominican Order in Oporto, where they were probably used to cure the poor and sick.[107]

Conclusion

In this chapter, the range of ways in which the Iberian nobility used their rings has been analyzed in conjunction with a consideration of their significance and the ways in which these valuable objects were circulated amongst relatives. Rings provided a valuable legacy that could be easily exploited to revive a family's depleted coffers as well as settle outstanding debts following a relative's death, yet they also embodied a symbolic and emotional legacy for the family. They were exchanged as a means of publicly declaring family alliances, as well as symbolizing the theoretical indissolubility of matrimonial ties during the period when matrimony was becoming established in line with the model created by the Fourth Lateran Council. Rings could also be offered by monarchs as a gift or payment to women they had extramarital relationships with. However, it seems more likely that clerics cited the existence of rings in lawsuits undertaken to legitimize kings' ille-

105 Buettner, *The Mineral and the Visual*, 47–55. She has analyzed the political significance of the gems of virtue (rubies, sapphires and emeralds) set in the crown of Sancho IV of Castile (1284–1295). No documentary testimonies have been found for rings of this kind amongst other social groups.

106 He died around 1217. Sottomayor Pizarro, "Pela morte," 220; Calderón Medina, *Rodrigo Froilaz*, 136–37. Thirteenth century Castilian lapidaries began to include moralizing virtues for each stone. Pasero Díaz-Guerra, "La razón de ser," 343–46; Martínez Márquez, "La moralización," 177–86.

107 Sottomayor Pizarro, "Pela morte," 226: "As mias sortellas de vertude aos frades predigadores do Porto por ma alma e de ma madre" ([I leave] my rings of virtue to the Dominican friars of Porto for my soul and that of my mother).

gitimate sons, in order to project a more discerning image of this aspect of royal behaviour.

Due to their economic, symbolic, and emotional value rings were circulated amongst inner family circles, and were exchanged between consanguineous and affinal kinsmen and kinswomen, and members of both the laity and clergy across both generations and frontiers. Over the course of successive marriages, women had access to a range of networks for circulating the rings they wore during their lives and redistributed at their death amongst their descendants, thereby keeping them within their paternal family networks. Many of these women, such as Teresa Morán, kept and used their rings in monasteries linked to their family, while others, such as Urraca Gómez and Countess Sancha Fernández, deposited them in monasteries for safekeeping, possibly along with their chattels, personal treasury, and documents.

There was an extraordinary class of rings that had a special use and significance for the medieval elites: those that had either belonged to saints or were set with gems of virtue. In addition to the display of moral virtues, they were used to guarantee good health and cure illnesses. Rings of this type were exclusive and exceptional objects that were owned by the nobility and donated to monasteries linked to their families, on the condition that these rings always remained in their treasuries. Thus, they would be available to cure their kinsmen and kinswomen for centuries to come in the monasteries' infirmaries, which also converted the monasteries into prestigious centres for healing that became linked to the family's memory.

Although the rings that adorned the hands of kings, queens, noblemen, and noblewomen over the course of the Iberian central Middle Ages seem barely visible in documentary sources, a detailed analysis has revealed their significant presence and use amongst the nobility. As the Christian forces gained new territory from Islam and obtained greater wealth, men and women acquired and accumulated rings in their personal treasuries. Their increasing number of rings was matched by a greater use of precious materials such as gold and diamonds, which when flaunted in public demonstrated their economic and social power. But no less important was the use of these small objects to heal physical maladies, ensure their souls' salvation, and, finally, to construct an enduring image of the owners of these rings that would be commemorated by future generations.

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